FUNDACIÓN UNIVERSIDAD DE LAS AMÉRICAS-PUEBLA

School of Humanities

Department of Languages

Thesis Presented by Brad Landon Teague

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

Directed by Dr. Patrick H. Smith

and Accepted by the Department of Languages

Santa Catarina Mártir, Puebla, Spring 2004

Table of Contents

IV. Results

V. Discussion and Conclusion

Appendices

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

1.1.1. Theories of Literacy

Research on the topic of literacy is abundant. Any library or internet search on this subject undoubtedly reveals hundreds or even thousands of available published materials. However, recently the term literacy has come to include so many varied meanings that nowadays only a select number of the aforementioned sources deal directly with reading and writing. In fact, Braslavsky (2003:7-8) comments that the Diccionario de Alfabetización de la Asociación Internacional de Lectura [International Reading Association's Literacy Dictionary] lists a total of thirty-eight different types of literacy, including reading and writing skills, functional and social dimensions, specific competencies, and liberation strategies (Harris and Hodges, 1995: 140). Other researchers (Barton, 1999; Barton & Hamilton, 2000) make note of similar definitions.

When the semantic scope of literacy is limited to reading and writing, there are similarly different theories that debate the precise definition of literacy. More specifically, while psychologists discuss literacy in terms of static, universal abilities, sociologists and anthropologists argue that it exists as a social practice, and thus that it must be analyzed not only in the mind, but also within particular contexts. Freire and Macedo (1989: 149) describe the psychological viewpoint as follows: "according to the cognitive development model, reading is conceived as a type of intellectual progress, achieved through a series of fixed, universal stages of development…" (my translation). In contrast, proponents of literacy as a social phenomenon claim that literacy practices

vary depending on the setting and that these practices likewise revolve around cultural ways of using and making sense of literacy, including personal and collective attitudes and values (Barton et al., 2000).

1.1.2. Objectives of Study

The present study, whose general aim is to understand the processes and ideologies that contribute to the construction of readers and writers in a specific Mexican context, drew its theoretical construct and ideas from the socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978). This focus was chosen in order to allow for a rich awareness and understanding dependent on contextual particularities. Indeed, past studies conducted at some of the same research sites planned for this study have concluded that, at least in this setting, literacy learning and teaching is best appreciated through an examination of the local socio-cultural attitudes and values that underlie literacy education. Consequently, this project was carried out with the objective of analyzing "activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape" (Barton et al., 2000: 7).

Using ethnographic methods (described in detail in chapter 3), this study focused on the attitudes and teaching practices that inform literacy instruction in a semi-private elementary school located in central Mexico. Previous research in this and other local schools has revealed several interesting findings, which likewise motivate further investigation. First, it has been discovered that writing instruction centers greatly on form, as opposed to meaning (Jiménez, Smith, & Martínez León, 2003; Ballesteros, 2003). In other words, students are rarely encouraged to write for communicative purposes, what Barton (1999) calls "authoring." Second, reading has sometimes been

described (both by teachers and parents) as "antisocial behavior" (Smith, Martínez-León & Jiménez, 2003). Perhaps not surprisingly, most classrooms lack books (although local educators point out that this phenomenon is due, at least in part, to a shortage of financial resources), and free reading occurs only if time allows (usually at the end of lessons). Finally, researchers have found that school and community literacy practices differ significantly, given that community texts are produced primarily for communicative purposes (i.e. food stands, for example the term *cemitas* (a type of sandwich) written as *semitaz*), while school texts tend to be highly controlled and constantly revised for form (Smith et al., 2003).

Such discrepancies between community and school literacy practices motivated a further aim of the present study, which included an analysis of the extent to which educators incorporate home literacy in the classroom. Goodman (cited in Taylor, 1998: vii-viii) stresses the point that literacy learning is a result of "daily human interaction" and that schools often fail to take into account the many and varied paths by which children become literate. Accordingly, educators typically ignore the possible ways in which family literacy can directly support literacy learning in the classroom. Along the same lines, Pérez (1998: 27) outlines the benefits of integrating home and community knowledge in more formal instruction, mentioning that unfortunately "literacy skills and practices unique to the community…may be not only different but oftentimes at odds with school-based literacy practices." This scenario is precisely what appears to be occurring in the proposed research context, and thus was studied more closely as part of this project.

One way to consider the benefits of local literacy practices is to look at them as "funds of knowledge". According to González (1995: 4, cited in Smith, 2001), "funds of knowledge" refers to "historically accumulated bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household functioning and well-being." Originally proposed by Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg (1992), this concept is based on extensive documentation of family and community resources, specifically skills and specialized knowledge held by minority Latino students in United States school systems, from which teachers can draw in planning lessons and activities (Moll & González, 1994). In this way, learning has been observed to be more meaningful to the students and, perhaps more importantly, it acknowledges family and community knowledge as valuable and worth recognition. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978: 84) states that "any learning a child encounters in school always has a previous history", which suggests that academic instruction should intentionally involve these experiences.

While Moll and González (1994) applied this theory to content learning, such as mathematics, history, and biology, Smith (2001) has recently expanded its scope to allow for explicit focus on language instruction, both written and oral, calling it "funds of linguistic knowledge (FOLK)". Given that this study was carried out in classrooms intended to teach L1 literacy, the researcher proposes to assess the degree of integration of FOLK in elementary school literacy classrooms. One purpose of the study then was to demonstrate to educators how locally-based resources are both useful and worthy of respect, hence challenging the dominant ideologies that render local knowledge invisible and therefore inaccessible (Freire & Macedo, 1989; Moll & Díaz, 1987).

1.1.3. Motivation for Research

Until teachers recognize what their students already know and what they need to learn, formal education will be of little value, which was one of the primary motivations for this study. Significantly, education in Mexico in particular has recently received much attention and criticism, oftentimes in direct relation to literacy. Indeed, several publications have highlighted the surprisingly low number of books and newspapers read annually by Mexican citizens, especially in comparison to rates in more developed nations (Juárez, 2002 and Reyes Calderón, 2002, cited in Smith, Martínez-León & Jiménez, 2002). Thus, this project aimed to understand the attitudes and ideologies underlying this perceived lack of interest in reading and writing, through means of a comparative analysis of the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers.

