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EAVESDROPPING ON THE PAST: AN ORAL HISTORY EXPLORATION OF ENGLISH
AND SPANISH IN CONTACT IN TEXAS' RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 1904-1945

A Thesis

by

AARON B. CUMMINGS

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas Pan-American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2015

Major Subject: English as a Second Language

EAVESDROPPING ON THE PAST: AN ORAL HISTORY EXPLORATION OF ENGLISH
AND SPANISH IN CONTACT IN TEXAS' RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 1904-1945

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May 2015

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ABSTRACT

Cummings, Aaron B., Eavesdropping on the Past: An Oral History Exploration of English and Spanish in Contact in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, 1904-1945. Master of Arts (MA), May, 2015, 297 pp., 9 tables, 8 figures, references, 180 titles.

This thesis investigates the interaction of English and Spanish L1 communities in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas from 1904 to 1945 (an era of mass English L1 migration from the Northern United States and Canada to this historically Spanish-speaking region) via analysis of oral interviews that record both language communities' memories of the era's social structures. Collectively, the interviews tell the story of the region's sociocultural and sociolinguistic environment with a view to exploring how members of each community reacted to the presence of the other language during the first years of significant English/Spanish language contact in previously linguistically isolated areas of the Rio Grande Valley. The primary goals of this project are to (1) to explore how the early 1900s South Texan social setting affected speakers of English, Spanish, or both; and in so doing, to (2) pilot a narrative-based model for future historical sociolinguistics research.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to the good people who participated in the interviews now stored in the Rio Grande Oral History Collection. Without these individuals' decisions to preserve their memories for future generations of South Texans, a project such as this would have never been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thesis committee (Dr. Deborah Cole, Dr. Yong Lang, and Dr. John Foreman) provided valuable feedback and support while I was attempting to generate the following string of words and ideas. The staff of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Collection at UTPA (Adela Cadena, Deandra Cavazos, Janette Garcia, Lisa Huerta, and Mayra Gonzalez) was full of helpful suggestions whenever I needed to dredge up some bit of information that seemed at first to have been misplaced a century ago. I would be remiss to neglect to mention the co-workers, fellow graduate students, and friends at the University of Texas - Pan American who afforded me the conversational space to think about this project (you know who you are). The credit for anything good in this project is due to the input of all these co-conspirators and mentors who have guided me through the project. Of course, any mistakes that have crept into this manuscript are exclusively my own.

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PART I: BACKGROUND AND THEORY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1900, deep South Texan cartography featured a string of towns with name such as Santa Maria, La Joya, Rio Grande, Peñitas, La Grulla, La Villa, Los Ebanos, Hidalgo, and Puerto de Isabela (Stambaugh, 1955, p. 180-181), all strung out along the banks of the Río Bravo del Norte. Also in the region were ranches with names such as Santa Anita, Carnestendolas, San Juan Plantation, Los Fresnos, Los Olivares, and Santa Rosa (Stambaugh, 1955, p. 180). The primary English-flavored exception on the map, Brownsville, had been begun in 1845 as Fort Brown to serve as an American outpost on land formerly belonging to the Mexican city of Matamoros. Yet by 1912, the area's principal cities (besides Brownsville) included Mission (spelled with two s's and pronounced "sh"), Scottish-sounding names like McAllen and Edinburg, and even a town named after [Van] Harlingen, Netherlands. Offshore, *la Isla del Padre Sur* was on its way to acquiring the English acronym SPI, often uttered by people who had never heard of its namesake, the priest (hence *Padre*) José Nicolás Ballí. The land itself, a coastal delta or flood plain drained by the Rio Bravo del Norte, had acquired a new but geographically inaccurate label: the Rio Grande Valley. A Spanish speaker at home in the area in 1900 would have been confronted with an unintelligible language in any given local city only a decade and a half later. What had happened?

What happened was what Fehrenbach called "Texas' last land rush" (1968, 2000, p. 734). From 1848 to 1904, Texas south of the Nueces had been officially part of the United States but

continued to be overwhelmingly rural and Spanish-speaking. Following the 1904 railroad connection from Alice to Brownsville, a land rush of enormous proportions saw a stream of English L1s from the Midwest, the Canadian Prairie Provinces, and nearby Southern states into a region promoters were calling a Magic Valley. The rush also saw the founding of a number of new cities dominated by English L1¹s built on ranchland that had been held by Spanish L1 families since the granting of *porciones* by the Spanish crown in the mid-1700s. The resulting flood of English-speakers inundated the existing Spanish L1 population. Yet at the same time, a significant stream of Mexican Spanish L1 refugees entered South Texas fleeing the chaos of the Mexican Revolution or looking for work (De León, 1993, 2009, p. 3).

Research Question

The sudden, tension-filled meeting of English L1 and Spanish L1 communities along an international border raises an obvious question: What social conditions would have encouraged or discouraged second language learning among the two primary first-language populations of the Rio Grande Valley in the early 1900s?

In order to explore how and why second language acquisition occurred (or not), one must examine the social terrain on which the various linguistic communities interacted with one other. Yet this complex network of interactions is no longer available for direct examination, since the railroad connections and land deals that sparked the shift occurred over a hundred years ago. If

¹ Linguists use the term *L1* to refer to a person's first or dominant language. A person can also speak an *L2*, *L3*, etc. (second language, third language, and so on). The term is fraught with complications. For example, in the twenty-first-century Rio Grande Valley it is not uncommon to find someone whose mother tongue (likely Spanish) is different from their dominant language, the language they went to school in, use with schoolmates, and are comfortable using (often English). In this case, which is the L1 and which is the L2? However, in the period we are interested in, the language contact situation was new for those outside of Brownsville and Rio Grande City, so most people's mother tongue and L1 are the same (there are some exceptions; the interviewee William Smid will be a German L1, but by the time of the interview is English-dominant.) In this paper, I will term people whose first and heritage language is Spanish, Spanish L1s; English L1s will be those whose first language is English. Obviously, knowing English and Spanish is not mutually exclusive; many are Spanish L1s / English L2s, or vice versa.

only we could talk to someone who lived through the decades that followed -- say from 1904 to 1945! While a direct conversation is out of the question, the efforts of oral historians mean that we can still listen in. During the 1980s, the Hidalgo County History Commission and others recorded a range of individuals with memories of the early 1900s before the actors left the scene. The resulting recordings enable us to eavesdrop, as it were, on the conversations of people who lived through our era of interest.

So, then, to the oral interview archives we turn, listening for factors that would have influenced how the language communities interacted, as well as the relationships that the languages had with each other. The anecdotal nature of the evidence imposes severe limits on the conclusions drawn, yet at the same time the very human stories we sample may be able to provide micro-level insights embedded in a personal narrative texture that goes beyond faceless facts.

Value of the Study

Sociolinguistic Significance

A century after the land rush, South Texas is still a major meeting point for English and Spanish. Local writer Minnie Gilbert, whose ancestors arrived in the Rio Grande Valley in 1909, wrote in 1975 of the English-Spanish linguistic dynamic in the region:

“[M]ore and more adults in the two cultural groups are appreciating and sharing the heritage of the other. Imperceptible fusing of the two elements is developing a distinctive regional bi-culture.

“The famous Texas drawl seldom is heard in the Valley. Constant exposure to a waterfall of Spanish on every hand has softened and slurred the speech of descendants of settlers of land rush days, most of whom came from the Midwest. Many regional words in common use, such as *resaca*, *tortillas*, *caliche*, *tacos*, and *pilón*, have no English equivalent.

“Perhaps for the same reason, English phrases, sometimes whole sentences, are interjected in talk between bilingual natives. Semanticists especially are intrigued by this habit of changing from Spanish to English and back again without the slightest pause.” (Gilbert, 1975, *Footprints across the Rio Grande*, p. 165-166)

Gilbert’s comments are interesting for their simplicity: though not a trained linguist, Gilbert has, perhaps without knowing the technical name for it, described *code-switching* (although linguists in general, not only “semanticists,” are interested in the phenomenon). Another fact Gilbert has hinted at is the un-Southern nature of the region’s dialect of English. On the one hand, this is hardly surprising: culturally, historian Doug Rossinow described southwest Texas as “beyond Dixie” (178), due to its close proximity and historical affinity to Mexico rather than the old Confederacy. Yet one wonders why the “Texas drawl” is not often heard in the Valley, given that the “drawly” parts of Texas are (relatively) nearby, and given that the greatest influx of English L1s to the region occurred during a time (the early 1900s) when Northerners had not yet moved to Sunbelt cities in sufficient quantities to cause repercussions among those with Southern accents in the Southern cities which were the nearest English-speaking urban areas to the Valley (see Hutcheson, 2008; and Hinrichs, 2012, for recent analysis of Southern urban dialects). Gilbert’s comments point to a variety of English that has been noted but underanalyzed. Some projects do notice the Spanish-related element sprinkled into South Texan English (such as Paul

Meier's *International Dialects of English Archive*, 2015, oddly enough designed not for linguists but for actors). The regional dialects map of Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) correctly places the southern New Mexico and El Paso areas outside the Southern dialect area, but the map misplaces the Valley in the South because their map is based on the Telsur project, a telephone-based survey of selected metropolitan areas. While the Valley has many more inhabitants than some of the other locations (in, say, the Dakotas) that were included in the project, no Texas area south of Corpus Christi was included in the Telsur study – thus leading to a complete absence of information on the Laredo-to-Brownsville chain of border cities in the *Atlas of North American English* (Labov, Ash, and Boberg, 2006, p.7-40). Even if Laredo, McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, and Brownsville had been included, it is unclear how representative the sampling would have been, since in some cases (such as New York City) the map's creators "exclud[ed] English names, as those are prominent among African-Americans, and Spanish names" on the basis that African-American and Hispanic speech does "not participate in the major sound changes in progress that are the focus of" the ANAE atlas (p. 27). If this was the case, then the Rio Grande Valley, with its overwhelmingly Hispanic population, is *de facto* outside the scope of Labov, Ash, and Boberg's atlas. A map created by amateur Rick Aschmann (2014) is actually much more detailed than that of the professionals (Labov et al.); but still Aschmann fails to distinguish the un-Southern flavor of South Texan English, inexplicably leaving the Valley (even Starr county, with approximately 95% Spanish spoken at home according to the U.S. census of 2010) out of his southwestern "Spanish-speaking area" (Aschmann 2014). Perhaps the oversight is due to the fact that Aschmann has used Labov et al.'s *Atlas of North American English* as a starting point, and then is making modifications based on new data as it is brought to his attention.

The cartographic correction offered by Gilbert will be reinforced in the oral interviews, as we explore the mixture of Midwest and Mexico in South Texas. A closer glance at the interviews will enable us to see how, when, and why this sociolinguistic phenomenon unfolded.

Historical, Anthropological, and Sociological Significance

In the study of the South Texas English/Spanish dynamic, it is vital to understand that the region's bilingualism is not simply another immigrant bilingualism that like explained in the Linguistic Society of America's brochure on bilingualism (Birner, 2012). This is not an immigrant group from a faraway country, but an established language that happened to have national borders shift around it in the period 1836-1848. The theory developed for English/Spanish interaction in the rest of the United States does not apply here. Going all the way back to the 1740s, for the majority of the inhabitants of the Deep South Texas border counties (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Zapata, and Webb), the regional language has been Spanish.

Consequently, what happened in the southern tip of Texas from 1900 to 1930 merits attention, as it represents a chance to see language dynamics usually associated with the colonialization of a far-flung imperial possession long ago – but this occurred within the borders of the United States, within in the twentieth century. Such cultural proximity is valuable because it may also help to control for another, insidious danger of research in the social science, especially linguistic anthropology:

The anthropologist's particular relation to the object of his study contains the makings of a theoretical distortion inasmuch as his situation as an observer, excluded from the real play of social activities by the fact that he has no place (except by choice or by way of a game) in the system observed and has no need to

make a place for himself there, inclines him to a hermeneutic representation of practices, leading him to reduce all social relations to communicative relations and, more precisely, to decoding operations. (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 1)

A small autobiographical detail: I am a native and resident of the region under discussion, which means that unlike the academic observer in the warning above, I do in fact have a “place” in the “system observed” – it is no mere game for me. Still, I find that the very nature of academic writing creates some distance from even a personal topic. Historical objectivity and theoretical frameworks sometimes conflict with the subjectivity with which humans experience events. I will endeavor in this narrative-based account to inject a responsible subjectivity by portraying the unique human personalities underlying the hard evidence.

Interdisciplinary Usefulness

While small in scale, this project blazes a trail in the interdisciplinary wilderness between oral history and linguistic anthropology – and the journey is well worth the trouble. The Rio Grande Valley is unique (linguistically and otherwise) in that it allows us to observe processes that happened in the rest of Texas in the 1870s: the arrival of railroads and the switch from ranching to commercial farming (De León, 1993, 2009, p. 57). The same integration into the wider American economy did not occur in the Rio Grande Valley until the railroad reached Brownsville in 1904 (De León, 1993, 2009, p. 57). One sees, for all practical purposes, the colonial experience being lived in the 20th century instead of the 17th, 18th, or 19th. The late date of the arrival of modernity in the Rio Grande means that this region (the Rio Grande Valley) was one of very few place in the United States in which oral history conducted in the 1980s could have obtained first-hand accounts of the confluence of the economic, culture, and linguistic

changes that occurred when Anglo-American language, schooling, and commerce took over a new area – even though the area had already been part of the U.S. for fifty years previously.

As an interdisciplinary exploration of these events, this thesis will not be reducible to history, on the one hand, or analysis of speech and text on the other. It will instead be much more attentive to the “social conditions” that are almost always left out of pure theorizing (Bourdieu, 1972, p.1). The result will be a messy, inelegant paper, chock-full of the dirt and complications that threaten every theoretical machine. I hope the material provided here may provide raw evidence for future research into the connections between oral history and sociolinguistics.

Social Significance

A wider knowledge of the history contained in these pages carries more than academic import. A better knowledge of these facts might provide historical support for extending bilingual education in the Valley so that instead of children being “bridged” into English (and, by default, out of Spanish), they instead be taught to be academically competent in both English and Spanish. Doing so would develop within the state of Texas a valuable human resource currently being wasted by practices such as labelling Spanish L1s LEPs (“limited English proficiency”) and allowing the L1 to atrophy. South Texans educated in both their Spanish and English languages would produce a generation of more confident, competent, and capable leaders in a location that is a crucial bridge for the Americas (see Lorenzen, 2007, for an example of how South Texan bilingualism could be leveraged as an economic resource instead of an educational liability).

One side effect of such groundedness will be, I hope, a direct application of what is found in these pages to throw some light on personal examples of the side effects of educational

language policies. Much linguistic discourse in Texas – especially in the educational realm – neglects the historic stories of everyday Spanish L1s and English L1s in language contact situations. Bringing these interviews to the light of day shows the long struggle of Spanish in Texas, and the first-hand rather than statistical analysis of the history of the situation may lead to better understanding among Texas educational linguistic policy-makers. Another motivation for making the sociolinguistic highlights of the interviews is to lead to a small measure of empowerment for people struggling with linguistic change everywhere. As Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1997) have remarked, it is not enough for a researcher to point out a problem, nor even just to advocate for a solution. The researcher should provide access to the study data and tools themselves in order to empower the people for whom the study is being undertaken (p. 145-154). This study, then, is for misunderstood and complicated language learning situations everywhere, and is dedicated to the memory of all people who have dealt, are dealing, and will deal with the challenges at the intersection of language learning and social change.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO SPANISH AND ENGLISH IN TEXAS

Geographical Setting

The Rio Grande Valley is defined here as the strip of land that runs along the north bank of the Rio Grande from Brownsville to Roma (essentially the southern half of the 956 telephone area code). Américo Paredes, in his study on South Texas folk hero Gregorio Cortéz Lira (*With His Pistol in his Hand*), defines the area thusly:

A region, half in Mexico and half in the United States, known as the Lower Rio Grande Border, the Lower Border, or simply the Border (with a capital B). Some people call it the Rio Grande Valley, but this name is also given a New Mexican area. In Texas, only the American side is usually called the Valley, and the name is associated with cotton, grapefruit, and the tourist industry (“Introduction,” N.P.)....The Lower Rio Grande Border is the area lying along the river, from its mouth to the two Laredos....This was the heart of the old Spanish province of Nuevo Santander, colonized in 1749 by José de Escandón (Paredes, 1958, p.7).

For this project, I restrict the sense the geographic limits to the area called “the Valley” which in the thought of today’s residents runs from South Padre Island to Roma. I exclude the area upriver to Laredo because it did not experience the same citrus-fueled land rush, and to this day has a higher Spanish-speaking percentage of its population (see the language spoken data on p. 53).

Chronological Setting

The study is limited to the period 1904-1945 because in South Texas this was the era of a land rush of historic proportions that brought enormous numbers of English L1s to what had been primarily Spanish-speaking communities (with the exception of already-multilingual Brownsville). A second reason is that later in the twentieth century, an already complicated study would have spiraled out of control because in the intervening decades the increasing ubiquity of English has led to substantial attrition of the Spanish language among the heritage speakers in the area. Twenty-first-century South Texas Spanish is a complicated entity; while Spanish is still ubiquitous, among Texan Spanish L1s of the younger generation the language has evolved (or suffered, from a prescriptive point of view). In the 2010s, it is increasingly common for young people of all backgrounds in South Texas to be English monolinguals or to have only a limited grasp of Spanish. (To understand how Spanish can shift even in Texas border towns where the language is commonplace, see Velásquez, 2009; Anderson-Mejías, et al., 2002; as well as Wolford and Carter, 2007). The result was a sociolinguistic situation with characteristics different from both the pre- and post- land rush eras.

The Spanish Origins of South Texas

Dating the arrival of Spanish to Texas is somewhat complicated. Arguments over the rightful historical place of Spanish or English in Texas tend to ignore the obvious: Languages do not necessarily follow boundaries, and in terms of first substantial European settlement, while South, Southeast, and West Texas were first settled by Spanish L1s from Spain and northern Mexico, Northeast Texas had no substantial permanent nonindigenous presence until the 1800s arrival of America English L1s. The resulting cultural divide is obvious, and can be observed

instructively by making the all-day drive between the Red River Valley in North Texas and the Rio Grande Valley in the south.

Texas' contact with Spanish speakers goes back as far as that of Mexico itself. In 1519, around the same time that Cortés was toppling Tenochtitlan's empire, the Spanish governor of Jamaica, Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, explored the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas -- a region he called Amichel (Morris 2010). However, apart from missions at El Paso and Presidio, early attempts to establish a strong Spanish presence -- such as a mission for the Jumano Indians near modern San Angelo in 1632 -- largely failed. The low priority of Texas on the region is hinted at in a name given it by some imperial administrators: *Nuevas Philipinas* -- apparently Texas had been an afterthought compared to the lucrative Southeast Asian islands of spices (Turanzas, 1961). In 1700, the Spanish hold on Texas was mostly nominal -- barely governmental (Foster, 1995, p. 1), and not yet linguistic.

In 1685, the (accidental) landing in Texas of three French ships under the command of René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, had given French a claim as well, but France's colonization attempts ended in a nightmare of shipwreck, mutiny, smallpox, and Karankawa raids. In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, by the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau (1762) France formally abandoned any designs on Texas, but the challenge did convince the Spanish to establish a more permanent presence in Texas (Morris, 2010).

The Spanish-language presence became permanent in South Texas during the years 1748-1755, when the Spanish crown sent José de Escandón y Helguera to the region known as the

Seno Mexicano. Escandón hailed from Soto de la Marina² in the Spanish region of Cantabria, a fact that would be stamped on the Tamaulipan and Texan landscapes in the form of Cantabrian toponyms such as Nuevo Santander (the pre-independence name for South Texas and Tamaulipas), as well as today's border cities of Reynosa (after Reinos), Camargo, and Laredo. In the wake of Escandón's exploration, a unique Spanish-speaking ranching culture and a rich set of traditions arose among the scattered towns lining the banks of the Rio Bravo del Norte.

Escandón, a forty-something veteran Indian fighter forged in the Yucatan, led a coordinated approach on the mouth of the Rio Grande from four different directions. He himself left Querétaro in early 1747, arriving in February of that year, but Texan governor Francisco García Larios arrived via San Antonio - clearly blazing a new trail into the region, since Spanish cartographers had thought the Nueces was a tributary of the Rio Grande, when in fact it flows into the Gulf – a fact which highlights just how little pre-1740 Spain knew about Texas (Foster, 1995). Meanwhile, Escandón's lieutenant Miguel de la Garza Falcón led his men on an odyssey that followed the Rio Grande all the way from present Coahuila state to the Gulf Coast. Miguel de la Garza and his family (Blas María de la Garza Falcón and others) would be leaders in the newly settled towns of Reynosa and Camargo, and their followers would have ranches on the northern (Texas) side of the river. The settlers would build Guerrero (the old town has been underwater since the building of Falcon Dam in 1950-54) and Dolores (a town on the Texas side). Another significant ranch would be started in 1753 with Escandón's permission at Carnestendolas; today the ranch has grown into the town called Rio Grande City. Escandón and additional settlers would push north up the river, founding Laredo in 1755. The new towns grew

² Minor correction for anyone reading Stambaugh's 1955 account: Stambaugh writes (p. 27) that Escandón's birthplace was "Soto la Marino" (p. 27). Technically not: the town was called *Soto la Marina* in colloquial regional speech or *Soto de la Marina* on official documents.

relatively rapidly, thanks to incentives that persuaded Mexicans to move from the interior to the frontier in exchange for land, tax breaks, and freedom. Even where towns did not exist, a vibrant rural way of life developed; it was said that in 1757 there were “3,000 horses, 13,000 sheep and goats, and 1,200 head of cattle grazing on ranches established in the area north of the present towns of McAllen and Pharr (Stambaugh 1955, p. 31). The pastoral picture remained much the same for generations. In 1870, that same region, now in Texas and known as Hidalgo County, boasted 18,141 cattle; 11,270 sheep; but only 2,387 human inhabitants (Garza, 2010, Hidalgo County).

While Spanish language and culture thrived along the Rio Grande, Spanish never really took hold in North Texas – a fact with ominous eventual consequences for the Spanish settlements to the south. Spain never managed to Hispanicize Texas north of El Paso, San Antonio, and Nacogdoches. Between the expedition of Alonso de Leon in 1689 and the final killing off of the French threat in 1768, the Spanish mounted a series of expeditions deep into Texas and even as far as Los Adaes in Louisiana, more to fend off the French than to settle the territory. Even with the French gone, the Spanish failed to domesticate North Texas (see Foster, 1995). As first the French and later the English armed the Plains tribes with horses and firearms, the Spanish could no longer dominate the Comanche, Apache, and Kiowa. In fact, the native tribes pushed back the Spanish to a line of defense along the latitude of San Antonio, so that much of “Spanish Texas’ was still Indian country (Foster 1995, p. 231).

The still-tenuous hold of Spanish (as a language) on Texas centuries after Pineda’s 1519 arrival is demonstrated by the fact that even the early 1700s Spanish expeditions to the region frequently had to employ interpreters to communicate with the local population. For instance, when the Marquis de San Miguel de Aguayo ventured into Texas to repel French soldiers

ranging west from Mobile (Alabama) in 1720-22, he needed an interpreter who could speak not only Spanish but also “the [language] of Texas” (Turanzas, 1961, p. 47, “*que sirvió de interprete para hablar la lengua castellana, como la de Texas*). This turned out to be Angelina, an “*india que se crió en el Rio Grande*” (“an Indian woman who had grown up along the Rio Grande”) (Turanzas, 1961, p. 47). So, the “Texan” language, at least as the Marques de Aguayo saw it in the 1720s, was a Native American dialect spoken in what is now the Rio Grande Valley.³ There were many other dialects spoken farther north (the name the Spanish gave the region, *Texas* or *Tejas*, is from the Caddo language spoken in East Texas). Outside of a few scattered missions, the languages of Texas continued to be those of the indigenous tribes until 1740s in the south, and in the northwest native tribes fought on well into the era of the Lone Star Republic.

The frustration of Spanish designs is echoed in the writing of missionary historian Juan Augustín Morfi. Morfi complained bitterly that due to a chain of incompetence ranging from local marshal Don Pedro de Rivera up to the viceroy and up the chain of the command to the king of Spain himself, “the province declined from day to day” as the Lipan Apaches and Comanches controlled the north of Texas. (Morfi, 1781/1935, p. 273). “Although we call ourselves its masters we do not exercise dominion over a foot of a land beyond San Antonio.” (Morfi, 1781, 1935, p. 273). Spanish attempts to settle the area resulted in heavy casualties – in 1779, Morfi estimated that “if an accurate count had been kept of men killed...by the Indians, it would appear that enough men have been killed and enough money lost to settle the entire province, and perhaps some of those that adjoin it” (Morfi 1781/1935 p. 273). When Spain was

³ The document in which this account first appeared was a text dating to 1722: *Derrotero seguido por el Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo en su viage [sic] y expedición a la Provincia de Texas (1720-1722), para recuperarla de los invasores franceses de la Movila, reintegrar sus Misiones y establecer barrera con la construcción de Presidios de los Adays, Texas, y Bahía del Espíritu Santo*. Escrita de Orden del mismo Marqués, en la Villa de Santiago de la Monclava, Capital de la Provincia de Coaguila [sic], Nueva Estremadura, por el Br. D. Juan Antonio de la Pena, Capellán Mayor del Batallón de San Miguel de Aragón, el 21 de junio de 1722 (in Turanzas, 1961, p. 1-81).

forced to return Louisiana to France per the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1800 it was a great loss for Spanish North America; but things went from bad to worse in 1803, when Napoleon (who would later add insult to injury by installing his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne) handed the heart of North America over to the young United States (Rodriguez, 2002, p. 61) by the terms of the Louisiana Purchase. To make matters worse, the French deliberately failed to specify the precise boundaries of Louisiana. A document from a French diplomat involved in the Franco-Spanish negotiations indicates that from the French point of view the territory extended all the way to the Rio Grande – an interpretation seized upon by American Manifest Destiny prophets who already coveted Texas (Rodriguez, 2002, p. 61). The Louisiana Purchase had immense sociolinguistic consequences for the entire North American continent. The possibility of a large French-speaking zone was ended, the only substantial remnants being those who still display *je me souviens* on Quebecois license plates and the Cajun French some two thousand miles away in the bayous of Louisiana. It also had an immediate impact on Texas. With any possibility of a francophone buffer gone, the odds of a Spanish-English clash over the land between the Sabine River and the Pacific Ocean increased drastically. Napoleon's damage to Spanish interests did not stop there; a Spain weakened by the Napoleonic Wars saw its American colonies revolt. Many of the Mexican citizens in what is today East Texas answered the revolutionaries' call to arms, with tragic consequences for Tejanos. In a dramatic incident forgotten to mainstream history as taught in Austin or Mexico City, the Texan episode of the Mexican War of Independence would leave Texas north and east of San Antonio devastated and partially depopulated. In 1811, the year after the the *Grito de Dolores*, a joint American-Mexican band of rebels, marching under a green flag, declared itself the Revolutionary Army of the North and challenged Spanish royal power. Following victory at Alazán they established at San Antonio

what is sometimes called the First Republic of Texas (Garret, 1939). A testy, messy, Spanish-English, Mexican-American adventure from the start, the revolt's linguistic and cultural dynamics foreshadowed the future of Texas. Unfortunately for the citizens of the region, this first republican experiment perished at the Battle of Medina in 1813.⁴ Now largely forgotten, Medina featured American and Mexican republicans fighting against Spanish royalists – but the clash ended with the most Texan lives lost of any single battle in Texas history, as the disorganized rebels were annihilated when they charged headlong into an ambush. The Spanish royalist commander Arredondo reported a thousand enemy combatants killed in the field, and then (by his own admission) he killed the prisoners (Arredondo, 1813/1908, p. 226). Perhaps only a 100 or so out of some 1,400 survived (Schwarz and Thonoff, 1986). Arredondo wreaked a terrible vengeance from the Medina River to the Sabine border region, wrecking the countryside. Although he could not have known, Arredondo's actions eventually lead to the Mexican Republic's need to resettle its northeastern frontier once independence was achieved (Garret, 1939, p. 223-233). De León writes of the results of Arredondo's "purge": "By 1821, when Mexico got its independence from Spain, the number of inhabitants of Texas had declined to about one-third of what it had been" in 1810 (De León, 1993/2008, p. 26). East Texas was particularly "depopulated" (p.26), a critical blow, because while by 1834 the population had rebounded, the increase was primarily in South Texas, chiefly San Antonio, Laredo, Goliad, and Victoria, with 500 people in Nacogdoches as an eastern exception (De León, 1993/2008, p. 27-28). In the end, it was the Spanish and later Mexican governments' need to find pioneers willing to establish settlements and battle the Comanches on the far northeastern frontier that led to

⁴ Due to the catastrophic loss of life on the republican side, the memory of the battlefield has been lost; but the parameters of the royalist commander's report place it in a wooded area south of San Antonio, on the road to Laredo, between the Medina and Atascosa Rivers (see Arredonodo, 1813/1908, p. 224).

Austin's, Beales', and other English L1 colonists settling in what was then Coahuila y Texas (see De León, 1993, 2009, p. 31-35; Brister, "Introduction" to Ludacus, 1834/2008, p. xvi-xvii).

Sociolinguistically speaking, the choice to import Anglo-American settlers to maintain nominal control of northeastern Mexico was momentous. In fact, language issues in the new settlements led directly to Mexico's loss of Texas. Many of the controversies between the Austin colonists and Mexico City government – such as what the laws (written in Spanish) actually said -- were quite literally lost in translation until things got out of hand because “neither would the Mexican government accept that the laws be translated, nor would the colonists learn Spanish” (Pahissia, 1999, p. 76, my trans.). In fact, Austin, who believed that the American settlers in Mexican Texas should learn Spanish, tried to procure a Spanish teacher for his settlements but was unsuccessful. Subsequent requests to Mexican authorities for an official government translator were also denied (Pahissia, 1999, p. 76). The conflict would move from legal-linguistic to all-out war following the skirmish at Gonzales on October 2, 1835, and by the time the shooting ended on April 21, 1836 at San Jacinto, Texas had slipped out of Mexico's control

Spanish Survival in South Texas Post-1836

However, while English was taking root all across Texas north of the Nueces, neither the Texas Revolution (1836) nor the arrival of American military (1845) nor the formal recognition of the area as part of the state of Texas (1848) could dislodge Spanish as the language of choice along the Rio Grande.

One reason for the continuance of Spanish in Texas was the fact that south of the Nueces the date 1836 had no meaning at the time. “In the border towns of Texas, for example, the fact that the region was not formally incorporated into the State until the end of the Mexican –

American War in 1848 contributed to the continued maintenance of Spanish.” (De León and Stewart, 1989, p. 51). In fact, it was the primarily the American attempt to assert ownership of this land following the Texas Annexation that led to the conflict in the first place. Anyone wishing to dispute the de facto independence of South-of-the-Nueces Texas from the Austin government during the Lone Star Republic period would do well to consult the history of the Republic of the Rio Grande of 1840, when the area that is now the Rio Grande Valley was part of a breakaway state covering South Texas, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas, all with a capital at Laredo (Aguilar, 2002; Resésendez, 2005, p. 256-267). Once the rebellion was crushed, it was Mexico -- not Texas -- that had re-established hegemony along the Rio Grande.

Texas annexation forced the question of which country the Rio Grande Valley belonged in, and America and English came to stay when President Polk ordered American troops into the border region in 1845. The soldiers establishing Fort Brown and began the construction of the military roads that would provide the region with some infrastructure.

Yet even in the post-1845 period, Spanish continued to be the primary language all throughout the region. To be sure, after the Mexican War enough American veterans and merchants stayed to give Brownsville and nearby Santa Rita to give the region its first English-speaking towns, but the potential priority of English was undermined by the simultaneous arrival of a multiplicity of languages because the small but significant stream of European immigrants who came to the principal towns of the region – Brownsville, Matamoros, Rio Grande City, and Laredo – were as likely to speak German or French as English.

Another factor was the relatively small scale of English L1 settlement from the rest of the United States. The post-1845 group had founded Brownsville and taken over a number of

ranches, but they had not fundamentally altered the demographics of the region. After 1865, in the wake of the Civil War, another English L1 wave of Southerners came to start over as far South as they could go. Still, while life did change in coastal Cameron county, in the inland ranches of Hidalgo and Starr counties life continued much as usual into the late 1800s, in part because so many of the newcomers learned Spanish. In the postwar period, one motivation for the two earlier Anglo waves' assimilation to Spanish seems to have been the sheer numerical superiority of Spanish-speakers throughout the 1700 and 1800s. "In the Rio Grande Valley along the border, on the other hand, Anglos averaged a mere 10% of the entire population throughout the nineteenth century, reaching a high of only 16% (De León and & Stewart 1989 [p.]12)" (Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna, 2008, p. 51). Another factor in the maintenance of Texas Spanish was (and is) that Mexican Spanish L1s continued to flow into the area. In the words of one Irish immigrant to the area in 1878: "It can well be said that there is no boundary line and to them Mexico is Texas and Texas is Mexico, and both are neither" (Amberson, M; Amberson, J.; and McAllen, 2014, Kindle Loc. 12954-12956).

Roma native and historian Jovita González (1904-1983) preserved a description of late 1800s upper-class [i.e., definers of linguistic value] town life in the ranching towns of the upper Valley as written by Antoinette Stewart of Rio Grande City:

Society was different in those days to what it is now...The dances were held in what is now the old the old courthouse. The officers from Fort Ringgold and their wives were the honor guests. There were neither racial nor social distinctions between Americans and Mexicans; we were just one family. This was due to the fact that so many of us of that generation had a Mexican mother and an American or European father (González, 1929, p. 84).

In other words, the “mother tongue” of the second generation of the 1800s Euro-American arrivals in the border cities was quite likely to be Spanish.

To be sure, there were tensions as English L1s slowly took control of pockets of the region: in 1888 in Rio Grande City, an Anglo shot local journalist Catarino Garza, who had been reporting on lynchings of Mexican-Americans. The town responded with what was described as a riot. Fortunately, Garza survived and peace returned (De León 1993, 2009, p. 56). In addition, there were attempts by some Anglos in South Texas to disenfranchise Tejano voters on the basis that as Indians, they were not American citizens. In fact, by this tactic the newcomers were attempting to keep Spanish L1s under the social arrangements of the old Spanish-Mexican *patron-peonaje* system, since it suited the interests of whoever was in power, whether a Spanish aristocrat or a supposedly democratic American captain of agriculture (De León 1993, 2009, p. 57). Still, the level of insult did not achieve what it would post-1900 once the land rush commenced. In part, according to local historian Jovita González, the difference was that – with exceptions - each of these first two waves of English L1s (roughly post-1845 and post-1865) assimilated to the Hispanic culture and learned Spanish. The third wave that came with the railroad post-1904 did not (González 1929, p. 88-89).⁵

Spanish Schools in the Isolated Areas

Yet another factor in Spanish language maintenance was that the first 60 years of Lone Star nation-then-statehood meant little difference in which language was used in the schools of Deep South Texas. When considering the social status of the languages in 1900 South Texas, one

⁵ González provides some essential written sources for anyone interested in the then-sparsely settled region; her 1929 M.A. thesis *Social Life in Cameron, Starr, and Zapata Counties* provides one of the best accounts of the culture of South Texas’ pre-English era), and while her posthumously published narrative *Dew on the Thorn* is held together by a fictionalized plot, the individual incidents embedded in the narrative preserve Texas Mexican legends and folk traditions.

must not transplant 21st century conceptions of English being the exclusive language of instruction (barring some preschool and elementary bilingual education). When the land rush began, most existing rural schools – where they existed - were still taught in Spanish, often by teachers trained in Mexico (González, 1929, p. 87).

Emergence of Multilingualism along the Rio Grande

In spite of the ubiquity of Spanish prior to 1845, the region did harbor a few English L1s in the pre-annexation period, especially those who did not fit in elsewhere. One of the first English L1s in the Rio Grande Valley was John F. Webber and his African-American wife. In the 1830s, John Webber had fallen in love with a woman who happened to be a slave. He paid the owner and married her. Unfortunately, in the Texas of the 1830s, such a union was not considered acceptable. The couple's daughter was excluded from school, so John and his wife hired a private tutor. In 1839, when the tutor began to receive death threats, John decided to pick up stakes and move to the sparsely settled Mexican border, where racial prejudice was (at the time) not the monster it was north of the Nueces (Stambaugh, 1955, p. 118-119).

Webber was not the only newcomer. Among the isolated ranches along the river a few (mostly failed) European settlements sprang up along the river. The new colonies were composed of a polyglot of settlers who came first at the invitation of the Mexican government in the early 1830s, and later after the American invasion of Mexico, to the environs of border-guarding Fort Brown and Fort Ringgold.

Germans in the Texas of the Era of the Republic

As an example of the new European settlers, consider the case of John Charles Beales. From faraway England, without having once seen Mexico or Texas, the enterprising character

responded to the Mexican government's attempts to find settlers for its northern frontier. After a few failed negotiation attempts, he finally got terms worked out. He then promptly recruited a group of English, Germans, French, and even Poles to come to Coahuila y Texas with him in 1833. The settlement was a failure, but – at least linguistically – it was a glorious one. The adventures were recorded by a German from Weimar in a series of letters back home, warning them not to repeat his mistake (Ludecus, 1834, 2008).

This early German settler, Eduard Ludecus, was initially a Missouri-bound immigrant, at a time when Missouri and Texas were being targeted by many in the still-fragmented German states as a “New Germany” (Hawgood, 1940, p. 109-200; Raab and Wirrer, 2008, p.117-138, 787-810); but Ludecus was distracted to the Rio Grande in 1833-1834 as part of a multinational colony led by an Englishman in what was then still Mexico (Brister, introduction to Ludecus ix-xvii), several times in his letters described Spanish as “pretty,” (p. 39), “beautiful” (p. 204), and even “the most beautiful language” (p. 90)– although, in one instance, his choice of adjective seems to have been affected by his appreciation for a particularly attractive speaker (Ludecus, 1833/4, 2008, p. 204). As for English, in contrast: “The more I hear the language, the less I like it” (p. 39). The already German-French-Latin trilingual (p. xiii, x) Ludecus would learn both new languages in short order.

Though no linguist, Ludecus was an accomplished multilingual (German, French, English, and Spanish) had a keen interest in language, and his letters are full of observations about language, even when they are completely out of context. For instance, he interrupts a blow-by-blow account of a German ex-soldier's being beaten up by an English cook to make the completely unrelated observation that the German spoke French and Spanish (p. 96).

His amateur sociolinguistic notes corroborate the enormously multilingual atmosphere of early Matamoros (including then what would be Brownsville later), such as his observations on “a tanner from Matamoros who was...a most peculiar phenomenon. He knew Latin and spoke English, French, and Spanish with great fluency, and he claimed that he could speak also Italian and Portuguese. Before long he had picked up a few German words which he used probably a hundred times a day. He sang and whistled probably a couple of dozen French and Italian operatic airs....and [over Porter beer] recite[d] a few Spanish tragedies” (p. 238). Of a French aristocratic exile from the Revolution Ludecus remarks that he had learned but a single phrase in English after over thirty years in the New World, which is accounted for by the comment that “the French are famous for not learning foreign languages” (p. 238).

Once Texas had achieved independence, it became a magnet for German settlement, although most of this was far to the north of the Valley (Muenster, Fredericksburg, and New Braunsfels in particular). Still, the occasional German would arrive in Deep South Texas from the fatherland by way of Mexico. For instance, one Heinrich Portscheller, who was born in one of the German-speaking states in 1840, and arrived in Mexico in 1865 due to the fact that Maximilian, the Austrian archduke and self-styled emperor of Mexico, thought he and his friends would make a fine addition to the German-speaking imperialist’s forces. Portscheller and a friend, however, deserted the imperial army and instead fought as Mexican soldiers under Mariano Escobedo during the 1866 battle of Santa Gertrudis. In the postwar period Portscheller migrated into the Rio Grande Valley, laboring as a brick mason not only in Mexico’s Mier, but also in Rio Grande City and Roma. He married a Mexican (Leonarda Campos, of Mier) and became an American citizen, but Ann Washington recalls that he never really learned his wife’s language or that of his adopted country, blaming this on the thoroughly bilingual environment

that complicated the German's learning English or Spanish (Anne Washington, *Rio Grande Roundup*, 92-94). The result was "a lack of verbal fluency" that "made him taciturn, and he had the reputation of being somewhat reclusive" (p. 94). Taciturn or not, he continued bricking in the Laredo area until 1915 (Washington, 1980, *Speaking shadows*, p. 94-96).

French in 1800s South Texas

France's place in Texas' "six flags" seems a little more well-earned once one realizes that French families continued to arrive even after French colonial ambitions in the region were over. A few French immigrants started arriving as early as 1833, along with the Americans and other foreigners, as Mexico was recruiting to settle its northern frontier.⁶ Later on, the French Oblate Fathers were crucial to religious life of the early Valley, as priests like Jean Horeau, Henri Janvier, Francois Bugnard, and Jean-Baptiste Bretault rode the length of the Valley to minister to



Figure 1: Capilla de La Lomita, the "mission" for which the nearby city of Mission, Texas, is named.

(Photo: Aaron Cummings)

the rural populace (although they did so in Spanish and most took Spanish names; Bretault became Juan de la Costa, for example) (Fort and Mission Hist. Soc., 2009, p. 12). Mission, Texas, in fact, is built on land purchased in part from the French priests, and the town's name derives from the Oblate chapel at La Lomita (Fort and Mission Hist. Soc., 2009, p. 7-8).-

Brownsville, Language Laboratory

While the rest of the Rio Grande (with the exception of Forts Brown, Ringgold and McIntosh arrayed along the river) would remain mostly Spanish-speaking until 1904, Brownsville diversified linguistically early, and with a vengeance. The process started across the river, as the Matamoros mercantile scene attracted ambitious characters from around the world, including a certain cabin boy from Northern Ireland who would give his family's name to Hidalgo County's largest city, McAllen. As the brand-new Texas city Brownsville began to take up the mantle of regional leadership, Mexico, Garza and Long (2010, Brownsville TX) record just how diverse the city became:

The 1850 census showed a population of 519, two-thirds of whom were from the states along the Atlantic seaboard; most of the remainder were Mexican, Irish, French, English, and German. The culture of the town reflected the cosmopolitan character of its inhabitants: a large number of the early residents had previously lived in Mexico and many had absorbed Mexican customs and practices. Because of Brownsville's extensive trade network and large European contingent, a large percentage of the residents were fluent in several languages, including Spanish, English, French, and German (Garza and Long, 2010).

After the initial post-1845 settlement, the region received another economic jolt in the form of the American Civil War: from 1861-1865 as Southern cotton flowed out of nearby Bagdad, Mexico, to escape the Union blockade. Unfortunately for the success of this South Texan linguistic laboratory, subsequent events would destroy Brownsville's chances of becoming a world city. In 1881, railroad connections between Corpus Christi and Laredo-Nuevo Laredo bypassed the seaport Brownsville-Matamoros, and with the re-routing of trade came the redeployment not only of foreign capital but also of foreign languages. (Hinojosa, 1983, p. 117-118) Nevertheless, in the first fifty years of Texas statehood Brownsville was a cosmopolitan destination for immigrants from all over Europe. Let the following examples illustrate.



Figure 2: Palo Alto battlefield near Brownsville (8 May 1845 – first major battle of U.S 1845-1848 invasion of Mexico. (Photo: Aaron Cummings)

One person who reveals the multilingualism endemic to Brownsville prior to the land rush (by which I mean that virtually all newcomers prior to the Midwesterners of the early 1900s learned the local language, Spanish) is the French L1 Joseph Kleiber, born in 1833 in then-German-controlled Alsace-Lorraine. His letters, stored at the University of Texas, reveal a trilingual person capable of writing in French, English, and Spanish. Logically enough for a French L1, he first moved to New Orleans, where he married an English L1 wife (Emma Henrietta Butler), the daughter of a resident of Port Isabel in South Texas. Soon, the couple moved to Emma's native South Texas. It is likely that he learned Spanish when he and many other South Texas immigrants uncomfortable with the Confederacy's goals fled to Matamoros during the Civil War to avoid having to fight for a pro-slavery country. Kleiber likely nourished his new Spanish as a railroad man in Brownsville, where he lived until economic reverses shortly before his death in 1877 forced him to move to Austin (Gilbert, 1980, p. 129-138).

One Brownsville Franco-American family, the Brulays, provided to be quite adept language learners. The mother, Marie Eugenia Boesch, fled her home in Alsace-Lorraine after the Prussian takeover of that province in 1871 and ended up in Matamoros, Mexico. The father, Peter Brulay, was a Parisian who had run away to sea at the age of 14, and stuck on the American continent after a shipwreck near Cartagena. A series of jobs moved him up the coast to Matamoros. The pair got married in Brownsville in 1876. As for the five Brulay children (George Jr., Eugenia, Louis, Jeanne and Maurice), they spoke only French at home, but "Spanish soon became their second language" (Magee, 1975, p. 79).

The family added English as well. Once Mr. Brulay had made his fortune in the local sugar industry, he "donated a building on the ranch for a one-room country school" where his Franco-Mexican-American kids (and others) received their first instruction in English (Magee,

1975, p. 82). When the family “regretfully” transferred from their ranch home to a city house in Brownsville in 1891, “the paramount reason for the change was to give the children opportunity to perfect their English.” (Magee, 1975, p. 84).

English in Brownsville

The U.S. Army brought English permanently to the area in 1845 with establishment of Fort Texas, renamed Fort Brown after the fort’s commander Jacob Brown was killed in its defense in the opening scene of the Mexican-American War. A town grew up around the fort, and inside the town a bilingual (but English L1-dominated) culture developed.

The Old Guard’s Last Stand: The Cortina Wars

The fact of multiple languages in Brownsville does not mean the area was a symbol of interethnic, inter-language harmony. Rather, it must be kept in mind that much of this diversity came at the expense of the previously dominant group: the Spanish L1s of Mexican Texas. As might be expected in a city raised round a U.S. Army outpost (Ft. Brown) wrested from the grazing land belonging to Matamoros during the American invasion of 1845, tensions between the old Mexican landholders and the newcomers flashed early. In the 1850s, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina led a ferocious but ultimately doomed rebellion against the American arrivals who had cost him his land and (in the final straw) the life of one of his men at the hands of the law.

At the Turn of the Century

In spite of such unrest, before 1900 traditional structures in the Valley could be characterized as slowly evolving rather than being obliterated – while Cortina and others lost land, many of the newcomers simply moved to the top of the existing social order, rather than

attempting to obliterate the status quo. The new American arrivals mostly learned Spanish, many (McAllen, Brewster, Box, and more) married into Mexican-Texan families, and settled into the established patterns of South Texas ranch life. The era of mass citrus production was undreamed-of: “The only cultivated areas were on John Closner’s sugar farm and patches of sugar cane and corn grown by the Mexicans in old resaca beds” (Maddox, 1955, p. 46). Even as the rest of Texas entered the modern industrial age of big farming and big industry, it seemed that a quiet ranching future awaited the southern tip of Texas (see Stambaugh, 1953, p. 142, for a list of the prominent ranches in the region as of 1860).

After the Railroad: Population Explosion and Language Transformation After 1904

The product coming from John Closner’s sugar plantation, however, had alerted the rest of the American agricultural scene to the Valley’s pecuniary potential. Around 1900 the American Rio Grande Land And Irrigation Company conceived a plan to transform the upriver ranchland into irrigated farmland and connect the railroad (which reached only to Alice) to Brownsville. Goldsby Goza describes with admirable concision the chain reaction that followed: “The developers were fully aware that irrigation would be unprofitable if there was no way to get the produce to distant markets; hence the railroad. Production required producers; hence the intensive recruitment of land buyers from the Midwest. Coordination of the operation required central facilities; hence the town [Mercedes, Texas; but the same applies to most towns along the railroad]” (Goza, 2010, American Rio Grande).

The developers’ plans succeeded. After years of the tip of Texas being accessible from the north only over wagon trails or by sea, the St. Louis-Brownsville-Mexico railroad was completed in 1904. Almost overnight, the old ranching economy became untenable. As the iron horse crisscrossed South Texas on a rapidly expanding spider web of wood and iron, towns grew

up along the stops and depots. The addition of paved highways from 1921 onwards (Stambaugh, 1955, p. 231) completed the previously isolated area's integration into the commercial and linguistic zone of the United States. A pattern that had struck the rest of Texas around 1880 finally reached the state's southernmost tip some thirty to forty years later (De León, 1993, 2009, p. 57).

The transformation of the region was total. After the original connection to Brownsville was made, additional connections were made to the rest of the Valley. Men like T.J. Hooks, influential in the founding of Donna, often paid a high bonus to attract the railroad to their property, knowing that the investment would pay off. Land was bought by the mile (not always ethically) and was sold by the acre. For instance, Edinburg politician A. Y. Baker was accused of having used his connections to buy school district land for \$3 per acre and then, once the town grew, having turned around and sold the same units for \$50 (Amberson, J; Amberson, M.; and McAllen, Kindle Loc. 13736). Promoters aggressively promoted a "Magic Valley" to northern farmers tired of frost and short growing seasons. The result was that the old ranching culture that Jovita González had described largely faded away. Near Brownsville, Juan Nepumuceno Cortina had already faced this threat in the mid-1800s when the old rural area north of Matamoros urbanized to become Brownsville and the old order lashed out the rebellion. Now, half a century later, the same fate was befalling western Cameron, Hidalgo, and what would become Willacy county as the developers – backed by outside money that the old elite of South Texas could compete with – simply bought out much of the entire region. Again, a backlashed developed; in 1915, the Plan de San Diego and the era of the bandit troubles (1914-1918) marked an era of open conflict between the Mexican-Texan ranchers and the Anglo-American invaders. The fighting flared quickly because Mexico itself was already torn apart by the Revolution (1910-

1918), and forces loyal to Venustiano Carranza and Pancho Villa operated on the American side as well. The Plan itself, which called on people's *Ejército Liberador de las Razas y del Pueblo* to drive the Americans to the Nueces and kill all who remained, was never set into motion because a rebel leader, Basilio Ramos, was betrayed and arrested when he set foot in McAllen (see the interview with journalist Lloyd Glover, p. 202). However, in the general spirit of unrest, a railroad was blown up and a series of battles between "bandits" and elements of the U.S. Army and Texas Rangers took place near Sebastian, Brownsville, Norias, and Mission (Hernández, 1997, p. 227-228; see the Minnie N. Millikan interview, p. 184, for the first-hand account of a 15-year old schoolteacher who woke up to a firefight near the Ojo de Agua schoolhouse, where in October 1915 twenty-five *sediciosos* attacked the fifteen or sixteen men of an Army signal group, a fray that led to the deaths of three soldiers and five raiders).⁷ Along with actual politically motivated fighting, there was general mayhem that struck Tejanos and Anglos alike (Johnson, 2003). Bilingual James Ballí McAllen, son of Spanish L1 heiress Salomé Ballí, died apparently of a nervous breakdown a year after successfully repelling an attack on the family ranch house (Amberson, M.; Amberson, J.; and McAllen, Kindle Loc. 9509-9553). By the time it was said and done, a Senate investigative panel found that the episodes had cost 550 American dead and substantial economic destruction from late 1910 through 1919 (Amberson, M.; Amberson, J.; and McAllen, 2014, Kindle Loc. 9487). To make matters worse, the Texas Rangers exacted a bloody vengeance in which as many as 5,000 Mexican-Texans – men, women, and children - died as the Rangers shot first and asked questions later. (Johnson, 2003, p. 120). In fact, even by the lowest, most pro-Ranger estimates, "a Tejano in south Texas was more likely to 'disappear' [during the 'border troubles' of the 1910s] than a citizen of Argentina during that country's infamous 'Dirty Wars' of the 1970s" (Johnson, 2003, p. 120). The human

⁷ Fifteen, according to Harris and Sadler, 2004, p. 292-293; sixteen, according to Stambaugh, 1953, p. 215).

tragedy in terms of lives lost was unspeakable, but linguists would note that the damage done to English-Spanish language community relations during the next few decades was also incalculable. Many Anglo-American settlers realized soon afterwards that what had happened – from draconian hangings and unlawful lynchings to unlawful arrests and Ranger killings - made them “ashamed” (p. 70), and there were some attempts at reconciliation (Chatelle, 1948, p. 21); however, as will be seen from the interviews, many hard feelings remained. For an example, listen to Spanish L1 John (Juan) Rutoskey’s lengthy discussion of the hard feelings among the Mexican-American ranch hands who worked the ranches near Harlingen and Kingsville toward Anglos (John Rutoskey interview).⁸ From a sociolinguistic perspective, the hard feelings led to one more block in conversation between language communities. As a lifelong Los Fresnos resident recalled in 1948, “we carefully refrained from mentioning the subject of bandits...as it is always a delicate subject”; any such “untactful reference...could have changed our pleasant interview from one of the frankest in details to one of general evasiveness” (Chatelle, 1948, p. 54). In SLA terms (see p. 87), these conditions were a barrier both to having a positive affect⁹ toward the other language, as well as reducing the chances for hearing the other language spoken in friendly context.

