Beyond a Language Boundary: Encounters with Silence and L1 Spanish-Speakers' Willingness to Communicate in English

John Turnbull
johnt629@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

BEYOND A LANGUAGE BOUNDARY: ENCOUNTERS WITH SILENCE AND L1 SPANISH-SPEAKERS’ WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

John Turnbull, MA
Department of English
Northern Illinois University, 2019
Doris Macdonald, Director

The descriptive multi-case study asks three adult migrants, first-language (L1) Spanish-speakers from México, about their interpretations of their own and others’ silences as they navigate daily life, jobs, family, and English-language learning in the United States. Subjective opinions about silence, their second-language (L2) acquisition processes, comfort levels in various speaking situations, functions of L2 communication, and affective and social dimensions of language learning are related to participants’ willingness to communicate (WTC), a construct that measures a predisposition to talk, rather than stay silent, in L2 interaction.

The research, through daily language-use surveys and semi-structured Spanish-language interviews with the three English-language learners, provides naturalistic narrative data to help learn how WTC changes as learners negotiate their L2 identities and nonnative-speaker status. Participants address L2 speaking anxiety, inner speech, cases of linguistic and racial discrimination, listening strategies, and the influence of both native-speakers and Spanish-English bilinguals on their decisions to stay silent or to speak English in contexts such as family, job, health care, schools, commerce, and government.

A range of social and cross-cultural factors is also shown to affect informants’ opportunities for speaking English and communicating in authentic L2 settings. These
extralinguistic factors include demographics of the Latino(a) community, judgments about Spanish-language power and vitality, levels of social isolation, and economic pressures. Coding of sequences from participant interviews allows content analysis by theme and later synthesis of narratives to add to knowledge about the potential value and risks of silence in second-language acquisition.
BEYOND A LANGUAGE BOUNDARY: ENCOUNTERS WITH SILENCE AND
L1 SPANISH-SPEAKERS’ WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

BY

JOHN TURNBULL
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Thesis Director:
Doris Macdonald
I express gratitude primarily for the supportive environment in the English Department at Northern Illinois University and for how it has nurtured my development since 2016 as a language teacher and researcher, transforming someone with little formal linguistic training into a person able to conceive and execute a methodologically and theoretically grounded second-language acquisition study. Carolina Velandia Hernández, a Fulbright scholar from Bogotá, Colombia, and doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, assisted with translations of interview and survey questions as well as consent documents from English to Spanish. Multilingual Connections of Chicago provided professional, meticulously accurate transcriptions of interviews in Spanish. I thank another member of my graduate-school cohort, Amy Bayliss, for mentioning to me the research of Keith Basso (1970) on silence among the Western Apache; to that point, I had no idea that research on silence even existed.

During the 2017–18 academic year, a practicum as part of Dr. Doris Macdonald’s TESOL methods course introduced me to the organizational energies and insights of former NIU Latino Resource Center director George Gutiérrez. He was especially helpful in conceiving survey questions and appreciating the linguistically and societally induced separation from school and government that Latino(a) migrants experience as part of daily life in the United States. Dr. Gülşat Aygen’s syntax course in spring 2018 raised the concept of linguistic universals and the parametric variation that occurs because of forced displacement and minority-language status. This helped affirm for me that political conditions do leave a mark upon
language, and it is not so ridiculous to think so. I am grateful, as well, for the investigative processes modeled by Dr. Betty Birner in her research methods course and Dr. Mandy Faretta-Stutenberg, of the Department of World Languages and Cultures, in an introduction to Hispanic linguistics. As a member of the thesis committee, Dr. Birner—along with Dr. Macdonald, my adviser and thesis director, and Dr. John Evar Strid of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction—also gave generous comments on the first complete version of the paper. I would be remiss not to mention the Information Delivery Services office at Northern Illinois University’s Founders’ Library, which facilitated many requests for articles and books; they even obtained, I am not certain how, a thick literature review in German of silence-related research (Schmitz 1990), packaged by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Bavarian State Library).

The study would not have been possible without the courageous participation of three adults, émigrés from México, and the facilitation of leaders at a city community education center, which hosted the field research. An early form of the research questions came from Latino(a) students I had met during teaching assignments, beginning ten years earlier, with the nonprofits Literacy Volunteers of Atlanta and the Latin American Association, also in Atlanta. These individuals welcomed me in their lives and shared their firsthand, often futile attempts to find English-speaking conversation partners in jobs as restaurant food runners, table clearers, cooks, drivers, and office and household cleaners. The collegiality and enthusiasm of public-school English teachers affiliated with La Asociación de Institutores y Trabajadores de la Educación del Cauca (ASOINCA) in Popayán, Cauca, Colombia, in 2011 taught me all that is possible through creative and content-based language pedagogy and through advocacy for inter-American understanding and the beloved community that one day might bridge north and south.
For the undocumented
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Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus*

The competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that are likely to be *listened to*, likely to be recognized as *acceptable* in all the situations in which there is occasion to speak. Here again, social acceptability is not reducible to mere grammaticality. Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence.


The purpose of this descriptive multiple case study is to learn more deeply about English-language learners and their interpretations of silences in their spoken interactions in English—both their own silences and the silences of interlocutors, actual and potential. The intent is to gain insight into subjective perceptions regarding individual and, more explicitly, social factors that impinge on learners’ self-perceived volition to interact in spoken English, that is, on their willingness to communicate (WTC). Presuming that research findings would differ depending on the population—based on factors such as age, first-language (L1) status, educational background, length of residence in the United States, quantity and quality of second-language (L2) input, level of target-language competence, and so on—the choice was made to narrow the selection of case-study participants to Spanish-speaking migrants from Latin America who had maintained continuous residence in the United States for at least five years, who worked outside the home at least part-time, and who had not surpassed intermediate proficiency on a
standardized English-as-a-second-language assessment. The criteria fit with a goal of finding informants with broad familiarity with the U.S. context, who were regularly exposed to English-language input—whether passively or by means of direct contact—and who still were actively constructing their second-language identities through language classes, job and social commitments, and other means.

The impetus for the research, in short, is to understand better the silences that language learners encounter in their daily lives, both as recipients and as architects of their own reticence. We are accustomed to silencing as a metaphor for restriction or oppression of some kind, but are the silences real, and do they occur in some noticeable, measurable way? Reasoning that the flip side of willingness to communicate would be unwillingness to communicate—and, hence, silence where there might have been communication (although silence, too, must be viewed as communication)—the governing research questions start with MacIntyre’s assessment of WTC research, in which he asks why “some people choose to speak up and others remain silent” in second-language environments (2007, 564). But pushing beyond a framing that sees speech production as individual choice, as if speech were freely available to all and simply a matter of personal preference, this study asks about the influence of social context on WTC.

To begin, the first broad research question incorporates the concept of willingness to communicate: (1) How do marginalized linguistic conditions and previous English-language interactions affect WTC in English? Beneath this broad query lie other questions: What differences in communicative behavior do learners notice and have they noticed about themselves in various social interactions? What additional factors do learners cite as influencing their WTC?
Moving to incorporate silence, which both as word and concept was largely left open to the participants’ interpretation but characterized through survey instruments and in interviews as intentional avoidance of second-language speech, mainly with native English-speakers, the study asks a second large question: (2) What external factors contribute to an English-language learner’s silence in various social interactions? Again, several related interests motivate the study’s design, including: What “silent strategies” have L2 English-speakers developed to negotiate daily life? What are their “rules,” if any, for being silent in English? How, in learners’ self-evaluation, do they see silence impeding their connection to social networks such as family, school, health, employment, law, governance, friendship, and so on? How do they see social institutions contributing to their silences? Do they view silence as a resource or a problem? And, finally, how do they interpret either peremptory silences from potential L2 interlocutors or silences addressed toward them during an L2 encounter?

First, it should be reiterated that there is no operationalized definition of silence in this thesis study. The principal motivation behind this decision is that, since the research questions venture into areas not well covered in previous second-language acquisition literature—namely, silence and willingness to communicate in naturalistic, rather than classroom, environments—too much is unknown. It seems wiser to let participants’ characterizations of silence emerge from their narratives rather than imposing a definition that may not correlate with authentic experience. In this approach, the present study agrees with an earlier exploration of first-language silences that “[s]peakers themselves are in a considerably better position than are observers to shed light on the potential reasons for their speechlessness” (Berger 2004, 150).

The main data source, therefore, comes from more than five hours of semi-structured interviews,
in which informants were mostly encouraged to tell their stories of language acquisition. Many of the stories recount silences as they also reveal that an absence of speech production should not be interpreted as a lack, whether of comprehension or motivation.

In a review of literature in the next chapter, it will also become clear that silence has been defined from a plethora of disciplinary perspectives, and that far from expressing the mere absence of speech or sound, silences contain their own messages that might be interpreted in a myriad of ways. A fundamentally ambiguous and indirect communicative option, silence does nonetheless communicate. Its potential messages cover a range of polarities: joy and disgust, shock and boredom, recognition and denial, consent and protest, contentment and terror.

Silence, deployed metaphorically, can symbolize repression, spiritual insight, or many other things. It is a topic of proverbial wisdom around the world, although its meanings and usage are culturally conditioned. The polyvalence of silence has an extended history. In the Hebrew Bible, when Hannah prays silently for a child, the priest, Eli, thinks she has been drinking (1 Samuel 1:13). In the epigraph to this chapter, from Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, the Creature, even as he finds voice within the novel, laments a silence that the written word cannot seem to assuage. He believes in his otherness as, at the same time, he demonstrates his capacity for human emotion and begins to narrate “the accomplishment of a long language acquisition trajectory” (Parrino 2015, 21).

In my readings of silence in this research project, I try to extend the most generous interpretations to those striving for a new language. As Gammeltoft writes in her ethnography of female Vietnamese victims of partner violence, “Understanding silence demands . . . that we focus not only on what people tell us, but also on what they do not or cannot tell us” (2016, 428).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Orientation to this second-language acquisition (SLA) study requires a research survey in three areas: (1) the place of language acquisition in human migration, especially between México and the United States; (2) the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC), a complex variable in SLA that incorporates numerous individual and environmental influences on learning an additional language; and (3) human silence. In the following review of scholarly literature, research on human silence is divided into two sections, the first addressing linguistic perspectives as well as the place of silence in second-language acquisition and education, and a second section concentrating on more broadly based and theoretical readings of silence as a social phenomenon. The more socially embedded characteristics of silence also relate to ongoing SLA interests in identity, language as expression of agency and marginality (spatial positioning), language ideologies and rights, and borderland and narrative studies.

Human Migration and Second-Language Acquisition

Learning an additional language attests to a social situation; in other words, it characteristically involves crossing a threshold, movement, or risk of some kind. For example, a person might travel as a means of individual enrichment; experience a compulsion to migrate due to climate change, economic privation, or violence; or forge close physical or virtual ties across cultural and/or national boundaries. This part of the literature review looks at issues such as
assimilation and integration in the L2 culture; barriers to integration; bilingualism; and variables that affect second-language acquisition among migrants, that is, among the population that has participated in this study, Mexican migrants to the United States. The survey of the vast literature is selective and privileges issues potentially affecting the present study’s informants.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were 258 million international migrants in 2017 (Vidal and Tjaden 2018, 9).1 Among this number are 150.3 million migrant workers, 68.5 million forcibly displaced, 36.1 million children, 25.4 million registered refugees, and ten million stateless people (18). These numbers represent the “highest levels of displacement on record” (UNHCR n.d.). The top destination country for international migration is the United States, a trend that since 1960 has resulted in an increasingly diverse and polyglot country (Migration Policy Institute 2017). Despite the periodic push for English-only or English-as-an-official-language policies, 60.3 million between 2009 and 2013 indicated that they speak a language other than English at home. At the time, that was almost 21 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Among these speakers of additional languages, 25.1 million reported that they speak English “less than very well.” The estimated 46.6 million international migrants in the United States include 11.1 million unauthorized residents or those living in the country without visas or with expired visas (Krogstad, Passel, and Cohn 2016).

Among non-English speakers in the United States, by far the greatest number speak Spanish (37.5 million). The next-largest group consists of speakers from a complex of eight Chinese languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, and related dialects (2.9 million) (U.S.

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1 See UNHCR 2013, “Definitions and Scope,” for differences among the more precise categories of refugees, asylum-seekers, returned (repatriated) refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returned IDPs, and stateless persons.
Census Bureau 2015). Naturally, flows have fluctuated, and different language groups have dominated at various times; for example, for thirty years beginning in 1850, census data report German as the dominant second language, with close to two million speakers in 1880 (Ramsey 2010, 22). In contrast, the number of migrants from México then was sixty-eight thousand. Clearly, numbering people by language group is an inexact process, and we cannot be led astray by the existence of precise figures, no matter the advances in technology and surveying techniques.

The present thesis research attends primarily to L2 acquisition among Spanish-speaking migrants from México. Within this population, we can consider sociolinguistic and affective dimensions of language learning in historical context. Language mixing and attempts at institutional control have persisted along the U.S.-México border for close to two centuries, colored distinctly by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 that ceded more than one-third of Mexican territory to the United States. To consider just one historical snapshot, the new U.S. state of Texas established public schools in 1854. Two years later, state legislators had mandated English-language instruction (MacDonald 2004, 59). The intertwining of the two tongues has only become more complex.

The two-thousand-mile U.S.-México border, an increasingly demarcated line of conquest and state authority since México in 1848 ceded slightly more than half of its territory (Gibson 2019, 443), has fostered an ongoing debate over crossing that border: who should cross, where and how they should cross, when they should cross, and why. Gloria Anzaldúa notoriously described the line as “una herida abierta [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” ([1987] 2012, 25). Along with the borderlands debate comes one over
language and fears of multilingualism, of linguistic corruption of both Spanish and English, of mutual unintelligibility, and others. For some, an imagined purity—of language, of family connection, of race—is at issue. Anzaldúa offers a counterexample of openness to heterogeneity. In the multigenre *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she writes extensively about the free use of English and Spanish languages near the Texas border with México and lists eight different varieties that she speaks ([1987] 2012, 77). At the same time, she reflects on the self-consciousness that results from linguistic ranking imposed by dominant institutions such as school, church, and family: “In childhood we are told that our language is wrong. Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self. The attacks continue throughout our lives” (80).

Systematic race- and language-based discrimination against Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States is well established, documented at least since the turn of the nineteenth century. In cities such as Los Angeles, Mexican barrios developed partly in response to prejudicial housing practices (Suarez 2013, 78). Such concentration of Mexican Americans and other ethnic groups has led to a situation in which the barrio provides comfort and passes on tradition. Yet the notion of enclaves has also been weaponized to assert that they facilitate an “English-optional lifestyle” (Suarez 2013, 78; Piller 2016, 40). Assumptions about the reasons that Mexicans historically have sought to live in the United States—that it is solely for economic reasons—neglect a more intricate complex of motivations. In a study of fifteen years of data from the Mexican Migration Project (https://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/), Fomby finds that the parental household and its management and interpretation of collective interests, economic conditions, and household power relations have strong influence on the decision to migrate (2005, 26–32). Married women from México also cite the benefits of experiencing more equity
and independence in the United States (33). Answers for the reasons why Mexicans migrate also depend on the questions asked. For example, studying patterns from 1986 to 1999, Nawrotzki et al. (2015) find heat and excess rain helping to drive departures of agricultural workers from rural areas.

In theoretical treatments of migration and language, scholars have noted the common conceptual fault of mapping languages onto politically determined territories, which causes linguistic complications for these mobile populations. Piller terms the phenomenon “the territorial principle” (2016, 33). Researchers such as Canagarajah (2017a) have noted that confining languages, ideologically, within nation-state boundaries helps create ideas such as ownership of languages, native- and nonnative-speakers, and other cornerstones of linguistic discrimination. That human beings are a migratory species\(^2\) complicates this territorial bias (6). Drawing on insights from geography that analyze how spatial variables influence communication, Canagarajah emphasizes the concept of mobility and notes that, for many of the estimated 258 million migrants worldwide, horizontal mobility fails to bring about vertical (social) mobility. In his analysis, the word mobility in political and economic discourse is reserved for the privileged. The less prestigious word migrants excludes those undertaking forced or semi-forced journeys from a positive mobilities framing, such that “[t]he mobile are welcome everywhere and have the resources to shuttle across borders as they please; migrants seek opportunities and refuge elsewhere” (2017a, 5).

Canagarajah refers to a “mobilities paradigm” across disciplines (2), which intersects with a “social turn” (Block 2003) in second-language acquisition studies. Such attention to

\(^2\)“We have a tradition of migration,” writes Anzaldúa, referring to Chicano(a) and Tejano(a) cultures, “a tradition of long walks” ([1987] 2012, 33).
social structures within second-language acquisition, still in its early phases, has illuminated challenges to emergent bilingualism and multilingualism in many parts of the world. Mesthrie describes a “catastrophic break in linguistic tradition” (2017, 229) that occurs with forced migration. He further explores language-contact theories that help understand linguistic change originating with the movement of people looking for work. Migration in search of labor entails distinct motivations for acquiring an additional language. Ortega reviews this vital distinction between circumstantial and elective L2 learners (2009, 243–45). As those seeking language instruction for self-enrichment, to meet school requirements, and so on, elective learners differ in fundamental ways from those who “must learn the majority language for reasons over which they have little choice and which are typically associated to larger-scale world events, such as immigration, economic hardship, postcolonialism, war or occupation” (243). One can now add climate emergency to that list (Nawrotzki et al. 2015).

Pavlenko and Lantolf, in a similar vein, contrast “bicultural bilinguals” and “functional bilinguals” (2000, 173). Functional bilinguals are those who often have had no choice in acquiring another language; bicultural learners, on the other hand, have taken advantage of an opportunity to expand their cross-cultural awareness. Wallace Lambert in the 1970s had already contributed the notions of additive and subtractive bilingualism, recognizing that in many societies, such as the United States (a subtractive context), non-English languages are threatened and stigmatized (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994, 191–92). Martinez distinguishes among linguistic, sociolinguistic, and critical linguistic perspectives on bilingualism (2006, 4–6). Moving beyond interest in linguistic forms and social contexts, the critical perspective intends to question power relationships between L1 and L2 speakers, politics, and language ideologies. One
methodological and theoretical approach is that of “anthropolitical linguistics” (Zentella 1997, 7). Doing fieldwork in a Puerto Rican *bloque* in East Harlem from 1979 to 1993, Zentella outfitted children with backpacks containing tape recorders in order to study naturalistic tokens of code switching among five dialectical varieties. Rather than language acquisition in the service of individual advancement, Zentella regards the creative melding of forms that she studied as “language for survival” within an oppressed community. The objective of an anthropolitical approach in such settings is

> to understand and facilitate a stigmatized group’s attempts to construct a positive self within an economic and political context that relegates its members to static and disparaged ethnic, racial, and class identities, and that identifies them with static and disparaged linguistic codes. (13)

Barriers fundamental to second-language acquisition were acknowledged within the research parameters of the elaborate European Science Foundation (ESF) project, which in the 1980s carried out a series of three-year longitudinal case studies in SLA among adult migrants resettling in Europe. Helping to drive the research questions was the acknowledgment that, for migrants moving for political or economic reasons—that is, involuntarily—“language acquisition takes place in a context characterised by social, educational and linguistic problems” (Perdue 1993a, 1).

> More-radical adjustments are asked of those displaced involuntarily, with L2 communication part of an intricate calculus involving multiple facets of life. Clément, Noels, and Deneault (2001) locate communicative abilities in a new society within larger processes of acculturation and adaptation. The authors offer a triangular model in which experiences of (1) discrimination affect a migrant’s (2) identity processes; in the opposite direction, security about identity impacts how migrants interpret language-based or skin-color bias. The two poles
of this bidirectional relationship influence (3) stress, with second-language confidence as mediator (568). More concretely, in a study among East Indians in Ottawa, the authors report that, for respondents with high L2 confidence, the level of discrimination reported, whether high or low, fails to affect stress. But, with low L2 confidence, “there is a significant difference such that those experiencing high collective discrimination report more stress than those reporting low collective discrimination” (570). Linguistic anxiety, in this example, increases vulnerability to some conditions of displacement. Doucerain et al. (2015) note migrants’ susceptibility to communication-related acculturative stress (CRAS); strong L2 social networks ameliorated such impacts.

Debates over assimilation or integration in a host society occur alongside a tendency to assess international migrants of whatever background according to the potential value of their labor. The interest often is in what skills they might bring to their new homes, in preference to anything else about them. Vigouroux refers to the “skills rhetoric” (2017, 312) of international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and how migrants are ordered and counted using murky, ill-defined descriptors: “semi-skilled,” “low-skilled,” and “unskilled” (315). Questionable assumptions, according to Vigouroux, in evaluating migrants’ employability—that manual work does not require literacy, that abstract thinking should be valued more than strength or endurance (316), that “skilled” workers add more to a nation’s influence than others, that so-called unskilled workers are by nature unauthorized (317), and that sharing the L2 brings about social cohesion (320)—help lead to language commodification and overlook realities, such as discrimination based on accent, that make a hoped-for integration of migrants from other language backgrounds difficult to achieve.
Economic arguments in these conversations hold more sway than linguistic ones. Migrants’ use of an L2 might deviate from prescriptive norms, Canagarajah argues, but often, to function well in diverse environments, “a full and advanced competence in a single language is not required” (2017a, 7). To Canagarajah, “spatial repertoire,” that is, being able to put together pieces of different languages in the appropriate contexts, is more important (8). Mexican communities in the United States, to take a concrete example, feature “linguistic heterogeneity” as they blend multiple Spanishes and Englishes (Martínez 2006, 81).

The terms assimilation and integration continue to recur within literature on migration, identity, and language. Linguistic proficiency in the L2 endures as a measure of such factors while, typically, the migrant takes the onus for language learning and other benchmarks of integration on themselves (Vigouroux 2017, 320). The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine cites demographic reports to show that, contrary to some opinion, today’s migrants to the United States learn English faster than previous generations (Waters and Pineau 2015, 313). The same study adds, however, that in counties that since 1990 have experienced large increases in Latino populations, levels of Mexicans reporting they speak English well have declined (231). Census and other researchers refer also to the “linguistic isolation” of certain demographic groups in the United States; this occurs when no household member over age fourteen speaks English very well. Spanish-speaking households are especially prone to such isolation, which “has important implications for immigrant and second generation integration, because it limits immigrants’ social capital and their access to various resources; it also contributes to anxiety” (310). A study of how native-born whites in the United

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3 In the early 1970s, communicative competence was contrasted with grammatical competence in the work of Dell Hymes (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994, 168).
States regard immigrants as potential neighbors places “legal status” at the top of the list of influences on perception. White people also feel more affinity for those who speak “fluent English,” although even such hallmarks of assimilation “cannot overcome the symbolic boundaries that reinforce white individuals’ perceptions of dissimilarity with others based on racial group membership” (Schachter 2016, 1007).

In a domestic ethnography of eighty-one Latino families in New Jersey and Ohio, Dreby observes stressors on unauthorized migrants in particular. These stresses include threats of enforcement and possible loss of a family member on whom they depend economically, futures for children of varying legal status, and the stigma attached to being migrants (2015, xii). As a global phenomenon, migration prompts reference to large groups of recently arrived allochthonous minorities who do not enjoy the favor of autochthonous groups that came earlier. In the Netherlands, for instance, Muslim migrants are grouped with a single term, *allochtonen*, pointing to their exclusion from the mainstream of liberal society (Long 2016, 165; Piller 2016, 35). In the U.S. context, a comparable phrase is “illegal aliens” to refer to unauthorized non-citizens that fall into Foucault’s category of “other”: “at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded” (Foucault quoted in Chavez 1998, 22).

One trend in applied linguistics and other literature is to see structures such as social class as inseparable from language issues. Velázquez Vázquez interviews thirty Mexican migrants in California and Texas in order to know more about how respondents understand social exclusion in their new context. Drawing on analysis attributed to Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, Velázquez Vázquez identifies many forms of exclusion in the migrant community, including those related to communication failures. The challenge of language acquisition “impedes these
persons from gaining access to new networks and social structures that would permit them to integrate completely with the host culture” (2011, 54–55; my translation). Heterogeneity and connections outside Spanish-speaking enclaves are needed to transcend the “structural holes” in society, a concept developed originally in the organizations model of Ronald Burt (49). Her interviewees name the frustrations of lacking social interactions and significant relations with English-speakers as one example of deficiencies in social capital. One of her participants, Karla, has acquired only limited English in eleven years in the United States. For that, Karla blames the isolation resulting from a sixty-five-hour weekly work schedule as a house cleaner and concierge (132). Block in his work since 2006 on multilingual identities and social class identifies no “clear line of research” on a political-economical frame at the intersection of migration, identity, and language (2017, 138). He employs theory from Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu to begin to understand migrant experiences in the context of social relations, especially those conditioned by structural political and economic inequalities.

Willingness to Communicate in Lieu of Silence

The study of willingness to communicate within second-language acquisition research began with its mirror image: the unwillingness to communicate in one’s first language (Burgoon 1976; Kang 2005, 279). From the interpretation of L2 speech as an individual, or trait-based, predilection, investigations have moved on to regard the vital influence of context and social and other external factors. Influential work, rooted in social psychology, from Canadian researchers beginning in the 1970s helped position WTC conceptually as an individually and socially conditioned composite variable that plays out dramatically in the instant when an L2 learner
decides whether to speak. If the learner “fails” at that moment, the result is a seeming communicative void, expressed as non-participation or silence. This section of the literature review begins by considering the willingness-to-communicate construct within the territory of individual differences in language learning. The review continues by examining some situation-based approaches, including WTC in language classrooms, and the trend toward treating WTC as a feature that both emerges from and contributes to social-network dynamics. Finally, the review traces the implicit connection between WTC and silence that the SLA field has made since development of restrained-communication, unwillingness-to-communicate, and WTC scales within first-language research nearly fifty years ago.

The impulse to group various inhibitions to speech (anomia and alienation, introversion, low self-esteem, and communication apprehension) as part of one measurement lay behind formulation and revision of an unwillingness-to-communicate scale. The construct was deemed potentially important for researchers in education, mass communication, and sociology, although emphasis fixed on an individual “tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication” (Burgoon 1976, 60). Willingness to communicate, too, was initially portrayed as a personality construct with interest concentrated on consistent, stable personality traits to the exclusion of contextual factors. Nevertheless, McCroskey and Richmond recognize in among the first publications about WTC that it “is probably to a major (though as yet undetermined) degree situationally dependent” (1987, 129). In discussing the variable’s foundations and antecedents, they incorporate several traits identified as undesirable: unwillingness to communicate, shyness,
cultural divergence,⁴ and, with the most detail, communication apprehension (130–51). The fear or anxiety associated with the latter is sorted into four varieties of communication apprehension (CA) that match closely with the strands in contemporary WTC research: traitlike CA, context-based CA, receiver-based CA, and situational CA (143–44). Early formulations of WTC emphasized it as a predisposition “relatively consistent across a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers” (134). Despite the situational influences, WTC in one context was theorized to predict WTC in another context.

In their heuristic model of willingness to communicate in a second language, MacIntyre et al. continue to characterize WTC as reflecting “the stable predisposition to talk in various situations,” while in the same discussion calling it “a situational variable with both transient and enduring influences” (1998, 546). They define WTC “as a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (547). The model takes the form of a pyramid (see figure 1), with the foundational elements of WTC—and thus, within the model, less subject to variation—forming the base or the bottom three layers. These are theorized as more stable factors in situating a person’s willingness to communicate and include a mix of individual traits (personality, communicative competence, L2 self-confidence) and contextual matters (intergroup climate, intergroup attitudes, and social situation). True to its roots in research on language-learner motivation (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003, 620), the WTC model includes motivational factors potentially affecting both individual and group contacts (MacIntyre et al. 1998, 550–51). The top three pyramid layers contain influences related to speaking

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⁴ McCroskey and Richmond write that cultural divergence results when “people find themselves in an environment in which their own subculture is in a minority position compared to other people with whom they must communicate” (1987, 140).
situations. At the very top is L2 use itself. Immediately supporting L2 use is WTC. Determining WTC most directly are the desire to interact with a specific person and L2 self-confidence: “We predict that these two factors will show high correlation with WTC because these two variables represent the cumulative influence of the layers . . . below” (549).

Figure 1. Heuristic model of variables influencing willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre 2007, 568).

Fundamentally both situation-specific and based on individual factors, the affiliation motives, self-perceived competence, and absence of anxiety suggested by these two key WTC
influencers came from already established research paths and prompted more attention to personality factors in WTC (Ortega 2009, 202–3). For example, in their research into anxiety among foreign-language learners, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), working with students of French at a Canadian university, call the effects of language anxiety on cognitive function both pervasive and subtle; further, based on a range of performance tasks that participants completed, they suggest that this anxiety does not express itself merely in language production but also affects the capacity to process input. Anxious students, self-identified in this study based on responses to a language-anxiety questionnaire, may have a “smaller base of second language knowledge” and have a harder time producing it (1994, 301). In another experiment that explored how anxiety affects the content of L2 speech, twenty Spanish-speaking ESL students at the University of Texas–Austin were divided into two groups. Half were subject to “cold and official” interview techniques while being filmed (Steinberg and Horwitz 1986, 132). Members of a nonanxiety group “sat in a comfortable armchair” (133) with no video camera. To researchers, the stressed students were limited in expressing personal opinions and seemed inhibited in discussing “personal reactions to and interpretations of facts” (135). In a study by MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément, anxiety levels of Anglophone learners of French in Canada “correlated negatively with both actual and perceived proficiency in the L2” (1997, 278). In other words, more-anxious students tended to underestimate their performance, perhaps leading, the researchers speculate, to a vicious cycle in the wider population in which anxiety-prone students, critical of their own abilities, are “more reluctant to speak. If language learners do not choose to communicate,” the study continues, “they cannot re-assess their competence” (278).
Ideals of the “good language learner,” desirable learner typologies, and effective
cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies connect implicitly and sometimes
explicitly to motivation and WTC research. Dörnyei and Skehan point out, though, that
motivational research, versus the research on language-learner strategies, has more solid
theoretical backing in social psychology, an advantage that they credit for a spike in such
motivation-oriented work in the 1990s (2003, 613). Yet the foundations of WTC study remain
tethered to the language classroom. MacIntyre et al.’s query, meant to guide creation of the
heuristic model for WTC, pertains to students in formal settings: “Why do some students seek,
while others avoid, second language (L2) communication?” (1998, 545). Even with a move to
investigate WTC as part of a more complex social dynamic, analysis relates almost exclusively
to classroom teaching, given the methodological belief that WTC outside the classroom cannot
be observed. As language-teaching pedagogies were shifting to emphasize communicative over
linguistic competence, MacIntyre et al. offer that “a proper objective for L2 education is to create
WTC,” adding, “A program that fails to produce students who are willing to use the language is
simply a failed program” (547).

Despite identification of more than thirty variables with potential impact on L2 WTC
(MacIntyre et al. 1998, 558), WTC research continued to emphasize individual differences and
learner-driven analysis. Self-perceived competence of students has been linked to frequency of
classroom second-language use (Hashimoto 2002). Gender and age variables are significant,
with WTC differences noticed between seventh and eighth grades in a junior-high-school French
immersion program (MacIntyre et al. 2003). Researchers have studied the “crossing the
Rubicon” framework for WTC (MacIntyre 2007, 567), which identifies the moment of L2
speech as a potential volitional triumph for the learner who chooses action over silence. While Ortega comments on the paucity of “actual observation of communicative behaviour” in WTC research (2009, 203), more-creative methodologies are being devised to pinpoint fluctuations in levels of WTC that have been shown to move up and down rather than remaining stable within a single conversation. For example, researchers in Poland prompted university English majors to record their task-related WTC at regular intervals while in dialogue and speaking independently, as during an oral exam (Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak 2014). They found no statistical correlation between the students’ WTC, levels of communication anxiety, self-perceived competence, and frequency of L2 use as recorded in questionnaires and the moment-to-moment WTC as measured in the “undoubtedly unnatural” process of recording spontaneously any variances in willingness. The results motivate the authors to write that, even in a classroom setting, “determining and analyzing conditions and factors capable of shaping WTC in the target language pose a considerable challenge” (256).