Unfortunately for an understanding of the proposed context, most research on literacy, both past and present, has originated in the United States and Europe. Albeit abundant and resourceful, the findings of these studies cannot be applied directly to Latin America, due to important contextual differences. As mentioned above, the social view of literacy practices examines learning not in the individual mind, but rather as a social construct dependent on precise settings and local ideologies (Barton, 1999). For this reason, an additional purpose of this project was to gain further insight on literacy within the Mexican context (although the context under study is likely to be different from other sites in Mexico and especially from other countries of Latin America). This knowledge will be valuable not only to Mexican teachers, who will hopefully have a better understanding of local student and parental attitudes, but also to international educators who teach Mexican students on a daily basis (Jiménez, 2002).

1.1.4. Research Questions

This study concentrated on the following two research questions, established as part of a larger project (Smith et al., 2002)[1]:

1) What attitudes and ideologies underlie the literacy practices observed in this particular elementary school and community?
2) To what extent do educators identify, understand, and incorporate funds of linguistic knowledge in schools, specifically in the teaching of literacy?

The subsequent questions are subdivisions of the previous ones and reflect the researcher's personal interests within the larger project:

1) What attitudes do teachers, students, and parents hold toward different types of literacy and their importance? In what ways are these attitudes similar and/or different?
2) What do school, community, and family literacies have in common, and how do they differ?
3) To what extent does the school integrate home and community literacies in the classroom (i.e. local funds of linguistic knowledge)?

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. The Socio-Cultural Nature of Literacy

The socio-cultural perspective of literacy considers the acts of reading and writing as "practices", in that any interaction with written language is determined and reinforced by culture-specific beliefs, attitudes, values, and social relationships (Barton, 1999;

[1] This project has been financed by the Mexican government, namely by the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT). Code number: 41140.

Barton & Hamilton, 2000). In other words, individuals read and write for specific purposes, to arrive at some desired end depending on their interests and needs. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 21) add that in any specific place and time such practices have become "habitualized". In other words, they are performed regularly and often unconsciously. Given that literacy is unique to distinct settings, various researchers have argued that there is not only one type of literacy; instead, there are "multiple literacies" (Street, 1984, 2001; Pérez, 1998; Rogers, 2001). "Literacy is not just a set of uniform technical skills to be imparted to those lacking them – the "autonomous" model – but rather … there are multiple literacies in communities, and … literacy practices are socially embedded" (Street, 2001: 2, cited in Rogers, 2001).

Considering that literacy is closely intertwined with social, cultural, and political factors, it follows that some forms of literacy are more dominant, visible, and influential than others (Lewis, 2001: 10). Clearly, those with money and power make the decisions as to which literacy practices are accepted and valued, particularly in academic contexts. Bourdieu (1991) claims that one of the ways in which the dominant class maintains its power is through constant criticism and correction of the spoken and written language of members of the lower classes.

Lewis and Bourdieu describe how certain worldview ideologies define and perpetuate social environments, usually classifying the types of reading and writing performed by lower-class and minority individuals as substandard. Such attitudes have grave consequences for minority language learners, given that these children are not encouraged to draw upon prior knowledge and experience to scaffold further learning (Pérez, 1998). On the contrary, they are placed in classrooms where dominant literacy

practices are expected from the outset. This "deficit" view, which continues to be quite widespread with particular reference to Latino children in U.S. school systems, eventually leads many learners to become discouraged and to ultimately reject formal schooling in general (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

For these reasons, researchers who promote socio-cultural theories of learning are encouraging literacy educators to acknowledge their students' backgrounds and differences. This recognition is not to be intended to encourage a shift to dominant practices, but instead to provide a bridge to more academic knowledge, that is, learning based significantly on prior experiences (González and Moll, 2002). According to González and Moll,

> There can be bridges that join community knowledge and school validation of that knowledge. There can be bridges between parents and teachers, school and community. There can be bridges of understanding in learning communities. There can be bridges between practical, out-of-school, experiential knowledge and academic, abstract knowledge. And of course, there are bridges between diverse peoples who come together to fulfill a common mission (p. 624).

In short, the socio-cultural theory of learning implies that teachers of literacy should be more reflective of the nature of their own beliefs and values, in order to be able to recognize the merit of alternative literacy practices.

1.2.2. Home Literacy and Funds of Linguistic Knowledge

Many people associate literacy with schooling, an institution in which students are supposedly taught to read and write in the "correct" manner. In fact, as is discussed later, parents of minority Latino children in the United States have tended to entrust their

children's education to teachers, often taking a passive role in their learning (Serpell, 1997). Nevertheless, researchers are beginning to understand and appreciate home and community literacy practices, which can be both similar to and different from those of formal schooling.

Taylor (1998), for example, claims that everyday life is full of reading and writing, and that practically all families, including those belonging to the lower class of society, use different types of literacy to serve a variety of purposes and needs in accordance with their own lives. Thus, she highlights the existence of "local" literacies, asserting that "literacy is deeply embedded in the social processes of family life and is not some specific list of activities added to the family agenda to explicitly teach reading" (pp. 92-3). Similarly, McCarthey (2000) argues that the nature, purposes, and uses of literacy vary from family to family, and from community to community, which recalls the idea of "multiple literacies" mentioned in the previous section. She goes on to point out how these different definitions and ideologies of literacy clash in academic settings, where often only the dominant (middle-class) view of literacy is valued, taught, and permitted.

Whitehouse and Colvin (2001) also allude to different types of literacy, describing how educators tend to ignore home and community literacies that are at odds with school practices. What is worse, few individuals seem to question this "deficit discourse", especially parents of low-class and/or minority children. Indeed, Serpell (1997) refers to these parents as "silent participants", who "regard the cultivation of literacy as more the responsibility of school, and morality as more the responsibility of home" (p. 596). All these researchers agree that more of an attempt needs to be made to document,

understand, and apply home and community knowledge of written language to the formal teaching of literacy at school.