In the end, while the bloodshed temporarily scared away immigrants, the influx of (English L1) soldiers and the terrorization of the existing Mexican-American (Spanish L1) population ultimately led to the rapid growth of the new Anglo-American (English L1) population. Groups of investors bought and sold vast portions of Texas to tens of thousands of small farmers. These entrepreneurs’ names are still carved on the urban landscape: street names

⁸ This long portion was not transcribed in this text due to space considerations, but is available for listening via the UTRGV Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection.

⁹ *Affect* is a second language acquisition term that describes how a person’s emotional response to hearing another language or to the environment in which the other language is used may help or block that individual’s learning of that language.

like Conway, Shary, and Bentsen (in Mission); and Sprague, Closner, and McColl (in Edinburg/McAllen) recall the developers who made (and in Conway's case, lost) fortunes in the heady days of the land rush. Together, these new arrivals turned the Valley into a close-packed string of towns that lived off an agricultural empire exporting onions and sugar, oranges and grapefruit. Nor is the imperial metaphor too far from the mark: King George IV, king of England and monarch of the British Empire, received a grapefruit from Mission's citrus magnate John Shary (in 2015, this letter could be viewed in the lobby of the John H. Shary room in the University of Texas – Pan American Library).

To illustrate the enormity of the sea change, just consider the census data from the period, particularly Hidalgo county. (As we have already seen, Cameron's influx began in 1848, and as for Starr, it falls into the category of upriver traditional Spanish regions that largely resisted the English invasion.) The Middle Valley, however – from Harlingen/San Benito to Mission along U.S. 83 – was completely swamped by the invasion of the "homeseekers." Keep in mind that Hidalgo spun off Willacy in 1920, so adding together the numbers for those two counties in 1930 shows just how much the population in the Hidalgo-Willacy area in particular had exploded: from 6,837 in 1900 to 90,234 just thirty years later – thirteen people in 1930 for every one in 1900 (Forstall , 1996, p. 153-160).

Table 1: Rio Grande Valley Counties Total Population (Source: Forestall, 1996, p. 153-160).

	Cameron	Hidalgo	Starr	Willacy
1890	14,424	6,534	10,749	N/A.
1900	16,095	6,837	11,469	N/A
1910	27,158	13,728	13,151	N/A
1920	36,662	38,110	11,089	10,499
1930	77,540	77,004	11,409	13,230

At this early stage, most of the new northern arrivals mostly spoke English, while the existing Tejano population (as well as numbers of refugees from Mexico) spoke Spanish. This bifurcated situation simplifies linguistic analysis compared to today’s more complicated linguistic-demographic calculus. Remember: bilingualism depends on extended language contact, but with the exception of the fort towns (Brownsville and Rio Grande City), in 1904 the two linguistic communities were just getting to know each other – leading to a naturally high rate both of English (and, in areas without schools, Spanish) monolingualism, and a greater divide between language communities than would ever be possible in today’s interconnected Valley cities. In this situation (as we will see in the interviews) bilingualism was a powerful advantage, especially for the middle class (as Lastra de Suarez points out [1992, p. 445] bilingualism helps the middle-to-elite classes more than the working class, whose nonstandard versions of both languages are often stigmatized).

From looking at the census data on persons born in Mexico (“white persons born in Mexico” in census parlance) versus those born in the U.S. (“native born” for the census takers) for 1890-1920, one can understand the various origins of the land rushers. Two things stand out.

First, one gets a taste of the extent to which Spanish L1s from the neighboring republic were revitalizing the Spanish spoken in the border counties. Second, in spite of this, a comparison of this chart with the total population figures above indicates that the sheer numbers of new Americans were tipping the balance irresistibly in the direction of English.

Table 2: Persons Born in Mexico, 1890-1920¹⁰ (Source: US Census, 1890-1930)

	Cameron	Hidalgo	Starr	Willacy
1890	5,403	2,782	5,126	N/A.
1900	4,906	2,366	4,262	N/A
1910	8,617	5,202	3,444	N/A
1920	9914	14,601	2,886	183
1930	Data omitted because in the 1930 census, <i>“For the first and only time, “Mexican” was listed as a race. Enumerators were to record all persons who had been born in Mexico or whose parents had been born in Mexico and who did not fall into another racial category as “Mexican”</i> ” (U.S. Census. 1930. History; see also Truesdale, p. 27). Since this is a one-off categorization it presents some problems of data interpretation.			

One potential problem with the above data is that Texas has always struggled to accurately count the oft-transient population arriving from south of the Rio Grande. Even in the 2010s sober South Texas journalists recognize that the border counties still struggle with getting Spanish L1s counted in the census (MacLaggan, 2013). Suffice it to say that if the numbers in the table need revision, the correction would be in the direction of higher numbers.

¹⁰ Note: Census term: *White Persons*. There was no separate *Hispanic* category for these years.

Nevertheless, even if there were a possibly deflated count of individuals of Mexican extraction on the census, it would not change the fact that the size of the rapid rise in the U.S.-born population is so great that it could not possibly have been due to natural increase among the Texas-born Spanish-speaking population alone. Many of the new people in the county must have come from elsewhere in the United States. This is supported by comments from the interviewees that hint that the relative proportion of the English L1 population was higher in the 1930s than it had been before (see Munger interview, p. 114) or is now. So then, if the bulk of this growth was not due to immigration from the Spanish-speaking south, it must have come from the English-speaking (and occasionally German- or Swedish-speaking) north. The language landscape and demography of the region had changed drastically in a very short span of time.

Knowledge of English among Early 1900s South Texans

Since we have already seen that the American-born Spanish L1 population was quite large one must go beyond place-of-birth data to determine proportion of people in the area who were not part of the new English-language community. Here the researcher encounters a major difficulty. It can be difficult to find precise numbers for Spanish and English speakers for the land rush period. Before 1890 the U.S. had census collected no language data whatsoever (Balesta, Martínez, and Moyna, 2008, p. 64), and even for several decades after that the only questions involved either (1) the mother tongue of *immigrants*, meaning that the many *native* South Texan Spanish-speakers would have remained invisible (U.S Census Bureau, 2012, *Historical census statistics on the foreign-born*), or the (2) “whether or not respondents were able to speak English” question was asked in 1890 and 1910 only of those who did not speak English – meaning that the many South Texas bilinguals would have again remained invisible. The wealth of language facts that can be found via the modern census did not begin to be

collected until 1970. So, since in most of the censuses that cover our period of interest “the only language question asked was mother tongue and it was generally asked only of the foreign born” (Siegel, Martin, and Bruno, 2001, p.1) the census can provide hints but little in the way of solid answers. However, Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna (2008) analyzed the 1910 census data (the only census from the 1900-1940 period to include knowledge of English as a question) for Texas and found that “non-English speaking Tejanos out-numbered English-speaking Tejanos by margins of as much as four to one.” (2008, p. 64). Balestra et al.’s finding forces us to keep in mind that the data in the above chart (p. 37) is potentially misleading, since the immigration numbers exclude the Spanish L1s who already lived in the region. Spanish L1 Tejanos will be given a voice by several Texan Spanish monolinguals in the oral history interviews: Josefina Ibañez Acosta (of La Grulla, p. 251), Isabel Loya and José María (of McAllen, p. 154), and the anonymous woman on the Lilia Ramos tape (from Rio Grande City, p. 171).

Situation of Spanish and English in the Early 1900s Lower Rio Grande Valley

Rapid Growth of the English L1 Population

Spanish L1s of early twentieth-century South Texas lived in an era of extremely rapid change in the region. One such change was urbanization. To say that cities like McAllen, Edinburg, and Harlingen date back only to the first decade of the 1900s is true in the strict sense, but the land rush was not happening in unexplored territory. Many of the new cities grew up on what had originally been a great ranch, but subdivision among heirs and the economic magnet of the ranch had served to create a populated area. Into this scene stepped developers who bought up enormous portions of South Texas, subdivided them, and then sold them to (often out-of-state) farmers and “home seekers.” The result was a chain reaction that led to the rapid

urbanization of the Valley, with cities appearing all along the old river and new railroads. One example is the McAllen-Edinburg metro, built on the former land of the Ballí family. The heiress to an enormous Spanish royal land grant, Salomé Ballí, had married first John Young, for whose Scottish hometown Edinburg is named, and then at his death married Young's business partner John McAllen, now the namesake of Hidalgo County's largest city. The resulting town was incorporated in 1911 after 1,000 people moved to the location of the old McAllen town site of 1904, an earlier failure to create a town on the McAllen-Ballí family's ranch land (Amberson, M.; McAllen, J., and McAllen, 2014, Kindle Loc. 8589). Next door to McAllen, Mission (est. 1907 by developers John Conway and J.W. Hoit) was built on land bought from the French missionary order whose La Lomita Mission Chapel gave the town its name (Fort and Mission Historical Museum, 2009, p. 85).

As the newcomers arrived, there were two great engines pushing the land boom. The first was the military. In 1916 the arrival of 17,000 U.S. Army soldiers chasing bandits, in particular one José Doroteo Arango Arámbula (a.k.a. Pancho Villa), sparked growth in McAllen. Many of these soldiers of 1916-1917 (they were called away at the outbreak of World War I) were from New York state (Gilbert, 1975, Valley Place-Names, p. 3-26).¹¹ This sudden influx of (English L1) temporary residents - and their paychecks – led to the development of McAllen in a (temporarily) primarily English L1 environment (See the Edna Dubois interview, p 127, for one example).

The second, even more important reason was the agricultural revolution that transformed the region into a citrus-producing paradise – at least, that is what the promoters said, and the slogans worked. The citrus boom was so intense that “by 1945, there were more than 6 million

¹¹ See the Edna Dubois interview, p. 127, for a New Hampshire army arrival in McAllen.

citrus trees in Hidalgo county” (Fort and Mission Historical Museum, 2009, p. 85).

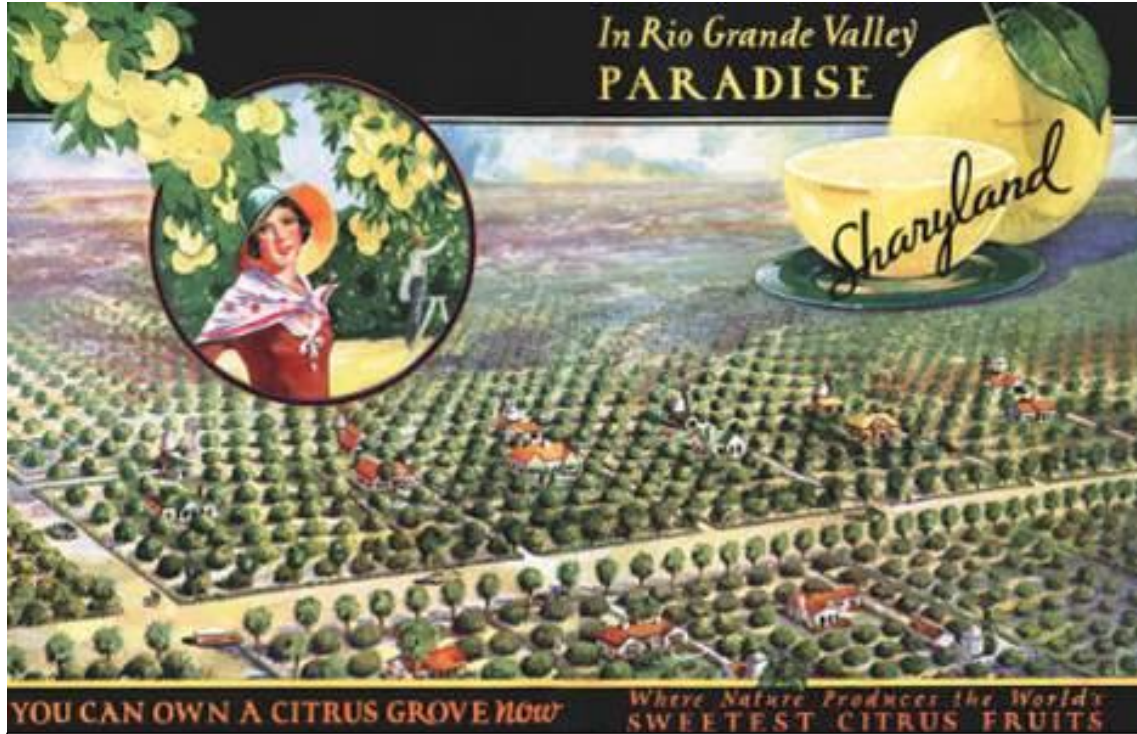


Figure 3 Sharyland Citrus advertisement, 1915.

(Photo credit: John H. Shary Collection, University of Texas – Pan American). Used by permission.

The new towns’ names reflect the overwhelmingly northern, or at least non-Spanish, extraction of their founders. In Mission, for instance, John Conway (president of the Mission Land Improvement Company) was born in Wisconsin to Irish immigrants, while John Shary (founder of the Texas Fruit Growers Exchange that sparked growth across the Mission region) was Nebraska-born to Czech immigrant parents (Fort and Mission Historical Museum, 2009, p. 18; 81). Even some apparently Spanish-sounded city names are actually named after English L1s; San Juan was named for John Closner’s ranch, while San Benito takes its moniker from one Benjamin Hicks (Chatelle, 1948, p. 29, 36). A full account of all the towns foundings would require more space than is available in this account, but the chart below summarizes the more important cities. Notice the preponderance of towns beginning in 1904 or thereafter, as the railroad connected to new stations and the land rush brought settlers to the tiny railroad towns.

Table 3: Rio Grande Valley Urbanization.

<p>Rio Grande Valley Urbanization: Towns along the Rio Grande and the Railroad Tracks from Starr County to the Gulf Coast</p>		<p><i>The following is a simplified reconciliation of information from Stambaugh (1956), the Handbook of Texas Online (2010), Fort and MHS (2009), Simons and Hoyt (2006), and the Valley By-Liners (1975-1982); to conserve space, some important details – additional towns, the land grants on which the towns were built - have been omitted, so a consultation of the above resources will be advisable for the interested researcher.</i></p>
<p>Principal cities that were founded as result of 1900s land rush to Rio Grande Valley; most towns did not spring up <i>ex nihilo</i> in the wild, but involved interests buying up large chunks of ranchland and selling it for agricultural development, leading to the urbanization of existing rural ranching communities.</p>		
Alamo	1902-1909	J.P. Blalock (of the Blalock colony in Mexico) first founded Ebenezer in the area, but lack of water led to a new location named Swallow, then Alamo, under the leadership of Alamo Land and Sugar Company.
Alton	1911	Named after Illinois-based Alton Railroad Company
Combes	1904	Dr. Joe Combes, a Brownsville surgeon
Donna	1904	Built on the Llano Grande royal land grant; named after Donna Fletcher.
Edcouch	1926	Named after Ed Couch
Edinburg	1908	Originally Chapin, TX, for Judge Chapin of Sherman, TX; in 1911, the named was changed to Edinburg for John Young's Scottish hometown.
Hargill	1926	W.A. Harding and Lamar Gill
Harlingen	1904	Named for Lon C. Hill's relatives in the Dutch city Von Harlingen
La Blanca	1904	Named for and developed by the La Blanca Land company.
La Feria	1908	Settlement sprang up on the La Feria royal land grant.
Lasara	1920s	Laura Harding and Sara Gill
Lyford	1904	William Lyford of the Chicago and Eastern Illinois railroad
McAllen	1904-1911	When the railroad reached the McAllen's Santa Anita Ranch in 1904, John McAllen set up a company to create the town, but delays and competing developers led to competing East and West McAllens before the town finally was incorporated in 1911.
Mercedes	1904	Built on the Llano Grande royal land grant; possibly named after Mercedes, wife of Mexico's then-president Porfirio Díaz
Mercedes	1904	Origin of name debated; some say after Porfirio Diaz' wife Mercedes.
Mission	1908	Early developers were John Conway and John Shary, who irrigated the area and promoted it for citrus farming; Name suggested by Rose Voltz, inspired by the nearby Mission La Lomita of the French Oblate Fathers
Monte Alto	1926	Railroad line built through the area, but few people or businesses showed up, and the area has remained sparsely populated
Norias	1904	Allegedly named for politician Jim Wells (a <i>noria</i> is a windmill-driven well)
Olmito	1904	Spanish for "Elm Grove"; founded when railroad built to spot
Pharr	1909-11	H.N. Pharr and other sugar producers started bought the land; it was settled by 1911
Raymondville	1904	Captain Raymond (Manager of El Sauz portion of the King Ranch)

San Benito	1904	Went through several names before being named for landowner Benjamin Hicks
San Carlos	1927	Small former rail station and present-day <i>colonia</i> east of Edinburg
San Juan	1906	John Closner's San Juan Plantation, named by Mrs. Closner.
Sebastian	1904	first Stillman, later renamed after John Sebastian of Rock Island RR lines
Sullivan City	1925	rancher Captain Ed. Sullivan
Weslaco	1920	W. E. Stewart Land Company
Yturrias	1904	Francisco Yturrias, Matamoros businessman; built on new railroad line

Table 4: Towns Pre-Existing the Land Rush

Cities along the Rio Grande from Starr County to the Gulf Coast that existed as towns before the land rush (this list does NOT include the many ranches that dotted the area).		
Brownsville	1845	Grazing commons of Matamoros; the Texas town grew up around Fort Brown (est. 1845 as American outpost at the beginning of the 1845-48 war.)
Camargo (Mex)	1749	Founded by Escandón's colonists.
Carricitos	1789	Settlement grew up around the Concepción de Carricitos land grant.
Elsa	pre 1800	Area settled by Mexican ranchers before 1800; later, during the land rush, named after Elsa George, a landowner's wife.
Havana	1767	Adjacent to La Joya/Mission, the first settlers built on land granted to José Matías Tijerina by the Spanish crown.
Hidalgo	1749	Area first settled by Escandón's colonists and known as La Habitación; ¹² in 1852 the Scottish immigrant John Young (and husband of Salome Balli) developed the area and named it Edinburgh; the name switched to Hidalgo in 1885.
La Grulla	1780s	Old Spanish town.
La Joya	1774	Ranch from the Spanish era that grew into a town along with Mission.
La Villa	1750	Settled by Mexican ranchers c. 1750 and incorporated by the land rush farmers in 1907.
Laguna Vista	<i>uncertain</i>	This coastal area saw intermittent use since the first European exploration of the region in the 1500s. Circa 1800 pirate Jean Lafitte dug a well here.
Los Fresnos	1770	An old ranch (Rancho Los Fresnos) dates back to 1700s; incorporated as a town during the land rush (in 1915 by Lon C. Hill).
Mier (Mex)	1753	Settled by Escandón's settlers, who built this new town downriver from Camargo; originally named Villa del Paso del Cántaro.
Peñitas	1530/ 1682	Regardless of which of the conflicting sources is correct (dates for first settlement vary by more than a century), most accounts agree that Peñitas is the oldest town in South Texas (or all of Texas, if the 1530 date is correct); it was settled by early Spanish explorers and Indians.
Port Isabel	1788-1828	Near the old port of Brazos Santiago on Brazos Island; in 1828, Rafael Garcia settled it as Potrero de Santa Isabel; in 1845, it became Point Isabel.

¹² See Maria Brewster Castillo interview, p. 102.

Progreso/ Toluca Ranch	1880	Toluca Ranch founded in the area in 1880. The post office that arrived in 1901 was named Progreso – and the present-day town, located by the Progreso border crossing, that has taken that name.
Reynosa (Mex)	1749	Founded by Escandón’s settlers.
Rio Grande City	1762	Settlement dates back to José Antonio de la Garza Falcón (one of Escandón’s lieutenants) and his Rancho Carnestolendas; after 1846, the site of Fort Ringgold.
Roma / Los Saenz (TX) / Ciudad Miguel Aleman (Mex)	1760s	Roma, Los Saenz, and the Mexican city on the other bank (originally San Pedro de Roma, now Ciudad Miguel Aleman) have gone through many name changes, but appear to have been original settled under the direction the Saenz family (some of Escandón’s settlers from Mier).
Santa Maria	c. 1750	Village established by Escandón's colonists.

Table 5: Ghost Towns of the Land Rush

Ghost Towns – The following towns / areas are mentioned in the interviews, but no longer exist.	
Del Mar	A vacation or resort spot for Mexican ranchers before the land rush period, a tiny town had sprung up in the 1940s. Del Mar did not last long; it was deserted in the early 1950s and the area is now within the confines of Brazos Island State Park.
Run	South of present-day Donna, Run was developed by some of the first English L1s settlers in the area starting in 1898. With the building of the railroad to Donna, Run became irrelevant.
Sam Fordyce	Railroad terminal town near present-day Sullivan City; gave its name to the Sam Fordyce extension running west through the Upper Valley towns. (see Edna Dubois interview)
Stockholm	The site of Swedish settlement; the land was bought in 1912 and settled in 1914, but by 1985 the area was deserted.

Donna, Sample Town

For a more in-depth sample of how these Valley communities formed, consider Donna, Texas. Just before 1900s, a group of investors would get together, raise capital, buy a large chunk of cheap land, and then give the railroad incentives to connect to their town. With the Sam

Fordyce extension, railroads soon reached a long ways south and inland from the original connections in Alice (the southernmost terminus in 1898) and Brownsville (1903). In 1955 Donna resident Winnie Maddox described the financial dealings behind her town:

T.J. Hooks, J.B. Hooks, A.F. Hester, T.F. Selman, W.H. Wickline, W.W. Cruse,...J.S. Price, C.W. Fletcher and W.H. Turner...[all East Texans from Hardin or Jefferson Counties] formed the La Blanca Agricultural Company with \$100,000 capital stock.¹³ They bought 23,000 acres fronting the river and extending two miles east and two miles west of the present side of Donna. It reached northward for eighteen miles, including the present site of La Blanca. John Closner held an option on the land which John McAllen had sold him for one dollar an acre. The Agricultural Company bought it for a price averaging one dollar twenty-five cents per acre....Hooks bought 10,000 additional acres for two dollars an acre (Maddox 47).

As can be seen, the English language and financial capital had arrived hand-in-hand in South Texas.

New Money and the Displacement of Established Bilingual Ranching Families

As this transformation occurred, one major problem for the established Spanish L1s was that law and market manipulation worked to dispossess farmers and ranchers who were land rich but money poor. As railroads increased the value of the land, many found themselves no longer able to pay taxes and lawyer fees on land that was still being used for the same purpose as centuries ago but in the eyes of revenue collectors had appreciated rapidly (Montejano, 1987, p.

¹³ Maddox's footnote references J. L. Allhands. (1931). *Gringo builders*. (Joplin, MO: Privately Printed) p. 124.

50-74). In 1898 ranchland in the Valley inland from Brownsville was “selling for seventy-five cents to three dollars an acre” (Maddox 45-46). To take just one instance of the rapid appreciation, by 1917 the present location of Weslaco was being sold to the W.E. Stewart Land Company for “ninety dollars an acre” (Garza, 2010, Weslaco). (See the interview with George Strohmeyer, p. 219, for an example of land bought off a tax default, and the Elias Cavazos interview, p. 109, for land given up for lawyer fees.) Capitalists from the rest of the United States with renewable assets were eager to snap up old Spanish grantee families’ land whenever the latter had to sell their only asset – pieces of Texas – for survival money. To be sure, the process did not affect only Mexican-Americans: Even Jim Wells, one of the leaders of the old bilingual ranching order, found himself forced to sell off land (Johnson 2003). Still, since the Spanish L1s or bilingual families (such as the McAllen-Ballís, Casares, Cavazos-Box, and Brewster families, see interviews p. 194, 109, and 102) were the original grantees, they had the most to lose, and often did. The result, from a purely linguistic point of view, was the displacement of a Spanish L1 elite by a new English L1 capitalist class, as shown by such indicators as the surnames of landowners in Cameron County on the eve of the land rush (1,238,865 acres under non-Spanish names versus 319,066 acres still in the hands of Spanish families; Montejano 1987, p. 73). Indeed, this land transfer was the hidden loss even before the land rush began – after all, the land had to be bought up before speculators could sell it off. This also happened in Hidalgo County. Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna’s research shows that Mexican-Texan families were “83.5% of landholders in 1852.” By 1900, when the speculators were just waiting for the railroads to show up to make a killing, the percentage of Mexican-Texan land owners among those who stood to profit from land sales was only 29% (Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna, 2008, p. 53).

Spanish Language Maintenance

In spite of the influx of English over the years, the Rio Grande Valley remains a Spanish-filled place, as two minutes on any South Texas street and a glance at the “language spoken at home” data from the 2010 U.S. census makes clear (ranging from 75% non-English in Cameron to 95% in Starr counties; see figure on p. 53 for complete statistics across the Valley). What was it like for the Spanish L1s who soldiered on, keeping their language alive north of the Rio Bravo to the present day (although, admittedly, with the help of continued influxes of the language from south of the border)?

Just as we saw earlier the factors that kept South Texas a Spanish-speaking region from 1848 to 1904, there were a series of factors that kept Spanish vibrant in the English-Spanish bilingual region that emerged after the twentieth century dawned. In fact, many of the same factors – proximity to a Spanish-speaking country, a continuous influx of Spanish L1s from Mexico and Central America, and an abundance Texan Spanish heritage language speakers – continue to work in South Texas today. The connection of the region to the outside world led to a corresponding upgrade in private Spanish schools for the Spanish L1 middle class and *élite*.¹⁴ We will meet one informal Spanish summer school teacher in the Santos Cardoza interview (p.218), but more formal institutions were created as well. In Mission, Texas, the Colegio Fronterizo was established by Samuel J. Treviño and his wife. Mrs. Treviño was 90 when a trilogy of books by local amateur historians was being collected, and she gave the date of the school’s foundation as 1913. “It taught business and academic courses, music, English and

¹⁴ See page 218 for the rest of the story: as we will see, the presence of a few private schools did not mean that quality, affordable education – in English or Spanish – was widely available to the rank and file until some time after 1900.

Spanish. A bilingual education program this early in Mission? Under the auspices of the Mexican Consulate, a well stocked Library was established” (Barrera, 1975, p. 62).

In addition, South Texas played a rather key role in the Latin American intellectual life of this period. Frequent unrest in Mexico meant that early 1900s South Texas served as a refuge for many exiled Mexican intellectuals, leading to the continued revitalization of Spanish writing in the area. Highly educated men from Mexico wrote revolutionary publications intended for distribution south of the Rio Grande. For instance, a number of Mexican intellectuals lived as exiles in South Texas during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and did substantial work in the Valley. For example, the philosopher José Vasconcelos and the historian and playwright Nemecio García Naranjo, among others, visited and taught at Mission’s new Colegio Fronterizo in Spanish of course. The activity of literati in turn led to the creation of Spanish-language fora such as the La Paz Theater in Mission and the publication of El Porvenir newspaper beginning in 1913 or 1914 (Barrera, 1975, p. 62-63).

Further, the overlay of the new towns did not mean that the old Spanish-L1 ranching families went away. In Mission, for example, the heirs of the original *porciones* -- Cavazos, Guerra, Longoria, Vela, and Cardenas -- continued to live in the area and were highly influential in the development of the town. They started many businesses, including the first grocery store in Mission. While many lost their land over time (65), their influence in the area remained significant (Barrera, 1975, p. 60-65).

Take, for instance, the case of Cayetano Barrera, originally of Mier, Tamaulipas, who moved in 1883 to a ranch in Brooks County (Los Braziles, near Premont), Texas. After 15 years some sixty miles north of the border, Barrera moved back into the Valley proper (keep in mind

that from a Spanish L1 point of view, Mier was in the same cultural unit as Mission in the 1880s), buying land in 1898 in Hidalgo County, where he founded La Reforma ranch (Barrera, 1975, p. 83-85). He valued education, so “he built [a school], hired a teacher and even boarded children of neighboring ranches free” (Barrera, 1975, p. 85). Linguistically interesting is the fact that all classes were given in Spanish. The same was true when children were sent north in Falfurrias in Brooks County, sixty or so miles from the border, for further education. The youngest Barrera child received some of his formal education in English, and even this was at the primarily Spanish-language El Colegio Fronterizo in Mission, Texas. Finally, some kids did go to Laredo’s Holding Institute for English lessons. The point of recounting the family’s educational adventures is that while the value of learning English was well understood, the transplanted British tongue was far from having the monopoly of prestige and educational power it would receive later in the 1900s.

Factors Undermining Language’s Written Component (in Spanish and English)

Even if the schools had switched to English at the birth of the state of Texas, it is not likely English would have entered by way of the school system, for the Barrera family was in many ways an exception for South Texas: they were educated. Education – in Spanish or otherwise – was rare. Even as opportunities for those able to afford expensive private schools increased, the opportunities for education in Spanish for the lower middle class, not to mention the working class, declined. Shortly after Texas statehood in 1845, a burst of activity among private schools, usually sponsored by religious organizations and therefore affordable -- and many of them teaching in Spanish – boosted South Texas school attendance, but according to Glenn Martínez, the post-1870 spread of public schools ironically served to deprive Spanish-speaking communities of education, because most Spanish-speaking towns lacked the personnel

who met the requirements now imposed on would-be teachers by the state of Texas (Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna, 2008, p. 59). The shift from religious, bilingual schools to secular, English-only undermined the Spanish-inclusive, Catholic parochial and Protestant missionary schools that had previously been active in the region (Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna, 2008, p. 59-60).

Education in Mexican Texas had featured appalling attendance rates: “In 1833, only 60 of 631 school-aged children enrolled” at the *ayunamiento* school in San Antonio” (Evans 1955, p. 28, quoted in Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna, 2009, p. 58-59). If such was the case in Texas’ then-leading city, it does not bode well for the isolated river delta ranches more than two hundred miles to the south. In fact, Jovita González – who grew up on the *ranch*o Las Viboras in the first decade of the 1900s – opined in 1929 that

It is only within the last twenty-five or thirty years [i.e., after 1900] that the Mexican border people have become interested in public school education. There was no need for it. The wealthy sent their children to the schools in Mexico, principally Monterrey and Saltillo, those in moderate circumstances [like the Barreras] sent theirs to private schools in Texas, while children of the servant class did not attend school at all. In fact, the landowners discouraged the working classes getting an education on the ground that this would ruin them for the work they had to do. (González 1929, p. 87).

South Texas: A Multiplicity of Histories (and their Linguistic Consequences)

In looking at the Rio Grande Valley linguistic and cultural scene from 1904-1945, it is important to keep in mind some subtle intra-regional differences that to some extent can be seen

in South Texas to this day. Depending on the region within the Valley, the situation of Spanish speakers deteriorated rapidly but unevenly. In the old Spanish towns, a Spanish-speaking elite held on to some power. In the new cities that sprang up in the citrus-and-railroad fueled Rio Grande Valley after 1904, English L1 dominated by creating English L1 towns through a system of *de facto* segregation. The break between the old and the new situations can be seen even in the English-versus-Spanish town names that line what is now Interstate 2: “The two [cities] best known for their segregation were Weslaco and McAllen, but most of the other [new] towns along U.S. 83 were [also] segregated, unlike the old towns of Hidalgo, Peñitas, and Relampago” (Garza and Long 2010, Hidalgo County). In other words: if a city emerged during the land rush, it was probably segregated as the newcomers enforced their boundaries; if the town arose *before* the land rush, it was likely integrated, as English L1s had to fit into the existing structure.

Why the difference in Hidalgo or Relampago versus Weslaco and McAllen? To see it more clearly, consider what happens as one moves to a place where the land rush’s influence fades. Driving upriver from the RGV on U.S. 83, the history of the cities that one encounters -- Roma, Zapata, San Ygnacio, and Laredo -- diverges slightly from the La Joya-to-Brownsville region, in part because the upriver cities were not part of the citrus rush to the extent that the downriver region was. For one, rainfall becomes slightly less plentiful as one moves west (27.51” yearly in Cameron versus 20.4” yearly in Webb), making the latter area attractive for sheep and cotton, but not citrus or sugar. Second, the area had connected to the railroad earlier, at Laredo, and was a prime conduit for trade with Mexico, meaning that railroad companies could recoup their losses without having to rely on land sales to immigrants as was the case in the Valley (Garza 2010, Mercedes). Third, there was a prior presence of historic Spanish cities strong and powerful enough to fend off northern land speculators. At the extreme western end of

the Valley, the old town of Roma had recently grown rich off contraband (Simons and Hoyt, 1992, p. 256), and 150 miles upriver, Laredo had already met the railroads in the 1880s, but as an established city with a strongly Spanish heritage, it could deal with the English influx as an additional layer on top of its pre-existing Spanish-speaking character. The result, is that as one 2007 Rio Grande river-boating adventurer noticed in 2007, “Laredo’s history is distinctive, too, in the absence of a sizeable class of landowning Anglos. The tiny minority of Anglos who did settle in the area quickly became assimilated into Hispanic culture...Even more than a hundred and fifty years after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo specified the Rio Grande as the Texas-Mexico border...over ninety percent of its households use Spanish as their principal language” (Bowden, 2007, p. 191). The result of all this, as Bowden noticed, is that Webb, Zapata, and even northern Starr counties (to this day) remain much more predominantly Spanish-speaking than the primary land rush counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy. Indeed, the last-named county did not even exist as such until was carved out in 1911 by Anglo land rush settlers, who formed the majority by the 1920s (Garza 2010). The comparatively greater proportion of Spanish-dominant individuals in Starr, Zapata, and Webb counties can still be seen in the 2010 Census. While over half of Willacy County, a quarter of Cameron County, and 15% of Hidalgo County speak English at home, the proportion of home English speakers drops in Webb County to less than 1 in 10, and in Starr County to about 1 in 20 (US Census Bureau: State and County Quickfacts, 2015).¹⁵

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau: *State and County QuickFacts*. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits. Last Revised: 5 February 2015 <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48465.html>.

Table 6: Language other than English spoken at home, % age 5+, 2009-2013¹⁶ (Source: US Census, 2010 State and County Quick Facts. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>)

Texas average: 34.7	
Primary Land Rush Counties: The Lower RGV	
County	Language other than English spoken at home
Cameron County (Brownsville, Harlingen)	73.1 %
Hidalgo County (McAllen-Edinburg-Mission)	84.9 %
Willacy County (Raymondville)	45.4 %
Bypassed by the land rush: Roma to Laredo	
County	Language other than English spoken at home
Starr (Rio Grande City, Roma)	95.6 %
Zapata (Zapata)	87.2 %
Webb (Laredo)	91.3 %

The difference in settlement patterns made a significant difference in the lives of Spanish L1s of the early 1900s. For instance, while segregation marked the schools of the new land rush cities in Hidalgo and Willacy counties, “the more heavily Hispanic counties of Webb, Duval, Starr, and Zapata maintained unsegregated (if second-rate) schools” (Johnson 2003, p. 180). It is possible that this may have been because there were simply not enough Anglo-Americans in these remote counties to get their way. More charitably, it may have been that in these Spanish-L1-dominated areas, Anglos were more willing to assimilate to Mexican culture rather than demand the reverse. Most likely it was a mix of both. Regardless of one’s opinion on this

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits Last Revised: 5 February 2015. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/48465.html>

question, it must be admitted that there was also a practical, economic motivation behind both segregation and integration, where each existed. While in the string of farming-based, Anglo-dominated cities from Mercedes to Mission, Spanish L1s were considered exploitable farm labor that needed to be kept controlled (and lack of English facilitated this). A different calculus played out elsewhere. Especially in Laredo and Roma (and to a lesser degree in Brownsville), where Mexican-Texans were customers with buying power, it made no economic sense to keep Hispanic citizens segregated (Johnson, 2003, p. 180).

Still, the old Spanish cities were not unaffected – some in fact had to deal with the railroads (and therefore English) earlier, as the connections began in Webb County as early as 1881. Rio Grande City and Laredo in particular were hit in the 1880s and 1890s by the Anglo-American wave of development and its accompanying racism, economic changes, and linguistic transformations (Hinojosa 1983, p.117-121). U.S. Army forts in Rio Grande (Fort Ringgold) and Laredo (Fort McIntosh) were constructed to maintain American control of that stretch of the border, but in Laredo in particular the old city's size and tradition had allowed its Spanish L1s to weather the storm better than the more scattered ranches and villages downriver. The small handful of European and Anglos in Laredo before the railroad arrival of the railroad had intermarried with the Latin population, thus defusing racial tension (Hinojosa 1983, p.92). Also, a small core of Laredo's richest and most politically active families were recent immigrants from France (Martin), Ireland (McDonell), or Germany (Leyendecker). Without the unfortunate Anglo-American prejudices then current in the United States, they established a working relationship (the Benavides and González families, among others). Again, family ties helped: a Leyendecker married a Benavides, for example (*Rootsweb*, 2008). When the railroad brought a rush of Anglo-Americans to the area, it exacerbated class tensions and led to a massive election

riot in 1886 (Adams, 2008, p. 124), but the very fact of the riot (that the leader of one party was a González shows that the Spanish L1 population was more active and had more of a voice than was the case in the Rio Grande Valley proper. Even in the turbulent decade of the 1910s, as the Rangers murdered their way across the Valley, isolated Laredo saw none of that killing (Adams, 2008, p. 121). Roma, meanwhile, had thrived in the late 1800s, largely thanks to contraband trade with Mexico – a boom evidenced by the town’s historic architecture (Simons and Hoyt, 1992, p. 256). Nevertheless, this paper will focus primarily on the linguistic situation in the new downriver towns, for it was where rural life faced off against mass commercial agriculture and rapid urbanization that English and Spanish faced off on the most unequal terms.

Beyond the Valley: National Linguistic Perspective

Pre-World War I Linguistic Diversity

In order to understand the perspective of the English L1s who arrived in South Texas circa 1900, it is necessary to lose the twenty-first-century cultural baggage of assuming Spanish is the default L2 of the United States. To understand Midwestern American’s affect toward Spanish, it must be kept in mind that they were much more familiar with non-English languages than today’s Midwesterners - they lived in a region that had seen mass migration from Northern and Central Europe, from the 1850-70s German influx to the 1870s-90s Scandinavian arrivals. So, languages other than English as such was less likely to upset them than some of the English-only people in the same terrain today (people whose ancestors may have spoken, say, Danish). On the other hand, however, the era of Mexican immigration to Chicago and the farmers’ fields of the Midwest lay decades in the future. The era of mass Mexican and Central American immigration on the order of millions had yet to begin. According to the 1910 Census, there were only 258,131 foreign-born Spanish speakers in the United States, much smaller than the number

of foreign-born speakers of German (2,759,032), Italian (1,365,110), Yiddish (1,051,767), Swedish (683,218), French (528,842), or even Norwegian (402,587) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999, *Table 6*). Officially, at least, there were only a few more Spanish-speaking arrivals than Czech or Hungarian speakers. Obviously, the “foreign-born” part of this data leaves out a huge swath of the Spanish-speaking population, since there were already many native Spanish speakers, some of whose ancestors had been living in New Mexico since long before the first Englishmen disembarked at Jamestown – but these heritage Spanish L1s were in Texas, California, or New Mexico, not Illinois – and any that may have come north early would have been drowned out linguistically by the language groups mentioned above. Also, given a number of factors (the very porous nature of the border at the time, the reticence of the Anglo to include Hispanics in government, the illiterate and rural nature of many Spanish speaking arrivals), the number of Spanish-speakers in South Texas in particular was likely much higher than the census reported. Nevertheless, the census is likely accurate in the sense that it reflects the relatively low profile that Spanish had in the North and Midwest of the United States – and therefore the exotic nature of the language to many of the new arrivals.

Post-World War I Isolationism

However, the flood of immigrants through Ellis Island, filling America with German and Swedish and so on, did not last. In examining the sociolinguistic factors determining the acquisition of the second language by English L1s in any corner of the United States from after World War I, one cannot avoid discussing the outbreak of isolationism (perhaps even xenophobia?) that erupted in the United States from about 1919 and lasted until World War II and a Cold War forced America to re-engage. The sociological side effects of this backlash were a draconian restriction on immigration from the rest of the world and a grassroots campaign against the teaching of foreign languages (chiefly German, but the sentiment seemed to

encompass all “non-American” – i.e. non-English languages. This social environment led to several events with implications for the interviews in the RGV Oral History Collection.

First, the era saw the end of German America. As World War I broke out, there was some tension in the United States – with its huge German-American population – as to just how loyal the Germans were going to be, and there was pressure for Germans to “Americanize,” to choose their new English-speaking nation over Germany. This environment may have affected at least some of the German L1s or heritage speakers that we will meet in the oral histories.

Second, the post-World-War-I era changed the American linguistic landscape in the direction of less diversity. The curb in immigration, coupled with intense pressure for immigrants to learn English, meant that the percentage of “foreign-born whites” (a category that prior to the 1954 case *Hernandez v. Texas* would have included both European and Latin American immigrants) unable to speak English dropped from 31% in 1910 to 8.5% in 1930 – exactly the time period that concerns us here (Lieberson 1981, p. 162). This linguistic shift nationally further isolated the Spanish L1s of South Texas within an increasingly English-speaking nation.

Third, the era saw a rejection of the Ellis-Island nation-of-immigrants ethos. After the war, the nationalism it stoked coupled with the Red Scare following the Russian Revolution, not to mention simple prejudice, led America to shut itself off to the outside world in many ways. For our purposes, suffice it to say that the Dillingham Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924 curbed much English L2 immigration by setting quotas based on the number of each nationality in the US at the time of the 1890 census (Wang, 1975, p.18-19).

It should be highlighted that the immigration measures did not significantly stem the flow of new Spanish L1s to South Texas. The immigration measures of the time were aimed primarily

at Asian and Southern European immigrants. In fact, when the local sheriff John Peavy mentioned “illegal immigrants,” he was generally referring to Portuguese, Greeks, and Austrians who sought to enter the U.S. via Tampico and Matamoros (Peavy, 1964, 192-195). These southern Europeans had been barred legal entry after the quota established for their nationality by the 1924 law had been filled. Meanwhile, the Anglo farmers of the Valley actually lobbied Congress to loosen such restrictions, and continued to import labor illegally regardless of what Congress said. To be sure, this concern was based on economics, not humanitarianism (Johnson 2003, p. 186). The upcoming period of the Depression and the Post-World War II spike in unemployment would lead to nativist backlash against Mexican immigrants, but from 1900 to 1930 in South Texas, Latin Americans were viewed essentially as a natural resource – labor ready for the taking (“lots of Mexican help,” in the word of interviewee Elma Krumdieck Koch Dutschman, p. 270).

Social and Sociolinguistic Consequences of the Land Rush

The numbers of English L1s would not have had so dramatic an impact on the region had they resembled more their first compatriots in the region. We have already seen that, prior to the railroads, the few English L1s who trickled down to South Texas largely accommodated to the dominant Spanish L1 culture. With the land rush and the rise of the new Anglo-dominated cities, however, all this changed. Writing for the Texas State Historical Association, Garza and Long (2010) concur with my and González’s analysis:

Race relations in Hidalgo County during the nineteenth century had been fairly amicable even as the number of Anglo-Americans moving to the area increased.

With the advent of the railroad Hidalgo County became a magnet for settlers from

the Midwest and the East. These settlers, unlike their ranching predecessors, were not willing to adapt to Hispanic culture and considered themselves superior to Mexican Americans. (Garza and Long, 2010, Hidalgo County).

These newcomer English L1s confronted a Spanish-speaking situation without the benefits of an education that valued such concepts as multiculturalism and diversity. When Midwestern farmers from (say) Iowa who might have heard only English and a smattering of German and Scandinavian tongues came to a pervasively Spanish-speaking area their reactions might well vary. Would he (or she) ignore, be antagonistic toward, or remain isolated from the incomprehensible L2? Or would he (or she) try to acclimate culturally and form cross-cultural friendships across the bridge of language learning? As it turns out, all of the above options were explored by English L1s new to the Valley. As we shall see, the reasons for each choice are largely predictable on the basis of sociolinguistic theories that we will explore in Chapter 4.

By the same token, Spanish L1s, especially in rural Hidalgo County, had to deal with the sudden ubiquity of English. An inherently complicated situation was compounded for Spanish L1s because their language was replaced in many environments associated with commerce and education. Linguistic shift occurred in the marketplace, as the dollar replaced the peso and it became necessary to know some English to gain access to elite markets. Shift also occurred in the schoolhouse, both in the sense that there were now – for the first time, in many rural areas, schools, and also in the sense that in these schools, English was the language of power. We will also see how some Spanish L1s were deprived (by poverty if not by policy) of access to those schools – and therefore to English.

Yet the very threat of English functioned paradoxically to keep Spanish functional in the region. While there were always some elite Spanish L1 families and enterprising individuals who forced acceptance from the newcomers, many of the rest found themselves grouped into similarly bad economic conditions. This social reality led (according to Skrabanek, 1970, and Carranza, 1977, p. 59) to “Spanish language maintenance” among the Spanish-speaking population. In Chapter IV will we encounter some theorists who have helped to explain why these shifts occurred, as well as how the different social strata within the pre-existing and immigrant Spanish L1 communities responded to what was often a difficult situation.

CHAPTER III

ORAL HISTORY THEORY AND THE RGV ARCHIVES

Sociolinguistic Value of Available Oral Interview Recordings

While it is too late for sociolinguists to find interview subjects who can remember moving to the Rio Grande Valley in 1904, it is still possible for researchers to sift through the oral interviews recorded by Valley historians in the 1980s. The audio of these interviews can be accessed in digitized format via the UTRGV library's Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection (although a few are still on cassette tapes).¹⁷ I will limit myself to this collection for three reasons. Two are quite practical. First, the RGV Oral History Collection is a suitable size: it is large enough to serve as a corpus without being completely unmanageable for a single researcher. A second practical reason for limiting this study to the RGV proper: the oral history records for Zapata and Webb Counties are located at the Webb County Historical Museum in Laredo – but the Laredo collection is not as conveniently organized as the collection housed in Edinburg. The third reason is more historical. We have already touched on the historical differences between the Laredo region versus the Lower Rio Grande Valley (see Chapter III);

¹⁷ An internet search for UTRGV Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection should return direct internet access. I do not include a url as the host university (UT Pan American) is at the time of this writing undergoing a transition to UT-Rio Grande Valley, a side effect of which is the near-future invalidation of all existing utpa.edu links.

The original cassette tapes can be found in the Borderlands archive on the first floor of the UTRGV Edinburg campus library. Of the interviews included in this study, the only one that remains undigitized is the Manuela Barrios interview; this account can be accessed via cassette tape in the archive.

all we will say now is that in the interest of building a coherent narrative, it is best to limit this thesis to the story of the Valley.

Selected Archive and Methodology

First, let me confess what this project is not: it is not new field work. However, I do not apologize for this. As Ritchie (2003) points out, at this point in time the most pressing need is not to grab a recorder and make more data, but to bring to the light of day previously recorded work. A great deal has been recorded, but only a small proportion of existing material has yet received scholarly attention (p.124-125). Such second-hand work as mine is necessary, if the goal of oral history is to allow previously overlooked people's voices to be heard. Oral history that is recorded only to lie dormant until someone finds out the file has been corrupted or the tape damaged might as well not have been recorded in the first place. Further, in my particular case, new recordings were not a realistic option due to the fact that for the early decades of the time period under consideration, nearly all living, interview-able witnesses have departed from the scene.

Oral history drawn primarily from a single archive (such as the Rio Grande Oral History Collection) permits a researcher to tell individual stories with some care, rather than risk submerging individuality in a sea of generalization. However, the limited sample size presents some historiographical hazards. Given the limited space available, I do not attempt to make a comprehensive account of the entire linguistic experience of any language community in the Rio Grande Valley in the early 1900s. As will become apparent, the various linguistic communities of South Texas in the late 1800s and early 1900s were far too complex and complicated to permit binary generalizations based on the English/Spanish bilingualism for which the region is known.

Instead, I will use narrative analysis of existing oral history interviews to create a series of narrative vignettes of individual experiences from the linguistic clash of the period. Taken together, the stories shed light on the historical sociolinguistic context of early 1900s South Texas. So, what I have attempted here is a set of case studies of micro-discourse expressed by ordinary people.

Since I am essentially eavesdropping on interviews conducted by historians, not linguists, much of the interview is relevant primarily as indicators of the overall social situation and how it would have affected language learning. However, whenever the interviewee addresses SLA issues, I transcribed those portions so that the subjects could be heard in their own words instead of having their ideas twisted to fit my theories. The result was a slow process, and I had to suspend judgment until I had heard a sufficiently large sample size to make generalizations. Gradually empirical data began to emerge that helped to shed light on what factors contributed to learning (or not learning) Spanish during the early 1900s.

Anyone interested in listening to these interviews for themselves can do so easily with a few clicks of a mouse, since the interviews in question have – mostly – been uploaded to the Internet in digital format. The shift to digital is welcome – the researcher can work outside often inconvenient archival hours – but digital records are not necessarily easy records. As Ritchie pointed out in 2003, just because an item is online does not mean that it is transcribed – and the result is an uptick in the “chance of misinterpretation and error” (p. 175-176). Twelve years later, the same is true of the archives used for this study, although I have attempted to minimize both misinterpretation and mistakes in transcription. To further complicate matters, some of the records have been translated into English. In each case, I have left the original in the manuscript

so that readers have access to the interviewees' actual words – which is the point of the enterprise.

Language of the Oral Histories

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection contains interviews conducted in English and Spanish. In the case of the Spanish interviews, my transcriptions of the chosen portions are in Spanish. I have provided an English translation in the footnotes. However, even though my work is not technically “discourse analysis,” I am still using discourse to build a picture of a social situation. As such, my work bears enough of a resemblance to DA that I deemed it wise to heed discourse analyst Norman Fairclough’s warning against doing language-based analysis based on translated data.¹⁸

Need for the Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection

Why privilege oral history over written sources? First, as this thesis is being produced for a linguistics program, the best way to ensure access to the dialects and accents of the interviews – short of transcribing them all in IPA, which, given the sheer quantity of material, would have taken more man-hours than the timeline for this project allowed – is to choose available audio that allows me to easily point future researchers to the recordings for further study of the dialects contained in these interviews.

More importantly, perhaps, in a region where the streets are still named after the big speculators who built a citrus empire in South Texas, oral history lets forgotten ordinary people

¹⁸ “One source of difficulty for textual analysis is the use of translated data. . . . To include textual analysis of translated data as part the analysis of a discursive event. . . strikes me as a procedure which is open to serious objections. What light can analysis of the researcher’s English translation of a Gorbachev speech cast upon the political and discursive analysis of a Soviet, and Russian-language, discursive event? In my opinion, discourse analysis papers should reproduce and analyze textual samples in the original language, despite the added difficulty for readers.” (Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman, 1995), p. 190-191.

speak for themselves. Historians often sketch eras on a grand scale, but I would like to emulate Studs Terkel, active in the 1930s to 1950s, who minimized theoretical considerations and let his respondents' "testimony speak for itself" (Abrams 155). Further, many of the voices quoted in oral history belong to traditionally marginalized groups. As Sherna Gluck noted regarding the connection between oral history, women's history, and feminism, interviews are a novel medium that lead to the "validation of women's experiences" (Gluck 2002, p. 3-26, in Abrams 157). The same can be said for any group whose experience has not been considered a "valid" part of a high school history book – which, when it comes right down to it, is pretty much every group except the largest personalities. (Even in well-documented regions, millions of experiences are compressed into summary paragraphs like "The Industrial Revolution" or "Agriculture in Medieval Europe.") The goal of my oral history, then, is not to provide a historically complete, factually comprehensive grand narrative; it is rather to illustrate a few trends with the words of the people who experienced them, and to note how their emphases often diverge from those in any topical history.

Complications with the Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection

As such, I am working with fairly authentic material, albeit compromised by three factors. First, sheer length of time between 1900-1930 and 1980-1990 means that the interview subjects have had time to either forget, or else recast their memories to fit a prevailing narrative in their discourse community. Second, confidence in the authenticity of sentiments expressed is moderated by the subjects' knowledge that their words are being recorded for posterity. In a sense, then, one gets a glimpse of what ordinary people would say in "polite society" to an

“educated” audience. This might entail a suppression of slurs and vulgarities.¹⁹ Perhaps the responder suffers from overthinking of how to express their ideas clearly (Minnie Norton Millikan, for example resorts in part to a written script to supplement the more free-ranging conversation).²⁰

In fact, even if the event were not being recorded, the very act of speaking to an academic or researcher changes the way the interviewee thinks and responds. Unfortunately, it is not quite possible to distinguish what someone “really thinks” from what they tell the researcher. Sociolinguist Reed-Danahay warns us that “the informant’s discourse owes its best-hidden properties to the fact that it is the product of a semi-theoretical disposition, inevitably induced by any learned questioning” (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 131, summarizing Bourdieu 1997, p. 18). This may be termed the observer’s paradox of oral history.