The breadth of such conditions and factors that bridge cultures, age, gender, and other life situations make it exceedingly difficult to assess the state of research into individual differences in WTC. Several studies have shown interest in the position of international students and migrants (also called “sojourners” in the literature), that is, in a population more analogous to the participants in the present study—those learning English in the culture of the target language. Variables examined in this literature involve changes in conversation topic and interlocutor (Kang 2005), learners’ beliefs about external and personal factors that affect language acquisition (Zhong 2014), effects of change in learning context on a person’s WTC (Cameron 2015), and informants’ positions within intra- and cross-cultural student networks (Gallagher and
Robins 2015; Gallagher 2019). Over time and spanning different methods, research has consistently shown perceived individual communicative competence as a reliable predictor of WTC, even in patients’ communications with doctors in a shared L1 (Baker and Watson 2015). The findings support the 1998 model from MacIntyre et al. that positions L2 self-confidence as one of the strongest influencers on WTC.

A turn from individual, trait-based to situated WTC reflects a broader move in second-language acquisition from cognitive to sociocultural interests, as well as a shift toward “complex systems thinking” (Gallagher and Robins 2015, 930). One stated desire for future research trajectories is to maintain attention both on human interaction (a “micro” view) and social groups (a “macro” view), recognizing that “language is not only inherently linked to person-to-person interaction, but also entwined with large-scale social differences of ethnicity, gender, and social class.” Thus, “an imperative remains for micro- and macrolevel explanations to fit together more seamlessly, appealing to each other’s insights in order to better explain L2-related phenomena” (930). Gallagher and Robins further draw on Bandura’s social-learning theory and the premise that individuals simultaneously generate and are constrained by social structures (930).

In this framing, supporting willingness to communicate in a second language takes on a potentially dynamic role in shaping reality for individuals and societies by facilitating human interaction, which in turn moves toward a “social and political goal of bringing cultures into contact and nations together” (Kang 2005, 278). In a study of four Korean-speakers placed in a conversation-partner program in the United States, Kang tracks how manipulating situational variables such as topic, interlocutor, and context connects to individual participants’ predispositions toward excitement (“elation about . . . talking”), responsibility (feeling an
obligation to communicate), and security (relative absence of anxiety). The dynamic nature of situational willingness to communicate that emerges in stimulated-recall interviews with informants moves Kang to propose a new definition of WTC, with emphasis on context: “Willingness to communicate is an individual’s volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation . . .” (291).

The macro perspective on communication as an “ongoing exchange between person and environment” (Gallagher 2013, 55) helps enable investigation of WTC as part of a more extensive process of adaptation. Employing measures of second-language confidence, perceived stress, and “cross-cultural daily hassles” among 104 Chinese university students in England, Gallagher (2013) shows a connection between the confidence measure and a willingness to communicate outside class. He further names “effective, voluntary use of the L2” as a key element in adjustment and proposes that such venturing of language will positively affect a student’s experience of culture shock, or the negative feeling of existing in an “international ghetto.” “[S]ojourners who are more willing to use the L2 across social situations,” Gallagher writes, “are less prone to the irksome daily events involved with living in a new culture” (2013, 69). Perhaps more significantly for the present research, though, Gallagher calls attention to the notion of agency: the capacity to manage one’s social environment depending on one’s social position. This important factor helps determine a student’s access to second-language speaking opportunities (2013, 70).

Along these lines, at least one WTC project has tried to discover a connection between second-language WTC and Bourdieu’s notion of social capital, defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less
institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu 1986, 248). Among 312 survey-takers at three Iranian universities, measures of cultural competence (exposure to music, museums, theaters, art classes) and literacy (acquaintance with reading and books) emerged as the best predictors of WTC (Ahmadi, Ansarifar, and Ansarifar 2015). Components related to social capital such as social solidarity, social competence, and extraversion did not show correlation, although the authors comment that most questions on the survey instrument to measure social and cultural capital dealt with formative child-parent relationships. They note higher WTC in English among wealthier students with access to financial support (418). The other side of this association is a connection found, in another study in Iran, between deculturation and WTC in English; students more willing to use English, a “prestige” language, in the classroom reported greater separation from Iranian culture (Nasiri et al. 2016).

Contributions from social-network analysis and dynamic systems theories have gained influence in WTC discussions as questions have moved toward environmental factors. MacIntyre and Legatto (2011), in testing a new method to record moment-to-moment fluctuations in participants’ L2 WTC, identify features that show WTC to be its own dynamic system: interconnected linguistic, social, cognitive, and emotional systems that orient themselves into “preferred states and repeller states” (165). In the latter state, such as when “vocabulary items are absent or a threat to self-esteem is detected” (169), the speaker can give up entirely on trying to communicate in the second language. Gallagher and Robins (2015) set out to map the social ties of seventy-five international students, most from China, in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in England, supposing that those with the highest WTC in English—
that is, those more willing to initiate communication in various situations—would have more-developed social networks. Also, they thought that people of similar WTC levels would cluster together. In the end, they found no association between second-language WTC and intra- or cross-cultural contacts. In small groups, WTC is shared by “co-ethnic subcultures,” within pockets of more-enthusiastic L2 users who make “their own alternative social settings where they could use the L2 in small groups, influencing one another in a dialogic fashion and supporting the use of the L2” (Gallagher and Robins 2015, 953). Where cross-cultural contacts do occur, they tend to result from “triadic closure,” in which a pair from the same ethnolinguistic group connects with a third from a different group. Gallagher and Robins describe such boundary crossing as “a highly localized, partner-of-partner (or, perhaps, friend-of-a-friend) effect” (952).

More recently, Gallagher (2019) went back to analyze the data from 2015. The focus in the new project is on network positions, specifically, whether reciprocal relationships and brokerage—the capacity to connect previously unconnected people—predict second-language WTC. Indeed, students in such network roles reported stronger L2 WTC, emphasizing the importance of exchange in tightly knit small groups and, therefore, the potential role that networking plays in communicative attitudes and behavior. At the same time, the data also show the precariousness of social position, in that those not able to access, for whatever reason, the intercultural contacts do not reap the benefit and, in fact, may suffer some harm. Where separation persists, Gallagher speculates that L2 WTC may decrease. “Given the opportunity to start a conversation,” he says, “when it fails, L2 WTC may diminish accordingly” (2019, 209).
The broader conclusion is that macro-level social cleavages do potentially shape one-to-one communication; one’s individual WTC is connected to social structures. Gallagher writes:

The tendency to communicate is not simply the possession of the individual. Opportunities to communicate are not generalized and free floating, simply ready and waiting for those of us with the proper skills, temperament, and motivation to seize on them. Instead, communication and its psychological precursors are integrated with and distributed across social structure, which can be conceived of in terms of interlocking relationships and positions within a social network. (2019, 211)

Other network studies confirm that, in Indonesia, classroom dynamics such as the shape of group discussion and the arrangement of seats affect a student’s WTC in English (Fadilah 2018). In Pakistan, a mixed-methods multiple case study among postgraduate business students with different first languages identifies interactional context, classroom atmosphere, and task type as among the most critical determinants of L2 WTC (Syed and Kuzborska 2018). In an “interventional” study in Japan, a context chosen for its reputation for classroom silences, researchers sought to unsettle classroom interaction patterns to observe over twelve weeks the effect on situated WTC at the individual and group levels (Yashima, MacIntyre, and Ikeda 2018). Members of a classroom of twenty-one English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students were recorded and interviewed. They wrote their own reflections about the experiment, in which the teacher deliberately retreated for twenty-minute intervals to allow open, mostly unmoderated discussion on metalinguistic issues, phobias, and other topics meant to stir participation. In all but one of the twelve weeks of the study, student talk exceeded teacher talk. To investigators, the interplay of talk and silence had the contextual impact of inviting or limiting student speech. Silences were significant, sometimes occupying as much as 55 percent of discussion time. The variation in self-initiated turns could be linked to “fleeting, momentary psychological reactions” (132) as personality traits interacted with a constantly shifting
classroom atmosphere. Another intervention meant to affect social dynamics and WTC is that of Reid and Trofimovich (2018), who led a longitudinal case study of two Chinese students volunteering in a U.S. kindergarten classroom. They asked if socializing with nonjudgmental native-speakers would enhance the English-learners’ WTC. According to the participants’ self-assessments, their overall willingness to communicate in all contexts increased over the five-week program. Reduction in the two participants’ silences, measured as minutes between utterances, was also reported.

WTC has often been intentionally framed as the difference between speech and silence. One review characterizes the key question to be why “some people choose to speak up and others remain silent” when given the chance to practice an additional language (MacIntyre 2007, 564). The construct, notably, does not theorize silence, or not speaking, as possessing its own nuanced communicative potential. Yet others do not seem so concerned with the attention MacIntyre gives to “momentary restraining forces” (2007, 572) of the psyche but wonder about variables that may have been working over time to keep an L2 learner quiet at any given moment. Norton (1995) identifies several circumstances in which her female migrant informants in Toronto were unlikely to speak: most involve unequal power relations, including conversations with teachers, supervisors, doctors, and fellow L1 speakers deemed more proficient in English. While not including the WTC construct in her work, Norton has posed related questions about speaker reticence, with answers lying in social dynamics affecting migrants’ adjustment to a new language environment. Rather than measuring individual reactions to experiment-induced pressures, Norton considers her participants holistically and in natural settings. Drawing on interviews, questionnaires, and learner-maintained diaries for her
data, Norton asks how an L2 learner’s contacts with the L1 social world affect acquisition (1995, 13). Her research touches on gender, social status, and power struggles, both within the learner and without, that influence her subjects’ self-identification as a “legitimate speaker,” as someone with the “right to speak” (1995, 18). She illuminates an array of individual affective and social variables pointing to

why it is that a learner may sometimes be motivated, extroverted, and confident and sometimes unmotivated, introverted, and anxious; why in one place there may be social distance between a specific group of language learners and the target language community, whereas in another place the social distance may be minimal; why a learner can sometimes speak and other times remains silent. (Norton 1995, 11)

The conversation thread regarding silence continues in recent WTC literature, again in classroom contexts where silence can take on special significance as a cause for negative evaluation. Fadilah (2018) distinguishes between the classroom silences of low- and high-proficiency L2 English-speakers in Indonesia. Participants in the first category worry about linguistic competence; those with higher proficiency react more to teaching styles and classroom dynamics. Notably, silence in this study was also interpreted positively as thinking time and as a pause to process knowledge (181). In fact, warnings appear in more recent research about misinterpreting classroom silence as unwillingness to communicate. In one of the L2 learner diaries in Syed and Kuzborska’s study in Pakistan, one student writes, “I was confused and was asking myself why I am silent? why should I feel myself inferior to others?” (2018, 16). The authors see this student’s WTC emerging from silence, in which he organizes thoughts introspectively. They add more generally that, in their class observations, “silence was not always reflective of a complete dissociation from the class activities on the part of the students” (17). As mentioned above, the study by Yashima, MacIntyre, and Ikeda (2018) was designed
specifically to address students’ classroom silences in Japan. In a case analysis of one of the more reserved speakers, the researchers found elaborate preparation that could be viewed as visualization of an “L2 self” (130). While acknowledging how difficult it can be to break silence, this student indicates how she follows a discussion and analyzes other speakers’ organization of ideas and turn-taking strategies.

Silence in Language Learning

Despite a broad characterization that second-language acquisition, as a discipline, is “silent on the concept of silence” (Granger 2004, 26), a growing amount of literature strives to observe, categorize, and evaluate silences in face-to-face interaction and in other situations. The study of silence is multidisciplinary, having been taken up at various times by anthropology, psychotherapy, sociology, social psychology, and linguistics. The linguistic approaches encompass phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic considerations; in addition, blended theoretical and methodological tools such as psycholinguistics, sociocultural analysis, intercultural communication studies (including the ethnography of communication), and linguistic anthropology (including second-language socialization) have proven useful. This section of the literature review proceeds first by treating definitions and descriptions of silence and various taxonomies for grouping silences by type and function. Silences have been examined in numerous cultures and speech contexts, although, as with research into willingness to communicate (see above), language learners have most often been observed and surveyed in a classroom rather than naturalistic settings. Next, the review covers the significance and assorted interpretations of second-language silences, both of learners and their interlocutors. Before
moving to a final literature-review section on silence as a social phenomenon, this third section concludes with discussion of the posited origins of and explanations for second-language silence dating back to Krashen’s proposed “silent period,” attested in childhood L2 learning and explained in Krashen’s early Input Hypothesis (1985, 9–12).

The modern definition of *silence*, as a noun, incorporates four distinct meanings (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/silence/), that of (1) “forbearance from speech or noise”; (2) “absence of sound or noise”; (3) “absence of mention” (including the synonyms *oblivion*, *obscurity*, and *secrecy*); and (4) in genetics, an impediment in the expression of genes. Referring to these definitions, Sobkowiak separates silences into two types, acoustic (prosodic or nonpropositional) and pragmatic (communicative). Unlike some other languages, English does not distinguish between the two silences lexically (Sobkowiak 1997, 43–44). One of the interdisciplinary volumes on silence shies away from attempting to define the word, saying that communication events must be judged on a case-by-case basis to know if the label “silence” is appropriate (Jaworski 1997, 3). Conceptually, defining silence in terms of absence creates practical problems for those wishing to study it, especially when the focus is on culturally situated human beings attempting to find voice in a new language. The idea of absence can prove elusive and discourage serious investigation, with a result that silence has in the past been treated with other “para-verbal cues,” like laughter, that throw into greater relief the utterances that they separate rather than meriting study in their own right. The alleged neglect of silence forms part of a critique of applied linguistics and its lack of attention to the body and other means of nonverbal communication, such as gaze and gesture (Canagarajah 2017a, 13).
It is not surprising, then, that no one definition of silence comes out of a myriad of linguistic approaches, with the criteria for silence tending to match the purpose at hand. Johannessen’s question, “How should silence be defined operationally?” (1974, 35), receives multiple answers in the literature. For those investigating inter- and intra-turn breaks, a speechless interval of ten milliseconds can qualify (Wilson and Zimmerman 1986). When building a taxonomy for pragmatic silences in Spanish, Camargo Fernández and Méndez Guerrero review language corpora for “the absence [of speech] equal to or more than one second” (2014, 104; my translation). Others prefer metaphoric treatment of silence and include it as part of an integrated theory of communication, considered among a gamut of linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic forms (Saville-Troike 1989, 146; Ephratt 2011). Jaworski advocates for silence as a “unifying concept” that might bring together diverse phenomena. He continues:

[W]e can say that a pause in discourse, a question left unanswered, a refusal to greet someone, a whisper which is not to reach a third party, avoidance of a topic in conversation, deafening noise, irrelevant talk, or a frozen gesture of an artist on stage are all different instances of “silence.” (1997, 3)

Systematic investigation of silence, by working to classify its forms and functions, has similarly progressed in different directions depending on disciplinary focus. For the origins of linguistic study of silence, scholars reference Pāṇini in the fourth century BCE (Ephratt 2011, 2295). Pāṇini receives credit for devising the concept of zero (Ø) and the null expression, or silence, of morphological and syntactic elements (Rocher 2003). Kurzon offers the example of the singular and plural sheep in English as an unmarked form, or morphological “zero sign.” Semantically, person is unmarked for gender, as opposed to man or woman (1998, 6). Bruneau, in assessing earlier attempts to analyze silence, critiques Ludwig Wittgenstein in his Tractatus
Logico-Philosophicus (“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”)\(^5\) for making silence a “vague, ambiguous nothing” in opposition to speech and, in so doing, rejecting the nature of language itself (Bruneau 1973, 20). Increasingly, linguists and philosophers of language see silence and speech in a symbiotic relationship, making it somewhat illogical to speak about one without mentioning the other. “‘Silence’ never ceases to imply its opposite,” writes Sontag in an essay on the aesthetics of silence. In order to be recognized, silence depends on the surrounding sounds (1969, 11). The intuition is affirmed at the phonetic level in research that identifies a closed glottis as important in holding onto a speaking turn. Researchers note variance in phonetic structure between such pauses and those that trail off (Local and Kelly 1986, 192, 195).

Bruneau (1973), without citing empirical evidence, names three forms of silence: psycholinguistic, interactive, and sociocultural. Due to the existence of continuous inner speech, absolute human silence does not exist within this scheme (17). The psycholinguistic variety is an often imperceptible mental silence in which human beings decode messages they receive. In interactive silence, people are conscious of their roles in a conversation; such silences can cause discomfort (29). Sociocultural silence is the hypothesized realm in which social systems determine how the other forms of silence are expressed. “Socio-cultural silences may define social patterns of communication much better than what is said,” Bruneau writes (36), offering religious and state authority structures as examples. More than other authors, Bilmes in his semiotic approach continues to treat silence as absence: “absolute silence” as complete absence of sound, “notable silence” as “relevant absence of a particular kind of sound” (1994, 73–74). A

\(^5\) “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen.” It is the final proposition in the Tractatus ([1922] 1951, 188–89).
subtype of the latter is conversational silence, of which there are explicit and implicit varieties. An implicit conversational silence may actually be audible, such as when someone changes the subject to avoid an uncomfortable topic. Another example is the subtle dynamic of racism and classism, when language can confirm one’s social position in lieu of mentioning information or attitudes relevant to another social group. Thus, Bilmes concludes, “Some silences are obscured by words” (82). Bao expands forms of classroom silence to the following categories: active and passive; conscious and subconscious; weak and strong; eventful (guided silence); decentralized (showing student self-determination); confrontational; uncooperative; misleading; interpersonal; eloquent (communicating meaning); and semiotic (with signs and gestures) (2014, 11–12).

As to what silence means, or what it communicates, scholarly interpretation often hinges on the situation and cultural context. “[S]ilence is still a—if not the—paramount factor in many communicative situations,” writes Jensen in introducing an early attempt to organize silences according to the functions they serve (1973, 249; emphasis in original). Fundamentally, according to recent treatments, silence is polyvalent. One silence might affirm while another negates. True to this evaluation, Jensen describes (1) a linking function of silence as lying along a continuum between strengthening relationships or separating people (249–51); (2) an affecting function as capable of healing or wounding (251–52); (3) a revelational function as potentially disclosing or obscuring (252–54); (4) a judgmental function as expressing agreement or disagreement (254–55); and (5) an activating function as demonstrating deep thought or the slowing down of mental processes (255–56).

Nakane, who seeks to explain silences in intercultural communication, divides the functions of silence into cognitive, discursive, social, and affective categories. She goes into
greatest detail regarding the social functions, listing subcategories related to negotiating social
distance, managing interlocutors’ impressions based on length and frequency of pauses,
exercising social control, maintaining power, and enacting politeness (2007, 11–12). The
complexity of the many functions of silence influences her creation of a two-dimensional model
for interpreting and even predicting silence, designed for her ethnographic observations of
Australian and Japanese classroom interactions. She divides silences into three domains:
linguistic, cognitive, and socio-psychological. To this she adds levels of social organization:
individual, situational, and sociocultural (31–33). Where the cognitive domain intersects with
sociocultural variables, for example, persons from different language and cultural backgrounds
will confront communicative challenges. They will not share knowledge that two persons of the
same language and cultural conditioning would; further, there likely will be differing norms of
conversational relevance and expectations about reaction speed, all factors that “may result in a
lack of rapport and thus in silence” (38).

As treated within study of language learning and interlanguage exchange, silences
necessarily bring context and learning situation explicitly into view. The potential meaning of
silence, in fact, pushes past personality, relationships, and interactions, according to Muñoz, to
become “part of a system of norms, premises, and symbols that pertains to a group of people”
(2016, 25). An earlier study of problematic communication between native- and nonnative-
speakers offers the possibility of noncommunication, including the avoidance of speech, “when
the perceived loss of energy necessary for communication outweighs the perceived benefit . . . to
be gained” (Gass and Varonis 1991, 124). When discussing miscommunication, the authors
draw a distinction between “misunderstanding” and “incomplete understanding,” with the former
more likely to lead to abandonment of the interaction (125). The difference is that, in the first case, interlocutors do not try to rectify, or may not even be aware of, the inaccuracies passing between them. Hope lies in negotiated communication, in which information is exchanged as the speakers persist through the interruptions and pauses that often characterize nonnative-speaker discourse (136).

Research in the 1960s and '70s among Oglala Sioux in South Dakota and Cherokee in eastern Oklahoma points to how students nurture a “language of silence” to indicate, without the possibility of direct protest, that cultural attitudes toward learning in these communities had not been taken into consideration (Dumont 1972, 348). Observed speaking in their native languages and in English outside class, inside the classroom students manifest, by seventh or eighth grade, an “amazingly complex system of communication and control” to exclude teachers through a rigorously held silence (346). In the investigator’s view, silence dictates the education. When teaching moves into the Sioux “cultural complex,” students talk; as the school asserts its authority, students go quiet (347). Among the Cherokee, silence tracks the cultural difference and discomfort, even fear, that students and teacher both experience. Aware of their powerlessness and the persistent cultural barriers, Cherokee students enter the territory of the “unknown, the foreign, and the strange” (349). Language fails them, and silence delivers what words cannot. Dumont concludes that “the many modes of student silence were highly refined means of selective interaction, subtly ensnaring the teacher in order to teach him those forms of teaching and learning with which they were comfortable and with which they could work” (357–58).
As Nakane notes, her Japanese participants sometimes explain their classroom silences in Australia as a product of insufficient competence, while others name social and cultural factors (2007, 39). She also comments on the shortage of research on the correlation between second-language proficiency and silence (14). In her interpretation of L2 silence, Granger takes a psychological approach, while maintaining the inherent connection among society, language, and person (2004, 34). Rather than reducing the issue to cognitive questions or individual anxieties, she poses a more complex dynamic between comprehension and L2 speech production. Again, rejecting absence of speech as an adequate description of a learner’s silence, she identifies the relationship between silence and the learner’s subjective experience of their personhood within a social world—that is, as a “social subject”—as a question with potentially more explanatory power (29). The issue, to Granger, is partly one of failing to appreciate nonlinguistic aspects of second-language acquisition. As Norton (2000; 2006; 2013) and others have done regarding identity issues in L2 learning, Granger keys in on self-concept and a range of other internal and interpersonal elements (2004, 6). Silence may be “a psychical moment, as well as a linguistic stage,” she writes, “in the complex process of moving from one language to another, and from one self to another” (6–7; emphasis in original). To go even further, silence within this framing is not limited just to deficits in speech production: “The self, the identity, can also be silent, unexpressed, and even—at least temporarily—lost” (7).

An extreme example from a well-known case study in first-language acquisition is that of Genie, who after living in enforced isolation for more than the first decade of her life tried to learn English among linguists who were studying her unique conditioning as a “wild child.”
trauma of the early years of deprivation make speech difficult for her, Curtiss writes in summarizing one of the early case reports:

In the early days, before speaking, she would tense up her body and take a deep breath, then produce an extremely high-pitched and breathy utterance. Choosing to remain silent much of the time, Genie often gestured instead of speaking. (1977, 37)

A sociocultural or social constructionist orientation to L2 learning reframes the debate as a learner striving to participate in a new community rather than acquiring a new linguistic code. Norton, in her qualitative research with five female immigrants in Toronto, expresses her informants’ challenge as seeking the “right to speak” more than a quest for competence (Norton and McKinney 2011, 84). Likewise, Pavlenko and Lantolf develop the metaphor of participation, using the phrase “whole language socialization” in lieu of “acquisition” (2000, 156). Their use of personal narrative as a data source fits with their image of language learners as symbolic, or often literal, border crossers and with Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the story-constituted self (158). Part of the acceptance of first-person testimony is to give adequate weight to agency and choice in second-language acquisition. In this sociocultural perspective, with links to Vygotsky, an L2 speaker’s experience and their speech or silence is mediated by social or classroom practice. As Pavlenko and Lantolf contend, the actors’, or the border crossers’, voices may be silenced given the loss of subjectivity when moving to second-language terrain. The scenario here is that of the circumstantial learner, the exile or the wartime, economic, or climate-change refugee, who opts out of the series of losses that precede the self’s reconstruction (161–63). Due to circumstance, many have to negotiate this internal conflict of not wanting to be native to another language. “It is ultimately through their own intentions and agency,”
Pavlenko and Lantolf write, “that people decide to undergo or not undergo the frequently agonizing process of linguistic, cultural, and personal transformation” (171).

In the case of linguistic silence from a newly immigrated kindergartener from México, researchers tracking him over one year note evidence of great psychological activity (DaSilva Iddings and Jang 2008). Authors take an “ecological perspective” to ask how Juan’s silence is “socially situated and culturally constructed within a particular context” (570). They name key concepts of emergence, which is the appearance of new language within a social network, and affordance, defined as “opportunities for meaningful action and interaction offered to an engaged participant” (571). In other investigations within the framework of conversation analysis, one child’s silence appears as a distinctive language-learner strategy (Sieglová 2011).

Defining strategic or intentional silence among L2 learners remains an unsettled question, but speechlessness in a first or second language can be divided into voluntary and involuntary forms. “Intentionally becoming silent in order to achieve certain goals is both conceptually and empirically separable from involuntary speechlessness,” writes Berger in presenting two studies of L1 silence among undergraduates (2004, 173). More than two hundred students were asked to recall incidents of their own silence as well as the possible causes, associated emotions, and consequences. Only 12 percent of respondents failed to recall speechless events over the previous three months. Those who do unpack their own silences report feeling discomfort, anxiety, powerlessness, perceived inferiority, weakness, and stupidity in reacting without words to what they portray as deviant behavior, stress, and lack of information (154). One interesting result is how most of the events take place in familiar locations with people that participants know:
Contrary to such simplistic caricatures as that of the hapless orator, so riven with anxiety that phonation is rendered impossible, or the shy wallflower cowering in the corner of a room filled with reveling party-goers, the episodes of speechlessness recalled by participants generally took place in relatively familiar, informal surroundings and involved interactions with equally familiar people. (172)

More-recent research on classroom-situated silence, employing a range of methodologies, points to cultural variations in the phenomenon: fossilized silence in Japan (King 2013), “collective resistance silence” in Finland (Skinnari 2014, 61), silence as saving face in China (Bao 2014), and potentially reconciliatory silence-breaking in Cyprus (Rampton and Charalambous 2016). Utilizing dynamic systems theory to research classroom silence in Japan, King (2013) identifies attractor states working amid numerous real-life variables to influence the speech or silence of Japanese students studying English. During forty-eight hours of class observation at nine universities, King codes just seven incidents of student-initiated, unsolicited speech, less than one-quarter of 1 percent of all classroom talk. The attractors, in King’s article, include classroom characteristics such as student disengagement, a prevalence of teacher-centered methods, scheduled silent periods for writing, reading, and listening, cognitive confusion, and hypersensitivity to self-presentation (337–39). Systems-theory analysis explains that “the stronger and more numerous the attractors drawing a learner’s discourse activity towards the state of saying nothing, the more energy is needed to push the system into a state of flux whereby the learner talks" (328).

Among fifth- and sixth-graders learning English in Finland, where a reputation for being taciturn has promoted the image of the “silent Finn” (Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985), Skinnari applies sociocultural theory to propose “agentive silences”—forms of individual and group resistance to what students regard as a power imbalance and the artifice of being obliged to
interact in a nonnative tongue. “Sometimes silence that started with individual pupils spread into the whole group and became collective during the school year,” Skinnari writes (2014, 61). Student agency emerges when they are asked to draw portraits of themselves as English-learners as well as through “[s]ulky faces, turned backs, and hiding under a sweatshirt hood” in class (60–61).

Bao’s (2014) qualitative interviews and surveys of language learners in Australia and several Asian countries produce diverse explanations for silence and reticence. Whereas silences can be productive, Bao distinguishes reticence as an individual handicap in communication that is wholly unproductive (13–15). He positions his work as part of a larger shift in second-language acquisition research from cognitive to affective dimensions, such that silences once regarded as “resistance to speech” (19) can now be viewed as a nuanced relationship between individual interiority and environment. For example, in surveying 112 first- and second-year English majors in Wuhan, China, Bao comments that student silence in some cases is linked to saving face, a value in Chinese society (67). Yet the idea of cooperation and mutual regard for the “face” of self and interlocutors comes, too, from the norms of politeness theorized by Brown and Levinson (Muñoz 2016, 22). Some Chinese students disclose that their silence forms part of such a pragmatic calculation. Participants tell Bao that “if they speak out and boast knowledge, this behaviour might make their less competent peers feel inferior, thus their decision to refrain from the spoken word would amount to the act of saving peers’ faces” (2014, 67).

Rampton and Charalambous question whether corporately held silences might benefit a community by helping to repress prejudicial attitudes: “[H]ow does one work out which ruptures to celebrate, and what silences to try and reinstate?” the authors ask (2016, 5). The background
for one of their investigations is the provision in 2003 for Turkish to be offered as a modern-language elective in Greek-Cypriot schools on the island of Cyprus, divided since 1974 between Turkey’s and Greece’s competing claims to sovereignty. In thirty-two hours of ethnographic observation, Charalambous remarks on a Turkish-language teacher’s silences about the Cyprus dispute. In fact, the instructor does not allow political discussion in the class and “focused his teaching on the safer ground of grammar and vocabulary, treating language as a code cut off from its cultural settings and its social and historical connotations” (7). The strategy blows up, however, when the teacher turns to personal pronouns in Turkish and what he claims is the language’s preference, more so than Greek, for politeness. In her field notes from 2006, Charalambous writes:

The moment Mr A said that the Turkish language might sound better than Greek, the students, who until then had been quietly listening to his talk, started shouting. . . . Students started talking all together despite Mr A’s repetition of “please.” Although it was not clear what they were saying, since they talked simultaneously, I could hear a student saying “but they are Turks” and some others saying about Turkish players of “Survivor” being impolite during the reality show. (7)

In later analysis, the authors note the residual tension between dominant ideology—that Turkish-Cypriots are not to be named as equals or regarded as legitimate neighbors—and a “preemergent” idea that both Greeks and Turks on the island can lay claim to Cypriot identity (14). Although cross-communal contacts do exist in some of the students’ families, within the classroom, silence about the Greek-Turkish relationship is reasserted. Paying close attention to the schoolroom interactions shows that silences, in this case, are produced collaboratively. The teacher’s choice to offer a “sanitized” variety of Turkish “is actually a strategy born of experience, and . . . is rather well adapted both to the pressures of the institution and to the possibilities of cultural encounter at this particular moment of history” (17).
How do researchers try to explain L2 silences, both individual and corporate, in varied contexts? Krashen argues that a “silent period,” most observable among childhood L2 learners, should be considered when constructing a language-instruction program (1985, 69–70). The phase of developing competence is also referred to as a “pre-speech stage, in which the focus is on the presentation of comprehensible input with little or no demand for student oral response” and is said to last from a few hours to several months (70). Located within a broader theory of second-language acquisition, the so-called Input Hypothesis is linked to the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis (1), where Krashen makes explicit that acquisition, in his interpretation, is an internal, subconscious process that correlates to the acquisition process for a first language. Although “comprehensible input” is essential for acquiring a second language (2), two-way interaction is not (34). This weak version of the Interaction Hypothesis allows for more passive acquisition, through listening and reading.

As evidence for the silent period, Krashen refers to a memoir by Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*, that narrates the author’s initial six-month silence in English class (10–11). Krashen also quotes extensively from a man born with cerebral palsy who, despite not being able to produce speech sounds, evinces passive comprehension of family members and listens regularly to the BBC and other sources; then, when he is thirty years old, he receives a specially manufactured typewriter and produces, on the first attempt, coherent and well-constructed English prose (11–12; see Fourcin and Boydell 1975). In his research, Bao alludes to the case of Damon, a descendant of native Vietnamese speakers who nevertheless learned and speaks English as a first language. When afforded the chance to travel to Vietnam, Damon finds that he speaks Vietnamese well despite never having been concerned before about production in that
language. The “language process . . . happened within Damon’s mind for twenty years completely in silent listening,” Bao writes (2014, 24).

The existence of learner silences is not disputed in the literature, although scholars use different terms to describe limited production and object to the notion of a monolithic, homogenous silence that incubates the eventual emergence of L2 speech. Granger refers to the silent period as “one kind of silence” among many (2004, 21). From the time that Krashen wrote about the theorized relationship between silence and language acquisition, other linguists and researchers in related fields have been trying to place silence within a more comprehensive explanation of human communication. One observation about silence is how it reflects cultural beliefs and practices and follows different rules according to a society’s emphasis, for example, on individual or group values (Saville-Troike 1985, 11–12). Along with acquiring an additional language, one must acquire its accented variety of silence, too: “Learning appropriate rules for silence is also part of the acculturation process for adults attempting to develop communicative competence in a second language and culture” (1985, 12–13). Ephratt cites earlier research that estimates the presence of verbal language in face-to-face adult conversation at no higher than 35 percent (2011, 2286). The question emerges about what is going on the rest of the time. Within Ephratt’s sensory-oriented communication model, silence falls in the acoustic-auditory realm, with silence serving (1) a linguistic or purely symbolic purpose when silence is the speaker’s choice; (2) a paralinguistic or indexical purpose, such as with unvoiced pauses; and (3) an extralinguistic or iconic purpose as the alternative to what no one wants to say out loud or even, paradoxically, as vocalized “empty speech,” which is nothing but meaningless noise (2011, 2298–304).
In support of such a holistic view, second-language socialization (SLS), with attention to a learner’s community of practice, tries to account for how linguistic or cultural newcomers “gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy” (Duff 2007, 310). SLS contextualizes L2 silence within a complex interaction of individual and social forces, in which possible outcomes might be partial L2 appropriation or rejection of the target practice.