With particular reference to Mexican-American families in the United States, Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) coined the term "funds of knowledge", referring to the skills and practices that families possessed and drew upon in order to survive in difficult times. To give an example, it was discovered that many Mexican households were rich in knowledge associated with agriculture, business, construction, repair, arts, folk medicine, and social skills (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1995: 266-7). Nevertheless, these abilities and experiences were relatively invisible to educators, who regularly characterized the children as academically handicapped, just because their background was somewhat different from that of white, middle-class children. Valdés (1996) describes how school personnel are quick to conclude that Latino parents are uninterested in their children's education, simply because they rarely attend school functions or meet one-on-one with teachers, albeit often admittedly due to a lack of English language proficiency.

The work of Luis Moll and Norma González shows how student experiences can be used for educational purposes, specifically by encouraging teachers to become aware of what each student can contribute to individual and collective learning. In a shared publication written with several teachers working on a project whose main objective was to understand and integrate funds of knowledge in classroom instruction, they claim:

> It [the recognition and integration of funds of knowledge] begins by teachers themselves redefining the resources available for thinking and teaching through the analysis of the funds of knowledge available in local households, in the

students they teach, and in the colleagues with whom they work" (González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendón, Gonzales & Amanti, 1993: 15).

Moreover, in this way, minority children and parents realize that they can personally make significant contributions to education.

Recently, Smith (2001) has extended the concept of "funds of knowledge" to focus specifically on knowledge of language. According to him, "'linguistic funds of knowledge' encompass what speakers know about their language(s), including how languages are learned and used" (p. 381). His idea refers to both the oral and written modalities of language, such as stories, letters, native speakers, and community announcements, all of which can be tapped by language and literacy instructors for productive and meaningful use in the classroom. The present study, which forms part of a larger research project (Smith et al., 2002), proposes to develop this concept of "funds of linguistic knowledge" by identifying literacy resources which children bring to their L1 Spanish lessons in a Mexican elementary school.

1.2.3. Research on Literacy and Literacy Instruction in Mexico

The 2000 Mexican census, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Technology (INEGI), reported a total of almost six million illiterates throughout the nation. The rate of illiteracy is higher for women, given that 11% of women are unable to read and write as opposed to only 7% of men (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2000). Although at first glance these rates might not seem so alarming, King (1994) points out that in 1990 INEGI defined "literate" as someone who possessed basic, or rudimentary, knowledge of literacy. (The 2000 census uses the same definition). In contrast, designating literacy as the capacity to

read and write functionally in society (being able to fulfill a variety of personal and professional needs and obligations) would mean that a much larger number of Mexicans could be characterized as illiterate (p. 105).

King (1994) indicates that the acquisition of functional abilities of reading and writing typically necessitates at least six years of formal education. According to the 2000 census results, the national educational average in Mexico is slightly more than seven years of schooling (INEGI, 2000). Thus, while those who meet or excel this average are probably able to read and write functionally, this is much less likely of many of those with fewer years of formal schooling.

As mentioned earlier, research on literacy and literacy instruction in Latin America, and particularly in Mexico, is relatively scarce. Regrettably, many reading and writing programs within Mexico have been derived from studies carried out in the United States and Europe, obviously very distinct contexts. Seda-Santana (2000: 5), for example, mentions how "the discourse of official government documents and among education professionals about primary and secondary school literacy in Latin America is clearly influenced by current theories from the developed nations of the world". She likewise claims that research in and about Latin-American settings tends to be conducted for immediate and evaluative purposes, given that these types of studies are used to make important policy decisions (p. 7).

Consistent with Seda-Santana (2000), Kimbrough (2004) also argues for the need for more research on literacy practices in Mexican schools. She proposes classroom-based, qualitative studies whose main objective lies in a description and evaluation of current literacy curriculums. According to her, these investigations would ideally permit

local researchers, teachers, and policymakers to improve the instruction of reading and writing based on context-specific circumstances. Gerardo Daniel Cirianni, the official advisor to the Mexican National Reading Program, sponsored by the national Department of Education (SEP), recognizes that literacy teachers are often unaware of what kinds of knowledge and actions are necessary to incorporate diverse kinds of reading into the educational curriculum. With the explicit aim of improving current instructional practices, he suggests that teachers begin asking themselves questions such as the following: What is reading? What obstacles prevent me from reading? What are the cultural dimensions associated with reading? What types of materials can I use to teach reading? What distinguishes speaking and reading? (Cirianni, 2003: 3-4). In other words, he recommends that teachers become more reflective of their own practices.

Despite a general lack of qualitative research on school literacy practices in Mexico, there are a few important studies worthy of mention. Smith, Jiménez & Ballesteros (in press) have recently highlighted the great deal of control imposed upon writing in three Mexican elementary schools, including the school which is the site of the present study. They reveal how students' writing is frequently limited to short, simple texts, which are almost always either dictated or copied. They similarly point out the common concern with form, namely spelling, accentuation, punctuation, and handwriting. With respect to reading, they comment on what appears to be a "*doble mentalidad*" [double mentality], considering that while the government and even many teachers seemingly promote an "amor a la lectura" [a love for reading], actual reading practices for this function are rare, regardless of school type (i.e. public or private) and of the socio-economic status of the students (p. 9).

Ferreiro (1989) acknowledges this claim that literacy instruction in Mexican elementary schools tends to stress form over meaning. As she observes, "there are times when the children appear to be concentrating strictly on the formal aspects of texts, without worrying at all about their meanings" (p. 142, my translation). Accordingly, she argues that teachers should make an effort to seek alternatives for mechanical work, especially activities that contextualize reading and writing and that are likely to be interesting and meaningful for learners. De la Garza and Ruiz Ávila (1994), in their study of the production of written texts by sixth-grade elementary students, found that the children were not encouraged to draw on previous linguistic knowledge when reading or writing. Instead, these students became victims of the isolated, skill-based approach of literacy, given that reading and writing were learned separately and typically not linked to real or useful contexts. As a result, the texts they produced tended to be short and incomplete, with more attention given to written conventions and presentation (including drawings) than to actual communicative information.

Ballesteros (2003) carried out observations and interviews in a public Mexican elementary school, focusing on literacy practices in first and fourth grades. Her findings were consistent with those reported above, in that students were rarely allowed to "author" their own texts. Instead, they were usually asked to copy from the chalkboard or from other books. These children were also expected to use red colored pencils when writing capital letters and punctuation marks. Findings from all of these studies suggest that teachers have been trained to emphasize the mechanical aspects of writing in their classrooms.