Finally, there is the problem of doing narrative analysis in spite of a triple gap between the writer (myself) and the source material (the interviews):

[1] There is a significant gap between the events described (c. 1900-1940) and the interviews (1984-1992);

[2] The interviewers’ and interviewees’ discussion is informed by the nonverbal, face-to-face interpersonal dynamic of two or more people who have met and are on at least speaking terms, whilst I am eavesdropping by analyzing the speech of people I do not know, sight unseen.

¹⁹ Listen to the Anita Cárdenas interview following the 7-minute mark for an example of an apology after letting less than decorous language slip. Listen at <http://cdm16775.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16775coll1/id/53/rec/1> or type Anita Cárdenas into the UTRGV collection website to listen. A written version of the exchange not included in the transcripts below because when written down the transcript (in my judgment) failed to capture the dynamic of the dialogue.

²⁰ Minnie Millikan reads her written work just after the portion of the interview transcribed in this thesis.

[3] In addition to the gap between event and interview, an additional 24-28 years elapsed between the recording of these interviews and my analysis of them. In fact, the bulk of the interviews were recorded the year of this writer's birth, so there may be occasional gaps between the assumptions that emerge from my context versus those assumed in the contexts that the interview participants shared as background knowledge.

Regarding the three points mentioned above, oral historian Lynn Abrams provides a helpful warning. She comments on the conundrum faced by researchers who find that elderly oral history interviewees rarely confirm our theories, or even present a coherent story. The reported experience of people from a century past may not conform to what we expect. Abrams advises:

Such interviewees may respond in a contained way to interview questions, focusing on facts rather than feelings and rarely offering more obviously revealing or open narrative answers. Given the advanced age of some of our respondents this is not surprising. Individuals of the older generation may be less influenced by modern 'confessional culture' and may have more respect for the dominant historical narrative. Such responses may disappoint the researcher who, having read all the theory, is expecting a self-reflective life-story narrative. But we can still gain insights from seemingly unpromising material into that person's sense of self and the way they position themselves within the broader narrative (Abrams 2010, p. 50-51).

Abrams points out that some respondents recast their narratives to fit in the mold of the dominant narrative. Yet, as a caution, we must go beyond Abrams and admit that just as people in the past

had their cherished myths and established narratives, so do we. Try as we might to be objective, it is difficult to escape the influence of ours and others' theories. Critical evaluation of claims made in oral histories is absolutely necessary, but we must be willing to admit that the same credentials that give us the expertise to do analysis have also saddled us with the cumulative effects of the expectations and interpretative frameworks created by our current culture and education.

Additional Complications Common to Oral History in General

Unhappy Interviewees: Ethics

A major issue in oral history is that it is intimately connected to real – and changeable – people. In spite of the best intentions and safeguards (IRB, etc.), researchers may end up recording stories from individuals who (for an unforeseen reason) agree to the interview even though they are secretly reluctant. Even more problematically, an individual who was ecstatic about the chance to set down memories at one time may become unhappy with it later. Elinore Mazé (2014) describes the case of an interviewee who retracted permission to access all or some of an interview years later, even after having “signed the release form, ... reviewed the manuscript” and even having mentioned a desire to have something written about the interview in question (Maze 2014, p. 150). In Mazé’s case, the turning point was the advent of the Google search; material once (for all practical purpose) restricted to a few historians has become, with the digitization of oral history, a matter of public record accessible to a much wider public with a few keystrokes and clicks. Anything one says can and will be used against one – and in an era of social media in which any recorded utterance may lead to viral public shaming, people may be even less willing to discuss uncomfortable subjects with an oral historian, or to release the

resulting interview. A person who gave an interview and signed permission forms back in the 1980s, thinking his or her words would be handled with care by a responsible historian, may by the 2010s become apprehensive about those same words might be handled by any troll with internet access.

Mazé's example teaches us that access to oral history is a privilege, and it is the researcher's responsibility to respect the free gift of a person's words to the cause of history. As she writes, "The digital revolution, and the resulting global exposure of oral history materials, has thrown the question into a much wider context. There is much current concern about privacy, in view of unfolding revelations of the reach and power of data mining tools in the hands of commercial and government entities, for purposes by no means transparent to the will or agreement of the individuals whose information is mined" (Maze 2014, p. 153).

Happy Interviewees: The Problem of the Assumed Unsaid

One of the theorists we will meet in the next (sociolinguistics theory) chapter, Pierre Bourdieu, points out a problem that can occur even when the interviewee and the interviewer hit it off and get along famously. Bourdieu's anthropological and sociological methods focused on the "particularities of different collective histories" (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 129); this, and the fact that he did a number of interviews, makes his theories applicable to our analysis of a collective montage of oral history interviews. One of Bourdieu's points in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* is that whenever an informant feels comfortable with the interviewer, (s)he tends to adopt a "discourse of familiarity" that "leaves unsaid all that goes without saying." (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 130). The result is that, because what is obvious [to the informant] is omitted, the daily grain of the informant's experience often goes unobserved, and a gap opens between the "learned reconstruction of the native world and the native experience of the world" (p. 130).

CHAPTER IV

SOCIOLINGUISTICS THEORY – TOOLS FOR THE PROJECT

Wanted: Theory Connecting Language to Society

In answering the question raised in this thesis regarding how and why people in language communities in contact acquire or otherwise react to the other language, the nature of the contact with L2 speakers is arguably just as important as the L2 language input itself. “No one acquires a language...without acquiring a relation to language” (1977b, p. 646, quoted in Grenfell 1998, p. 73). This thesis will focus on interpersonal and societal relations that surrounded second language acquisition in the Rio Grande Valley in the early 1900s.

History and Language Learning: A Clear Connection

Before examining sociological complexities, let us make quick note of the fact that the connection between social realities and language learning in any give situation are contingent; that is, they are not inevitable but dependent on a series of historical events whose consequences affect the daily lives of language learners in different ways. This is unfortunately overlooked in much educational theorizing. Jean Piaget is still being quoted at length in Texas educational training manuals (Texas Teachers, 2013) as having explained children’s educational development (including language) as a rather uniform process; but long ago Vygotsky (writing in the 1934) critiqued the “developmental uniformities” that Piaget had established, arguing that Piaget’s system reflected “not laws of nature but are historically and socially determined”

(Vygotsky, 1986, p. 55). It is this reasoning that warranted the above extended digression into historical events underlying the social milieu.

Social Economy of Linguistics: Pierre Bourdieu's *Marché Linguistique*

The material in that historical digression is only a rough sketch of a complex history, but enough has been said to make clear that the South Texas of the Magic Valley land rush provides a real life test of the theories of Pierre Bourdieu²¹ in his now-classic *Ce que parler veut dire: L'économie des échanges linguistiques* (1982).²² Here Bourdieu takes an analogy from economics and applies it to sociolinguistics. He takes the economic ideas of *market* and *price* and uses them to examine how social standing and power fix a non-monetary perceived *cost* (in social “currency” or “capital”) for the value of each language variety, thus determining which

²¹ **Problems in Bourdieu and Language**

Michael Grenfell (1998) notes that while language surfaces in each of the French sociologist's important projects, Bourdieu poses a problem for linguists because his “treatment of language is probably the least ‘empirical’ of all his topics of study. There are no linguistic analyses in the traditional sense of the term” (1998, p. 72) In fact, not only does he not adhere to classic linguistic concerns, Bourdieu “opens both his main books on language with full-frontal attacks on the contemporary founding fathers of linguistics: Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky” (1998, p.72).

To understand Bourdieu's refusal to engage in then-acceptable linguistic mainstream, one must understand Bourdieu's context. In Bourdieu's heyday, Chomsky's linguistics had captured academics' attention, but Chomskian theory was still very much in a grammar-transformational stage with scant regard for the functional complexities of language [see Joseph Emonds (1972) and so forth for examples of the mechanistic language theorizing of that era.] Bourdieu was horrified. Grenfell describes how Bourdieu quotes Chomsky only to tear him apart: “Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an *ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention or interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.* This seems to me to have been the position of the founders of modern general linguistics, and no cogent reason for modifying it has been offered” (Chomsky 1965, p. 4 quoted in Bourdieu, 1991, p. 44 – italics Bourdieu's own)” (Grenfell 72-73). For researchers interested in marginalized languages – whether French regional dialects or South Texan Spanish – the ideal speaker-listener construct is an uncomfortable idea, as the concept subtly implies the dialects of a rather broad swath of people as something other than “ideal.”

²² One possible objection to this theoretical borrowing involves the advisability of extracting Bourdieu from France and extraditing his theories to Texas. One rebuttal is that other researchers have already done the same in even less parallel settings. Witness Lardinois and Thapan's intercontinental collaboration *Reading Pierre Bourdieu in a Dual Context: Essays from India and France* (2001). If Bourdieu can be transplanted to Mumbai, he can be moved to McAllen just as well.

languages are considered valuable to learn and use in any given context. We will elaborate on Bourdieu's ideas at some length as a starting point, but we will finish by critiquing and refining the theory almost beyond recognition in order to better account for the phenomena in the oral history.

While Bourdieu's concepts are drawn from the specific linguistic settings of war-torn Algeria and provincial France, he clearly considers any bilingual setting as an ideal laboratory for testing his theory: « *Les situations de bilinguisme permettent d'observer de manière quasi expérimentale les variations de la langue employée en fonction de la distribution du capital proprement linguistique et des autres espèces de capitale* » (Bourdieu 1982, p. 77).²³ In context, he likely refers to long-established, static situations of bilingualism between national and local languages such as are common on Europe (e.g. Spanish/Catalan), or the French-Arabic dichotomy of Algeria, where he had done much sociological observation. Yet when it comes to quasi-experimental place to study two languages in contact, one of better places to begin could be early 1900s South Texas. Here one is not dealing with a long-established dual-lingual dynamic (at least, not in 1900), but an era and place of incipient bilingualism.

The issue with 1900-1930s Texas is that – as we have seen in the history above – the two languages were not in social equilibrium. In spite of the large number of Spanish speakers, in several sectors of society (most critically education), Spanish was utterly suppressed. The reason Bourdieu gives for the expansion of a dominant language in the face of former multilingualism provides a good theoretical framework for examining the characteristics of English in Border Texas: just as there is an economic market in which resources are exchanged, there exists a

²³ Bourdieu translation: “Situations of bilingualism allow us to observe in an almost experimental way the varieties of language being employed in their function of the distribution of capital, both in its technically linguistic as well as other forms” (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 77).

linguistic market where communication happens. For Bourdieu, «*l'échange linguistique est aussi un échange économique, qui s'établit dans un certain rapport de forces symbolique entre un producteur, pourvu d'un certain capitale linguistique, et un consommateur (ou une marché), et qui est propre à procurer un certain profit matériel ou symbolique*»²⁴ (Bourdieu 1982, p. 59-60).

In other words, the pragmatic speaker (consumer) selects the language (product) that provides the maximum material (economic) or symbolic (cultural) return on the investment made to learn a language. So it is that «*Les discours ne reçoivent leur valeur (et leur sens) que dans la relation à un marché, caractérisé par une loi de formation des prix particulière*»²⁵ (Bourdieu 1982, p. 60). These “particular prices” vary according to issues raised by Park and Wee (2012) below (p. 74).

Given all the foregoing talk about prices and markets, it must be emphasized that *price* in this theory refers not merely to money but also to ethnic, social, and class concerns. Each of these facets of human behavior exists along a continuum from socially devalued to valued, although the specific valuations vary from context to context (Agha 2012).

Another complication with this picture is that Bourdieu's “situation of bilingualism” may not apply to 1900-1930s South Texas to the same degree that it would in, say Catalonia or Quebec where there has been long continuance of both languages. The compressed chronology of the Rio Grande land rush meant that during our period of interest, many people were not yet bilingual, so in spite of the presence of large numbers of English/Spanish bilinguals, there were also large populations in the same vicinity who were monolingual in one language or the other.

²⁴ Bourdieu translation: “A language exchange is also an economic exchange that is established within an interconnection of certain symbolic forces between a producer, coming from a certain amount of linguistic capital, and a consumer (or market), and to which pertains the procurement of some material or symbolic profit” (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 59-60).

²⁵ Bourdieu translation: “Speech cannot receive a value (or even meaning) except within its relation to a market, one characterized by laws that govern the formulation of specific prices [for different types of speech]” (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 60).

A linguist with more familiarity with the Mexico-United States linguistic relationship, Clementina Merced Yolanda Lastra y Villar y García Gómez²⁶, summarized the situation of bilingualism in the United States as being a boon for children of the elite, who have the time and resources to learn a language for fun; a nominal bilingualism for those majority kids who take a few years of school L2; a comfortable bilingualism of children in bilingual families, but the bane of minority children who may not learn either language in a way considered “standard” by the rulers of the classroom or the captains of industry (Lastra de Suarez, 1992, p. 445).

However, this twist actually makes the situation more interesting. In accounting for this semi-bilingual dynamic, it is possible to use a value model to determine whether those who chose to become bilingual may have done so (or not) based on the price of the prospective language to be learned in the *marché linguistique*. Those whose language commands the lesser price should, in Bourdieu’s theory, have been forced to “buy” the other language to compete; those born with the higher language might have required motivations that lie beyond the purview of Bourdieu’s *marché*.

The Unification of the American Language Market: Park and Wee

The question that arises when discussing the linguistic price shift that occurred in the Rio Grande Valley is: How could Spanish go from being highly valued in all walks of life to being marginalized in many contexts? Park and Wee (2012) explain,

Linguistic markets can function this way because of *unification*: that is, through a common recognition in the laws of price formation. Thus the more unified markets are, the more they share similar logics governing, among other things, the

²⁶ Lastra, a Mexican linguist educated at Georgetown but teaching at the Universidad Autónoma de México, is familiar with the dynamics of English-Spanish bilingualism in the United States.

kinds of capital considered relevant to the market, the convertibility of different forms of capital, and the kinds of ends that actors in the market ought to be oriented towards. The unification of the education and workplace markets, for example, is critical in reinforcing the status of some languages as legitimate, official, or standard, while also leading to the devaluation of others (p. 28).

In Park and Wee's analysis, the sociolinguistic evolution of early 1900s South Texas can be described as the unification of the Rio Grande Valley linguistic market²⁷ to that of the United States as a whole. This raised the value of English (the U.S. lingua franca) and devalued Spanish (which was now being ejected from the schools and the workplaces of the Valley).

Applications of Theory to Bilingual Situations

One complication with Park and Wee is that they are written in the context of World Englishes theories, which focus on how different varieties of the same language compete for recognition. In a World Englishes case, it is a little easier to switch between registers, since the effort it takes to (at least pretend) to acquire pieces of a different dialect is not so challenging as the case of speakers of a Romance tongue (Spanish) learning a Germanic one (English) or vice versa. However, in choosing not between dialects but entirely separate languages, Lastra de Suarez (1992) concurs with Fishman (1968) in explaining that the equilibrium cannot likely long be maintained. One language or another almost inevitably gains the upper hand within the various market niches or social circles of a society.

²⁷ A possible theoretical alternative to the Park/Wee/Bourdieu "market" is Spolsky's (2004, 2009) "domain" (Park and Wee, p. 30). However, as many of the interviews will specifically bring up the interplay between economics and language learning, I deemed it best to utilize the market analogy.

[Se] ha criticado el uso de la equiparación [balance] como medida [de bilingüismo], puesto que esto define al bilingüismo equiparado como el ideal. Según él [Fishman], el bilingüismo estable sólo se da cuando es funcional, puesto que ninguna sociedad necesita dos lenguas para las mismas funciones. Una sociedad bilingüe produce bilingües cuyas lenguas son dominantes en un área y no bilingües equiparados. Así es que ese método de medición no es realista. Además, se da por hecho que la equiparación significa que el bilingüe sabe bien las dos lenguas, pero puede hablar las dos mal (Lastra de Suarez 1992, p. 446)²⁸

Lastra's last comment resonates strongly with many in South Texas to this day, as many have grown up having both of their languages critiqued by English or Spanish L1s from less complicated places in the interior of the United States or Mexico, places where interference and code-switching are less common. However, once education has given a South Texas bilingual command of one, the other, or both, he or she is now in a situation where English or Spanish (and different varieties of each) can be used in the same way as the different varieties of English that World Englishes theorists (see Park and Wee 2012; Kachru 1990, 2006; and Jenkins, 2015).

The Problems of Unification

It may be objected that to show concern for Spanish in South Texas is to remain trapped in the past: Is not the eventual linguistic unification of the Rio Grande Valley to the United States a natural process, the obvious and natural state of affairs in a country whose traditions are

²⁸ Yolanda de Lastra translation: "The use of balance as a measure of bilingualism has been criticized, because this defines balanced bilingualism as the ideal. According to him [Fishman], balanced bilingualism only happens when it is functional, because no society needs two languages for the same functions. A bilingual societies produces bilinguals whose are bilingual in one area [a language domain where both are used], and not balanced bilinguals. So, this method of measurement is not realistic. Further, it assumes that 'balanced' means that the bilingual knows both languages well – but he could speak both badly" (Lastra de Suarez 1992, p. 446).

supposed to have derived from Britain? This assumption may have some validity in the old English colonies of the East Coast, but in the Southwest things are not so simple. Here, the American Union has many of the historical characteristics of an empire, with English serving as an imperial lingua franca.

Some American English L1s may overestimate the “naturalness” of their tongue for those whose linguistic heritage hails from another language tradition. Some English monolingual Americans – in the 1930s Rio Grande Valley and now across the country – have wanted English imposed for the good of all – as, in Bourdieu’s words, “a universal treasure” (1982, p. 23-24) shared by all. English is a linguistic treasure, to be sure, and as a universal lingua franca it has immeasurably facilitated American education, industry, and unity. However, English can be a treasure without being exclusive. Doris Sommers (2004) has argued convincingly that the American political and educational systems badly needs the multiple languages that marginalized Americans already speak circulated freely to give the country the resources it needs to tackle social ills at home and understand a plural world abroad. Kharkhurin (2012) has pointed out the increase in creative capital that multilingualism can provide, a cultural asset America needs to remain competitive on a globalized planet. For America to repress its linguistic assets in the name of a false unity would be foolish.

But English hegemony is further complicated by the fact that not all the corners that it now attempts to fill are places where it has long “belonged,” to use a word that is perhaps too crude. This is true from a World Englishes perspective, but it is even true in such American regions as the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. As an integral part of an all-American state, the Valley illustrates Bourdieu’s caution about considering the national languages as naturally

occurring phenomena that can be studied linguistically without recourse to history, politics, economics, or sociology.

Saussure had argued that since *ce n'est pas l'espace qui définit la langue, mais la langue qui définit son espace*, then the language of any given region would be determined by the “intrinsic force” of some invisible “autonomous logic” as the collective of language *porteurs* (carriers) in an area determine the dialect to which the region will pertain. (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 26). Logically Saussure’s contention implies that once a place has been transformed by the carriers of a language - such as the English L1s of the land rush – then the subsequent development of language in that area is a natural process. However, things are usually more complicated than that. Bourdieu fires back that

Cette philosophie de l'histoire, qui fait de la dynamique interne de la langue le seul principe des limites de sa diffusion, occulte le processus proprement politique d'unification au terme duquel un ensemble déterminé des sujets parlants « sujets parlants » se trouve pratiquement amené à accepter la langue officielle.
(Bourdieu 1982, p. 26-27).²⁹

The political “pressures of unification” of which Bourdieu speaks included both formal, institutionalized use of the dominant language in government and education as well as the informal but no less powerful pressure of economics – hence, again, the *market* analogy. In the United States, for as long as it has been such, there has been economic pressure to learn English. Contemporary researchers have even fixed the precise “cost” of a refusal to learn English in the

²⁹ “This historical philosophy, which makes the internal dynamic of a language the sole principle of the limits of that language’s diffusion, hides the essentially political process of the principle of unification by which a given group of speaking subjects (speaking subjects) finds itself practically threatened to accept the official language” (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 26-27).

present-day United States in terms of earnings potential (Day and Shin, 2005). So, what kind of space is the Valley? For the native Spanish L1s of the early 1900s, the Valley could be the kind of place where the logic of national unity, as well as market forces, “practically threatened” them to reach an accord with English. To give a specific example, consider that in the U.S. census documenting the first decade of the land rush (1900-1910), “upward mobility and the possession of wealth through land holdings correlated rather strongly with ability to speak English....An analysis of the census data reveals that Hispanic homeowners were almost twice more likely to speak English than non-homeowners” in Texas (Balestra, Martínez, and Moyna., 2008, p.64). Although things were not so simple as English = house, there was a complex of factors by which economic advantage and English acted as partners.

Cautions and Caveats

Macro and Micro

A potentially disastrous side effect of thinking about language in economic terms is that one might assume that language learning can be determined entirely by “macro-social ‘market’ principles”; Asif Agha offers a course correction to Bourdieu by reminding us of the “micro-sociological facts of footing and role alignment” that collectively make up the macro-market (Agha, 2007, p. 167). In other words, to think about the large scale forces as determining language valuation is to place the cart before the horse. Language does not acquire value by deduction (this language X has value Y, therefore people treat it as worth \$Z) but by induction (lots of interactions among people lead to a collective consideration of language as having language worth \$Z, so it acquires a fictitious but influential symbolic value Y). As we will see in the interviews below, sometimes it is a value-generating micro-structure that leads to a language being learned, and other times a value-revealing macro-structure of language valuation affects

SLA. An example of the former would be learning the language of one's spouse even when it is not the dominant tongue (if this happened often enough the language would acquire value); an example of the latter might be workplace needs pushed by international market forces (a series of previous linguistic micro-exchanges have given the language power among a wide range of people).

Joseph Sung-Yul Park on Value

In thinking through theories that use economic analogies for language use, sometimes the overlapping denotations of financial terms with linguistic situations can cause unwanted interference. One such problem is inherent in the word *value*: the term includes both a moral and an economic dimension. It might be tempting to dismiss language as strictly a tool of communication, but humans are not so unemotional. Joseph Sung-Yul Park warns theorists against a failure to understand that humans must look on things not merely as “useful” but also as “good” or “bad.” Ethics, aesthetics, and language – these are subjective, relative things for humans, but they are the essence of what defines us as a species. Consequently, any theory that fails to account for all dimensions is doomed to failure (Graeber, 2001, p. 1-2; Park and Wee, 2012, p. 28).

Multiple Markets

A second caveat is that while a certain language (or even within languages, a register that is a more or less “high” social connotation within a society) may have a certain *prix* relative to other languages as a generalization, the ideas of price and market is a bit of an over simplification. As Park and Wee (2012) explain, “No single market ever completely exhausts the totality of any individual's social experiences. All actors are simultaneously imbedded in

multiple markets, and because different markets are characterized by distinct norms and values, individuals are always faced with the need to reconcile the potentially conflicting demands – including demands related to language use – which various markets may impose upon them” (p. 29). Every last family circle, workplace, schoolroom, schoolyard, and restaurant, to name only a few examples, is a linguistic micro-market. Even for a member of the “high” language group, there may be instances where the price of not knowing the “low” language group can be not only occasionally embarrassing but also economically expensive. Take, for instance, the case of T.J. Hooks, one of the founders of Donna, Texas: “T.J. Hooks knew little Spanish. It was necessary for him to make previous arrangements at Rio Bravo for horses, so he could go to the ranch. Although he was exceedingly proud of knowing big words like *caballos* (horses), smaller words bothered him. *Uno* (one) and *once* (eleven) were two of these confusing words. One day while travelling alone, he was amazed to find eleven horses saddled and waiting for him to continue his journey. He paid for eleven horses and rode one” (Maddox, 1995, p. 49). There is no need to fear for Mr. Hook’s finances – after all, the former East Texas/Louisiana lumber magnate had been able to donate 1,200 acres and a cash bonus to entice the railroad to Donna, so he could spare some change for the extra horses. (Maddox, 1995, p. 50).

Which English(es)? Which Spanish(es)?

Remember the comment on Park and Wee made above? We temporarily ignored Park and Wee’s World Englishes perspective to focus on a clash between entirely different languages. However, World Englishes theory paves the way for consideration of a third problem, which is that even the apparently basic, fundamental idea of “language” is very hard to define. In a bilingual environment, one must measure not only Spanish versus English, but also “correct” North Mexican Spanish versus “espanGLISH”; “standard” Midwestern American versus Southern

American English; and so on. As Agha (2007) points out, even within the same language multiple linguistic registers (English or Spanish) may be used in the same region, yet be in an on-going “competing valorization” based on a complex mix of social reproduction systems (schools), social “asymmetries”, ideology, purely practical considerations, and so forth (p. 155-159). The price of a language in time does not remain constant in time and space; in 2014 South Texas, proper Spanish is considered valuable by the community consensus, even among English speakers who do not know the language; yet at this same date English-speakers in the rest of the United States may not share that valuation and feel threatened by Spanish in “their” country. It is also worth noting that I wrote “proper Spanish” – while the pure, abstract, Platonic form-materialized-as-speech form of a language is quite elusive from a pluralistic linguistic point of view (see Hall, 2013, p. 213-214) the asymmetry of language lives on in the South Texas region in the frequent condemnation of code switching by Spanish L1s with strong ties to Mexico (see Vojtko , 2004), and the defense of this manifestation of linguistic creativity by some South Texas Spanish-English bilinguals (see Anzaldúa, 1987). For the sake of space, this paper skips over this massive question (a question so large that literally hundreds if not thousands of sociolinguists have devoted their entire academic careers it) in order to gain the rhetorical flexibility granted by the simplified (and admittedly simplistic) dual constructs of English and Spanish.

The Interconnected Sociologies of a Language and Its People

A fourth caveat: Linguistic markets are not so clean-cut and theoretically elegant as mere mathematical models of status. There is a complex mix of status not just of the languages in question, but also of the relative status of the people in question. The racist structures of the Southern United States, including Texas, during this period are well known. So, attitudes toward speakers often rub off on languages, and vice versa. Ishtla Singh (1999) explains “Failure to

recognize the validity of another language has to do with attitudes toward the speakers of these languages....” For example, in the United States, there are often negative attitudes toward the intellectual capacity of Spanish-English bilinguals in elementary schools, and the same can be said for popular perception Turkish-German bilinguals in Germany. Yet a German-English bilingual at a university in either the U.S.A or Germany is considered “smart.” The explanation for this paradox, says Singh, “may be partly to do with the perceived status of the language in question, partly to do with the status of the speaker, and partly to do with the isolation of the élite bilingual whose linguistic diversity is not seen as a threat to the majority population.” (Singh, 1999, p. 95). Ishtla Singh’s observation helps explain the difference in the pro-Spanish attitudes of the élite, old (mid-1800s arrivals) South Texas bilingual families (see the Andrew Champion and Brewster interviews below) and the disinterested or even hostile opinions of many new arrivals who came at the turn of the twentieth century.

We will take time for a fifth and final complication, although more could be added: namely that not only was there inequality between English L1s and those of Spanish L1s (usually on racial rather than strictly linguistic grounds), but also old inequalities among the latter (see González, 1929). That being said inter-Spanish-L1 stratification did diminish following the common calamity that was the transformation of the old Mexican Far North into the American Southwest after 1848. Balestra (2008) demonstrates this convergence of Spanish-speakers via an analysis of personal letters from the era (*Formas de tratamiento*, 2008, p. 82).

Concepts to Keep in the Reader’s Pocket

As you digest the material in the oral histories below, there are a few concepts that may aid you in keeping critical perspective vis-à-vis the temptation to get swallowed up in the story

(not that that would be a bad thing from a narrative point of view – but stories alone do not research make).

Stance

One helpful concept is that of stance. Jaffe defines the active aspect of stance – stancetaking as “taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one’s utterance” (2009, p. 3). Stance is important because it is composed of the linguistic traces left by the position a communicator has taken vis-à-vis whatever she or he is talking about. In the ethnolinguistically charged interviews below, the stance of the speaker will be vital in understanding their contribution to our understanding of South Texas sociolinguistics. Johnston, writing in Jaffe 2009, helpfully quotes Du Bois (2007), on the subject of stance in a way that shows just how connected the concept is to every feature of identity, linguistics, and society. “Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (the self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field” (Johnstone in Jaffe, 2009, p. 31). Indeed, Du Bois’ term “triangle” highlights the connections that can be made between any two communicators and their object of reference (Johnstone in Jaffe, 2009, p. 31). More often than not in our study, an interviewer-interviewee-events triangle fits Du Bois’ model nicely.

Intra- and Inter-Cultural Taken-for-Granteds (TFGs)

A concept that comes in handy for the interviews with substantial code-switching (see Delia Ramírez Alaniz, p.259, for example), is the idea of intercultural *taken-for-granted*s (TFGs). An example Fitch (2003) uses of a TFG is a family dinner-conversation in which the father talks exclusively in Spanish and other family members persist using in English, yet no one

seems frustrated or put off. And why should they? They are all bilingual, and a diglossic conversation is an un-remarked upon because it is a TFG in such situations (Fitch, 2003, p. 91-95). It is unsurprising to those who use it precisely because a TFG is, for those who use it, an “unmarked, typical” (Fitch, 2003, p. 95) feature of conversations. Thus in an oral interview between bilinguals, such an exchange ruffles neither speaker, even while it may baffle a historian for whom such behavior is a novel phenomenon.

Power and Discourse Analysis

The reader – and especially the listener – will notice a difference in tone between confident and hurt speakers. The difference will line up rather nicely with what Bourdieu, Park, and Agha would have predicted: English L1s with easy grasp of status English routinely describe the same region in starkly divergent terms from those used by those in less easy circumstances. Glowing evocations of paradise can be juxtaposed with stories of starvation. As Youmans (2007) points out, language and power are intimately connected. “Language creates power” and “power creates language” (p. 49-50). A person’s status and power inevitably (even if unconsciously) affect how they speak. Youmans connects this to Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) idea that “minorities simply may not have access to the cultural capital...of power language” (2007, p. 51). The connection between cultural capital and the leisure to learn a language will become clear in interview by poverty-stricken language learners in the RGV oral history collection. For more on language and power, see Fairclough (1989, 1995). For how language and power connect to racism, see virtually the entire life work of Dutch discourse analyst Theo Van Dijk. To understand how both Fairclough’s and Van Dijk’s methods can be applied to power via discourse analysis, see Hill and Irvine (1993) (Machin and Mayr (2012), Paltridge (2012), Phillips and Jørgensen (2002), Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) and Gee (2010). I shied away from

including these theorists' work overtly in this paper because their critical approach – usually aimed at politicians and the media would be uncharitable toward average folks who kindly donated their memories to history.

Beyond Coercion: Agha and Linguistic Commodities

One disadvantage of focuses on coercion or power is that it obscures the voluntary acts people take in regards to language. While coercion and power may apply to Spanish L1 children who learned English in school, or to English L1 agricultural foremen who learned Spanish to keep a job, Agha (2011) reminds us that language is just one feature of a complicated set of features that together form an individual's lifestyle. Within a consumer society (and part of the revolution of the land rush was the transformation of the Rio Grande Valley into just such as society), language is a commodity. This sounds like Bourdieu, Park, or Wee, but Agha backs off the factory-built hard commodity analogy built into "price" and thinks more along the lines of social statements made in the context of a complex web of social semiotics. Just as a owning brand name stuff carries more value than the stuff itself is really worth, thanks to the shared semiotic or symbolic power that such goods have for placing the user into the group of people who have or do X, so specific language use brings more than its financial or social capital: it places the language user into the discourse community and social group of those who can (or choose to) use the same language. Just as some rich people eschew status symbol automobiles, and some middle class people use credit for cars they can't afford, so language use is not automatically determined by class factors (even though constrained by them); sometimes language use is a lifestyle choice (Agha 2011).

Second Language Acquisition

It is not possible to perform in-depth case studies on the learning processes of historical persons on the basis of a sixty-minute interview on local history, but it would be a good idea to briefly encapsulate some basic elements of Second Language Acquisition theory that will be referred to from time to time in the cases of individual interviewees.

The social nature of language learning. The market model cannot always account for why someone uses a language – sometimes language use is better examined via the more personal model of relationships or friendships. One English L1 interviewee who got confused with school Spanish picked it up once he married a Spanish L1 (see the Roy Lester Rydl interview, p. 117). Others learned the other language from playmates. Pressing these situations into the market model is technically possible (the *marché* of friendship?) but also brutally impersonal. In such cases, a theory with which to analyze this relational aspect of SLA is perhaps that rooted in the socioculturalist thought of Les Vygotsky. The key contribution of this body of thought is that language learning is “social: ‘the source of development resides in the environment rather than in the individual’” (Lantolf, 2006a, p. 726, qtd. in Ortega, 2009, p. 239). Vygotskians formalize this in the Zone of Proximal Development, a zone made up of the gap between what learners can accomplish unaided and what they can do with guidance (Ortega, p. 224). This will show up in interviews such as that with Josefina Acosta, who tries to learn English at home instead of going to school (p. 251).

Another useful strand of SLA theory is the idea of language socialization. Some theorists feel that language cannot truly be learned independently of culture. Since the words in a language make reference to external objects and ideas in a culturally determined way,

socialization into a culture is key to determining not just appreciation of the language, but the actual forms used (Mitchell and Myers, 2004, p. 235-237). There are pragmatic issues, of course, in interviews: how much a person feels expected to talk, turn-taking, interruptions, as so forth are culturally normed aspects of language. Yet it is not just the rhythm of speech determined by culture: the very structure and components of speech are culturally normed, as well, and one must be socialized into the language to know them. They cannot be learned in their entirety independently with grammar books and a dictionary. One's place in society (age, class, gender, occupation, etc.) has implications for the lexical, morphological, and syntactic choices people make in their use of language. For instance, the use of respectful forms in Spanish, non-standard English from an "insider" perspective (ain't) or non-standard forms resulting from Spanish-interference all derive from the culture in which the individual learned the language.

Stephen Krashen's concept of an affective filter – though it cannot explain everything that goes on in determining the relationship of attitude to language learning – is also a handy concept to keep in mind. Krashen's idea is that if negative feelings (a barrier, or "filter" to receiving information) are high, learning will suffer (Krashen 1982, p. 30-32; Loewen and Reinders, 2011, p.9). It will be clear in the interviews that not all language learning happened in an equality felicitous environment. The experience of an English L1 child who learned Spanish from playmates in an environment of freedom (English was allowed, just useless, for William Robinson, p. 258) is different from a Spanish L1 child (such as Gilberto López, p. 247) who learned English in a school where Spanish was not allowed to be spoken and where he felt his L1 was not appreciated. Such a classroom environment is clearly not conducive to SLA, and it does not lead to amicable relations between language communities in later life, either.

Input and interaction. Another piece of Krashen’s SLA model helpful for our case is the need for incremental, comprehensible input (overheard, intelligible use of the L2) as a key to successfully learning language. Grammar will follow from what is overheard (Krashen, 1982, p. 20-22; Mitchell and Myles, 2004, p. 166-167). An addendum to the idea of input is Michael Long’s interaction hypothesis, which maintains that comprehension and clarification strategies developed during conversations in the L2 can help make a greater proportion of input received comprehensible (thus aiding SLA) (Long, 1996; Myles and Mitchell, 2004, p. 167).

This paper focuses on language and society rather than the mechanics of language learning. Nevertheless, the fact that the brain needs steady, incremental input and frequent interaction with the L2 in order for the brain to assimilate the language does have clear sociolinguistic implications. If society is constructed such that speakers of different languages are to some extent kept separate from each other, then input and interaction are reduced and “accidental” SLA by virtue of everyday L2 contact is reduced as well.

Mixing Linguistics and Oral History: Agha & Singh on Metapragmatics

We have considered oral history in one chapter and sociolinguistics in another, but as we proceed from theory to the material itself, it is worth noting a place where the linguistics and recorded histories intersect. While the material in the Rio Grande Valley Oral History collection is authentic in the sense of having been gathered from first-person witnesses, its reliability is subject not only to the inherent subjectivity of any recounting of the past, but also to a more basic limitation at the level of the language itself. Linguistic anthropologist Asif Agha warns us that the registers speakers use is affected by “typifications of language use” that embody larger, often unconscious, “metapragmatic stereotypes” (Agha 2007, p. 150-151). Agha notes that

“judgments elicited through interviews” are among the language use categories in which speakers are especially likely to use a register that diverges somewhat from their normal speech patterns (2007, p. 151). How much of what a person says and how much of how he or she said it has been modified to meet the expectations of an encounter with an interviewer is difficult to determine in hindsight, when one does not have access to the register used by an individual in situations other than the interview. However, as will become apparent below, different interviewers (especially Anglo English monolinguals versus Spanish-speaking or bilingual interviewers) do succeed in drawing out different comments from those interviewed. The varied refracting of the information by various interviewers is to be expected. As Ishtla Singh (1999) writes, “We inherit the linguistic signs of the speech community we are born into, and there seems to be evidence that the meanings of those signs influence the way in which we can then perceive the world around us.” (p. 88). A detailed analysis of the differing registers used in these situations would likely be instructive, but that project lies beyond the scope of this present study.

Narrative: Concretizing Theory and Empowering Knowledge

Beyond Existing Theory

The great weakness of the Bourdieu-Park-Wee market family of theories is that (like all sociological theories) a metaphor or a model – however useful - cannot fully account for all of the emotions, antagonisms, friendships, family connections, random playmates, and other complicated human happenings that take place on a micro scale, below the macro level of social theory. While the Vygotskian theory reference above corrects for some of this by focusing on social relationship in language learning, it swings too far the other direction at times by not providing a tool for distinguishing between learning motivated by constructively engaged

classrooms, friendship, love, or intrinsic motivation on the one hand, and learning in contexts of coercion on the other. This paper is not arguing for the legitimacy of any of the above frameworks. Like a wrench, a theory is a tool to be used when its dimensions fit the task, and discarded when it does not. Looking through the oral histories, one will note overall tendencies that confirm the market analogy for language dynamics, but also some glorious anomalies that force theorists to throw up their hands and recognize that humans are happily irrational creatures. People's actions, especially in emotional-cultural areas such as language, often stick fingers in the eye of social theory. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any theory will capture all the complex foibles of human nature, not even in a single realm such as language. As Bourdieu himself reminded linguists and sociologists alike, "to be able to see and describe the world as it is [was?], you have to be ready to be always dealing with things that are complicated, confused, impure, uncertain, all of which runs counter to the usual idea of intellectual rigor" (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Krais, 1991, p. 259, quoted in Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, 2002, p. 80).

Narrative as a Means to Empowering Knowledge

As researchers, the response to the above skepticism on theory need not be to throw up one's hands; rather, sociologists and sociolinguists can combine the reflection gained by theorizing with the implicit recognition of "complicated, confused, uncertain" reality afforded by narrative. Narrative (in its fictional form) builds its most basic structures from the conflicts created by reality's messes. However, sociolinguistics are not novelists; they cannot fictionalize and remain responsible. They can instead borrow from another academic discipline that bridges narrative and observation of society: history. History is, after all, "a collection of well-told stories" (Daly 2011). Theory may not make it past a classroom; when historical sociolinguists make use of the power of narrative to influence and engage with a broader public, sociolinguists

will be better able to make their observations on socially relevant situations available to a broader public.

In fact, researchers are merely cementing the élite's monopoly on knowledge if they do not find ways to make their findings available to the public they intend to benefit by their work. The genius of oral history narratives is twofold. First, as narratives, oral history can tell a story better understood and used in public discourse than the abstract formulations of theory alone. Second, by using as narrative not some historian's "authoritative" version of events, but instead giving published pages to the *vox populi*, the oral history narratives of everyday people allow marginalized interpretations of sociolinguistic (and other) realities to enter the academic space. The goal, then, of this blend of sociolinguistics and history is to give a voice to the people who actually experienced the events about which linguists have theorized.

PART II: NARRATIVES OF SOUTH TEXAS LANGUAGE CONTACT, 1904-1945

Table 7: Story Time - Table of Narratives Selected from the RGV Oral Histories

Bilingual Ranchers Pre-1900
The Champions and Smiths
Andrew Champion
Maria Castillo Brewster
Elias Cavazos
A Land Rush As Experienced By Immigrant English L1s
Andrew Jackson Munger
Roy Lester Rydl
John R. Peavy
Maude Henson Finney
Sophie Anne Hyba
Edna Dubois' husband
M.J. Baily
Lloyd Glover, Excerpt 1
Susan Alma Norton
Floyd Everhard
Beulah Bell Stuart, Excerpt 1

War In Mexico And A Spanish L1 Exodus To Texas
Isabel Loya
Manuela Barrios
Lucio Sierra
Andrés Silva
Anonymous (on Lilia Ramos tape), Excerpt 1
John Rutoskey
Linguistic Capital in the Marketplace
Wendell T. Schwarz
Lloyd Glover, Excerpt 2
Minnie Norton Millikan
Water Rabe
Alicia Cano
Cosme Casares Muñoz
Lilia Ramos
Social Dynamics And Linguistic Consequences
Lloyd Glover, Excerpt 3
Juan Castillo
Nina J. LaFleur
Ina Buss
Leo J. Leo

Anita Cárdenas
Santos Cardoza
George Strohmeier
Harry Cole
Child Language Acquisition of Spanish by English L1s
Francis Lorraine Jensen
Wayne Claire Walker
Charles Langston
Frances Borman
English-Language Education for Spanish L1s
Beulah Bell Stuart: Excerpt 2
Didio Cecilio Rodriguez
Anonymous (on Lilia Ramos tape), Excerpt 2
Carolina García
Timoteo Patrón
Gilberto López
Delia Ramírez Alaniz
Josefina Ibañez Acosta
Sila López
William Robinson
Third Languages During the Land Rush
Swedish in Stockholm, Texas

Harold Brehm
Elma Krumdieck Koch Dutschman
William Smid

NOTE: The above oral histories – and indeed all oral interview recordings used in this thesis – are used courtesy of the University of Texas - Pan American's Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection. As of August 2015, this collection will be housed the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley. The recordings will be accessible via the UTRGV library website; the physical copies will be stored in the Lower Rio Grande Valley Archive, located on the first floor of the UTRGV Edinburg campus.

CHAPTER V

BILINGUAL RANCHERS PRE-1900

Champions and Smiths: Early Immigrant Spanish Learners

In 1887, the early immigrant Smith family came overland from Rockport, Texas, to Hidalgo County. Their daughter Ellen would go on to marry the Andrew Champion whose son's interview is included in the LRGV Oral History Collection. As Ellen and Andrew grew up in a country where Mexican culture and language were everywhere, they assimilated in many respects. Both spoke Spanish, and Andrew was Catholic – by far the dominant brand of Christianity in South Texas. The Champion family in particular was quite open to new experiences and new languages. Andrew's grandfather Albert Champion (1816-1890) had been an Italian L1 immigrant from the Austrian Empire who had settled at Port Isabel on the South Texas Coast. There, in 1850, Albert had married a Spanish L1, Estéfana Solís (A.A. Champion, 2010). Given Andrew's family's heritage and Ellen's family's pioneering tendencies, it comes as no surprise that both Andrew and Ellen easily merged into the Spanish-speaking culture.

When the Smiths arrived, they reported finding “only two American schools,” one in Hidalgo and the other in La Grulla (Maddox, 1955, p. 27). This is unsurprising: because Hidalgo County lacked a school tax (Maddox, 1995, p. 27), there was no money to fund rural schools. The Smith's daughter Ellen consequently attended a “private Mexican school” where she learned Spanish. Showing how the sudden influx of American money would soon destabilize the Spanish

L1 economy, the private ranch schools of the era charged tuition in the form of “eggs, chickens, corn, or beans” (Maddox, 1995, p. 27). In Ellen’s case, the school was El Esterito, where “a Mexican flag was proudly displayed and the children were told about Mexican heroes” (Maddox 28). The newcomers also began to remedy the lack of education available in the Valley. A future difficulty would be segregated, or at least hostile, schools, but again the first attempts at educational facilities were integrated. The Ruthven family (the Ruthven men had arrived in the 1890s, and their family came in 1903) installed themselves south of modern Donna in a town they called Run (from the name Ruthven) (Maddox 36-38). There “Mary Hester started the first Run school” in 1905, and both Mexican and Anglo Americans filled the seats (Maddox 38). A similar one-teacher school operated on the ranch that would become San Juan (Maddox 38).

Andrew Champion

(interview 1982 with Robert Norton)

Ellen’s husband, Andrew Champion, belonged to a prominent family whose family’s name marks street signs in several Rio Grande Valley cities, and adorns an elementary school in Brownsville.³⁰

I will risk a digression into his family’s story for the purpose of illustrating the type of English L1 Americans who had already ventured into South Texas prior to its integration into mainstream America during the land rush. Born in 1899 in Santa Maria (in Cameron County, of

³⁰ From the website of A.A. Champion Elementary in Brownsville, TX (at 4750 Bowie Road): “The school was named for A. A. Champion, a noted local historian, rancher, and public servant. Champion pursued a lifetime of knowledge regarding the history of the area in which he lived and became a nationally recognized historical source for the South Texas and Northern Mexico areas. It was Champion’s research which provided the U.S. Park Service with the actual location of the Palo Alto Battlefield, now a National Historical Site in Cameron County. Frequently described as a ‘true gentleman,’ A.A. Champion also served his community as a U.S. Customs officer, Brownsville City Commissioner, and member of the Texas Southmost Board of Trustees. Bea Garcia was the school’s first principal.” (A.A. Champion Elementary. “School History.” <http://www.greatschools.org/texas/brownsville/9095-Champion-Elementary-School/>)

which Brownsville is the county seat, his family moved to Donna in 1916. Champion's place in the social strata can be seen in his education; rather than learn in the Valley's new, struggling schools, he was sent in the 6th or 7th grade to a boy's school in San Antonio, where he attended through high school, graduating early at the age of 16. When World War I broke out, young Andrew joined the Marines just four days after war declared against Germany in 1917. He was sent to France June to November 1919 – he stayed an extra year in Paris while recuperating from getting shot and badly wounded. He used the stay to brush up on his family's ancestral language: French.

Who were the Champions? His father (Andrew as well) had been born in Port Isabel , while his mother's family (his maternal grandfather and family) came from Mississippi in 1902, and farmed in Progreso, also known (in those days) as Toluca Ranch (there is still a Toluca Ranch Road in Progreso). His grandmother taught school at Toluca Ranch. His father's mother (paternal grandmother) was from Spain. His grandfather was French. They had arrived about the same time Texas became a state, 1845, at Port Isabel. From that time the Europeans immersed themselves in Texan culture, to the point of stereotype: the elder Andrew had joined the Texas Rangers and served in the Pecos/Fort Stockton region. Nevertheless, the young Andrew acquired a good education, including studies in Latin (“My senior year in high school I was taking...besides English, I was doing, I was translating Latin. And I have still my translations in Latin” [37:20-37:54]). This trilingual (English/Spanish/Latin) background and long residence (for a Euro-American) in South Texas meant an economic opportunity that actually enhanced his language skills: work in Mexico. [29:01]

After returning from the war, and finalizing his education at St. Mary's in San Antonio, Champion snagged a job in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, with an oil company. By his own account,

he had the social skills (probably including language) to “bluff” his way into job he was not otherwise qualified for:

[38:18-41:00]

Andrew Champion: “I’d like to give you more on that educational job that I took in Mexico.”

Robert Norton: “Okay.”

AC: “I took this, I just related here – this man Bryson got me this job. And they needed, uh, a man to take care of the analyt-, uh, analytical division. And I didn’t really know what I was getting into. But I, I needed a job badly, and I, I just bluffed myself into that job. I had taken this auditor’s course, as an auditor. And I, they also took, I had taken the last two years there, and I keep thinking to myself, this school, were teaching us things that you’d take when you’re a freshman in college. I took a full book-keeping course and finished it, that last year. So I took this course, and I took this job, in the analytical division. Ebano, state of San Luis Potosi, with Standard of Indiana. And finally, we had our office – I had my office down below, and they had what we called the Hill, and that where the general office of that company was, on top this hill. And the head man, the head man that ran this part of the business his name was Ellis, and he came down one day and he said to me, “You bluffed your way into this job, didn’t you.” I said “Yes I did, Mr. Ellis.” And he said “Why’d you do it?” And I said “Because I needed this job. I had to have it.” And he said, “OK, I’m going to, going to, going to help you...”

AC: “You couldn’t buy anything....To give you a better picture of this field, this oil field, we had our own chicken farm, we had our own vegetable garden, we had our own hospital. We had to. There wasn’t a thing there. We were isolated, way out there—”

RN: “So did you hire a lot of natives?”

AC: “What?”

RN: “For the work?”

AC: “We had uh - All were natives with the exception of your drillers, two dressers, and uh, the uh, booking department (the analytical department, or the bookkeeping department, our business). But the rest were all natives.”

As a result of having lived in San Luís Potosí and having worked for a company that had hired mostly Spanish speakers, most from Mexico, Andrew acquired good friends in Mexico – Spanish-speaking friends. Thanks to his connections with both language communities and both sides of the border, Champion also provides a more neutral account of the “border troubles” that poisoned inter-ethnic relations between the Anglo- and Mexican-Americans between 1915-18 than the sensationalized accounts that circulated among many. While the Northerners we will meet later occasionally referenced their fear of “bandits,” with the exception of Minnie M. Norton and Beulah Stuart they will be remarkably short on any actual experiences with bandits (see the story of Lloyd Glover’s mother, p. 135) Champion, on the other hand, talked first-hand to an eyewitness of bandit robbery – and, just as reality is always more complicated than the sensationalized versions of any given conflict – the victims were not new arrivals from the north but Spanish L1s from the border region.

[51:17-52:47]

AC: “[During the border troubles of 1914-1919] Don Florencio Saenz had a store there. And uh, during that time that uh, see, they came, the bandits came across the river one night and held him up. And they had a wagon, and uh, I guess they stole the wagon somewhere, and they had this wagon, and they told him, they were loading this wagon full of sugar, beans, pinto beans, or whatever they had in those days, loaded it up, and they told him that they wanted his money. And he told them I don’t have any money, I just made a deposit a few days ago, and I sent a man

to Brownsville with the money. And this leader said to him, there was five of them, he said “You’re lying, and we’re going to kill you.” So then, then Florencio Saenz ‘s wife came out, she was hearing the whole thing, she was back in the room, she came out, and she walked in front, and she said, that, “My husband’s telling the truth. Why do you want to abuse him? If you want to kill somebody, kill me. And she bluffed them. She ran them out. Her name was uh[tone suggests remembering], her name was Sósthene.”

RN: “What was it?”

AC: “Sósthene. That was her first name.”

RN: “Oh yeah.”

AC: “They called her Doña Sósthene. And she said, in Spanish, *¿Por qué van a estar abusando de mi esposo? Si ustedes desean matar a alguien, mátenme a mí.* “Don’t abuse my husband, if you want to kills somebody kill me.”

RN: “Kill me?!”

AC: “Yes, and the man said, we don’t want to kill you lady. And they backed off and loaded up a wagon full of groceries and left.”

The Spanish quotation indicates that he had heard the story in Spanish from the Saenz family. This familiarity shows someone much more in tune with both sides of the linguistic divide in the Valley than some of the newcomers would be.

Maria Brewster Castillo

(Interview 1987 with Norma Linda Canales)

Another family of long residence in the Rio Grande Valley were the Brewsters, who lived on a ranch near Hidalgo, Texas – established as a river crossing in the 1840s, Hidalgo is the original county seat of Hidalgo county, and a town that predates the larger land rush towns of the

county such as McAllen, Edinburg, and Mission. The Brewsters were one of the first Anglo-American families in the area, but they quickly blended with the Mexican-American population (as Maria's name indicates). Maria Brewster Castillo (b. 1916) was bilingual, and there is some code-switching during offside comments with the interviewer (Norma Linda Canales). In fact, her bilingualism extends back to her crib, as she remembers a Spanish-English bilingual lullaby she was sung [48:02-49:04].

Norma Canales: "And then you had a very big porch in the front, [MC: yes, uh, huh] back there, and *allí se sentaban en las tardes.*"

Maria Castillo: "Oh yes, uh huh. And I remember the rocking chair that, uh, my daddy used to put me to sleep there."

NC: "In the front porch?"

MC: "Yeh, in the front porch...and right there there's a big, uh, rocking chair, and my daddy used to tell me when I grew up, that he used to rock me there and say – I wanted him to sing to me, the uh, little song, 'El bebé de papa':

El bebé de papá
If the baby's little,
If she go to sleep
The next day she's an angel."

NC: "Aw!"

What is the background to a family from the heart of Dixie ending up in a Mexican border town singing bilingual lullabies to the pioneer's granddaughter? The story Maria Brewster

Castillo tells of her family's arrival in South Texas hints at the integration that had occurred with earlier English L1 immigrants to the area.

[0:13-6:05]

Maria Castillo: "Well, my name is Mary Brewster Castillo. Of course, I'm a Brewster from my maiden name from my father. My father is – his name was John Manuel Brewster. And my mother was Paulita Castañeda, a regional from Hidalgo, Texas. She was born and raised in Hidalgo, Texas. When Hidalgo was named – eh, uh, -eh –

Norma Canales: "You can say it is Spanish if you want."