Doubtless, some L2 adopters are welcomed into the new linguistic society. In contrast, Duff writes:

Others may be highly motivated to become socialized into the norms and practices of new L2 communities but may face resistance or opposition from those expected to nurture them; or, regardless of the target community’s attitudes toward them, they may not be fully invested in becoming socialized into the ways of this group because their future trajectories and goals may not require it, because they remain actively involved in and committed to their primary communities, or because they cannot straddle both simultaneously, for practical, logistical, or ideological reasons. (310)

Empirical research in fact exposes uncertainty about the explanations for L2 silence. Noting that the prevalence of a silent period in child learners of additional languages is still unknown, Le Pichon and de Jonge in a case study of a four-year-old native Berber speaker learning Dutch ask if it is possible to distinguish a temporary silent period from diagnoses of selective mutism or social anxiety, which are not linguistic issues (2016, 427). Possible explanations for the boy’s silence include “imbalanced bilingualism,” in which a child lacks speaking opportunities in a new language (429). The authors, conscious of the many uncertainties, argue for the necessity of distinguishing among social and family factors, psychological and emotional factors, and linguistic factors that may contribute to limited production (438). At an extreme end of the silence spectrum, attested among child refugees, is resignation syndrome, which manifests initially as mutism and communication failure and affects “psychologically traumatized children
and adolescents in the midst of a strenuous and lengthy migration process” (Sallin et al. 2016). In this research among children in Sweden, the authors ultimately classify the isolated phenomenon as a variant of catatonia.

Social Contexts for Silence

In a review of social context in second-language acquisition research, Siegel (2003) outlines the governing perspectives of such investigations. Interest in micro-analysis is typically associated with pursuit of questions about identities and social positions negotiated through individual linguistic exchanges. In contrast, at the macro-level, the research asks structural questions of power and history that help shape linguistic relationships. Most L2 acquisition research to the turn of the twenty-first century, according to this one overview, had combined the macro and structural approaches, with micro-level, more finely grained interactional study on the increase (183–84).

Without claiming that these are rigid categories representative of either linguistic reality or extant scholarship, this final section of the literature review, about study of silence in human communication, follows this same convenient separation by first treating silence from the emic, ground-level, participant’s point of view. Much of this literature has appeared since Siegel’s article. Research covers the relationship among silence and linguistic identity (the voiceless “I”), silence and emerging bilingualism, and face-to-face techniques that might express themselves as self- or other-silencing: silent treatment, ostracism (or shunning), and linguicism, that is, language-based discrimination. Again, there is no claim that interactional silences do not have a collective dimension and that they are not affected by or do not affect society. Next, the review
of literature turns to the etic or outsider’s view, with focus on silence as structured by political and cultural forces as well as by language itself. This survey pays special attention to the pragmatics of silence (such as the relationship between silence and politeness theory) and to silence as experienced through language ideologies, race and gender distinctions, and other forms of power and domination. As in the previous section of the review, methodologies are diverse. Both in the micro and macro orientations, literature incorporates objective and subjective evaluation—two more parameters identified in Siegel’s tracking of contextual variables in language learning (2003, 184). Objective research considers institutional associations with silence, while the subjective deals with individual perceptions, which is the interest of the present thesis.

Moving from the terrain of L2 learner silences to the broader range of silence in the social world, it becomes obvious that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the social from the individual and vice versa. Labov, for one, felt the “socio-” prefix in sociolinguistics to be an unnecessary redundancy (Murray 1998, 179). The wedding of the social and the personal becomes particularly clear in conditions that Norton has studied, that of naturalistic language learners who undergo identity shifts as a result of migration. These L1 and L2 selves, given profound social change brought on by relocation, are constructed and reconstructed in complicated fashion with attention to such sociocultural factors as “boundary-crossing, multilingualism, and human agency” (Norton and Toohey 2011, 436). Norton further critiques the “good language learner” ideal, fundamentally individualistic in orientation, for being based in the premise that second-language learners maintain control of the social environment in which they learn (see also Siegel 2003, 189–90). She specifically challenges much research on
language learning for failing to explain her own data, which evidence the power relationships and prevailing disdain that prevent her informants from connecting with a postulated community of first-language native-speakers anxious to help. “The reality for most of the women in the study,” Norton writes, “was that the outside world was frequently hostile and uninviting” (2013, 150).

Even first-language acquisition, despite the strong separation in Chomskyan linguistics between theorized linguistic structures and the use of language in context, has an integral social component, as Atkinson argues. Accounting for phenomena such as identity, turn-taking, indexicality, participation, sociolinguistic variation, and discourse organization, the L1 environment, in opposition to the notion of an impoverished environment for language acquisition, offers a “lush social world,” a “deep, multiplex embedding of language activities” (2002, 528). Within this sociocognitive approach, Atkinson laments the placement of second-language acquisition “mainly within individual heads” instead of out in the world (534), where influences not directly connected to linguistics and cognition can affect theories constructed in the abstract.

For children to gain communicative competence in society, ethnographic and linguistic data note the significance of nonverbal behaviors, which sometimes precede verbal communication (Saville-Troike 1989, 242). Thai children, for example, learn the wai gesture of respect and greeting before they can talk, and Saville-Troike further illuminates cultural practices, such as mother-child interactions, to transmit interpretations of silence unique to a society’s worldview. Several authors comment on the use of proverbs and stories to pass on communal attitudes about silence. In Setswana, many sayings remonstrate children to silence,
given the low status of young persons in Botswana and many other cultures. Implicitly, silence signals agreement “and therefore it is not only a demonstration of the listener’s humility but also an acceptance of their own ignorance and lack of experience” (Bagwasi 2012, 189). As an admonition for children not to speak while eating, one proverb cautions, “O ja ka molomo ofe o bua ka ofe?” (“Which mouth are you using to eat, and which one are you using to speak?”) (190). Several idioms, however, mark silence as disruptive to community order, as when someone does not answer a question or refuses to speak when expected to (187–88). At the level of interaction, silence can be used for social control in cultures as diverse as Inuit, Igbo, and Amish. Intercultural misunderstandings, stereotyping, and inaccurate attributions can occur when silences of one speech community are judged according to the norms of another (Saville-Troike 1985, 14). Especially within the ethnographic tradition, communicative events and the silences contained within them can be evaluated according to genre, topic, function, setting, and participants, including the interlocutors’ social status and relationships, in order to understand the rules of interaction (14–15).

To analyze conversational styles at a Thanksgiving meal, Tannen (1985) records the exchanges among three Jewish New Yorkers and three visitors. After playing back the audio recording for individual participants, and gauging contrasting reactions to the event, she concludes that the paradoxical nature of interactional silence helps explain why New Yorkers think the others are distant and the visitors believe the New Yorkers to be too dominant. The paradox, to Tannen, rests in the human need to feel connected to others and yet to preserve distance (97), what Brown and Levinson (1978) address in ideas of positive and negative politeness. Silence can function as negative politeness, Tannen observes, in that it does not
impose on others and maintains a boundary. Yet it can fail to serve as positive politeness by transmitting lack of involvement (1985, 98). In the rapidity of speech and machine-gun-style questioning, the New Yorkers at this meal act out their wariness of silence. To them “it is better to toss out a new topic rather than risk silence as an old one peters out” (104). As often occurs interculturally, different norms in inter-turn pauses, combined with silence’s built-in ambiguity, frustrate the expectations of both groups. Others have researched pragmatic markers in phatic speech, described as “talk for the sake of talking, with no or very little informative value” (Stenström 2014, 30). In a corpus study of teenagers in London, Stenström concentrates on how speakers fill intra- and inter-turn pauses with silence-breakers such as yeah, er/m, no, like, right, really, you know, innit, and okay, as well as with taboo words to create connection and “keep the conversation going” (46).

Several studies look at interactions among adult migrants—the population interviewed for this thesis project—particularly in workplace contexts. The research does not explicitly examine situated silent strategies, but the theorized and observed communicative practices do include nonverbal elements and other features characteristic of interethnic contact. Under the premise that the partners in such interactions need to work harder than those of the same linguistic background, Dittmar and von Stutterheim (1985) apply communication accommodation theory to their assessment of immigrant-worker discourse. In West Germany, from which they draw their data, the word Gastarbeiterdeutsch (“guest-worker German”) had already been coined to label the language variety (138). Prejudice of L1 native-speakers and social distance, along with the impulse of many migrant groups to maintain social and linguistic identities, leads to more divergence, or unsuccessful communication, in interactions across
language and culture boundaries. *Convergence* sits at the other pole, when the migrant “adjusts himself to the foreign norms” and the native-speaker tries to assist or accommodate the newcomer in the L2. Challenges to smooth discourse are the nonnative-speaker’s continued use of their L1, need for conversational repairs, accentuated levels of feedback and self-correction, and even possible abandonment of the topic (128). The authors characterize the search for referential and propositional meaning within the interaction in this way:

> From the point of view of communication, the immigrant (or migrant) is usually in the subordinate position and the native in the superior. According to the asymmetry in linguistic and cultural knowledge, both interactants have to decide whether each of them tolerates their role complements: the foreigner as a linguistically and culturally incompetent, helpless, socially subordinate petitioner (supplicant) and the native as the competent, knowing, advising helper who knows how things are done in his context. (126)

The series of European Science Foundation case studies in the 1980s draws on eleven source languages and favors ethnic minority workers in its participant base. The final report of results, in portraying language acquisition as involving both interactive and cognitive effort, tries to “oust the image of the language learner as a receptacle into whom language is poured, and where it is then made sense of internally and in isolation” (Perdue 1993b, 154). It also criticizes other SLA research for failing to pay attention to “the difference between the cushioned environment of the middle-class, ethnocentric language classroom and the rough and tumble of everyday life that constitutes the ‘untutored’ . . . learning environment for the informants in this study” (154).

Choosing a multilingual factory setting in Toronto for ethnographic research, Goldstein finds that the native language of many of the employees (Portuguese) acts as a language boundary, preserving in-group contacts for one sector of the work crew, mostly women from the
Azores, “as part of a strategy of managing economic subordination” (1996, 175). For another group of workers, in which age and gender are key variables, both English and Portuguese identities are important. Access to English and to English-speaking contacts facilitates transition and retention of jobs off the production line and marks a sociocultural distinction. Yet Goldstein affirms that the L1 is still vitally important to daily interaction and, furthermore, retains its prestige as a “language of solidarity” and of linguistic authority because it offers a means of economic survival (201). Contrary to the assumption that English is a required skill for these migrant workers, Goldstein shows that is not the case, at least in Ontario. There are fewer studies of the unique language barriers confronting unauthorized migrant workers, although in research among farm and factory workers in San Diego County, Chavez documents cases of workers being disciplined for speaking Spanish at work and the resulting self-consciousness and anxiety (1998, 154).

Second-language silences appear at times in Block’s recordings of Spanish-speaking Latinos in London, both during interactions at home and work (2007b). Carlos, who had been a philosophy lecturer in his native Colombia, takes a job as a building porter because of his beginning-level competence in English. While Carlos maintains interest in football (soccer), his academic background and linguistic limitations separate him at times from “the English-mediated, White, working-class and male dominant atmosphere” (2007b, 121). In one recording with two work associates, Carlos mostly remains quiet but offers short comments about Chelsea Football Club and the pragmatic interjection “yeah” on several occasions. While not a protagonist, Block terms Carlos an active co-participant. Carlos himself, though, in Block’s translation from the Spanish, provides an ambivalent self-evaluation:
I’m listening and there is a part of the conversation, that I tell you, I lose it because the other person he is talking to . . . he has this problem, he stutters, and then his diction, how he pronounces, it’s very sharp, and I lose spirit, interest, in the conversation. So, I just leave them there, to talk between themselves. I’m there but . . . (2007b, 121–22)

Scollon remarks on negative attributions directed toward others and toward oneself when a conversation features silence or long pauses when exchanging turns (1985, 25). He credits the metaphor of the machine governing much of industrial society for these interpretations. He writes: “If one assumes the engine should be running, the silences will indicate failures” (26).

The informants in the above research, as well as in this thesis project, fall into the category of circumstantial learners, or circumstantial bilinguals, which typically is a lower-prestige position than those who create their own circumstances for learning an L2 (Schecter and Bayley 2002, 194; Ortega 2009, 243–45). Environments of subtractive bilingualism, such as the United States, where first languages face likely replacement after one or two generations, further stigmatize users of minority linguistic codes (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994, 191–92). Specific stressors affecting the circumstantial learner’s language interaction include impaired cognitive function because of post-traumatic stress disorder (Clayton 2015). Studies of English-language learners from Iraq and elsewhere list a range of PTSD-related classroom behaviors: “inability to concentrate, headaches, high anxiety, and reluctance to participate verbally, memory problems, and dissociation” (8). Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan border crossers, too, bring memories of violence and, when they reach the United States, face the additional stress of possible deportation due to the complexities of achieving refugee status.

Lavadenz (2014), though, writes about the combination among Central Americans in Los Angeles of invisibility and empowerment from their new linguistic and cultural repertoires, expressed in the metaphor “speaking in silence.” “Although concealment or hiddenness is part
of their experience” as the result of their undocumentability,⁶ “so is learning to speak new languages and dialects” (165). While marginalization and low status seem to forecast negative outcomes, motivation to achieve—in these Central Americans’ case, partly due to survivor guilt and the resulting sense of responsibility—offers a counterbalance (165). Gordon (2011) comments on the paradox that SLA, despite the discipline’s commitments to studying cognitive processing, attention, and memory, lacks any theory to address trauma survivors, for whom native-language attrition becomes another area of loss (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, 166). Some research, however, exists on Holocaust survivors confronting the task of recounting horrific events in an L2. For sharing their experiences, English often is preferred to a European language, Hebrew, or Yiddish because it is viewed as more neutral and “uncorrupted” (Wajnryb 1999, 86). The burden in these cases falls as well on the listener, who faces the “paralysis of non-response” and finds silence the only appropriate reaction (90). Elie Wiesel called a survivor’s opting for silence a “silence of self-preservation” (Sibelman 1995, 24).

Micro-level linguistic silences also encompass several strategies that have been studied as ostracism, shunning, social distancing, social rejection, and silent treatment. Williams (2001) constructs a taxonomy of ostracism, within which are considered visible and less-visible forms, such as physical and social exclusion and cyberostracism, ostracism according to motive (role-prescribed, defensive, punitive), and various causes behind the practice. One of the categories motivating shunning behavior is called “oblivious ostracism,” which targets of the practice experience as their own invisibility rather than as explicit punishment (54–55). Williams raises

⁶ Anton Flores of the Alterna community in LaGrange, Georgia, offers this term to express the reality for many sojourners from Latin America. “They’re not just undocumented, they’re undocumentable” (personal communication).
the possibility that such exclusion might be exploited to advantage individually and corporately by finding forms of collaborative resistance, subaltern silences, or performed silence that harness power and potentially reorganize the discursive setting (Wagner 2012, 100). Silence is also one of the “particularly powerful forms of resistance” to education (Granger 2004, 10). “Silent treatment,” also called “covert silence,” differs from shunning or ostracism in that it is “dyadic rather than group-oriented, informal rather than formal, temporary rather than permanent, and carried out in the presence of the target rather than through complete avoidance” (Wright and Roloff 2016, 1594). The overlap with other silencing techniques occurs within the consequences felt by the targets and perpetrators. For targets, being ignored leads to more negative reactions than when silence is linked more explicitly to punishment or disagreement. “[L]osses of self-esteem, sense of belonging, feelings of control, and belief in meaningful existence” over the long-term have potential impacts for physical and mental health (1598). For perpetrators, the practice can lead to emotional exhaustion and a “self-dehumanizing effect,” as one integrates a behavior so contrary to social norms (1599).

Turning to social or cultural silences, or silences at the macro-level of institutional and societal organization, interlanguage pragmatics distinguishes two forms of knowledge important to second-language learners: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence (Félix-Brasdefer 2017, 418). The first pertains to linguistic and other resources employed to communicate pragmatic intent. Sociopragmatic competence relates to situational norms in the L2 society “as well as familiarity with assessments of (im)politeness and variables of social power and social distance.” Hence, possessing L2 pragmatic competence means that a learner can understand and perform speech acts (micro-level) and discourse (macro) (419).
Recent pragmatic inquiries seek to judge silence in relation to Grice’s cooperative principle and supporting maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Although Grice, in Ephratt’s view, regarded silence as a flouting of these maxims (especially those of quantity and relation), she reinterprets some of Grice’s own examples to demonstrate that “verbal silence, just like speech, may sometimes serve the purposes of communication and interaction, thereby complying with the cooperative principle, and sometimes counter them” (2012, 63). In addition, Ephratt employs examples from Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and the Avis rental-car slogan, “Avis. We Try Harder,” which she judges as “a case of verbal silence as a means of revealing information” (68). The slogan elides the expected syntactic comparative but, in Ephratt’s view, is not concealing since, in 1964, there was one clear industry leader (Hertz), and U.S. regulations prohibited the naming of competitors in advertising (69). She further argues, more important to the present research, that in the hypothesized case of someone approaching another person to ask a question in a language the second person does not understand, silence is the appropriate response to accord with the maxim of quality. Replying “no” to the question “Parlez vous français?” would violate the maxim because it creates a problem with the utterance’s truth value, whereas silence communicates, “I am not part of it, I do not share this code” (74).

Kurzon (2012) refers specifically to the maxim of quantity in discussing language tokens in Igbo, Akan, Western Apache, and Finnish societies to illustrate that compliance or noncompliance with the maxim depends on cultural norms and the seemingly infinite range of unarticulated motivations for silence. Here he appears to follow Enninger, who points out the “culture-specific socio-pragmatic constraints on the universal speaking behavior of members of specific speech communities” and asserts a need for contrastive pragmatics (1991, 5). According
to one application of markedness theory, “communicative silence is a pragmatically marked member of the opposition silence-speech” (Sobkowiak 1997, 45), even though the first part of the quantity maxim, “Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange),” would seem to prescribe silence when one is uninformed. But Kurzon observes that keeping quiet in preference to mindless talk is not the general practice, except in cultural variants to which he and others refer and that suggest a modification to the maxim, to read: “If you have nothing informative to say, you maintain silence. If, however, you do speak, then, in order to be cooperative, follow the other three maxims: quality, relation and manner” (2012, 126).

Leech suggests, in contrast, a “phatic maxim” of politeness to accord with Malinowski’s idea of phatic communion, which could be formulated, simply, as “Avoid silence,” or “Keep talking” (1983, 141). In this perspective, talk “serves to extend the common ground of agreement and experience shared by the participants” (142). This treatment does not address the dynamic facing L2 speakers, though Leech recognizes the prospect of speaking to a stranger or someone of higher social position (a “distant” addressee) as “an act of presumption” (126, 141). He adds that “silence may be the only polite form of behaviour available to someone of little status” (141). Tannen cautions that the assumption that powerful people speak while the oppressed enact silence does not always match reality (2003, 218). In relation to gender studies, in particular, wives may have a more voluble conversational style even though the more silent husband holds dominance. Women have also used “rhetorical silence” to resist—Farmer alludes to Anita Hill and also the historical “announced silence” of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (2001, 2). Other counterexamples are interrogations, during which a mostly silent interrogator holds
authority, or worldwide variance in parent-child relationships, where, for instance, in the United States children are conditioned to perform for elders, who nevertheless continue to keep power (Tannen 2003, 219). In many societies, the right to silence has been affirmed for criminal suspects submitting to police interviews, although, in practice, the right is “heavily constrained by the discourse environment” (Heydon 2011, 2315).

Some conflicting interpretations of silence in the literature seem to arise from disciplinary differences, especially those between the linguistic and social psychological or anthropological approaches. Theoretical work that claims an important place for sociostructural variables—that is, for extralinguistic factors—allows for the prominence of such conditions as cultural attitudes toward multilingualism, acculturation factors such as social and psychological distance, an L2 learner’s orientation toward cultural integration or fear of assimilation, and subjective evaluations of ethnolinguistic power dynamics (Siegel 2003, 185–86). Hymes, commenting nearly fifty years ago on the breadth of human linguistic diversity, laments the absence of systematic knowledge and a means of describing language in interaction with the social world (1972, 38). Advocating for sociolinguistic description and taxonomy, he refers to a “universality of linguistic repertoires” and, as evidence, cites silence routines in some cultures that undermine Malinowski’s observations about phatic speech. He mentions Basso’s (1970) anthropological work among the Western Apache in Arizona. From such work, Hymes extrapolates that “[t]he distribution of required and preferred silence . . . perhaps most immediately reveals in outline form a community’s structure of speaking” (1972, 40).

Basso’s study, resulting from sixteen months of fieldwork in the mid- to late 1960s, echoes Hymes’s support for ethnography of communication and knowledge of codes, channels,
and referential expressions preferred by speech communities (1970, 215). Writing in opposition to the stigmatizing “silent Indian” stereotype, Basso concludes that the key determinant of Apache silence is emergent ambiguity or unpredictability in personal relationships. He provides as examples the silences directed toward children returning to the settlement after a long absence (219–21) or toward community members cursing out others, which may be influenced by alcohol use (221–22). In succeeding years, substantial ethnographic research has followed this course of investigating contrastive linguistic practice among groups classified by nationality, race, gender, and numerous other associations.

Literature reviewed briefly below pertains specifically to silence in different cultural settings, and the review is far from comprehensive. As an illustration of cross-cultural perspectives on silence, Sifianou (1997) highlights the conflicting meanings in British and Greek society of silently joining a group that is already talking. In England, the silence serves as a case of negative politeness in order to avoid interrupting an ongoing discussion; in Greece, however, failing at the beginning to vocally acknowledge other group members “is viewed as a distancing device” (74). She references Greek proverbs, such as “One should be afraid of the slow rivers,” to show specific cultural attitudes regarding silence as possibly deceitful and dangerous (76). A study of the functions of silences in storytelling in Maori and Pakeha language groups—Pakeha is the Maori word for white descendants of New Zealand’s colonizers—reviews corpus data that show Maori listeners providing one-third less verbal feedback than European-descended counterparts and fewer questions (Holmes 2003). The comparison represents a case in cultural relativity, as both groups manifest attentiveness, albeit using different techniques (115). The practical consequences for Maori, though, are serious, in that Maori schoolchildren are
sometimes viewed as passive and uninterested due to their silences. Because Pakeha conventions are seen as the norm, the Maori, representing just over 15 percent of the national population, “are typically required to adapt or to suffer the negative consequences of any resulting communication” (135).

Studies emphasizing either micro- or macro-level analyses of silence have occurred among the Hausa (Hunter 1982), Igbo (Nwoye 1985), and Yoruba (Medubi 2010) in Nigeria; Afro-Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro (Sheriff 2000); Aboriginal communities in northern Australia (Mushin and Gardner 2009); Maori and English linguistic landscapes in New Zealand (Macalister 2010); Setswana-speakers in Botswana (Bagwasi 2012); those of free and slave descent in Madagascar (Freeman 2013); the Sámi-Norwegian community in northern Norway (Johansen 2013); and Mexican American teachers in Texas (Saldaña 2013).
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter on methodology reviews reasoning behind the choice of a multiple case-study approach and the use of case studies in past second-language acquisition (SLA) research. The operationalization of silence as a case-study variable is discussed briefly before treatment of participants and research setting, data collection and analysis, and the role of the researcher as interlocutor for the three case-study subjects.

The methods in this study represent a distinct application of the “social turn” in second-language research (Block 2003). Choice of method, to be sure, is not a neutral or value-free process. Qualitative methodology assists in studying social questions, as opposed to individual learner differences, that arise from acknowledgment of the culturally embedded nature of language exchange. Second-language learners are actors situated in society, whether in their native cultures or in the culture hosting the target language. Questions such as learners’ levels of access and participation in the host country, negotiation of power dynamics, and the impacts of non-nativelike linguistic performance on identity (see Ortega 2009, 233–51) reflect a recognition that language acquisition is more than an individual question of self-determination or aptitude. In the same spirit, this study of silences in second-language acquisition strives in its method for an emic, insider’s perspective and aims “to understand the experiences of language learners in naturalistic contexts and from the perspectives of the learners themselves” (Deters 2011, 53). This embrace of a diversity of learner perspectives leads to an ontological awareness of “multiple
realities” (55) and the acceptance of first-person testimony as a legitimate data source, with the assertion that narratives of second-language learners—extending to popular language-acquisition memoirs such as Eva Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation* or David Sedaris’s *Me Talk Pretty One Day*—offer richer material for investigators than quantitative results (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, 157).

A descriptive multiple case-study design was selected due to parameters and questions—most notably English-language learners’ self-assessments of silence, an issue typically not addressed in second-language acquisition research and notoriously hard to define and measure—whose outcomes “are unclear, unknown, or unexplored” (LeCompte and Schensul 2010, 114). Another complicating factor is marking, or even finding, a boundary between contexts in which second-language silences might or might not appear (Yin 2009, 18). Better to let those, in the design of this project, with intimate knowledge and who are actively constructing stories of second-language acquisition to make such judgments. In an earlier study of L1 silences, in which participants were asked to recall earlier instances of speechlessness and potential causes and consequences, Berger writes, “Speakers themselves are in a considerably better position than are observers to shed light on the potential reasons for their speechlessness” (2004, 150).

The research ethos here is subjective, interpretive, and inductive, as case studies are characterized in qualitative-research submission guidelines for *TESOL Quarterly* (TESOL International Association n.d.). Deters (2011) distinguishes among exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. Using this taxonomy, the present research straddles the exploratory and descriptive categories, since the objective is to compile language-learning narratives for three participants with the goal to help guide future research directions. One specific interest lies
in formulating more perceptive questions to ask migrants to English-speaking cultures about how they experience, or do not experience, silence as imposed by a dominant language and by a milieu of indifference, if not outright hostility and oppression, toward newcomers judged to be of low status. Distinct from formative language-learner case studies of the 1970s and ’80s that Duff surveys (2008, 36–37), the data here were not obtained longitudinally (see Schumann 1977; Schmidt 1983; Duff 2008, 2–13, for case-study designs that analyze participant speech samples over as long as three years). Nor is this research of sufficient depth to be considered “ethnographic” in the sense of including nuanced characterization of “the culture of the group or entity under study” (LeCompte and Schensul 2010, 116; emphasis in original).

Silence, indeed, apart from pragmatic pauses when taking turns, to mark disagreement, and so on (Camargo Fernández and Méndez Guerrero 2014), is difficult to observe or to measure and, even when I try to describe the phenomenon solely through perception by “neutral” observers, does not account for the tumult of inner speech (de Guerrero 2005). Thus, silence remains inscrutable as to ultimate meaning. This project, in its self-imposed limitations, should not be confused with investigations of a “silent period” in second-language acquisition. Defining such a silent period, if it exists, is also problematic (Granger 2004, 14–22). Eliciting silence in a second language, on its face, seems like an odd endeavor. Linguists certainly can target phonetic and morphosyntactic speech tokens for elicitation, but what would constitute the gambit necessary to be assured of getting silence? Even if an experimental context were clearly delineated, how could the resulting evidence be interpreted? It is certainly possible to observe naturally occurring silences. But what do they signify? Can one tell the difference between a
native-language silence and a second-language silence? Thus, one confronts a methodological quandary centered on naming the “it” that can be defined for research purposes.

As alluded to above, the present investigation operates on the premise that silence, as defined in the context of this research, marks a self-perceived lack or absence of speech in the daily lives of case-study participants. “It” is remaining quiet, in English, when one has something to say to an English-speaker. Granger (2004), in her monograph-length study of silence as a psychological feature in SLA, also discusses the methodological impediments. The so-called silent period might describe one kind of silence, but Granger believes that learner silences might have alternative explanations. Within her methodology, she meshes linguistic with psychoanalytic theory to help explain them. In its method, therefore, the research described here chooses an abstract entity, silence, to query and allows study participants to judge the presence and quantity of such an abstraction in their own experiences of learning English. Even a more recognizable concept such as willingness to communicate has not been subject to observation in a realistic L2 setting (Ortega 2009, 203), suggesting further the provisional nature of this study in trying to establish boundaries for what data are being sought and even what questions to ask.

Participants and Setting

Three participants were recruited from a metropolitan community-based education center, where I previously had been a volunteer. Connection to this facility and its majority Latino(a) student body was integral to forming the research questions, in that anecdotal accounts from learners had helped to stimulate initial curiosity and at least to offer, if not to ensure, the
possibility that informants might be able to make sense of what was being asked. When identifying and initiating contact with prospective and the ultimate participants, however, no relationship existed between researcher and informants (see below, “Researcher Role”). The stipulation that participants be distant from native-like competence, according to accepted instruments of evaluation, while also having long-standing familiarity with bilingual contexts in the United States further made recruiting from among migrants from Latin America the best possibility for honoring these restrictions. More practically, though, I am competent to conduct interviews in Spanish but not in other L2s. The intent was to identify three subjects who might function as “typical cases” (LeCompte and Schensul 2010, 159), sharing long, contiguous periods of U.S. residence with significant exposure to naturalistic L2 input, due to an economic imperative of having to work outside the home.

Familiarity with the field setting, with its leadership and style of instruction, was useful when engaging with interviewees at a vulnerable moment. The goal of the survey and interview process, after all, was to provide insight into internal beliefs and processes of English-language learners as they ventured daily across cultural and linguistic boundaries. It is not typical, within the literature reviewed for this study, for learners to be asked about how they process and/or use silence. Through interviews, both one-to-one and as a cohort, and surveys, participants had the opportunity to disclose as much as they wanted and also to withhold. Participants received a small stipend for sitting for at least three interviews and for compiling three weeks of daily L2-use surveys, that is, for submitting data for twenty-one days of English-language interaction at their job sites and at other places.
To protect a possibly vulnerable population, participants are identified only by first-name pseudonyms and without other identifiers such as neighborhood, cities of origin, and so on. Other specifiers, such as places of work and any proper names indicating present or previous residence, are excised, if needed, from transcript data. Typed interview transcripts were stored without identifying information. Once transcribed with sufficient detail and accuracy, digital audio recordings were deleted. The three participants signed informed-consent forms that outlined these practices for protecting their identities. Text of the consent forms—in the Spanish original and English translation—appears in appendix A.

Following are sketches of the three informants. Details emerge later in chapter 4 as individual narratives are juxtaposed in the reporting and discussion of results.

Participant One (“Gabriela”)

By the day of the first interview, Gabriela had lived in the United States for sixteen years. Her level of English, using the Center for Applied Linguistics BEST Literacy scale, which measures reading and writing, was assessed before the interviews as high beginner (Form C, 53). She was born and raised in the east-central state of Veracruz, México, in a town consisting of some fifty homes. She lived on a ranch with her family. While her parents lacked a primary education, Gabriela completed secondary school at sixteen, which in modern México is a typical school-leaving age. Now in her early forties, she has two children, both of whom were born in the United States. The language of her daily interaction—at home, in the community, at church, with coworkers—is Spanish, although she practices English daily with teachers at the school
where for fourteen years she has worked as a custodian; in addition, she takes a basic English class at the community center.

Participant Two ("Miguel")

Also from Veracruz, México, Miguel fell one year short of completing the secondary grades; not long after, he migrated to the United States. He is in his mid-twenties and, at the time of the first interview, had been working in the city for eight years. He currently works as a night-shift food-packer. As with the study’s other two participants, Miguel recalls starting to labor outside the family home in his early teens. He was a seasonal agricultural worker in Veracruz, harvesting tomatoes with other members of the community. Now, after finishing work at six in the morning, he studies English at the community center. On the BEST Literacy assessment, he ranked as a low beginner (Form C, 30).

Participant Three ("Daniela")

Daniela is from Michoacán, a state in west-central México. Her mother attended primary school, and she recalls that her father reached third grade. She herself finished sixth grade but did not proceed to the secondary years; instead, she began helping her mother at home and, later, her father, an agricultural worker, growing lettuce, onions, and strawberries. Unlike Gabriela and Miguel, Daniela had worked in other parts of México, as a shop assistant in a larger city. She also remembered traveling north to the state of Guanajuato for religious gatherings, at which she heard dialectical variations of Spanish. When interviewed, Daniela, in her mid-thirties, had lived close to eleven years in the United States; she works as a meat-packer, a job she has held
for nearly three years, on the second shift, from late afternoon until leaving shortly after midnight. One limitation on her acquisition of English is the necessity of wearing noise-mitigating headphones on the job, although, in any case, her coworkers are primarily Spanish-speakers. Like Miguel, she places as a low beginner on the Best Literacy scale (Form C, 37).