It seems as though most researchers agree that literacy instruction in Mexico has not achieved the goal of generating "good readers". Carrasco Altamirano (2003) asserts that schools seldom promote reading for application in the real world, that is, at work and in daily life. She points out how the reading and writing practices inculcated as part of formal schooling are by and large limited to this context. Accordingly, she proposes several reading strategies that, in her opinion, should be taught explicitly along with reading and writing. These include selectivity, prediction, inferencing, self-monitoring, imaging, and ways to remember and recall what has been read (pp. 135-140). She claims that only in this manner will students become efficient readers capable of actively constructing and retaining meaning.

1.2.4. Methodological Precedents

This qualitative study followed the general methods proposed by Bogdan & Biklen (1998) and Spindler & Spindler (1992). As described more in depth in chapter three, data were collected primarily through observations (Merriam, 1998) and interviews (Seidman, 1998). The analysis was simultaneous with data collection, utilizing a constant comparative approach common in qualitative research.

There are four studies on which the methods of this project were modeled. The first two include Smith et al. (2003) and Jiménez et al. (2003). These publications, based on the same larger study, represent initial attempts to understand the processes and ideologies that contribute to the social construction of readers and writers in three elementary schools in central Mexico. The research design for this study drew on some of the same theoretical constructs, research questions, context, and data collection and analysis procedures underlying these studies. However, given time restraints, the project

was limited to only one of the school settings involved in the aforementioned investigations, in addition to the homes of families that send their children to this school, and the local community.

Another study that is relevant methodologically is that conducted by Rosales-Kufrin (1989), who explored factors affecting the dropout of Mexican-American students in an elementary school in a Chicago barrio. Although this topic is not directly related to literacy practices, the findings of the study are based on interviews with students, parents, and school personnel concerning their respective feelings, perceptions, and opinions on schooling. The research study likewise included interviews with these same groups, though with the specific aim of probing attitudes and ideologies toward diverse literacy practices.

The last study that influenced the research is that of David Barton (2000) at Lancaster University. He and his colleagues have initiated the "Literacy in Community project", whose objective is based on a detailed study of the role of literacy in the everyday lives of different individuals. The methodology on which their investigation is based includes observations, in-depth interviews, photography, and the collection of documents and records (p. 169). This project drew on these same instruments and techniques, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of literacy practices in the homes, schools, and communities of a specific Mexican context.

1.3. Research Strategy

1.3.1. Assumptions

This study is concerned with two related issues. First of all, it elicited and compared teachers', students' and parents' attitudes and ideologies toward literacy and

literacy instruction in a specific Mexican context. Second, it examined the extent to which educators are aware of funds of linguistic knowledge associated with home and community literacy practices (including attitudes held toward them), and accordingly whether or not they make a conscious effort to incorporate these skills in the formal teaching of reading and writing. In order to address this last question, it was also necessary to document the ways in which home, community, and school literacy practices are both similar and different.

One of the researcher's assumptions is that individuals within the Mexican setting may perceive literacy practices in very different ways from people in other contexts, including those from the United States and Europe (Smith et al., 2003). As mentioned earlier, research carried out in these contexts has informed policies and practices in effect in Mexico. This assumption is based on the fact that Mexico has been shaped by unique historical, economic, social, and cultural factors, such as colonialism, linguistic diversity, and social injustices, which, taken together, distinguish it in many respects from the localities mentioned above. A major aim of the project is to identify and understand the attitudes and ideologies held in this environment (through observations and interviews). More specifically, this study proposes to identify beliefs and practices concerning reading and writing in a specific Mexican context, with the long-term aim of informing local and national instruction.

The researcher likewise assumes that most (if not all) of the individuals participating in the study (parents, teachers, children) have spent a considerable amount of time living and/or working in the proposed research context. In fact, many were probably born and raised in this setting. This assumption has been some what confirmed

by previous studies carried out in the same area (Smith et al., 2003; Jiménez et al., 2003; Ballesteros, 2003). This point is important given that the project plans to survey local attitudes, beliefs, and practices, and individuals who have migrated to the area from other countries or even other parts of Mexico may not hold the same opinions as local community members (i.e. transnational immigrants). For this reason, interviews with educators, parents, and students included questions regarding place of birth, former residence, and stable contact (including travel) with people outside the proposed region of study. Although participants' perspectives are likely to differ to some degree, local ideologies are expected to reveal certain patterns and similarities.

1.3.2. Expected Results

As far as the first research question - a comparison and contrast of attitudes and ideologies toward literacy practices - it was predicted that the teachers, parents, and children would respond in distinct ways. For instance, the teachers, who have completed many years of formal education (i.e. both hold college degrees), may tend to advocate dominant (school-based) literacy practices, to which they have become accustomed through their own schooling and practices. In contrast, many of the parents, some of whom have had less formal schooling, may not be aware of these standards, preferring instead local literacy practices.

Indeed, the study conducted by Rosales-Kufrin (1989), on which the attitudes portion of this project is based, revealed significant dissimilarities between the beliefs of parents and teachers (although with respect to the issue of first-language maintenance in the context of bilingual schooling). Furthermore, the children's perspectives may place them somewhere in between these two extremes, considering that they are in the initial

years of exposure to academic literacy (perhaps the first-graders more so than the fourth-graders). Lastly, many or all of the participants may be found to hold different sets of beliefs depending on domain, namely which literacy activities are acceptable at school as opposed to in the home and community.

With regard to the second research question – how home and community literacy practices are similar to and different from school practices – it was predicted that the research would reveal notable distinctions between reading and writing in the two settings. Indeed, prior investigation in the proposed context has reported that first- and fourth-grade teachers concentrate highly on the form of writing (i.e. accentuation, punctuation, spelling), while community members seem to be more concerned with the communicative function of the written language, evidenced, for example, by local signs and announcements (Jiménez et al., 2003). Moreover, the researcher expects to encounter diverse types of literacy practices in the homes and community, of which educators are not aware, or otherwise fail to recognize as "real" literacy.