MC: [whispering] "¿Cómo se decía eso?"

NC: "That's okay."

MC: "I don't know – I told you before, *verdad?* Ay–"

NC: "Chavez?"

MC: "No – *no sé* – it was a funny name, I don't remember."

NC: "But your daddy came from somewhere else, no?"

MC: "Oh, well my daddy came from, was his family from Mississippi or Alabama, I'm not sure about it, maybe. His father was Doctor William Brewster, married to a Minerva Smith Brewster. They came in covered wagons from Mississippi or Alabama - as a recall my mother telling me about my father."

NC: "Do you remember more or less what year? Or do you not remember that sort of thing?"

MC: "Well, it was long, long before 1904, I know that. Maybe the eighteens, probably. Mhmm. They was only like little children when they came down, with their parents. Like eight or nine years old."

NC: "And then, the Mr. Brewster was the doctor."

MC: “My grandfather was a doctor, and my grandmother, Minerva, was a nurse. Course my grandfather worked around the – from Rio Grande to – I understand from Rio Grande to Brownsville and in his little buggy, and all the little ranches, Los Indios, La Gloria, back to Brownsville, and sometimes he’d cross to Mexico, to Matamoros.”

NC: “So he would go take care of people in their homes?”

MC: “In their homes, yes. And she–”

NC: “And how long would that take? A trip take?”

MC: “Well that I know, I don’t know, I don’t remember, maybe months? I understand two or three months. He would go, you know, and spend time in every little ranch he could. He could stay anywhere, he was welcome.”

NC: “Mhm.”

MC: “And uh, my grandmother, Minerva, she stayed as a midwife. Being a nurse, she took over as midwife, you know, all the little poor people in the ranch, they had babies, she would take care of that.”

NC: [affirmative mumbling]

MC: “My mother used to tell me, because that was long before I was born. But I remember, I recall other things that my mother used to tell me, and my father. We used to have a ranch there for many years.”

NC: “And this is in Hidalgo?”

MC: “Mhmm. Habitación. Hidalgo – when my mother was – now I remember! When my mother was born, Hidalgo, Texas, was named Habitación.”

NC: “Oh!”

MC: “Habitación. It was the name of it, little town there. And that’s where my mother was born.”

NC: “But she would have been born in the eighteen hundreds, verdad?”

MC: “Oh, yes, uhuh, in 1800s. My mother was born in uh, eighteen hundred seventy four! August the twenty-six. In Hidalgo. Mhm! And that was the name, Habitacion. And she was baptized here, too.”

NC: “Do you remember if her parents were from here, or from Mexico, your mother’s parents.”

MC: “I don’t remember about my grandmother, my mother, on my mother’s side. But my father, my grandfather on my mother’s side was born in um, Goliad, Texas.”

NC: “Goliad?”

MC: “In Goliad, Texas. Uhuh. I don’t know what year, whatever, but my mother used to tell me that he came from there.”

NC: “Okay, Goliad.”

MC: “How he got there, I don’t know, but she remembered that he usually stayed, he came from Goliad, Texas. Maybe he was born there, maybe not, but I don’t recall.”

NC: “Mhmm.”

MC: “But I was born 1916. But before that, of course, my father, uh, as I remember, in 1914, maybe before that, he was a Texas Ranger. I have – that’s why I have his picture there, with his group of men. It was taken – that picture was taken in Cotulla, Texas , in nineteen, nineteen, 1914.”

NC: “So he was a Texas Ranger?”

MC: “He was a Texas Ranger.”

NC: “And I guess he worked here in the border?”

MC: “Yes, here, all through the border of – Like a border patrol, but they had to take care of the border. Because it’s when the –”

NC: “Do you remember if it was very dangerous, for, *para hacer esto?*”

MC: “I don’t remember them telling me things like that, what I do remember: After I was born, maybe in ’16 or ’17 was when the war, you know, the World War First, I guess?”

NC: “Mhm, *Sí.*”

MC: “She used to give me a bottle a lot of time because I cried, you know, I was hungry. A baby’s a baby. And a neighbor used to come and stay with my mother, with her family, because they were afraid of the – you know, the people who – the *bandidos.*”

NC: “The *bandidos?*”³¹

MC: “Mhm, and they would come and stay at our home....”

Castillo goes on to describe the old rural life of the region. San Juan Plantation had been a little community, active years before the city of McAllen (6:00-7:00). The rural nature of the region shines through; she remembers coyote hides lying in stacks to take into Brownsville to be sold in the *almacén* owned by a Mr. Ross in Brownsville. Yet there was luxury as well: the chair the interviewee is sitting on was *austriaco*,³² imported via Brownsville circa 1909-10 (10:00). The Spanish words she peppers throughout to describe these items hint toward her Spanish-speaking yet ex-Texas Ranger father – an anomaly in the bitter feelings that would develop between the Rangers and the Mexican-American people of the Valley.

³¹ Later on in the interview (13th and 14th minutes) Castillo explains that her Texas Ranger father wouldn’t have been involved in the bandit troubles of 1915 and following because in late 1914 health troubles forced him out of the Ranger corps. By 1922 he had become an optometrist!

³² Spanish for *Austrian*.

After health concerns forced her father out of the Ranger corps, he became a travelling optometrist. It appears that discussion about his practice was largely conducted in Spanish, because Castillo code-switches to *ambulante* to describe the nomadic nature of her father's work [14:58-15:01] – NC has to remind her of the English equivalent.

The code-switching becomes particularly pronounced around 19:00, as they discuss el primer Puente de Hidalgo, apparently because they are looking at a Spanish inscription on a photograph dated 1939:

[19:11-19:57]

MC: “‘*El primer Puente de Hidalgo, cuándo se cayó.*’ *Porque se cayó.*”

NC: “¿*Se cayó?*”

MC: “Si, *se cayó* and it drowned.”

MC: “Yeah, *mira. A ver - mira, mira.* [Parece que está leyendo.] ‘El día 12 de noviembre de 1939 – ah, se volvió a caer’ – it was twice it failed and yeah, 1939, el puente de Hidalgo y hubo un ahogado, el señor era de Edinburg. Uh-huh. But it was 1939 *cuando se cayó.* When it was built, I do not remember.”

NC: “But what happened, it just fell?”

MC: “It just fell.”

NC: “No *habia* like high winds or anything like that?”

MC: “I don’t remember how it fell. But, *pero*, the ferry...”

....

The bridge was not the only way across; there was a ferry (*El Chalán*). She still remembers a boat trip her family took to Reynosa in 1922. The boats were big enough to put cars

on, and people did – thus showing a freer movement of people – and language– than exists along the border in the post-September-2001 era.

Young Maria went to school in San Juan Plantation – at least sometimes (24:30ff). They didn't go to school when it drizzled; she suspected “that's why I'm not so bright.” School was in English; she learned language-related things quite well, having memorized her first book, which along with several poems she can still recite in their entirety. She never memorized the times tables, though! However, she only went to school through the 5th grade, at which point her mother was crippled by *reumatismo* and her education ended. “From there on I kept the house,” learning to milk cows and perform other farming tasks. In this, Maria Brewster Castillo was conforming to a trend we will see across the region among rural children – little or reduced education because of the need to work.

Like so many others of the old ranching class during the period, young Maryita Brewster (as she was called at the ranch) saw her family's land taken away by the moneyed class. They lost the land to the bank over debts owed. Maria Castillo, however, did not seem to mind – when asked on what it was like to move from the ranch to the city, she replied, “I remember one thing when I was at the ranch, I never wanted to get married with any of the rancher kids around there, those little bums around there. I wanted to marry somebody from the city!” She got her wish, marrying the manager of a grocery store who worked from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm for \$7.00 per day [40:00-55:00].

Elias Cavazos: Bilingual Ranching Families in New English-Dominated Cities

(Interview in 1987 with Robert Norton)

As immense amounts of capital flowed into South Texas, deep pockets bought out smallholders who had fallen on hard times, sparing none of the old established grantee families.

The outbreak of violence in the ranchlands from 1915-18 compounded matters, as the isolated ranches (such as the McAllen's) were easy targets for raiders. Indeed, even James McAllen's widow, Margaret Rhode McAllen, found herself forced to sell off much of the McAllen-Ballí family land in the Santa Anita royal grant (although she held on to the San Juanito portion, and a small remnant of the McAllen ranch remains in the family and in operation to this day off Monte Cristo road in north Edinburg)³³ (Amberson, M; Amberson, J.; and McAllen, Kindle Loc. 9481-9557). Other porción heirs fared no better. In the case of another union of Spanish L1 and English L1 families (in this case, Cavazos and Box), one Elias Cavazos was born on their El Sauz ranch in 1901. In his old age he told his story to Hidalgo county historian Robert Norton.

Born in 1901 on El Sauz Ranch, Elias left McAllen in 1925 for New York City, where he met his wife Kathleen. The two were married there in 1934, but the couple returned to the Rio Grande Valley in 1977. Elias Cavazos had some social capital in the Texan world – he was related to a Battle of San Jacinto veteran on his mother's side. His maternal grandfather, Mr. (yes, Mr.) Lina Helen Box, was a lawyer and customs inspector whose family owned the large Porción 72, which once ran in a narrow strip from the river to present-day Edinburg. From a linguistic point of view, Box - an Alabama native – was one of the first English L1s in the area, and his marriage into the Mexican-Texan aristocracy ensured bilingualism for his children. In Elias' childhood, however the changing times doomed his family's ranch. His grandmother Box lost some land to lawyers after Lina's death. Later, his father Porfirio Cavazos agreed to sell the entirety of their ranchland to John Closner's group, the Louisiana-Rio Grande Land and Sugar Company. The ranchers moved into the new city of McAllen. Elias' own story ended happily – he moved to New York, married Kathleen (a daughter of Irish immigrants), enjoyed a long

³³ The ranch is private, but those interested can get a brief overview of the land's complicated history on the McAllen Ranch website: <http://www.mcallenranch.com/history/ranch-history/> (Accessed March 31, 2015).

career for Western Union, and finally moved back to McAllen to retire. Still, his story shows the changes the new economy brought to the old order. Let us look at some of Elias' story in his own words.

. Like many bilingual border ranching families (such as the McAllens-Ballí and Brewster-Castillo ranches above), the Box family had a hard time hanging onto their land as society changed around them. Robert Norton and Elias Cavazos have the following exchange that illustrates the issue.

[34:03 – 36:59]

RN: “I couldn't help but notice that in some of the legal transactions, this is when you showed me some letters now a while ago; there was a rather stiff legal fee involved – I think it cost 450 acres of land for some sort of a document – tell us about that sort of thing before we leave the Valley. What do you recall about that?”

EC: “I, I don't remember too much about that. But, no I don't rec –“

RN: “It was customary to take legal fees, like they'd sign over so much land and that sort of thing back in those days –“

EC: “Oh, oh yes, and uh I, uh I don't know, it was terrible the way they took land away from some of the natives. But they took advantage of my grandmother. Because she was a widow, and she had young children, so they really took advantage of her.”

RN: “How much land did the, did the Boxes own at the height of their –“

EC: “Well the –“

RN: “Four or five thousand acres, wasn't it?”

EC: “Oh, uh, I heard, talking, it was all the way from the river bank, all the way to Edinburg. A strip of land that long, and I don’t know about the width. The width I don’t know. But it was

Porción 72. The whole *porcion*, - “

RN: “The whole *porcion*, there was”

EC: “Belonged to my grandfather.”

RN: That was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide, then, $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, if it was the whole *porcion*.”

EC: “It was. And I notice in one of his letters, there, that he had bought 500 acres or something besides that. So he owned quite a bit of land.”

RN: “Well, when she spent 450 acres of it for legal fees, it still wasn’t too much of it, was it?”

EC: “No, no, it wasn’t considering that. But it was awful.”

RN: “Who ended up with most of that? I think that, I know that Mr. Closner was buying a lot of land around here.”

EC: “That was Closner. Closner, I think, got most of it.”

RN: “Bought it, huh?”

EC: “Yes, it was Closner. And uh--”

RN: “The Alamo Land and Sugar Company – no, not the Alamo, but the uh, uh, I should be able to come up with the name of it, but anyway the San Juan Plantation.”

EC: “The San Juan Plantation was there, yes.”

RN: “Well, that was interesting how things changed hands back in those days.”

EC: “Oh, yeah!” [sarcasm dripping]

RN: “And the Cavazos family, then, your father, moved from the farm to McAllen, didn’t he? Isn’t that correct?”

EC: “Well, no, we moved from the farm, from that ranch, to, uh, south, out to [wife Kathleen interjects: “McAllen”], well, yeah, McAllen, in 1910.”

CHAPTER VI

A LAND RUSH AS EXPERIENCED BY IMMIGRANT ENGLISH L1S

Andrew Jackson Munger: Social Realities in Early McAllen-Mission

(Interview in 1987 with Johan Carl Seagren)

As we begin a journey that will explore often ugly social realities in early South Texas, it must be kept in mind that language learning occurs in a complicated socio-cultural matrix, and should not be oversimplified with a moralistic “monolingualism bad” mentality that turns the fact that someone may have had no reason to learn an L2 into an ethical issue. To be sure, many ethical issues do emerge in the process (such as the racism that separated the two language communities), but just as it would be wrong to fault some Texas Mexicans for being slow to adopt English, it would be equally misguided rebuke Midwesterners for not learning Spanish. To do so would be a moralistic reading of what – in Bourdieu’s theory – was primarily a matter of economics and social power structure. Simply put, just having a positive affect toward Spanish and even an appreciative attitude toward Spanish speakers is not enough to learn the language; Krashen (1982) argues that one must also have frequent comprehensible input and strong motivation. Speakers of the language undervalued by the *marché linguistique* have strong social and economic reasons to pick up the valued language; so, absent personal social reasons (friends/family) or economic reasons (it appears that many picked up just enough Spanish to talk to field workers), the small Midwestern immigrant farmer who worked his own land and (due to social structures that are hinted at in the interviews) socialized mostly with other Midwesterners

would find that passively waiting to learn Spanish by osmosis was unlikely. On such case is Andrew Jackson Munger (b. 1909), a Missourian who reached the Rio Grande Valley in 1936, at the age of about 27. Munger's explanation shows the futility of adult newcomer trusting to picking up Spanish by osmosis.

[17:18-18:00]

JCS: "What was your first impressions and everything about the Valley when you came down here?"

AM: "Uh, loved it [pause] and I still love it."

JCS: "That's good [yessir]: Did you find any challenges besides the language, you know, having not, having no knowledge of Spanish, was there, ah--"

AM: "Well, I thought that maybe in 10 years that I'd master it, when I first got here, but I've been here 50 and I haven't."

JCS: "[Ha ha ha] Oh my goodness. I hope I can learn it, maybe--"

AM: "Huh?"

JCS: "I hope I learn it, then. You know, what, you know, did uh, the Valley produce good crops? The last few years it's been kind of tough for the farmers down here. What was the farming conditions like when you first came down here?"

One possible explanation emerges later in the interview [19:15]:

JCS: "What about the people working down here? What were they like? You were a minority down here. There were more Mexicans--"

AM: "Not then."

JCS: "Not then? There were more Anglos than there were--"

AM: "Uh [pause]. Now, I was substitute mail carrier for 21 years."

JCS: “Uh huh.”

AM: “And they uh, the Mexicans at that time – in the 30s, early 40s – they all lived out in the country. Now they have all moved to town. In fact, over where we lived there, we had 2 or 3 Mexican houses in the back [mmhmm] of our place, where we lived. And uh, it uh, a majority of the Mexicans lived in two room houses, in the country. You can’t imagine the change that has been made in the last 50 years.”

JCS: “What was the relationship like, between Anglos and Hispanics? When you first came down here?”

AM: “Oh, it was, it was very good, but there was very few that spoke that spoke, English, and very few that spoke, Spanish [ha ha].”

JCS: “But they were still able to get along even though they might have the language barrier?”

AM: “Yeah.”

JCS: whereas today there seems to be a lot of racist feelings among Hispanics AND Anglos toward each other [yeah] and so that wasn’t as prevalent in the 30s and 40s when you came down here?

AM: Well no, no, this was, it was, [pause], good.”

Munger’s comments hint at another dynamic: As the pre-existing Spanish L1 population of Hidalgo County had been mostly rural, Munger is probably right that the opening decades of the new towns’ existence saw a higher ratio of English L1s in the cities, while most Spanish L1s were still living in the country. As would be expected from two groups then only briefly in contact, only a few in either language community spoke the language of the other. (As will become apparent later, this gap opened enormous doors for those who were bilingual). The depth of the gap between the two communities is illustrated by Munger’s comments later on in the

interview that only two “Mexican” girls graduated with his daughter, and that the Baptist church where he attended had “no Mexicans in it.” Historians have found that even the churches were divided along linguistic lines: “Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Catholics had both English-and Spanish-speaking congregations in any given town” (Balestra, Martínez and Moyna, 2008, p. 58). In an era in which faith communities were an epicenter of social events for many people, social divisions along linguistic lines would have had a negative effect on intercommunity language acquisition.

Roy Lester Rydl: Spanish as Taught in the Dakotas versus South Texas

(Interview in 1987 with Guadalupe Martinez)

It is worth recognizing that the vocabulary that researchers throw around with reference to language contact situations often coexists uneasily with the phenomena the vocabulary is meant to describe. Words such as “immigration” are much more complicated in real life than in theory. Even the simplest stock phrases -- “moving to the Valley” or “learning Spanish in school” -- could refer to rather more complex sets of events. Roy Lester Rydl, born in 1908 in Huron, South Dakota, moved back and forth between South Texas and South Dakota multiple times as a child. Initially, his Spanish SLA was badly compromised by the fact that Spanish as taught in a 1910s South Dakota high school and Spanish as spoken in Deep South Texas did not seem to the interviewee to be the same language. He did eventually learn Spanish, however, thanks to one of the classic SLA methods: he married a Spanish L1 wife.

[1:50-4:07]

Guadalupe Martinez: “And your father was a farmer, and carried on with his legacy?”

Roy Rydl: “Yes, dad was a farmer, he had three quarters of land in Dakota, and the in 1919, he decided to go south where it was warmer, to retire. So uh, my father and my mother and my

sister came to Texas, and, uh, they bought a sixty-acre farm in the Valley. I was uh, ten years old when we came to the Valley, that is, when I came with my father, and brother, to the Valley to live.

GM: “And here you continued with your farming as you did? [pause, implied *in Dakota*].”

RR: “Yes, we farmed more or less, farmed together. And uh, in, uh, 1925 I went back to South Dakota, my farm had repossessed his farm back there, so my mother and my sister and I went back to South Dakota. And I drove an old Model T Ford which, at that time, was a new car. It was a 1924. But in '25 I drove that Model T to South Dakota. We was on the road 14 and a half days, going from Alamo to here in South Dakota. And I uh spend ten years back up there. In the meantime I got married, the first time, in Heron, in '33. Then '35, between '29 and '35, the Depression and drought more or less drove us out of South Dakota so we came back to Texas and continued to run the farm down here.”

He goes on to bring up a sociolinguistically relevant fact about the local (Alamo, Texas) school. The interviewer asks him about what it was like to be at school as an Anglo (probably English L1) in a large population of “Latins” (c. 1930, probably Spanish L1s). The reply explains some of the English-only dynamic that would cause problems for students like Gilberto López (p. 247) in the Edinburg school system.

[7:56-10:51]

GM: “And how – Did you ever see any – I don’t know, I guess, you were treated different because they were Anglos in such a big population of Latins?”

RR: “Well, at the time the girls went to school - in fact, at the time I went to school there was very, very few Latins going to school. At the time my daughters was going to school, I would say the population was, uh, probably fifty-fifty: 50 Anglo, 50 Latin.”

GM: "When was this about?"

RR: "Ahh - Now, you've got me there. It was in the '40s, in the '40s and '50s. Because, when I went to school here, in the '20s, I had a teacher that also taught my oldest girl in school down here. And that teacher is still living today in Alice...."

When (around the 18:00' mark) Guadalupe Martinez asked him about the *braceros* of the World War II period, the exchange reveals that those Northern arrivals who were not farmers may have had little contact with these Spanish L1s

GM: "Were you connected with them in any way?"

RR: "No. I had nothing to do with them."

GM:" There were some efforts, or I don't know, I was told that a lot of those men left jobs open so they brought in braceros, they brought in, you know, people from Mexico to do those jobs while they were gone. Did you have the farm at that time? And did--"

RR: "If you're talking about the time of World War II, well I was, uh, I was doing mechanical and welding work. And uh, really, uh, I can't really tell you much about braceros, I know there were a lot of braceros here, uh, they were illegal aliens which had permit to work in Texas, or United States."

GM: "Yeah, and uh, so you weren't really connected really with them in any way?"

RR: "No, I had, I had really, I had nothing to with uh, the uh, aliens. I do know there were a lot here, a lot of braceros, wetbacks,"

GM: "Mhmm"

RRL: "and so on. But no, I had, uh, nothing to do with them."

This information, of course, raises the question of language contact between English immigrants like Munger and a Spanish environment. In fact, Martínez asks Munger as much:

[19:13-20:35]

GM: “In the years that you’ve been here, it kind of difficult not to have to learn, or want to learn, uh, Spanish language. Because it might, I’m sure, it was perhaps a barrier at some times, not knowing it.”

RR: “Well, when I came down here I was 10 years old, and I picked up some of the Spanish in the 5 years I was here. Then when I went back North, in ’25, and then went to high school, the teacher asked me what, uh, foreign language I wanted to take. Well, I thought Spanish would be it because I thought, well, I can talk Spanish. I couldn’t talk Spanish at all [interviewer chuckles], not the type they were teaching.”

GM: “I see so, but you did learn enough, at least, that you could—”

RR: “Oh yes, I’ve learned enough to get by.”

GM: “Well, that’s good.”

RR: “In fact, my wife is Latin and she’s helped me.”

GM:” Uh huh. Good. And how about your, your children?”

Rydl replied that they’ve all married off and have kids - but that “talking about language, none of my daughters ever learned to talk Spanish” [20:56-21:05]. Given that Mrs. Rydl was apparently bilingual, Spanish must have not been a valuable enough commodity (in Agha’s thought) in their particular language market to justify learning it.

John R. Peavy: A Lawman and a New Language

(Written Memoire & Oral Interview in RGV Oral History Collection)

John R. Peavy was a lawman notorious for having shot at least one man – but also a complex character whose attitude toward the Spanish L1 community in South Texas swings

between extreme ethnocentrism and genuine curiosity. His learning of Spanish seems to have come from an early 1900s Missourian's perception that the Rio Grande Valley was an exotic place from another planet, but instead of clamming up, he responded with an (almost embarrassing) openness and curiosity to learn all he could. While his story exists in audio form in the RGV Oral History Archive, in later life the rough character found his literary side and wrote a memoir of his life in South Texas. The result is a first-hand account of a Midwestern American English L1's perception of South Texas which includes a few observations of sociolinguistic interest. The observations below derive from Peavy's written work.

When he first arrived in Brownsville, “the conversation that I could hear was a strange mixture of English and Spanish, which filled my mind with curiosity and amazement.” (Peavy, 1964, p. 7). This “amazement” is more understandable if one remembers that in the first decade of the 1900s Spanish did not yet decorate supermarket labels all over America – it still was associated with exotic, hard-to-find things like bananas³⁴ and bullfighters in the popular Northern imagination. However, in spite of his surprise, Peavy had the key to learning: intense curiosity. “I took a great interest in the Mexican people and spent a lot of time with them. Within six months, I was able to hold a conversation in Spanish on almost any subject.” (Peavy, 1964, p. 8). Given Peavy's typical Texas Ranger braggadocio for the length of the book, we are entitled to be skeptical of the precise timeline given, and of just how coherent Peavy's Spanish conversations were at the end of those six months. Still, what is clear is that within the first few years of Peavy's new Texan life he had indeed picked up a serviceable command of Spanish. Given that Peavy learned Spanish as an adult L2, it is to be expected that Peavy's Spanish was English-

³⁴ See Susan Alma Norton interview, p. 137.

accented, a fact that may be gathered from some of the spelling irregularities in his memoir, such as “*Taluca* ranch” (p. 116) rather than *Toluca* (near Progreso, Texas).

Peavy actively sought out L2 language speaking opportunities. He would visit Spanish L1 ranches for the educational value of the experience. The encounters no doubt helped his budding language skills. On one such occasion, “I introduced myself and told him the purpose of my visit. He spoke a little English and I had learned a little Spanish. Our conversation continued in a mixture of English and Spanish.” (Peavy, 1964, p. 24). There one has social language learning in action, and an example of the two participants negotiating for meaning. This ranch visit was not isolated; he often stopped by social gatherings on the ranches to hear “their songs, laughter, and mysterious stories of the old Mexican ranches along the Rio Grande, known to the old timers as El Rio Bravo Del Norte” (p. 22). In fact, in Peavy’s opinion, “When told in the Spanish language these yarns are much more expressive and entertaining than the same stories told in English (p. 22).” This positive attitude toward the target language is the SLA concept of *affect* in action. Even if Peavy’s openness was based mostly on cultural naiveté, he still exemplifies many attributes of an ideal language learner, as described by Lourdes Ortega (2008).

Another reason for Peavy’s success was his line of employment; the nature of law enforcement in South Texas was such that almost all Rangers spoke “Spanish fluently” (Peavy 1964, p. 128). They needed to speak Spanish. An example of the bilingual duties that fell on law enforcement can be seen in Peavy’s trip to Mier, Tamaulipas, to act as interpreter between a Mexican government agent and a U.S. army officer. The object of the investigation was to determine whether a set of prisoners charged with revolutionary activity in Mexico were or were not U.S. citizens (Peavy, 1964, p. 150-152). One, Jose Olivares, was American; he turned out to be the brother of Jesus Olivares, sheriff of Duval County. Jose had been in Mier on ranch

business when he was arrested (p. 152-153). He got off scot-free. The others were not so lucky and were shot. Afterwards there was a post-execution dinner at a café where Peavy did the talking (in Spanish) with the Mexican officers (p. 156-157).

Maudie Henson Finney: Spanish Lessons for a Missouri Nurse

(Interview in 1993 with Carol B. Turner)

Maudie Henson Finney, born 1913 in Missouri, moved to Tennessee to study nursing. Once she became a registered nurse in 1934, she then got a job back in Missouri. There she met her future husband; they came to the Valley when he got a job at a drugstore in McAllen. In fact, the two were married on the day of their arrival in McAllen. At the time of her arrival in McAllen in 1937, Finney was 34 years of age – old enough to make learning Spanish challenging, but she took lessons from a local lady and achieved some limited success with the language. I think she may know more than she humbly lets on, because her line of work would have demanded some basic knowledge.

As a nurse she did clinics everywhere in Valley, carrying her equipment in a car, in any available building, even in a church in Los Ebanos when there was no other suitable building in the town. These impromptu clinics must have attracted a fair number of Spanish speakers, and she seems to have gotten along fine. As to her language learning experience, however, Finney remembers:

[17:28-18:30]

Carol Turner: “Um, are you a Spanish speaker?”

Maude Finney: “Uh, not really. I, I can speak enough to get along with them. I’m not really bilingual, but I have some.”

CT: “That you learned after you got here?”

MF: “Yes.”

CT: “Yes. Out of need? Ha ha!”

MF: “I took lessons from, uh, Cristina Guerra. She was a – she taught piano and Spanish and anything and everything. She was a lovely lady.”

CT: “She lived here in McAllen on Broadway.”

MF: “Mhmm. She had, she, mm, ah, she was widowed. And she had these children, all talented. Beautiful children. Dancers, and one of them now is an artist in New York. One of them still lives in McAllen, her name is Keys. And she, uh, she teaches Spanish. And I remember – she looks like her mother – and I remember I can see her mother there? –”

CT: “When you look at her, yes.”

Maude Finney’s comment (“I can speak enough to get along with them. I’m not really bilingual, but I have some [Spanish]”) reflects the complexity of a language contact situation in which most people pick up “enough to get along with” the other language’s speakers. This is especially the case when the potential L2 has less prestige (in Agha’s terms, is a less valuable commodity). Since the second language is probably used mostly in informal settings, learning the L2 to a full academic level is not only unnecessary (it is not often used in educational or professional settings) but possibly even counterproductive (the dialect that develops when a language is marginalized is not likely the same formal register that one would have learned by studying the language in school). The line between being an unbalanced bilingual and having no more than L2 survival skills is a fine one; the important lesson to take away is that English and Spanish are not a simple binary. Bilingualism is not measured in discrete units but along an analog spectrum.

Sophie Ann Hyba: Complicated Feelings for Spanish

(Interview in 1987 with Tony Hyba)

Chicagoan (b. 1915 in the great metropolis of Illinois) Sophie Ann Hyba shows the language learning frustration that could await a English L1, even one who had worked in Mexico for a year and having some Spanish L1s try to teach her, but progress was slow, perhaps because of her apparent insistence that the others should just learn English instead.

[24:19-27:08]

Tony Hyba: “Do you think it is important to, for everybody to know English?”

Sophie Ann Hyba: “I think they should learn to use it. I, I, they want for that

...[incomprehensible]...I’m a big one for that. I tried to learn foreign languages, I worked, I can understand a lot of it, but I can't speak it, the language after a year in Mexico. I learned a lot, a few, I hear them talk and I know what they're saying, but some words I can't I tried, it, I can't talk a conversation with them, I can say a few words in that, and when they'd want to talk, I try to talk with them, I'd talk to them at school, I'd tell them I was a year in Mexico and tried to learn your language. Your mother tried to teach me Spanish too. She talk to me, she used to come to me room for an hour every day she tried to teach me Spanish and I caught on to say some words, too. But they should learn more English.”

TH: “Because you know they tried to make a law in Texas, well not a law, well a law in Texas to make English the official language.”

SAH: “Yeah, they debated it, but yeah, I heard that....”

.... [a little later in the interview, on the same topic of English as official language]:

TH: “What have you heard of your friends, from your girlfriends. You have a lot of Mexican friends, right?”

SAH: “Well yeah, most of them are opposed to it. There are some of them, all they did want to do was talk Spanish. And they would say you don’t know any of these words. And I would say “you should speak English” You’re here! How about it I talk my language, like that, I start talking my language in front of them, in front of other people, keep going, keep going, they wouldn’t like that. No, that’s the truth!...It’s rude. They should have so many of those, what do you call those things, translate from your language to the other--”

TH: “Translators?”

SAH. “Yeah. You shouldn’t have to have that, where you have to translate from one language to the other. That’s how lawyers make money.”

TH “I know for some real older people, it hard for them to learn, just like I was trying to learn Spanish. So yes, I know. But English is not too bad, I mean, you could try.”

Hyba realized (from personal experience, one suspects) that SLA is much harder for older adults than for the young. The wish that the L2 speakers with whom the speaker is in contact would simply learn her L1 and save her from the trouble of learning the L2 is as old as language contact itself. On a more sociological note, Hyba’s comment about translation being tantamount to lawyer fees is interesting in that by adding her testimony to that of Alaniz (p.259) it appears that both some Spanish monolinguals and some English monolinguals distrusted lawyers who played games with language for a fee. Sociolinguistic analysis of dominant versus marginalized languages must bear in mind that the rank-and-file speakers of even the dominant language may distrust those who wield language in specialized forms imbued with the power conferred by education or office. Pierre Bourdieu, the developer of our linguistic market model, certainly realized this: he provided an extended analysis of what gives language (in its *e-language* form, or a specific utterance in a given context) either an “authorized” or unauthorized status (Bourdieu,

1982, p. 103-134). Language uttered or written in the often ritualized forms unique to institutions ranging from magic to education may take on a power independent of whatever status the speaker's *n-language* may have (n-language being the broad concept that languages such as "English" or Spanish" exists as independent entities apart from individual speakers). Interested readers may consult Chomsky, 1986, p. 19-33, and Hall, 2012, p. 213 for further elucidation of the e-language and n-language concepts.

Edna Doris Parks Dubois' Husband: A Mised, Homesick Solider in McAllen

(Interview 1989 with Robert Norton)

Language learning never happens in a vacuum; in fact, SLA is one of the activities mostly likely to take place in conditions of culture shock. Some people overcome it; others do not. As seen in the two juxtaposed instances below, SLA in the face of homesickness is often the child of necessity; but when an escape route is evident, there is little impetus to extend such accommodation to the culture of a place of temporary residence.

Northeast to McAllen

One finds a paucity of people from the Northeast (New England or the Mid Atlantic) in the oral histories of the LRGV archive. Valley people reported that the soldiers stationed in McAllen during the "border troubles" were mostly New York-based, but while their dollars fueled the economy they were not in themselves the source of all the towns growth. The glimpse we get from the archive shows that Northeasterners found themselves uncomfortable in South Texas. Take the case of Edna Dubois, a young McAllen native who married a "Yankee" and witnessed firsthand his unhappiness.

The Dubois family had moved to the Rio Grande Valley sometime earlier, the family having lost their land back in Colorado to bankruptcy. Edna's future husband, meanwhile, arrived in the McAllen area as a soldier, along with the buildup of American forces in the region during Jack Pershing's fabled (and fruitless) chase for Pancho Villa. The snippet below shows nothing of direct linguistic interest, but obliquely it does remind language-obsessed sociolinguists that other people have other priorities and emotional connections beyond language, and that learning a new local language is pointless when priorities lie elsewhere.

Of interest is how her soldier future husband ended up guarding the Rio Grande Valley instead of doing what he had signed up for: fighting the Germans in France during World War I.

[25:58-27:18]

Robert Norton: "That's interesting. Well I imagine you as a young lady stood down there by the railroad tracks when the troops came in back then."

Elma Dubois: "Oh, yes, I did. Well--"

RN: "Did those boys look pretty handsome to you?"

ED: "Ha ha! Well, poor fellas, they were so homesick. I've heard my husband tell about his scoop. He and his friends – he lived in Boston at that time – and when they got ready to enlist they went all around town looking for a place where they could enlist and go to right off over to France. They didn't want to mess around with all these training camps and everything they'd heard about. So they got into a recruiting office in Boston and they assured them, yep, they'd be going right out. So they signed up, and then they sent them into New York, to a welcome, and they stayed there two or three days 'til they got their uniforms issued, and then they put them on a train, and told them that they were shipping them out. They woke up the next morning, they

were in Canada. And then they rode that train for six days, and ended at Sam Fordyce [in the Rio Grande Valley, just west of La Joya, Texas].”

RN: “Ha ha ha ha!”

ED: “The day before Christmas!”

The man ended up back in the Rio Grande Valley, where he reconnected with Edna, but never with the place he had been so misleadingly sent.

[34:14-38:22]

ED: “And in the winter he went to college in Boston, and of course he was only 22 when we got married, so he hadn’t any career, so when we got out of the army he went back working for his father. And uh, then, uh, [Muzen] was shut down in September, then we had nothing to do all winter – well, repair, repaint, things like that.”

ED: “So, he and I used to come down here in winter and stay with my folks. And uh, I’d usually get a job somewhere, around the courthouse or somewhere where I was known, and sometimes he’d have a job too, working as a carpenter’s helper or anything he could pick up for, just to keep himself busy, and then in the spring we’d go back. Well, that kept up until, uh, let me see, until 1926.... So then, we decided to live down here year round. So, he worked with Alfred Meyers, and he had a electrical turi- electrical shop to repair the electrical parts of an automobile, whatever you call those, starters [inter: uh, huh] and spark plugs and what not. Well, and all the – all of our married life he had wanted to buy a farm. He was crazy about going to New England and buying a farm. Well, I had grew up on a farm and I had had enough of farm [inter: you knew about that!] but when World War II came along, we both went to work for the Navy in Corpus, and when that was over, well, he said, will we go back to McAllen or will we buy a farm? So, we went North and bought a farm. And he was an entirely changed person! He loved every minute

that he lived on that farm and I didn't realize how, how out of place he had felt living here until he was someplace where he was more comfortable. Cause you see he was referred to here as a 'Yankee.' [RN: ha ha ha as a Yankee.] And at voting time, he was a Republican, he always had to work on the election board because he was about the only Republican in town [RN: ha ha]. And um, he didn't anything in common here, to talk to the men about. They would, we would meet on the street and they'd be talking about cattle, or oil, or farming, and he knew nothing about any of those, and me, I grew up here, I mean, mostly , and I was perfectly at home, and I didn't realize how uncomfortable he was."

RN: "So when did you go back to Massachusetts?"

ED: "No, he bought a farm in New Hampshire."

RN: "That's pretty country."

ED: "Beautiful country. And I loved it there. And we lived there 17 years, 'til he passed away."

M J Baily: A Canadian Learns Spanish on the Job

(Interview 1987 with Mary Salas)

Yet the factor of homesickness was not insuperable obstacle. M.J. Baily was born in Rivers, Manitoba, Canada, in 1909. He arrived along with his parents and six siblings in the Edcouch-Elsa area in 1921. However, it is worth keeping in mind that some English L1 kids did not come to the area willingly: he came because his folks came, and as a 13-year-old he had not much choice. In spite of experiencing the discomfort inherent in being a Canadian child in the Rio Grande Valley in the 1910s, M. J. Baily did learn Spanish as a young man. He did so out of necessity: as a farm foreman in the Elsa area, learning the language and getting work went hand in hand; else he would have had to "go down the road." Consequently he picked up both Spanish

and the moniker “Pancho.” He used Spanish as long as he had the job, but by the time of this interview has forgotten “lots of words.”

[21:18-23:00]

Mary Salas: “So you come from where it’s real cold weather and now you live where it’s real hot. Which do you prefer?”

M.J. Baily: “The heat. And when I first come down here, in ‘20, ’21 with my folks,”

MS: “Hmhm.”

MJB: “I couldn’t sweat. I’d get just as red as uh, your clothes, there.”

MS: “Uh-huh.”

MJB: “My cheeks were getting to be just as red as a beet. The only place I sweat was on the top of my head, that’s the only place I sweat.”

MS: “When you were farming here.”

MJB: “Mhmh. I’d get out there working and I couldn’t sweat.”

MS: “You’d just get red.”

MJB: “Now I get out there and it won’t be long, I’m sweating.”

MS: “Ha ha!”

MJB: “I’m acclimatized to it now.”

MS: “Yeah, you’re used it now.”

MJB: “This is a wonderful place to live, the best in the world. Sometimes people will say, ‘How in the world did you get down in Texas?’ I said, well, if your daddy and momma leave, I guess you go along, too. And that’s what I did.”

MS: “Do you remember why they wanted to come down?”

MJB: I went because they wanted me to get down. I didn't want to go. It wasn't because I didn't want to leave them. I wanted to stay with my two cousins up there. They said, no, you ain't gonna stay with your cousins....So they made us go, and I never did like it. So in '24, my brother said, 'Let's go to Kansas!' and I said 'okay.'”

MS: “Were your parents still living then?”

MJB: “Yeah, they were still living then. In a Model T, we left here in 1924”

MS: “In your Model T, all the way up to Canada?”

MJB: “On March the 24th, 1924, we left here, and we drove that Model T all the way up there and it made it....”

They made it to Kansas in a journey that involved an engine rebuild and other misadventures. He came back to the Valley, though, around 1930 in the midst of the Depression, and this time he seems to have hit it off in his new home, thanks to a more mature philosophy:

[25:47-25:59]

MJB: “Life is what you make of it. If you don't get up and mix with the people, well, you ain't going to have very much fun. But if you get out with them, you'll have a good time.”

[28:24-:30:40]

[After recounting why he is now glad to be in South Texas rather than cold Manitoba, he adds]:

“And uh, well, now I can talk Spanish and uh, I can talk Spanish just as good as I can English.”

MS: “Really?”

MJB: “Pretty near as good.”

MS: “Really. You learned it -?”

MJB: “Well, like naturally when you get away from it you lose pronunciation, of the Spanish language, but as long as you talk it every day, you can keep talkin' it, but else you forget lots of it. I have. I've forgot lots of words.”

MS: “Where did you learn Spanish? When you moved down here?”

MJB: “Well, when I moved down here, and when I went to work for Wells Brothers, it was either work or go down the road, and I, I learned how to talk.”

MS: “Hm hm hm [laugh] But you managed it!”

MJB: “I, I did enough where I could hold on a job, man.”

MS: “What did you do there, farming?”

MJB: “I worked on, [incomprehensible.] Put 'em to work, tell 'em what to do, and go off and leave and come back and check. I'd do, maybe 200, 250 miles a day. And I mean every day, that was every day.”

MS: “Ooh. In your Model T?”

MJB: “No, that was when I quit my job and I went to work for Wells brothers, and they took me as a foreman. And they had three different foremen for Manchita, MonteAlto, and South of Donna. And they had 800 acres here down south of Donna, and 500, 500 or 600 acres out at Manchita, and at Loma de Altos they had another 800 or 900 acres that they farmed.”

MS: “That's a lot of land. A lot to land for one person.

MJB: “They were big farmers. There was two brothers, and” ...[Baily goes on to explain the local hierarchy with Conway and other farming potentates of the early 1900s Valley.]

...

[31:27-32:24]

MS: “Did they hire - What kind of people did they hire at that place?”

MJB: “Spanish, lots of Spanish, during the war they, all you could get was wetbacks....”

Baily goes on to explain that they had to sneak workers past immigration and the police to get the work done because nobody else was home due to war. Baily, however seemed fine with this dynamic:

[32:15-32:36]

MJB: “I got along with them. The Spanish used to call me Pancho.”

MS: “Pancho, huh?”

MJB: “Yes, in Spanish I was Pancho [incomprehensible mumbling on the recording].”

MS: So you were known as Pancho.

MJB: “Mhm. When they got lost they’d say, ‘Go ask Pancho what to do.’”

MS: [Laughs].

MJB: “So that’s the way it was.”

Lloyd Howard Glover: Excerpt 1, Land Sales Tactics and Sociolinguistic Implications

(Interview 1984 with Robert Norton)

Not all English L1s merged with the Spanish L1 population the way “Pancho” M.J. Baily did. The gap between groups was no accident: in fact, it was a systemic consequence of the way the newly developed farmland was being sold to incoming English L1s. The “immigrant train” business running north to south was driven by rosy pictures of South Texas life that appealed to the existing ideals of Midwestern farmers, but the realities of border life could get in the way of the commercial appeal. At least in some cases, the railroad promoters appear to have actively isolated Midwesterners from South Texans during the “excursions” to the Valley in order to make a more calculated, attractive sales pitch. Obviously, this pattern would have not promoted second language acquisition of Spanish.

An example of this situation is the family of Lloyd Glover. Lloyd was born in 1913 in Wichita, Minnesota. His father (a New Yorker) and his mother (an Iowan) moved to Pharr, Texas, in early 1916. South Texas was to be a new experience for them; yet it would also become their permanent home. Lloyd spent his career as a newspaper journalist in Pharr, Texas.

[1:59-2:37]

Lloyd Glover: “My father came down here on a land excursion in October of nineteen and fifteen [1915], with the Harding-Gill Land Company of Raymondville. And, uh, he bought land at one mile west of Raymondville and one mile and one mile north of Raymondville. We had 120 acres. One-half section. We came down then, the whole family and everybody, with a new, uh, REO car,³⁵ and all kinds of furniture and household goods, on January 21st, nineteen and sixteen [1916], which happened to be a Thursday, because I looked it up on the calendar, of 1916, to find out....”

[3:21-4:56]

LG: “Anyway, we came down in 1916, and 1916 happened to be the year of the bandit trouble down here in the Rio Grande Valley, and I heard my mother talk later, when I was a little older, that she didn’t understand why my father didn’t know about the bandit trouble down here when he came down in October 1915, when they’d just wrecked the train down at Olmito, the bandits had.³⁶ And if you know how the land companies operated these excursions, why, they didn’t let them read newspapers, they didn’t let them converse with other people. They kept them in a hotel by themselves, and they put them in cars, and drove them out and showed them the land,

³⁵ Ransom Eli Olds, founder of Oldsmobile, started one other now-defunct car company: REO, the name being based on his initials. REO cars were produced from 1904 through 1936, although some trucks continued to be built after that. (Reo Club of America, 2015).

³⁶ Armed men boarded a train and shot several uniformed men on October 14, 1915 (Chatelle, citing the *San Benito Light*, 1948, p. 63).

then then they took them back, and they were closely guarded the whole time they were here.³⁷

So they didn't even know about the bandit trouble-

Robert Norton: "Until they got back."

LG: "[Laughs] until they got back home, ha ha! My mother said, if they'd known about the bandit trouble, she would have never consented to come here, to Texas. She would have never entertained the notion. The first year - she said the first year they were here, and think it was 1916, they didn't dare go out at night; if they went out a night, then they carried guns; and they went more than one. There was almost more than one go with them, they didn't dare go alone, everywhere they went. And they had lots of trouble, around Lyford and Sebastian, and not too much of Raymondville, where we were. But they were very active around Combes, and Sebastian, and Lyford. Because that was just a short ride from the river. Some of them liked to come across the river near Brownsville, and come across that area to steal livestock and horses, or whatever they could."

Interviewee Floyd Everhard confirmed Glover's assertions about incoming immigrants were kept isolated from the gritty details of their new surroundings, saying that some land promotion companies even posted guards on the prospective buyers' railroad cars (presumably once the bloody events in the Valley had made it into the national public consciousness). From a sociolinguistic point of view, it easily understood what the consequences of staying in protective armed groups of fellow English-speakers would have had on second language acquisition, not

³⁷ Chatelle, writing in 1948, supports Glover's story: "Pullman cars were chartered and trips were arranged by [land] agents, each Pullman carrying about 20 people and ranging from one to four cars a trip. On the way down, San Antonio was the only stop made, and that was for sightseeing purposes. After the Valley was reached...the train was met by local men, each with his automobile, and the homeseekers stepped from the train into the auto. As soon as all were placed, a sightseeing tour of the upper Valley began...Each driver of a car was immediately responsible for the ones placed in his care for the four-day stay, and there were many rules and regulations of policy and procedure for them to follow" (p. 56).

only in terms of affect toward the L2 but also in opportunities for getting authentic Spanish input from mixing freely with the Spanish-speaking population.

Susan Alma Norton: “No One Spoke Spanish”

(Interview in 1991 with Helen L. Weaver Williams)

Another reason the new Northern arrivals did not necessarily integrate into the existing Spanish community is that they had already brought their own community with them. If isolated Midwesterners had trickled down, they might perforce had needed to do business with more Spanish L1s (leaving aside the counterfactual that many of the bigger towns themselves were started by collections of newcomers, and therefore not connected to the past Spanish-dominated social structure). One example of this phenomenon is Susan Alma Norton. Born in 1891 in Geraldine, Alabama³⁸ she moved along with her family to Donna, Texas, around 1912. Her brief response to a question about what happened in Donna back in the day strays into sociolinguistic territory:

[6:21- 6:57]

Helen Williams: “ Can you tell me something about what happened when you were living in Donna? Anything of interest?”

Alma Norton: “Not much of interest except when we got there was no lights, no water, no nothing, and very, only just a few scattered, humans, American families. No one spoke Spanish, anybody, we didn’t understand it. About the first word we learned was, I did, was “goodbye”, [laugh] that was about all the Spanish we knew.”

The comment “no one spoke Spanish” is instructive; obviously, there was an entire country of Spanish-speakers across the river, and plenty of Spanish-speakers nearby even on the

³⁸ Susan Alma Norton was 100 years old at the time of this interview!

American side, but Norton likely means something else. She says “we didn’t understand it” – which implies that she and her circle did hear some Spanish, but were not in a situation to be able to learn it. Comparison of Alma Norton’s statement with a comment of Andrew Munger (“they uh, the Mexicans at that time – in the ‘30s, early ‘40s – they all lived out in the country. Now they have all moved to town”; see p.116) alerts us that – at this early stage in the land rush – the cities would have been rather sparsely settled, mostly by English L1s. Meanwhile, the countryside would have housed more of the Spanish L1s. This rural-urban divide among the L1 communities dynamic would have limited Spanish language acquisition among the English L1s of the new towns – hence the limitation of Alma’s friends’ Spanish to (presumably) *adios*.

Keep in mind that language contact situations often involve accommodating to a many environmental factors beyond linguistic considerations. It was not only the language that was new to the Alabamian: the diseases were as well. The family spent the winter of 1914-15 in Arkansas after Alma’s mother died of typhoid fever. On the bright side, there were happier surprises as well: Upon their return to the Valley, [11:50] “we had never seen so many bananas, so we filled up on them.” Comments such as these remind linguists once again that the study of human language acquisition cannot be studied like rats in a lab – people out of their comfort zone are learning and dealing with many feelings and sensations beyond words.

Floyd Clay Everhard: Social Dynamics among English L1 Missourians in the Valley

(Interview 1991 with Robert Norton)

Another version of the same English L1-clumping that occurred were the social support groups that grew up based on former state allegiances. Floyd arrived in Pharr from Missouri in 1918 as a young boy. In Everhard’s life there were early exposures to things that may (one cannot be certain) have affected his affective filter vis-à-vis the Spanish language. For starters,

his father was a veteran of the Spanish-American War [15:13]. When introduced to Spanish-speaking Texas, the citrus fruit was green but the sandburs were painful. They had driven over primitive roads, opening gates and bumping over arroyos to get to the McAllen-Mission area. But they “made it.”

[17:38 – 18:22]

Floyd Everhard: “Well, we got in, we got in – as I recall – somewhere after two o’clock [August 1, 1918]. There was the middle of the afternoon. And uh, the thing that got our eye was the small grove that A.J. McColl³⁹ just where stood his clubhouse. Uh, trees as uh, I pictured them through the years, must have been seven or eight years old. There was no fruit on them at the time, except green fruit. Then we drove directly to our farm, and when I got out, I was barefooted, and there were lots of sandburs–”

Robert Norton: “Oh, ho ho!”

FE: “And that was my introduction to the Valley.”

He explains his perspective on why his father and so many English L1s came to the Rio Grande Valley. He also provides interesting thoughts on the settlement patterns and places of origin.

[19:13-19:58]

FE: “Well, uh, there was a canal system was in place. This country was developed by the sugar cane industry. This was not, uh, this was not a farming country, general farming, it was developed by Louisiana Rio Grande Corporation of some kind, I don’t know–”

³⁹ A.J. McColl is the namesake of the McColl St. that runs through McAllen and Edinburg. The Everhards bought their farm from McColl.

RN: “Canal Company.”

FE: “But then uh, the sugar industry was dying, at the time we got here. So then the land companies imported the, the prospective buyers from the Midwest, mainly from Kansas, Missouri, and the North. It was an afterthought.”

Everhard also provides valuable insights on the social dynamics that led to a work bonanza and high social status for new English L1 agriculturalists from the northern states even as the old bilingual ranchers and especially Tejano Spanish L1s struggled to make ends meet.



Figure 4: Hidalgo Pump House, built 1909
(Photo: Aaron Cummings)

[19:59 – 21:30]

RN: “I’d like to –
for our own
personal
information – and

we’ve been looking for people who could recall it –when

did you make your first trip down to Hidalgo to the pumps to the headwaters for the canal

system?”

FE: “Uh, my father, well, in those days it was quite a task to recruit people to head up boards of directors. And my dad was solicited in the field by a group – my dad and mother got active in the Methodist church in Pharr as soon as we got here. And Dad was the, uh, teacher for the men’s class for many, many years. And he, uh, helped organize the farmers’ group, so that we could get together and talk over problems. In that way he was exposed to some of the other people, and he



Figure 5: Pumps at irrigation system headwaters. A canal had to be dug to the spot after a massive hurricane in 1933 shifted the course of the Rio Grande. (Photo: Aaron Cummings)

was solicited to join the schoolboard, of which he became president real quick, and also he became a director of the water district. And that way, he uh – There what’nt many people here, Anglos–”

RN: “Yes.”

FE: “So that way he got in on the ground floor in the bodies that helped build the community.”

The comment “there what’nt many people here, Anglos [mostly English L1s]” in the context of recruiting people for responsible positions shows the power of English relative to Spanish in that being of the English L1 community appears to have been an unspoken requirement for being part of the discourse community of power in Hidalgo County. At this point, it is helpful to recall the warning of Reed-Danahay about the dynamic of a “discourse of familiarity” between interviewers and –ees of the same culture that “leaves unsaid all that goes without saying” (Reed-Danahay 2005, p. 130). To deconstruct the unsaid, it appears that many new settlers saw this country as a new, wild, previously uninhabited world. In fact, Floyd’s father said as much. Floyd remembered that as a child he had disliked the Valley and wanted to return to Missouri, but his father reassured him that there were economic possibilities here and that [24:50] “this is a young country. You’ll grow up with it.” This redefinition of the Rio Grande Delta as a “young” and “new” country (see the Beulah Bell Stuart interview, p. 143) as a “Magic Valley” waiting for the new English L1 arrivals to “grow up with it” is an example of a taken-for-granted ideal with linguistic consequences. If the immigration had been perceived as having moved into Spanish L1s’ back yard, they may have been more likely to learn the local language.