Data Collection

Earlier volunteer experience at the community education center, where all the interviews occurred, enabled the development of “bridging relationships” (Schensul and LeCompte 2013, 12) with teachers and administrators who facilitated data collection, scheduling the conversation times and locations and making students available during their classes. Teachers in the beginning ESL courses themselves recruited participants (see appendix B for original recruiting document). Existence of intermediary relationships was essential to building investigator credibility, since there had been no preexisting contact between myself and potential research participants. Established community leaders and instructors explained, in Spanish, the proposed research objectives, the time commitment, and my biography, indicating the relevance of the observation that “[r]apport ultimately rests on the connections through which [researchers] have been introduced to the community setting . . .” (Schensul and LeCompte 2013, 30).

Two aspects of data collection took place in the same time period: daily responses to language surveys and semi-structured interviews. Daily surveys (see appendix C for Spanish-language questions), intended to track English use during three noncontiguous weeks, initially were prepared to work on participants’ smartphones, but later, after technology complications, were distributed and collected on paper. Thus, valid data were collected for two weeks for each
participant. Scattered results collected the first week, via electronic submission, were discarded. These daily questionnaires asked about overall English usage during the previous twenty-four hours; where and in what situations the English use occurred; subjective evaluations of the effectiveness of the conversations; and if English-language interactions had incorporated notable “silences,” according to participants’ reading of the term. The paper surveys were collected immediately before scheduled interviews.

The conversations with each participant lasted between thirty minutes to one hour, with the idea that each would be exploratory and open-ended, although structured around guiding questions asked of all the respondents (see appendix D for the list of questions, in Spanish and English, asked of each participant). All interviews were conducted in Spanish, chosen as the language of data collection in hopes of lessening learner anxiety and to maximize quality and quantity of reporting (Mackey and Gass 2016, 225). The first interview covered educational, family, and professional background and was the only interview of the three not digitally recorded; in lieu of audio, answers to a brief initial questionnaire about the utility of Spanish and English in various social situations were written down. Participants answered follow-up questions at the start of the second interview, so that relevant background information could later be transcribed. The second and third interviews dealt with individual and social factors that affect informants’ comfort level in English and use of and interpretation of silence in English-language environments. A fourth interview let participants reflect on their own experiences and respond to each other; one of the participants (Daniela) was not available for this wrap-up session. By mixing the ways that informants thought about their use of English to incorporate daily self-monitoring, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group (all spread over roughly one
month), the intent was to gain access to their assessments at different moments and to partially mitigate the problem of inaccurate first-person perceptions. The range of data-collection techniques allowed for contradictions to emerge and sensitivity to moments when participants might have been unsure of themselves, trying to meet the investigator’s expectations, or still sorting through their own ideas.

In design, the interviews, meant to address silence as both a stigmatized and potentially useful language feature (Schilling 2013, 96), sought to foster coherent narratives about language production rather than to generate any desired linguistic forms. The modular structure of each interview allowed subjects to revisit topics from previous interviews or the content of survey questions, encouraging them “to talk as long as they like on any topic that particularly interests them, to tell stories or narratives, and even to go off on tangents of their own” (Schilling 2013, 108). The trajectory moved from detailed queries in the first interview to more freely formed prompts later, as topics became potentially more sensitive. It is a model of shared meaning construction with special interest in how oppressed populations experience transitions and, more specifically, the navigation of multilingual terrain (LeCompte and Schensul 2010, 120–21; see Edley and Litosseliti 2010, 158–60, on social-constructionist insights on interviewing).

Data Analysis

Since, in the end, participants supplied daily language-use surveys on paper, these data were manually transferred to electronic spreadsheets—two weeks for each person. Survey outcomes were not subject to any quantitative analysis but served as points of cross-reference for interviewees’ own comments about attitudes toward English and subjective impressions of their
interlinguistic capabilities. Interviews two, three, and four were professionally transcribed by a native Spanish-speaker, then reviewed for accuracy, lacunae, and any missing pragmatic features. Given that no discourse analysis was intended, punctuation was added to the transcript data (Nagy and Sharma 2013, 242). Translations throughout are my own, although they have also been reviewed by native Spanish-speakers. Following extended translations, those appearing as text extracts, I add Gabriela’s, Miguel’s, and Daniela’s original words.

To partially control my subjective responses to text data, conceptual analytical categories emerged from respondents’ own language choices, described as an “analytic inductive approach” (Brown 2001, 241). These categories then were conceptualized more broadly to allow coding of transcripts and further analysis (Dörnyei 2003, 117). To offer more specifics, in one interview Gabriela was asked to broadly describe her English-language conversations. She felt they were mostly effective, partly because “I don’t take on big topics. We’re talking about topics like family . . .” This was a favorite with female teachers at her school. Because she and the other two participants all speak about one of the common functions of human speech—allowing for simple exchange and comfort between acquaintances—the excerpt merits classification under the somewhat narrow heading of “phatic speech.” But, at the same time, it also suggests a more general topic, which I call “forms and functions of human communication.” In the presentation of findings in chapter 4, the description of participant narratives encompasses representative examples (explanation building), analysis of patterns among the three case-study subjects (pattern matching and cross-case synthesis), and interpretation related to earlier study and theory (Yin 2009, 126; Mackey and Gass 2016, 232). The data “chunking” allows for identification of themes as part of a “systematic cognitive process involving comparing, contrasting, looking for
linkages, similarities, and differences, and finding sequences, co-occurrences, and absences” (LeCompte and Schensul 2010, 199).

In total, from six recorded one-on-one interviews and a concluding interview that included two of the informants, 1,714 speaking turns were transcribed; to be clear, this number reflects the total speech turns from investigator and respondents. One hundred and forty-three turns were not coded, because they dealt with administrative issues, such as the process for completing daily language-use surveys and other matters. Therefore, 1,571 turns received code numbers; in some cases, the informants’ turns, whether because of length or because they moved among topics, received as many as twelve codes. A complete list of codes, as well as the total number of turns for each speech category, is included as appendix E. The process of developing a theme codebook followed that outlined in La Pelle (2004). The result is a three-level codebook, arranged hierarchically, so that information pertaining to the research questions could be sorted and analyzed at the end.

To be as transparent as possible about the coding method, it is worth quoting at length from La Pelle and her discussion of the codebook:

[In] preparation for analysis, a theme codebook is created by reading a representative sample of interviews and noting the themes that seem to recur or that have some significance to the study. The codebook should contain a definition of each major theme and each subtheme within that major theme. The codebook assigns numerical codes to the in vivo or constructed textual theme categories being defined. These numerical codes will be used for later sorting of text data by theme code. To ensure predictability of sorting, decimal numeric codes are used for the actual theme coding and a numeric sort is done on theme codes in the data tables during analysis. (2004, 88–89)

This extract describes the process in this study, once the recordings were fully transcribed. To consider one example of coding the interview passages, the excerpt below comes from the first interview with Miguel (reproduced in my translation, followed by the original Spanish). He had
been asked about speaking English at work, whether he could identify his most pressing second-
language difficulty: grammatical structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, or something else.

Miguel answered that the problem, for him, was one of needing more real-time, face-to-face
interaction:

Because there are words where I say, “bear, I already know this word.” But like they tell
me, like we’re talking now, [but] in English, you react to what [the word] is. But if we’re
talking slowly, like [I do] with the supervisor, we speak slowly and then, yeah, I’m going
to understand. But like that [in] a direct conversation, of several minutes, no.

Porque hay palabras que digo “oso, esta palabra ya me la sabía yo.” Pero como me la
dicen, como ahorita que estamos hablando nosotros, en inglés, pues de aquí a que
reaccionar uno qué es. Pero si hablamos despacio, como con el supervisor, hablamos
despacio y entonces sí le voy entendiendo. Pero así ya una conversación directa, de
varios minutos, no.

This excerpt of four sentences in the original Spanish ultimately received seven codes so that the
sequence later could be identified as addressing L2 use in the United States (1.20), interaction at
work with bilingual speakers and native-speakers (2.15, 2.20, 2.255), inner speech in the L2
(3.410), anxieties about communication (4.05), and the role of bilingual members of the Latino
community (5.20). These themes, as La Pelle recommends, had already been pulled out and
arranged into a taxonomy, which appears in full in appendix E. The numbering of themes and
the order in which they appear is merely a relic of the sorting and analysis, and the code numbers
bear no significance in themselves. Chapter 4 adds up speaker turns, those related to L2 silence
and social factors in SLA, for each of the three informants.

Researcher Role

An inductive approach as well as the researcher acting in both the data-collection and
analytical roles are necessary features of this exploratory, qualitative project (see Deters 2011,
57). At various moments, I spoke differently than a neutral investigator might, feeling that we were collaborators in interpreting their behaviors and statements. This may have added further to my influence. Earlier involvement at the field site gave me entrée to a community of potential participants, although none of them was previously known to me: not their identities, nor their performance as language students, nor their personal histories, except as they had self-identified to meet participation requirements. Those requirements were that they were native Spanish-speakers, had lived continuously in the United States for at least five years, worked outside the home, and had not tested above a high-intermediate level as English-language learners.

Despite the methodological structure and desire for authentic data, scholarship remains an expression of autobiography. Research is “always to some degree affected by the personal training, preferences, political views, experiences, and even the neuroses of the investigators carrying them out” (LeCompte and Schensul 2010, 133). I am not immune to such biases. Nor am I immune to the power imbalances in social and linguistic status that form a constituent part of language-acquisition research among human subjects. Although, in this case, participants could use their native language with a nonnative Spanish-speaker, interviews were held in the researcher’s cultural milieu, and no one could doubt that my academic standing influenced the nature of each encounter. Conducting research in a language in which one has less than native-speaker competence, furthermore, leads inevitably to mistaken interpretations and missed opportunities that a more fluent listener could have avoided.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study proceeds by reviewing the three case studies individually, with attention to themes extracted from the daily language-use surveys and interviews. Both surveys and semi-structured interview questions asked participants about how they used their first language (Spanish) and second language (English) in specific physical and virtual environments: at home, at work, at doctors’ offices and other health-care facilities, at schools (both their community center, where they take English classes, and their children’s schools), at stores and restaurants, when worshiping, when practicing sports or recreation, at social events and parties, at governmental offices, and by phone (voice, text, and social media). Such data relate to the first research question concerning the effects of social context and linguistic environment on willingness to communicate. In the next section, within a cross-case synthesis, each person’s responses are evaluated according to how they perceive and use second-language silence in everyday interactions. Data are also analyzed for informants’ own explanations of the social factors that give rise to an unwillingness to communicate and, at times, silence. The concluding discussion considers the findings in relation to the literature and theoretical perspectives reviewed in chapter 2, then reevaluates the original research questions based on interpretation of qualitative results.
Throughout the two weeks of surveying her daily language use, Gabriela indicated that she used English between 10 and 60 percent of the time, the wide variation reflecting days when she did not work or have class. These are the places where she gets much of her L2 practice. She reported using English at work, with family, at medical offices, at her school and that of her two children, at stores, at parties, and by telephone. Her English-language conversations she rated between 60 and 100 percent effective. These daily ratings are clearly subjective and are supplied, for each of the three participants, in table 1. Among the problems she encountered, drawing directly from her written responses, were with idioms, rapidity of speech of her interlocutors, being asked to repeat herself, a rapid shift in language from Spanish to English, misunderstanding via telephone, and feelings of insecurity and nervousness. Once during the two weeks she reported staying silent to avoid speaking English, writing, “I was sorry he [or she] didn’t understand me.” Once, in a store, she felt someone avoided speaking English with her, although she was not sure: “Maybe on seeing me she realized that I spoke Spanish. She was speaking [English], and when she got to me, she helped me in Spanish.”

To survey questions administered during semi-structured interviews, Gabriela says that most of her English-language exposure comes at work, as a nighttime cleaner at a large high school, where she interacts with English-language staff, teachers and administrators, who sometimes stay on site as late as nine p.m. to monitor sporting events and concerts. “My workmates speak Spanish but the school personnel that are there speak English,” Gabriela says. “If I need something, I have to ask for it in English. If they need something, they’re going to tell
Table 1. Self-Assessments of Amount of English Use and Effectiveness of L2 Conversations, by Participant (P1 [Gabriela], P2 [Miguel], and P3 [Daniela]), as Recorded in Daily Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of survey</th>
<th>Daily English-language use (%)</th>
<th>Effectiveness of L2 use (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Day 7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 11</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

me in English.” Responding to questions in a face-to-face interview, she considers her English-language interactions overall to be between 80 and 90 percent effective, with the qualifiers that she speaks with “people that I know” and generally limits interactions to speech with a phatic function, such as keeping up with family matters. She recalls avoiding conversations in English in the past, although not now. Still, the unpredictable nature of human discourse adds, for Gabriela, an edge of uncertainty to life in an English-speaking milieu, in which people who “talk and talk and talk,” who speak quickly, or who have an unfamiliar accent convince her not to venture much with language, “not to open up a really big chat, because then it makes me afraid that I’m not going to understand them.” In English classes, however, it is the written word that creates the most anxiety.
In answer to questions about her comfort level in English in the same physical environments singled out in the daily surveys, Gabriela jokes that she never feels “extremely comfortable,” the highest mark on the ten-point Likert scale, although she does not have to worry at her older daughter’s school, where her teacher is bilingual, nor at church, sports, or social events, where the language of exchange is Spanish. Work is comfortable—she ranks it an eight—for its familiarity, her English lessons (a ten) for the bilingual instructors and lessons, and governmental offices (a seven) and doctors’ offices (an eight), because, if understanding presents a problem, there often is recourse to interpreters. Further, in Gabriela’s view, the onus is on medical professionals to figure out how to help her. Her comfort level while shopping varies according to the type of business, whether a local enterprise catering to Hispanic clientele or a chain supermarket or large department store. At the latter, the linguistic competence of the cashier is influential “because there are cashiers who don’t know how to speak Spanish.” The trend, Gabriela notes, is toward hiring more workers with Spanish-language skills. Phone conversations she ranks at eight, if they are limited to making appointments or asking basic questions.

Discomforts arise for Gabriela, interestingly, in contacts with other English-language learners and native Spanish-speakers who bring to the surface, more than native English-speakers do, Gabriela’s awareness of her own L2 limitations. Not being understood by her older daughter, who is twelve, offers such a galling possibility that Gabriela will not risk talking in English at home: “There it is uncomfortable to be speaking, since, what if she doesn’t understand me? It’s that in reality in my family the only ones who speak English are children. The adults don’t.” In text messages, her daughter instructs her mother to write in English, telling her,
“Mommy, you have to learn English.” And while teachers and administrators at the high school where Gabriela works try to understand and help her with syntax and pronunciation, Latinos who have advanced farther in their acquisition of English—“your own people,” Gabriela says—want to criticize. “It’s like,” she continues, giving an example of what a native Spanish-speaker might say to her, “‘You’re not pronouncing it right.’ ” The encouragement of or discouragement from emerging bilinguals also appear as themes in case studies two and three, with Miguel and Daniela. There is no consensus among the three participants as to whether L1 Spanish-speaking peers who have, for whatever reason, found the means or method to cultivate high English competence are an asset or hindrance to their own L2-acquisition journey.

“Miguel” as a Language Learner

Miguel reported that he uses English between 10 and 40 percent of the time in daily interactions. These English-language contacts occur at work, with family, at the community center where he studies English, at stores, when playing soccer, at parties, and by telephone. He rates these contacts as between 30 and 50 percent effective and attributes the challenges to a lack of English-language conversation partners and, most often during the two weeks in which he completed paper surveys, to his status as a second-language learner. Once, at work, Miguel recorded that another person avoided speaking English with him. “Maybe he didn’t hear me, or maybe he was busy,” Miguel writes. Not once during the two weeks did he opt for silence over trying to communicate in English.

In the interviews, Miguel distinguishes between “direct” L2 conversations and those that are influenced by the interlocutor’s awareness of his developing English competence.
Encounters with those who only speak English (“someone who knows it 100 percent, perfectly, who doesn’t speak Spanish at all”), for Miguel, are the most difficult, because “there are words that I don’t understand yet. And I’m like, ‘What’s going on? How do I answer?’ . . . I feel like I’m going to mess up, that I’m not going to understand everything. And then after [they speak], What am I going to say to them?” He uses the word “fear” (miedo) to describe such moments: “That’s my fear, to be in a situation like that and not know what to do.” There is no one present to help Miguel at these times, and the person he is talking to does not take into account that Miguel is still learning English. His work supervisor, however, and coworkers who are likewise bilingual and know Miguel’s linguistic capabilities speak more slowly in English. They are invested in Miguel’s efforts to acquire the language and, to Miguel, are cognizant of their role as on-the-job teachers. Miguel’s supervisor “is bilingual and, so, he teaches us. There’s another young guy who also goes to school and also talks to us in English.”

He rates his overall effectiveness as an English communicator as four out of ten, noting that he only began to take language classes consistently after six years in the United States. The first frustrating attempt had occurred two years earlier, when friends encouraged him to enroll in adult education:

I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know the basics. [. . .]¹ And my self-esteem dropped. Because I got there in the beginning-level classroom, and you get there without knowing anything. When the teacher arrived and said, “Hi, good morning,” we started to speak only English. And I said [in Spanish], “Excuse me, I have a question,” and she told me, “Only English.” But I didn’t know anything. Not the basics, nothing. It was . . . all of us were starting from zero. But the teacher was bad. She was bad. She got angry and said, “No, you all are burros,” and this and that. And we told her, “But how are we going to learn if you don’t teach us the fundamentals, like ‘hello’ or ‘good morning’ to interact with you?” She said no, that we should buy a book and that we had to study and talk to

¹ Within the broad transcriptions of Spanish and the translations, an ellipsis in brackets [. . .] marks elided text. Ellipses not contained in brackets represent pauses, repairs, reformulations, and the like.
her. I only went for one week. I didn’t like that setup. Because like that, you’re not going to learn like that.

[N]o sabía pues yo nada. No sabía yo lo básico. [. . .] Y mi autoestima pues, me la bajaron. Porque yo llegué ahí y en el primer salón, y pues uno llega sin saber nada, y cuando la maestra llegaba y decía “hi, good morning” y nos empezaba a hablar puro inglés. Y le decía “disculpe, tengo una pregunta” y me decía “sólo inglés.” Pues pero si yo no sabía nada. Ni lo básico ni nada. No, no. Éra . . . todos íbamos empezando en cero. Pero la maestra era mala. Mala era. Enojona y decía “no, ustedes son burros” y que esto, que lo otro. Y decíamos, “pero cómo vamos a aprender si nos debe de enseñar lo básico, como hola o buenos días para interactuarlo con usted.” No dice, que compremos un libro y que teníamos que ir aprendiendo y hablarlo con ella. Ya, sólo fui una semana. Entonces no me gustó el trato. Porque, así pues, no va uno a aprender así.

Miguel’s persistence took him to the community center where he studies now. These instructors are bilingual and allow students to switch between Spanish and English. His current comfort level in speaking English at work is attenuated in that only the conversations with his supervisor, whose bilingualism Miguel sees as a resource for fellow Latinos, put him at ease. He wishes he felt more comfortable “to start speaking it with more people . . . with coworkers, with friends, or with anyone,” yet also gives himself credit for his resourcefulness and remembers small victories, such as a time he accompanied his cousin, stopped on multiple occasions for driving without a license, to a courthouse. “We were asking around, mostly me,” Miguel says, “asking where the room was or where we should go in. And, yeah, I felt comfortable.” He alludes to a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies to explain his work routine of eating for a half-hour during the meal break and studying the rest of the time, watching pronunciation videos and utilizing smartphone-based language-learning applications. In public, faced with the alternative of staying quiet or stumbling forward with imperfect language knowledge, technology gives Miguel a way to counter the cognitive challenge, for example, of accessing vocabulary. He uses his smartphone to look up words—such as dessert at a restaurant
with his cousin—in preference to using human translators or other strategies, like using hand signals or avoiding the interaction entirely (and having to go without dessert).

Improvement in English, in Miguel’s mind, is linked directly to workplace promotion. “If you can learn English,” his supervisor tells him, “you can be a supervisor, too, and have a salary, not be paid by the hour anymore.” In addition, Miguel realizes that the language skills would benefit him even in México. “A lot of doors are opened for you,” including in airports and other tourist locations. He characterizes debates with Mexican workers who do not study English as ongoing conversations, with well-known lines of argument. Miguel says friends ask him why he persists with language study “if you’re not from here and you don’t have papers,” meaning a legal entry visa. “Someday they’re going to send you back to your country,” says Miguel, continuing to paraphrase his detractors, “or you’re going to go back to your country, and who are you going to help there by speaking English? There in your town, no one’s going to know it.” These negative external voices, which Miguel says are in the minority, nevertheless encourage him further to show that his investment will bear fruit. “Whether here or in México, it will be useful for me. It’s something you learn. It’s something, I think, it’s what life is about: if you like it, learn it, do it. . . . If they believe that I can’t [learn English], then I’m going to show them that I can.” Miguel’s comments consistently point to a complicated dynamic that English-language learners from Latin America might face when trying to leverage the skills of bilingual speakers as potential allies in their own learning while at the same time trying to tune out negativity from those in their own community who reject their fellow migrant’s ambitions or who, for whatever reason, do not want to help.
“Daniela” as a Language Learner

A second-shift worker at a meat-packing plant, from three in the afternoon to twelve thirty in the morning, Daniela’s language-learning history is a bit more complex than that of Gabriela and Miguel. For family reasons, she ended her schooling after sixth grade and traveled from rural Michoacán to larger cities for work. Starting at sixteen years old, she began to interact with other types of Spanish, which she calls a “more educated” variety. At religious retreats, she heard other dialects and indigenous languages that she did not understand. Despite ending her formal schooling earlier than both Gabriela and Miguel, Daniela speaks with awareness of the potential of language and of her own potential as a language learner. She says of interacting with city dwellers during her two- or three-month temporary jobs in México, “Sometimes you don’t know how to say things. You don’t know how to use the right words.” But she acquired new vocabulary and “later you’re going to understand how to use many [new] words.”

In her written surveys of English-language use for this study, Daniela consistently ranks her effectiveness between 30 and 50 percent. In her daily comments, she describes a self-conscious strategy of venturing only the language that she has used successfully before. On one day, she writes, “Only what I am able to pronounce so that [people] understand me is what I say.” As with Gabriela and Miguel, the most dependable place for her to practice is the job. In fact, the only two other settings in which she mentions using English are her English classes and while shopping—never with family, with doctors, in government offices, at social gatherings, or in any of the other locations named in surveys and semi-directed interview questions. On two of the fourteen days surveyed, she admits to not using English at all. On three days, she only used
English at work, where, as mentioned above, speaking is limited by noisy machinery. Six times she reports being “not sure” that someone avoided speaking English with her. “Maybe they thought that I don’t understand English,” she writes about several different incidents. One time she was unsure if she herself had opted for silence over speech, suggesting that the reason was “because there are only a few words that I know in English.”

Expanding on the survey data in interviews, Daniela refers not to a single second-language environment, such as a particular store or interlocutor, as the most challenging, but “the moment of speaking” (el momento de hablar) writ large. At that instant, she describes an internal cognitive hiccup, the sensation of not being able to remember the word she wants to use “until a little while has passed.” She refers to such cognitive delays with both input (reception) and output (production). The result, for her, is the same: “In the moment, I don’t get it right.”

The L2 l’esprit de l’escalier, for Daniela, occurs at work and in shops; the lapses are not confined to certain places. Similarly, she does not name one place where she feels most comfortable experimenting with language. Rather, the almost daily experience of facing the momento de hablar, for its frequency or for some unknown reason unique to Daniela, has become a comfort zone in that she accepts the unpredictability. This is not the only occasion among participant interviews in which spoken testimony partially contradicts, or seems to contradict, what informants wrote down in the paper surveys. While Daniela, in writing, reflects that she offers no more in speech than what her interlocutors will understand, in the interviews she replies:

If I don’t understand or don’t know what to say, no . . . well, no, it doesn’t bother me. Because I say, “No, I don’t understand you,” or, “Yes, I understand you.” That’s it. But I feel the same, whether I say that I understood a tiny bit of what they were talking about,
if I understand only a few words, or if I don’t understand, or don’t know. I say, “I don’t know what you said.”

O sea si no entiendo o no sé hablar, no . . . pues no, no me incomoda. Porque digo “no, no le entiendo” o “sí le entiendo.” Y ya. Pero yo me siento igual. Si le digo que le entendi poquito a lo que hablen. Entiendo así poquitas palabras. O si no entiendo, o no sé, digo “no sé qué dijo.”

In this manner, Daniela for the most part manages to bypass self-criticism in her interview answers to emphasize survival and resourcefulness. A few things she understands in English, most things she does not. To her, these are facts, not value judgments. In her internal classification system, she ranks her capacity to communicate in English as four out of ten.

Several times she repeats, “What I understand is what I’m able to say.” Although the contexts in which she uses English are circumscribed, she does not consciously avoid unfamiliar places or situations:

I go anywhere, just like that. Many times I’ve gone places where there are only English-speakers. And I ask them things in Spanish and they tell me they don’t speak Spanish. So I . . . I bring a word to my mind. One, two, or three words that I can say in that moment so that they understand me, that’s what I try to say. I try to say [the words] so that I . . . speaking a tiny bit of English, one, two, or three words, if they understood me then I feel comfortable. And I know that I am obligated to say one, two, or three [words]. Whatever I know, I have to say it when I’m with people that don’t speak Spanish.

[V]oy a cualquier lado. Así. Muchas veces he ido a lugares a donde hay pura persona que habla inglés. Y luego yo les pregunté en español y ya me dicen que no hablan español. Ya, entonces yo . . . ya traigo a mi mente la palabra. Una, dos o tres palabras que yo pueda hablar en ese momento para que me entiendan yo trato de hablarlos. Yo trato de hablarlas para que yo . . . hablando un poquito de inglés, una, dos o tres palabras, si ya me entendieron ya me siento cómoda. Y sé que me siento obligada a hablar una, dos o tres, lo que sepa lo tengo que hablar cuando estoy entre personas que no hablan español.

The theme of obligation, positively construed, recurs among the three interviewees. For Daniela, on her arrival in the United States as a single woman in her early twenties, she faced an economic imperative to earn money. To work, she had to take public transport. Not knowing
English could not deter her. Spanish-speaking coworkers gave her notes on her daily commute, what color trains to take, where to catch the right bus. She tried not to let language limit her:

Where I was living there are a lot of shops and there were Chinese [stores], and some others Indian. [. . .] I also . . . I didn’t stay cooped up by saying, “If I go out, I’m not going to understand or they’re not going to understand me, or I . . .” No. I went out. I went to look at the shops. I looked at the shoes, the clothes, whatever. I kept looking at things. And if they spoke to me in English, I didn’t understand. But later, as I say, little by little, [I learned] with a cousin or my cousins. I heard things that [people] said. But mostly my cousin, then she did teach me a few words. Then later she tells me, “No, so, you tell him, ‘No, no thank you,’ tell him no, thank you, that you don’t want it.” Things like that. And then she told me, “No, don’t say anything more than, ‘Okay,’” and that way you’re saying that it’s all right.” Like that, some little things, and I tried to remember them. And then I would go anywhere, even though they didn’t understand me or even though I didn’t understand.

Like Gabriela, Daniela confesses to being much more comfortable with the spoken word than with writing. But to her, these anxieties about writing can be worked out in the classroom.

Human interpreters help her get by in medical and government offices. With family, in church, on the telephone—these are Spanish-only settings. Her love of shopping, however, has lured her into a world of multilingual exchange, where, ever since leaving México, “The language has never worried me. Never.” When initially making purchases in the United States, she studied the cash-register screens until she learned the spoken numbers. With the boost from such self-generated confidence, Daniela now believes that she can initiate small conversations while
shopping, for example, or when talking about others’ children, or ordering coffee. The chats for which she provides the most detail are transactional and are those in which Daniela can voice her preference. She mentions storekeepers showing her items for purchase:

And when I see it, I say, “Oh, that’s beautiful,” and then what I can say in English. I say it’s beautiful, that I like it. And I say that the color, the names [of the colors] . . . I use the name of the color and I tell them that it’s beautiful. Like that. A few things.

Y cuando lo veo y ya digo “Oh, que está bonito.” Y así lo que yo puedo hablar en inglés. Yo le digo que está bonito. Que me gusta. Y yo le digo que el color, los nombres . . . se me sale el nombre del color y les digo que está bonito. Así. Pocas cosas.

Multiple Case-Study Synthesis:

Silences and Social Context in Participants’ L2 Acquisition Narratives

The previous section dealt primarily with the three participants’ life circumstances, including job, family, and patterns of daily interaction, and their willingness to communicate in assorted settings and situations. These are issues related to the first research question. The second governing research question concerns contextual influences on learner silences and related questions about rules for maintaining or breaking silence, possible benefits and drawbacks of silence, and participants’ interpretations of others’ silences, both in their native México and the L2 milieu. This section, therefore, engages in more synthesized reporting and analysis of informants’ replies to semi-structured and open-ended questions.

Drawing from the 1,571 coded speaking turns, table 2 shows the number of turns that address each theme within six individual interviews with the three participants. The aim in presenting the material in this fashion is not to add a quantitative dimension to a qualitative methodology; rather, the two subsequent tables condense information into digestible format and
preview forthcoming narrative content covering the informants’ strategies for being silent and interpretations of silence in daily life (codes 3.40 through 3.45), as well as their subjective evaluation of social factors related to their acquisition of English (codes 5.05 through 5.20).

The first line of data in table 2, the level represented by code 3.05 (phatic speech), indicates that there are twenty turns in the two recorded face-to-face interviews with Gabriela (P1) that cover phatic speech—most often, in her case, these are Gabriela’s ritualized greetings with fellow employees and teachers at the high school where she works as a nighttime cleaner. In comparison, interviews with Miguel yield four turns on the same theme (3.05) and five for Daniela. Speaking turns may contain one word or several hundred; that is, there is no way to know, from the raw totals, how much content each theme contains. To provide more information about what the raw numbers represent, each participant’s totals also incorporate speaking turns from the researcher. Turn totals do not include the sequences from the concluding group interview, because Daniela was not able to attend the final group interview. Thus, table 2 culls themes from 534 codable speaking turns contained in interviews with Gabriela, from 392 turns with Miguel, and from 444 turns with Daniela. As discussed in chapter 3 on methodology, these sequences could receive multiple codes depending on the content of the speaker’s turn. If a turn consisted of nothing more than affirmation or negation (sí or no) or a pragmatic marker and turn-filler such as mm-hmm, oh, ajá, okay, pues, and so on, this pragmatic marker was coded according to the theme or themes under discussion at that moment.

One more note about the hierarchical arrangement of table 2. The system is purely conceptual and not intended to facilitate quantification. For example, level two includes “social barriers to L2 acquisition” (code 5.15). Three specific examples of social barriers appear
Table 2. Selected Themes with Total Speaking Turns, by Participant (P1 [Gabriela], P2 [Miguel], and P3 [Daniela]), in Individual Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.000</td>
<td><strong>Forms and functions of human communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>Phatic speech (introductions, politeness, etc.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Informative communication</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Economic transactions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Metalinguistic communication (school-based language learning and correction and strategies outside school)/code switching</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Writing (includes texting)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>Emotional and cultural exchange/friendship</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>Silent strategies &amp; interpretations of silence</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.405</td>
<td>Perceived lack of linguistic competence and chances for miscommunication</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>Mental rehearsal, turn-taking, and inner speech</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.415</td>
<td>Avoidance of conflict and linguistic discrimination</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.420</td>
<td>Listening &amp; nonverbal participation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.425</td>
<td>Imposed or enforced silences (including excess noise)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.430</td>
<td>Emotional and legal self-protection, fatigue, and anger</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.435</td>
<td>Preference for technology as L2 intermediary (e.g., smartphone-based translator)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Strategies to circumvent silence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.000</td>
<td><strong>Social factors in second-language acquisition (SLA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>L1 and L2 cultural differences</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Latino demographics and bilingualism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Social barriers to L2 acquisition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.155</td>
<td>Discrimination and anti-Mexican bias</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.160</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.165</td>
<td>Economic imperatives, including childcare</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>Supportive and challenging roles of bilingual members of Latino community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
immediately below, on level three (codes 5.155 through 5.165). Yet the speaking turns in level three are not double counted so that the theme at the higher level (5.15) provides an accurate total of the related sequences below. In other words, speaking turns that address “discrimination and anti-Mexican bias” (code 5.155) are coded separately and not added to the more comprehensive concept in level two. There is no overlap, which is clear from the numerical totals: just four turns pertain to social barriers in general, but forty-two to the narrower theme of discrimination and bias.