Given that teachers are expected not to acknowledge non-academic forms of literacy, it is doubtful that they make an effort to teach reading and writing using these texts as a resource. Hence, in response to the third research question, concerning the integration of funds of linguistic knowledge, it was anticipated that teachers would not consider them worthy of inclusion in the classroom. On the contrary, many literacy educators probably limit instruction to the types of texts and techniques that they themselves learned to be permitted and valued as part of formal schooling; that is, they more than likely tend to utilize published materials that encourage a focus on form and style (e.g. dominant literacy practices). Another plausible explanation is that many

teachers may assume that children with limited resources are simply uneducated and should thus practice the technical and mechanical aspects of literacy before "advancing" to other activities.

Other educators may follow the recommendations of recent materials available from the Secretaría de Educación Pública [Department of Public Education], which encourage literacy learning based on children's knowledge of local texts (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2001).

Despite these predictions, it is certainly possible that the three groups' attitudes and beliefs about literacy are similar. After all, as commented above, many (if not most) of the participants have been born and raised in this specific context, and community-wide ideologies may prevail. In fact, similar schooling may have an effect on their respective opinions. In other words, local value systems may prove to be more influential than academic standards imposed by governmental agencies creating educational policies in Mexico City. Along the same lines, teachers may or may not apply, in a consistent manner, the materials given to them by these institutions. It could be that they choose to teach reading and writing using some kind of combination of published and local resources, a strategy reported by Ballesteros (2003) in some (limited) circumstances.

Likewise, although it was predicted that teachers would tend not to identify and incorporate into the classroom funds of linguistic knowledge based on home and community resources, it is probably more realistic to assume that different teachers do so in distinct ways and proportions. For instance, grade level might well be a fundamental factor. It is plausible that first-grade teachers may integrate local practices to a much greater extent than do fourth-grade teachers, perhaps in an attempt to introduce their

students gradually to more academic, abstract literacies. Another significant factor may involve the teachers' depth of knowledge of the community, especially with regard to how long they have lived in the community and how well they know their students.

CHAPTER 2: SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

2.1. Research Design

The present study followed a qualitative research design based on ethnographic methods. This approach was chosen given that the purpose of the research was to describe and analyze part of the culture of a specific community, specifically "by identifying and describing the participants' practices and beliefs" (Gay & Airasian, 2002). In other words, the project was carried out in a natural setting, mainly through observations and interviews, to permit an understanding of local perspectives and behaviors toward literacy and literacy instruction.

Indeed, Erickson (1986) suggests that the field of education provides many opportunities for this type of investigation. As opposed to quantitative studies, qualitative research, in particular the ethnographic method, is often conducted to frame human culture and ideologies, represented and transmitted in educational settings, within a socio-political and historical context. Such techniques were ideal for the project at hand, which examined the attitudes and practices of teachers, parents, and students in a specific community in central Mexico.

As described in detail in the next chapter, data collection was based on multiple sources (i.e. observations, interviews, document analysis), and such triangulation allowed for an understanding of the anticipated complexity of the proposed research context. This strategy reduced the chances of establishing inaccurate assumptions, results, and implications, often the case with this type of research. The use of three different data collection techniques permitted not only a greater depth of understanding of the practices and ideologies of interest, but also more valid findings.

The data were obtained over the course of seven months (September 2003 – March 2004) and were analyzed in accordance with the constant comparative method regularly employed in qualitative studies.

It is important to note that qualitative research does not intend to prove pre-formed hypotheses or theories. Rather, qualitative researchers typically spend extended amounts of time in the proposed setting before making assumptions, based on the data, which lead to hypotheses and often to theories. Therefore, this study derived from the three research questions outlined in chapter one, in an attempt to identify and describe local cultural ideologies, and not on set predictions to be proved or disproved.

Moreover, in qualitative investigations, an understanding of the context and participants evolves throughout the study, as the researcher becomes increasingly familiar with his/her environment. One of the main goals in this project was to learn as much as possible about the participants and also about the factors underlying their beliefs and practices. Seven months in the proposed context was thus necessary, especially considering the researcher's own distinct cultural and educational upbringing in the United States.

The final reason influencing the decision to carry out the study in this manner was that the investigation formed part of a larger research project, described in chapter one (Smith et al., 2002). The main objective of this larger study is to understand the processes and ideologies that contribute to the social construction of readers and writers in two elementary schools in central Mexico. Significantly, the research team of this project had already established at its conception the qualitative paradigm based on ethnographic methods outlined above. Given that the study proposed to add data and

findings to this larger investigation, it was crucial that the researcher follow a similar methodology, specifically with respect to data collection and analysis.

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Community

The data for this project was collected in a specific region of south central Mexico over a period of seven months. The elementary school chosen for research is located in a medium-sized city with a population of around 50,000 (Jiménez et al., 2003), whose history reaches back over 2,000 years. This town is situated near a larger city, the state capital and a major industrial and educational center with approximately 2 million inhabitants.

According to Smith et al. (2002), this area of central Mexico is considered an "expulsion zone", given that many residents, especially men between the ages of 15 and 50, emigrate to the United States (particularly New Jersey/New York) in search for better employment opportunities. Some of these individuals, referred to in this study as "transnationals", move back-and-forth between the two countries on a frequent basis.

The city is comprised of *barrios*, which, according to Mlade (2001: 20), consist of "groups of mostly inter-related families, the majority of whom reside in the same neighborhood, also referred to as a *barrio*, which are protected by and participate in the celebration of the same patron saint." Clusters of these residential districts serve as the structure of the city as a whole. As a result of a denser population and the construction of houses, businesses, and streets, parcels of land and open fields have become increasingly scarce. Along the same lines, over the years the percentage of residents dedicating their

time to agricultural work has significantly diminished, at least inside city limits (Álvarez, Corro & Lorandi, 1992)

As far as education, 2000 census data indicates that 92 percent of the community is literate (95% of males, 90% of females). In 2000, 8076 (93%) children ages 5-11 were attending school (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2000). Nevertheless, Álvarez et al. (1992, cited in Mlade, 2001: 25) have claimed that "prestige in the community counted more than education as a contributing factor to economic level." Mlade explains this point by arguing that connections (i.e. people one knows in positions of power/influence) can often be more useful than professional degrees and qualifications and that local residents are conscious of this fact.