Another factor that limited language learning was the tight social network (hinted at above in the story of Everhard's father's social roles) that provided English L1 immigrants with community but limited L2 input. At the [28:10], Floyd remembers, "We had a group, the Missouri group. And when someone was sick, they took care of him" This indicates that newly arrived Missourians could get many things done not just without speaking to Spanish-speakers, but without having to go beyond ties to Missouri. As would be the case with a non-English immigrant group in the northern United States, the tight community of English-speakers in the Valley enabled L1 language maintenance, thus sometimes undermining the need to learn the Spanish language. The newcomers were not only preserving their own language, they were recasting the new landscape in their image (and language). The interviewer points out that Wisconsin road, Minnesota road, Alberta road, and others in the McAllen-Edinburg area are named for Midwesterners.

Beulah Bell Stuart: Excerpt 1, "New Country"

(Interview in 1987 with Crystal Marie Cantú⁴⁰)

Beulah Bell Stuart was born in 1901 in Concrete Texas (Dewitt County), a very small rural community. Her father had property there and had been raised there. However, her father also bought cattle in Mexico for shipping to various places. He would go down into Mexico – Stuart was not sure exactly where – in order to procure beef for the army. In this way he was introduced to the Rio Grande Valley, and in 1911 he took his family – including young Beulah – with him to the area. The family settled in Mercedes. Later on, Beulah married an Illinois man who had also a train to the valley in 1911. Based on all this family information, Stuart recalled

⁴⁰ Cantú was a recent graduate of Mission High School; the different dynamic between the young-old interviewer-interviewee (as opposed to the mostly middle-aged interviewees in the rest of the interviews) is interesting.

the way the railroad companies (Southern Pacific, in her families' case) would offer an entire experience aimed at getting people to relocate south to the tip of Texas.

[21:00- 23:25]

Crystal Cantú: "And then you said that your family came down in 1911 and then you said that also your future husband's family had also come at that time."

Beulah Stuart: "They came from Illinois."

CC: "And did they all have a reason for why they wanted to settle here in the Valley? Is it, was it for that purpose that there was, it was prosperous land?"

BS: "It was new country and they just wanted to experience--"

CC: "They found it exciting to move?"

BS: "And they came down"

CC: "And were there lots of families that you knew of that came down, or just...?"

BS: "Well, they all came about the time we got here. You know, they did bring the home seekers in, you know, they'd drive trains and came in, about Weslaco, and they'd bought land, you know, men, selling land, they wanted to sell land down here you know, so they would go up North, and uh, find people who wanted to move, and they'd tell them about the growing season down here in the Valley, so they came down on private trains, and uh,"

CC: "What, what do you mean by private trains? I, I mean, I've never been on a train myself. How did those work?"

BS: "Well, they would, uh, like we had trains then, you know, that the way people traveled--"

CC: "Commuted"

BS: "And uh, they would get a number of people together and then they would buy land from some of the uh, of the uh, some of these companies, you know, I think Southern Pacific was one, and they would call a train, you know, a string of cars and so on, to pull them. And them up with all the new --"

what we called -- home seekers. And came down to the Valley and showed them the Valley and, you know, sell the land. That's how it got sold."

CC: "Uh huh. But did they, like the first trip when they come here, it was definite if they would stay or not?"

BS: "Oh, no, no."

CC: "They would just come look and browse--"

BS: "They came down to the Valley and tried to sell them the land. That's what they did."

CC: "And was he enthusiastic, or--"

BS: "No, no, he's never been that. He was really looking forward to harvesting [...static..]"

CC: "And what -- do you remember what his conclusions were when he first saw the Rio Grande Valley? Did he think that he'd have a prosperous life?"

BS: "Yeah--"

CC: "He did?"

BS: "I'm sure he did!"

CC: "That's why he moved."

BS: "Yeah."

CC: "Or else he wouldn't have moved and brought his family."

BS: "Well, he had a very happy life, in the Valley."

Stuart's account is worth listening to in order to get a feeling for what happened during the moving process. Her "new country" remark perhaps typifies the vision of Manifest Destiny still at work in American thought: while the South Texas brush country had been settled by the Spanish long before the Anglo-, German, and Scandinavian Americans moved into the Midwest, from an Anglo-American point of view the Rio Grande Valley was a "new" frontier to be settled.

Local amateur historian Lucy Wallace confirms the developers' practice of bringing prospective residents down to the Valley on special trains, often in families and even neighborhoods (120). The pitchmen stopped at nothing; the potential buyers were "wined and dined, and given tours" (Vassberg, 2000), and the developers even hired "professional entertainers" to maximize the positive experience and prime their prospective immigrants to stay (Wallace, "They Led the Way, 1975, p.120). Interviewee Maurice Cramer, whose father came from southeastern Missouri, agrees with Beulah Bell Stuart on the picturesque label for these trips: "homeseeker excursions" (Maurice Cramer interview [7:20]). Homeseeking was not a small-scale phenomenon, either: at the height of the land rush, over a thousand Northerners per week were taking the train tour of the Valley (Vassberg 2000).



Figure 6: A "homeseeker" excursion group visits Sharyland, 18 May 1915.
(Photo credit: John H. Shary Collection, University of Texas – Pan American. Used by permission.)

Ola Lance: Mutual Anxiety about the 'Other'

(Interview in 1987 with Joseph Hoy)

Ola Lance was born in 1904 in Pike County, Arkansas, and arrived in the Valley in 1937 or 1938 (she didn't recall which). Lance typified a general feeling of uneasiness that some newcomers felt toward the unfamiliar nation to the south. Mexico was seen as not safe, and she avoided going there if possible. This was not unique to newcomers from the North, either; Anita

Cárdenas, another interviewee, recalled of her parents: “*Pero a mi papá y mamá, no es no podían ir a México, es que no querían. Les agarraron mucho miedo, mucho temor, ¿verdad? Porque las guerras - porque así superaron las guerras allá. Y ella decía que no iba a ir por México. ¡Ella era tejana!*”⁴¹ [58:35-59:00].” Cárdenas’ mother had good reason to worry about borders, having had family taken by American immigration officers. For some new and old Texans on either side of both national and linguistic divides, sometimes border crossings were simply not worth the risk – a situation which could have led to a loss of Spanish in Texas had it not been for the flow of immigration that has continued to the present day (see Chapter VII).

[16:22-16:46]

Joseph Hoy: “Did you ever go into Mexico?”

Ola Lance: “Oh, just once in a while. I didn’t really like to go over there. I went over there when I had to get sugar with Ross. Ross lived in San Antonio. Sugar was hard to get so we’d go over there. But I didn’t – ha, ha I’m afraid to go over there! I don’t like it.”

Her general mistrust of Mexico extended to its people and its language. The snatch of conversation below reveals that she assumed that they had the same feelings about her that she had about them:

[22:10-22:57]

JH: “But you never - Did your husband speak Spanish?”

OL: “Not much. He could get by with them. But the boys, they learned it right off.

JH: “Sure?”

⁴¹ Anita Cárdenas translation:

“But as for my dad and mom, it’s not that they couldn’t go to Mexico, it’s that they didn’t want to. It made them very afraid, you know? Because of the wars. Because that’s how they overcame the wars over there [apparently she means, in her father’s case, by leaving, and in her mothers’ case, by staying away]. And she said that she wasn’t going to go to Mexico. She was Texan!”

OL: “Kids did. And uh – well, what else was I supposed to tell ‘em, we started out at Edinburg, and I thought it was the longest distance to Mission, and we came to Steward Road, and we turned down, we went down to Bryan Street first – it was all Stewart Road, though, and we went down there, and of course those were Mexicans were watching us through the bending trees, the rain was bending trees down, and they were looking at us, just as anxious about us as we were about them, you know...”

Just as anxious Ola Lance’s children learned the language of the people their mother was frightened of, a mix of linguistic abilities in families was not uncommon, and is often instructive as to the ways Americans learned languages in the 1910s and 20s. As we shall see in the next excerpt, Nina Neptune’s parents’ peripatetic lifestyle meant that she moved schools too often to learn a foreign language by formal instruction, and she did not pick it up in the Valley, either. Some of her relatives learned Spanish in New Mexico, a skill they would later use when visiting her and adventurously wandering into Mexico. She also mentions one other linguistic resource potentially available to would be Spanish learners: in the early days of the Valley, the only radio stations were in Mexico.

Nina Grace Neptune: A Family’s Divergent Language Trajectories

(Interview in 1987 with Roel Garza)

Born 1902 in Clearfork, Kentucky, her father bought and ran a store in Moorhead, KY. The family kept on moving: first to New Mexico (this would later be linguistically relevant), then on to an Arkansas farm, and then to the oil field around El Dorado in the same state. Finally, when she was 22, her father moved her and the younger segment of the family to Donna, Texas [12:00]. On the journey through Texas, she remembered a local farmer in Georgetown telling they wouldn’t regret moving to the Valley, and giving them special “kid glove” oranges. Upon

arrival, she liked what she saw of the Rio Grande Valley: “It was beautiful. It was a dream. Prettier than it is now, much prettier... All the trees they were just pictures. Everything was. A beautiful - white homes sitting back in those orchards, and oh, it was beautiful. The highway - those palms, those big tall palms, it just fascinated us.”

Her father bought 40 acres in Donna and planted a small orange orchard [14:00]. A few years later she married and settled down in the Rio Grande Valley for life.

However, her positive affect toward the area did not extend to learning the language of the neighboring country. She didn't learn Spanish because she wasn't much interested in education and never graduated high school due to the family's incessant moving. However the move that cost her the chance to graduate (from New Mexico to Arkansas) gifted her brother the chance to learn Spanish, because as an older sibling ready to settle down he elected to stay for some time longer in New Mexico. There he learned Spanish. Consequently, even though he eventually took a job as a reporter in Iowa, when he and his family would visit their Texas relatives it was the “Yankee” branch of the family that got the *ganas* to visit Mexico and practice their language skills (in spite of the occasional misadventure). Neptune recalled:

[15:13-18:10]

Nina Neptune: “My oldest brother and oldest sister didn't move down here with us, they were already married and away from home.”

Roel Garza: “Then you were the oldest one left down here? You were the oldest one down here, at the time?”

NN: “Yeah, I was. My sister, the one older than me, was married - she was living with the feller in New Mexico, my brother was in New Mexico to, then he eventually went to Iowa, and took

over the farm his, uh, father-in-law had. He wanted to retire, so took that old - but, that didn't last long, either. They had a drought or two, and and he couldn't , he didn't stand still. He was a self-educated guy, I mean, he was my brother. He got with the big seed field, and he was a salesman for that for a long time, and then he finally got a, into the *Des Moines Tribune*, the paper, the biggest newspaper in Des Moines Iowa-”

RG: “He was reporter?”

NN: “He was manager.”

RG: “Oh, manager.”

NN: “Over that paper, the rest of his life. He passed away in Des Moines, Iowa. He had bought a home down here, he was gonna come down here and retire and but he go leukemia and passed away....”

NN: “He'd come every summer, though.”

RG: “To visit.”

NN: “Yeah he'd come down South-”

RG: “Did he like it down here?”

NN: “He'd come down here for two weeks, and spend it with us.”

RG: “Like what would you do? You all ever go visit Mexico?”

NN: “Oh, yeah, they went to Mexico, and went way in, him and his wife, and my youngest brother and his wife, and my other two brothers, all went to Mexico, way over in Mexico.”

RG: “And?”

NN: “And they crossed the river, and it come up a flood, and they got flooded out, they like to have not got out of the river. Talk about scared people, they were some scared people.”

RG: “And imagine Anglos at the time over there in Mexico, stranded-”

NN: "Uh huh."

RG: "And there were-"

NN: "And they didn't even - well, my oldest brother spoke Spanish, pretty good, he took Spanish in school in New Mexico. Well, I did too, but I wouldn't have got too far with it, I don't think. Because I didn't - at the time, all I was interested in, was if I took it I could take the high school education that county was giving, and skip the eighth grade, and go into high school. And I had had three months' Spanish. That was the only interest I had in Spanish, at the time. I passed it, and then I passed-"

RG: "Did you graduate; were you, from high school?"

NN: "No, I didn't I never did graduate from high school."

RG: "What year-"

NN: "We moved off the farm, I was just in high school then. I don't know - and then the first year of high school, when we were-"

RG: "Like you were in 9th grade?"

NN: "The thing is, we kept moving, moving, moving. And we would lose out a month or two every time we moved."

RG: "And what did you do?"

NN: "It affected, really, our education."

Apparently Spanish as taught in New Mexico high school Neptune's brother attended was of sufficient quality to prepare him for the unexpected in Mexico, although Neptune did not stay in the school long enough to master the language.

Another sociolinguistically revelant tidbit that Neptune mentions regarding the early decades Donna was the absence of American radio:

[28:15-29:09]

RG: “Do you remember when television, like came about? [NN: Yes.] Like, did y’all buy one real fast?”

NN: “Not real fast, No. But we got one, pretty fast, [mumbles incomprehensibly].”

RG: “Yeah.”

NN: “That is in the line of entertainment we didn’t have a radio near as soon as we did a TV.”

RG: “Uh huh. And like, did the television, did you say, ‘We got to have that?’ It was like a booming industry then. Everybody started to buy one.”

NN: “Yeah. In fact, it wasn’t any stations over here when we got it. It was just in Mexico. [RG: Oh.] We just got Mexico. Part of the time you got a program, part of the time you didn’t.”

RG: “So like the radio wasn’t in –”

NN: “Yeah, it would drive you crazy, you know. You’d get real interested, and then it would quit. It would do that, static, whatnot, whatever you call it.”

RG: “And then the TV came around.”

Frustratingly for linguists, Neptune sidesteps what one suspects was a question by Garza as to whether Mexican radio was in Spanish. Lack of information on that crucial fact limits the conclusions one can draw about the possibility of English L1s having used Spanish radio to get Spanish audible input in a comfortable home wetting. Neptune’s lack of interest in pursuing the linguistic implications leads us to one other observation, one that may not be obvious to the reader of this manuscript but that does become clear to anyone who listens to many hours of the Rio Grande Valley Oral History corpus. This observation is that perhaps the most notable aspect of language as discussed in the interviews with the English L1 newcomers to the Rio Grande Valley is actually just how rarely language is mentioned. In spite of the fact that the new

homeseekers were in a historically Spanish-speaking area, they seem for the most part to have taken the English-speaking environment their mass arrival created as a given. In part this appears to be because language does not appear to have been a primary concern of some of the interviewers (for instance, in the Williams Smid interview (p. 271), interviewer Robert Norton redirected the conversation the first time the interviewee attempted to bring up his German-speaking childhood). However, after listening to hours of audio the impression that emerges is that many new arrivals got along just fine in the new English-dominant communities and saw little reason to acclimate to the legacy linguistic environment. This is precisely what Bourdieu, Park, or Agha would have predicted: while bilingualism had its benefits, on the whole English was the more social valuable commodity, a fact which reduced the attractiveness of Spanish as a target language for potential language learners.

CHAPTER VII

WAR IN MEXICO AND A SPANISH L1 EXODUS TO TEXAS

Revolution and Poverty in Mexico Spur a Resurgence of Spanish in Texas

William Foster, who we met earlier describing how the Spanish never quite failed to tame Texas, which remained Indian Territory until the Anglo Texans inflicted a series of massacres on the Comanches and other tribes, argues that more recent history is allowing both Indians and the Spanish language to take their revenge. Following the events of 1836-1848, “Some Indians, along with Mexican families, migrated or were driven into northern Mexico by the Anglo surge. Many Indians melted into the Mexican population and survived. Today they are a part of the Mexican resurgence back across the Rio Grande del Norte to a land their tribal ancestors knew well” (Foster 1995, 231). The resurgence began during these years, as many Mexicans fled north again to escape yet another war: the Mexican Revolution (1910-1918) (Johnson, Benjamin, 2003, p. 128). Even after the fighting ceased, economic pressures and family connections continued to push people north to the Rio Grande Valley, especially from Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and San Luis Potosí. Here they arrived in a formerly Mexican, Spanish-speaking territory that was in the process of being overrun simultaneously by English-speaking farmers from unheard-of places like Minnesota and North Dakota. Farmers fleeing south to escape Northern snows now met another large demographic – although one harder to measure statistically since it did not fit easily into the newly English-run government machinery.

A year before McAllen was incorporated, the political situation in Mexico began to unravel as longtime dictator Porfirio Díaz was exiled and the country plunged into a prolonged period of civil war (1910-1918). Battles raged uncomfortably close to the Rio Grande Valley; when Matamoros was captured by General Lucio Blanco, Mexican soldiers and wounded men fled across the bridge to Brownsville. Raiding from bandits and harsh retaliation by Texas Rangers and later the U.S. Army turned the Valley into a war zone. Upwards of 10,000 American soldiers were stationed in new McAllen; cavalry patrolled the border near Mission; and Brownsville's eponymous Fort Brown remained active. The result was an influx of refugees; especially from nearby Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and even San Luis Potosí. The connection between the Valley and Northern Mexico is old and deep, especially since many lived on both sides of the river – a fact that complicated the relationship between Texans and the Mexican Revolution.

Isabel Loya and José María: Excerpt 1, Spanish L1 Texans Caught in the Crossfire

(Interview in 1987 with Mary Salas)

Isabel Loya was Texas-born (in 1909, in McAllen) but spent much time in Tamaulipas after her mother took her there, only to die and leave her orphaned. She remembered how the chaos in Mexico affected this binational society:

[16:08-17:18]⁴²

⁴² Isabel Loya translation:

Isabel Loya: “Anyway, I was born here in McAllen, and as I will tell you later I lost my mother, and I remember very well that, when we crossed over there, to Reynosa, we crossed walking, I and my brother, at low water, and later [went] as far as Bravo, and from there on by mother was doing very poorly, with the fever that, uh, uh, uh, that they called – it was a fever that she had, malaria.”

Mary Salas: “Ah, yes, yes.”

IL: “This happened a long time ago, many years [ago], when Carranza was at war along the border.”

MS: “You studied this?”

Isabel Loya: *“Yo nací en McAllen, cuando mi padre empezó a trabajar en McAllen, mi mamá y mi papá del otro lado, sin papeles ellos; en aquellos tiempos no les daban papeles, ni nada. Como quiera, aquí nací yo en McAllen, y, como te digo después, me faltó mi madre, y me acuerdo que, muy bien, que fue cuando nos pasamos pa’ alla, pa’ Reynosa, pasamos andando yo y mi hermano, a agua bajita, y luego hasta Bravo, y de allí mi mamá andaba muy mal, con la fiebre de uh, uh, uh, que decían – Era una fiebre que había, malaria.”*

Mary Salas: *“Ah, sí, sí, sí.”*

IL: *“Había a long time ago, muchos años, cuando Pancho Villa y Carranza andaba en la guerra en la frontera”*

MS: *“¿Estudió usted eso?”*

IL: *“Bueno, alcancé a ver a Pancho Villa y a los Carrancistas--”*

MS: *“¡Mm!”*

IL: *“matando gallas, marranos, y vacas. Porque en este rancho donde mi papá vivía habían todos esos animales, de manera que en ese tiempo, ellos los soldados, ellos no nos respetaban.”*

For Isabel Loya the war was triply complicated, for not only was she a Texan in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution, while she was still there her little brother was fighting as an American soldier along with the other U.S. Army troops arrayed in New Mexico to defend against attacks such as Pancho Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico, a situation he found still more complicated for educational-linguistic reasons – but he would learn (to speak, though not to write), and as a result of this experience made a new life for himself and his bride in Montana:

IL: *“Well, I was able to see Pancho Villa and the Carrancistas—”*

MS: *“Mhm!”*

IL: *“killing chickens, and pigs, and cattle. Because in the rancho where my father lived there were all these animals, but the thing was that in those days they, the soldiers, didn’t respect us.”*

[17:19-18:03]⁴³

IL: *“Y cuando me traje mi hermanito, y lo registraron, porque era ciudadano americano, él es nacido aquí, pero se lo llevó a Edimburgo para registrarlo, para su registro. Y luego luego pasó al army, se fue en el tren, y paso y estuvo un año, ocho meses, en el – sirviendo en Albuquerque, Nuevo México, mi hermano mío hizo eso, José –”*

MS: *”Hmhm ”*

IL: *“José María. En esto ya salió él; tu sabes, libre, y vino a Paseo, y luego salió dischargeado, porque él no sabía ni tampoco como poner su nombre, ni nada, se había criado cuidando chivas. Entonces se me fue. Vino para Montana, y allá se casó, en Billings, Montana, y tiene seis hijos....”*

Manuela Barrios: Refugee from War-Torn San Luis Potosi

(Interview on Cassette Tape, Accessible in UTRGV Edinburg LRGV Archives)

One example of the exiles from the Revolution’s bloodbath is Manuela Barrera, whose story outlines the danger facing those living in revolutionary Mexico. In 1915, in the wake of the bloody skirmish in the Mexican Revolution recounted below, a 16 or 17-year old Manuela and her family moved from Matehuala, San Luís Potosí, to Monterrey, Nuevo León. Their refugee trek continued in 1918 when the family moved to the tiny town of Peñitas on the north bank of the Rio Bravo (about 8 miles upriver from La Joya). Manuela lived in the *Valle de Tejas* for the

⁴³ IL: “And I when I took my little brother, and they registered him, because he was an American citizen, born here, but he was taken to Edinburg to register him [for the draft]. And immediately he went into the army, and went away in the train, and left and was a year, eight months in the – serving in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My own brother did this, José--“

MS: “Mhmm.”

IL: “José María. From this que left, *tú sabes*, you know, free, and came to Paseo, and later left dischargeado, because he didn’t even know how to write his name, or nothing, he had been raised raising goats. Then he left me. He went to Montana, and there he married, in Billings, Montana, and he has six children...”

rest of her very long life (she died in Peñitas in 1989 at the age of 101).⁴⁴ Here is Manuela's – then a young girl – brush with war in rural Matahuala, San Luis Potosí.

*[Interview is only on cassette tape, so there is no digitized count meter.]*⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Manuela's obituary lists her as being born in 17 June 1899, but unless she forgot her own birth date during the interview, she was actually born a year earlier than the official DOB given in the obit. <http://texasobits.tributes.com/show/Manuela-Barrios-57454740> (Accessed 20 June 2013).

⁴⁵ Manuela Barrios translation:

Barrios: "I also experienced the war in Matahuala."

Interviewer: "What was this time like? What happened?"

B: "It's that [pause] mmm [mumbles something incomprehensibly quiet. Begins again in a trembling voice]. In the war, they killed people. They killed the animals. They took everything that you had. They burned many nice houses."

I: "Did the people suffer much?"

B: "The houses were burned. People lost family members. People spend the night in the hills, hiding with their families, because they were killing us."

I: "Who –?"

B: "The Carrancistas and Villistas. Madero was the one who lit the fuse – Madero, and all of them, all the ones who ... wanted to be, or who were, presidents, but only for a little while, because they would be killed [pause]. Umm, [pause] They were all bad, none was good. [Pauses, mumbles; the static in the tape recorder renders her words incomprehensible]. One time ... someone asked me a question, and asked how old I was. And I told them. And they said, So then you are from the time of Villa, you went through the war? And I said yes. And they said, "How good were they [Villa's men, still heroes to the border people]?" And I said, "they were all the same, they were all equally bad."

I: "And you never experienced - or how shall I say, you never saw –"

B: "Oh, I saw [people get] wounded because they [soldiers] came to where I lived, [mumbles in a low voice], to be sure, to Matahuala, the town [where she lived]. And I saw them, because there they were, yes, from the Maderistas and the Carrancistas."

I: "What was – what cause had the Carrancistas [ie., what were they fighting for]?"

B: "Well, what I told you, that 'What they are taking from you is yours.' Because when Porfirio Díaz left the post, it was Madero who got involved first, and then, when Madero sparked the war, then came [paused, remembering] Villa. Then was when Porfirio Díaz left the land."

I: "Yes."

B: "But this is what they fought over, to become presidents."

I: "Yes."

B: "Well there were, some of them, who did not think like the rest, when they killed them, did not want [gets very emotional and her words are confused] –"

I: "Then, you were there when they came –"

B: "Yes, when the Villistas and the Carrancistas came, it was them, it was they who got into a shootout in the rancho."

I: "In the rancho where you were?"

B: "Yes, it was they who shot it out with the enemy because it is close to [pause] – Díaz's men were close to Matahuala, in fact, as close as from here [ie., Peñitas] to La Joya [approximately 8 miles]. [Pause.] And they were who fired and killed five people."

I: "Where? There in the rancho?"

B: "Yes, there where – on a little hill, there, the shooting, there they killed them. Then, este, they left, and left them lying there shot. And when this happened, uh, uh, some took courage, of those who, of those from the rancho, [and] they picked them up, those who lived, and those who did, well, they buried them, yes, and of these two died, of the five, and three lived, but wounded, and they carried them to the rancho where we lived, then the judge – because

Barrios: *“También yo pasé la guerra en Matahuala.”*

Entrevistadora: *“¿Qué tiempos eran esos? ¿Qué sucedía?”*

B: *“Es que [pausa] mmm [dice algo, pero no suficiente claramente para entender. Empieza de nuevo en voz trémula]. En la guerra, mataban la gente. Mataban los animales. Te quitaban todo lo que tenías. Encendían muchas casas.”*

E: *“¿Sufría mucho la gente?”*

B: *“Quemaban las casas. Perdían familiares. Pasaban las noches en los montes, escondiéndose con sus familias, porque nos mataban.”*

E: *“¿Quién –”*

Barrios: *“Los Carrancistas y Villistas. Madero, fue que prendió la mecha – Madero, y todos ellos, todos que ... querrían ser, o todos los que fueron presidentes por un tiempo nomás, porque los mataron [pausa]. Este [pausa] – todos fueron malos, no era bueno, nadie de ellos. [Pausa, dice algo en voz baja, incomprendible]. Una vez ... me levantó una pregunta, y me preguntó cuántos años tenía, y yo le dije, y dijo, ¿Entonces tú eres de la era de Villa, tú eres de la guerra, pasase la guerra? Y le dije sí, que sí. Y dijo, ¿Qué tan buenos eran? Y dije, todos eran iguales, todos eran iguales de malos.”*

E: *“Sí. Y no alcanzó usted a conocer o sea nada más ha visto –”*

after what happened the judge was the one in charge in the rancho – decided who would carry them to the town, which town lay at a day’s walk away –”

I: “A day’s walk!”

B: “Well, they were not going to live that long [long enough to make it to the town]”

I: “Well of course.”

B: “They got to the town [pause] – to die. Well, and then [pause] they were close to our house [her voice gets shaky] and they were still alive, and someone went and said that someone should clean up the wounded, and I cleaned [washed] them, they were all bleeding, I took off everything they had because it was all bloody, and put new clean clothes on them, but oh, well, [laughs nervously, without mirth], as someone has said, “the blood of war,” right?”

B: *“Ah, conocí heridos porque llegaban a donde vivía, en uno de los ranchos. [dice algo en voz baja, incompresible], de cierto de Matahuala el pueblo. Yo los conocí, porque allí estaban, sí, de los maderistas y de los carrancistas –”*

E: *“¿Qué era – qué causa tenían los carrancistas?”*

B: *“Pos que, lo que te digo, que la, lo que te llevan era nuestro. Porque cuando Porfirio Díaz dejó el puesto, fue Madero el que le metió primero, y ya, cuando Madero estalló la guerra, entonces siguió [pausa, si como verificar el orden de los acontecimientos en su recuerdo] Villa, entonces fue cuando Don Porfirio Días se fue de la tierra –”*

E: *“Sí.”*

B: *“Pero eso es lo que peleaban, ser presidentes.”*

E: *“Sí.”*

B: *“Eran pues, algunos de ellos no pensaron como todos cuando los mataron, no quieran [se pone muy emocional] –”*

E: *“Entonces, usted alcanzó estar allí cuando vinieron –”*

B: *“Sí, cuando vinieron los villistas y los carrancistas, fueron los que, los que hicieron un tiroteo en el rancho.”*

E: *“¿En el rancho donde usted estaba?”*

B: *“Sí, fueron los que hicieron un tiroteo con el enemigo porque es cerquita de, [pausa] estaban los [pausa] de Díaz cerquita de Matahuala, cierto, cerca como de aquí a La Joya. [pausa] Este – [pausa] y ellos fueron los que hicieron un tiroteo y mataron [pausa] a cinco personas.”*

E: *“¿Dónde? ¿Allí en el rancho?”*

B: *“Sí. Allí donde – en una lomita allí, el tiroteo, allí los mataron. Entonces, este, se fueron, y los dejaron tirados, y cuando sucedía eso – eh, eh – algunos tenían valor, de los que, del rancho, los*

levantaban, los que estaban vivos, y los que no, pues les daban sepultura, sí, y de estos dos murieron, de los cinco, y tres vivieron, pero heridos, y los llevaron al rancho, donde vivíamos nosotros, entonces el juez, -porque después de lo acontecido el juez tenía el mando en rancho, ¿no? juzgó quién los llevara al pueblo, cual pueblo pos quedaba un día de camino –”

E: “¡Un día de camino!”

B: “Pues ellos no iban a vivir tanto –”

E: “Pues sí.”

B: “Llegaron al pueblo [pausa] – para morir. Bueno y entonces [pausa] estaban cerca de la casa de nosotros, [su voz se pone trémula] y estaban viviendo, y alguien fue y dijo que los lavara a aquellos heridos, y yo les lavé, todos sangraban, quitaban todo lo que tenían pues es que sangraban, y les pusieron ropa limpia, pero ni modo que [se ría nerviosamente] como quien dice, ‘la sangre de la guerra,’ ¿verdad?”

Not only had Manuela and her family been traumatized by the war, when in 1918 they left war-torn Mexico behind, their lot in the rapidly commercializing Rio Grande Valley was no more settled. She, her brother, and many other agricultural workers used the new railroad to travel to all the harvesting spots in the Valley’s new farms. They would arrive at each new place and stay for a time with the other workers in a temporary camp. Showing the transient and challenging nature of her life, after two years her brother disappeared in 1923 and was never heard from again, even though a distraught Manuela spent whatever money she in travelling up and down the railroad, looking for her brother in every agricultural camp from Austin to Tampico – to no avail. The tears in her voice still sound through the static of the old recording. “Y entonces ya era el ’24 cuando nos convencieron que no lo hallaron, y nunca lo hallé, y yo quedé aquí con mi familia.” The loss of her brother meant the end of Barrios’ adventures outside

the home. For the rest of her life she stayed put, never marrying, never even having the time for a boyfriend, in order to support younger family members.

Speaking of the younger family members Manuela sacrificed herself to support, the story of Manuela's family shows that the difficulty of adjustment to agrarian South Texas did not confine itself to the first generation. In an out-of-the-way place like Peñitas, no one bothered to educate the children of the *jornaleros* who labored in the field. (Migrant workers' children in the twenty-first century continue to struggle with this.) Barrios recalled, "*No había escuelas, no había nada. Algunos que sabían leer, les pagaban.*" ("There were no schools, there was nothing. There were a few who knew how to read, and we paid them [to teach some of the luckier kids to read].") Neither was there much of an outcry at the sub-optimal situation, because learning was not seen as a necessary complement to a low-class laborer's kids' skill set in those days in Mexico or South Texas. Barrios recalled, "*Y así muy pocos se interesaban en darles lo que es, lo que puede la escuela [pausa] – puro trabajo.*" ("And so very few people were interested in giving themselves what an education can provide - just work, all the time.") This perspective was largely because educational difficulties in the early 1900s were hardly confined to rural Texas; in rural Mexico, they were far worse. In San Luís Potosí, Manuela had never attended school for a single day. "*Yo no tuve educación, yo nunca asistí a la escuela, porque fue desde chiquita cuando empecé a trabajar. Mi hermanito aún no había nacido cuando mi padre se murió.*"⁴⁶

In the rural areas upriver from Mission, the situation for Manuela's young Texas family members was not much better than it had been for Manuela in Mexico. González wrote frankly of the late 1800s and first two decades of the 1900s: "Parents did not send their children to the

⁴⁶ Translation: "I did not have an education; I never attended school, because I started working as a small child. My little brother had not yet been born when my father died."

rural public schools for two reasons; firstly, the teachers did not know anything to teach and secondly Mexican schools offered better opportunities to the students. The teachers in these private schools were graduates either of the Monterrey or Saltillo schools and had a superior education than the native instructors” (González, 1929, p. 95). Notice, however, the word *private*; for Manuela’s relatives the superior education of a Monterrey graduate was out of reach.

The lack of available education was no accident. In early 1900s Texas, at least in some corners of policy-making, recently arrived Mexicans were valued only for the labor could provide, and education was not a desired part of the skills set. In the World War I era anti-German, anti-foreign wave, the Burnett Immigration Law of 1917 had stipulated that all immigrants had to pass a literacy test (Johnson 165). But literacy was not something the farmers in South Texas wanted of their field hands – it was better to keep them trapped in poverty, limited by illiteracy to cheap farm labor. So they pressured President Woodrow Wilson to make an exception for Mexicans - and Wilson did so for those “employed only in agricultural labor” (Johnson 165).

Lucio Sierra: One Workers’ Story and the Professional-Education Barrier

(Interview in 1987 with “Miguel Torres”⁴⁷)

To continue with the economic consequences that the lack of education had on Spanish L1 immigrants to South Texas, and the reason why they continued to come in spite of the hard life and discrimination that awaited them there, consider the case of Lucio Sierra.

The Economic Situation in Mexico

⁴⁷ Miguel Torres according to the official record; listening reveals that interviewers are several voices, apparently two males and a female. We will use the designations Ent 1, 2, 3 in lieu of names, since we do not know for certain who the interviewers were. One of the voices may well be the Miguel Torres mentioned in the archival note.

Lucio Sierra was born in 1913 in Yerbabuena, San Luís Potosí. He arrived in South Texas in 1969, which is technically after the period we are studying. However, precisely because he was still in Mexico during our era of interest, he could testify to the ongoing situation during the land rush period in Mexico. His story highlights some recurring themes in rural Mexico that explain the continuing attraction of the Rio Grande Valley south of the border in spite of the deteriorating situation that awaited Spanish L1s in Texas during over the first half of the 20th century.

One such theme is that price and society are hardly unique to the Valley or the United States. Sierra recalled the situation in Yerbabuena as follows:

[9:48 - 11:01]⁴⁸

Ent1: “*¿Y cómo, y cómo fue tu vida de joven allí en México? ¿Qué me cuentas acerca de esto?*”

⁴⁸ Lucio Sierra translation:

Interviewer 1: “And how, and how was your life as a young person over in Mexico? What can you tell me about it?”

Lucio Sierra: “Well for one part, let us say, we – well, in those years, um, well almost all the people lived very hard up because, well, well, over there it was always the many with money that counted. All the poor people, well, whatever the rich one wanted, he got. Because there were still *patrones* to whom you had to tip your hat, right? Take off our hat, and greet them, eh? And so it was that in this life, well, well, we experienced it as difficult because we, uh, once it was they we, uh, uh, could go to work, they would tell us, they would say to my father, “Listen here, I want you to lend me this boy so we can go sow [crops].”

Int 1: “You were his peons?”

LS: “We were his peons, well, of the one who had money...”

...

LS: “What they paid was fifty *centavos*.”

Int 2: “Fifty *centavos*!”

LS: “That’s what one earned from the time the sun went up until the sun went down.”

Int 2: “That wasn’t nothing!” [Expressed in the double negative sense, not as *litotes*.]

Int 3: “No, in that time—“

LS: “Well, those were other times, weren’t they?”

Int 3: “That’s for sure.”

LS: “There the kids didn’t go around with the kids not wanting to do anything. No, it was whatever someone told you to do, and not just your father, either. Any [older person] could say ‘You’re going to do this for me.’”

Int 1: “So how old were you when you thought about extricating yourself, of getting out of there?”

LS: “Well, let’s see, I, about, uh, at about 12, at 12 or 13, at 13 years of age I believe. Then, that’s when the highway from Mexico [City] to Laredo passed by my town, which was Linares, where I was raised, you know.”

Lucio Sierra: *“Pues por una parte dizque que nosotros – pues, en aquellos años, este, pues casi toda la gente vivíamos muy al tiburón por cuestión de que, que, - pos para allá todo el tiempo el hombre de dinero era ése que valía. Toda la gente pobre, pos ésta como al rico le quería tener, la tenía. Porque había todavía patrones que para usted se le necesitaba quitarse el sombrero, ¿verdad? Quitarse el sombrero, y saludarlos, ¿eh? Así es que en esa vida pos la pasábamos muy duro porque nosotros, este ya que estuvimos nosotros que, que, nos podíamos ir a trabajar, nos decían, le decían a mi papa, ‘Oye, yo quiero que prestes este muchacho para que vaya a sembrar.’”*

Ent1: *“¿Eran ustedes los peones de él?”*

LS: *“Éramos los peones de él, pues de aquel que tenía dinero...”*

[12:35-13:20]

LS: *“Lo que pagaron eran cincuenta centavos.”*

Ent2: *“¡Cincuenta centavos!”*

LS: *“Fue lo que uno ganaba desde que el sol nacía hasta que hasta que el sol se metía.”*

Ent2: *“¡No era nada!”*

Ent3: *“No, en aquella era--”*

LS: *“Pues, en aquellos años eran otros tiempos, ¿verdad?”*

Ent3: *“Eso es claro.”*

LS: *“Allá no andaban con que los muchachos no quieren hacer nada. No, es que allí lo que se le decía cualquiera, y no porque fuera su padre. Cualquiera le decía, ‘Tú, me vas a hacer esto.’”*

Ent1: *“¿Entonces, a los cuantos años usted pensó ya en desenvolverse, en salir de allí?”*

LS: *“Bueno mire, yo, como a los, uh, creo que a los 12, a los 12 a 13, a los 13 años yo creo. Entonces, fue cuando la carretera de, de Laredo a México pasó por mi pueblo, lo que era Linares, donde yo me crie, ¿verdad?”*

This was around 1928 or 1929, in Sierra’s recollection. To construct the Laredo-Mexico highway, workers were being contracted for everything from building roadtop to bridges. He and his brother-in-law went to work on this road. There he saw the possibilities that could come with actually getting paid an actual wage for a day’s work. To be sure, the wage was only 75 centavos, but it was for only eight hours, as opposed to sundown to sunset as it had been in Yerbabuena labor.

Later, they moved from working on the highway to working in the nearby town (Linares, Nuevo León), where they began to learn useful skills. However, it was at this point the limits that a lack of language and education skills put on professional development become clear. As Lucio Sierra points out, literacy was a firm obstacle of the class barrier in Mexico. It didn’t help to learn a skilled trade if you didn’t have the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic that were needed to run your operation.

[17:50-18:58]⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Lucio Sierra translation:

LS: “It would be better for us to get out of here, let’s go to the town and see what we can find in the town’ . . . and so we left the highway--”

Int1: “Where did you go next?”

LS: “There to the same town, Linares, you know? We left they highway because we weren’t working on the road any more there, you know? So we went to the town. Then in the town – something like thirty of us had left [the highway], well they said, well, “You are going to lose all the things you have gained here,’ well, we said, “Let it be lost [good riddance] because this is [working with] cement is just pick and stick [i.e., hard labor with simple implements].”

Int 1: “And what did you do in the town? Where did you find work?”

LS: “Well, in the town some learned to be bricklayers, some learned carpentering, others learned – what to you call it, putting pipes for water? How is it said?”

Int 1: “Plumbing?”

LS: “Plumbing. Well,”

LS: “*Vale más que salimos de aquí; vámonos al pueblo a ver lo que podemos aprender en el pueblo’ ...Entonces salimos de la carretera–*”

Ent1: “*¿Adónde se fueron después?*”

LS: “*Allí al mismo pueblo de Linares, ¿verdad? Salimos de la carretera, a ver, porque ya no trabajamos en este camino [el Laredo-México], ¿verdad? Entonces nos fuimos al pueblo.*

Entonces allí en el pueblo nos – salimos como unos treinta, pos dijeron pos ‘Ustedes van a perder lo que tienen ganado aquí’ – pos que se pierda, porque esta cementa no más, puro pico y pala – ”

Ent1: “*¿Y qué hicieron en pueblo? En que alcanzaron trabajar?*

LS: “*Bueno, en el pueblo unos aprendieron albañiles, aprendió la carpintería, otros, aprendieron este, ¿Cómo le dice, este de para poner tubos de agua? ¿Cómo les dice?*

Ent1: “*¿Plomería?*”

LS: “*Plomería. Bueno,*”

Ent1: “*¿Y usted, qué aprendió?*

LS: “*Yo no aprendí más que puro pico y pala, porque bueno no sabía leer, conocí todos los trabajos de la carretera, y me la daban de cargo, me la daban de velador, pero nunca yo fui a la escuela, no sabía ni como poner mi nombre. Entonces, pues, ¿para que servía, verdad?*”

Illiteracy and Its Consequences

Nor was Lucio Sierra alone in being deprived of a professional career as a tradesman by being deprived of an education. Education in English-only schools might be a rough experience for Spanish L1s in Texas; that being said, their rural counterparts in Mexico might receive none

Int 1: “And you, what did you learn?”

LS: “I never learned more than just pick and stick [manual labor], because I didn’t know how to read, I knew all the jobs of [building] the highway, and they gave me the task of [watcher/watchman/guard], but I never went to school, I didn’t even know how to write my name. So, then, what good would it have done me, you know?”

whatsoever. The census of the period listed among its categories “Illiterate foreign-born white males of voting age”, which apart from betraying by its title a fear then prevalent in the U.S. that mass migration from Eastern and Southern Europe was somehow destroying American democracy,⁵⁰ also shows in hard numbers the economic challenge faced by South Texas counties in terms having high numbers of individuals who lacked a basic skill needed to compete in the formal capitalist economy that replaced *peonaje* and small ranchers alike: literacy. In 1910 and 1920, South Texas and border counties like Bexar (county of the bilingual metro San Antonio), El Paso, and Webb (county of Laredo), and of course Cameron (Brownsville) and Hidalgo (McAllen-Edinburg-Mission) had high populations who could not read or write. The great weakness of this data (shown in the table below) is that it is raw numbers, not percentage. So, sparsely populated but (to this day) mostly Spanish L1 Starr county (Roma) has a small number; the key is to realize that medium-population counties like Cameron and Hidalgo had more newcomers unable to read than even the mass metro areas like Harris (Houston) or Dallas counties, with all the economic and social implications that put residents at a disadvantage and made a command of English literacy even more of a valuable commodity in the *marché linguistique*. A second problem is that given prevalence of informal or illegal labor importation, the illiteracy numbers for the border counties are almost certainly seriously underestimated.

⁵⁰ Américo Paredes’ *George Washington Gómez* evokes – albeit in fictional form - how democracy functioned in South Texas in the absence of English-language literacy: the use of colors to vote for different parties.

Table 8: Census Data - Texas: Illiterate Foreign-Born White Males of Voting Age.
 (Source: University of Virginia. *Historical Census Browser*.)

County	1910	1920
Cameron	1,564	1,729
Hidalgo	940	2,192
Starr	723	364
Webb	1,355	1,566
Bexar	2,434	6,428
<i>In contrast...</i>		
Panola (rural LA border)	0	0
Dallas (big North Texas city)	239	945

Illiteracy would become a bigger problem as time wore on, as a United States where illiteracy had once been common (20% of all people 14 years old and older in 1870) became more and more a reading and writing nation. By 1900, illiteracy had dropped to 10.7%; by 1910, to 7.7%; by 1920, to 6.0%; by 1930, to 4.3% (Snyder, 1993). It worth noting that segregation and other social injustices led to vast spikes in illiteracy among some populations. African-Americans, for example, had a 79.9% illiteracy rate in 1870, 44.5% in 1900, and 16.4% illiteracy in 1930 (Snyder 1993, p. 21). Unlike African-Americans, Hispanics did not get their own census category in these years – but since Mexican-Americans in McAllen endured conditions similar to African-Americans in the rest of the South, one is not left with a good feeling about the state of affairs that existed. Since reading and writing are two of the standard components of language learning, a lack of literacy in L1 similarly impedes learning an L2. In addition to being a barrier

to book-learning an L2, illiteracy was also a fundamental challenge to integration into an English speaking society: We will return to the theme of education and illiteracy in Chapter XI, when we find that challenges for acquiring an education (and therefore English, with the resulting limitations in a society where English commanded a higher market price) extended not only to adult arrivals like Sierra, but to students from Texas as well.

Language and Identity within the Spanish L1 Community: Texas versus Mexico

Language learning was not a simple matter of identifying more with Mexico or Texas, and preferring Spanish or English accordingly. Even among the Spanish monolingual population in South Texas, some loyally identified with the old country of Mexico, and others fiercely claimed a Texan identity. A case in point is the juxtaposition of Andrés Silva (born 1893 in Camargo, Tamaulipas) and an anonymous interviewee⁵¹ (born in 1923 in Rio Grande City, Texas). Neither speaks English. Silva was educated; “Anonymous” was not. In spite of not speaking English, Anonymous considered herself a multigenerational Texan and said she knows nothing about Mexico further than Reynosa. Silva, on the other hand, felt insulted when people in Reynosa call him American; his father fought for Mexico against the French, and he endured danger during the Mexican Revolution (from which time his father fled and that is when he came to Texas). All this experience adds up to a proudly Mexican national feeling. Here are the relevant interview portions:

⁵¹ Misplaced on the Lilia Ramos tape; Ramos’ interview does not begin until [30:18].

Andrés Silva: Pride in His Father's Heroism and Implications for Language

(Interview in 1987 by Betty Lou Garza)

Andrés Silva was born in 1893 in Camargo, Tamaulipas (he is 94 at the time of this 1987 interview – which is why his father could have been fighting in the 1860s as a shockingly young soldier boy). He starts the interview off with his defining pride in his family:

[0:00-0:20]⁵²

Andrés Silva: *Nací cerca de aquí en Camargo. Mi padre era uno de los que lucho cuando los franceses se apoderaron de México.*”

Silva discusses his father's war experiences at some length, including a battle that fits the description of the one Rutoskey's (interview p.176) grandfather died in fighting for the French.

[7:11-7:44]

Andrés Silva: *“En Reynosa, San Antonio, existen quienes dicen que son americanos. Eh, pos que sí. Pero yo no. Me siento tan mexicano como usted, porque mi padre era un [héroe?], y luchó para la independencia de México.”*

Bolaño (1982) points out that language contact tends to degenerate into language conflict, and especially when one linguistic group is being dominated by the other (in this case, the twentieth-century English-speakers' domination of the Spanish-speaking population of South Texas) a loyalty to language as a weapon in the struggle is natural (p. 77). In Montreal, Quebec, where the issue has been extensively studied thanks to the English-French dynamic in that Canadian city, a study by Segalowitz, Gatbonton, and Trofimovich (2009) found there is a link

⁵² Andrés Silva translation

Andres Silva: “I was born near here in Camargo. My father was one of those who fought when the French took over Mexico.”

....

AS: “In Reynosa, San Antonio there are those who say they're Americans. Well yes – but not me! I feel as Mexican as you, because my father was [a hero?] and fought for the independence of Mexico.”

between national identification and SLA in the sense that the former may “affect the amount of L2 use a person will engage in,” as well as leading to a “fine-tuning” in the calibration of the learner’s language acquisition apparatus thanks to more frequent input from the other language (p. 172-192).

Anonymous (on Lilia Ramos tape): Excerpt 1, Texas Identification

(Interviewer unknown)

National identity and language identity were separate things, however. The words of an anonymous interviewee whose story has been misplaced on the Lilia Ramos tape recalled made it clear that she, born in 1923 in Rio Grande City, belonged in Texas:

[2:30-3:10]⁵³

Entrevistadora: “¿Viviste aquí en el Valle?”

Anónima: “*Toda la vida.*”

ENT: “¿*Toda?*”

AN: “*Sí. Toda la vida vivimos aquí en el Valle.*”

ENT: “*Usted - ¿Y tu familia también?*”

⁵³ Anonymous translation:

IN: “You lived here in the Valley?”

AN: “All my life.”

IN: “All?”

AN: “Yes. All our lives we have lived here in the Valley.”

IN: “You did – and your family, too?”

AN: “Yes. My entire family was born and raised here.”

IN: “And your – and your mother and father as well?”

AN: “My mother and father, too. They lived here for a while, but now they’ve been dead for many years.”

IN: “Did they come from Mexico?”

AN: “No.”

IN: “From Spain?”

AN: “No. They were from here, from Texas.”

IN: “And them?”

AN: “Us too. No one of my siblings was born in Mexico. The truth is I’ve never been to Mexico, except right here in Reynosa.”

AN: “*Sí. Toda mi familia es nacida y criada aquí.*”

ENT: “*¿Y sus...Y su madre y su papa también?*”

AN: “*Mi mama y papa también. Aquí estuvieron un tiempo, pero hace muchos años que murieron.*”

ENT: “*¿Vinieron ellos de México?*”

AN: “*No.*”

ENT: “*¿De España?*”

AN: “*No. Eran de aquí, de Texas.*”

ENT: “*¿Sí?*”

AN: “*No ellos, ellos no eran de México.*”

ENT: “*¿Y ellos?*”

AN: “*Nosotros también. Nadie de mis hermanos nacieron en México. La mera verdad que no conozco a México. Nomás que aquí en Reynosa.*”

Her roots in Texas show in the remainder of the interview. It is clear that this anonymous woman fit in well in her community. In 1983 and 1984, her (by then elderly) husband was honored by being chosen as “Rey” [King] of “Los Amigos Del Valle,” a Mission-based community organization.

However, her story shows just how common it was for native South Texans (especially in Starr County, as we saw in Chapter 4) to not use English, even quite late in the land rush; remember, she was born in 1923, so her experiences are later than that.

[7:20-8:38]⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Anonymous translation.

AN: *“Mis hijas sí fueron a la escuela, acabaron la escuela. Mis hijos no acabaron la escuela pero si saben bastante. Si saben mucho inglés y todo eso.”*

ENT: *“¿Su esposo no sabía español?”*

AN: *“Mi esposo-”*

ENT: *“I mean, ¿inglés?”*

AN: *“Inglés, nada. Muy poquito sabemos. Mi esposo fue a la escuela de ancianos, y aprendió un poquito el inglés, y escribir español, porque una maestra lo querría bastante y le daba clases, después de la escuela. Dejaba a cuantos, a bastantes muchachos, y le enseñaba a él. Porque él sabía, mi esposo, español, escribir español. Inglés, sabía muy poquito. Mi esposo era un hombre muy alto, tenía muchas familiares españoles. Todos creían que era americano....Todos se equivocaban, y él decía, ‘No tengo nada de inglés,’ decía.”*

Anonymous’ choice to identify as Texan also did not result from enjoying the life that should have been hers as part of the American dream. Rather, she got the short end of the economic stick.

ENT: *“¿Cuando estaba chica usted, cuanto te pagaron por los trabajos que hiciste?”⁵⁵*

Anonymous: “My daughters did go to school, and finished school. My sons didn’t finish school but they do know a lot. They do know a lot of English and all that.”

Interviewer: “Your husband didn’t know Spanish?”

AN: “My husband –“

EN: “I mean, English?”

AN: “English, nothing. We know very little. My husband went to a school for the elderly, and learned a little bit of English, and to write Spanish, because a teacher liked him a lot and gave him classes, after school. She left several, a bunch of students, and taught him. Because he knew, my husband, Spanish, to write Spanish. English, he knew very little. My husband was a very tall man, he had some Spanish family. Everyone thought he was an American...they were wrong, and he would say, ‘I don’t have any English,’ he would say.”

⁵⁵ Anonymous English translation

Interviewer: “When you were young, how much did they pay you for the jobs that you did?”

Anonymous: “Well I, see, I worked much in manual labor. They paid me fifty cents a day.”

IN: “Fifty cents?”

AN: “For ten hours.”

IN: “For the whole day?”

AN: “For the whole day. Fifty cents.”

AN: *“Pues yo, fíjate que trabaje yo mucho en la labor. Me pagaron 50 centavos al día.”*

ENT: *“50 centavos.”*

AN: *“Las 10 horas.”*

ENT: *“¿Por todo el día?”*

AN: *“Por todo el día. 50 centavos.”*

...

ENT: *“¿Yo no era suficiente?”*

AN: *“No era. Todos quedamos en la casa de mis hermanos. Y allí, cuando casé, me esposo ganaba 4 pesos al día.”*

ENT: *“¿Pesos?”*

AN: *“No era nada. Por semana, los cinco días, ganaba como unos 15. Por semana, fíjate, por mantener a mis 4 hijos...[describe como ella trabajaba para que los hijos vayan a la escuela, pero] ...No alcanzaba.”⁵⁶*

Silva and ‘Anonymous’: Two Sides of a Wider Debate

Obviously many South Texans, such as Andrés Silva, had very strong personal ties to Mexico and its history, and understandably resented and resisted the expectation that they now

....