Table 3, again in the interest of condensation, lists the questions in the concluding one-on-one interviews that deliberately target silences. (Appendix D contains all the questions, in Spanish and in English translation, asked of all three informants at each of three one-on-one interviews.) Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela were asked these questions (in Spanish), using identical phrasing, in the sequence as given. The three righthand columns track short answers for each; “long answer” appears when the answer is too expansive to appear in tabular format. Regarding the Likert-scale questions in the bottom half of table 3, “N/A” indicates where the participants did not provide a clear numerical response. The question about use of English at children’s schools does not pertain to Miguel and Daniela, who do not have children. The short answer “Spanish only” means that, for those respondents, they use Spanish all the time in these contexts and chose not to speculate about English-only variants of such settings.

Both tables can serve as references while reading the reporting of results, which are arranged according to the table 2 themes that address silence and social context. That is, the syntheses to follow proceed in order through the shortened codebook (the full version appears in appendix E), starting with silent strategies and interpretations (code 3.40) and treating
Table 3. Interview Questions about L1 and L2 Silences, with Short Answers by Participant (P1 [Gabriela], P2 [Miguel], and P3 [Daniela])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you quieter in English [L2] than in your mother tongue [L1]?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your interpretation of silent responses in English [L2]?</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there situations in which you stay silent instead of speaking in English [L2]?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that silence is useful in some situations, or is it a problem?</td>
<td>no, not useful</td>
<td>no, not useful</td>
<td>yes, useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your native country, in México, in your mother tongue [L1], how do others react when you stay silent?</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you respond in México when others stay silent?</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there positive and negative silences in your country?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you limit your speech more in English [L2] than in Spanish [L1]?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it is more important to stay silent in the United States than in your native country?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there things that you need to say in English [L2] that you cannot get across?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does others’ silence affect you, or your own silence, when you are trying to practice or learn English [L2]?</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
<td>long answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the probability that you might stay silent in the following situations, with the assumption that the people you are talking to only understand English [L2]? Classify each from “0” to “10,” where “0” means “zero probability” and “10” means “extreme probability.”</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the workplace?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With your family?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With doctors, dentists, and other health professionals?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your school?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your children’s school?</td>
<td>Spanish only</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While shopping?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In places of worship?</td>
<td>Spanish only</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Spanish only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While you play sports or participate in another form of recreation?</td>
<td>Spanish only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At parties or other social events?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Spanish only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In governmental offices, courthouses, or Social Security offices?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the telephone?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
subordinate topics in turn. A total of nine level-two and level-three themes address silences; for ease of exegesis, these are conflated to eight: “mental rehearsal, turn-taking, and inner speech” (3.410) is combined with “listening and nonverbal participation” (3.420). Six themes contain most of the speaking turns about social factors in second-language acquisition, which will be discussed below in three brief syntheses. (“Avoidance of conflict and linguistic discrimination” [3.415] is combined with “discrimination and anti-Mexican bias” [5.155], and “isolation” [5.160] merges with “economic imperatives, including childcare” [5.165]). The level-two category “social barriers to L2 acquisition” (code 5.15), as alluded to above, encompasses too few speaking turns (four) and therefore is deleted from the reporting.

Silent Strategies and Interpretations of Silence (3.40)

Table 2 shows 333 speaking turns for this theme, a large number that reflects, first, the quantity of prepared and spontaneous questions geared to participants’ experience of L2 silence in their daily lives and, second, that participants were not guided directly to discuss the related categories that emerged in level three (codes 3.405 through 3.435). The latter, more finely grained strategies and motivations for L2 silences came from their own reflections and storytelling and, likely for this reason, are more dispersed in the data.

All three participants were asked if they avoided places or situations where they might have to speak English. Some literature classifies avoidance within nonnative-speaker discourse as noncommunication, or a variety of nonengagement (Gass and Varonis 1991, 124). The problematic communication (which is noncommunication) can be initiated by either party. Gass and Varonis provide examples of a student avoiding a nonnative-speaker conversation partner
when “particularly tired.” The native-speaker in this case “would turn around and walk the other way so as not to engage in what would undoubtedly be a difficult and stressful conversation.”

Another person tells of avoiding bank tellers in San Francisco because “he feared communicative difficulty” with those who appeared to be nonnative-speakers of English (124). Gabriela and Daniela, from the present study, state that fatigue and internal calculations about how much energy or security they might lose in trying to speak English explain some of their L2 avoidance.

More directly than the other two participants, Gabriela admits to reducing her L2 speech output in a way that, in México—in an environment of what she terms *bromistas* (“jokers”)—would not happen. The first L2 self-limiting, or silencing, technique that occurs to her is “evading people” at work. She continues:

> If I see that they are talkers, then it’s better to make sure I don’t look at them. [...] Or when they’re having a conversation, and I feel that they’re starting to talk about things that I’m not going to understand, I tell them I’m sorry, but I have to go now, that [someone is] waiting for me. [...] Now it’s less often, but before it did make me afraid. Ever since I started to work there, the teachers have been very kind. But those who talked the most with me, I evaded them. If I saw that they were there, I went around their classrooms to come back when they’d already left because I was afraid they would talk to me.

_Pues si veo que tienen mucha plática, pues mejor me hago que no las miro. [...] [O] cuando están teniendo una conversación, y yo siento que ya están entrando en conversaciones que no le voy a entender, nada más les digo que lo siento, pero que me tengo que ir ya, que me están esperando. [...] Ahora ya menos, pero antes sí me daba como mucho temor. Hasta cuando yo empecé a trabajar ahí, las maestras siempre han sido muy amables. Pues yo a las que más platicaban conmigo, las evadía. Si yo las veía que estaban ahí, rodeaba sus salones para llegar donde ellas cuando ya se habían ido porque me daba temor que me hablaran._

Daniela, on the other hand, characterizes herself by nature as a quieter person. She claims the role of listener in both the L1 and L2—“I feel happier listening than talking and talking”—balancing her listening strategy with the occasional aside to male or female English-speaking
coworkers, wondering if they are tired or liked the work they were doing that day. But sometimes the silences are involuntary, a kind of cognitive surrender:

The problem would be when you’re tired. Because, when you’re tired, even my head hurts. So they can be talking in Spanish and you won’t understand. […] Sometimes you don’t give conversations any importance. So then I don’t understand. Not in Spanish or in English. If you’re tired, weary, when you’re tired even in your head . . . it pains you. That’s the problem. When you’re tired like that, [with] a tired mind, I don’t understand [anything].

El problema sería como cuando uno está cansado. Porque sí, cuando uno está cansado, así que hasta la cabeza me duele. Pues pueden estar conversando hasta en español y pues no entiende uno. […] A veces no le da uno importancia a conversaciones. Entonces así, no entiendo. Ni en español ni en inglés. Si ya uno está cansado como el cansancio . . . cuando está uno cansado que hasta la cabeza sí. . . . Le duele a uno. Es el problema. Cuando está uno cansado así, con la mente que . . . cansada, así. No entiendo.

Interactional avoidance is also a solution for those who, for whatever reason, do not want to learn the L2 (Siegel 2003, 192). But since all three participants have persisted with L2 education even after long sojourns in the United States, the explanation is less likely. Miguel, as his short answers in table 3 show, maintains resoluteness in facing communicative challenges and sees silence, for him, as a dangerous option. He does feel anxiety rise, however, in medical or government offices; at the doctor’s, he worries that by talking he might end up with an unwanted blood exam. But, generally, the greater risk is silence. In the final plenary interview with Gabriela and Miguel, the two discuss the philosophy that even the certainty of making L2 errors should not be enough to dissuade them from talking:

Gabriela: […] If you’re fighting for something and you keep quiet for not knowing how to say it, you’re risking that with your silence you lose a lot.

Miguel: Yes.

Researcher: And what are you losing? You are losing chances to learn?
Miguel: To learn . . .

Gabriela: To see [things] better, to . . .

Miguel: To improve.

Researcher: Or maybe opportunities that you can’t know about?

Gabriela: Right.

Gabriela: [. . .] Si estás luchando por algo y te quedas callado por no saberlo decir, pues te estás arriesgando a que, con tu silencio, pierdes mucho.

Miguel: Sí.

Investigador: ¿Y que están perdiendo? ¿Están perdiendo oportunidades para aprender?

Miguel: Para aprender . . .

Gabriela: Para ver mejor, para . . .

Miguel: Para mejorar.

Investigador: ¿O tal vez oportunidades que no sepan?

Gabriela: Ajá.

In another interview, as we talk about her experiences with medical translators (and the necessity at times of waiting for one to become available), Gabriela raises a complex internal sensibility that melds Norton’s notion of investment, extrinsic motivations, an adult sojourner’s sense of responsibility, and an obligation to her two children:

Now it’s not easier [to stay silent] because, there are times that one kept quiet [before], but now not so much. Because now you . . . before I didn’t think about these things. When we arrived here, you come with the mentality that you come to work and to try to help your family that you left there [in México]. But when the years go passing by, it’s more necessary for us now that we start to think about staying here. Then we say, “What am I doing here? I have to learn how to speak English.” I’m in a country where I have to speak English. It doesn’t have the obligation, this country, to provide translators for everything. It’s my responsibility. If I’m here, it’s my duty to speak it. [. . .] If I’m here, I have to speak English.
Ya no es más fácil porque ahora ya, como que, hay veces que se quedaba uno callado, pero ya no tanto. Porque ahora uno ya . . . antes no pensaba en las cosas. Cuando nosotros llegamos aquí, vienes con la mentalidad de que vienes a trabajar y a tratar de ayudar a tu familia, que dejas allá. Pero ya cuando van pasando los años, pues para nosotros ya nos es más necesario, y ya empezamos a quedarnos aquí. Entonces decimos “¿qué estoy haciendo aquí? Tengo que aprender a hablar inglés.” Estoy en un país donde necesito hablar inglés. No tienen la obligación, este país, de poner traductores en todo. Es mi obligación. Si yo estoy aquí, es mi obligación de yo hablarlo. [...] Si yo estoy aquí, yo tengo que hablar inglés.

Perceived Lack of Linguistic Competence and Chances for Miscommunication (3.405)

Among the seven level-three themes dealing with silent strategies, silence as a result of perceived linguistic inferiority and feared miscommunication prevails as the topic mentioned in the most interview sequences (113). The L2 learner’s anxiety about communicative competence has consistently shown itself a key variable in tests of willingness-to-communicate modeling. In one of the earliest WTC models, the concept was expressed as “state communicative self-confidence,” itself constituted by perceived competence and lack of anxiety (MacIntyre et al. 1998, 549). That these are the “most immediate determinants of WTC” when considering language-learner traits has been affirmed in multiple studies (e.g., Hashimoto 2002; Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak 2014), both in language classrooms and in an L1 when talking to doctors—another context of perceived disparities in fluency. Baker and Watson conclude that “[w]hen patients feel that they can communicate, it influences the likelihood that they will” (2015, 635).

Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela all have their own versions of this gnawing concern about garbled messages that Daniela expresses as something most closely approximating the WTC construct: the worry that, at the moment of speech, miscommunication becomes an inevitability.
Receiving incomprehensible input seems less of a concern for her. She has a one-word response for these situations: “sorry.” “I say, ‘A little English.’ A little. And now they know that I’m not understanding them.” Regarding her own speech production, however, she affirms that silence has become even more of a companion for her in the United States than it was in México. In describing how she assimilates content learned in community-center English classes, Daniela reproduces her inner speech and the mechanics of interlanguage process:

Right now in class, I’ve learned some . . . some . . . like some questions and some responses. But even with that, sometimes it’s forgotten when the time comes to talk. At the time of speaking, I say [to myself], it’s [just] one thing: “I already had it here. I already knew how it’s said.” And no, it’s gone. It’s forgotten. Then it’s trying to remember. Remembering to be able to say it or explain. Because it’s forgotten. Or sometimes you know one word but the other is missing. And I say [to myself], “Oh, but it’s said like this and like this.” And no. Sometimes you forget it at the moment of speaking or asking. Because sometimes you can’t say the complete sentence. The complete sentence. Only half comes out, and the other half . . . but there are a lot of situations where I say, “Ay, how do you say this?” And you stay that way, “How do I say it? What is it?” Because sometimes you only remember half. Half the sentence.

Gabriela uses the words *despair* and *barrier*, referring to her own internal messaging system that warns her of linguistic dangers. Despite, in the written surveys of daily language use, ranking her English-language interactions as highly effective, memories linger of perceived failures, recent ones and enduring. The Friday before this second face-to-face interview, Gabriela had
Gabriela recounts searching ranks of cashiers for someone who “looks like” they speak Spanish.

Asked about the source of her fears, whether it is internal or external, she answers, “It’s one’s own, one’s own unconscious: ‘Ay, and what if they don’t understand me? And if I say something and they don’t know what it is? And if they answer me and I don’t know what to say back?’ That is one’s fear.”

Miguel senses his vulnerability most when talking to native-speakers. He cannot always be sure if the coworker who does not respond to his greeting on the packing floor late at night was distracted by the noise of machinery. Sometimes he attributes racist motivations to state workers at the motor-vehicle bureau: “There are people who say, ‘No, if you can’t speak . . . then
wait until those in the line pass by.” Both silence and speech entail risks. The chance of not being understood “is one of the biggest risks that I take. I can speak and tell them and do so much. And I studied all that time to tell them and then, when the moment comes, they don’t understand me. So I think it’s a risk.”

Mental Rehearsal, Turn-Taking, Inner Speech, and Listening (3.410, 3.420)

Saville-Troike, borrowing from the sociological analysis of David Riesman, applies the phrases “inner-directed” and “other-directed” to childhood second-language learners (1988, 567–68). The idea is to counter the impression that limited speech production in an L2 indicates passivity, rather than the active participation of a learner who has “gone underground” and uses private speech to make sense of L2 input. She sees inner-directed learners during this “silent period” (see Krashen 1985, 9–12) refraining from initiating exchanges and producing “little if any overt social verbalization in the second language” (1988, 568). The process has also been attested among intermediate and advanced adult L2 learners of Spanish. Centeno-Cortés and Jiménez Jiménez view private verbal thinking (PVT) as part of the L2 reasoning process and affirm that not all unfinished or fragmented L2 utterances are breakdowns, but “when accompanied by a long silence . . . could also indicate that the thinking went underground in the form of inner speech” (2004, 20). Private speech might act as internalization, rehearsal, covert participation, self-regulation during a task, or as a form of self-criticism or understanding (8–9; see also de Guerrero 2005, 154–60).

Among the three participants in this study, Daniela advocates most explicitly for silent acquisition. It serves her disposition. Interviews with her account for twenty of the twenty-
seven speaking turns covering these two level-three themes. Furthermore, utilizing community resources, primarily other L1 Spanish-speakers learning English and her community-center language classes, she has made a study of chain restaurants such as Starbucks and McDonald’s. The relatively fixed menu items, predictable language exchanges, and most especially the foreknowledge and potential for rehearsal suit Daniela’s learning style; at relatively low risk, she can experience successful linguistic and economic transactions and learn to appreciate novel items like iced coffee, which does not feature in México. Now, she passes on her techniques to friends. For one woman, who likes hamburgers with bacon—extra bacon—Daniela arranged for her to practice with a bilingual server, whom she instructed, “Tell her that you want it with extra bacon.” To her friend, she said, “Listen.” Since the woman’s husband, too, is bilingual, Daniela advocated that her friend take a more active role in such exchanges. “He orders,” Daniela says, referring to the husband. “And he pays. So I told her, ‘If you don’t order, at least listen. Listen to what he’s saying.’ I tell her, ‘Listen. And for whatever you like, learn how it’s said,’ I say, ‘so that you can ask for it like that.’ ”

This research project does not claim any linkage here between internalization and social production, with private speech the conveyor (de Guerrero 2005, 157). It is worth taking pedagogical note, though, of Daniela’s mindful approach and of her broader application of an action-reflection model to language and daily affairs:

A positive silence is when one is thinking most of the time about situations that one has. [. . .] It’s not being silent only to be angry or to be sad. It’s for thinking about a solution. Sometimes one is thinking silently, and maybe in a moment one can convey to another person, “Now I’ve thought about what I’m going to do. Now I’ve thought about it.” And one can have another attitude now that you know what you’re going to do. People sometimes, [they say,] “She was really quiet, and then she began to smile. She knows what she’s going to do.” And they’re surprised, right? “And now what are you talking about? I saw you really quiet and now you know what you’re going to do.” And one
changes one’s attitude. [. . .] And [then] maybe one starts a conversation with another person. And the silence is over. [. . .] And one changes their attitude and it makes you happier. And one ceases their thinking, because now you’ve thought how to fix a problem that was making you spin around. And there are positive conversations, positive, now that you’ve changed your mind. And now you say, “I’ll do this differently.” And there are positive conversations. From silence. That’s what I think.

Un silencio positivo es cuando uno está pensando a lo mejor en situaciones que uno tiene. [. . .] No es estar en silencio solo por estar enojado o por estar triste. Si no por estar pensando en la solución. A veces está uno en silencio pensando, y de momento a lo mejor uno le puede expresar a otra persona, “Ya, ya pensé como le voy a hacer.” “Ya pensé.” Y puede uno expresar otra actitud. Ya, ya sé cómo le voy a hacer. Y ya. Las personas a veces . . . “Y ahora estaba muy callada, y ahora ya empezó a sonreír. Ya sabe cómo le va a hacer.” Y se sorprenden, ¿no? “¿Y ahora de que hablas? Te miré muy callada y ahora que ya sabes que vas a hacer . . .” Y cambia la actitud de uno. [. . .] Y a lo mejor empieza uno una conversación con una persona. Y se acabó el silencio. [. . .] Y cambia uno la actitud de ponerse uno más contento. Y deja uno de estar pensando, porque ya pensó uno como solucionar un problema que estaba uno ahí dándole vueltas. Y hay conversaciones positivas. Positivas, ya de que le cambia a uno la mente. Y dice ya, “Haré esto diferente.” Y hay conversaciones positivas. De un silencio. Es lo que yo pienso.

Avoidance of Conflict, Linguistic Discrimination, and Anti-Mexican Bias (3.415, 5.155)

Dittmar and von Stutterheim (1985, 135–36), in working through the relationship between the language of migrant workers in Western Europe in the early 1980s and the migrants’ social experience, reference the social-identity theory of Tajfel and Turner. Within this conception of social in- and out-groups, encounters at the intergroup pole (on the far end of a continuum on which the opposite pole features relations determined by interpersonal connection) will be shaped by group members’ knowledge of these social categories. The intergroup contacts include linguistic exchanges, and this intergroup approach has also been applied to SLA (Siegel 2003, 189–90), with some confirmation from Sachdev and Bourhis that “high status group members discriminate so as to maintain their positive social identities” (1991, 18).
Interaction between language groups, in this model, will go a long way toward determining L2 attainment. A related model of interethnic boundaries also suggests that miscommunication asserts a “social need” for separation between self and other (Dittmar and von Stutterheim 1985, 136).

There are insufficient data in the present research to offer substantive critique or support to the intergroup hypothesis or related social psychological models that consider factors such as social distance, ethnolinguistic vitality of the L1 and L2, and societal attitudes toward multilingualism (Siegel 2003, 185–92; see Schumann 1976; 1978). Some speaking turns in my interviews with the three case-study participants do suggest features of L2 learner reticence (see Bao 2014, 14–15), moments when the three were confronted with explicit linguistic and racial bias, demonstrating the importance of social relations to out-group, minority-language migrants. Block’s research on the intersectionality of migration, identity, and language further elucidates a political-economic perspective and posits that bilingual individuals, like women in patriarchal societies, suffer from “misrecognition” by dominant groups and, thus, harm to self-conception (2017, 133). Block quotes Taylor, who argues that identity “is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (1994, 25; emphasis in original).

In the final joint interview with Gabriela and Miguel, both enumerated incidents of discrimination, ranging from being ignored, to having shopkeepers, cashiers, or government workers pretend not to understand simple questions, to outright abuse. Gabriela, who among the three informants has lived the longest time in the United States, comments that, for her, racial
animosity has declined over her residence. She does remember mistreatment on her first job, shortly after she came to the United States sixteen years before, as well as a more recent event at a suburban supermarket. Leaving the market with Spanish-speaking coworkers, Gabriela and others were subjected to comments by “some güeras,” that is, light-skinned girls. “And they said to us, ‘Ay, these [ones] think’—they said it in English but we did understand them—‘these think that they’re going around on their ranch. They don’t know that they’re in the United States and here we have to speak English.’ ”

Miguel recalls a case while shopping for clothes with his cousin:

We were walking around, my cousin and I, and my cousin is darker-skinned. And there was a güera, one of the ones that serve you there, and he went by. And he said—and I was behind him, and we were walking around looking—and he says, “The güera is pretty.” And I think she understood and said, “Bastard Mexican.” [. . .] So, I think that that’s bad. I did understand it as an insult. Like something racist. And so, yeah, I stayed quiet. [. . .] Later she went somewhere else and then security came, and they were going around watching us, thinking that—I don’t know—you’re going to rob them or I don’t know.

Gabriela and Miguel concur that keeping quiet is the best policy. Other options are leaving the public space, and, at a shopping center, Gabriela suggests changing checkout lines if needed to defuse conflict. Personal experience and their knowledge of the legacy of anti-Mexican sentiment has left its mark, although it cannot be known from the survey and interview data how the social antipathy affects participants’ L2 usage or acquisition. Regarding her nationality, Gabriela says, “I feel that, as a Mexican, that they give you less than others, like that’s the
biggest difference,” although she thinks that with fluency in English the number of opportunities would increase.

Some research on assimilation in the U.S. context, however, does not bear out this optimism. A 2015 survey of non-Hispanic white Americans on neighbor preferences and perceived similarities with other ethnicities finds that while Latinos and Asians are tolerated, black people and undocumented immigrants of all races are “largely unwelcome.” The more damning conclusion is that

even groups treated as viable neighbors and friends are viewed as deeply dissimilar, and speaking fluent English, calling oneself an American, and other positive characteristics often hailed as central to assimilation cannot overcome the symbolic boundaries that reinforce white individuals’ perceptions of dissimilarity. (Schachter 2016, 1007)

Bruneau comments on the silencing impact of difference, toward which some manifest a “generalized, habitual” rejection. “The stranger, or person who is viewed as strange, in most situations, has a great disadvantage,” he continues (1973, 32). “He often has the burden of breaking silence and imposing more certainty (or speech) to develop interpersonal relationships.”

Imposed or Enforced Silences (3.430)

Variously expressed as sociocultural silence (Bruneau 1973, 36) or implicit silence (Bilmes 1994, 82–84) when the form of oppression relates to classism or racist attitudes at a societal level, the category of imposed silence as represented in this research also includes ambient noise conditions. At Miguel’s and Daniela’s jobs in the food-packing industry, for example, noise levels create ambiguity in message senders and receivers as to whether communication has been accurately delivered. Enforced by workplace regulations, Daniela wears ear protection at almost all times. It is not a small matter for L2 acquisition, since for all
three participants the workplace, according to interviews and daily language-use surveys, provides a major source of L2 input, along with community-center English classes, some family members, bilingual Spanish-speakers, and occasional shopping ventures. “There’s not much talk,” says Daniela of the work routine. “And besides that, the supervisor goes around watching us. That we are focused on our jobs. And if someone is talking and talking, sometimes she’ll change you.”

Places, people, cultural norms (such as taboos), the self, and unidentifiable sources can impose silence (see Basso 1970; Bagwasi 2012). In Medubi’s work, male domination in Nigerian Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo societies means “literal silence” for women, who through reserve express both submissiveness and solidarity, while men use silence to show detachment or annoyance (2010, 39). Bruneau refers to psycholinguistic imposition of “fast” and “slow” silences for various language-cognition tasks. Elie Wiesel wrote about the “imposed mutism” of trauma (Sibelman 1995, 6). Sheriff in fieldwork in a Rio de Janeiro favela describes ongoing communal avoidance of race-related discourse as “fully cognizant silence” that responds in a practical way to firmly rooted domination (2000, 128).

Among participants in this research, Miguel notices, from his new observation post in the United States, a contrastive feeling of liberty now that silences around Mexican police corruption for him have been lifted:

Here there are more rights, more laws, there is more . . . more help than in México. Here it’s more positive. Here it’s not like, like there in México. The situation is different because if a person . . . if a person [in México] answers back to people, like to police or to people with some credential or high rank, it’s bad for them. They have the power. Not here. Here what I believe is with the laws, as a citizen you can ask the police questions. Or if the police are not within their rights, you can reason with them. […] I know a woman from here, and the police came because they were making noise. And for no other reason the police went into her house, and the woman objected with the police, that
they didn’t have the right to come into her house. And there in México that would never happen.

_Incluso aquí hay más derechos, más leyes, hay más . . . más ayuda que en México. Aquí es más positivo. Aquí no es como . . . como allá en México, la situación es diferente porque si uno . . . uno le contesta a personas, como a policías o a gente que tiene una placa o rangos altos, pues es como negativo para uno. Porque ellos según tienen el poder. Y aquí no. Aquí yo, según creo, las leyes uno como ciudadano, los de aquí le pueden hacer preguntas al policía. O si el policía no está en su derecho, le pueden alegar al policía. [. . .] Conozco una señora que es de aquí, que este el policía llegó porque estaban haciendo bulla. Y nada más porque el policía se metió a su casa, y la señora le . . . se puso a negar con el policía, que él no tenía derecho a entrar a su casa. Y pues allá en México nunca iba a pasar._

This study did not inquire into manifold effects of age, gender, sexuality, and immigration status, although these extralinguistic issues, too, influence a person’s disposition to communicate in an L1 and L2. Related to gender, for example, married migrant Mexican women in the United States have in earlier research reported more independence and self-determination, more marriage equity, and more intimacy than in their native contexts (Fomby 2005, 33). More-recent studies indicate that such factors pertain as well to geographic location, with Mexican migrant women feeling more isolated in marriage and other intimate connections where U.S.-based Latino(a) social networks are more diffuse. That is, inequality in marriage or other intimate connections is less likely to matter to this population when they “live in a place with a supportive infrastructure.” In such migrant communities, these so-called relational contexts will exercise less influence on female autonomy (Dreby and Schmalzbauer 2013, 21).

_Emotional and Legal Self-Protection, Fatigue, and Anger (3.435)_

_Sifianou (1997, 72–74) references Brown and Levinson’s work to affirm how silence expresses various politeness strategies, with negative and “off-record” forms of politeness of_
special interest in this brief synthesis of results. By staying quiet, a person acknowledges
negative-face needs, from Brown and Levinson’s formulation, by not interfering with another
person’s freedom while at the same time protecting their own distance and emotional neutrality,
as when one remains silent on public transportation. According to Sifianou, silence is most
closely related to the indirectness, ambiguity, and vagueness of off-record politeness: “[S]ilence
allows the actor to evade responsibility for having committed a particular act and at the same
time to reduce the degree of imposition” (73).

Silence as positive politeness comes from the intimacy of not having to use words to be
understood. For the second-language learner, this form of silence is more difficult to achieve in
the L2; thus, in Sifianou’s analysis, negative or off-record forms of politeness, based on
avoidance, would be more useful: “[I]t is easier to safeguard territories and social distance
through silence” (78). L2 silence, most especially, can preserve tranquility in lieu of venturing
into terrain that might prove face-threatening to oneself. Ephratt also judges that silence serves
interactional purposes, including that of the person who wishes not to transact in an unfamiliar
tongue, where their silence can communicate, “I do not share this code” (2012, 74). Among
participants in the present study, Miguel, who rarely thinks that silence in English is a good idea,
imagines that silence becomes more useful the more dire the situation, such as in a law court: “If
they call up the judge, and you don’t know what they’re talking about and they ask, ‘Do you
agree?’ well, then it’s better that I keep silent.”

Yet, in many situations, the inherent ambiguity of silence puts the onus for interpretation
on the receiver. These are high inferential demands, flowing from silence’s indirectness.
“Silence is the extreme manifestation of indirectness,” writes Tannen (1985, 97), in that it
transmits meaning without verbal content. In talking about silence as self-protection and explaining how English has not intimidated her, Daniela refers more than once to her silence on buses and trains. As a new resident in the United States, with little L2 competence, she protected herself on mass transit by studying the route beforehand with advice from fellow Spanish-speakers. In the meantime, she listened and took in information. “I learned to talk on the bus and the train,” Daniela says. “Right away I began to move around all over the place, even though I didn’t understand anything. Because some workmates that I knew taught me to . . . I don’t know really, that if I take this train, that the other one passes here in another color, and from here you can go here, and from here you can go there.” Now, as someone experienced in city ways, she likewise travels in silence with other commuters, confident in her directions, yet able to break silence if needed to ask or answer questions about the route and specific stops.

Interpreting and employing silence proved more difficult for her in México, where another’s L1 silence could be read as tiredness, anger, sadness, arrogance, preoccupation, and so on. Although prodding the person in Spanish was a possibility, Daniela’s mother was a different challenge, because a wall of silence made it hard to navigate the relationship. To Daniela, the silence was an angry one:

That is what I thought. My mom is really mad. [. . .] And when I began to see my mom like that, [she said to me,] “You don’t talk to me, I don’t know why.” That is what she said, that she didn’t know why I didn’t talk to her. Things like that. For me it’s that my mom was angry. And that’s how I grew up, believing that she was always angry. Because she was never able to talk with me. And if I asked her, she said, “Don’t ask me those questions. I don’t know.” Things like that: “No, don’t ask me. Go take care of your business.” Like rejecting me for me having asked her something, for wanting to talk to her. That is what I felt. And that is what I also see in other people. So, the same. The same. And you can know if people are angry, if they’re happy, if the silence is for good or bad. You come to know people. You know people.
Ajá, eso fue lo que pensaba. Mi mamá está bien enojada. [ . . . ] Y cuando a mi mamá empezaba yo a verla así, que “No me hables. Yo no sé.” Así ella me decía, que ella no sabía, que yo no le hablara. Cosas así. Para mí es que mi mamá estaba enojada. Y así crecí, creyendo que ella estaba enojada siempre. Porque ella no podía conversar conmigo nada. No podía platicar conmigo nada. Y si yo le preguntaba, ella me contestaba así. “No me hagas esas preguntas. Yo no sé.” Cosas así. “No, no me preguntes. Ponte a hacer por allá tus cosas.” Como un rechazo a mí, por yo preguntarle algo, por yo querer platicar con ella. Así lo sentí. Y así lo veo yo también en otras personas. Pues lo mismo. Lo mismo. Y sí, puede uno saber si está la gente enojada, si está contenta, si el silencio es para bien, o si el silencio es para mal. Conoce luego uno las personas. Conoce uno las personas.

In this manner, perhaps even more so in a second-language setting, Daniela has become a reader of silences, her own and those of others. “It’s not only in speech that you can understand that they’re angry or happy,” she says of the silences that she witnesses in the United States. “Also the body language. That there are happy people. They’re smiling. And others show their anger and it’s evident in the body. They make aggressive movements or . . . It’s seen in the body.”

Preference for Technology as L2 Intermediary (3.440)

Gabriela and Miguel mention several times how they use smartphones to manage L2 input and output. Gabriela receives text messages from her physician and English teacher in English and with her daughter has worked out a bilingual version, in which she writes in English and her daughter in Spanish. Having a bilingual daughter, who is twelve and who was born in the United States, changes the L2 landscape a bit for Gabriela. Her daughter can serve as occasional translator, but trying to employ her as an English-speaking partner has not proven feasible. “In person she doesn’t have patience to be explaining,” Gabriela says. “But by text she does it. She corrects what you’re saying.” In this manner, Gabriela adjusts L2 communication to a digital channel, and it is not completely cut off. It is also a subtle means of retaining
parental authority, for, recognizing her daughter’s superior English ability, linguistic input needs
to be controlled at home so she and her husband stay connected. She does not want to be made
silent by her children or nieces. Using Mexican slang for “kids” or “brats,” Gabriela says that if
they try to speak with her in English at home, she has to remind them: “Chamacos, speak
Spanish here. Because you know that I don’t understand you.” The rules relax a bit for her six-
year-old son who can switch language codes as he wishes.