This region is likewise home to a significant number of indigenous peoples, who often emigrate from southern states. Náhuatl speakers have a long history in this part of Mexico, and, indeed, the state in which the study was conducted is home to one of the highest concentrations of speakers of indigenous languages in the nation (Jiménez et al., 2003). The national census reports in this city a total of 2,143 Náhuatl speakers over the age of five, as well as a fewer number of individuals with a knowledge of Totonaco (102), Mazateco (23), Mixteco (17), and Zapoteco (15) (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2000).

2.2.2. School

2.2.2.1. Description

Before providing a description of the research site and participants, it seems necessary to explain to readers, especially non-Mexicans, how the Mexican school system is structured and organized. Levinson (2001: 6) offers a breakdown of the

available options. He points out that after the completion of six years (grades 1-6) of elementary school (*primaria*), students may opt to attend a regular middle school (*secundaria*), a technical middle school, or what is known as a *telesecundaria*, in which instruction is broadcast via television screens with the help of a teacher. This period of formal education typically lasts three years, grades 7-9. Subsequently, students who decide to continue their education may advance to a regular high school (*preparatoria*) or to a technical high school (grades 10-12), the last option existing for individuals who wish to specialize in an area such as computer technology or commerce.

Regarding tertiary education, Mexicans who graduate from high school may attend a teacher's college (*Normal Superior*), a university, or a technical institute (*Politécnico or Tecnológico*). Depending on the type of degree sought, this instruction can last anywhere from two to five years, usually at least four or five years for those pursuing a bachelor of arts (B.A.) or sciences (B.S.). Although the *Normal Superior* used to be a two-year degree, it is now four years. After the B.A. and B.S. degrees, known as *licenciaturas*, students may earn a master's (*maestría*) and/or Ph.D. (*doctorado*).

For the purposes of this study, a semi-private, elementary school was chosen for several reasons. First, as mentioned in chapter one, current research on literacy practices and instruction have been quite limited to contexts in the United States and Western Europe. Given that attempts have been made to generalize these findings to Latin America, specifically Mexico, it is important to recognize that the social nature of literacy (Barton, 1999) stipulates that reading and writing are best examined as practices dependent on social, cultural, and ideological factors. Accordingly, research in an actual

Mexican setting was hoped to contribute to the construction and revision of theories based on local data.

Second, this particular school was selected due to the fact that access to classrooms and school grounds had already been negotiated (see section 2.2.2.2). In fact, researchers participating in the larger study knew teachers and administrators at the school, had firsthand knowledge of the institution's beginning and approach to teaching (Jiménez et al., 2003), and had previously collected data in the form of classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. Significantly, the present thesis extended and refined the findings of former studies carried out at the research site.

Third, as described in detail below, this semi-private institution is unusual in that the students represent a range of socio-economic statuses; that is, there is a combination of students from both the lower and middle classes of society. Public schools, in contrast, are populated mostly by children of the lower class. The former principal stated in earlier interviews (Jiménez et al., 2003: 494) that the school prided itself on its effort made to admit "students who had not been successful in public schools". However, school officials recently told the researcher that incoming students no longer had the opportunity to receive scholarships or reduced tuition, as in past years. Current tuition at the elementary level is *600 pesos*, around $60 USD, per month, in contrast to public schools, which have no tuition fees. It is important to mention that both private and public schools in Mexico have many other hidden costs, such as money for uniforms, materials, and donations.

The school in which the data was collected, which has been given the pseudonym Centro Telpochcalli, states as its mission 'the search for social, psychological, and

educational alternatives enabling members of the nation's most disadvantaged population to become active agents of change and social transformation'. The institution was founded in 1985 and exists as a non-governmental, non-profit organization which promotes human, social, and economic development. It includes students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, with a present total of 358 (elementary school: 196; middle school: 116; high school: 46), as well as 30 teachers and administrators. What follows is an outline of the school's creation and history, adapted from a document produced at the school with the purpose of soliciting funds from foundations (Vázquez, 2003).

In 1985 local educators and researchers established a formal educational model whose objective was to maximize the potential of the student body in the Centro Telpochcalli. During this same year, these individuals, along with children and adults from the community, initiated the construction of sixteen classrooms, workshops for job training, offices, a computer lab, a library, in addition to a Community Development Center. Likewise, a curriculum was designed for pre-school, elementary, middle, and high-school grade levels, emphasizing social action, professional skills and abilities, and academic competitiveness. (Today there is no longer a pre-school at this institution.) In 1992 school affiliates published a book (Álvarez et al., 1992) and an article, entitled *Desarrollo y Evaluación del Proyecto Educativo Telpochcalli* [*Development and Evaluation of Telpochcalli's Educational Proyect*], both dealing with the socioeconomic needs of the local community as well as the school's commitment to the advancement of its students and the community.

Beginning in 1992, parents from 27 local preschools, elementary schools, and middle schools, including the Centro Telpochcalli, formed committees whose goal was to plan and construct educational facilities benefiting over 5,000 children from the local community. This association, which likewise gathered to examine the factors which inhibited or fostered community and parental participation in educational issues, was recognized both locally and nationally in 1995. During 1993-1994, the institution also organized two state conferences intended to promote human and social development, especially that of women.

By 1996, the school had begun implementing educational opportunities for 500 children and parents in a select part of the local community. Under past circumstances, this population had little access to formal education; therefore, the institution's project was designed to encourage individuals in their own communities to promote group participation and responsibility, thereby making them agents of change. These families were also provided with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and tools necessary to guide changes. These efforts were congratulated in 1999 by the governments of Mexico and Canada, based on the opportunities they offered children of an otherwise marginalized population.

Also in 1999, the educational model described above was tested in other communities within state boundaries, specifically in 19 indigenous communities (a total of over 2,000 children) including speakers of Totonaco, Náhuatl, and Popoloca. Seven of these communities were eventually chosen as settings in which to implement the new pedagogy based on social action. The aims of these programs included the following: a reduction of poverty; human, social, educational, economic, environmental, and cultural

development; democratic processes; intercultural values; peace; and, human rights. In recent years, the school has expanded it outreach projects to 14 rural communities, that is, to more than 3000 indigenous children and youth. According to the former principal, the institution hopes to reverse the unfortunate consequences of historical neglect and marginalization suffered by indigenous and rural populations. All of these programs are provided free-of-charge to the participants.