IN: *“And it wasn’t enough?”*

AN: *“It wasn’t. We all stayed in my brothers’ house. And there, when I married, my husband made four pesos a day.”*

IN: *“Pesos?”*

AN: *“It was nothing. For a week, all five days, he made about 15. Per week, see, to maintain my four children...[she describes how she worked so her children could go to school, but]...it wasn’t enough.”*

⁵⁶ **Bilingualism in the Background**

For what it is worth in terms of illustrating the continued bilingualism of the Rio Grande Valley, at the 22:00 mark one hears in the background of the Ramos interview (which appear to have conducted in a church or school) first the American pledge of allegiance, followed by an Our Father prayer in both English and Spanish, and finally an extemporaneous prayer in Spanish. Then the sound descends back to indistinguishable background level.

adopt the identity of the country that had acted as *invasor* in 1845-48. Silva's point carries added weight because the Texan connection to the Mexican resistance against French aggression runs very deep: at the great Mexican victory over French forces at Pueblo on the 5 de mayo de 1862, the Mexican army's commander, Ignacio Zaragoza, was not only born in 1829 in Bahía del Espíritu Santo, in what is now Southeast Texas, but also related to the Juan José Erasmo Seguín, one-time *acalde* of San Antonio, friend of Stephen F. Austin, and delegate to the Mexican constitutional convention of 1824 (Texas State Historical Association) and (de la Teja, "Seguin," 2015). His memory lives on in Texas as a statue in the main plaza of the South Texas town of Laredo, and further north a marker points to his birthplace off Highway 59 near Goliad.

Silva's choice points to a wider identity crisis among early 1900s Tejanos, one with linguistic implications: Did embracing the United States and its socio-political structures imply *traición* of the mother country? The issue came up in the Valley as Mexican-Americans began to organize politically to resist Anglo-American domination of the region. For example, the San Antonio-based Order of the Sons of America (established 1921) stipulated that members be U.S. citizens. When the same thing was proposed at a League of Latin American citizens in the Valley city of Harlingen, a "four-hour" shouting match erupted, and when the measure passed, many delegates left (Johnson 2003, p. 185). The division reflected the deep emotional, cultural, and political aspects inherent within this conversation, but the issue also made a difference for language learning. Someone like Silva, loyal to the Mexico for which his father had fought, had no reason to learn the language of the North American invader. People like the Leo J. Leo interviewed (p. 212), as well as local leaders such as Brownsville-based state legislator J.T. Canales and Laredoan Eduardo Idar (whose wife, Jovita Idar, "founded co-founded the League of Mexican Women, which focused its work on education for poor children" [*Rootsweb*, 2008]),

on the other hand, were determined to make the democracy in which they now lived live up to its ideals. Of course, in choosing this course, they were electing to engage with a largely English-speaking country – and for this, they were well aware, English would be necessary.

John Rutoskey: A Polish Spanish L1 Descendant of Silva’s Father’s Enemies

(Interview with Corina Cantú)

John Rutoskey, born in 1892 in Nuevo León, Mexico, was a descendant of a Polish soldier in the service of the French who invaded Mexico in the 1860s, represents a linguistically interesting individual: a Polish Spanish L1 who grew up surviving off the stereotypical regional activity of herding goats.

[1:30-6:00]

John Rutoskey: “*Cuando yo nací, mi madre era Teodora Quintanilla....[Ella] estaba casada con mi papa Mariano Rutoskey, del lado Polish, polaco. ¿Entendiste?*”

Corina Cantú: “*Sí.*”⁵⁷

....

JR: “*Mi padre mío era soldado polaco. ¿Entiendes?*”

⁵⁷ John Rutoskey English translation:

John Rutoskey: “When I was born, my mother was Teodora Quintanilla...She was married to my father, Mariano Rutoskey, on the Polish side. You understand?”

Corina Cantú: “Yes.”

....

JR: “My father was a Polish soldier, you understand?”

CC: “Mhmm”

JR: “Well, as he was in the army, and as France and Poland shared many interests,”

CC: “Yes”

JR: “They joined forces, and they came and put him in a boat to come here to Mexico.”

CC: “Where was he from? From Poland?”

JR: “From Polish. Oh, yes, he was from Polish.”

CC: “Where did they arrive? In Veracruz, or somewhere else?”

JR: “Don’t know. From there [France] they left, and my father, who was in school, he was about 12 or 13 years old, came home and said, ‘Mom, where’s Dad?’ ‘He’s in the ship. They put in the ship, they want to take him to Mexico, to fight over there.’ And then my father said to his mother, ‘Mommy, I’ll go over there [too]. I am going to the ship to talk with him....’”

CC: “*Mhm.*”

JR: “*Entonces, como estaba en el ejército, y como Francia y Polish cabían con muchos intereses,*”

CC: *Sí,*

JR: “*Se juntaron ellos, y se vinieron y le metieron en un barco para venir aquí hacia México.*”

CC: “*¿De dónde era? ¿De Poland?*”

JR: “*De Polish. Oh, sí, era de Polish.*”

CC: “*¿Adónde llegaron? ¿A Veracruz, u otro parte?*”

JR: “*No sé. De allá salieron, y mi papa mío, estaba en la escuela, él tenía aproximadamente*

unos 12 o 13 años, llega a la casa y le dice, ‘Mamá, ¿Dónde está papa?’ ‘Hijito, está en el

barco. Se le metieron en un barco, se le quieren llevar para México, a pelear pa’allá.’ Y

entonces, le dijo a la mamá mi papá, dijo, ‘Mamacita, yo me voy allí. Yo voy a meterme en el

barco para hablar con él....’”

There follows a long story, well worth the listening to for interested readers, of how John Rutosky’s adolescent father, John’s father’s uncle, and John’s grandfather all ended up on a boat heading for Mexico to fight for the French during French intervention of 1861-1867. Suffice it to say that the John’s father (Mariano) came to Mexico as a 13-year-old, was left orphaned in Mexico after his father and uncle were killed in a disastrous French defeat. Mariano was adopted by a Mexican family who gave him Mexican clothes and taught him Spanish. He was a good cook and tailor, and he married a local girl, Teodora Quintanilla. Unfortunately for John, Mariano – in spite of being “*muy talentoso,*” turned out to be an absentee father, running off to Rio Grande City, Texas, and leaving Teodora Quintanilla, John’s Mexican mother, to fend for herself. When Teodora died in childbirth when John was five, the young John (like the similarly motherless Isabel Loya, p. 239) had no other option but to starve and raise goats. The result, John

remembered, was that “*Yo me crié como un animal. Yo no tuve escuela, ni en inglés ni en español ni en polaco ni francés*” [40:26].⁵⁸

John would eventually follow his father’s footsteps and headed for Texas, crossing the river in a dangerous operation illegally in 1911, and then heading first for Mission, then Harlingen, and finally ending up as a field hand on the King Ranch north of the Valley. This cattle kingdom (which Rutoskey refers to, as most Spanish-speakers did, as La Kineña, was a symbol of what had happened to South Texas. Rutoskey remembered, “*Muchos mexicanos que vivían allá les quitó las propiedades. Y les decía que valió tres cuatrocientos pesos y luego les daba dos o trescientos pesos...*”⁵⁹ He went on to explain how Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were often mistreated by being kept out of schools and restaurants in nearby Harlingen. The entire atmosphere was confirmation of the hand-in-hand price change in language, commodity, and social status posited by Bourdieu, the sociologist who theorized in Rutoskey’s father’s soldier comrades’ language.

⁵⁸ JR: “I grew up like an animal. I never had schooling, not in English nor in Spanish nor in Polish nor in French.”

⁵⁹ JR: “Many Mexicans that lived there, they’d had their properties taken away. They would be told their land was worth three or four hundred pesos, but later they would only give them two or three hundred pesos...”

CHAPTER VIII

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL IN THE MARKETPLACE

Introduction

In the section below we will meet field hands, an ice cream machine repairman, a department store worker. The intersection of linguistic capital, work, and earnings potential meant that working relationships had a direct relationship on second language acquisition. Of course, work roles are usually directly connected to social status – especially in a highly stratified place like the Valley, which was a bonanza for some while the scene of near-slave labor for others. As a result, this investigation is useful not just from the point of view of SLA but also from a social justice perspective.

The following interviews will show how Spanish was a useful asset for English L1s – but racism sometimes could keep English from mattering so much for those Spanish L1s at the bottom of the social ladder. As will be seen, a sanitized version of either Bourdieu or Park and Wee’s theories, oversimplified to say that linguistic marketplaces alone determine value (a mistake, by the way, that those theorists avoided in their own words⁶⁰), will not work, because in early 1900s South Texas the division was not so much purely linguistic as ethnolinguistic. In other words, socially ingrained prejudice meant that some Spanish L1/English L2s started out

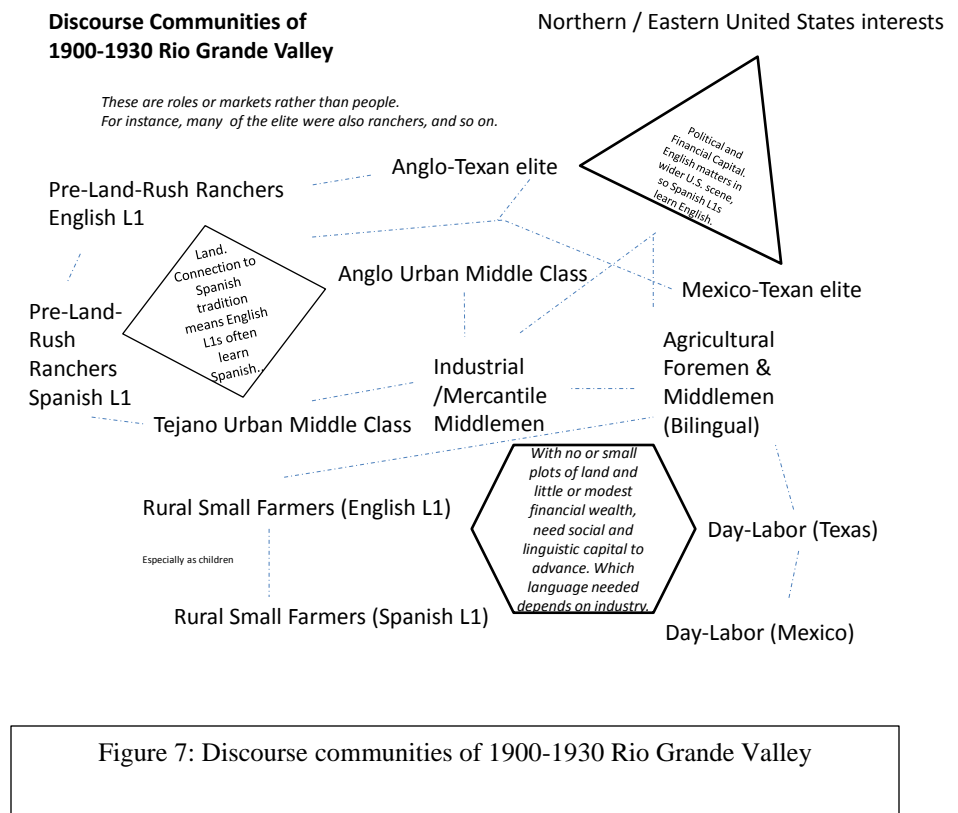
⁶⁰ Park and Wee (2012), for instance, begin their work by explaining the implications of their theory within the wider messy social environment in which linguistic markets function. Bourdieu, meanwhile, especially in *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Paris: Raisons d’Agir, 2014), made quite explicit how his theory was intended to upend the prejudices of the French academic elite.

with negative credits in the linguistic marketplace that English could mitigate but not remove, while some English L1/Spanish L2s received a useful social-capital boost with the acquisition of the second language.

Social Groupings and Language Acquisition

A tool used by Milroy and Milroy (1997) to explore intra-English language change across social groupings in Belfast (Northern Ireland) can be adapted to explore Spanish-English language learning across social groupings in South Texas. One key point of the Milroys' theory is that it helps explain why language change often happens more across weak links rather than in strongly-linked groups (Milroy and Milroy, 1997, p. 201-202. This explains why, for instance, the "Missouri group" clung to English only, while the relatively weak links of journeymen

English L1 workers (who lacked a tight group, but had many weak links to Spanish L1s) were much more likely to learn Spanish. It also illustrates how the tight-knit Spanish L1 communities of the upper end of the Valley seem to have retained more Spanish and



learned less English than the mobile, less strongly-linked citizens of county seat and university town Edinburg.

The figure shown replaces the Milroys' hard-and-fast groups (in Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics have historically been mutually exclusive) with economic roles. The role concept fits Park and Wee's (2012) concept of multiple markets: For example, many individuals moved between the roles shown below, or even held several roles at the same time. The point is that society required different people in different roles to interact with each other in different languages, which of course had consequences for language use and acquisition.

The community that bore the social, cultural, and economic brunt of the sharp increase in the price of English on the linguistic market were the existing Spanish speakers – a culture of continuity with order that had existed since the Spanish kings granted lands along the riverbanks back in the 1740s. Those who lacked the free time and education necessary to add English to their skill set had to make do in a new order dominated what was (to the Valley) a foreign language. Alicia Cano exemplifies the complexities that the new bilingual situation created for Spanish monolinguals in the workplace in the new cities like McAllen. Meanwhile, people like Wendell T. Scharz cashed in on the advantage of being from the upper class and bilingual (remember the bilingual breakdown of de Lastra (1992) for an explanation of how the value of the same language in the same *marché linguistique* can vary based on the speaker's class background [Lastra de Suarez, 1992, p. 445]).

Wendell Theodore Schwarz Ice Cream Repair Bilingual “Mogul”

(Interview 1988 with Denise Kemp)

Wendell Theodore Schwarz was born in Anahuac, Texas (on Galveston Bay) in 1907. His parents (Philip Schwarz and Elizabeth Anna Stein Schwarz had moved to Anahuac in 1900; but they were originally from Stuttgart, Germany, and (still German-speaking) Pennsylvania Dutch territory, respectively. Young Wendell came to Mercedes in 1914 along with his parents when they moved to the Rio Grande Valley. He does not mention how he acquired Spanish – although as a seven year old arrival it may have come the easy way of social interaction with playmates – but he does tell us what bilingualism was worth on the market – even the ice cream mechanic market.

[24:24-25:33]

Wendell Schwarz: “I was servicing his [ice cream freezer] cabinets. I had to drive as far as Rio Grande City.”

DS: “How’d you get back and forth? What type of vehicle?”

Wife: “130”

WS: “What I actually had most of the time I had a ’29 model Chevy coupe, and I took the seats out, and uh, uh, I put a single seat as a divider, and I opened it all the way to the back so I could _”

DS: “So you could put your tools and stuff.”

WS: “So I could put the tools, yeah, and stuff like that.”

WS: “Because I’m gonna tell you right now, during that Depression, those old dogs, we charged a dollar and a half for a service call.”

DE: “I was gonna ask you that. A dollar and a half.”

Mrs. Shwarz: “That was a big price!”

WS: “Yeah, a dollar and a half an hour, we charged. When we went to Rio Grande City we charged ‘em 10 cents a mile one way, because, from McAllen, because there was services in McAllen that could get it, but I spoke Spanish and I got up there and I got, uh, and I was, I got about all the business I could handle, more than everybody in McAllen.”

Mrs. Scwarz: “We were bilingual.”

WS: “Oh yes.”

DS: “And I guess you picked that up growing up.”

WS: “Oh yes.”

Wendell Schwarz went on to explain that as a boy, when his family moved to Mercedes, most of their neighbors in the “woods” were from Mexico, with the nearest English L1 neighbor three miles away. Wendell had been planted in a language immersion situation while still young enough to pick up an L2 easily.

Lloyd Glover: Excerpt 2, Tom Mayfield -- Bilingual Lawman

(Interview in 1984 with Robert Norton)

[See p.134 for Glover on land excursions; see p. 202 for information on the Plan of San Diego.]

Lloyd Glover, who we met above, interviewed many men in his career as a journalist, among others an interesting individual by the name of Tom Mayfield. Mayfield was a local lawman and later Texas Ranger in Hidalgo County, and his primary qualification for the job appeared to be of the kind that language teachers post on boards as motivation for students.

[46:00-48:05]

Bob Norton: “Another one of the famous personalities –and I’m going to say personality, because he really was a personality, he was even involved in the 1908 movement of the

[Hidalgo] county records from Hidalgo, what was, to what was then Chapin, now Edinburg, when they moved from the river to a more central location in the county. So Tom had been around as a, uh, personality for many years. Tell us what you know about Tom Mayfield.”

Lloyd Glover: “Well, he was an interesting personality. I liked him and admired him a great deal....But anyway, Tom was a very authentic person as a law enforcement officer. Mr. Closner hired him, as a deputy sheriff, because he could speak Spanish, and uh, mainly, that’s what [indistinct] had written about Tom, and he said that Mr. Closner had hired him because he was fluent in Spanish, and he could deal with the Spanish people – so many of them that were working for Mr. Closner on his plantation [San Juan Plantation – now San Juan, Texas, east of McAllen], and uh, also in law enforcement, that he could speak Spanish very well. But uh, anyway, he was also a special Texas Ranger during bandit days down here....” [See Glover Excerpt 3, p. 202, for Mayfield’s role in this critical juncture in Valley history, a dangerous, deadly, and unfortunate series of episodes in English-Spanish language community relations].

Minnie Norton Millikan: Teenage Bilingual Teacher in Dangerous Places

(Interview 1989 with Robert Norton)

Being one of very few bilingual Anglo mechanics had given Schwarz a wider market share, and being a bilingual law officer made Mayfield a sheriff, but as a schoolteacher (those enforcers of standard English!) bilingualism could also be an incredibly powerful asset – even if for a girl recently graduated from the eighth grade. (By the by, the eighth grade appeared several times as the educational terminus for several interviewees. In the 1900s-1930s, this level of educational attainment was not unique to South Texas. As late as 1940, the average American stopped school around the eighth grade (Snyder, 1993, p. 18).)

In an era when Valley school teachers were looking for - and failing to find – bilingual schoolteachers as from as far away as San Antonio, an Alabama-born kid who'd picked up Spanish thanks to having been placed in a school for Latino children (because her sister taught there) was a precious resource. This is the story of Minnie Norton (later Millikan), who was born in Crossville, Alabama, in 1898, and arrived in Texas in 1909. Even as a teenager, she was capable of teaching by herself and of surviving situations that scared off her Civil War veteran district superintendent.

[17:22]

Minnie Norton Milliken: “[At the school at San Juan plantation] I was the only American child there, so you know what I learned: I learned Spanish.”

Robert Norton: You learned Spanish! That's good. And you used it the rest of your life, didn't you.

MNM: I really got it, [laughs], the easy way; I never studied Spanish, and I speak pretty good Spanish, [laughs]

MNM: Yes. Tell us about the structure of San Juan plantation....

....

[20:00-32:49]

Minnie was asked – on her third day of ninth grade -- by the local superintendent to teach school at Los Ebanos ("at least I tried to teach first grade. I didn't know how.") She was so young that she had to get her father to sign off on her teaching and her family had to take to the school where she taught. “Had you finished high school yet?” asked Robert Norton. Minnie Milliken replies with an anguished "No!" In fact, because she hadn't finished high school yet, she could not even be paid yet until she went and took a certificate test in Edinburg, Texas. However,

she was in high demand as a teacher because (after a battle she will describe that scared students out of the Ojo de Agua area) there was a vacancy in Edcouch-Elsa. The catch?

MNM: "Whoever went there, they would have to board with Mexicans, so he thought that the one who could speak Spanish should be the one to go, he thought -

RN: "That would be you. Congratulations!"

MNM: "He thought, he thought, that Miss Wickline from San Antonio would be the one, she was older than I. But when he found she couldn't speak a word of Spanish, and I, I spoke it like a native, and I'd have to be the one to go. And, he looked at me and asked me, if I thought I could teach a seven, seven, seventh-grade school, and I said well, if the other girl could, I can too. So I came home and my daddy took me to San Jose and I taught out there until July."

RN: "Is this a picture of the San Jose school?"

MNM: "And I taught out there in an old, uh, *jacal*, with dirt floors and a thatched roof -"

RN: "Uh-huh, I see that. Let me concentrate on—"

MNM: "and some of my students were older than I was -"

RN: Well I can see this gentleman here, he must be at least 50.

MNM: "Well"

RN: "How old was he?"

MNM: "That's not a gentleman - oh, that man? he was the father of those,"

RN: "Oh"

MNM: "but he lived there at the place where I boarded."

RN: so he wasn't a student, then.

MNM: "No, he wasn't a student. But these -"

RN: "How about this lady over here?"

MNM: "No, she was not. And these back in here, they were not students but – “

RN: “uh-huh”

MNM: "but these in here were students.”

RN: “And this attractive girl here, is that you?”

MNM: "No, that is Ellen Ash, and she had been the teacher there the year before.”

RN: “Oh yeah.”

MNM: "But she was very dear friend of mine and lived out north of Mission. And she was also our next teacher from out there. But we just all happened to be there. In fact, we had gone out there together.”

RN: “You know, it's interesting, you said it was necessary to know Spanish, did you introduce these students to English also? Did you teach bilingually?”

MNM: "Ooooooh, no. We were not allowed to speak Spanish in the ---"

RN: “Oh, you weren't.”

MNM: "Oh, no."

RN: “How long did it take them to become accustomed to the language?”

MNM: "Weeeeeell PAUSE, You know I think they learned it faster then than they did the bilingual way, I don't know. I, I quit teaching before they started the bilingual -"

RN: “Oh yes, uh-huh,”

MNM: "And I -"

RN: “But did, did they catch on, like say in 2 or 3 months?”

MNM: "Well, we just naturally -- and if they didn't, if the younger ones didn't understand, the older ones would tell them what to do,"

RN: “Oh, yes.”“And they learned English quite rapidly, is that correct?”

MNM: "They learned English. Well, you know, with Kika de la Garza⁶¹ and some of these doctors and lawyers around here, they learned English our way."

RN: "It looks like you had 14 students out there."

MNM: "I thought that we we did."

RN: "And you had seven grades out there?"

MNM: "Right."

RN: "So for some you probably only had one student in the grade."

MNM: "Right, right."

RN: "But they were all nice children and they all loved their teacher, right?"

MNM: "Right."

RN: "And the older people, like this gentleman, they probably liked the teacher too, right?"

MNM: "Yes, that was Mr. Solis."

RN: "Okay, and who's this lady over here? You remember her?"

MNM: "Uuuuuuuuhhhhhh, I, I wouldn't - I think she's Miss Zamora."

RN: "Zamora [Norton is struggling with pronouncing the name]"

MNM: "Uh huh."

RN: "Well, that's wonderful. That was out in Edcouch. And you taught there how long, didja say?"

MNM: "Just from November until then in July. I finished the term for the girl that had started. She had left because she was afraid of the bandit trouble."

RN: "Uh huh. You never were afraid of the bandits, were you? Took 'em in stride, right?"

MNM: "Well, you know, I was in a battle."

⁶¹ Eligio ("Kika") de la Garza (b. 1927 in Mercedes) grew up in Mission and went on to a distinguished career in the U.S. House of Representatives (1965-1997) (Library of Congress, 2010).

RN: “Huh huh huh Well, was it more conversation than it was actual thing?”

RN: “Yes, uh huh.”

MNM: "The Battle of Ojo de Agua?⁶² No! The bandits came over and they, we woke up, there were three of us girls out there, and we woke up with bullets whizzing around over our house. We dressed and went out in the yard with some of our older boys, our older schoolboys, and it was bright, and we could even see the bandits hiding across the street behind some trees, and we could hear them yelling '*Vive Villa, Muerte a los americanos*' - and [PAUSE, her voice had been squeaking] it was rather exciting. And the next morning, we went to the soldiers' camp down the road a little ways, and saw the three bandits that had been killed, one was a Jap. And one was a man about 43 years old, and he had his brains blown out, and they were all mixed up with dirt on top of his head, and on his face, and, they had killed two or three of our soldiers. I can remember, the wireless had been wrecked at the beginning of the battle, and they sent soldiers toward Mission to [*tape glitches, some audio apparently lost*] this, was rather exciting. You could hear them way up down the road galloping, they got to Madero and phoned up to Mission, and by daylight there was a whole troop of soldiers that came out, and when they passed our house where we three girls were living, they stopped to check to see if we were all right, and while they were standing there, a Mexican woman came from behind our house and said there was a bandit in her back yard, and they left us standing holding their [horses'] bridles, and we heard them say 'halt!', and then we heard them say 'fire!', and the next thing they came to get a blanket off one of the horses, and they went back, and brought one of our own men, who had left camp because he had no more ammo, ammunition, and they had shot one of our own men, and they had to put him

⁶² The “Battle” of Ojo de Agua took place on 22 October 1915 when a group of 25 *sediciosos* who crossed the Rio Grande and attacked 15 American signal corps soldiers at the military outpost of Ojo de Agua south of Mission, Texas Official records indicate three dead and eight wounded American soldiers, along with 5 dead raiders (four Mexican and one Japanese) (Harris and Sadler, 2004, p. 292-293).

on a stretcher, and take him up to the camp, and --- [voice trails off.] We dressed, and went up and saw the dead people.⁶³ And by the time we got back to the house there were three cars there from Mission, from different relatives to take us to town. And we went into Mission and stayed until Sunday afternoon, and then went back to the ranch to finish school. But most of our students had gone other places, and -"

RN: "Did the person who had been accidentally shot survive?"

MNM: "No, they killed him."

RN: "Oh, that's too bad."

MNM: "They killed him." Oooh, hummmmm, where was I?"⁶⁴

The power of bilingualism became apparent in the wake of this battle. Her supervisor – a Mr. Dunn, who just so happened to be a Civil War veteran – was too afraid to go to the school where he had posted three teenage girls. It is at this point that she gets shifted to Elsa for the reasons outlined above: English might be the language of the classroom, but Spanish was the language of every boarding-house in the town.

Walter Rabe: WW I Objector in South Texas Thanks to Spanish-Speaking Skills

(Interview in 1990 with Robert Norton)

An East Texan who was actually drawn to the Valley specifically thanks to his Spanish-speaking ability was German-American Walter Rabe. He had been born in LaGrange, in East Texas, in 1897, but when he was still a child his parents moved to a south Texas ranching

⁶³ Minnie's description of a sudden surprise fits with the military's report – the American signal corps that was attacked by the marauders admitted had been taken by surprise, which accounts for the lost lives and for the fact that the teachers were not warned.

⁶⁴ For more on Milliken's account, see "Battle of Ojo de Agua" in the Mission Historical Society's and Hidalgo County Historical Society's booklet on the history of Mission (Mission Historical Society and Hidalgo County Historical Society, 1991, p. 24-26).

community in Bee County. To make a long story short, this son of German parents deserted rather than fight in World War I (he sidesteps questions as to why, but Walter Rabe's evident pride in his parent's German homeland gives a possible clue). In all events, in military training camp Walter met the son of a Donna broom corn factory owner who was looking for Spanish-speaking employees. After a year in jail in Florida for his desertion, Rabe ended up in La Blanca, Texas. Walter picks up the story:

[23:18-25:00]

Robert Norton: "Then when you came down here, did you come down on the train?"

Walter Rabe: "Yeah."

RN: "What do you remember about that train ride and when you came into town. What town did you come to?"

WR: "Well, I [pause] when I went and bought my ticket, they told me they'd let me know when the next train that went to the Valley.

RN: "Yeah?"

WR: "I didn't know where the Valley was, never heard of it."

RN: "Gosh, whatever attracted you to come down here?"

WR: "That broom corn deal! [See story above, from 21:00-23:15]. See, old Johnny, he found out I could talk Spanish - "

RN: "Oh. Yeah."

WR: "So he wanted me to come down here with him.

RN: "What was Johnny's last name?"

WR: "Denning."

RN: "Denning?"

WR: “Old Man Denning was the one who owned the broom corn factory. The company.”

RN: “Johnny’s father.”

WR: “Yeah.

RN: “Okay.”

Walter Rabe enjoyed a long career in close connection with Spanish-speakers. Walter would go to Rio Bravo (Tamaulipas) to get workers for the broom corn [36:30]. After he retired from that business [39:40] he hauled caliche on the road from San Ygnacio to Laredo (an area, to this day, where Spanish is much more common than English.) He remembers “the big to-do” on Washington’s Birthday in Laredo, and was apparently popular enough to have been invited to the fling by the firemen. He even brought a (Spanish L1) “old maid” from the store in San Ygnacio to see the event “since she’d never been to town before” [41:00].

[51:10]

Rabe clearly identifies with Spanish-speakers, once saying,

WR: “When I come down here, I tell everybody, “There’s me and three **more** Mexicans down here.”

RN: “[Laughs] That made four of you!”

WR: “Two boot-leggers, a goat-herder, and myself.”

It is not hard to see why Rabe learned and maintained Spanish more easily than many other English L1s; his open, gregarious nature lends itself easily to the interaction necessary for language learning. His openness to living in and going to areas outside the English-speaking part of the Valley helped, as well.

Alicia Cano: Spanish Monolingual Adaptation to a Bilingual Economy

(Interviewed by a “Jimmy” in 1987)

Alicia Cano mentions quite explicitly the economic concerns underlying the use of English and Spanish in the new retail-based capitalist economy of urban McAllen. Although Cano did live in McAllen during land rush era, the story told below happens (technically) past our narrow 1945 cut-off point, but the story she tells of language in the retail business is equally pertinent in 1915 and 2015 [35:00-36:19].⁶⁵

AC: [*Vino a Estados Unidos, trabajaba en Dillard's aunque*] “*mi inglés era muy elemental, casi no hablaba inglés.*”

AC: “*Yo seguí luchando y luchando y luchando, y cuando yo consideré que ya mis hijos podían quedarse solos, ir solos a la escuela, un día me encomendé a Dios, dijo ‘ahora Dios me ayuden’, me vestí, me arreglé, me fui a hacer aplicaciones, apliqué en J.C. Penny, en Dillards, en Montgomery, en Sears, en Jones & Jones. A los dos días me hablaban los de Dillards. A los tres, a los cuatro días de haber hecho aplicación ya estuve trabajando en Dillards. Y la, y como lo te he dicho, en ese entonces yo casi no hablaba inglés, que mi inglés era muy deficiente, que no hablaba más que lo más elemental, pero me dijeron que no importaba porque como la*

⁶⁵ Alicia Cano translation:

Alicia Cano came to the United States, working in Dillards “even though my English as very rudimentary, I almost ever spoke English.”

AC: I continued struggling and struggling and struggling, and when I determined that my children could now stay home by themselves, go by themselves to school, one day I commended myself to God. I said “Now God help me,” I dressed myself, I fixed myself up, and I went to make applications. I applied in J.C. Penny, in Dillard’s, in Montgomery [Ward], in Sears, in Jones & Jones. After two days the people from Dillards contacted me. At three or four days from having applied I was working at Dillards. And there, like I had told you, at this time I almost never spoke English; it’s that my English was very deficient, I didn’t speak more than the basics, but they said it didn’t matter since the majority of our clients were Mexicans, right? Then – and well if someday I had any problems with an American, well I would just pass the client to one of my co-workers, so that he could take care of him, and that’s how I did it, you understand? When I began I would excuse myself with the people, saying that I only spoke Spanish, but I would just pass him the client, right? And then, then this, after the people from Dillard’s called me...[and she tells all the other stores where she had applied also accepted her application, but as Dillard’s had contacted her first, she stayed with the company out of a feeling rather like loyalty.]

mayoría de los clientes eran mexicanos, ¿verdad? Entonces – y pues si algún día tenía problemas con un americano, pues solamente se lo pasara a unos de mis compañeros el cliente, para que él lo atendiera, y así hice, ¿me entiendes? Cuando empecé me disculpaba con las personas que no hablan más que español, pero entonces nomás le pasé el cliente, ¿no? Y entonces, entonces este, después de que hablaron los de Dillard's [y cuenta como también los demás almacenes a las que aplicó también aceptaron su solicitud, pero como Dillard's la había contactado primero, ella se quedaba con ellos de un sentimiento de una especie de lealtad, o algo así.]”

Cosme Casares Muñoz: Bourdieu's *Marché* Reflected in Real Money

(Interview in 1987 with Leticia Miroslava Gamboa)

In pre-1903 South Texas, “either Mexican or American currency was acceptable in any transaction along the border.” (Maddox, 1955, p. 37). The shift to only American impoverished and confused the old peso-driven (indeed, often barter-driven) economy. The interview of Cosme Casares Muñoz provides an approximation to a textbook example of Bourdieu's argument regarding how the “price” of a language is related to the social value of that language and its speakers' role in the politico-economic structure. Born in 1915 in McAllen (his parents had arrived in Texas from Mexico in 1908), Muñoz came to manhood in a period dominated by English, but with the recent Spanish-dominated past still very much alive. The perceived connection (to those who experienced it) between linguistic and economic change is quite clear in Muñoz' testimony.

A particularly unfortunately bit of the connection between language and the segregated relations of the emerging Valley was the violence that erupted between the two groups that the

English L1 elite of new McAllen wanted to keep as exploitable labor sources. One of these groups had English, the other as yet did not – and as the rising value of English tipped the market in favor of the former, the latter took action. Cosme Casares Muñoz explained:

[10:06-11:27]⁶⁶

Cosme Muñoz: “*En aquel tiempo fue cuando fundaron el hotel aquí...se llamaba el Hotel Palma.*”

Leticia Gamboa: “*En [calles] Primero y Tenth?*”

CM: “*En Primero y Tenth.*”

CM: “*Y para, para usar, manejar la gente allí, americana, pues trajeron negritos, porque sabía – no había gente que hablaba inglés en este tiempo, y la gente que hablaba inglés iban a contratados, para andar, eh, con, eh, trabajando en los hoteles y este y el otro porque ellos agarraban más dinero que nosotros afuera, haciendo fields en este y el otro, que en hoteles. Trajeron negritos y luego, a los dieciocho años, los corrieron de aquí, del pueblito de McAllen.*”

LG: “*¿A quién?*”

CM: “*A los negritos.*”

LG: “*Los mexicanos, ¿o quién?*”

CM: “*Sí, los mexicanos.*”

⁶⁶ Cosme Muñoz translation:

Cosme Muñoz: “In this period they built the hotel here...it was called the Palm Hotel.”

Leticia Gamboa: “At First and Tenth? [Streets]”

CM: “At First and Tenth.”

CM: And for, for to use, to manage the people here, the Americans, well they brought blacks, because they knew – there were no people who spoke English in this time, and the people who spoke English were going to be hired, to go around, uh, working in the hotels and in this and the other because they got more money than us [who worked] outside, working in the fields of this and the other, rather than in hotels. They brought blacks and later, around ’18, they ran them out of here, of the city McAllen.

LG: “Who [did they run out]?”

CM: “The blacks.”

LG: “The Mexicans [did], or who?”

CM: “Yes, the Mexicans.”

Almost as if some narrator were attempting lighten the mood of a somber story, a sudden interruption reminds the listener that these interviews happened in real-world places, with certain dynamics that remain out of our ken, but must have effected people's responses. In the middle of the interview (apparently) Gamboa's child bursts into the conversation a contribution of her own: "*Mama, ¡ponga mis zapatos!*" [14:47-50].

When Gamboa asked Muñoz point-blank about relations between the ethno-linguistic communities in the early period, Muñoz explained that language was key to being appreciated in the new society. As for the elephant in the room – the Ranger killings/bandit troubles (as the two sides seem to have remembered things differently), Muñoz provided the other side of the story, creating a counter-narrative in contrast with Lloyd Glover's scoop on the "bandit troubles": For many people in the valley, these times were more like the "Ranger Troubles," as Ranger reprisals for bandit raids got out of hand and targeted innocent farm workers.

[20:29-22:13]⁶⁷

LG: "*¿Y en este tiempo ustedes querían a los americanos, o no?*"

CM: "*Pos, es que era que como mi papá se crio, de chiquillo, entre los mismos allí de la corte, este, se aprendieron el bilingüe, inglés, muy fácil, y muchos más que había, chamacas y chamacos, este, prendieron el mechero muy fácil y se apreciaban muy bien, todos ellos. Este, la cuestión de que dicen que la raza no los querían, y que este y el otro, pues, era porque venían*

⁶⁷ Cosme Casares Muñoz translation:

Leticia Gamboa: "And at this time did you like the Americans, or not?"

Cosme Muñoz: "Well, it's that since my father grew up, from a little thing, among the people there of the court, um, they learned to be bilingual, English, very easily, and many of them there were, girls and boys, um, they lit the match pretty easily and got along / appreciated each other well, all of them. This, the issue of them their saying that the *raza* [Mexican-Americans] didn't like them, and this and the other, well, it was because some people from other places came and brought started feuds, and they would go out by night, and come to places like this, on horseback, and would come to the river, and they would make – they went and shot at the Rangers that were at the Ebanitos pump, and the Mission pump, close to here, stationed, and went and shot at them, and then crossed to the other side, and later they [the soldiers/Rangers] would say it had been the workers from, from the field, but it hadn't been, it had been people who came from other there [Mexico], but they [the bandits] would attack them [the soldiers] just because they were stationed there."

otros de otro partes y llevaban pleitos, y se iban en la noche, y entraron a lugares así, a caballo, y venían al río, y hacían – iban y peloteaban los rinches que estaban en la pompa de Ebanitos, y la pompa de Mission, cerca de acá, estacionados, y venían y los tiraban, y pasaban pa' el otro lado, y luego decían que eran los trabajadores del, del campo, y no era, era gente que venían de allá, pero se les caían encima pero nomas que porque allí estaban estacionados.”

LG: “¿Cómo se llamaba a este tipo de personas?”

CM: “¿A los rinches, o a los sediciosos? [Casares siguió explicándole que el uno era un Ranger, y el otro un rebelde que venía de dentro de México].”

Muñoz also provides us with an example of how the shift in language and the shift in the from a ranching society to a modern capitalist economy happened more or less simultaneously. [27:46-29:06]⁶⁸

LG: “Dice un profesor que una vez el dinero de México tenía más valor que el dinero de aquí. ¿Sí?”

CM: “Pos – eso sí, yo no me acuerdo. Pero acuerdo del oro que estaba de La Paz, ¿te dijo tu profe?”

LG: “No, no dijo.”

CM: “Sí, esto si acuerdo yo, porque los terrenos que tenía mi gente, por parte de los Ballí, aquí, y por parte de los Cazares, lo vinieron perdiendo porque no corría dinero americano. Y en el corte no recibieron más que dinero americano para pagar los taxes. Y la mayoría de ellos

⁶⁸ LG: “A professor said once the Mexican currency LG had more value than the currency here. Is that so?”

CM: Well – about this, I don’t remember. But I do remember the gold that was in La Paz, did your professor tell you about that?

LG: “No, he didn’t say.”

CM: “Yes, this I do remember, because the lands that my people had, from the Ballí [the royal Spanish grant holders large portions of Hidalgo County], here, and from the Cazares [another family with grant land in Hidalgo county dating back to the Spanish era], they ended up losing it because there was no American money in circulation. And in the court they didn’t accept anything other than American money to pay the taxes. And the majority of them lost their lands because they couldn’t come up with American money, because along the this river, Mexican money was in circulation. And if they didn’t find American money to pay the taxes, it wasn’t accepted.

perdieron sus terrenos porque no hallaban por donde trajeron dinero americano, porque por todo aquí del río, corría dinero mexicano. Y si no hallaba dinero americano para pagar los taxes no era recibido.”

Note the code-switching to English for *taxes*: the new financial order, the passing of the old ranching order, and the coming of the new language were all interconnected for the people who lived through these events.

Lilia Ramos: Implicit Negotiation to Determine Interview Language

(Interview 1987 with Patricia Narravo)

Even among those who never quite mastered English, the association of English with educated situations (or, to put it another way, its value on the *marché linguistique*) has interesting complications. Here we will see the opening moments of an interview and how the two people implicitly negotiate for which language will be used. The negotiation – which passed without explicit recognition – shows two interesting things. First, the fact that oral histories are usually conducted as part of “academic stuff” shows that people will often attempt to adjust their register to meet this perception. Second, because in the knowledge economy education means money and power, the negotiation shows the value of English in even with the micro-market of an interview situation: Lilia Ramos knows her interlocutor is bilingual, but still feels a need to try the more difficult prestige language with the (young, educated) Patricia, even as Patricia extends implicit invitations to switch to Spanish.

[30:18]

Patricia Navarro: “Your name is?”

Lilia Ramos: “Lilia Ramos. Lilia Ramos.”

PN: “And you were born when?”

LR: “In *el día primero de agosto de seventeen*”

PN: “Nineteen seventeen?”

LR: “No, the first August seventeen.”

PN: “What year?”

LR: “*El first, primero*”

PN: “Nineteen oh one?”

LR: “Yeah. No. *Primero*, the seventeen, of August.”

PN: “*¿Sí, pero qué año?*”

LR: “*Diecisiete* – seventeen.”

PN: “Nineteen seventeen?”

LR: “Yeah.”

PN: “Okay. How long have you lived in the Rio Grande Valley?”

LR: “I live, I am from McAllen.”

PN: “You were born in McAllen?”

LR: “No, Rio Grande City.”

PN: “When you were young, what kind of work did you do?”

LR: “*Yo trabajé en bodegas, ¿no? Vendieron tomate, puse labels on los tomates.*”

PN: “Mhmm.”

LR: “*En McAllen, yo trabajé. Y housework*”

PN: “Housework – *¿cuando estabas joven?*”

LR: “*En California andaba, trabajando.*”

PN: “*¿Cuánto te pagaron?*”

LR: “An hour? Four fifty an hour.”

PN: “An hour? *¿Cuándo estabas joven?*”

LR:, “*Sí, bueno, tres cincuenta y cinco, en McAllen, en la bodega.*”

[They stay in Spanish from now on.]

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND LINGUISTIC CONSEQUENCES

A Pretext for Racism – and an English/Spanish Community Divide

Racism is never warranted, but to understand the overtones this unfortunate social dynamic took in the Rio Grande Valley, the reader would do well to review the region's violent history (a sad tale dating back to Texas-Mexico clashes in the 1830s but recently returned to a hot shooting conflict by spillover violence from the Mexican Revolution, widespread cattle-theft and other banditry, and all exacerbated by the Texas Rangers' indiscriminate reprisals) outlined in Chapter I, p. 22). One interview –Lloyd Glover, who we have already met with his story of the immigrants being isolated from the “bandit troubles” in the area until they had already bought land, was a journalist who helped shape discourse among English L1s of the period. The “bandit troubles” were part of a larger discourse in the then-dominant stream of Texas political discussion that located the trajectory of Texan history in the context of the Alamo and Goliad. In the course of Glover's career as a newspaperman, he got to interview some Texas Rangers, including some on the subject of the discovery of the Plan de San Diego (see Chapter I, p. 22 above), a moment that highlighted another rift between the language communities.

Lloyd Glover: Excerpt 3, Border Troubles - A McAllen Journalist's Perspective

(Interview 1987 with Robert Norton)

Lloyd Glover, who we met previously in learning about the topics of land excursions (p. 135) and the bilingual lawman Tom Mayfield (p. 183), continued the story of Mayfield's career as a Texas Ranger with some incidents that highlight the reasons for damage between the two first language communities. The first story will be one that rightly angered Mexican-Americans; the second was a scare for the incoming Anglo-Americans

[48:05-49:08]

Lloyd Glover: "I wrote up a feature article about [Texas Ranger] Tom [Mayfield] for one of fiftieth anniversary editions that I put out for Pharr, and he told me afterward, that that was the best article, and the most truthful [laughs] that had ever been written about him. And he thanked me very much, he was very proud of it. One of things, uh, that he said he was associated with – but he wasn't, actually – he said that he was given the credit, or the blame, for participating in the massacre of nine bandits down south of Mission. And they took them to Alamo, and they hung them up, and there's pictures of that, of those nine. I've seen pictures of that, of those nine, that are hanging up as bandits. He people said that he had participated in that shootout with them, and he said he wasn't anywhere near Mission at the time. And he did go to Alamo when they brought the bodies there, and he was then seen there, with other Texas Rangers, but he said that was one statement that they made about him that was utterly not true."

...

[49:57-51:20]

Lloyd Glover: “And one of the instances in his life was with him and this damn Ramos, they arrested a man by the name of Ramos⁶⁹ in McAllen at the Guerra store, on 16th street in 1916. And on his person he had the famous plan of San Diego. Which was a plan for insurrection, an uprising in the United States in Texas, and in New Mexico, and in all these states that are on the border here. And they were going to have an uprising, and, um, take it back from them, and turn it back into Mexico. And this document was in Spanish. And, uh, Tom could translate Spanish very well. And so the secret got out, before they could even start the plan. Whether they could have ever gotten it started anyway, no one even knows now, but anyway, but it was a diabolic scheme, I tell you, that they had, and what they proposed to do.”

Robert Norton: “They were going to overthrow the United States, isn’t that right?”

LG: “Eventually, yes.”

RN: “In order to give this territory back to Mexico, right?”

LG: “Right. They were going to kill certain people, and all that. Certain people here were marked to be killed, and certain classes of people here were marked to be killed, and the rest.”

The bandit raids, the aborted Plan, and the Texas Ranger killings (in the “massacre” Glover mentions, as well as many others, the Rangers were accused of having shot the first Mexican-Americans they came across while on the hunt for “bandits”) all show in microcosm why Anglos and Tejanos (and consequently English and Spanish L1s) were all too often at odds. In reality, the bandits’ targets and the Plan of San Diego’s “classes of people marked to be killed” (in Glover’s words) included not only Anglo-Americans but also those Tejanos who had

⁶⁹ Basilio Ramos was betrayed in McAllen, Texas, alerting authorities. Currently the most useful treatment of the Plan de San Diego, its social context, and its aftermath is Benjamin Heber Johnson (2003). *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexican into Americans*. (New Haven: Yale University Press.) Understanding the Anglo reaction to this and other “bandit troubles” is essential to understand the social dynamics (racism, segregation, and so forth) that exacerbated conflict between the region’s two primary ethnolinguistic groups.

cast in their lot with the northern republic – recall the story of Florencio and Sóstenes Saenz in the Champion interview (p. 102). Unfortunately, however, some Anglo-Americans ignored these nationalist nuances within the issue and responded with suspicion toward anyone who looked “Mexican.” This in turn led to division between ethnolinguistic groups: in a Southern United States with already rampant racism, the culturally-ingrained default solution of segregation was all too often applied in the Rio Grande Valley as well.

The Economics of Racism

There is both written and spoken evidence for how the division affected South Texas. The Spanish L1 writers who lived through the period detail the rapidly erosion in race relations between newly arrived English L1s and the Spanish L1 community. Jovita González and Américo Paredes describe the change from the old English L1 élite who lived with and intermarried with the Spanish L1 population (men like Young and McAllen, most prominently) to a harsher attitude of discrimination.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the Rutoskey, López, and Alaniz interviews below back up the writers (and show that hard feelings existed on both sides). While McAllen spoke Spanish to his wife,⁷¹ the new English L1s would not sit near them in restaurants. The situation worsened in 1915-1919, the era of the “border troubles” when Anglo hysteria over the discovery of the Plan de San Diego led to a worsening of race relations. In fact, the “bandit” raids and retaliatory strikes by Texas Rangers on raiders and civilians alike led to memories that persist to this day. In fact, as I write this on a Friday morning in 2015, the Saltillo (Coahuila, Mex.) newspaper *Zocalo Saltillo* published a piece evoking the memories of the fallout of the

⁷⁰ See González’ *Dew on the Thorn* and her already-cited thesis; in Paredes’ case, *George Washington Gómez* and *With His Pistol in His Hand*.

⁷¹ Perhaps the fact that both McAllen and Young were born outside the United States – McAllen in Northern Ireland and Young in Scotland – may have made it easier for Salomé Ballí’s first and second husbands to overcome some of the ethnolinguistic prejudices then endemic in the U.S.A.

Plan de San Diego and the lynchings that occurred not just in the Valley, but all along the border, such as that at Porvenir, Texas in 1918 (*Zócalo Saltillo*, 2015; Justice, 2010). The obvious implications for Spanish SLA by the newcomers are obvious. It should be pointed out that I am not accusing any of the English L1s quoted in these interviews of this sin; rather, I am grateful for their willingness to donate their memories to history. Nevertheless, there were problems, as shown in the next story, that of Juan Castillo.

Juan Castillo: Racism's Impact on the Spanish L1 Community

(Interview 1987 with Corina Cantú)

[15:00-16:15]

Juan Castillo: “Every Saturday we used to go up to town [Donna, see 14:00ff], and they didn’t have shows, like they got right now, theaters. There used to be an old tent, and we used to let those flaps down, and, uh, put up lights, and they start rolling the machine, and it only cost us, a nickel to get in there. When we get out, we wanted to eat something. But we couldn’t go into the restaurants, cause they treated us like animals. They wanted to feed us in the back kitchen. The colored people were still worse, because, once in a while, you find a Spanish-speaking person, lighter and looked more like a, Anglo, so they got mixed up and feed them. But the colored people were worse than us, they couldn’t change their color, they were just black, so they had to go the back of the kitchen if they want to eat. Nobody was gonna sit down next to an Anglo, a white person in front of the restaurant. There was a discriminating, way back. Nowadays, I don’t see that. Even the colored people sit next to a white people, and **Spanish-speaking** people, but in those days it was very hard...”

Castillo is neither exaggerating nor reporting a unique situation. A situation very similar to Castillo's memory was evoked in literary form by Brownsville native and Castillo's contemporary Américo Paredes (1915-1999) in *George Washington Gómez* (see Wilkens, 1998, p. 123-138, for an analysis of the connection between Paredes' novel and the South Texan educational situation of the period). It does not take a lot of imagination to see the havoc wreaked on intercommunity language learning when "white people" and "Spanish-speaking people" were two categories that could not sit together in a restaurant (Wilkens, 1998; José Castillo interview, p. 205). Nor was the problem unique to Brownsville. Historians Garza and Long (2010), writing for the Texas State Historical Association, found that by 1920, and until at least the 1960s, "all the new towns that developed along the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway during the first twenty years of the twentieth century were fully segregated" (Garza and Long, 2010, Hidalgo County).

The segregation issue and Castillo's plight are important phenomena beyond the field of race relations, because situations of ethnolinguistic conflict almost always lead to linguistic divergence, even when the two groups speak the same language (take, for example, African-American versus Standard American English). In situations of multi-language contact, the communication breakdown can be exacerbated. Indeed, SLA and L2 use is always influenced by the different language speakers' attitudes toward one another. According to Accommodation Theory, as explained by Beebe and Zuengler (1983), speakers react via language to the "values and intentions" of the people they are talking to (p. 201). Therefore, when people are interacting with people outside their ethnolinguistic group, yet wish to build rapport or seek rapprochement with the outsiders, they will converge toward the outsider's speaking style. On the other hand, in situations of perceived conflict or hostility, divergence of speaking style occurs. In either case,

convergence or divergence may be a matter of accent (within a language), or a matter of dialect or language in multilingual contexts. This theory was tested in the late 1970s and early '80s with English-French Canadians, French-Flemish Belgians, and English-Welsh Britons (Beebe and Zuengler, 1983, p.196-205). In the bilingual context of the Rio Grande Valley, it is logical to assume that convergence-divergence occurred as well. In the confined space of a historical interview, it was harder to see – but certainly among English-language interviews conducted between English/Spanish bilingual interviewer/interviewee pairs, one finds a great deal more code-switching (see Delia Alaniz, p. 259, for example), and some situations where bilinguals negotiated regarding which language the interview should be conducted in (the Lilia Ramos interview, p.198, among others). Johnson (2003) explains how racism kept the two language communities separate, referencing two of the situations José Castillo mentioned (work conditions and the entertainment options):

“Most ethnic Mexicans...responded to segregation not so much by fighting it as by choosing to have as little as possible to do with the Anglos who so despised them. If they had to work for an Anglo farm owner, at least their co-workers were other Tejanos or Mexican immigrants....If a person didn't want to sit in the decrepit “Mexican” section of the theaters to watch a movie or hear a music recital, then his family or labor camp had its own bands and hosted its own dances....In short, if you stayed in Texas, especially in South Texas, you could live in a world inhabited, if not controlled, by people who were like you and who actually showed you respect” (Johnson, 2003, p. 181).

Nina J. LaFleur: McAllen's Linguistic Geography

(Interview in 1985 with Robert Norton)

One finds an oblique reference to the segregated state of things in an interview with Nina LaFleur, an ex-telegraph message deliverer who by virtue of her job witnessed all sections of McAllen. Born in Wisconsin in 1911 in the family of a North Woods lumberjack, at least by Nina's telling her mother apparently landed the family in Donna, Texas, out of a bit of impulse buying:

[2:10-3:10]

Nina LaFleur: "We came down to Texas, rather mother came down in a, on a land excursion, mostly as a lark. It was two or three other couples who came, but she just came along. But she was the only one that really bought anything. Frankly she shouldn't have bought it because we were poor people, but she bought twenty acres out on Valley View Road at Donna, and went back home and sold our farm and everything except for a few things that we brought down in an immigrant car."