Miguel more proactively uses the phone as an English-learning aide, accessing
smartphone apps to fill lunch hour on his overnight packing shift: “I have a break hour and in
that time I eat and, in the other half-hour, I put on videos on how to learn English. Pronunciation
and everything. I’ve started to watch them, and I learn two or three words.” As mentioned
above, through a story of one restaurant dinner with his cousin, Miguel explains how he uses the
phone at times as a supplement to silent cognitive processing. The phone serves silently—that
is, not possessing its own consciousness—as a virtual interlocutor, in order to anticipate or even
to fix potential later silences with human partners. “My cousin said to me there, ‘Ask them what
they have for postre,’ and, well, I don’t remember what [the word] is. I didn’t know how to say
it. So I grabbed the phone. ‘Oh, dessert.’ And then I asked them. . . . And [because of] that
story, the word stays with you more. And that way you keep learning.”

In addition to electronic means, L2 repair strategies or silence-filling alternatives
mentioned by participants include hand signals, use of demonstrative adjectives (this one, that
one, etc.) as referential aids, metalinguistic queries about vocabulary, and research and rehearsal
that include leveraging bilingual Spanish-English speakers and community-center teachers for help with language and cultural navigation. Daniela treats her initial purchases of iced coffee as an L2-acquisition case study, or how an L2 originated from what had been conceptual and lexical absence:

I remember that my aunt taught me how to ask for iced coffee. She said to me, “Go and bring me a coffee, from over there.” Then it was daytime. And for us, in México, we don’t drink coffee at midday, neither hot nor cold. We don’t do it, it’s not done. During the day we drink water or soda, but cold. But coffee, no. I never knew about cold coffee. [. . .] I knew about hot coffee, and that was made at home, never bought like here. [. . .] So you get a craving and [now] at any moment I have to go buy a coffee—hot or cold. [. . .]

I remember when I had only just arrived, how my aunt sold things on the street. She parked her truck and had her fruits and vegetables, and I was helping her. It was near some local shops. And there they sold coffee, cold coffee. Iced coffee.

And she tells me, “Go and buy me a coffee.”
“A coffee?”
She says, “Yes, cold.”
And how am I going to ask for a coffee like that? “I want a cold coffee.”
No, she said, “First tell them that you want a coffee. . . . ‘Give me an iced coffee? An iced coffee medium?’ ”

I didn’t know, and I paid attention to my aunt, so I could go and bring it, bring it here like she was telling me. An iced coffee medium. And I carried that here in my mind. “Iced coffee medium.”

And later I remember that she also told me the flavor. Caramel, vanilla. Now I don’t remember what, but so it was brought like how she asked me. And I stored it, the two or three words that I had to say to ask for it.

Then, she says to me, “And if you want one, then ask for two, one for you.”

And that was how I started to ask for cold coffee: when my aunt sent me. Like that, “medium iced coffee.”

Recuerdo que mi tía me enseñó a como pedir el iced coffee. Entonces ella me decía “ve a traerme un café, ahí a tal lado.” Y entonces era de día. Y para nosotros, en México, no tomamos el café al mediodía, ni caliente ni frío. No lo usamos, no se usa. Al día, en el día tomamos agua, o la soda, pero frío. Pero café no. Yo ni conocía el café frío. [. . .] Conocía el café caliente, y eso pues preparado en casa, nunca comprado como aquí. [. . .] Y uno se antoja y a todo momento me toca ir a comprar un café. Y en el calor, pues el café frío. [. . .]

Entonces yo recuerdo cuando tenía un poquito de haber llegado, como mi tía vende en la calle. Así pone su camioneta y sus frutas, sus verduras y yo la ayudaba. Y quedaba cerca así a unos locales. Y allí vendían café, el café frío. El iced coffee.
Y ya me dice ella “ve y me compras un café.”
“¿Un café?”
Me dice, “Sí, frío.”
¿Y cómo voy a pedir un café así? “Quiero un café frío.”
No, me dice ella “pues dile quiero un café. . . . ¿Me da un iced coffee? ¿Un iced coffee medium?”
Y pues yo no sabía, y le ponía yo atención a mi tía. Para ir yo y llevaba yo la . . . llevaba yo aquí grabado como lo iba a decir. Que un iced coffee medium. Y ya yo lo llevaba aquí en la mente. Y “iced coffee medium.”
Y luego me acuerdo de que también me decía el sabor. Caramelo, vainilla. Ya no me acuerdo, pero para que se lo llevara como ella me lo pedía. Y ya yo me lo grababa aquí, las dos o tres palabras que yo tenía que decirle para pedirlo.
Y ya, luego me dicen, “y si quieres uno, pues le pides dos, uno para ti.”
Y fue de la manera que yo empecé a pedir el café frío. Una cuando mi tía me mandaba. Así, un iced coffee medium.

Social Factors in SLA: L1 and L2 Cultural Differences (5.05)

Contrastive analysis with the linguistic cultures of Veracruz and Michoacán, México, occurred in participant interviews when they were explicitly asked to compare attitudes toward silence in the various locations. Their comparisons reflect Harder’s assessment of the language learner as someone in a “reduced” position, needing to master linguistic code but also to acquire “patterns of action,” and the necessary interdependence of both tasks (1980, 263). In Harder’s terms, they learn both system and actualization, making L2 performance all the more transformative for shaping new patterns of language and life simultaneously, with the patterns inextricably related. The informants’ recollections of their L2 selves also recall the dimensions of loss enumerated in Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), connected to the “double displacement” of place and language that Eva Hoffman names in her memoir Lost in Translation. The losses include, but are not limited to, linguistic identity, subjectivities, frame of reference, inner voice, and attrition of first-language cultural and lexical familiarity (162–63).
One interview fragment helps illustrate the relationships among personality, social context, and language. Gabriela was asked how people in México react to her when she is silent:

Gabriela: No, there I don’t stay silent.

Researcher: Never?

Gabriela: Never.

Researcher: So it’s not part of the culture.

Gabriela: No, no. It’s always . . . we are always joking around. So I never keep silent.

Researcher: But there are people who are quieter.

Gabriela: Yes, yes. On this topic, my husband is very reserved, very quiet. There are people who are quiet, so if you say something to them, they only respond with exactly what you asked. Not me, I answer and keep talking; even though I don’t know the person, I start talking and asking them about everything. If I don’t know them, then where they’re from, how they came, what the culture is like there. Their favorite foods. Like that, to open up the conversation.

Researcher: Mm-hmm.

Gabriela: So me, I can’t stay quiet. Only in English, because I don’t understand.

Researcher: So there are differences in your personality. Speaking in English you’re quieter.

Gabriela: Yes, more reserved, quieter.

Gabriela: No, es que ahí no permanezco en silencio.

Investigador: ¿Nunca?

Gabriela: Nunca.

Investigador: Pues no es parte de la cultura.

Investigador: *Pero hay personas más calladas.*

Gabriela: *Sí, sí. En este caso, mi esposo es muy reservado, muy callado. Hay personas que sí son calladas, que si les dices algo nomás te contestan exactamente lo que preguntaste. Yo no, yo les contesto y les sigo en la plática, aunque no conozca a la persona yo empiezo a platicar y a preguntarle y todo. Si no lo conozco, pues de dónde eres, como vienes, cuál es tu cultura allá. Que son tus comidas favoritas. Y eso, a abrirle plática.*

Investigador: *Mm-hmm.*

Gabriela: *Pues entonces yo, yo callarme no puedo. A menos en inglés, porque no entiendo.*

Investigador: *Pues hay diferencias en su personalidad. Al hablar en inglés es más callada.*

Gabriela: *Sí, más reservada, más callada.*

Asked in a subsequent interview if keeping silent in the United States held more personal value for her than in México, Gabriela said that the particulars of circumstance did not dictate her silence. Rather, she preemptively adopts a position of self-restraint in contrast to Veracruz, where people implicitly understand her. “The reality is that I’d like to be able to talk, to be able to interact now with more people. I’d have more friendships. If I could, by art of magic or a chip that you could put in, I’d be able to speak English.” In a follow-up comment, she refers to her positive motivation toward learning English and acculturating more:

*I’d like to have a chip. Take out one and put in another so I could speak English. Because I like the language, it sounds pretty. So [I’d be] equal: me, without the accent that isn’t understood. Because here, either you pronounce things well, or even a small problem distorts everything you’re asking. So, for this reason, if I could, I’d change the chip.*

*Sí, me gustaría tener un chip. Quitarle ese y ponerme otro para yo poder hablar inglés. Porque a mí me gusta el idioma, se escucha bonito, pero pues igual. A mí sin el acento y esto, no se entiende. Y es que aquí, o lo pronuncias bien o con una cosita ya distorsionaste todo lo que estás preguntando. Por eso digo, si yo pudiera pues me cambio el chip y ya.*
Attitudes here among Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela are in some conflict. Quietness for Miguel is more of an individual choice, less rooted in social factors. In fact, in the U.S. context, Miguel suggests that he feels more at liberty as a speaker within a rights regime that subjectively feels more just, less corrupt, than the one in México. Despite alluding to his unauthorized presence in the United States, Miguel nevertheless says he conducts himself as a person with “more rights.” “You can try to explain things, or interact with—this is what I know—with the police or anyone who works for the state, for the country. To be well-informed. Yes, I think that’s a positive for trying to learn more.” He bears a respectful attitude toward those in México who, by disposition, act counterculturally to the prevailing bonhomie and ease of association. His interpretation of silence in the L1 context is that “you’re shy, quiet. Different from the others. Calmer. . . . For us there, for us in Veracruz, we got together, several of us, when we left from work, and we’d go out talking, telling jokes: hanging out. And there are people who pull away, right? And we say, ‘But why?’ It’s shyness or . . . later you invite them out and [say,] ‘Come out with us.’ ‘No, no thanks.’ ”

Daniela takes a more neutral stance, in which language conditions—that is, the social situations that prompt communication—in the two nations bear a likeness to each other. While she might vocalize more concern for a persistently quiet L1 speaking partner, she feels that, with patience, one will discover the reason behind the silence:

Sometimes [they say,] “Ay, before coming to work I got really upset.” That sometimes they got angry at home. Or if they are older people, sometimes they say, “Ay, I’m thinking that I have a problem” with their child, their husband. Sometimes they are thinking about all that, and they don’t talk. They don’t even look happy in their face, people look sad. And later they say that it’s because they have a problem, because they didn’t sleep, because they’re thinking about the problems they have. Sometimes,
whatever answer they give explains why they are silent, quiet. And it’s that they’re thinking about their situation.

O a veces, “Ay, es que antes de venir a trabajar hice un coraje.” Que la hicieron enojar a veces en su casa. O si ya son personas mayores, a veces dicen, “Ay, es que estoy pensando que tengo un problema.” Que, con su hijo, que con su esposo. Y a veces todo eso están pensando y no platican. No se les ve la alegría ni en su cara, se le ve triste a la gente. Ya, luego dicen que, porque tienen un problema, que, porque no durmieron, que porque están pensando en problemas que tienen. A veces, cualquier respuesta dan, de que, porque están en silencio, callados. Y sí, pues pensando en sus situaciones.

Here she talks about memories from México. But she remembers almost the same conversation at her current job, further affirming for her the cultural similarities: “A black woman told me that . . . so we were working and later she told me that she was really sleepy. And I understood that she was sleepy. And I understood that she said she had gotten up at six in the morning. That she had only slept until six.” Again, the bodily expressions facilitated Daniela’s interpretation of the English words: “It was the same, her body looked completely tired. . . . So [here] they have the same feeling. You see it in the face.” As with Gabriela, individual interactions do not seem to shape Daniela’s cultural attitudes or L2 self as much as the totality of environmental factors. The knowledge that one can speak and be understood in México provides a fixed condition, some security, even if the content of speech is identical. For this sense of security, Daniela in the city prefers life in a Latino barrio and compares the reality to an imagined, less manageable existence in which the environmental stresses of English enclose her:

Because [now] you go out, and you know that you will meet many people. If you have to ask something in Spanish, we understand. We understand, and you can talk and ask about anything when you are in the same barrio that speaks the same language. You understand everything. Everybody understands you, about everything. In contrast, if you lived . . . I’d say if you lived in a purely American neighborhood, with people of color who only have English, then yeah. I would stay silent. Silence. Only listening to how the people talk, and you don’t understand. You understand the words, [but] what they are talking about you cannot understand. Surrounded by people like that.
Porque sale uno y pues sabe uno que encuentra a varias personas. Si uno tiene que preguntar algo pues en español, nos entendemos. Nos entendemos y puede uno platicar y preguntar alguna cosa cuando está uno así en el mismo barrio, que habla el mismo idioma. Entiende uno pues todo. Todo se entiende uno. De todo. En cambio si vive uno . . . yo digo si vivo en un barrio de puro americano, morenos que solo tengan el inglés, pues sí. Permanecería yo en silencio. Silencio. Solo escuchar como habla la gente, y no entiende uno. Entiende uno a las palabras, lo que platican, no puede uno entender. Rodeado de personas así.

Latino Demographics and Bilingualism as Support and Challenge (5.10, 5.20)

Although they no longer operate within a majority Latino(a) society, with Spanish the dominant language of social and economic exchange, Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela constitute part of a powerful demographic. A 2015 statistical portrait of the Hispanic population in the United States sets the total at 56.5 million: more than any Spanish-speaking nation except México. They are 17.6 percent of the U.S. population. In 1980, by contrast, Hispanics were 6.5 percent (Flores, López, and Radford 2017). Half the U.S. population growth since 2000 is due to the Hispanic demographic (Flores 2017). Sixty-seven percent are working, with a median annual household income of $44,800 (Flores, López, and Radford 2017).

Notwithstanding their presence in a “majority language context,” the three participants in this study know the power of their linguistic resources, as the Portuguese participants in Goldstein’s research in Toronto (1996) valued their own first-language networks and the crucial role of these networks in assuring economic survival. Gallagher’s emphasis on social networks in L2 acquisition and in boosting confidence in a learner’s willingness to communicate indicates that cross-cultural contact typically arises from reciprocal (mutually acknowledged) relationships

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2 Within these figures, close to 38 million of the Hispanic population are of Mexican origin, or 63.3 percent of the Hispanic resident population (Flores, López, and Radford 2017).
in the first language (2019, 194). Even though Gallagher’s research takes place among English for Academic Purposes students in institutional settings, distancing oneself from one’s group or group identity does not seem like a good strategy. In health-care contexts, judged as intergroup interactions because of the fundamental power imbalance between doctors and patients, a patient-centered orientation along with belief in their own competence as communicators helps patients feel they can negotiate and advocate for themselves within the relationship. With these power dynamics “it is often not possible (or desirable) to entirely abandon one’s group identity and focus on establishing interpersonal relationships” (Baker and Watson 2015, 633).

Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela maintain their Spanish-language contacts; in fact, the L1 governs relationships for all three within spheres of family, personal, and community life. Linguistic boundary crossings primarily take place in the workplace and public settings, that is, in consumer spaces and in interactions with the administrative state. Language contact with fellow Spanish-speakers supplies some of the most contested moments, as the three work out how and where their first language should be employed and where the boundary lines between the two codes, if there is any line at all, might be drawn.

Gabriela, especially, in encounters with Spanish-speaking coworkers and bilingual teachers at the school where she works, participates in metalinguistic discourse with some frequency. Her stories point out how an interlocutor’s linguistic preferences and competencies are not always obvious. She remembers two meetings with new teachers at the high school. She came upon them as she cleaned in late afternoon, the instructors finishing their workdays in empty classrooms. In the first meeting, Gabriela apologized for interrupting:

I came in talking to her in English and all that, and she began to answer me, and she started to say everything in English. And I was talking there, and at the end I didn’t
know what I was going to ask her, and I said, “Oh, I don’t know your name!” In English I said it to her. And she answered me in Spanish. [. . .]
I said, “Oh, you speak Spanish!”
She said, “Yes, I am from [México]. I studied in [a Mexican city].”
And I said to her, “Eh! And why didn’t you tell me? I am suffering as I say every word, and you can see that I’m battling to be able to talk with you, and you didn’t tell me!”

She said, “No, because if I tell you I speak Spanish, you’re not going to practice [English], and you must keep speaking it.” She said, “You have to practice it. And if I tell you, ‘No, I speak Spanish,’ then you will start to speak in Spanish, and no. . . . You have to . . . it’s not for me. I can speak it, but you have to learn it.” She told me, “With me, always talk to me in English. Now if I don’t . . . if you don’t know [a word], I’m going to tell you what it is you want to say. But I will speak [English].”

Yo llegué acá hablándole en inglés y todo, y ella me empezó a contestar, y ella me empezó a platicar todo en inglés. Y yo ahí estaba platicando, y a la final no sé qué le iba a preguntar y le digo “¡oh es que no sé cómo se llama!” En inglés le dije yo. Y me contesta en español. [. . .]
Le dije, “Oh, ¡hablas español!”
Me dice, “Sí, yo soy de [México] . . . yo estudié en [una ciudad mexicana].”
Y le digo, “¡Eh! ¿Y por qué no me dijiste? Y yo sufriendo para decirte cada palabra, y tú estabas viendo que yo estaba batallando para hablar contigo, ¡y no me dijiste!”

Me dijo, “No, porque si yo te digo que hablo español tú no lo vas a practicar, y tú debes de seguirlo hablando.” Me dice. “Tú debes de practicarlo. Y si yo te digo ‘no, yo hablo español’ pues tú empiezas a hablar en español, y no” me dice. “Tú tienes . . . no es por mí. Yo lo puedo hablar, pero tú tienes que aprenderlo.” Me dice, “A mí, tú siempre háblame en inglés. Ya si yo no . . . si tú no sabes, ya te voy a decir que es lo que quieresdecir. Pero yo sí lo hablo.”

This teacher was light-skinned. Another teacher with darker skin, born in the United States but with Mexican roots, was also new to the school.

So I arrived, and the last name gave her away. Her name is . . . it was, because now she got married and her last name changed. Her name was [a Latino surname]. And I went in, and I said, “Hola.” And she kept watching me. And I said, “¿Cómo estás?” And she answered me in English. And later I told her [in Spanish], “What beautiful pictures you have here.” She had a picture of a Virgin Mary. And again she answered me in English. And I said to her, “Why do you answer me in English? You speak Spanish.” She says, “I speak Spanish, but I don’t like that language.” [. . .]
And I . . . wow.
In México, we have a saying for it, something funny for us. We say, “You are denying your language, and the nopal is there on your face.” It’s a way of saying . . . the nopal is a leaf with spines that is used a lot in México. It’s edible, it’s eaten. But it’s called a nopal. I told my supervisor [about the phrase], I didn’t say it to [the teacher]. To her I just said, “And why don’t you like it?”

She said, “Not my last name, either. That’s what gives me away.” She said, “How did you know that I speak Spanish?”

I said, “It’s obvious, because of your last name. I know that you are [Latino last name]. In the United States, they don’t use the n. So, if it’s [Latino last name], you are Mexican.”

“No,” she said. “Because of that, I’m going to change it when I get married.”

Y entonces llegué, y pues el apellido la delató. Y se llama . . . se llamaba, porque ahora ya se casó y se cambió el apellido. Se llamaba [un apellido latino]. Y llego y le digo “Hola.” Y se me queda viendo. Y le digo “¿Cómo estás?” Y me contesta en inglés. Y luego le digo, “¿Qué bonita foto tienes ahí.” Tenía una foto de una virgen. Y me volvió a contestar en inglés. Y le digo “¿Por qué me contestas en inglés? Tú hablas español.”

Me dice, “Hablo español, pero a mi no me gusta ese idioma.”

Y yo, “whao.”

Nosotros en México tenemos una palabra, de decirlo . . . como algo para nosotros chistoso o algo decimos “estás negando tu idioma, y se te ve el nopal en la frente.” Es una manera de decir . . . el nopal es una . . . una hoja con espinas que se da mucho en México. Es comible, se come. Pero le dice uno nopal. Le dije a mi supervisor, a ella no le dije eso. A ella nomás le dije “¿Y por qué no te gusta?”

Le dice, “Ni mi apellido. Es que me delata.” Me dijo “¿Cómo supiste que yo hablo español?”

Le dije, “Obvio, por tu apellido. Yo sé que usted es [un apellido latino]. En Estados Unidos no existe la eñe. Entonces, si es [un apellido latino], eres mexicana.”

“Sí,” me dice. “Por eso mismo me lo voy a cambiar en cuanto me case.”

Linguistic pride extends for Gabriela to making sure her children have bilingual skills and to claiming Spanish as an essential part of self: “What identifies us is [skin] color, our race, our way of being. We speak Spanish, obviously.” According to the intergroup approach to second-language acquisition, proficiency in the L2 is hypothesized to be more likely, in addition to possessing other traits, when L1 identification is of little importance and the L1’s perceived

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3 The Spanish is, “Estás negando tu idioma, y se te ve el nopal en la frente.” The nopal is a leaf of the prickly-pear cactus. Gabriela later points out that the nopal also forms part of the state seal of México and appears on the Mexican flag. As a metaphor, it can be taken as a signal of bilingualism and pride in one’s racial heritage.
ethnolinguistic vitality is low (Siegel 2003, 189). With birth origins in México, having come to the United States as older adolescents or young adults, Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela tend to see the cultural and linguistic boundaries as important features of daily life.

As mentioned above, though, they are not of one mind on the question of how bilingual speakers—whether sojourners like themselves or those native to the United States, although of Latin American extraction—might best assist them in shaping their own emerging bilingual identities. Research into situational willingness to communicate among Korean-speakers exposes the high volatility of the WTC construct, even within the same communicative event, and the multitude of factors that impinge on L2-speaker anxiety levels (Kang 2005). In Kang’s study, the topic, context, and interlocutor all influenced the participants’ level of security in speaking English. Kang concludes that interlocutors played the biggest role in raising or limiting fears in the L2 (282). The English-learners felt better when their speaking partner already knew their proficiency level, and some of the greatest insecurity came from speaking English with or around those who shared the L1 (Korean). With fellow Korean-speakers with whom they might already have or might come to forge a personal relationship, struggling with English was seen as a deficiency. The participants also paid attention to nonnative speakers who seemed to have achieved greater L2 fluency and were sensitive to this power dynamic (283).

Some of these factors may play a role in Gabriela’s sensitivity to speaking English with native Spanish-speakers. The data do not provide clarity on this question. She honored the approach of the first teacher, but not the second. For Gabriela, the second teacher was one more example of, although she did not use the word, surrendering to the dominant linguistic code and settling for a false and ultimately inferior self:
There are those who until . . . they’ve just arrived and they come out [and say] they don’t like to speak Spanish. Only English. And there is where I say that that looks ridiculous. It looks silly. To negate your language, or that something you happen to be makes you ashamed. I mean, if they speak English and they speak Spanish, it’s an opportunity for them. In this country and whatever country. Because in México, too, a person speaking English can work at the borders, in the tourist places. Because of that I say, How silly! Instead of being ashamed of speaking Spanish, they should feel proud for speaking two languages.

Hay unas que hasta . . . acaban de llegar y salen con que no les gusta hablar español. Solo inglés. Y ahí yo digo pues que se ve ridículo. Se ve tonto. Que nieguen su idioma, o que les de vergüenza algo que puede ser . . . o sea, si hablan inglés, y hablan español, es una oportunidad para ellos. En este país y en el que sea. Porque en México también uno hablando inglés, puedes trabajar en las fronteras. En los lugares turísticos. Por eso digo, pues, ¡que tontos! En vez de avergonzarse de hablar español, pues deberían de sentirse orgullosos por hablar dos idiomas.

The reasons for her individual discomfort in using the L2 with bilinguals is fear of critique, based on personal experience. Native English-speakers, in Gabriela’s thinking, will correct her but not criticize.

Miguel and Daniela, on the other hand, have found techniques to utilize bilingual knowledge without it seeming to threaten their more nascent English abilities. For them, Duff’s theorizing about second-language socialization matches a reality they describe in which the relationships with bilinguals seem mutually supportive. Daniela, as quoted above, had relied on family and coworkers in the early days when transitioning to the new linguistic and cultural milieu. Duff writes that “experts or more proficient members of a group play a very important role in socializing novices and implicitly or explicitly teaching them to think, feel, and act in accordance with the values, ideologies, and traditions of the group” (2007, 311). With a workplace in which his bilingual supervisor actively encourages his English-language goals, Miguel, too, sees the bilingual network as a chain of potential helpers rather than as rivals. In the
final group interview, Miguel openly disagrees with Gabriela that the bilingual speakers are only trying to judge:

No, but that depends on your confidence, if you believe what they say. It’s nothing more than one person. Like, like me with native-speakers, I try to explain that I’m not understanding them. So I would want . . . to explain to them and tell them, “Hey, help me,” and try to explain. But I would feel more uncomfortable asking [a native-speaker] for help so they could explain things to me. Because, for me, explaining myself to [a bilingual] person, I feel at ease. As to what [Gabriela] says: There will be people that criticize or that will say, like I told you the other time, there are people who tell you, “Oh, now you go to school and think that you speak English,” and this and that. But if you start paying attention to people, then what? And I think that . . . that depends on you.

Social Barriers to L2 Acquisition: Isolation and Economic Imperatives (5.160, 5.165)

While L2 silence can serve a cognitive function of helping to process language and to rehearse or reformulate messages, second-language input, for which production is not necessary, remains one of the key components of SLA theory. Even the postulated L2 “silent period” maintains a social nature (Bao 2014, 16). Social isolation works against language acquisition.

Demographers and census analysts have coined the phrase “linguistic isolation” to classify U.S. households in which no resident over fourteen years old speaks English well, and they identify Spanish-speaking households as particularly vulnerable (Waters and Pineau 2015, 310).

Although some have attacked primarily Spanish-speaking barrios and other migrant
concentrations as abetting an “English-optional lifestyle” (Piller 2016, 40), there is evidence that access to an L1 network forms a key component of acculturation and that linguistic concentration in the demonized migrant “enclaves” helps empower communities rather than contributing to separation. This was a conclusion after researchers studied relational networks of Mexican women migrants in several parts of the United States (Dreby and Schmalzbauer 2013, 21).

Recent research on the willingness-to-communicate construct features attention to social network analysis. Within school networks, one finding is that cross-cultural ties develop from intracultural contacts, and that this phenomenon of “triadic closure”—meeting someone from another ethnolinguistic group via an L1 connection—helps explain motivation to interact cross-culturally more than an individual’s WTC (Gallagher and Robins 2015, 952–53). An illustration comes from the group interview with Gabriela and Miguel. Because of the learners’ association with the community center and its English-language program, they are introduced each spring to university students who assist in language classes over the weeklong school holidays. In encounters with these students, who typically are a blend of U.S.-born and international volunteers, Gabriela and Miguel report that they receive some of the strongest support for their L2 efforts and identities:

Miguel: We interact with them, we talk to them. And one girl that was talking with us was from India. And she was telling us about her culture and all. And we in English, speaking with her, trying to explain how it was in México, the culture and everything. And it felt . . . for me it felt exciting. Very . . . something unexplainable because it’s something that, that I never thought would happen. To converse with another person from another country, that I didn’t even know about and what went on there, about the culture. And to speak with her, and she explained it to us and everything. So . . .

Gabriela: And for us to understand something about her is very rewarding. It’s to feel very . . .

Miguel: Yes.
Gabriela: . . . good. That you are understanding a conversation.

Miguel: It’s satisfying. To understand and to know . . .

Gabriela: And to see that you talk to them and they are answering what you are asking them. That they’re understanding you.

Miguel: E interactuamos con ellos, platicamos con ellos. Y una muchacha que estaba platicando con nosotros era de la India. Y nos estaba contando su cultura. Y todo. Y nosotros en inglés, conversando con ella, tratando de explicar cómo era en México la cultura y todo. Y se siente . . . para mí se sintió emocionante. Muy este . . . algo inexplicable porque es algo que . . . que jamás yo pensé llegar a hacer. Conversar con otra persona de otro país, que ni siquiera ni idea sabía y que pasaba allá. Que la cultura. Y conversamos con ella, y nos explicó y todo. Y pues . . .

Gabriela: Y para nosotros entenderle algo es muy a gusto. Es sentirse muy . . .

Miguel: Sí, pues.

Gabriela: . . . bien. Que estás entendiendo una conversación.

Miguel: Satisfactorio para uno. Entender y saber . . .

Gabriela: Y ver que les hablas y te están contestando lo que les estás preguntando. O sea que ya te están entendiendo.

The themes of social isolation and economic restraints as challenges to L2 acquisition take the most prominence in interviews with Gabriela. For her, as a married mother of two children, household economic issues are central. In addition, unlike Miguel and Daniela, who consistently work with others in food-packing factories, Gabriela spends significant job time apart from coworkers and, as night lingers on at her school, apart from any human contact. She works on a team of four, all Spanish-speakers. They are assigned an area of the school to clean and, other than a shared meal hour, work separately with a fixed set of tasks to accomplish until they leave at midnight. While cleaning, Gabriela listens to music, in English, on her phone.
With a son, six, and daughter, twelve, she now regrets not having studied English on first coming to the United States, when she was childless. “Now when someone says, ‘I’m going to school,’ ” Gabriela says, “it’s because they don’t have small kids.” She describes the routine of a circumstantial language learner who needs to help sustain her family financially while engaging in demanding intellectual practice at the same time:

It’s the same. It’s stressful. It’s the same. I get up to make a meal, take the children to school, I clean, I leave for work. And I get there, half-asleep, and do it again: get up early and, like today, I get up at six thirty [a.m.]. I arrive at twelve thirty [a.m.] from work. Once I bathe and lie down, it’s already two in the morning. And at six thirty I have to get up for the kids, who go to school. And I take the kids to school and start to wash dishes to come [to the community center]. I leave from here to go back to make a meal and clean to leave for work. A routine.

She talks of other Spanish-speaking parents she meets at her daughter’s school, who have given up on English study or never made time for it. Gabriela speculates that “maybe they have a more relaxed life” and can afford more leisure, whereas she ponders her growing children and how she can remain part of their social world as they conduct more of their lives with English-speaking friends. She considers herself a slow learner of English, linked, she suspects, to her work circumstance:

A lot has to do, like you said, with the jobs. Because if a person is where they only speak English, they are forced to speak English. Because there is no one around them, workmates, that you can speak Spanish to. But the environment for many of us, or like mine, is that practically everyone around me in my work, in my house, [uses] Spanish. [. . .] And I look at my supervisor, because he also didn’t speak [English] at all when he started to work. And now he’s a supervisor there in the school where he worked. He
started to work in an area where it’s all English. And he learned well, quickly. Because you don’t speak it, or you do.

Y también mucho tiene que ver, como dijo, en los trabajos. Porque si una persona está donde solamente hablan inglés, se ve forzada a hablar inglés. Porque no hay nadie a su alrededor, de compañeros de trabajo que hables español. Pero en el entorno de muchos de nosotros, o como el mío, que es prácticamente todos los que me rodean en mi trabajo, y en mi casa, pues español. [. . .] Y yo miro a mi supervisor, porque el también no hablaba nada cuando entró a trabajar. Y ahora es supervisor ahí en la escuela donde trabajó. Y entró a trabajar a un área donde es puro inglés. Y lo aprendió bien, rápido. Porque no lo hablas o lo hablas.

All three participants, as they tallied where they employed English in the daily language-use surveys, and as they answered interview questions, note how the L2 serves primarily phatic and informative functions at work and while transacting their public lives. It is a language of aspiration and consumption, a serviceable tool when earning money to support family in the United States and, via remittances, in México. Spanish remains the code of intimacy and emotional exchange and fellowship. This seems to accord with previous SLA research on social context that instrumental motivations, that is, finding the means for material betterment, typically prove more important for learners from minority-language groups in dominant L2 settings, such as Spanish-speakers in the United States (Siegel 2003, 185). Gabriela talks about one English-language friendship, with a man that she and her family refer to as abuelo (grandfather) and who refers to her children as his grandchildren. She calls him a good, kind person but regrets that they cannot communicate better. “He comes to visit us and, later, we sit down to eat and we are like: ‘What do we say to him?’ ”
Social Context, Willingness to Communicate, and Silence

To conclude the discussion, I consider in turn the two guiding research questions—mindful of the study’s limited scope and findings that are not generalizable to other Spanish-speakers learning English, nor to any ELL population—and the insights that participants have shared about social context, willingness to communicate (WTC), and L2 silence. The first question is: How do marginalized linguistic conditions and previous English-language interactions affect WTC in English? Related issues concern participants’ communicative behavior in social interactions and other factors. Defined fundamentally as “the probability of initiating communication when free to do so” (MacIntyre 2013, 688), WTC incorporates such a gamut of trait-based and situational variables that researchers designing more recent systems-based approaches to test the construct conclude that L2 WTC behavior is too complex to be predicted (Syed and Kuzborska 2018). The heuristic model for WTC is constructed as a pyramid (MacIntyre et al. 1998, 547), with factors most foundational to initiating L2 communication arrayed at the base. Personality traits and intergroup climate, which anchor the six-layer structure, are hypothesized to be the most stable variables, the desire to communicate and “state communicative self-confidence” the most subject to change in the moment.