Currently, the institution puts forth eight objectives, as follows:

1) To avoid the loss of human potential in Mexico by participating in the national effort to fight against social marginalization and poverty
2) To contribute significantly to the reversal of social problems resulting from the lack of education of children, families, and communities of limited resources
3) To promote cultural, human, intellectual, economic, and social development through education and material resources
4) To design, implement, evaluate, and promote initiatives and programs which are crucial to the advancement of the aforementioned population
5) To develop educational alternatives permitting the population in question to overcome poverty and to increase its quality of life
6) To motivate and encourage community members to become actively involved in developmental projects
7) To guide, support, and promote unity, progress, and self-maintenance among community members

8) To train participants to obtain and manage financial resources, to develop productive activities leading to self-sustainability, and to facilitate the establishment of relationships with national and international organizations

Many of these goals are similar to those set by the Secretaría de Educación Pública [Department of Public Education] for public elementary schools in Mexico. For example, the SEP webpage mentions as its mission the "creation of conditions permitting and assuring that all Mexican have access to a quality education" (my translation). (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2003). It likewise claims to promote the "integral human development of the nation's population", as well as its "cultural, scientific, technological, economic, and social advancement". Clearly, both entities state that they support the rights and opportunities of lower-class children to an education which will allow them to become successful members of society.

Recently, a team of researchers, including graduate students at the local university, administered a linguistic census (see Appendix B) to parents at the research site as part of a final course project in bilingualism. Of a total of 196 families from grade levels one through six (the elementary school), 58 parents responded to the questionnaire. Questions were designed to ascertain background information on the parents (i.e. age, sex, place of birth, current residence, grade level of child(ren), number of years the family's children have attended the school, profession, number of persons living in home, access to utilities, type of property, and years of formal education) as well as knowledge of foreign languages, including which languages, proficiency in each language, domains of use, frequency of use, linguistic skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), types of

texts read, and where each language was learned. Moreover, the questionnaires consisted of items concerning the perceived importance of a bilingual education, number and location of relatives living abroad, countries visited, whether the parent watched television and/or listened to music in English, reasons for choosing this particular school for their child(ren), and what they considered to be characteristics of a 'good education'.

The general findings of the linguistic census questionnaire revealed that almost half the respondents (48%) claimed to know no foreign language, while 46% reported some knowledge of English, 5% French or Italian, and 2% Náhuatl, Maya, or German. Of those who claimed to know a foreign language, most (90%) replied that their level of proficiency was either basic or intermediate. As far as linguistic skills, slightly more participants answered that they were able to read and write in the foreign language as opposed to speak or understand it. In other words, these self-reported data suggest that L2 literacy is somewhat more developed than oracy. All the respondents to the question regarding the importance of a bilingual education decided that knowledge of a second language was advantageous for their child(ren).

Following the general analysis mentioned above (i.e. all 58 questionnaires), the data were separated according to grade level, specifically first and fourth grades. The reason the responses of parents from these grade levels were isolated and analyzed independently was because the current study concentrated on literacy practices of children in first and fourth grades. Given that the knowledge of other languages can influence local literacy practices, processes, and ideologies (the topic of the project), it was interesting to discover the linguistic repertoire of these specific groups of parents.

Of a total of 58 parents who answered the questionnaire, twelve reported having a child in first grade. Twelve other parents claimed to have a son or daughter in fourth grade. Of the twelve first-grade parents, five reported knowledge of a foreign language: 4- English; 1- English and Náhuatl. On the other hand, only three of the twelve fourth-grade parents know another language: 2- English; 1- Italian. With respect to level of proficiency, the first-grade parents are fairly balanced between basic (2), intermediate (1), and advanced (2). Likewise, they are equally able to read, write, understand, and speak English, the most common foreign language. In contrast, all the fourth-grade parents evaluated their knowledge as basic. They also reported passive bilingualism, claiming that they were only able to read and understand the foreign languages. As stated above in the general analysis, all respondents revealed that a bilingual education was important for their child(ren).

With respect to socio-economic status (SES), the census study classified ten of the 58 respondents as 'low', thirty-five as 'middle', and the remaining thirteen as 'high'. These levels were determined on the basis of an evaluation of criteria such as profession, number of people living in the home, access to utilities (water, telephone, electricity, gas, Internet and car), as well as years of formal schooling and trips abroad.

In the low SES level, only one person reported knowledge of a second language, Maya. However, no further information was provided about that language (i.e. proficiency, linguistic skills). Of the 35 individuals categorized within the middle SES level, sixteen claimed to know a foreign language (English-14; Italian-2; French-1; Náhuatl-1) with either a basic or intermediate proficiency. Literacy was slightly higher than oracy for English. Surprisingly, only one individual mentioned knowledge of

Náhuatl, historically the most important local indigenous language. In the 'high' SES group, all respondents reported knowledge of a second language (English-12; French-2; German-1; Italian-1). As far as level of proficiency in English, four were basic, four intermediate, and three advanced. The other person left this item blank. Linguistic skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) were equally balanced for this last group.

The 58 participants in the linguistic census gave a variety of answers when asked why they chose the Centro Telpochcalli for their children. Thirteen mentioned the high level of academics at the school, and seven others commented on the effective teaching methods. Five respondents said that the primary basis for enrolling their children in this school was because of its proximity to their homes; likewise, most of the respondents reported that their children used means of public transportation to get to and from school. The remaining parents listed reasons as diverse as discipline, the instruction of societal values, critical thinking skills, respect, recommendations from friends and relatives, peer interaction, facilities, openness, smaller classes, and an affordable tuition.

2.2.2.2. Access

Given that this particular school had been one of the primary research sites for the larger study since 2002, it was anticipated that access for the present project would be unproblematic. Indeed, other researchers had already conducted observations and interviews with school officials and children in this institution, and had likewise donated books and given onsite, professional-development workshops. In this manner, a certain rapport and trust had been established between the researchers and the school.