Nina LaFleur moved to McAllen around 1942. Nina LaFleur's travels around town in her line of work provided insight into social conditions and ethno-linguistic divisions among English, Spanish, and even Japanese communities in young McAllen, as seen in the conversation below.

McAllen's division into (in LaFleur's words) "Mexican town" and "the white parts" in the following conversation suggests divisions that likely hindered language learning between the Spanish L1 and English L1 communities. LaFleur remembered driving around McAllen:

Nina LaFleur: "I was the Western Union messenger. I got five dollars a month for that."

Robert Norton: "What? They were being generous, weren't they? [laughs]."

NL: "And then we got the little commission, off of the revenue that we got."

RN: "Did you get any tips?"

NL: "No, no tips."

RN: "Golly. And did you walk or ride a bicycle?"

NL: "I drove the car--"

RN: "[interrupting] You drove the car! You didn't have a Western Union bicycle?"

NL: "Well no, I never learned to ride a bicycle--"

RN: "Oh."

NL: "For one thing. And I delivered them all over every place in town. Mexican town, and the white part, and drove even down to the Japs south of town on--"

RN: "Hmm."

NL: "I guess it was Stewart Road."

RN: "And you got five dollars a month for that, plus gas?"

NL: "Mhmm. No, not gas."

RN: "No gas? Nothing for fuel?"

NL: "I drove the agents car [ha ha]."

RN: "Oh, you drove the agent's car. That helped a little bit."

One finds in LaFleur's comments a reminder of a common sociological theme that Bourdieu called *lieu*, or place. A *lieu*, in Bourdieu's terms, is more specific than an *espace social*, or social space. Whereas the latter term can refer to the entire realm of something (the educational system, the economic world, the languages in play) in a region, the former term is a

pin-point geographic reference that indexes social status to physical space. In reality, this plays out not only as the economic ability to buy a place, but the social (and, yes, linguistic) capital that enables a person to feel at home there. He even argued that these places are inscribed in actors' minds, so that people begin to act in conformity with their lieu (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 134-135). All this, even apart from more overt forms of segregation, leads to geographic segregation along ethnolinguistic lines in situations where social capital is distributed unevenly.

Ina Buss: Empathy

(Interview 1987 with Marilyn Nowak)

Of course, not all English L1s had trouble getting along with Spanish L1s. Some saw the problems and were concerned. An example of an English L1 immigrant who observed the inequality but felt helpless to do something about the situation is Ina Buss, who arrived in McAllen in 1937 from Arkansas: Ina Buss was grew up in Arkansas, raised by a single mother (her father had died when she was six). Ina Buss ended up in the Valley thanks to oil field jobs held by family members.

She recalls how her initial excitement at seeing another country during visits to Reynosa was offset by her realization and understanding of the magnitude of the economic problems faced by people not far from where she lived; the sensation was particularly intense when she went to Mexico.

[7:51 – 9:36]

Marilyn Nowak: “How about Mexico? Do you enjoy going to Mexico?”

Ina Buss: “Well, the novelty of going over there wore off a long, long, long time ago. I have -
When grandkids, daughters, friends come visit well of course you always take them over and

take ‘em through, umm, but you feel sorry for the people over there, you can’t help but do that, I mean the people you see when you go that way, I’ve never been into the interior, never been any farther in than just a few miles inside of Reynosa. Now when I go to Mexico, mostly I’ll go down and cross at Progreso, because it’s, usually I’ll have some other people with me and walking is not so hard – they don’t have so many, as much stuff over there as they have in Reynosa, but you don’t have all that walking – and I’m getting to the place where I’m afraid to drive over there anymore, because even the next door neighbor went over there about two months ago, and they sideswiped him.”

MN: “And what happened?”

IB: “Well, there what’nt anybody injured, but they drive over there all the time.”

MN: “Yeah, uh-hum.”

IB: “And I don’t know but I just--”

MN: “Yeah, I know what you mean.”

IB: “I’m getting older, it didn’t used to bother me, but it does anymore.”

MN: “Yeah, I know.”

IB: “I got a sister in law that comes down here, she’d just dearly love to go back to grandma’s house -- If you can get someone else to drive, but I don’t want to take my car over there!

MN: [Hm hm].

IB: “But you do feel sorry for the people you see that way, because there’s not much you can do to help them, but they must have such a horrible life, at least a lot of them that you see over there, because they seemingly have two classes of people, the very, very rich and the very, very poor...”

Ina Bus's own experiences as the child of an economically struggling single mother may have equipped her to identify with those less fortunate, whereas many other Anglos in the Rio Grande Valley during this period seemed to have taken the situation for granted or indeed to have simply despised those in less comfortable shoes.

Nor was she the only one upset about the inequality of the economic gap between the new American and Mexican populations. John Peavy, a grizzled local law enforcement man, expressed his anger at Americans willing to donate humanitarian aid to faraway India yet who hypocritically refuse "a little help to a people in a neighboring country right here within sight of our borders – oh no- that was different; nobody would ever think of doing such a thing" (Peavy 1964, p. 264).

Leo J. Leo: South Texas Politics and the Effect on the Two Language Communities

(Interview in 1980 by Hubert J. Miller)

Born in 1917 in Mission, Texas, Leo and his brother Alexander were moved by their parents to Tabasco, Texas, (now La Joya,) later that same year. However, the Leo family had been in the region for generations.

The complexities cannot fit into this linguistics paper, but if a reader is interested in learning how the existing powers that undergirded the political establishment, he or she should listen to Leo J. Leo Interview 2.⁷² Here Leo explains Hidalgo county politics of the first half of the twentieth century. At different points, Closner⁷³-Cavazos-Reyna families profited from schemes; later, A.Y. Baker largely ran the county using intimidation, violence, and fear. Poor

⁷² Leo J. Leo gave a total of ten interviews for the archive.

⁷³ John Closner is not mentioned in Leo's interview but adding the shenanigans outlined by Leo to those described in the McAllen family papers (see Amberson, M.; Amberson, J.; and McAllen, 2014) makes for lurid political history.

Spanish L1 Mexican-Americans were often used as pawns in an alliance of the wealthy and the poor, for whom cheap voters were tools of the political machine, or else, once “good government” reformists took power depriving them a voice by tactics such as of poll taxes, the threat of jail, and an omnipresence of armed deputies. The point of all the political games was to uphold a (mostly) Anglo, and therefore (mostly) English L1 political establishment that had scant concern for Mexican-Americans who were not part of the elite (and therefore scant concern for Spanish L1s). All of this conforms to Bourdieu’s insistence that sociolinguistics cannot be studied without reference to the state and how – without even explicitly making pronouncements about official languages and such – determines the market price of language, and over the long term, which languages will be spoken.

Another inequality among those of differing language background (and, therefore, another factor in the metaphorical value associated with learning each language) that Leo highlights was the universally English L1 background of schoolteachers in the early 1900s Valley. Leo was in La Hoya; in nearly adjacent Mission, Harold Brehm (see interview p. 268) reports that an (Anglo, English L1) relative could not get hired because the board simply refused to hire local girls, apparently believing that northern imports were better prepared. Meanwhile, the use of 8th-grade graduate, 15-year old Minnie Norton Milliken (see interview p. 184) as a schoolteacher near Elsa. where most adults were Spanish L1s, shows the power that knowing Spanish could have for a bilingual teacher in an era when most teachers were imports from the North. Why all Anglo teachers? Leo’s explanation, coming from someone familiar with school board politics, is helpful.

[41:42-42:06]

Henry Miller: “Let me ask you some more about the elementary schools. Would your teachers be Anglo-American or Mexican-American?”

Leo Leo: “Very good question, sir. There were mostly, of course, here in high school, practically, there were very few Mexican-Americans. All, all Anglos. And in the outlying schools, the majority were Anglos. For one very good reason, Doc: There were no Mexican-American teachers available.”

This situation would have to change for the Spanish language to raise its price in the educational linguistic market. This was not unique to La Joya or Mission; a consultation of the roster of Los Fresnos teachers preserved in resident Miriam Chatell’s 1948 account reveals not a single surname of Spanish origin for any academic year between 1915 and 1948 (Chatelle, p. 89-95).

However, the solution was not so easy as simply educating a new generation of local teachers, because prejudice also reared its ugly head. One Mexican-American graduate of the La Joya high school who planned to teach could not do so in Mission – they wouldn’t hire her – so she had to drive every day to Rio Grande City (remember the discussion above in the historical chapter on the different social dynamics in Starr County compared to the Mission-McAllen metro.) She finally got a job in La Joya, could not break into the Mission teaching market until the 1950s. In the meantime, such a situation further devalued Spanish.

Leo recalled his old schoolboy experiences in La Joya as an example.

[49:56-51:10]

LL: “Well Doctor, a lot of us, we already knew how to speak English by the time we were in high school and, uh, there was no problem with communication. And, uh, as I told you, in the ‘30s we had quite a few Anglos with us in school. And the teachers did not know how to speak Spanish - although, I had a Spanish teacher that I thought the world of, and her name was – she

was an Anglo – and uh, her name was Cora Decker, and she did do her job in teaching, at least, I felt that she taught me plenty, and I never will forget her. That’s one teacher that remains fresh in my mind, and will forever. But uh, the majority of our students here, you know, in the high school, knew how to communicate, I think it was perhaps in the grade school where the bilingual education might have been more, uh, much more needed, because by the time we were in high school we had no problem communicating...[He explained how his class was very active, even staging Spanish dramas at other schools].

[51:35-53:00]

HM: “You didn’t run across – or, I hear some of the older people talking about this, uh, is the uh, that they were punished for teaching Spanish.”

LL: “Oh yes. Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. Oh yes, Doctor, but then again, a lot of times this is something that has been driven into some of our parents also, because – it’s lamentable, it’s really wrong that it was done, but they felt that we could learn English better if we wouldn’t speak Spanish. I remember because, I was scared because some of those teachers meant what they said, they’d spank the hell out of us if we were speaking Spanish. I know I, one time I accidentally said a word in Spanish, and they beat the heck out of me.”

LL: “So, one time there was a boy right next to me and I, we, as I say we were all really active and he says, ‘Leo why don’t you speak Spanish, a word of Spanish to me’ and I said, ‘Like hell I will.’ And so he says, ‘Come on, come on!’ And ‘aww’ I says. ‘I’m not gonna.’ And finally he got me to agree to one thing, I said, ‘You say it first, and then I’ll say it.’ So he said a bad word, and then I said a bigger one, and then we both got a big laugh out of it, but then were looking around scared because we knew they were going to spank the hell out of us if they’d heard.”

Anita Cárdenas: Segregation in the Schools

(Interview in 1987 with Leticia Miroslava)

Anita Cárdenas was born in 1915 in Cadereyta, Nuevo León, México. She was interviewed in 1987 by Leticia Miroslava Gamboa. Her father was from Mexico, her mother from Texas. The interview starts by going straight to the economic troubles that propelled people like Anita north of the border; she ended up in Mercedes.

[0:39-1:00]⁷⁴

LM: *“Empecemos con la vida de hace tanto. ¿Cómo era [la vida?] El dinero – ¿cómo te lo manejaba?”*

AC: *“Bueno, de eso nunca alcancé a ver mucho, esto de ver el dinero. Pero sí, veía yo, que era muy poco lo que ganaba mi papa, y era mucho lo que trabajaba.”*

So Anita Cárdenas summed up eloquently the situation Spanish L1 who came from to work in the Valley endured. They found that while pay was at a minimum, work was at a maximum. Indeed, the entire Magic Valley agricultural empire depended on exploitation such as that which the Cárdenas family endured. The writer William S. Burroughs, during his brief attempt to set up as a farmer in the McAllen area in the 1940s, complained to poet Allen Ginsberg in 1948 of the impossibility of farming in the Valley without breaking immigration law, and of the unfair labor practices the workers endured:

We farmers in the Rio Grande Valley depend entirely on Mexican laborers who enter the Country illegally with our aid and connivance. The “civil liberties” of

⁷⁴ Anita Cárdenas translation:

Leticia Miroslava: “Let us begin with the life of back then. How was life? Money – how did you manage it?”
Anita Cárdenas: “Well, I never got to see much of that, this business of seeing money. But yes, I did see that my father earned little but worked much.”

these workers are violated repeatedly. They are often kept on the job at the point of gun (at cotton picking time when delay may mean loss of the entire crop).

Workers who try to leave the field are shot. (I know of several instances.) In short, my ethical position, now that I'm a respectable farmer, is probably shakier than when I was pushing junk. Now, as then, I violate the law, but my present violations are condoned by a corrupt government (Burroughs, 1963, 1993. Letter to Allen Ginsberg, 30 November 1948).

These were the conditions under which Alicia Cárdenas' father would have worked when he made the decision to emigrate to the Mercedes farm fields.

It was not just the workers who had it rough. Cárdenas continues by describing the discrimination that Spanish L1 schoolchildren often faced in the schools of South Texas:

[18:45-19:25]⁷⁵

LM: *“Y de la escuela, de las escuelas adonde usted fue, ¿Adónde fue y cómo era? Como eran los maestros, y eran puros mexicanos, americanos, mixiados, ¿Cómo era más antes?”*

AC: *“Pues fíjate que sí había discriminación ¿así se dice esto? en la escuela. Los americanos en un parte, y los mexicanos en otro parte.”*

LM: *“¿Todo el tiempo?”*

⁷⁵ Anita Cárdenas English translation.

LC: “And about school, about the school you went to, where was it and how was it? How were the teachers – were they all Mexicans, Americans, mixed? How was it back then?”

AC: “Well, see, there was discrimination – is that how you say it? -- in the school. The Americans in one part, the Mexicans in another.”

LC: “All the time?”

AC: “Yeah. And we did mix together. Because not all of them were bad at heart or something, of course not. There were some who looked for us, and we looked for them [as friends]. And others were like, “Mexicans.” Racists! They were jokers. Motherfuckers!

LC: Ha ha ha ha!

AC: “*Si. Y nos revolvíamos. Porque no todos eran de mala corazón, claro que no. Hay algunos que nos buscaban, y los buscábamos. Y otros que “Mexicans!” Racists. Eran chistosos. ¡Que chingan madre!*”⁷⁶

LM: “*¡Ja ja ja ja!*”

Santos Cardoza: Spanish-Language Summer School

(Interview in 1986 with Patricia Rodriguez)

Santos Cardoza was born in 1901 in Mendez, Tamaulipas, but moved to Pharr Texas in 1918 at the age of 17 when the family moved to Hidalgo, Texas. In spite of the transfer to Texas, the Cardoza family was determined to maintain a high quality of Spanish, and was distressed by what they saw as the degradation of Spanish among the first generation of Spanish L1s to be educated in English L1 public schools in the Valley. Consequently, Santos Cardoza gave Spanish classes to Spanish L1 children in the summer, so that in addition to the English they were learning in school, they would also be fully literate in Spanish [5:00].

As for English, Santos had no more than informal learning – but it was informal learning of a type that once again demonstrates the connection between Bourdieu’s linguistic marketplace and the actual marketplace. In South Texas, commerce with “Americans” drove English learning among the Spanish L1s who – like Cardoza, had attended school in Mexico, or like Josefina Acosta (below), not at all. As Bourdieu would have predicted, the member of Cardoza’s family who learned the most was the brother who owned “an American store.”

⁷⁶ This is not the only bit of rough language Cárdenas uses. At around the seven-minute mark, a discussion of the rough language that the braceros used – language used by Anita herself as well – would likely be of great interest to linguists.

Santos Cardoza: *“Y mi hermano aprendió un poco de inglés y trabajaba en una tienda americana como un dueño... y nosotros pos no nos empeñamos en aprender inglés. Mi mama hablo muy poquito, solo pocas palabras.... Y sé yo un poquito de inglés pero unas ciertas palabras. Y ya entiendo y leo porque aprendí en las tiendas.”*⁷⁷

Friendship (Or at Least Affect) Triumphs over Economics

One crucial factor for adult SLA was interaction with people who spoke the opposite language. Within the boundaries of the (highly charged) race relations of the period, this characteristic – engagement with speakers of the other language -- was based more on personality and chance association than geographic origin. Not all Missourians were as tightly linked with other Missourians as the Floyd Everhard of the “Missouri Circle” discussed above. Another native of the Show Me State, George Strohmeyer, enjoyed a baseball-driven community environment that involved him with speakers of both languages, and in both countries.

George Strohmeyer: Baseball as a Bridge between Communities

(Interview 1987 with Robert Norton)

George Strohmeyer, born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1897, was born in German parents: William S. and Anna Bot (father Stuttgart, mother from Berlin.) His mother came to America as a 1-year-old; his father at age 17, in steerage. He had reached New York City in 1890 with 6 cents and a plan to join forces with his brother, who had come over in 1884 and settled in

⁷⁷ Santos Cardoza translation:

“And my brother learned a little bit of English, and he worked in an American store as a manager... And we well, we never set ourselves to learning English. My mom speaks only a little bit, only a few words. And I know a little bit of English, but only a certain words.... And now I understand and read because I have been learning in the stores.”

Russell, Kansas. The brother was a blacksmith, and he taught George's father the trade. His father maintained his German connections; going on a trip to visit Germany in 1907.

When George Strohmeier made it to the Rio Grande Valley, he lost no time inserting himself in the local social scene. In the 1930s, Strohmeier pitched for the local semi-pro baseball team, the Mission 30-30s. He recalled, "I was the only white man on the ball club, as you can see" [34:30]. This was a good thing, too, for language community relations. Also on the Mission 30-30s roster at the same time as Strohmeier were such local luminaries as Ernesto Contreras, Pepe Barrera, Raymundo de la Garza (cousin of prominent politician Kika de la Garza; Kika himself played for the team as well at one point as well). Most famously, they had Leo Najó (Leonardo Alanis), the first Mexican-born baseball player to break into American professional baseball. Obviously, then, theirs was a bilingual squad. The 30-30s played all over South Texas (Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Laredo); but they also played in Mexico (Mexico City and Monterrey). In fact, in one game in Mexico, they inserted Alanis in the hopes the umpire would call strikes in Leo Najó's favor [56:10]. In all events, semi-pro teams such as Mission's did a great deal to help alleviate some of the tension between the cultural and language communities of Mission and the Valley.

However, Strohmeier also knew a thing or two about dealing with the economic powers that controlled the Valley, the same economic powers that were pushing Spanish L1s off their land, and thus creating tension within the communities. Strohmeier acquired land in Donna during the Depression when someone failed to pay taxes on it; he had to buy the property and pay twenty years of back taxes, but he was still better off than the unknown individual who lost it over its appreciating tax value in the first place. Later, he would experience first-hand the

ruthlessness of one of the Valley's agricultural magnates: Lloyd Bentsen, Sr.⁷⁸, whose family had arrived in the Rio Grande Valley (from Minnesota) "penniless," but who had gone to work for Mission developer John Shary and who, with his brother Elmer, became a power player on the Valley business scene (Lackman, 2010). Now entrenched a member of Mission society, Strohmeyer had a chance to play checkers with Bentsen, but according to the baseball player's telling, the businessman swindled him out of the dollar they'd bet on the game even though Stroymeyer had won fair and square [53:00]. Other magnates had performed similar tricks – involving legalese, not checkers --- to pry away much larger prizes in land from a large number of the region's Spanish L1s (see the Maria Brewster Castillo and Delia Alaniz interviews).

In fairness, it is worth noting that many of the Valley's early power players actually represented the American dream for poor immigrants from Europe: John Conway, John Shary, and Lloyd Bentsen were all self-made men who were the children of poor immigrants from Ireland, Bohemia,⁷⁹ and Denmark, respectively (Fort and Mission Historical Society, 2009; Lackman, 2010). Yet from a sociolinguistic point of view, these men's immigrant families' rapid integration into the American mainstream showed the pressure to conformity within the melting pot – a pressure that complicated life for the Spanish L1s of the borderlands.

Still, the presence of people comfortable in both languages and cultures, like Strohmeyer, shows that the totality of life and language can never be reduced to Bourdieu's market forces: some men and women will find ways to connect with those around them, even when they are from a different culture, with the result that friendships created serve as a Zone of Proximal Development for language and more (Vygotsky, 1934/1986; Ortega, 2009, p. 239).

⁷⁸ Lloyd Bentsen, Sr., must be distinguished from his son Lloyd Bentsen, Jr., who is more famous nationally as the multi-term Texas Senator and running mate of Michael Dukakis in 1988.

⁷⁹ The old region of Bohemia is roughly coextensive with the modern Czech Republic.

Harry Cole: Amiable Immigrant to the Rio Grande Valley

(Interview in 1987 by Marilyn Nowak)

Another Northern arrival who refused to remain linguistically isolated was Harry Cole of Indiana. When Cole arrived in South Texas in 1926, he took to the area, and even to Mexico, like a fish introduced to water.

[0:06-1:16]

HC: “My name is Harry Cole. Of course I live here in McAllen but I was born in Madison, Indiana, in 1913. That means I’m 74.”

MN: “Hhm hm.”

HC: “But I came to the Valley when I was thirteen [1926], and I went to school here, and I went off to the service, I came back, in Mc- and I was raised in Mercedes – I came back to the Valley after the service, ‘cuz I worked for the government and I worked for Safeway and I retired with Safeway, but as far as the Valley it compares to other parts of the United States – and I have been over practically every inch of the United States, this is for not only my own idea, but the idea of many of other people, this is one fine place to live, and it – I believe it’s going to improve in the near future, because people are coming here by the thousands that weren’t here a few years ago.”

Though by the time of the interview he was confined to McAllen, Cole had worked in and travelled all over Mexico. He liked to take his wife on trips south of the border. In summary, Cole described his feelings as “I like Mexico. I like the Mexican people.” From liking a land and its people, it is a much shorter step to learning its language.

CHAPTER X

CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF SPANISH BY ENGLISH L1S

Frances Lorraine Jensen: Spanish from Playmates

(Interview in 1985 with Robert Norton)

In an environment where the *marché linguistique* did not provide a strong political or economic pressure for English L1s to learn Spanish, the most likely candidates for Spanish learning were those who immigrated with their families at a young age. A four year old English L1 surrounded by Spanish L1 children faces (for her world) a very strong social pressure to learn a language her parents may spurn. One example is Frances Loraine Jensen (an American child born in 1924 in Alberta, Canada), who arrived in the Valley with her northern parents. She got there when she was only 1 year old, when her brain was still closer to Locke's mythical *tabula rasa*. Her earliest environment saw her demonstrating how Vygotsky's emphasis on social learning can lead to language learning, even in the absence of formal instruction.

She remembers:

Frances Loraine Jensen: "But there were a number of us down there. But all the children played together, we didn't really differentiate, whether we were Anglo, or, or, not; we just kids, all playing together. I think that's where I picked up Spanish. Mother had a lady that helped at the house, and uh, when I learned to talk, Becca taught me Spanish, and my mother and father taught me English. So when I became a teacher I could sympathize with, empathize with, the children

who came to school and talked a hodgepodge of English and Spanish, because I actually had experienced that myself. But, uh, the kids went to school and I was left by myself. I was very unhappy and I guess I made it known, and Daddy took me in the car over to Hidalgo to talk to, well, you know –“

Robert Norton: “Mr. Baker?”

JF: “Mr. Baker. ‘And told him, that I seemed to want to go to school with the other kids, and ‘Did he have room for one more?’ And he said that he always had room for anyone that wanted to go to school. ...[follows the story of her disenchantment with school: “After the new wore off, I was a little bit antagonistic toward the idea of going because when I went to school I knew my numbers because I had learned them playing dominoes with my father; I could read, a lot, because my grandmother, having been a schoolteacher, had taught me that. I could shoot a gun, I could ride a horse, I thought I knew all the important things in life. After the new wore off I couldn’t realize while I was being stuck in four walls. But, I loved to read and it wasn’t long before I overcame that and went on with it.”

Jensen’s striking success seems to have been a combination of a very supportive family that challenged her to learn new things (so why not language, too?), a go-getter personality, and a multilingual environment, that – at least as a young child – was free of perceived tension between linguistic groups. The result was that a Minnesotan born became a fluent Spanish/English bilingual.

Wayne Claire Walker: More Spanish with Playmates

(Interview in 1987 with Tony G. Hyba)

Frances Loraine Jensen was not alone – As South Texans eighty years later know full well, children from English monolingual families can learn Spanish (or vice versa) without

formal instruction if they have playmates who are dominant in the other language. One such is Wayne Claire Walker. Born in Ellsworth, Kansas, in 1916 to rancher parents, he found a set of Spanish-speaking playmates in March 1919 when his family sold off their assets in Kansas and moved to Edinburg, Texas.

This was a time when Edinburg children had little by way of recreational activities other than each other. As he remembers it, “Edinburg wasn’t hardly nothing. The courthouse had a tent city around it.”

[11:37-13:13]

Wayne Claire Walker: “Now, jumping from that on to my, uh, my days and my friends. I was raised amongst the Spanish people. Ah, I could speak more Spanish than I could English, at the age of six and seven years old. The uh, places where we had to have for recreation – Right behind this Flanagan there was there is a lake, called the Kriske lake, which still exists. It’s uh, it’s still there. And we used to go over there and go swimming, us, uh, us the Kriske boys, and Beto, uh, Beto was my buddy, I uh right at this moment it slips my mind his last name, but anyway he was uh, one of the little boys that lived on the place here, that helped take care of the farm. And uh, our recreation would be to go over there to the lake. Now there was brush there, and we used to dig caves, and we used to have all kinds of fun around this lake.”

As a side note comparing the Walker children with other children who lacked transportation to school, Wayne Walker remembers that the kids in his family went to school on donkeys (8:50).

Charlie Egdar Langston: Americans in Porfirian Mexico

(Interview in 1987 with Patricia Peña)

An oft-forgotten factor to take into account is that for a small number of American southerners in the Rio Grande Valley, the move was actually a move north – they had been living in Mexico until the Revolution broke out. During the Porfiriato, Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz actively encouraged the settling of “colonies” of foreigners in Mexico in the hopes that their technical skills and entrepreneurial tendencies would spark Mexico’s economy. A boy from one of these colonies shared his story with the Hidalgo County Historical Commission.

Born in 1901 near Little Rock, Arkansas, young Charles moved to the Valley in 1907 along with his mother and sisters (when Oklahoma went to statehood.) However, in between those two dates, a time before the Valley had really taken off as a destination, he had spent four years with his family in the Blalock Colony in Tamaulipas, Mexico. The people of the Blalock Colony had, “in 1903-04, emigrated from Greer County, Oklahoma Territory, to Mexico, to establish an agricultural colony. These adventurers formed a stock corporation, the Blalock Mexico Colony and purchased 176,515 acres in Tamaulipas, Mexico, called Hacienda del Chamal” (Blalock 2013). As a result, by the time his family moved to Mission, where his mother opened a restaurant, Charles was bilingual.

[11:00-13:26]

PP: “I know you speak very well Spanish, don’t you?”

Charles Langston: “Hmm?”

PP: “You speak very good Spanish?”

CL: “I speak it, I don’t think it’s very good but I speak it. See, I went to school in Mexico awhile, when we was over there, we was over there about 4 years. I went to school over there.

‘Course we was in an American colony, it was the Blalock colony, but uh-”

PP: “You went as a colony to Mexico?”

CL: “Well, we went to live in this colony. The colony was already down there, and we went to live in it. And we farmed and ranched and – [pause]. All the neighbors of course was Mexicans. The colony was American people you know, and I was the only one in the family that talked Spanish. I learned Spanish here [i.e., the Valley] cause I didn’t have nobody to play with but Mexican boys, y’know.”

PP: “Did they treat the Mexicans any different than the, than the Anglos?”

CL: “No, the same.”

PP: “No?”

CL: “With this exception: that the uh, – see, Mexico didn’t have public schools in them days--”

PP: “Hm-Hmm.”

CL: “But that colony, they, they, uh, they imported a teacher from Texas, a man and his wife to teach school, and they paid them twelve months out of the year, and paid their way back to the States every – they come here every summer to go to summer school, you know. Oh man, I don’t remember what they called it. But during vacation, we’d move out in the country, and then during school term we’d move into town, into the settlement, to go to school, you see. We had a two story rock schoolhouse down there, and I guess it’s still there. And a lot of those people.”

Unknown: “[Yells] Knock, knock!”

CL: “Come in!” And a lot of those people that live [Unknown: ‘Scuse me!] a lot of those people that lived down there – I don’t know – [Unknown: “Brought you some cherries! They’ve been

washed.”] Okay! Thank you, thank you! How’s that boy? [Unknown: That boy’s just great, I guess. The last I heard.” [Tape cuts out, resumes.]

From this point the conversation is so meandering that it would be difficult to record here – but the final answer to Patricia’s original question about Anglo-Mexican relations among school children was:

[15:50-16:16]

PP: “Were there any Mexicans in your class.”

CL: “There were two, I think. Two girls. You know, the Mexican people, in those days, they wanted all boys, you know, in the family, because those boys could work, you know. In fact, in the business the whole family worked, you know. And they had to make a living. Cause they was only paying them – a week here, they was only paying them 25 cents a day, you know, for field labor.”

...

[21:30 – 22: 16]

CL: “I get a lot of enjoyment out of this, because, you know, I knew these people. See, look at this one.”

PP: “Was this one of the Mexican girls?”

CL: “Yes, let me see if I can find the name. Let me see here. [Apparently looking at something, maybe a yearbook, and his eyesight may have been failing him because Patricia Peña reads it for him:

PP: “Olimpia Rodriguez?”

CL: “I think that’s her name.”

Charles Langston's response to Patricia Peña's question jives well with the accounts given by Mexican-Americans in Chapter XI regarding education cut short by poverty and the resulting need to have children working instead of studying – a situation which not only kept English L1 and Spanish L1 children apart, but also perpetuated the opportunity gap between the two communities to the next generation. (Of course, the situation also helped Spanish language maintenance, as the education-deprived children did not always learn English. An ongoing discussion all over the world continues to be the balance of helping minority language groups with language maintenance without isolating them from the opportunity of participating equally and freely in the majority-language society and marketplace.)

Frances Borman: Lack of Access to Authentic Spanish at School

(Interview in 1993 with Betty Fogarty)

If not all new Midwesterners had the same rapport with the Spanish language as Jensen did, one reason was certainly that the bilingual childhood Jensen experienced was denied to many others. In some communities, Anglo and Latino children were placed in different schools, on the pretext that the latter needed additional English instruction before being mainstreamed. Frances Borman explains the justification for this process (b. 1902 in Illinois, in 1924 she arrived on her father's new farm on the open area between Edinburg and Mission). She saw the old separated system as superior to contemporary bilingual education.

[21:42]

Frances Wood Borman: "Then there was something else that I've missed in the last few years. I think we've made a mistake about language, the double language in schools. When my children

started the Sharyland school, little further north on this road, was a small school where small Latin children, or any Latin children, who did not know English, went to school until they were proficient in that language. I wonder if that's not a good idea again."

Betty Fogarty: "Then they could go into the other schools-"

FWB: "When they could understand and express themselves, they went back to regular school. They weren't too stringent with those children; now, it takes a long while to learn English when you've never known it, but as they had acquired enough knowledge, that they could understand what the teacher was saying - even maybe she had to repeat it, but still they knew some English before they went into school, and that's not true nowadays. I think it's a good idea. Uhh, we've talked about several things, we talked, I don't know if we talked about Jones' store..."

CHAPTER XI

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR SPANISH L1S

Borman's comments, however, open an entire new can of worms. The linguistic flashpoint of the Spanish L1 Valley child of the early 1900s was without a doubt the school. Numerous stories point to the trauma of second language learning in an environment where the linguistic learning process was trammled with the social (class, race) to create an often toxic atmosphere for English immersion.

We have just analyzed Borman's description of early Valley schools in terms of what segregation could mean for English L1's not learning Spanish; but the way many Spanish L1 children were treated led to lifelong resentment against Anglo Texans. Some "Latin" students were placed in *escuelitas*, separate schools for Spanish L1s – with obvious consequences for not only in-class language learning but social relations between the two language communities, thus limiting out-of-class learning. Even those who did have full access to an English-teaching school faced the classic conundrum confronting linguistic minorities everywhere.

As Bourdieu explained regarding the regional languages of mid-1900s France, the egalitarian standardization of public schools in a free republic does not remove the problem of language-related inequality. Even in schools structured "to ensure equality of access" inequality could and did persist. "Bourdieu's analyses suggested that within this equity in provision, a further hidden selection was taking place in the way the culture of schooling was grounded on a

particular dominant way of viewing the world – that of the dominant classes. Schooling could therefore operate according to its principles of open access, and the misrecognized systems of selection could do the rest. And, language was intimately involved in such systems as the medium of teaching and learning.” (Grenfell, *Bourdieu, Language and Linguistics* p. 37)

So, even though these students learned English the hard way, the experience did not necessarily lead to peace and harmony between language communities – which of course meant fewer opportunities for learning each other’s language outside of the context of schools.

The English L1 child of South Texas, on the other hand, seemed to enjoy a very tight connection with the school, at the expense of identification with the “other” in all its forms; the “Mexicans” are another group, and the obvious consequences for this in terms of language learning is clear. Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of the *marché linguistique* predicts that in this case it would be the Spanish L1s who learn English, for whom mastery of the more socially expensive language is necessary for upward mobility, while the English L1s have less pressure to learn Spanish. However, both then and now in South Texas, for the non-upwardly mobile, English was optional, which in part explains why so many rural respondents in these interviews have very limited, if indeed any, English, in spite of being Texas born and raised in the twentieth century.

Beulah Bell Stuart: Excerpt 2, Education and Social Progress

(Interview in 1987 with Crystal Marie Cantú)

We have already met Beulah Bell Stuart in the context of railroad –driven immigration of English L1s, but she went on in the interview to discuss social and inter-linguistic community relations issues that are also sociolinguistically relevant. Her take on race relations (which, in the early 1900s and, even to a lesser extent now, was in South Texas usually also inter-language

community relations) is helpful. Keep in mind that she was a teacher, so her information on schools is first-hand from an English L1 teacher's point of view – something which explains the emphasis she puts on education as a path forward for both language communities.

First, for one sore point between the communities, Stuart was not overly concerned with the threat posed by “Mexican bandits,” saying, “I never saw a bandit in my life; they did steal some of my father's cattle [5:00].”

Stuart also had a good deal to add on education issues. She confirmed that in the Mercedes region there were different schools for Latin students and Anglo students [11:00]. As we have already mentioned, such situations did not bode well for inter-language-community language acquisition of Spanish by English L1s, and did not help the affect⁸⁰ of Spanish L1s who were learning English in segregated schools. However, Beulah Bell Stuart was not in favor of keeping education separate, and she welcomed the greater mixing of communities as time went on, seeing it as positive the mixing of cultures along the Rio Grande: “They are Americanized, we got Latinized” [27:00].

On the subject of inequality between the language communities (with all of the implications of such inequality within Bourdieu's framework for the perceived value of using a language), she related the story of Mercedes, Texas. As will be clear, this former teacher sees education (including, presumably, language education) as the key to reconciliation between language communities.

[28:00-29:10]

⁸⁰ *Affect* is a second language acquisition term for an individual's emotional disposition toward a language and a language learning environment.

IN: “And, uh, most of the government, or the city council or whatever, was made up of American people, of Americans?”

Beulah Stuart: “At that time, it was.”

IN: “When did it start reforming?”

BS: “As the Latins became more educated, you know, then they got into politics, which they should!”

IN: “Hmhhhmm– So, you didn’t find it aggravating, then, that Mexican-Americans were moving up? You know, you didn’t find it–”

BS: “No, no didn’t. We didn’t bat an eye, I never did find it so. Of course, I’ve lived here all my life, and I’ve been used to the Latin people, and I just, uh–”

IN: “We’re just people.”

BS: “People like anybody else. And the thing of it is, they have learned, or they’ve educated themselves, and they are just as entitled, and that should be recognized–”

IN: “And you know, I wish more people would think like you, Mrs. Stuart, because there are people like me, Mexicans, who grow up hating Anglos.”⁸¹

The pair of communicators succeeded admirably at speaking on a touchy subject, cross-culturally, all while being interviewed for posterity. One of the drawbacks of transcripts such as this is that they do not fully capture the pleasant conversational dynamic of this interview compared to some rather interrogatory sessions that emerged elsewhere in the archive. Crystal Marie Cantú was (at the time of this interview) a recent high school graduate, which helps explain her reference to things heard while growing up. The rapport that Cantú – in spite of theoretical naiveté and lack of training – succeeding in establishing with a much older

⁸¹ Crystal Marie Cantú was (at the time of this interview) a recent high school graduate, which helps explain her reference to things heard while growing up.

interviewee from a different culture led to one of the more informative interviews in the archive. One hint to the conversational dynamics that can be seen is the high rate of interchange and supportive interruptions that Crystal Cantú uses to work with Beulah Stuart in constructing the narrative, in contrast to some of the monologues seen elsewhere.

In all events, Beulah Bell Stuart was right that education had been one of the main stumbling blocks on the road to full participation in the new society for Mexican Texans. However, there was more to the story.

The Other Side of the Story

Earlier (p.188), schoolteacher Minnie Norton Millikan mentioned Kika de la Garza as one of the Spanish L1s who had learned English “our way” (i.e., English-only). Eligio “Kika” de la Garza was one of the politicians (U.S. Representative from 1965-1997) to whom Stuart is likely referring. However, De la Garza had an additional explanation for increased Hispanic participation in Texas society in the post-WWII period: The mass participation of Mexican-Americans in the American army during World War II gave them a claim to full participation in American society and politics that could no longer be denied (Schmal, 2002, p. 1). Take, for example, the case of Felix Longoria of Three Rivers, Texas. In 1944 Longoria was killed in battle against the Japanese on Luzon in the Philippines. When, in 1949, Longoria’s remains were brought home, his wife Beatriz wanted him buried at the Three Rivers cemetery, “but the local mortician refused to hold a wake for a ‘Mexican’ in his funeral home” (De Leon, 1993, 2009, p. 120). The outrage perpetrated on the body and family of a slain American hero led to a public outcry, and Felix Longoria now rests in peace in Arlington National Cemetery alongside the United States’ most decorated veterans. While another couple of decades would pass before

social structures subsided enough for Latinos to participate fully in South Texas politics and the highest levels of social life, the efforts of Beatriz Longoria and Héctor García to make sure South Texas honored its own were a major step toward that goal. So, while Stuart was right in that education was important, there were more obstacles than education to be overcome.

Learning Obstacles

Learning English for native Texan Spanish L1s was not easy, because of the “presence of inferior ‘Mexican Ward’ schools” which not only “stigmatized children as being less than full-fledged citizens,” but also “hindered their ability to learn the English language” (De León, 1993, 2009, p. 128). This lack of access to education and language led to exclusion from community organization – which of course added to the vicious cycle by making it harder to gain educational opportunities and language learning – and so the education-language barrier persisted in spite of nominal attempts at education. Beulah’s “Latinos” becoming more educated was a process beset not only with economic challenges but also discrimination based on racism. De León writes that it was not until the 1948 *Delgado v. Bastrop* decision that a district court decided that “separating students in different buildings violated the law” (1993/2008, p. 129). However, for almost another decade school districts often ignored *Delgado*, so in 1957 *Hernández versus Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District* a similar issue was dragged into court again. This time the dispute was over “the segregation of Mexican-American children in the first two grades and their subsequent detention at that level for a total of four years” (De León 1993/2008, p. 129). This ruling is important to the earlier times (1920s-1930s) for two reasons: First, because if the issue had to be litigated, then such practices must have been happening (likely far beyond Driscoll), and secondly, because the court found that the holding back of Spanish L1 children in schools was “an unreasonable practice predicated on notions about race

or ancestry” (De León, 1993/2008, p. 1929). Of course, these “notions” in the schoolhouse simply reflected prejudices society in at large – a situation that cannot have helped the two linguistic communities interact or learn each other’s language.

Didio Cecilio Rodriguez: *Estudie de inglés casi nada*

(Interview in 1987 with Linda Peña)

An overwhelmingly common story among the less well-to-do Spanish L1s who lived in the region was that the next generation did not learn the newly dominant language because economic pressures forced them to work rather than attend the English-speaking schools long enough to learn the new language well. Take, for instance, the case of Didio Cecilio Rodriguez, born in 1917 in Rio Grande City:

[14:25-16:05]⁸²

Didio Rodriguez: “*Y, este, yo, cuando fui a la escuela, yo iba para jugar. ¿Me entiendes? Y había días cuando iba, y otros días cuando no iba. Porque yo tenía que darle a mi hermano y cuñado, ayudarle en la labor o hacer algo. Para esto, no iba ya a la escuela. Es que iba una semana y eran dos semanas que no me fui, y en total sí siempre aprendí, pero no aprendí casi nada. Estudie de inglés casa nada, en la escuela. Estudie también español, porque estaba en la ciudad en Edinburg, pero el inglés, no. Casi el inglés sé, casi no. Pues – como te digo – casi mínimo. Lo aprendí aquí, no puedo escribir inglés.*”

⁸² Didio Rodriguez translation:

Didio Rodriguez: “And, uh, when I went to school, I went to play. You understand me? And there were days when I would go, and days when I wouldn’t. Because I had to give help to by brother and brother-in-law, to help them in the work or do something. Because of this I stopped going to school. It’s that I went one week, and then for two weeks I wouldn’t go. To sum up, I always did learn, but [in the end?] I learned almost nothing. I studied English almost not at all, in school. I almost know English, I almost don’t. It’s that – how to I tell you – I learned it here, I can’t write English.”

Linda Peña: “Mhmm, but—“

DR: “I had school but in this business of carpentry the school happens on the job. You understand? I didn’t have to, when I started the job, I contracted to work, first I contracted to work alone, I signed for a dollar a day – but per *day*, not hours. One dollar a day, [from] daylight, until it got dark. One dollar a day. I worked in manual labor, and I also worked to make myself into a carpenter.”

Linda Peña: “*Mmm mm. pero—*”

DR: “*Tuve escuela, pero en esta cuestión de la carpintería, la escuela se factura en la chamba. ¿Entiendes? No tuve que, cuando empecé la chamba, yo contraté a trabajar, primero contraté a trabajar solo. Yo contraté a trabajar un dólar por día – pero por día, no por horas. One dollar a day, daylight, hasta que se oscurecía. One dollar a day. Trabajé en la labor, y trabajé también haciéndome carpintero...*”

The comments of Didio Cecilio Rodriguez highlight a problem in early 1900s South Texan public education: truancy laws were rarely enforced for poor children, especially Mexican-Americans (Johnson, 2003, p. 181), primarily because to do so would (from the parents’ point of view) deprive the family of needed help, and (from the farmers’ point of view) reduce the available pool of cheap labor.

Isabel Loya: Excerpt 2, Child Abuse and Language Learning

(Interview in 1987 with Mary Salas)

Another story illustrates a particularly somber twist in the narrative: child abuse. It is difficult for a six-year-old like Isabel Rodriguez Loya to acquire a second language when the child’s mind is on the fact that she and her little brother don’t have enough to eat. In spite of the obstacles, Isabel acquired English (as shown by the occasional code-switching during the interview). Isabel also illustrates the fluidity of the international border in those years. Born in McAllen in 1909, she moves through Mercedes to Bravo, Nuevo Leon, where her mother suddenly died. The child returned to Texas, but the situation was dire, as her relatives – who had the money to eat well – deprived her and her brother of food.

[0:13-0:35]⁸³

Mary Salas: “*Y nació?*”

Isabel Loya: “*En McAllen en 1909. And then, and then, crecí, mi mama, de aquí se fue por Mercedes para Bravo, Nuevo León, allí hasta mis parientes, por mi mamá, y por mi papá. Él es Rodríguez, y Cantú mi mamá.*”

[0:43-2:16]

IL: “*Y luego, este, quedé huérfana. Mi mamá murió. Cuidé chivas - you know, goats, y todo eso –Cuidé chivas un año, and then una tía mía recogió una hermana mía, chiquita, fue ella que me trajo de cuidar chivas. Yo no sabía cuidar animales pero teníamos miedo–*”

MS: “*¿Cuántos años tenías?*”

IL: “*Tenía como seis años.*”

MS: “*Ah. Estabas chica.*”

IL: “*Bueno mi abuelita ---- Cuando mi madre nos faltó nos fuimos de aquí, para Reynosa, y luego fuimos a Bravo, Nuevo León. Y luego allí quedamos huérfanos y papá decía, ‘Dios mío, ¿qué voy a hacer con mis hijos?’ Me llevaron con los tíos, y me metieron a cuidar chivas. Yo no*

⁸³ Isabel Loya translation:

Mary Salas: “And you were born?”

Isabel Loya: “In McAllen in 1909. And then, and then, I grew up, my mom, from here she went through Mercedes for Bravo, Nuevo Leon, toward my relatives. He’s a Rodriguez and my mom’s a Cantú.”

....

IL: “And then, uh, I was left orphaned. My mom died. I took care of *chivas* – you know, goats, and all this – I took care of goats for a year, and then an aunt of mine took me from caring for goats. I didn’t know how to take care of animals, and I was afraid—“

MS: “How old were you?”

IL: “I was like six years old.”

MS: “Ah, you were still small.”

IL: Well my grandmother – when my mother passed, we went from here, to Reynosa, and later to Bravo, Nuevo Leon. And later we were left orphans and father said, ‘My God, what am I going to do with my children?’ They took me to my aunt and uncles’ place, and they set me to caring for goats. I didn’t know how, I was scared of it. My grandfather said, ‘Don’t be afraid, they won’t do anything to you.’ I said, ‘I don’t want to be here,’ and I would cry and scream, and my little brother, too. Later we cried, because we were hungry. [*She cries, remembering it.*] They gave us only one tortilla in the morning, and all day long, without eating, until the afternoon when they gave us a plate of tuna. The hunger shot through us.... They weren’t poor. They had money and they had cows, goats, they were rich. But we didn’t fit in as their grandchildren.”

sabía, de este tenía miedo. Me decía mi abuela, 'No tengas miedo, ellos no te hacen nada.' Yo me dije, 'No quiero estar aquí,' lloraba y gritaba y mi hermanito también. Luego llorábamos, porque teníamos hambre. Nos dieron solo una tortilla en la mañana, y todo el día, sin comer, hasta la tarde un plato de atún. Nos clavó el hambre muy duramente. No eran pobres. Ellos tenían dinero y tenían vacas, chivas, eran ricos. Pero no nos cabían como nietos."

She was getting very tired as serving as maid (*criada*) for her aunt and uncle, so she moved crossed back to Mercedes in the face of her family's protestations. There she worked at a store with *americanos*, where she picked up some English at the age of 29 (11:26-11:56).

Loya's choice to move to the U.S. and work in a store instead of remaining in rural life was, linguistically speaking, important because it placed her in a different social group (see my adaptation of Milroy's [1997] theory, p. 157-158 of this paper). That a young goat herder such as Isabel had been would have learned English was statistically somewhat unlikely, given that in 1890, in the entire United States, a whopping 52% of all stock raisers and herders (the traditional North Mexico and South Texan occupations) could not speak English. If such was the case for the U.S. as a whole, the South Texas percentage should be much higher. (Lieberson, 1981, p. 165). Then as now, immigrants and minorities ended up in the least desirable occupations. For hard manual labor across the board (*los labores* as several respondents called it) the language gap was stark: 28% of other agricultural workers, 33% of iron workers, and a telling 55% of coal miners lacked English proficiency. In contrast, in occupations such as "clerk and copyists," "professional service," "salesmen," and even "bartenders," the non-English-speaking rate ranged between only 5% and 8% (Lieberson, 1981, p. 165). By moving to the ranks of those who needed to speak on a daily basis, Loya upped her odds of English SLA.

Anonymous (on Lilia Ramos tape): Multigenerational Texan without Access to English

(Interviewer unknown, date unknown), Excerpt 2

The anonymous interviewee (b. 1923) from Rio Grande City who we met earlier in the context of her Texan identity (see p. 171) was never afforded an education in the state of her choice. In her poverty-stricken family, all hands had to work if the mouths were to be fed.

[0:38-0:50]⁸⁴

Anónima: “*Y este, nací en 1923, 18 de abril. Y mi papa y mi mama, pos, éramos entonces pobres; nosotros no tuvimos escuela. Tuvimos que trabajar para poder comernos. Es que yo no tuve escuela. Y allí crecimos. Yo me casé con un señor de aquí, de Rio Grande.*”

The work was hard, too:

[1:45-2:25]

Entrevistadora: “*¿Qué hiciste de trabajo cuando estabas jovencita?*”

AN: “*¿De joven? Yo le ayudé a mi esposo a trabajar, para mantener a mis 4 hijos.*”

ENT: “*¿Con que trabajo?*”

AN: “*Nuestro trabajo era la labor. El algodón. Pizcar. Con mis hijos estábamos en la labor.*”

ENT: “*¿Muy difícil?*”

AN: “*Claro que sí. Como no. El sol es muy caliente, y todo, y hasta que no crecieron mis hijas, ayudaron a su papá -- sí ya me quedé en la casa, porque era poco lo que me pagaron -- y como*

⁸⁴ Anonymous translation:

AN: “And, uh, I was born in 1923, April 18. And my mom and my dad, well we were poor then, we didn’t have school. And there we grew up. I married a gentleman from Rio Grande City.”

...

IN: “What did you do for work when you were young?”

AN: “When I was young? I helped my husband with the work, to take care of our four children.”

IN: “With what work?”

AN: “Out work was manual labor. The cotton. Picking it. With my kids, we were in manual labor.”

IN: “Very difficult?”

AN: “Of course. How could it not be? The sun is very hot, and all that, and until my children grew up, they helped their father – although I now stayed in the house, because they paid me so little – and as they were tired of working, my daughters married very young, and we two were left alone, and now I am all alone.”

eran cansadas de trabajar, muy chicas se casaron mis hijas, y quedamos solos los dos, y ahora ya quedé sola.”

Nosotros No Tuvimos Escuela

Anonymous' remark “we didn't have school” was not an isolated complaint in early 1900s South Texas. The reason was that the children had to go to work in the fields in the unequal agricultural society of South Texas, in which field hands did the work but saw next to none of the fruit of their labor. The problem was generational: the interviewee's children had to work as well, so the daughters looked to marriage (which was available) rather than education (which was not) to escape field drudgery.

This vicious cycle continued for many. A look at the census data shows the prevalence of illiteracy in the region during that era. One suspects that – especially for self-reported, written data on illiteracy, in a region with an uneasy relationship with federal officials in the era of Pancho Villa – the actual numbers were rather higher than the official figures. To be fair, the situation was not really that much better in many other parts of rural Texas (Hidalgo County was doing better than rural regions in the East Texas Piney Woods, for instance) but when compounded with cultural and linguistic divisions illiteracy is even more of a problem than it would be otherwise.

Table 9: Illiterate Persons Ten Years of Age and Over (University of Virginia. Historical Census Browser. “Census Data Over Time: Texas: Persons Ten Years of Age or Older Who Are Illiterate.” <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php>).

County	1870	1910	1920	1930
Cameron	5,694	7,324	8,496	13,494
Hidalgo	1,238	4,395	8,839	12,193
Starr	2,063	3,808	2,077	2,026
Webb	1,346	5,440	5,976	4,874
Bexar	3,299	11,557	19,831	20,905
<i>Illiteracy was also common in English-dominated NE Texas during the time.</i>				
Panola	2636	1962	1690	1820
Dallas	1709	5356	6447	6997
Travis	3217	4696	3562	4777
Red River	2852	2457	2199	1519

Carolina García: No Buses, No English

(Interview in 1987 with Lucial Mendez)

The childhood of Carolina García further illustrates the refrain of limited education (and therefore language learning) opportunities for rural Spanish L1s due to work and poverty. García speaks succinctly and to the point, so we will let her do the talking:

[0:00 – 1:45]⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Carolina García translation:

Carolina García: *“Mi nombre es Carolina García, y yo nací en 1923, el 17 de mayo. Mi papá se llamaba Benito García; mi mamá, Virginia Vela. Entonces yo fui – mi mamá tenía el número de once hijos; yo fui de las más chicas, yo y una hermana. Yo no conocía mi papá, porque él murió cuando yo tenía 2 años. Yo me críe con mis hermanos y mi mamá hasta la edad de 13 años, tenía yo cuando murió mi mamá. Luego, yo me quedé con mis hermanos.”*

CG: *“Pero en aquel tiempo cuando yo me críe, era muy dura la vida. Porque no teníamos agua. Teníamos que ir a las presas donde había tanques, porque allí que las amontaba el agua cuando llovía, y de allá lo carreábamos. ¡En carretones! o a cubetas, como podíamos, pero para bañarnos, para hacer este quehacer para todo. Y moliendo: poniéndome a hacer masa con mi mamá, ayudándole a ella, hasta que ella nos faltó.”*

CG: *Yo hasta fui creciendo, por eso no tengo escuela. Porque donde yo vivía, cinco millas del Midway al Norte. Y no entraron buses. No había nada para allá. Pues nosotros éramos once hijos que no tuvimos educación, a la escuela no fue ninguna, porque no había buses. No había quien te diera la mano para que te educaras. Así es que por eso uno ni sabe el inglés, más que poner mi nombre.”*

Carolina García: “My name is Carolina García, and I was born in 1923, the 17th of May. My father was named Benito García; my mom, Virginia Vela. So then I was – my mother had a total of eleven children; I was one of the youngest, me and a sister. I didn’t know my father, because he died when I was 2 years old. I was raised with my brothers and my mom until the age of 13, which is how old I was when my mother died. After that, I stayed with my siblings.”