Among participants in this study, Daniela most nearly describes the “crossing the Rubicon” time of decision for L2 learners and the focus of WTC study, when they must conjure linguistic form and agentive purpose to talk. “Sometimes you forget” lexical items and morphosyntactic information “at the moment of speaking [al momento de hablar] or asking,” Daniela says. She also, in completing daily language-use surveys over two weeks, reports more communicative ambiguity than the other two informants, uncertain about the causes or
implications of others’ silences and her own in situations that call for English. One observation is that she does not regard unwillingness to speak, whether in the L2 classroom or natural interaction, as a volitional failure on her part. This may be an individual trait, an expression of ethnolinguistic vitality, or some combination of known and unknown factors. The alternative to speaking English for Daniela, in many of her interactions, is silence, but such silences can be quite productive. As evidenced by her involvement in English classes, even after several years of U.S. residence, she has not opted out of a system in which two dominant linguistic codes make various claims on her cognitively, emotionally, socially, and in every other sense. By “opting out,” I refer to what has been learned from systems-based analysis of WTC, in which investigators comment on how learners encounter “repeller states,” when second-language communication is abandoned (MacIntyre and Legatto 2011). Gabriela and Miguel contrasted themselves with fellow Spanish-speaking sojourners who had given up on or not started L2 education. Both said they were occasionally belittled for their efforts by, in Gabriela’s words, their “own people.”

Ephratt’s project of integrating silence within a comprehensive communicative system seems a productive way of addressing L2 WTC for Gabriela, and Miguel, and Daniela, because in this melding of linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic silences, it is shown that “silence does not constitute a natural kind” (2011, 2298). Some might look at these three learners’ BEST assessments in English and conclude they are ineffective or struggling English-language communicators. Gabriela, in particular, makes this judgment about herself. Yet, in Ephratt’s more expansive model of human communication, the three emerge as exceedingly competent, because they demonstrate the access they have, not only to an unfathomably complex linguistic
system (Spanish), but to silence of different kinds, other nonverbal behaviors, and tools of all the five senses. In keeping with estimates that silence and nonverbal modes occupy 65 percent or more of human interchange (Ephratt 2011, 2287), Gabriela mentions ordering coffee with hand signals. Miguel translanguages with his smartphone. And I do not consider here the silent, yet eloquent, statements that each has made about structural inequities, political and economic violence, and self-determination by completing the grinding physical journey and mental adjustment to life in the United States.

One legitimate question is whether the WTC construct provides the best framing for characterizing L2 capacities of circumstantial language learners such as Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela. Originally, in MacIntyre et al.’s modeling (1998, 545), WTC was aimed at assessing how students, in formal classroom settings, seek or avoid L2 usage, and most research in the intervening twenty years has occurred in academic institutions. MacIntyre et al. also asked how formal language instruction could instill willingness to communicate among learners. The situation of the present study’s three participants appears unlike that of the classroom subjects in WTC research. It is not that classroom-based learners lack volition to communicate in a second language in naturalistic environments; little research exists to affirm or to suspect whether that is true. In my informants’ daily existence, however, willingness to communicate in English is implicit in their work and public lives rather than something to be cultivated at comparative leisure in school. None of the three has opted out of a multilingual social context. All three, in the final one-to-one interview, were asked identical questions about their silences, or when they felt less willing to speak in English. Some of the key questions were:

Are you quieter in English than in your mother tongue?
Are there situations in which you stay silent instead of speaking in English?
Do you limit your speech more in English than in Spanish?
Do you think it is more important to stay silent in the United States than in your native country?

Gabriela and Daniela answered “yes” to all of these; Miguel answered “no” to all (see table 3). Gender may be playing a role in these and some of Miguel’s other responses. More important, though, when asked about settings in which English intersects with their lives most directly, based on their own reports of language usage, each cited a low probability of using L2 silence strategically. Gabriela is firm that she would not employ an L2 silent strategy at work, with family, in a medical office, or at school. Miguel, without the economic stresses of parenthood and able to code-switch while working (and despite his “no” answers to the questions above), suggests that he is a bit more open to L2 silence; Daniela, too, leaves room for flexibility at work, where Spanish remains an option for performing many parts of the job. In other words, in settings that help shape economic and physical survival, the three have proven themselves adaptable to linguistic requirements. All appear to have developed their “spatial repertoires” and, in preference to grammatical competence, they “know how words align with objects, people, and contexts” (Canagarajah 2017, 9).

Zentella (1996) in fieldwork in a Puerto Rican bloque in East Harlem uses the phrase “language for survival” to describe the multilingual, code-switching routines of members of this linguistic community. She faults linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics for how they “fall short of capturing the way language is linked to issues of survival, that is, the language for survival dynamic that permeates verbal behavior in oppressed ethnolinguistic communities. Most important, both fail to advocate change . . .” (13; emphasis in original). The recognition is that “doing being bilingual” is creative art, and each person, in developing their own strategies of
silence or meaning negotiation, repudiates what being a “true bilingual” or “good language learner” is thought to mean (13). In advocating for a values-oriented approach to linguistic analysis, Zentella further proposes that research in marginalized, multilingual migrant contexts “would be incomplete if it did not (a) highlight the unjust economic and political policies that determine their informants’ education, housing, employment, and—consequently—language development, and (b) work toward reversing those policies and the notion that community members must trade their language and identity for basic rights” (14).

It would be interesting to see Gallagher’s (2019) questions about social-network positions predicting L2 WTC brought to the lives of Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela and to those in like circumstances as transnational migrants, whose interactions and WTC in those interactions are shaped more by an intergroup dynamic than the WTC pyramid model perhaps would recognize. Gallagher observes “that one’s actions and behavior depend not only on one’s own characteristics and tendencies but also those of one’s social neighbors, as well as on the constraints imposed by one’s social position” (195). Further, he notes that the WTC formulation fails to consider “sociostructural mechanisms that facilitate or dampen interpersonal communication” (195). We see in the data from this study that L2 use in a survival context—in the realms of labor and material exchange—predominate in the surveys and narratives of the three participants. Their language serves their survival and, reciprocally, the structure of the marketplace.

They notice these aspects of their communicative behavior, and they also comment on other variables that push them “across the Rubicon” into L2 speech, some recognized in previous WTC research, such as the predictability of an L2 exchange, the opportunity to plan for
interactions, social position and linguistic skill of interlocutors, their own desires for material or intellectual content, dispositional curiosities, and a felt obligation to be communicative as participants in U.S. polity. The L2 seemingly has not gained them rich emotional and affective rewards as the result of cross-cultural contacts, except for Gabriela’s story of meeting linguistic challenges from two bilingual high-school teachers and Gabriela and Miguel’s exchange with international university students—a rare breach in linguistic and societal boundary setting. The instrumental nature of most of the L2 contacts recalls Block’s investigations at the intersections of migration, identity, and language, through which he emphasizes the “class-based hierarchies” that shape migrant lives (2017, 134). Although Miguel self-identified as undocumented, I do not know the immigration status of the three participants. It is worth bringing into the equation, though, the possible influence of de facto statelessness and, as Block comments, the awkwardness of a transnational identity for which traditional measures of acculturation and assimilation do not work (2017, 134).

The discussion now turns to the second set of research questions, dealing with the extralinguistic factors that contribute to an English-language learner’s silence in various social interactions. I was also interested in the participants’ L2 “silent strategies,” their “rules” for being silent in the United States, the dynamics of silence in institutions of family, school, health, employment, government, and friendship, and their perspectives on L2 silence as a problem or potential resource. One phenomenon that occurs in this study’s interview data is that participants tend not to view silence as an episodic occurrence, that is, in the manner that silence is built (silently) into the WTC construct as the “dark side” of L2 communication: avoidant, anxiety-ridden, and possibly uncomprehending, an instance of a person failing to rise to the occasion.
Daniela, for example, talks about anxieties at the moment of speaking, mostly with regard to lexical gaps. But the awareness does not lead her to say that she abandons L2 communication for this reason. The silence reported by informants seems preemptive in nature. They decide, rather like a military commander feeling that their forces are outnumbered, to skip encounters that would be too linguistically taxing. An example is Gabriela avoiding monolingual schoolteachers with a predilection for chat. For this behavior she internalizes shame and self-diminishment—she says she “would have more friendships” if her English were better, if she could install a magic language chip—but silence is always collusive (Tannen 1985, 100). One critique of WTC research is that it places the onus for communication on the L2 learner, rarely acknowledging that a partner’s, especially a native-speaker’s, willingness to communicate and competencies in accommodating a person raised with another linguistic code are also at issue. Noncommunication is a social project. Grice’s cooperative principle does not entail special dispensations for either party.

Maybe another reason that Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela do not speak about silence as an identifying feature of their L2 selves is that a person’s awareness of their own inner speech colors their self-description. Although they might be externally quiet, we can suspect that anyone, regardless of assessed competence in language production, is internally voluble to some degree (see de Guerrero 2005; Fernyhough 2016). The earlier review of literature also makes plain that a person’s expectations about silence, their own and that of others, is culturally conditioned. Even a half-second was enough, among first-language speakers from the United States, Italy, and Japan, to “distinguish cultural differences in orientation to inter-turn silence” (Roberts, Margutti, and Takano 2011, 343). Tannen’s (1985) Thanksgiving study raises the idea
of communicative style in dissecting interpretations of silence among her dinner guests. And while one can protest the implied diminishment in referring to an L2 learner’s “reduced personality,” it may be somewhat therapeutic to consider that there will come a point, for almost any nonnative-speaker, at which their L2 talents will not be able to support the social role to which they are accustomed (Harder 1980, 269). The dilemma becomes one of balancing desires to learn with instinctive patterns of action that tell a person “to remain silent . . . whenever they feel they can’t act the way they would like.”

Literature on social dimensions of silence also distinguishes between group and individual silent response (see Medubi 2010, 33). Silence can have a collective dimension, as when, in Igboland in southeastern Nigeria, an Ikoro drum sounds and “even children do not cry as the beating of the drum signifies that something ominous has happened” (34). The idea of collective silence relates as well to the enacting of power relationships implicit within linguistic performance. Achino-Loeb defines silence from the perspective of power, as “selective suppression of experience involved in power manipulations, whether for purposes of domination or of resistance” (2006, 3). Silence has an impact on populations in both its substantive and metaphorical dimensions. Again, one’s silence may not be a matter of personal choice, but prevailing power dynamics may require it. Sociocultural approaches to linguistics, for example, employ the language of L2 learner agency and contextual affordances. In these interpretations, an L2 learner is constrained by what the linguistic environment will allow (Skinnari 2014, 48). Thus, for Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela, the community center where they study English momentarily releases them from their captivity to linguistic forces beyond their control, those of the nation-state and capitalism, among others. In the educational context, Rampton and
Charalambous (2016) similarly offer examples of broken silences that, at least for a moment, alter the power dynamic between teacher and classroom, allowing students to name a social reality—in one case, the stigmatizing of Bangla-accented English in the U.K.—that usually goes unmentioned.

It is curious in the data from this study that Daniela, in her interviews, names chain coffee houses and fast-food restaurants as locations for her L2 emergence. Her extended narrative of ordering iced coffee for the first time could be read, in the way that she finds a voice in a linguistic habitus that is stacked against her, as a subversion of “the unification of the market in symbolic goods,” to use Bourdieu’s language (1991, 50). Or, one could see a capitulation to a dominant language and its triumph in the global market. She describes, in the iced-coffee incident, learning how to speak the L2 in a formulaic manner that suits a habitus in which money and goods provide a universal code, accessible (in theory) to all, regardless of language and other identities. But again, using Bourdieu’s analysis of how language constitutes and shapes this complex of symbolic domination, adopting the code “presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values” (50–51).

Another, starker possibility for reading the L2 silence of the three informants is to continue analyzing their unique social position. There are superficial resemblances, at least, between the circumstance of many contemporary Latino(a) migrants to the United States, especially those who have bypassed the formal immigration system, and the performed silences of slaves of an earlier era. The phrase “performed silence” here borrows Saville-Troike’s construction in referring to biblical injunctions covering the silence of women (1985, 4). Making
the case would call for much more skilled historical investigation and interpretation than I can manage.⁴ One of the historical pieces, though, would go back to the nineteenth-century annexation by the United States of México’s northern territories. The perspective of Santa Ana (2002) in documenting the power and prevalence of metaphors that have served, over more than a century, to justify racism against Mexicans and the Latin American populace writ large helps contextualize the miserable state of modern-day border crossers. As part of the annexation, the new governing authority in these previously Mexican territories gradually took away civil and property rights. Where Indians had been considered full citizens of México, they no longer enjoyed this status. Slavery, too, had been outlawed in México but not, at the time of annexation in 1848, within the United States. Santa Ana continues his reprise of the history:

> Once the land was theirs, Anglo-Americans sought labor to build their society. U.S. industry, mining, and agribusiness spent millions of dollars to recruit highly productive Mexicans from the interior of Mexico to work. This vigorous recruitment established the sources and direction of the stream of people moving to the United States from the south. The patterns of Mexican immigration set down at that time only increased in volume and extent across the century. With Mexican immigration, U.S. capitalism secured an optimal labor reserve; it proved to be more tractable than any other. (2002, 274)

A second historical sliver would come from readings of the linguistic habitus of slavery. Kibbey (1983) concentrates her analysis on the key theme of language and, in its turn, silence in Frederick Douglass’s autobiography. Her exegesis of the linguistic codes of enslavement is extensive. The language of slavery, according to Kibbey, worked together with the economic code of violence to forge a dynamic in which a slave’s silence was necessary to keep the system intact. The slaveholders realized that “[e]ach economic slave must be linguistically enslaved . . .

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⁴ Connections among the historical and modern-day slave trades, immigration policy, and language are being actively researched from a range of perspectives. See Grable 1998; Magee 2010; McKanders 2014; von Sternberg 2014; Acer and Byrne 2017; Clancy 2017; Ferriss 2017; Mesthrie 2017; Naish 2017; and Kaufman 2019.
must be coerced to discover and enter a structure of meaning that denies his humanity” (167).

The use of a label, “slave,” erased substantive difference between individuals to give them a “uniform status” (174). The “slave” label could be correlated to the use of “illegal” or “alien” or “migrant worker” in modern discourse about Latino(a)s, or to many of the metaphors that have come to shape these sojourners’ social positions in the current period. Santa Ana, in chapter 7 of his book, explicates the metaphors of the Latino(a) as disease or intruder. Latino(a)s themselves do not get to create these meanings in English, but they are subject to them. In Douglass’s work, the linguistic journey of shedding this totalizing “slave” identity forms, in Kibbey’s view, the narrative’s predominant trajectory. Douglass writes that when he first started appearing at abolition meetings, the idea of speaking to whites was a burden. He remembered the long period of silent bondage and continued to be aware that “[c]oncealed in the slave’s silence was the unacknowledged linguistic reciprocity between speaker and hearer” (Kibbey 1983, 171).
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This multiple case study has examined the willingness to communicate of English-language learners in naturalistic settings and their subjective interpretations of interactional silences that they experience in English as an outcome of their L2 proficiency or social status. The population was composed of three adult learners, who share Spanish as their first language, had lived in continuous residence in the United States between eight and sixteen years, work outside the home, and had been assessed at no higher than an intermediate level in English on a standardized instrument. In the end, all three were from México and tested as low beginners and high beginners on a BEST Literacy scale. There were two women and one man, aged from their mid-twenties to early forties; all were currently taking English classes at a city community center. The key research questions addressed the effects of marginalized social conditions and earlier L2 experiences on their willingness to communicate (WTC) and extralinguistic factors that contributed to their perceived silences, and to the silences of others, in various social settings.

In daily language-use surveys, administered over two weeks, and a series of face-to-face interviews, the participants noted individual cases when they felt they had chosen silence over speaking and when they felt their conversation partners had done the same. Their responses also covered more expansive topics related to second-language acquisition, such as language environments and interlocutors, forms and functions of human communication, individual
differences and psychological aspects related to L2 usage, and social factors in language acquisition, including the perceived barriers of racism, linguistic discrimination, social isolation, and household economy. The analysis proceeded by grouping speaking turns according to these themes and by making use of informants’ stories to address issues, related to WTC and silence, that they themselves had identified.

Supporting some earlier research on the WTC construct, participants confirmed, through their recollections, opinions, and insights, the power that perceived lack of L2 competence and feared miscommunication has over interaction in English. Silence did not often overtake them as volitional weakness in the moment, as the willingness-to-communicate construct has been formulated. Rather, silences were sometimes anticipated, manufactured, or recognized after the fact as avoidance of interlocutors, as time for planning what lexical items and structures they might use, as leveraging the fluency of Spanish-speaking bilinguals for targeted input, as inevitable lulls in speech while carrying out repetitive work tasks, as the outcome of noise in the workplace or enforced silences from supervisors, as planned or unplanned “time-outs” from the strains of L2 cognitive work, and as the persistent inner monologue that narrates events and our interpretations of them. For these L2 learners, as other researchers on silence have concluded, such nonverbal communication provides advantages and drawbacks for its indirectness, ambiguity, protectiveness, and the demands it places on others sharing the discourse. Silence is not monolithic, not “a natural kind” (Ephratt 2011, 2287, 2298).

Two of the participants—Gabriela and Daniela—confess to being quieter versions of themselves in English and to cultivating cautious styles of L2 interaction, influenced by their anxieties about not being understood. For Daniela, she explicitly connects the quietness to her
strategy of preparation and active listening. Earlier research has drawn a correlation between second-language anxiety and learners who underestimate their ability in the new language. With fewer spoken L2 interactions, such students cannot fully appreciate the gains they have been able to make and potentially revise inaccurate self-assessments (MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément 1997). While not asserting that this represents the inner dynamic for Gabriela and Daniela, the self-limiting pattern that each describes perhaps relates to extralinguistic explanations with origins inside and outside the self.

Alisha Ali (2010), for one, employs a theory of self-silencing developed by Jack ([1991] 1993). The sojourning Caribbean women in Toronto and New York that Ali interviews do not confront a language barrier but mention differing social expectations of women in their new societies as well as pervasive discrimination. Self-silencing represents more than a choice to speak or not but an insidious loss of self that relates to the immigrant experience and how it can “compromise one’s emotional well-being” (2010, 234). These individuals believe that, in Norton’s words, they have lost the “right to speak” (1995, 18). Freire’s work in critical pedagogy raises the related specter of the internal oppressor, a demon duplicating in a person’s subjective experience a set of external norms that characterize a domination system. In these relationships between dominators and the oppressed, the former “steal the words of others” and grow accustomed to the intoxicating, anti-dialogical condition of the other being’s silence ([1970] 2000, 134).

The research in this thesis indicates that, in fact, innumerable extralinguistic variables influence L2 speech production for the three learners. There is an echo here of earlier work showing that willingness to communicate, a concept born out of inquiry into language-learner
motivation, depends on a long list of contextual and individual factors. As in research into second-language-learner motivation, one of the challenges is to explain “the complex interrelationship of the individual organism, the individual’s environment, and the broader sociocultural context” (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003, 616). This study has tried another approach to the willingness-to-communicate formulation by associating WTC explicitly with silence, with which it had already been associated implicitly. The concept of silence under review was defined indirectly within the survey and interview questions as refraining from L2 speech when an opportunity presents itself. Since the interest was in subjective, individual perceptions, the term silence was otherwise left to the participants’ own interpretation. They acknowledge the presence of silence in their efforts to speak an additional language and regard it as a kind of refuge, lamentable for them at times but also useful in managing their exposure to existential and economic pressures. It perhaps is not the “fully cognizant silence” of Sheriff’s informants in facing persistent racism in Rio de Janeiro (2000, 128) yet reflects awareness of the continued vitality of their first language in shaping their identities, even in a different linguistic surrounding. The other notable approach here to operationalizing WTC has been to ask how it functions in a naturalistic environment. Adult ESL learners were recruited from a community-based language program, but their classroom interactions were not the focus, as in a large amount of earlier work on WTC.

Any conclusions, however tentative, relating to the initial research questions must be shaped to identify future areas for inquiry and be faithful to participants’ own descriptions. Regarding the effects of social distance and personal narratives of English-language interaction on WTC, I have commented on the prevalence of L2 input and output, for Gabriela, Miguel, and
Daniela, in work and economic transactions. These tendencies accord with members of a minority language group’s so-called instrumental motivations (Siegel 2003, 185), but have been more fruitfully analyzed under the rubric of investment. Norton and McKinney directly speak to the difference between these concepts. Contrary to thinking primarily about a language learner’s material desires, investment regards L2 use not solely as an instrument for gain but as a reshaping and reimagining of identity (2011, 75). Daniela’s rehearsal of her first iced-coffee purchase, for instance, shows herself as a capable and adaptable L2 user more than it shows someone who wants to try a new beverage. One also sees in Daniela’s vignette how verbal fluency is not required in multilingual marketplace exchanges. “In the face of linguistic obstacles to communication,” writes Calvet, “markets show us how, despite everything, people communicate” (1998, 88). Such accounts further encourage SLA research in places beyond school. Daniela’s own recourse to and recommendations concerning L2 learner silence in the marketplace challenge WTC studies that fail to consider that not speaking might complement a person’s L2 WTC rather than subverting it.

As to extralinguistic factors that contribute to the participants’ perceived silences, and to the silences of others, in social settings, I identify in Gabriela’s, Miguel’s, and Daniela’s stories some openness to silent strategies when they doubt their L2 competence, when they are tired, and when the situation is volatile and the outcome of L2 speech unknown, such as when Gabriela and Miguel have opted out of direct confrontations with racism and linguistic discrimination. The latter silence in the face of unpredictability recalls Basso’s (1970) findings among the Western Apache. Gabriela, Miguel, and Daniela maintain their individualized mappings of places and people to avoid and different strategies for intentional silence. Gabriela, for example,
feels anxious with English-Spanish bilinguals; for Miguel, the reverse is true. The encounters with bilingual teachers that Gabriela narrates suggest future research avenues as to how L1 and L2 silences are negotiated or used as a distancing device in migrant Latino(a) populations in the United States. Berger in his first-language research concludes that most speechlessness is involuntary and remarks on embarrassment and guilt his informants report when choosing to stay silent (2004, 168). Gabriela, in particular, reports this experience in English. Miguel employs the risks he identifies with L2 silence as an impetus to learn further. Daniela’s positive associations with silence and language acquisition seem to make potential self-shaming less of an issue. The emergence from the L2 silence about self, for Gabriela and Miguel, when they meet university students interested in cultural exchange is profound. It stirs ideas about intentional research into the identity issues, miscommunication, and silences involved in the purposeful crossing of linguistic divides (see below, “Future Directions”).

I now turn to consider the limitations of this case-study methodology, alternative readings for the data, potential implications of what has been learned for teaching English-language learners (especially for the teaching of adult, sojourning populations), and more detailed research directions for the future.

Limitations of the Research

In a qualitative case-study design, it is natural to feel close to one’s participants and to advocate for their perspectives. Their narratives, like anyone’s stories, are highly subjective, unverified, and the product of one-time encounters with an unknown graduate student; thus, they should be read in light of these conditions. Within this research, subjectivity was amplified in
that data came purely from informants’ own versions of the world. Then, their narratives were sorted and selected according to the researcher’s own purpose. Cursory inspection of the codebook of interview themes in appendix E shows, for instance, that many thematic categories are ignored in the interpretation of informant statements. One reason is that there is a good deal of overlap; for example, a speaking turn coded as an L2 silent strategy would likely also appear as a token of second-language use in the United States, then it probably would be coded according to the physical environment where the silence had been employed, and so on. But, certainly, the data could be exploited to address other questions or thematic interests and, in so doing, shift the interpretive frame onto other linguistic terrain or into another discipline entirely.

Another limitation of the research is inherent in defining the topic under investigation. There are definitions and unique deployments of the word *silence* in phonetics, morphosyntactics, semantics, pragmatics, and in the broader social sciences and humanities, with methodological paradigms that fall within gender studies, literature, comparative religions, and other multidisciplinary perspectives. Granger, in her psychoanalytic study of second-language silence, frames the dilemma well:

[T]he silent period in the context of second language learning (and silence qua silence in any context) is inherently problematic. After all, whether transparent or not, whether informed by prior knowledge or not, whether obligatory or not, it is by definition, in some sense at least, silent. And in Western cultures whose naturalised, common-sense operating principles favour performance over contemplation, participation over inaction, and—what is most relevant here—speech over silence, there is something peculiar, even counter-intuitive, about investigating something that in a sense is not there. It is a struggle to reconstruct silence, not as an absence, an emptiness that must be filled with something else in order to be meaningful, but rather as an investigable actuality. (2004, 4–5)

Settling on a method to find and describe this silence—if, indeed, it actually exists—is a challenge. It is particularly challenging to partner a study of silence with the WTC construct,
given the conventional wisdom that willingness to communicate cannot be observed in natural settings.

Finally, all survey and interview data were collected in the participants’ L1. The strength of this approach is in the quality of the narrative reflections and in the comfort the L1 might provide as participants disclose intimate information to a stranger. Nevertheless, I never experienced for myself the L2 competence of those providing data, which might have offered more insight into their second-language selves.

Alternative Readings of the Data

It would be quite possible to interpret Gabriela’s, Miguel’s, and Daniela’s stories in the framework of L2 motivation research, from which the WTC construct was developed. One of the incentives for doing so would be to address the three participants’ unique persistence with English-language learning, despite the regrets, setbacks, and discouragements that each describes. Does an instrumental motivation (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003, 613), for example, fully account for Gabriela’s attendance at morning English classes, after four to five hours’ sleep, and after sixteen years of residence in the United States? What explains Gabriela’s choice, persistence, and effort that are characteristic of the motivation construct (614)? One thinks of statements about her children, rapidly advancing in their English capacities, connecting with L1 English-speakers at school, and developing channels of communication excluding Gabriela and her husband. We can portray Miguel’s powerful drive to persist in his learning—studying English-language videos over his meal break, downloading language apps, and seeking out metalinguistic conversations with his bilingual work supervisor—as the interplay of intrinsic and
extrinsic motivation pushing him forward. What is the impact on motivation for all three when they sense they are being dismissed by native-speakers or by fellow Latino(a)s who mock their ambitions? Each of their language-learning trajectories could be mapped out with the assistance of more than thirty years of L2 motivation research, helping to see in the passing of time a “dynamically changing and evolving mental process, characterized by constant (re)appraisal and balancing of the various internal and external influences that the individual is exposed to” (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003, 617).

Pedagogical Considerations

Early willingness-to-communicate research drew energy from a shift in second-language teaching from linguistic to communicative competence and proposed that “a proper objective for L2 education is to create WTC” (MacIntyre et al. 1998, 547). The idea sounds admirable, with an implicit goal of addressing learners’ perceived L2 competence and intrinsic motivation to cross borders and, in theory, creating more task-based language instruction with opportunities for meaningful language use. Making the second language of relevance to her class was the struggle for Skinnari (2014), as she simultaneously taught and investigated student silences in her L2 English classroom in Finland. In their questionnaire responses, “Some pupils wrote that studying English was *boring*, or that English was not important for them in their past or present experiences or imagined future lives” (51; emphasis in original).

But how to create WTC, and how to know that one has achieved one’s goal? To date, it does not appear that much pedagogical guidance has flowed from the willingness-to-communicate model, despite its heuristic intent. While the majority of WTC research has been
conducted in classrooms, it is not clear how many participants under study were aware of what willingness to communicate is and why it might be important to them. Within Freire’s critical pedagogy, in his discussion of “decoding,” lies a potential tool for bringing willingness to communicate and silence to the attention of students ([1970] 2000, 106). The idea of creating classroom L2 dialogue about silence and, ultimately, to have students access it as a generative theme of conversation—to make the content of L2 instruction more explicitly metalinguistic—springs from the importance of silence in Freire’s work. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, silence is the existential classroom problem par excellence; its presence and the contradictions it implies with the rich, inaudible inner speech of students, who offer “the eloquence of experience,” helps explain the central role of dialogical action in Freire’s pedagogical approach (114). The action-reflection process of noticing and naming silence in a community of adult sojourners, such as the participants in this thesis study, itself involves subthemes of language dominance, communication style, gender positions, and language revitalization and emancipation. The idea of emancipation can be addressed at communal and personal levels, as language learners name the shaming to which their L1 is subject and their internalized attitudes of linguistic inferiority.

One exemplar of the approach appears in Johansen’s interviews in a Sámi-Norwegian community (2013), compiled as she makes a narrative record of Norwegianization and subsequent efforts to strengthen, or emancipate, minority languages such as Kven, Meänkieli, and Sámi. As Johansen points out, both the theme and the pedagogical practice among “muted groups” serve restorative aims:

I would like to stress the potential of the research interview as a site of language emancipation in itself. The meeting between interviewer and interviewee is a social action in which silence can be overcome and the voiceless can be heard. The researcher is then forced to look beyond political correctness and current macro-level agendas in
order to present an analysis that is close up to the lives and the experiences of the people
involved. (74)

Another useful topic within this framework is the positive utilization of silence in language
learning, as students listen to and perhaps track, in diary format, their inner speech and consider
how it can function as a self-contained instructional tool. Instructors themselves will have to
adapt to longer silences that, in one experiment, sometimes consumed more than half of allotted
discussion time (Yashima, MacIntyre, and Ikeda 2018).

Future Directions

Pushing beyond the classroom represents one of the next frontiers for studying the
willingness-to-communicate construct. The present research hoped to continue addressing this
gap by asking questions about naturalistic L2 use and how learners interpret and employ L2
silences in daily exchange. Much WTC research, along with other debates in second-language
acquisition, places the L2 learner center-stage, endowed with responsibility for communication
success or failure. While many projects have shown the impact of interlocutors and social
factors on WTC, others present willingness to communicate as an individual possession, as a
trait-based binary that at any given instant is on or off. Such interpretations make it easier to see
learner silence, in the WTC paradigm, as a contrast to the ideal of the speaking individual.

Opting to accept this common impression of silence, especially classroom silence, as an
avoidance tactic—or as evidence of self- or externally imposed suppression—researchers
position the assumed contrary to silence, speech production, as a kind of escape from bondage
when they talk of a person’s “decision to speak” or WTC. Part of this orientation arises from the
early idea of willingness to communicate as rooted in individual volition and particularly in the
writing of psychologist and philosopher William James (see MacIntyre 2007, 569–71). One
citation is of James pondering a person’s decision to get out of bed on a cold morning, when
there is a clear difference between the wish to begin one’s day and the willingness to make it so
(James [1890] 1981, 1132–33). Thus, the “key defining characteristic of WTC,” according to the
concept’s initial formulators, became “choosing to initiate communication when there is a
choice” (MacIntyre 2007, 570). If this is a governing binary of L2 use, then a second-language
learner’s opting for silence must be a failure. Others have noticed the same stark division
between speaking and not speaking, not necessarily about WTC, but related more generally to
the place of silence in human life and language. “The notion of silence that crept into speech
studies and linguistics in the 1970s,” argues Ephratt (2008, 1910), “was closely associated with
negativity, passiveness, impotence and death. It was treated as absence: absence of speech, and
absence of meaning and intention.” In this SLA investigative paradigm, it should also be said,
speech takes precedence over other skills, such as writing or listening, for instance, as an L2
expressive outlet (McKay and Wong 1996). Significantly, research on mother-tongue speakers’
willingness to accommodate nonnative accents and speech patterns and the effects of negative
stereotyping on WTC (see Montgomery and Zhang 2018) often do not figure in the question of
L2 speakers’ own willingness to talk.

Taking the Montgomery and Zhang study as a cue, a profitable direction would be to
investigate both sides of silence and WTC in the interaction of native- and nonnative-speakers.
Typically, as alluded to above, WTC research asks after the linguistic and cultural competence,
the anxiety levels, the L2 attitudes, the motivation, and the social and network positioning of the
second-language learner only. In the context of formal second-language instruction, students’
classroom WTC is often observed in small-group contact with peers or as they respond to instructor input. What might be useful is an adapted, smaller-scale version of the European Science Foundation project (Perdue 1993a; 1993b), asking about the interactional strategies, silences, interpretations, and inferences of participants in live interaction. Again, following a technique in the European Science Foundation research, one interactant could be learning an L2 (say, Spanish) in a dominant L1 context, with the other learning the L2 (say, English) as a sojourner, within the L2 culture. By creating an *intercambio*, in which the interlocutors alternately use the L1, L2, and then are free to use both as they feel the conversation demands, one could obtain data from a more authentically two-sided exchange, with both participants having opportunities to accommodate the other’s L2 efforts and to communicate in turn in the other person’s native language. Such research, in addition, serves language instruction in its broader social objective of helping cultures make contact (Kang 2005, 278).

While not its primary intention, this study has left a written record of a series of cross-cultural meetings and hopefully of the richness of discourse of L2 users and of their interactions when acquiring English outside the classroom. The project has tried to heed an earlier call to regard the second-language user, not as a “deficient communicator,” but as an individual creatively marshaling resources and having multilingual success even though not replicating the unhelpful standard of L2 native-speaker competence (see Firth and Wagner 1997, 295–96; Block 2003, 3–4). With much second-language acquisition occurring in contexts of human displacement and migration, questions about the social conditions giving rise to these new linguistic efforts, spoken and silent, will continue to be important.


APPENDIX A

INFORMED-CONSENT DOCUMENT (SPANISH AND ENGLISH)
Northern Illinois University
Department of English
Consentimiento Informado para Participantes de Investigación

El propósito de esta ficha de consentimiento es proveer a los participantes en esta investigación de una clara explicación de la naturaleza de la misma, así como de su rol en ella como participantes.

La presente investigación (“Beyond a Language Boundary: Encounters with Silence and L1 Spanish-Speakers’ Willingness to Communicate in English”) es conducida por John Turnbull, un asistente de docente de posgrado y candidato para la maestría de la enseñanza de inglés como idioma extranjero en el departamento de inglés de la Universidad de Northern Illinois. La meta de este estudio es entender más precisamente las dificultades en el aprendizaje de inglés que los inmigrantes de América Latina encuentran por razones de la inequidad social. Con ejemplos auténticos desde la vida cotidiana nos gustaría saber las barreras que existen cuando un individuo trate de entrar “al mundo de inglés.”

Si usted accede a participar en este estudio, se le pedirá responder preguntas en tres entrevistas y completar una serie de encuestas. Las entrevistas se harán conducidas en una hora conveniente para Ud. y en una ubicación privada, como su hogar o un cuarto privado en una biblioteca pública. Cada entrevista tomará entre 45 y 60 minutos. Lo que conversemos durante estas sesiones se grabará, de modo que el investigador pueda transcribir después las ideas que usted haya expresado(a). Las encuestas diarias – las cuales usted recibirá por teléfono por las tardes por siete días consecutivos, en el curso de tres semanas separadas – incluirán entre cinco y seis (5-6) preguntas sobre su uso de inglés durante su día laboral o su tiempo libre. En total, serán 21 encuestas, una encuesta cada día por 21 días; cada encuesta debería tardar entre 3-4 minutos como máximo. Todas estas tareas tomarán entre cuatro y cinco (4-5) horas de su tiempo.

Las investigaciones darán inicio desde la primera semana de marzo hasta la primera semana de abril, en un curso de cinco semanas. Las entrevistas cubrirán los siguientes asuntos:

**Entrevista N° 1**: Sus experiencias educacionales, familiares y profesionales;
**Entrevista N° 2**: Los factores personales y sociales que afectan su nivel de comodidad cuando se está comunicando en inglés;
**Entrevista N° 3**: Su utilización y su interpretación de silencio en entornos en los cuales la gente utiliza inglés.

Las encuestas diarias le pedirán a Ud. información sobre su utilización de inglés durante las 24 horas anteriores, p.ej., donde y con qué frecuencia utilizó Ud. inglés. Se harán preguntas también para que pueda evaluar la eficiencia de sus conversaciones en inglés, si alguien evitó de hablar inglés con Ud. o si permaneció Ud. en silencio para evitar hablar inglés.
La participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria. La información que se recoja será confidencial y no se usará para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de esta investigación. Sus respuestas a los cuestionarios y a las entrevistas serán codificadas usando un número de identificación y, por lo tanto, serán anónimas. Una vez trascritas las entrevistas, los archivos con las grabaciones se destruirán. En el estudio escrito final, se lo identificará por un seudónimo (un nombre) de su elección.

Los beneficios de participar en este estudio incluirán autoconocimiento sobre su proceso de aprender idiomas nuevos y una conciencia más desarrollada acerca de las barreras sociales que los inmigrantes tratan de superar.

Si tiene alguna duda sobre este proyecto, puede hacer preguntas en cualquier momento durante su participación en él. Igualmente, puede retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento sin que eso lo perjudique en ninguna forma. Su participación o su elección de no participar no tendrán ninguno impacto en su inscripción en las clases de inglés en _________________. Si alguna de las preguntas durante las entrevistas le parece incómoda, tiene usted el derecho de hacérselo saber al investigador o de no responderlas.

Desde ya le agradecemos su participación.

Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación, conducida por John Turnbull de la Universidad de Northern Illinois. He sido informado(a) de que la meta de este estudio es entender más precisamente las dificultades en el aprendizaje de inglés. Me han indicado también que tendré que responder cuestionarios y preguntas en tres entrevistas, las cuales tomarán aproximadamente 4-5 horas. Las entrevistas estarán grabadas en un modo digital para transcripción más tarde.

Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento. He sido informado de que puedo hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto en cualquier momento y que puedo retirarme del mismo cuando así lo decida, sin que esto acarree perjuicio alguno para mi persona. De tener preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio, puedo contactar a:

Dr. Doris Macdonald  
Associate Professor, Applied Linguistics, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)  
Northern Illinois University  
Department of English  
Reavis Hall, Room 320  
DeKalb, Illinois 60115  
(815) 753-0611  
dmvm@niu.edu
Reconozco además que, si yo desearía más información sobre mis derechos como un participante en esta investigación, puedo contactar a:

Office of Research Compliance  
Northern Illinois University  
(815) 753-8588

Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido. Para esto, puedo contactar a Prof. Doris Macdonald al teléfono o correo electrónico anteriormente mencionado.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Nombre del participante (en letras de imprenta)

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Firma del participante

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Fecha
Northern Illinois University
Department of English
Informed Consent Agreement for Participants in Research

The purpose of this consent form is to provide participants in this research a clear explanation of its nature, as well as of their role in the research as participants.

The present research (“Beyond a Language Boundary: Encounters with Silence and L1 Spanish-Speakers’ Willingness to Communicate in English”) is being conducted by John Turnbull, a graduate teaching assistant and MA TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) candidate in the Department of English at Northern Illinois University. The goal of this study is to understand more exactly the challenges in the acquisition of English that, for reasons of social inequality, Latin American migrants encounter. With authentic examples from everyday life, we would like to know the barriers that exist when a person tries to enter “the world of English.”

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer questions in three interviews, conducted at a time of your convenience and in a private location, such as your home or a private study room at a public library, and to complete a series of surveys. Each interview will take between 45 and 60 minutes. What we talk about during these sessions will be recorded so that the researcher afterward can transcribe the ideas that you have expressed. The daily surveys – which you will receive by telephone in the evenings for seven consecutive days, over the course of three separate weeks – will include between five and six (5-6) questions about your use of English during your workday or free time. In total, you will complete 21 surveys, one each day for 21 days; each survey should take a maximum of three to four (3-4) minutes. All these tasks combined will take between four and five (4-5) hours of your time.

Research will take place from the beginning of March through the first week in April, over a total of five weeks. The three interviews will cover the following topics:

- **Interview 1:** Educational, family, and professional background
- **Interview 2:** Internal (individual) and external (societal) factors affecting willingness to communicate in English
- **Interview 3:** Use of and interpretations of silence in English-language environments

The daily surveys will ask about where and how often you spoke English over the preceding 24 hours, to rank the effectiveness of your conversations, if you avoided or one of your speaking partners avoided using English with you, and how you used and interpreted silence.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The information collected will be confidential and will be used for no purpose other than the purposes of this research. Your answers to the questionnaires and interviews will be coded using an identification number and, for that reason, will be anonymous. Once the interviews are transcribed, the files containing the recordings will...
be destroyed. In the final written study, you will be identified by a one-name pseudonym of your choice.

The benefits of participating in this study will include self-knowledge about your process of learning new languages and a more developed consciousness concerning the social barriers that immigrants try to overcome.

If you have any questions about this project, you can ask questions at any time during your participation. Also, you can withdraw from the project at any moment without it harming you in any way. **Your participation or decision not to participate will have no effect on your enrollment in ESL classes at ______________________________.** If any of the questions during the interviews make you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to make that known to the researcher or not to answer.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

---

I agree to participate voluntarily in this research, conducted by John Turnbull of Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the goal of this study is to understand more exactly the challenges in learning English. It has also been indicated that I will have to answer survey questions and questions in three interviews, all of which will take approximately 4-5 hours. These interviews will be recorded electronically for later transcription.

I acknowledge that the information I provide in the course of this research is strictly confidential and will not be used without my consent for any other purpose other than those of this study. I have been informed that I can ask questions about the project at any moment and that I can withdraw from it when I decide, without causing any harm to me. In case of questions about my participation in this study, I can contact:

**Dr. Doris Macdonald**  
Associate Professor, Applied Linguistics, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)  
Northern Illinois University  
Department of English  
Reavis Hall, Room 320  
DeKalb, Illinois 60115  
(815) 753-0611  
dmvm@niu.edu

I further acknowledge that if I desire more information about my rights as a participant in this research, I can contact:
The researcher’s contact information is as follows:

John Turnbull  
Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Northern Illinois University  
Department of English  
Reavis Hall, Room 215  
DeKalb, Illinois 60115  
(630) 300-8111  
john.turnbull@niu.edu

I understand that a copy of this consent form will be provided to me, and that I can ask for information about the results of this study when concluded. For this information, I can contact Prof. Doris Macdonald at the phone number or email address mentioned above.

Name of participant (printed)

Signature of participant

Date
APPENDIX B

RECRUITING DOCUMENT (SPANISH AND ENGLISH)
Se Necesitan Estudiantes del Idioma Inglés para un Proyecto de Investigación de la Universidad de Northern Illinois

¿Cuál es el proyecto?
La meta de esta investigación es para entender mejor los desafíos que los inmigrantes de América Latina a veces enfrentan cuando están trabajando para aprender inglés. A través de entrevistas y encuestas, nos gustaría aprender sobre los ejemplos auténticos de la utilización de inglés en la vida cotidiana. Particularmente queremos al identificar las barreras que existen cuando una persona trata de entrar “al mundo de inglés.”

¿Quién puede participar?
Los participantes deberían tener las siguientes características:
1. Hablen español como su lengua materna.
2. Hasta ahora hayan vivido continuamente en EE. UU. por 5 años por lo menos.
3. Trabajen fuera de su hogar a tiempo parcial (10 horas por semana o más).
4. De acuerdo con la evaluación más reciente de su nivel de inglés, no se hayan puntuado en un nivel superior a intermedio.

¿Por qué le estamos pidiendo su ayuda?
Tenemos que aprender de las experiencias auténticas y cotidianas de latino(a)s cuando están trabajando para aprender inglés. Cuando nos provee información confidencial en las entrevistas y en las encuestas diarias sobre su utilización de inglés en ambientes cotidianos, nos ayuda adquirir datos muy importantes para estudiar precisamente como lo(a)s latino(a)s experimentan la adquisición de inglés en el contexto social de los EE. UU. Su participación tiene mucho valor para comprender los lugares en los cuales lo(a)s latino(a)s utilizan inglés y para identificar las barreras sociales y culturales para la adquisición de un idioma nuevo.

¿Qué tengo que hacer?
Si está de acuerdo y le gustaría participar, se reunirá con el investigador para tres entrevistas entre 45 y 60 minutos para cada una. Estas entrevistas, las cuales van a cubrir (1) sus experiencias educacionales, familiares y profesionales, (2) los factores personales y sociales que afectan su nivel de comodidad cuando se está comunicando en inglés y (3) su utilización y su interpretación de silencio en entornos en los cuales la gente utiliza inglés, se grabarán para la transcripción. Toda su información será confidencial (vea la pregunta a continuación).

En el curso de tres semanas, va a tomar una serie de encuestas diarias confidenciales – es decir, veintiuna (21) encuestas en total, una por cada día. Las encuestas incluirán entre cinco y seis (5-6) preguntas sobre su utilización de inglés durante su día laboral o su tiempo libre. Cada encuesta por lo máximo tomará entre tres y cuatro (3-4) minutos para cumplir.

Todas estas tareas juntas tomarán entre cuatro y cinco (4-5) horas de su tiempo.

Las investigaciones darán inicio desde la primera semana de marzo hasta la primera semana de abril, en un curso de cinco semanas.
¿Qué van a hacer Uds. con mi información?
La participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria. La información que se recoja será confidencial y no se usará para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de esta investigación. Sus respuestas a los cuestionarios y a las entrevistas serán codificadas usando un número de identificación y, por lo tanto, serán anónimas. Una vez trascritas las entrevistas, los archivos con las grabaciones se destruirán. En el estudio escrito final, se lo identificará por un seudónimo (un nombre) de su elección.

¿Cómo voy a beneficiar de mi participación?
Los beneficios de participar en esta investigación incluirán autoconocimiento sobre su proceso del aprendizaje de inglés y una consciencia más desarrollada sobre las barreras sociales que los inmigrantes tratan de superar. Tendrá la oportunidad de pedirle al investigador para aprender más sobre el proceso de la investigación. También tendrá la oportunidad para interactuar con hispanohablantes nativos que también están tratando de vivir entre dos lenguajes.

¿Quién está haciendo la investigación?
La investigación se está dirigiendo por John Turnbull, un asistente de docente de posgrado y candidato para la maestría de la enseñanza de inglés como idioma extranjero en el departamento de inglés de la Universidad de Northern Illinois.

John ha trabajado por más de ocho años como profesor de inglés y como defensor para las comunidades latinoamericanas en los EE. UU., México y América del Sur. En Atlanta, John trabajó para dos organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro, Literacy Volunteers of Atlanta (2010-2012) y La Asociación Latinoamericana (2011-2015). En 2011 en Popayán, Cauca, Colombia, por seis meses fue voluntario para un sindicato de docentes, La Asociación de Institutos y Trabajadores de la Educación del Cauca (ASOINCA), en la cual proveyó recursos lingüísticos y pedagógicos para el desarrollo de docentes de inglés en escuelas públicas.

Además ha enseñado a estudiantes del idioma inglés en Lituania, Cabo Verde y Tailandia. Desde 2016, ha sido estudiante de posgrado en el programa de la enseñanza de inglés como idioma extranjero en la Universidad de Northern Illinois. John tiene interés en la educación para adultos, en la lingüística aplicada, en las identidades fronterizas, en la comunicación intercultural y en la discriminación por razón de lenguaje. John sigue como voluntario en el Literacy Council de Rockford, Illinois, u un año atrás duró tres semanas en el sur de Arizona. Allí estudió los asuntos fronterizos y los de la migración. Fue voluntario también con el Kino Border Initiative, una organización jesuita en Nogales, Sonora, México.
What is the project?
The goal of the research is to better understand challenges that Latin American migrants sometimes encounter when working to learn English. Through interviews and surveys, we wish to learn about authentic examples of English use from everyday life, in particular the barriers that exist when a person tries to enter “the world of English.”

Who can participate?
Participants should meet the following qualifications:
1. Speak Spanish as a first language
2. Continuous residence in the United States of 5 years or more
3. Employed at least part-time outside the home (10 hours per week or more)
4. Most recent language assessment or intake assessment places student at upper-intermediate level or below

Why are we asking for your help?
We need to learn from the authentic everyday experiences of Latinos as they work to learn English. By providing information confidentially in interviews and in responses to daily language surveys, you will supply very important data for studying exactly how Latinos experience English-language acquisition in the social context of the United States. Your participation is of great value in understanding the places where Latinos use English and in comprehending possible social and cultural barriers to language acquisition.

What will I have to do?
If you agree to participate, you will meet with the researcher three times for interviews of between 45 to 60 minutes each. These interviews, which will cover (1) educational, family, and professional background, (2) the personal and social factors that affect your comfort level while communicating in English, and (3) your use of and interpretation of silence in English-language environments, will be recorded for transcription. All information is confidential (see question below).

Over three weeks, you will also take a series of daily confidential surveys—twenty-one (21) surveys in total, one each day. The surveys will include between five and six (5-6) questions about your use of English during your workday or free time. Each survey should take a maximum of three to four (3-4) minutes to complete.

All these tasks combined will take between four and five (4-5) hours of your time.

Research will take place from the beginning of March through the first week in April, over a total of five weeks.
What will you do with my information?
The information collected will be confidential and will be used for no purpose other than the purposes of this research. Your answers to the questionnaires and interviews will be coded using an identification number and, for that reason, will be anonymous. Once the interviews are transcribed, the files containing the recordings will be destroyed. In the final written study, you will be identified by a one-name pseudonym of your choice.

How will I benefit from participating?
The benefits of participating in this study will include self-knowledge about your process of learning English and a more developed awareness concerning the social barriers that immigrants try to overcome. You will have the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher, to learn about the research process, and to interact with others also trying to live in two language worlds.

Who is doing the research?
The research is being conducted by John Turnbull, a graduate teaching assistant and MA TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) candidate in the Department of English at Northern Illinois University.

John has worked for more than eight years as an English teacher among and as an advocate for Latin American communities in the United States, México, and South America. In Atlanta, John worked for the nonprofit organizations Literacy Volunteers of Atlanta (2010-12) and the Latin American Association (2011-15). In 2011, in Popayán, Cauca, Colombia, he served six months as a volunteer for a teacher’s union, La Asociación de Institutores y Trabajadores de la Educación del Cauca (ASOINCA), providing curriculum and teacher-development resources for public-school K-12 English teachers.

He has also worked with English-language learners in Lithuania, Cape Verde, and Thailand. Since 2016, he has studied in the MA TESOL program at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb with interests in adult education, applied linguistics, border identities, intercultural communication, and language-based discrimination. John continues to volunteer with the Literacy Council in Rockford, Illinois, and in late 2016 and early 2017 spent three weeks in southern Arizona learning about border and migration issues and volunteering with the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Sonora, México.
APPENDIX C

DAILY LANGUAGE-USE SURVEY (SPANISH)
Encuesta diaria sobre la utilización del inglés

| Fecha: ___________________________ | La hora __________________ am / pm |

P1 ¿Qué porcentaje de tiempo piensa que hablará Ud. inglés hoy (es decir, las 24 horas anteriores)? (entre 0 y 100 por ciento)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Porcentaje de tiempo</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0  10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>___________ Utilización diaria del inglés</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
P2 ¿Dónde y en cuales situaciones habló Ud. inglés hoy (es decir, las 24 horas anteriores)? (Marque todo lo que corresponda.)

☐ En su lugar de empleo (1)
☐ Con su familia (2)
☐ Con doctores, dentistas y otros profesionales de la salud (3)
☐ En su escuela (4)
☐ En la escuela de sus hijos (5)
☐ De compras (6)
☐ En lugares de culto religioso (7)
☐ Mientras Ud. practica deportes o hace alguna otra forma de recreación (8)
☐ En las fiestas u otros eventos sociales (9)
☐ En oficinas gubernamentales (tribunales, oficinas de la Seguridad Social, etc) (10)
☐ Por teléfono (11)

P3 ¿Cómo evaluaría Ud. hoy la eficiencia de sus conversaciones en inglés? (Clasifiquelas entre “0” y “10,” donde “0” quiere decir “no eficiente” o "ineficiente" y “10” quiere decir “extremadamente eficiente.”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La eficiencia de sus conversaciones en inglés</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Si respondió entre «0» y «9», por favor responda en pregunta 4 (P4) con una frase o con oraciones cortas. Si respondió «10», salte a la pregunta 5 (P5).

P4 Si sus conversaciones fueron menores del 100 por ciento efectivas ¿por qué lo cree? 
(Responda con una frase o con oraciones cortas.)

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

P5 ¿Evitó alguien hablar inglés con Ud. hoy (es decir, durante las 24 horas anteriores)?

- Sí (1)
- No (2)
- No estoy seguro (3)

Si respondió «Sí» o «No estoy seguro», por favor responda en pregunta 5a (P5a) con una frase o con oraciones cortas. Si respondió «No», salte a la pregunta 6 (P6).

P5a ¿Por qué piensa que él o ella no utilizó inglés? (Responda con una frase o con oraciones cortas.)

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
P6 ¿Permaneció Ud. en silencio hoy para evitar hablar inglés (es decir, durante las 24 horas anteriores)?

- Sí (1)
- No (2)
- No estoy seguro (3)

Si respondió «Sí» o «No estoy seguro», por favor responda en pregunta 6a (P6a) con una frase o con oraciones cortas. Si respondió «No», salte hasta el fin.

P6a ¿Por qué lo decidió? (Responda con una frase o con oraciones cortas.)

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Muchas gracias por su participación.
APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (SPANISH AND ENGLISH)
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview 1: Educational, Family, and Professional Background

1. Where are your parents from? / ¿De dónde son sus padres?
2. How much education did your parents receive? / ¿Qué nivel de educación alcanzaron sus padres?
3. Where were you born, and where did you grow up? / ¿Dónde nació y dónde creció Ud.?
4. How much education did you receive? / ¿Qué nivel de educación alcanzó Ud.?
5. What is your first language, and do you know other languages? / ¿Cuál es su lengua materna? ¿Conoce otros idiomas Ud.?
6. When did you learn to read and write in your first language? / ¿Cuándo aprendió Ud. leer y escribir en su lengua materna?
7. Have you ever had problems communicating in your first language? / ¿Ha tenido Ud. problemas comunicarse en su lengua materna?
8. Were you exposed to other languages when you were young? If so, which languages? / ¿Escuchó o habló Ud. otros idiomas cuando era joven? Si es así ¿cuáles idiomas?
9. Did you study other languages in school? If so, which languages and when did you study them? / ¿Aprendió Ud. otros idiomas en su escuela primaria o secundaria? Si es así ¿cuáles idiomas y cuándo los aprendió?
10. What was your first job? How old were you when you started working outside the home? / ¿Cuál era su primer trabajo? ¿Cuántos años tenía Ud. cuando empezó a trabajar fuera de la casa?
11. How long have you been working outside the home, from your first job until now? / ¿Por cuántos años ha trabajado Ud. fuera de la casa, desde su primer trabajo hasta ahora?
12. How long have you lived in the United States? Have you traveled in or lived in other states? / ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva Ud. en EE. UU.? ¿Ha viajado o vivido en otros estados?
13. What is the primary language in your workplace? Do you use both your first language and English at work? / ¿Cuál es el idioma preferido en su lugar de empleo? ¿Habla Ud. ambos idiomas – su idioma nativo e inglés – en su trabajo?
14. Which language – your first language or English – is more useful in the following situations? ¿Cuál idioma – su lengua materna o inglés – es más útil en las siguientes situaciones?
   - at work / en su lugar de empleo
   - with your family / con su familia
   - with doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals / con doctores, dentistas y otros profesionales médicos
   - at your school / en su escuela
   - at your children’s school / en la escuela de sus hijos
   - while shopping / de compras
   - in places of worship / en lugares de culto religioso
Outside English classes, how often do you use English in the following settings and situations? (Answer with an estimated percentage, from 0 to 100 percent of the time.)

- at work
- with your family
- with doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals
- at your school
- at your children’s school
- while shopping
- in places of worship
- while playing sports or doing other recreation
- at parties or other social events
- in places of government
- on the telephone

The most difficult situation for you to use English? Entre las situaciones en las cuales habla inglés, cual es la más difícil?

When do you feel most comfortable using English? En que situaciones se siente más cómodo en inglés?

How would you describe your capacity to communicate in English, ranked on a scale of effectiveness, where “0” is not at all effective and “10” is extremely effective? ¿Cómo describiría Ud. sus capacidades para comunicarse en inglés, clasificadas en una escala de efectivo en la cual “0” quiere decir “ninguno efectivo” y “10” quiere decir “extremadamente efectivo”?

Do you avoid places or situations where you might have to speak English? If so, why do you think you avoid those places or situations? ¿Evita Ud. lugares o situaciones en las cuales tendría la posibilidad de hablar inglés? Si es así ¿por qué piensa que evita esos lugares o situaciones?

Do you find it difficult to practice English outside English class? Do you have problems using English in English class? ¿Encuentra Ud. difícil practicar inglés
fuera de sus clases de inglés? ¿Tiene problemas para usar inglés en sus clases de inglés?

6. How would you describe your level of comfort speaking English in the following situations, ranked from “0” to “10,” where “0” is not at all comfortable and “10” is extremely comfortable? / ¿Cómo describiría Ud. su nivel de comodidad al hablar inglés en las siguientes situaciones, clasificadas desde “0” hasta “10,” donde “0” quiere decir “muy incómodo” y “10” quiere decir “extremadamente cómodo”?

- at work / en su lugar de empleo
- with your family / con su familia
- with doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals / con doctores, dentistas y otros profesionales de la salud
- at your school / en su escuela
- at your children’s school / en la escuela de sus hijos
- while shopping / de compras
- in places of worship / en lugares de culto religioso
- while playing sports or doing other recreation / mientras Ud. practica deportes o hace alguna otra forma de recreación
- at parties or other social events / en las fiestas u otros eventos sociales
- in places of government (courts, Social Security office, etc.) / en oficinas gubernamentales (tribunales, oficinas de la Seguridad Social, etc.)
- on the telephone / por teléfono

7. Are there things you need to say that you cannot communicate in English? Examples? / ¿Existen cosas que tiene que decir que no puede comunicar en inglés? ¿Ejemplos?

8. What kind of problems have you had communicating in English? Can you give specific examples? / ¿Cuáles problemas ha tenido Ud. al comunicarse en inglés? ¿Podría pensar en unos ejemplos?


10. Do you initiate conversations in English or wait for others to start talking with you? When do you initiate? When do you wait? / ¿Inicia Ud. conversaciones en inglés o espera a que otros las inicien? ¿En cuales situaciones las inicia Ud.? ¿Cuándo espera?

11. In what situations are you more likely to speak with others in English? / ¿En cuales situaciones sería más probable que Ud. hable con otros en inglés?

12. In what situations are you more likely to stay quiet? / ¿En cuales situaciones sería más probable que Ud. permanezca en silencio?
Interview 3: Use of and Interpretations of Silence

1. Do you think that you’re a quieter person in English than in your first language? Why or why not? / ¿Piensa que Ud. es más callado en inglés que en su lengua materna? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no?

2. When you initiate conversations in English, do people respond in English? How do you interpret silent responses? / ¿Cuándo Ud. inicia conversaciones en inglés, contestan los demás en inglés? ¿Cuál es su interpretación de las respuestas silenciosas?


4. Do you think your silence is useful in such situations, or is it a problem? Why? / ¿Piensa que su silencio sea útil en esas situaciones o sea un problema? ¿Por qué?

5. In your home country, in your first language, how do people react when you stay quiet? How do you react to others when they are silent? / ¿En su país nativo, en su lengua materna, cómo responden los demás cuando Ud. permanece en silencio? ¿Cómo responde Ud. cuando los demás se permanecen en silencio?

6. Are there positive and negative silences in your home country? Can you think of examples? / ¿Existen silencios positivos y negativos en su país nativo? ¿Puede Ud. pensar en ejemplos?

7. Do you limit your speech more in English than in your first language? If so, how? / ¿Limita Ud. su discurso más en inglés que en su lengua materna? Si es así ¿cómo lo limita?

8. Do you think it is more important to be quiet in the United States than in your home country? If so, why? / ¿Piensa que sea más importante permanecerse en silencio en EE.UU. que en su país nativo? Si es así ¿por qué?

9. Are there things you need to say that you cannot communicate in English? Examples? / ¿Existen cosas que tiene que decir que no puede comunicar en inglés? ¿Ejemplos?

10. How does silence of other people or your own silence affect you in trying to practice or learn English? / ¿Cómo lo afecta a Ud. el silencio de los demás o su propio silencio cuando se trata de practicar o aprender inglés?

11. How likely are you to stay quiet in the following situations, assuming people with whom you are talking only understand English? (Please rank from “0” to “10,” where “0” is not at all likely and “10” is extremely likely.) / ¿Cuál sería la probabilidad que Ud. se permanezca en silencio en las siguientes situaciones, con la suposición de que la gente con quien habla entienda inglés solamente? (Por favor clasifiquelas desde “0” hasta “10,” donde “0” quiere decir “ninguna probabilidad” y “10” quiere decir “probabilidad extrema.”)
   - at work / en su lugar de empleo
   - with your family / con su familia
   - with doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals / con doctores, dentistas y otros profesionales de la salud
   - at your school / en su escuela
- at your children’s school / en la escuela de sus hijos
- while shopping / de compras
- in places of worship / en lugares de culto religioso
- while playing sports or doing other recreation / mientras Ud. practica deportes o hace alguna otra forma de recreación
- at parties or other social events / en las fiestas u otros eventos sociales
- in places of government (courts, Social Security office, etc.) / en oficinas gubernamentales (tribunales, oficinas de la Seguridad Social, etc.)
- on the telephone / por teléfono
APPENDIX E

CODEBOOK OF INTERVIEW THEMES
Table 4 indicates thematic categories that emerged inductively from respondents’ own choices of topic and language within individual interviews (and one group discussion) that formed part of the thesis project (Brown 2001, 241). It also includes, in the far-right column, the total number of speaking turns that addressed that theme, even in indirect fashion. These are the sequences as contained in six recorded and transcribed one-to-one interviews and a final recorded group interview involving two of the participants. There were 1,714 speaking turns in total, of which 1,571 received codes; the 143 uncoded segments dealt with administrative matters, such as logistics of completing the daily language-use surveys. The listing of thematic categories as shown in the table followed conflation and reconceptualization of raw interview data to allow coding of transcripts and further content analysis (Dörnyei 2003, 117). The coding scheme is adapted from La Pelle (2004) (see chapter 3 for more details on thematic coding).
Table 4. Codebook of Interview Themes with Total Number of Speaking Turns Addressing Each Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.000</td>
<td><strong>First-language (L1) and second-language (L2) usage</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>L1 (Spanish) use in the United States and México</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>L1 (Spanish) acquisition in México, including environmental influences</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>L2 (Spanish) use; i.e., use of Spanish by native English-speakers in the United States and México</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>L2 (English) use in the United States and México</td>
<td>1,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>L2 (English) acquisition in the United States and México, including environmental influences</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>L2 (English) variation in the United States (includes phonetic, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic features)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.000</td>
<td><strong>Language environments and interlocutors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>Among the Latin American community</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>With family members, whether Spanish- or English-speaking or bilingual</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>With bilingual interlocutors (non-family)</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>With L2 speakers; i.e., with native English-speakers</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>In specific physical or virtual environments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.255</td>
<td>In the workplace</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.260</td>
<td>At medical offices</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.265</td>
<td>At schools (community education center or children’s schools)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.270</td>
<td>Stores and markets (for economic exchange)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.275</td>
<td>Places of worship</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.280</td>
<td>Sites of sport or recreation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.285</td>
<td>Parties or other social events</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.290</td>
<td>Places of government (courts, Social Security office, etc.)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.295</td>
<td>Via telephone or digital media</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>In non-specific physical environments</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.000</td>
<td><strong>Forms and functions of human communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>Phatic speech (introductions, politeness, etc.)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Informative communication</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Economic transactions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Metalinguistic communication (school-based language learning and correction and strategies outside school)/code switching</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Writing (includes texting)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>Emotional and cultural exchange/friendship</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>Silent strategies &amp; interpretations of silence</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.405</td>
<td>Perceived lack of linguistic competence and chances for miscommunication</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.410</td>
<td>Mental rehearsal, turn-taking, and inner speech</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.415</td>
<td>Avoidance of conflict and linguistic discrimination</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.420</td>
<td>Listening &amp; nonverbal participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.425</td>
<td>Imposed or enforced silences (including excess noise)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.430</td>
<td>Emotional and legal self-protection, fatigue, and anger</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.435</td>
<td>Preference for technology as L2 intermediary (e.g., smartphone-based translator)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Strategies to circumvent silence</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.000</td>
<td><strong>Individual differences and psychological aspects</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>Speaking and other anxieties (especially regarding potential or actual miscommunication)</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>L1 and L2 identities</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>Motivation and investment in L2 milieu</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Obligations to learn/speak L2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Cognitive challenges and perceived individual obstacles to language acquisition</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Shame, low self-regard</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.000</td>
<td><strong>Social factors in second-language acquisition (SLA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>L1 and L2 cultural differences</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Latino demographics and bilingualism</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Social barriers to L2 acquisition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.155</td>
<td>Discrimination and anti-Mexican bias</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.160</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.165</td>
<td>Economic imperatives, including childcare</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>Supportive and challenging roles of bilingual members of Latino community</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>