CG: “But in that time when I was being raised, life was very rough. Because we did not have water. We had to go to the reservoirs where there were tanks, because there the water collected when it rained, and from there we carted it. In carts! Or in buckets, as we could, to bathe ourselves, and to do this chore or the other. I would be grinding: putting myself to make masa with my mother, helping her, until she passed away.”

CG: “I was growing up during this time, that’s why I don’t have school. Because where I lived, five miles from Midway to the north. And buses didn’t come there. There was nothing there. So we were eleven kids who didn’t get an education, not one of us went to school, because there were no buses. There was no one to give you a hand so you could educate yourself. That’s why one doesn’t even know English, other than to sign my name.”

Timoteo Padrón: The Sacrificed Child

(Interview in 1987 with Sandra Cárdenas)

[Very loud background noises of children playing in the background of this oral interview.]

Timoteo Padrón did acquire some basic skills in English, as seen by a moment of code-switching; but his overall limited English proficiency can be traced back to a choice made within the economy of the family regarding who would get what.

[0:17-1:22]⁸⁶

Timoteo Padrón: “*En aquellos años, bueno la vida no era igual a lo que es hoy, porque no había las oportunidades que ya hay. En el primer lugar, no había manera de ir a la escuela. Como yo, no tuve escuela.*”

Sandra Cárdenas: “*No, ¿nada?*”

TP: “*Yo no tuve escuela por la razón de que, para poder ayudar a mi padre. Lo mayor es mayor, y yo tenía que trabajar para ayudar a mantener a unos siete más, hermanos míos, para que ellos fueran a la escuela.*”

SC: “*Sí.*”

⁸⁶ Timoteo Padrón translation:

Timoteo Padrón: “In those years, well, life was not the same as it is today, because there were not the same opportunities that there are now. In the first place, there was no way to get to school. Like me, I didn’t have school.”

Sandra Cárdenas: “No, none at all?”

TP: “I didn’t get an education for the reason that, in order to be able to help my father. ‘The oldest is the oldest,’ and I had to work to maintain seven more, my brothers and sisters, so that they could go to school.”

SC: “Yes.”

TP: “Well, when one began to work – I began to work at the age of 10 years.

SC: “Ten years.”

TP: “Ten years, harvesting corn. In manual labor. In those days there was no such thing as the ‘hour.’ It was just, then it was, ‘The sun well risen, and the sun well gone.’ Or, if you will, ‘Many trials in the morning, and much difficulty in the afternoon.’ The was no way to say, ‘What you gonna pay me, none of this.’”

TP: *“Bueno, cuando empezaba a trabajar uno, yo empecé a trabajar a la edad de diez años,”*

SC: *“Diez años.”*

TP: *“Diez años, pizcando maíz. En los labores. En aquellos años no había la hora. Nomás era, allá era: el sol bien amanecido, y luego bien salido. O sea: mucha prueba en la mañana, y mucho rigor en la tarde. No había con que decir, what you gonna pay, nada de eso...”*

The result of such working conditions was a 75-cent per day wage!

Timoteo had been the child who made sacrifices so that his younger siblings could get an education. Presumably his siblings picked up the language at school, while he had to fend for himself, both in employment and pedagogy. He may have gone to school at least a few times, or he may have listened to his sibling’s comments, because he did have few things to say about school. Timoteo’s next comments explain why many educated American children did not pick up Spanish: in some cases, the Anglo and Mexican children were segregated into different *escuelitas*, or little community schools.

[2:00]⁸⁷

TP: *“Otra diferencia es que no había tantas oportunidades de escuela. Nosotros vivíamos por el pueblo, el rancho. Bueno, no había, este, autobuses, como ahora. No había esa oportunidad. Las escuelitas eran escuelitas chiquitas, como en meses, había la escuela americana y escuela*

⁸⁷ Timoteo Padrón translation:

“Another difference is that there weren’t so many opportunities of schooling. We lived by the pueblo, by the rancho. Well, there was no, uh, buses, like today. There was not this opportunity. The schools were small schools, as in some months there was the American school and the Mexican school. They were divided. Uh, it was very different from today – [now] the languages are heard, and mixed more. Like now, well, of course they can talk English because from very small they are learning it. In those days, there were lots of Americans [in school] because they were more numerous than us. And they had as one of the rules, it was that each time that one would speak Spanish, they would say ‘No.’”

mexicana. Estaban divididas. Este, era muy diferente a hoy – se escucha, se mixea, más la lengua. Como ahorita, bueno, pues sí ellos pueden hablar inglés pues porque desde chiquito lo están aprendiendo. En aquellos tiempos, había muchos americanos porque que eran más numerosos que nosotros. Y tenían como una de las reglas, es que cada vez que uno hablara en español, dijeron que no.”

Timoteo Padrón agrees with Carolina García on the difficulty of make it from the rural rancho to the nearest school without buses, but he also brings up something important even for those who could make it to school: in language market theory, it follows that the greater proportion of Anglo-Americans in the schools in those days (as compared to before 1904, or even compared to today) would have tended to keep the market price of English high and Spanish low, even before taking into account the artificial restrictions placed on Spanish-speakers by the schools mentioned by Padrón.

Gilberto López: Surviving Racism and English-Only Education

(Interview 1987 with Juan Martín Guerra)

In Jovita González’s carefully understated words (written in 1929), “Public schools in the border have not been conducive to the development of the individual” (Life Along the Border, 1929, p.103). Gilberto López’s childhood is an example of the harsh reality behind González’s words. Gilberto was born in 1922 in Edinburg, Texas. He grew up in a *rancho* near the town, and attended the local school. He spoke to Juan Martín Guerra of that experience.

[6:20-9:00]⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Gilberto López Translation

IN: “In this rancho were there gringos too, or just Mexicans?”

GL: “Oh, yes, there were Germans, there were Poles; there was some of everything. Everything, everything. And, well, in this time there was also much, shall we say, discrimination. Always we, the Mexicans, were treated

Juan Guerra: “*¿En este rancho había gringos también, o puros mexicanos?*”

Gilberto López: “*Oh, sí, había alemanes, había polacos, había de todos, todos. Todo, todo. Y, pues, en esto tiempo también había mucho, mucha, diríamos, discriminación. Siempre a nosotros los mexicanos nos tratábamos diferentes, ¿no? En el tiempo que yo comencé a ir a la escuela, recuerdo, que siempre, siempre se tenía como muy grande en mi corazón como un coraje porque siempre me trataban, nos trataban abajo, el, el, los americanos, siempre era el mas, uh--*”

JG: “*¿Más poder?*”

GL: “*Mas poder, y siempre se juntaban de tres y cuatro, y, y, y, y golpeaban a uno, en la escuela. Recuerdo yo, que se nos pedía que no habláramos español, lo cual era nuestro idioma, ¿no? Y si por casualidad te escucharan hablando español, comenzaban a juntarse, a juntar uno por uno, uno por uno y se empezaba haciendo una bolita, el maestro nos iba juntando, ¿no? Y luego recuerdo yo que nos llevaban a un cuartito, ¿no? y tenían una mentada Seli, y esa Seli no creas que era una muchacha, no: Era una tabla, y bien gruesota eh, y tenían dos, y los dos se les decían Seli, y la una tenía agujeritos, y la otra no los tenía, agujeritos, ¿no? Y tú sabes con cuál de las dos nos pegaron. Pero entonces yo miraba eso, y todavía sigo viendo mal, ¿no?*”

differently, no? In the time that I began to go to school, I remember, that always, always I had like a very fierce feeling in my heart, like a rage because always they treated me, they treated us, low, the, the, the Americans. They always had more, more--”

IN: “More power?”

GL: “More power, and always they would get together, by 3s or 4s, and and, and, and they would hit you, in the school. I remember. They, they asked us that we not speak Spanish – which was our language, right? And if by chance they overheard you talking Spanish, they would get together, one by one, and get in a little group, the teachers would get us together, you see? And later I remember that they would take us to a little room, you follow? And they had there a setup “Seli” and this Seli don’t think that this was a girl, it was a [wooden] board [or plank], and it was solid, and the two were called Seli, and the one had little holes, and the other didn’t, you see? And do you know with which of the two they would hit us? But this I saw, and I still feel it badly, no? Because only to use, the Mexicans, [they did this], and they wanted to take, really, our language, because they didn’t speak our language, and we didn’t speak English, when they gave us a few whacks, they would put us face down on the table, you follow? And they would give us 3, but struck hard, so that sometimes you couldn’t even sit, from how much it hurt, the blows they’d given you.”

IN: “And the gringos would start to laugh over this?”

GL: “Yes, they would laugh. And, and, and, how they would make fun [of you], no? And uh, well, the truth is you would feel bad, no? Even if you didn’t want to feel bad. But thank God, as the years have gone by these things have been changing, right?”

porque nomas a nosotros, como mexicanos, y se nos quería quitar, verdad, nuestra idioma. Y por causa de que, no hablaban nuestra idioma y no hablábamos en inglés. Cuando nos daban unos azotizos nos ponían boca abajo arriba en una mesa, ¿no? y luego nos daban tres, pero bien dados, que a veces no te podías ni sentar, de lo que dolía, las, los tablazos aquellos.”

JG: “¿Y los gringos se comenzaban a reír, por eso?”

GL: “Sí, se reían. Y, y, y, y, y como que se burlaban, ¿no? Uh, Y uno, pos, por supuesto, verdad, te sentías, te sentías mal, ¿no? Aunque no quisieras que sintieras mal. Pero gracias a Dios que, a correr de los años, fue cambiando esto, ¿no?”

In connection with López’s story, it is worth noting the observations of Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) on Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, because the idea fits South Texan context of the early 1900s. *Habitus* means that it is not just language differences that make education difficult for disadvantaged pupils, but a lack of access to the basic rules of educational culture. It is true that getting an education, for many, was economically impossible. Yet even if everyone suddenly had the money to allow their children to go to school and work, in the local – yet foreign – new American public schools, the poor rural South Texas pupils encountered a problem based on Bourdieu’s *habitus*. It is not just money that many pupils lacked – they were held back by an environment that lacked a tradition of education. This meant that a family’s lack of educational background led in turn to a lack of understanding of the game of education among the children. Many parents would have like their children to be educated – after all, doing so would increase not only their earning potential, but also their place in society. However, the attempt of historically disadvantaged people attempting to make it by the rules of the game is often a gamble, since there were in South Texas society many barriers to their success. The society was likely to interpret any difficulty (language, discomfort in a new academic

environment, etc.) as being Spanish L1s fault –and the message could even be internalized, unfortunately. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) explain.

“Bourdieu insists... that this kind of ‘gambling’ [for social capital] is largely doomed to failure.” In spite of a family’s efforts to get an education, “the habitus of the children will, in advance, disqualify them from success, both in the sense that the children will signal, in everything they do and say, their unsuitability for higher education [as narrowly defined by the established model], and as a corollary, the children will themselves recognize this, and more or less expect failure. As Bourdieu writes, ‘Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games...are not “fair games”. Without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations (2000: 214-215)” (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002, p. 24).

However, more than habitus was in play in South Texan schools. Racism took its toll in making school a brutal experience for Mexican-American students. Montejano writes that schools in the Rio Grande Valley were segregated into “American” and “Mexican” facilities for each district. Anglo teachers often considered their Mexican pupils “biological[ly] and intellectual[ly] inferior” (Montejano, 1987, p. 192). The fact that even Anglo teachers who taught in primarily Mexican-American Texan schools were paid less (Montejano, 1987, p. 192) was not calculated to draw the better teachers. Such an appalling situation led many Mexican-Texans to drop out. In a fictional work written in the 1930s but based on his own real-life childhood, *George Washington Gómez*, a Brownsville journalist by the name of Américo Paredes used the character Gualínto to explore the school experience, from the sometimes incompetent primary teachers to sometimes racist high school administrators. There might be “high” and

“low” levels for each of first and second grade – and sometimes Hispanic students ended up in the lower rank out of “pedagogical necessity” (Paredes, *George Washington Gómez*, p. 148). History as taught in public school – songs about the Alamo, for instance - made Mexican-Americans feel as though they had no place unless they denied their heritage (Paredes, *Gómez* , p. 147-150). Tone-deaf graduation speakers –even famous ones like Paredes’ fictional version of Texas historian J. Frank Dobie - cracked racist jokes (*Gómez* 272), and some school-related social events celebrations might be closed to Mexican-Americans (*Gómez* p. 172-175). All these experiences Paredes recorded conspired to leave some students of Mexican extraction out in the educational cold. Not that success for Spanish L1s was impossible: Paredes himself would go on to be a professor at the University of Texas in Austin.

Paredes aside, such racism and segregation point to a basic division in the socio-linguistic landscape. Johnson (2003) explains the direct connection between the experiences of children such as Gilberto López and Anita Cárdenas and the continuance of Spanish L1 monolingualism:

If [Tejanos and Mexican immigrants] couldn’t send their children to a decent school, one where they would not be humiliated or beaten for speaking Spanish, then there were other ways for them to learn what they needed to navigate the world. They would be fine knowing only Spanish and would probably learn more about their history and culture by talking to a grandparent or family friend than from listening to a hostile and ignorant teacher (p. 181).

Josefina Ibañez Acosta: *En la casa me enseñaron a escribir y leer.*”

(interview in 1987 with Francisca Rodriguez)

Josefina Ibañez Acosta was born in 1920 in La Grulla, a small town in Starr County. She spent the first 20 years of her life in a rancho near the town. Born in Texas, she remained a

lifelong Spanish monolingual. As such she is representative of the rural Spanish L1s of Starr County who continued to live in Spanish even as the cities next door in Hidalgo County transformed into English L1-dominated societies. Her sister went to school, and then came home and showed Josefina the books, something important for the reason Josefina explained.

[4:12-5:39]⁸⁹

FR: “*¿No fue a la escuela?*”

JA: “*Sí, sí fui a la escuela. Pero como yo ya estaba grande tenía como [incomprensible] cuando fui a la escuela.*”

FR: “*¿Cuántos años tenías?*”

JA: *Once* (11).

FR: *Once. ¿Cuándo fue?*

⁸⁹ Josefina Acosta translation

Francisca Rodriguez: “You didn’t go to school?”

Josefina Acosta: “Yes, yes I went to school. But I was already big when I went to school.”

FR: “How old were you?”

JA: Eleven.

FR: Eleven. When was this?

JA: “There were no buses out in the ranchos. Buses didn’t run.”

FR: “Everyone walked?”

JA: “No, they used a truck to make a “busesito [little bus]” that came to the ranchos. There were no seats like buses today have. No, it was a truck with little benches. And closed off with a box, like a little house. And that’s how they carried us to school.”

FR: “And what did you study there?”

JA: “They studied to be able to read and write. Me, I taught myself to read and write at home.”

FR: “You never went to school?”

JA: “I went to school, but only barely, just a little bit. I didn’t go to school because as I was the oldest I had to help my mom. I never went to school, but in the house they taught me to read and write.”

FR: [indistinct]

JA: “No, I don’t know much English but in school they taught me to count, and the letters.”

FR: “Do you know how to write English?”

JA: “No.”

FR: “Spanish.”

JA: “Yes, Spanish. My other two sisters went to school; my brothers didn’t go to school, just the girls.”

JA: *“No había buses para allá en los ranchos. No corrían buses.”*

FR: *“¿Todos se fueron caminando?”*

JA: *“No, pues de un troque hicieron como un busesito [indistinto] que venía a los ranchos. No había asientos como tienen los buses en sí. No, era un troque con banquillas. Y cerrado con una caja, como una casita. Así nos llevaron a la escuela.”*

FR: *“¿Y qué es lo que estudiaban allá?”*

JA: *“Estudiaron para poder leer y escribir. Yo, me enseñé en mi casa a escribir y a leer.”*

FR: *“¿Nunca fue a la escuela?”*

JA: *“A la escuela fui - pero casi, muy poco yo. No yo fui a la escuela porque como yo era la más grande tenía que ayudarle a mi mamá. Nunca fui a la escuela, pero en la casa me enseñaron a escribir, y leer.”*

FR: *“[indistinto]”*

JA: *“No, no sé mucho inglés pero en la escuela me enseñaron a contar y las letras.”*

FR: *“¿Usted sabe escribir inglés?”*

JA: *“No.”*

FR: *“Español.”*

JA: *“Sí, español. Las otras dos hermanas mías se fueron a la escuela; los hermanos no fueron a la escuela; nomas ellas.”*

Josefina Acosta's comments echo those of Timoteo Padrón (p.245): The oldest child was expected to remain at home to work and to make space for other children, in this case Josefina's sisters. However, in the Acostas' case, the boys did not go to school, either. She also substantiates Carolina García's remarks regarding the lack of buses – although there was some rudimentary school transportation in La Grulla in the form of a truck with benches attached.

Sila López: English-Only Catholic School with International Teachers

(Interview in 1987 with Josefina Flores)

While we are on the theme of childhood experiences with English and Spanish in the classroom, it would be worthwhile to compare the experience of the aforementioned public school alums with a student from a private Catholic school. For, this, we turn to the story of Sila López, born 1917 in Mission, Texas. López mentioned [11:30] that one of the chief sore points in the community, independent of language lines, was actually religion. Methodists who applied to her Catholic school were refused, and the disappointed Methodists responded by poking fun at the Catholic custom of making the sign of the cross in front of church doors. Virtually all Spanish L1s in early 1900s South Texas were Catholic, yet a majority of the new English L1 immigrants were Protestant. Would English (the powerful but still “outsider” language) also be enforced in an (“insider”) Catholic school? The answer turns out, in at least one instance, to be “yes.”

Sila López was a well-educated individual, having gone to Guadalupe Catholic School in Mission, and later to Pan American University in Edinburg. At the time of the interview she was still a teacher. Their conversation shines light on relations between the Spanish- and English-speaking linguistic communities. It also reflects the stranglehold English held even in many private schools in the region, and the strategies used to keep English in its privileged position in

the educational system. Unlike the hostile of system of many public schools, the Catholic school did, however, encourage Spanish L1s to continue on to college – a fact that would lead to López’s becoming one of the region’s Spanish L1 teachers, displacing the earlier monopoly held by (often out-of-state) English L1s.

[1:00-1:54]

Josefina Flores: “*No había* prejudice?”

Sila López: “Yes, there was, but at the time I didn’t notice; or I was never discriminated. At the school, we were friends. *Este*, we were friends. We always went to their homes, and they would come to ours, to mine. We celebrated Christmas, the way, uh, like now. But it was a different time, when I was growing up, so we had church activities, and we went to *las posadas...*”

....

[3:50-5:50]

JF: “*Eran puros mexicanos* - I mean were you all Mexicans in the school?”

SL: “No we had about - some Anglos. *Pero*”

JF: “But everyone was treated equal?”

SL: “Yes! I mean, the sisters were from Ireland, from, um, Chicago, from, uh, Missouri, and they spoke English, and we were not supposed to speak Spanish.”

JF: “And what-”

SL: “In school we had a rule that we had to speak English. And our lessons were in English. We did not have bilingual the way like, now.”

JF: “Were you punished for talking Spanish?”

SL: “Yes, were supposed to, uh, pay a fine or something if we were caught--”

JF: “Speaking Spanish.”

SL: “Yes, but we managed to speak it anyway (laughs). And when we were, after school, you know, or at home, we had to, because they didn’t speak English at home, so we had to speak Spanish.”

JF: “Spanish. And then after Catholic school was high school?”

SL: “High school.”

JF: “But that was public? So were things different?”

SL: “Well yes, because it was just 4 subjects.”

JF: “Uh huh.”

SL: “And but, it was different because we were assigned a class, a lot of homework also, and we were supposed to pass. And we were supposed to, *este*, do our, what do you call, where we – in the Catholic school it was a good experience because you were able to continue, you know,”

JF: “Uh huh”

SL: “Doing what you were supposed to do, so we didn’t have any problem and we got good grades, and we didn’t have any problems getting to, you know, passing to, getting my college entrance exam, -”

JF: “So as soon as you finished high school you went to college?”

SL: “No, I didn’t.”

Sila López would go on to Edinburg Junior College just a year or so later, though. As she recalls the college experience in the 1930s, question of linguistic or racial discrimination between English L1 Anglos and Spanish L1 Hispanics was not overt; but it was true that friends stayed with friends, and friends tended to come from the same linguistic background. There was an Anglo girl in one of her social groups, but her presence caused no problems because of the unifying nature of the university experience: “If it was for school, we were united.”

Sila López had some worthwhile observations on the bilingual education system that emerged later, once she became a teacher during the years in which dual language instruction was emerging as a common tactic in Texas schools. Proving that code-switching is not a phenomenon restricted to undereducated bilinguals, both teacher and interviewer frequently code-switch frequently in this snippet of conversation.

[23:00-24:33]

SL: “I like the bilingual system because it teaches the child in their own language, you know, as much as they can, and then all they have to do is transfer that knowledge to English. It pushes the same. If like, uh, the class, they are telling them about, uh, the planets: *Bueno* you know if you teach it in English, they don’t understand what you’re talking about. It’s just like talking to uh, the wall. But if you, if they, if you tell them, if you make it interesting and you tell them, *el sol, la luna, las estrellas, y los planetas, y que tantos hay*, they will remember!

IN: Uh huh.

SL: They will remember it *si lo dices en español, pero les si dices nomás en inglés, inglés, inglés*, y they come from Mexico – most of the children we have now are from Mexico, or from Nicaragua, or El Salvador, or Poland, *también!*

IN: Uh huh.

SL: So, *este*, if you talk in your language, it’s hard, and it would take longer, for that person to, to get the, the skills, the concepts, or whatever you’re trying to teach.”

IN: Uh huh.

SL: So, when you went to Catholic School, *verdad...* [Sila then repeats the issue of no Spanish being allowed in Guadalupe or Mission High].

William Robinson: Spanish L1 Thanks to Playmates

(Interview in 1990 with Robert Norton)

Another issue that made English acquisition difficult for young Spanish L1s was the fact that – prior to mass media, and with a local rural economy conducted in Spanish – there was simply nowhere outside of school where it needed to be used. The extent to which the region’s children did not speak English outside of school is shown by the occasional story of the English L1 immigrant family’s child who knows Spanish rather than English because all of his or her playmates are Spanish speakers. One such case is the story of William Robinson, a scion of an English L1 family from Central Texas (natives of Rollersville and Georgetown who moved to Donna). Their McAllen-born son William became – at least according to his wife, and depending on the definition -- a Spanish L1 before he started school.

[10:38-11:45]

Robert Norton: “OK. Uh, did you have many playmates when you were a small kid, before you started school?”

William Robinson: “Uh –

Mrs. Robinson [interjecting]: “He couldn’t even speak English!”

WR: “That’s all I had to play with – “

Mrs. Robinson: “Was the Mexican kids from – “

WR: “Yes, with the Mexican children who worked on the place.”

RN: “So you learned Spanish the easy way, then.”

WR: “Yeah, and when I went to school I forgot it all.”

RN: “Oh, you did?”

WR: “Yeah. They taught us Castillian Spanish. Mexican kids had a hard time with it, too.”

RN: “Ah.”

WR: “They quit that, I think, now.”

RN: “Well, you speak Spanish well today, don’t you?”

WR: “Not as well as I could. I, uh, went down to Mexico in ’64 and worked with a friend.

Bought some land, and I was down there several weeks. In a little while it started coming back to me. You get to where you think in Spanish, then it’s easy. But I’ve got off of it again.”

Delia Ramírez Alaniz: Code Switching, a Sign of Linguistic Spaces

(Interview in 1987 with Rubén Alaniz)⁹⁰

Delia Ramírez Alaniz was born in 1919 in Havana, Texas, to South Texan parents. Her father was born in Rio Grande City in 1888, and her mother in Havana (just southwest of La Joya, near Mission). Alaniz grew up and spent her life in the tiny town of Havana.

I have left the first excerpt from this interview untranslated in order to force appreciation of the code-switching between English (in *italics*) and Spanish. The code-switching is significant because all the school vocabulary – grade numbering, the words “teacher” and “teaching” and the act of “walking” in the context of going to school is in English. It is likely that the specific English lexical items that pop up within this mostly Spanish conversation – words and phrases referring to school phenomena -- reflect the influence English had as the language of education, even for those who continued to use Spanish outside of the classroom.

[4:26-6:30]

Delia Alaniz: “*Todos los de aquí en Havana iban a esta escuela.*”

Ruben Alaniz: “¿Cómo se llamaba?”

⁹⁰ The interviewee gives her name as Delia Ramírez Alaniz but to find the interview in question in the RGV Oral History Collection, search for Delia O. Alaniz.

DA: “*Havana nomás. Nomás la Havana. La Havana School.*”

RA: “*¿Cómo cuanta gente había en ese entonces?*”

DA: “*Había muchos, muchos. Eran dos, um, dos cuartos. Estaba dividido. Y la dividieron los más medianos como first, second, third grade, iban en un cuarto. Y los demás, hasta fifth, yo creo, iban en el otro cuarto, todos allí. Estaba mediano. Estaban medianos los cuartos.*”

RA: “*¿Y estaba poblado?*”

DA: “*Sí, había mucha gente.*”

RA: “*¿Mas que ahorita?*”

DA: “*Pos sí. Se sonaba una campana y nombre, nos dábamos mucho gusto porque queríamos jugar. We were more interested in playing than in studying.*”

RA: “*Y como – ¿Eran puros mexicanos?*”

DA: “*Sí, no había gringos pa’ nada.*”

RA: “*¿No había gringos?*”

DA: “*Puros mexicanos. La maestra era gringa. Se llamaba – le llamábamos Miss Mauck, ya no recuerdo el nombre de otros. Vivía en Pharr.*”

DA: “*Tenía una lugar para las teachers – eso es como se las llaman, teachers – bien cerquita de la escuela. Allí se quedaban toda la semana y los Sundays se iban. Una de ellas se llamaba, este, Contreras, apellido – Santana Contreras. Era la que – she used to teach first and second grade. y la otra nomas era la que – she used to teach, uh, no recuerdo.*”

RA: “*¿Y cómo llegaron a la escuela?*”

DA: “*Walking.*”

RA: “*Walking?*”

DA: “*Todos nos fuimos walking a la escuela pero después de que nos pasamos a la sixth, uh grade, iban por el bus.*”

Language and Economics

Delia Alaniz goes on to provide yet another case study on the connection between linguistic and economic power. The story of her family tells how the Spanish-speaking population lost more than language of education in the English-speaking arrivals. She describes how her (illiterate, Spanish-monolingual) family was swindled of their land by clerks who forged a typed “X” on English documents that the interested parties could not read. Her family had to battle for mineral rights with the First National Bank of Laredo [25:00-29:00]. To win, she had to find a Spanish L1- lawyer who “*no se vendió a los gringos*” (“would not sell out to gringo [lawyers]”).

Language Attitudes in School

Another interesting snippet of her interview serves as a counterpoint to Gilberto López’s account of what happened to Spanish speakers in the schools of Edinburg. Alaniz, who went to school in Havana (near La Joya, and thus on the edge of the more heavily Spanish-speaking western portion of the Valley) did not suffer the same emotional scarring at school thanks to the relaxed attitude toward the use of Spanish in school. The comparison shows the impact of differing educational linguistic policies on South Texas society, as proving that the language that commands the higher price on the linguistic does not necessarily have to be a tool of oppression, so long as the people in command of that language do not use linguistic power to flex political power or enforce social/class/race distinctions. (Again, even if you only read English, glance through the Spanish to see the code-switching.)

[50:45-51:21]⁹¹

RA: “*Y, ¿nunca había problemas si hablabas español en clase, en las clases?*”

DA: “No. They didn’t go into it. They didn’t care. They never did bring it up, *de que si hablabas español o inglés en clase.*”

RA: “*¿Y la gente les enseñaba todo en inglés?*”

DA: “*Sí. Todas las clases eran en inglés menos uno en español. Teníamos una clase en español.*”

RA: “*Y si – ¿Habían muchos que no sabían hablar inglés?*”

DA: “*No, pos todos estábamos en lo mismo, tratando de aprender inglés. Pero no había del otro lado, gente del otro lado no. Eran muy raro los del otro lado, no como ahora cuando vienen en bunches.*”

Alaniz’ final remark underscores the indigenous nature of South Texas Spanish: these Spanish L1s were from Texas, not Mexico. It is also welcome to see that all Spanish L1 students of the period did not suffer the same mistreatment as Gilberto López (p.247); just a few miles southwest of Gilberto’s Mission school, in Delia’s Havana school English and Spanish mingled freely in the hallways. The effects of this freedom are palpably obvious; young Delia loved to go to school, even if only to play with others (presumably in Spanish), and her remarks about English L1s in portions I have not shown here show no sense of rivalry or resentment toward the other linguistic community. Mr. Gilberto López, on the other hand, had a raw fury in his voice

⁹¹ Delia Alaniz translation

IN: “And, you never had problems if you spoke Spanish in class, in the classes?”

DA: “No, they didn’t go into it. They didn’t care. They never did bring it up, whether you spoke Spanish or English in class.”

IN: “And the people taught you in English?”

DA: “Yes. All the classes were in English except for one in Spanish. We had one class in Spanish.”

IN: “And if – Were there many who did not know English?”

DA: “No, well, we were all the in same boat, trying to learning English. But there were not many from the other side [of the Rio Grande], people from the other side, no. People from the other side were rare, not like now when they come in bunches.”

when he remembered his negative English-only school experience and his remarks later in his interview show surprise when one Anglo he worked for (a Mr. Norquist) actually turned out to be a decent fellow who liked people of any ethnic or language background. The difference between the reactions of Alaniz and López to their school experience show how the side effects of language policy and the (mis)use of language power by the community whose language commands a higher price on the linguistic market may resonate for decades in the affected individuals.

CHAPTER XII

THIRD LANGUAGES DURING THE LAND RUSH

Semi-Tropical Scandinavia: Swedish L1s of the Rio Grande Valley

Around 1912, a Minnesota-based group of Swedish L1s began an attempt to create a Swedish community on 12,177 acres called the Turner Tract (the region west of Lyford, Texas) (Vassberg 2000). They got some help when ex-Minnesota legislator William Apsey Harding saw his agricultural holdings destroyed by blizzard, so he took his talents and equipment to the Rio Grande Valley. There he used his machinery to grade new roads near Lyford and Santa Maria, including those in an area called the Turner Tract, where the Swedish group was about to begin building their town, which they would call Stockholm, Texas (Harding 1978, p. 250-251). The new settlement was meant to be “‘uteslatande svensk’ (exclusively Swedish)” (Vassberg, 2003, p.16).

With the founding of Stockholm, a number of Swedish L1s from Minnesota and neighboring Canada went south to the Rio Grande Valley. Upon arriving, they tapped into an existing Central Texas Swedish social infrastructure that could potentially have aided language maintenance. For instance, they obtained copies of Austin’s Swedish-language periodical the *Texas Posten*. In fact, advertisements for the new South Texas Swedish settlement appeared in the *Texas Posten* of June 12, 1913 (Vassberg, 2003, p.16). In addition, there were Swedish schools in Austin and Round Rock. Support for the small Swedish-language churches that they

established in South Texas came from Swedish congregations in Central Texas. (Vassberg, 2003, p. 8) In the end, however, Austin-Round Rock was far enough away that South Texas Swedish would have to stand on its own if it wanted to survive.

The new town was named Stockholm for Sweden's capital. The residents quickly established schools (where classes were held in English) and churches (where services were conducted in Swedish). The divergent language choices made for church and school an interesting juxtaposition between these two realms of prime sociolinguistic real estate. University of Texas – Pan American professor (and descendant of the Stockholm Swedes) writes on the interaction between the Nordic settlers, their school, and their languages:

When the children of the Swedish colony first enrolled, they were fluent in two languages, all right, but their bilingualism did *not* necessarily include English! Typically, early Turner Tract children spoke only Swedish (the language of family communication) and Spanish (the language of the local Hispanic workers and their children with whom the Swedish youngsters played). In public school, however, the Swedish children quickly // picked up English in the total immersion setting, and within a few years spoke it with native fluency. That made them trilingual, an incalculable advantage in an environment where they often had to deal with monolingual English-speakers, and with monolingual Spanish-speakers. In fact, the Swedes (especially the children, but even many adults of the community) learned Spanish so quickly that some members of Lyford's Anglo community incorrectly assumed that Swedish and Spanish were closely related languages. (Vassberg, 2003, p. 46-47)

In the end, however, the Swedish experiment did not work. The English-centric world of their children led to a loss of Swedish among the young. Spanish and English were the languages of adults in commerce with the rest of the world. The mainstays of public Swedish use on the Tract – the churches – closed as membership declined. The Bethel Lutheran Church in Lyford lived on, but “when Bethel switched from Swedish to English services in the 1930s,” the Swedishness of the congregation was swallowed up in an influx of other traditionally Lutheran but linguistically alien groups, such as German-Americans (Vassberg 2003, p. 85). As Vassberg explained, their trilingual children had an advantage – but most of them put that advantage to good use by leaving the tiny farming community behind. Soon Stockholm itself was a ghost town, and by 2002 Vassberg’s investigations in surrounding towns turned up “only one elderly



Figure 8. The site of Stockholm, Texas, as it appeared in March 2015. The historical marker and cemetery are all that remain in a sea of farmland. (Photo: Aaron Cummings)

German Heritage Speakers in the Rio Grande Valley

The following interviews are included together to chronicle a mistake of mine, an important mistake because it was one that linguists may often be tempted to make. Upon realizing just how many German bilinguals or heritage speakers arrived in the Valley during the land rush, I formed the hypothesis that they would (like the Stockholm Swedish L1s) rapidly accommodate to the Spanish language since they were already used to multilingualism. With the exception of George Strohmeyer (whose interview is listed in the on p. 219 above), this was not the case. At least among those whose memories are preserved in the oral histories, most German L1s largely discarded German in the Rio Grande Valley, and did not pick up Spanish.

There is a historical hypothesis for why this was so. At one point the idea of a New Germany somewhere in Texas (popular during the Republic years of the early 1840s -- see Raab and Wirrer, p. 787-810, 2008), raised the possibility of German as a major linguistic player in Texas. However, as mentioned in chapter 4, the tensions of World War I forced a decision in the popular imagination between being “German” and “American,” and many seem to have discarded the Teutonic tongue in preference for English monolingualism. Today German is limited to pockets in Texas (primarily Muenster, New Braunfels, and Fredericksburg).

Some German-Americans saw the loss of their language in America as a tragedy (Hawgood, 1940, *The Tragedy of German-America*). However, the German L1s we will encounter in the RGV Oral History Collection do not. In fact, one German L1/English L2s encountered here (William Smid, p. 271) was a rather fervent advocate for English as an official language and against bilingual education.

Harold Brehm

(Interview in 1985 by Robert Norton)

Indeed, one German heritage speaker, Harold Brehm (born in 1897, he arrived in McAllen in 1924), was even the grandson of a German linguist. Brehm's grandfather had been the tutor of the Austrian court. He spoke Spanish and had worked in Mexico, and finally moved to the United States. In fact, at the time of the interview a branch of his family still had a ranch in Mexico, which Harold had visited. His interview does not touch on either the German or Spanish language beyond remarking on the story of the linguist grandfather. Nevertheless, what he does tell us about the social patterns of the day is helpful.

One thing Harold Brehm highlights is the sheer number of English L1s arriving in the Valley during the 1920s.

[27:47-28:19]

Harold Brehm: "And then these land companies would bring down people from the north, and they would have probably, uh, they would come down in the Pullman cars, and park them there, and then they'd have as high as 100 automobiles, uh, tours of the Valley. They'd put them in a hundred carloads of tours they'd take them in the Valley and bring that many down at one time. And they had them there, we'd see sometimes as high as two and three, ah, tours a day. And they bought this land."⁹²

Another clue in Brehm's conversation is an idea of the somewhat unstable dynamics of the new English L1s towns, as seen in Brehm's comment (delivered as an explanation to what he

⁹² Brehm's description agrees with the statement of Lloyd Glover (p. 134-136) regarding how immigrants were carefully handled in company cars to maximize sales and minimize contact with troubling realities.

did not know where [McAllen politician] Bill Schupp was from) that “everybody was from someplace else” [30:30].

Yet another particularly relevant tidbit, considering the intimate link between school and language, is the story of his wife’s attempt to get a job as teacher.

Harold Brehm: “My wife graduated from high school here in 1926. When she graduated--”

Robert Norton: “I thought she graduated in ’22.”

HB: “Mm?”

RN: “I thought she graduated in --”

HB: “She graduated from high school here in ’22.”

RN: “What did she graduate from?”

HB: “She graduated from university in ’26.”

RN: “Oh!”

HB: “When she went away to university the Rotary Club would have her, there was probably a half a dozen of them, for the luncheon, ‘Oh, we’re so glad you’re going away so you can make a better citizen, come home and make better citizens, going away to university,’ so, when she graduated from high school, she applied for a job as a teacher here. ‘Oh,’ they said. ‘We’re not hiring local girls.’”

RN: “Oh?”

HB: “Then the next year, she taught one year down in Harlingen, and then they said yeah, they’re hiring local girls, but they’re not hiring married girls, ‘cause we’d got married then.”

RN: “This was after she was through with university, right?”

HB: “Yeah. And she never could get a job. She taught the Bible in the school before she became a regular teacher in any of the public schools.”

It is unclear whether the “not hiring local girls” may not have been just a ploy to not hire Mrs. Brehm, but given Milliken’s testimony that Mission tried to hire out of San Antonio, it is possible that there may have been a pattern from hiring from the north - which would have explained some of the unease of the school districts with an incomprehensible language being spoken in the classroom.

Elma Krumdieck Koch Dutschman

(Interview in 1992 with Robert Norton)

Without once mentioning language, Elma Krumdieck Koch Dutschman (born 1915 in Minnesota) hints at the social divisions between Euro- and Latin Americans in the Valley (she ended up in Pharr, Texas). The daughter of a German immigrant, she would have had to have been exposed to German language and culture, so she is hardly coming from an English-only background; however, she is coming from a Midwest-German culture that contrasted and conflicted sharply with Texas-Mexican culture, and she repeats Buelah Bell Stuart’s manifest-destiny-esque comment that the Valley is “new” country –a phrase which overlooks its continual occupation by Spanish-speakers since the 1740s and ‘50s. The newcomers who came by train appeared to have lived together, creating a de facto “Mexican” part of town, and rarely mingling with Spanish-speakers except as agricultural “help.”

[1:00-1:23]

RN: “Miss Dutschman, I understand you came from Minnesota. Tell us about your parents. Uh, where and when was your daddy born?”

Elma Dutschman: “He was born in Germany.”

RN: “In Germany.”

ED: “Uh huh.”

RN: “That’s nice.”

ED: “I don’t know where, its Hanover or Hamburg [laughs] I don’t remember.”

RN: “Well, they’re both very nice cities.”

ED: “Well I don’t know but they was, he was born there. Mother was born in here in Minnesota.”

As she went on, Elma Dutschman dropped some oblique but insightful hints to what life was life in the Valley. She made it clear that during World War II people were getting worked up over just how few men there were left to work the farms – a situation that would lead to the bracero program, which, from a linguist’s point of view, led to more language diversity [24:00]. Apparently there were “little Mexican shacks” that were mostly in the same part town – sign of division, both ethnically and linguistically. Dutschman realized that the Valley farming economy would not have worked without “a lot of help, a lot of Mexican help” [31:00]. Of course, the same segregation that kept language communities in different parts of town also tended to lead to the maintenance of the marginalized language. In a sense, the same linguistic market that was largely spurning Spanish as a status language was cementing Spanish’s enduring presence at a popular level in South Texas (Johnson 2003, p. 181).

William Smid

(Interview on unknown date by Robert Norton)

Interestingly, being a German L1 did not mean that one was likely to view bilingual education favorably, neither English-German nor English-Spanish. Consider the upbringing of William Smid, born 1910 in Iowa as a third-generation American, but a German L1. It is interesting to contrast this language background with his views on learning English and his disapprobation of bilingual education for Spanish L1s.

[0:58- 2:33]

Smid: “Well, I was reared in the state of Iowa, in a German community. This community was completely German. The churches....”

Inter: “What were the names of your father and mother?”

Smid: “My dad’s name was George Smid and my mother’s name was Frankie Cope.”

Inter: “And was your father and mother born in this country?”

Smid: “They were both born in this country, and uh, lived on a farm. They were successful farmers, and uh reared a family of six children.”

Inter: “What was your birthdate?”

Smid: “And mine...I was the third one, April 1910. And uh, as I said it was all, the all community, the whole community, the neighbors, it was about all 15 or 20 miles square, a German community, and it had one German town.”

Inter: “What was, what was the specific name of this town?”

Smid: “Kamrar. K-A-M-R-A-R.”

[Kamrar, Iowa, is a tiny hamlet located in central Iowa. The 2010 census gives Kamrar, Iowa, a population of 199 inhabitants.]

Smid: “All four of my grandparents came from Germany.”

...

[29:00 approx]

Interviewer: “OK, tell us about your German language.”

Smid: “Uh, the uh Sunday School was German, church was German, the little town of Kamrar, K-A-M-R-A-R, a German community, was all German, and all, all the communications was German. The telephone line, it was of a farm cooperative telephone line. Except in one instance,

for which I am very thankful. The school system was English. They required that English be spoken in the school building, in the classrooms, and on the playground. And that was fairly strictly enforced. And I think that was a big help to the children who went to those schools. The teacher curriculum was such that she could have the eighth grades – it was done, I'm a product of it – and uh, I think that uh, [hesitates] mmm - Bilingual education is a serious mistake that we are using in the Rio Grande Valley, for this reason: All learning is difficult. No matter what it is, learning is difficult, and to have a bilingual education system is to make – to try to make – it easy, and it can't be done easy. It is, it is a hard job to change from one language to another. You see, in my early days, I thought in the German language and I had to translate it to the English language. And that is a very difficult process. I remember one time, they uh there were three others in my grade, in that country school. And the teacher asked a question, and I knew it! I knew the answer but I didn't know how to say it in the English language, so I whispered in in German, and the, the little fellow setting next to me, he could translate it [what Smid had whispered German], so he [laughs] got credit for the answer [laughs]. I knew the answer, but he got credit because he knew how to translate it to the English language. And we all – as time went on, the uh demand⁹³ for English became more pronounced.”

Inter: “How much time are you talking about? Second grade, third grade?”

Smid: “All – yes, this was in second and third grade, maybe even the first. And but, as we went into Sunday School, some of the parents began to want English Sunday school – as my parents did. And finally Sunday School turned toward, to the English language. And then church service began to have two services, one in German and one in English. And after a few years, I think by the time I was oh, maybe sixth or seventh grade, that would be nineteen – uh –uh, oh, I dunno,

⁹³ Bourdieu, Park, or Agha would be intrigued by Smid's use of the word “demand” - It would appear that Smid has subconsciously formulated or subscribed to his own market theory of language.

1917, 1918, the church became English, they spoke, the sermons were in English language. So um, gradually the, the children, the uh uh, began to talk English at home. I know my parents did. My parents cooperated with the idea that we were in America, we should have the English language. And gradually, as we, as I came to the eighth grade, I, we were just about all English, and people in that little town became, uh talked the English language. And so, it was —”

Inter: “And still kept your native language?”

Smid: “Naw —”

Inter: “Well, then, pretty well?”

Smid: “Oh, yes, we could. But not anymore. Uh, we had some visitors here, a couple winters ago, from the community, and I asked her — they were older than I am — and I asked her to talk to me in the German language, and she did. And I could understand every bit of it. But I couldn’t answer her in the German language. So, that has completely faded out of my thought, uh, and I think in the English language. [pause].”

WS: “You know, I think the people that are sponsoring this bilingual education, they don’t realize that uh, the Spanish-speaking people are thinking in Spanish and have to translate it into the English language. But they did to — preferably — change to the English language so that they think in the English language. And we hear, we hear that all the time. We hear these people that speak the Spanish, that speak the Spanish language, that try to translate it. They’re, they are not steady in their communication. Anyway, I’m always grateful that the rule was — and it was enforced — to speak the English language, and I think it should be done all over the United States. I think, truly, we should have a law, that the English language be used exclusively in business, and in the courthouse, in voting, and so on and so forth. Like, there is, at this time, in 1985, there

is considerable agitation to have that rule established, that English be the official language of the United States. I know it is so, they are demanding it in Miami and in California, and we need it in the Rio Grande Valley.”

The English-adopting posture of Dutschman and Smid is not unusual. Speaking of the European immigrants from Central and Southern Europe who arrived in the last decades of the 1800s, Lieberson notes that most of them eventually learned English, and among the immigrants’ children there were “virtually no holdouts...Less than one percent of the second-generation whites in the United States were unable to speak English in either 1890 or 1900” (1981, p. 162). At the same time, there seems to have been something of coercion in play forcing these English-learning decisions. In Wisconsin territory, for instance, a 1846 law “demanded the teaching of English in all public schools” and a 1854 law “expressly forbade teaching in any other language but English” (Hawgood 1940, 1970, p. 39). At the time, writes Hawgood, “this was very much resented by the Germans” (p. 39). Hawgood’s own explanation, showing perhaps c. 1940 thinking, was that Germans accommodated the unfair demands due to “their very great respect for any ‘state’ system” (p. 39). Whether Hawgood or Bourdieu better captures the reason for German-American accommodation is unclear. What is certain is that by the early 1900s the German wave was all but over, leading Dutschman, Smid, and their compatriots in a situation where English monolingualism was more acceptable since there were far fewer German arrivals to talk to. This raises an important difference between German heritage speakers and Spanish L1s in the United States as the 1900s wore on: Bilingualism begat bilingualism in immigrant communities because “newcomers unable to speak English provided an incentive for resisting mother-tongue shift among immigrant compatriots who were bilingual.” (Lieberson, 1981, p. 171). German, Swedish, and Norwegian L1 communities in the United States found themselves

linguistically stranded as the tides of newcomers ended; by contrast, the number of Spanish L1 arrivals remained significant, thus boosting the existing Spanish bilingual communities of the Southwest.

CHAPTER XIII:

CONCLUSION

Summary of Sociolinguistic Patterns and Theoretical Comments

Suggestions of some sociolinguistic patterns emerged from the narrative data. Among the newly arrived English L1s of the land rush period, a range of factors led to successful Spanish SLA during the period: arrival in the Rio Grande Valley at an early age; playing with Spanish L1 children as a child; going to school with Spanish L1s; learning (or maintaining language) while working with Spanish L1s; and developing friendships with Spanish L1 families. On the other hand, a second set of factors led to not learning Spanish. One interesting factor to emerge was that the land agents advertising for the “Magic Valley” among northern farmers took prospects to the Valley on special train trips. During these “land excursions,” the newcomers were carefully isolated from the local population. (This was not by accident -- the period overlapped the 1914-1919 period of clashes between Texas Rangers and “bandits,” a situation which did not figure to be a selling point.) Even once they arrived, all settlers were set up on preplanned land tracts, surrounded by other English L1s, sometimes from their home states, not mixed in among the bilingual or Spanish-speaking people already there. Several of the new towns – McAllen, Mission, and more – were soon divided into English L1 and Spanish L1 sections, which did not encourage language learning. The rise of racism and segregation further drove the language communities apart. Further, most of the new arrivals were farmers. Among the farmers, who often hired day labor from Mexico, the common denominator was that that the business

relationship was unequal, often involving local bilingual foremen handling business between the new arrivals, both English L1s and Spanish L1s. Further, soon the arrival of radio and newspaper media tuned the arrivals back toward the center of their mostly-English-speaking country rather than the nearby Spanish-speaking periphery.

In the Spanish L1 community, those who went to school learned English because English was now the state-sanctioned language of instruction. However, especially in rural areas, not everyone could go to school because of the need to work to keep families alive. Further complicating language learning is the fact that even among those who did go to school, an often hostile environment in the new English-only schools created resentment, which in turn did nothing to help relations between the two communities.

Yet in both language communities one finds examples of people who used the other community's language unforced because they shared an interest or friendship that included them in the zone of the people of the other language. These intergroup social ties appear to have been the most effective not only in terms of SLA but also in terms of bridging the cultural divide between the two L1 groups.

To recast this explanation in terms of our available sociolinguist theories, we might term both this bridging of communities by friendly, voluntarily learning, as well as economically forced learning of the other language on the job *informal SLA*, to clarify the following from extensive research in SLA in formal classroom contexts.

Taking the emotion out of it, it would seem that informal SLA is largely determined by market forces and perceptions of valuation – in other words, “Why should I bother learning X language? Because I will receive some value Y from knowing it.” However, in reality this

apparent free agency of choice in language use can be more complicated. Bourdieu (1982) had explained that value leads to language usage that is not always voluntary, but mandated by state or educational forces. Park and Wee (2012) complicated things further by showing that thinking of a single national market for language is too simple, because everyone is embedded in multiple markets depending on their social circles, which means that the same language may have a different price for different people. Finally, Agha (2012) updated and expanded the theory for a free market society where language is consumed along with other commodities as a lifestyle choice. What should be added is that a social relationship is as much a *marché linguistique* with its own valuation of language as is a formal financial or educational market situation. All of these theories essentially provide material for an account of motivation for language learning and usage. People will learn and use a language if they have compelling social, relational, or economic reasons to do; and they suffer corresponding social and economic harm if psychological or financial factors prevent them from learning a socially necessary language.

What needs to happen at this point is a unification of these market theories with a Vygotskian view modified to broaden the Zone of Proximal Development so that it takes into account ZPDs beyond the classroom, such as situations where playmates or employers provided the guidance. A start is to view each social relationship (whether forced or a friendship) as a zone of proximal development in which language contact provides input that is picked up and put up in one's language pocket if it is worth the trouble, or left alone if it is not perceived as needed or wanted (or even threatening).

Recommended Further Research

Considerations of space drastically limited some of the topics that could have been explored using the Rio Grande Valley Oral History Collection. Linguists might wish to mine the

same material giving an emphasis to accent or dialect, gender or age. Historians might find it worthwhile to look into the historical backdrop of each of the interviews individually; while I focused on sociolinguistically relevant factors, the interviews are rich in detail on a wide range of subjects. Then again, there is no need to keep historians and linguists separate; a book could be created simply by filling in the gaps that already cry out from my pastiche work above (an IPA or at least phonologically-sensitive transcription would open worlds for linguists; interviewing family members of the informants might work wonders for historians of the region).

The Point of It All

A great deal has come to light in these pages regarding the conflicts that have taken place in the Rio Grande Valley between the various groups that inhabit and have inhabited the region. One thing these pages should not be used for is ammunition to facilitate squabbling among my fellow South Texans. Enough has been written here to see that wrongs have been committed and much damage inflicted on many people by the social forces that have swept over this region in the twentieth century. However, we have also found stories that illuminate alternate ways not only of coexisting, but of thriving as we all learn from each other. I hope the stories told here will provide a starting point for constructive conversation among the speakers of every language and of every background who call this area home.

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[The Valley By-Liners was and is a writer's group based in Harlingen, Texas. They represent a unique source of local amateur historical work, and are still active today. See <http://www.rgvbyliners.org/> for more information.]

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APPENDIX



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Organization: graduate student (UTPA)
Address: 3516 Anaya St. Edinburg TX 78539
E-mail: aaronbcummings@gmail.com
Telephone: 9034871548

Materials to be used (attach additional paper if needed):

- 1) **John H. Shary Excursion May 18 – 1915**
<http://cdm16775.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/shary/id/374>
- 2) In Rio Grande Valley Paradise: Sharyland: Where nature produces the sweetest fruits
<http://cdm16775.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/shary/id/369/rec/1>

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aaron B. Cummings is from Laredo, Texas. He holds a B.A. in History (Bob Jones University, 2009), a M.A. in Theological Studies (Dallas Baptist University, 2012), and a M.A. in English as a Second Language (University of Texas – Pan American, 2015). During his studies at DBU, Aaron worked as a maintenance planner in an aluminum extrusion plant, but while at UTPA he taught test preparation and first-year university composition classes. Aaron now teaches ninth grade English Language Arts at IDEA Weslaco in Weslaco, Texas. He would welcome any follow-up discussion on the contents of this paper, and can be reached via the email address listed below.

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