Nevertheless, access was more delayed than expected, especially access to the first- and fourth-grade classrooms. Initially - around the middle of September - the

researcher was accompanied to the school by the director of the larger project with the aim of a formal introduction to school administrators. The first observations (primarily of the school grounds) were also carried out during these final weeks of September. These visits served to familiarize the researcher with the setting, although permission had yet to be obtained to enter the classrooms due to the elementary-school principal's stipulation that a formal introduction to the teachers would be a necessary prerequisite.

A few weeks later, after various failed attempts to organize meetings with the first- and fourth-grade teachers, on whose classes the study wished to concentrate, the principal finally arranged an afternoon meeting. The purpose of this 30-minute get-together was twofold. First, it was necessary for the researcher and project director to formally introduce themselves to the two teachers, and vice versa. Second, this time was taken to explain to the principal and teachers the goals and objectives of the project, as well as to obtain permission from both parties to perform observations in each of the teacher's classrooms once a week during a seven-month period. Once both teachers were informed of the researcher's intentions, they agreed to the observations and initial dates were set. Classroom visits began the next week (in early October).

In exchange for allowing the researcher access to the school grounds and the two classrooms, the thesis director gave the elementary school principal a written document (see Appendix A) promising to continue giving professional-development workshops at the school. The topic of these seminars would relate directly to literacy instruction. A copy of this document was likewise made for other administrative staff, including the founder of the school, who, at the request of the principal, should be completely informed of all the aspects of the project. The principal also made it clear on several occasions that

the founder of the school needed to read the original proposal of the larger study before classrooms observations could begin.

Another important outcome of the meeting was that the teachers and principal were assured that the names of the school and participants would remain anonymous. In other words, only the researchers and other members of the research team would have access to the data obtained during observations and interviews. In the thesis, as in any other publications using the findings from the school, information singling out this research site would be eliminated unless individual participants gave explicit approval to use their names. The parents, whom the researcher contacted in early December, were also guaranteed this confidentiality.

2.3. Participants

From October-February, observations took place in one first-grade classroom and one fourth-grade classroom (one hour weekly in each class) at this particular school. Beginning in mid-February, the number of observations in each classroom increased to two times per week, given that another member of the research team was assigned to fourth grade, while the researcher stayed in first grade.

First grade was selected due to the fact that it is at this level that children typically begin to learn to read. In other words, in first grade children are first exposed to academic literacy practices associated with formal schooling. According to the first-grade teacher, only 50% of her current students had attended pre-school. Fourth grade, on the other hand, is when the focus of instruction usually shifts to reading for the purpose of learning. Indeed, literacy activities are very prevalent at these levels of instruction in

Mexico, which yielded abundant data. In addition to these observations, six children, six parents, and the two teachers were interviewed mid-way through the project with the aim of gathering more in-depth perspectives on literacy and literacy instruction both in general and more specifically at the research site. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to a detailed description of all the researchers, teachers, students, and parents involved directly with this thesis.

2.3.1. Researchers

2.3.1.1. Larger Project

The principal investigators for the larger study are a professor from the local university (born in the United States), who has a Ph.D. in Education, and an associate professor of Language and Literacy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who also holds a Ph.D. in Education. The second researcher, who received his B.A. in Mexico, has taught a qualitative research course as a visiting professor in the local university. Both are bilingual in English and Spanish. Likewise, there are presently two graduate students, as well as another researcher/professor, collecting and analyzing data in support of the larger project.

2.3.1.2. Primary Researcher

The author of this study was born and raised in the United States. He received his undergraduate degree with a double major in Spanish and linguistics. His experience with Mexico began during college, when he studied abroad in two different parts of the country as a foreign exchange student, once in the summer and later for an entire academic year. Currently he is completing a master's degree in applied linguistics in a bilingual program in central Mexico, having lived in the area for a year and a half. His

near-native proficiency in Spanish and firsthand knowledge of the country, including schooling, were crucial factors in the data collection process given that all the literacy classes, interviews, and documents were in Spanish and thus required both a written and oral command of the language.

2.3.2. Teachers

The first-grade teacher in this study, Gertrudis (pseudonym), was a Mexican female, age 27, with a (four-year) bachelor's degree in elementary education from a state teacher's college (*Escuela Normal*). After working at another local elementary school for half a year, she accepted employment at the research site, where she has now been a teacher in first grade for a total of three years. The fourth-grade Spanish teacher, Octavio (pseudonym), was a Mexican male, age 37, with a two-year associate's degree in elementary education from a state teacher's college. He has been teaching at the school for fourteen years, having previously worked during three years as an educator for the Secretaría de Educación Pública [Department of Public Education] in a nearby urban area. Importantly, Octavio's only contact with the fourth-grade students is during Spanish literacy instruction, given that he teaches sixth grade throughout the rest of the school day. Moreover, this is the first year he has taught in the elementary school, having spent the previous thirteen years teaching ninth-grade science at the middle school.

2.3.3. Students

2.3.3.1. Classrooms

As mentioned earlier, observations were conducted in two elementary-school Spanish classrooms: first and fourth grades. The subject of Spanish was selected because

Table 2.1 Participating Teachers

Name (Pseudonym)	Current Position	Age	Gender	Professional Degree	Total years of teaching experience	Years teaching at current location
Gertrudis	first-grade teacher	27	female	B.A. Elementary Education	3.5	3
Octavio	fourth-grade teacher	37	male	A.A. Elementary Education	17	14

school administrators commented that literacy activities would be most prevalent in these classes. The larger study (Smith et al., 2002; Jiménez et al., 2003) likewise decided to focus on Spanish classes at the two research sites (a public and a semi-private school) for the purpose of comparison and contrast.

There were a total of 28 first-graders and 19 fourth-graders. The number of students in the two classes is different because while the first-grade class is comprised of all the children at this level in the school, the fourth-graders have been divided into two groups due to the larger number of students of this age. The researcher worked with only one of these latter groups (both of which are taught by Octavio), which was chosen in October by the principal and teacher.

The classrooms themselves are very similar in physical layout, as seen in Figure 2.1 below. As illustrated, the two rooms include tables rather than individual desks. The tables are rectangular, wooden-topped, painted blue, and in good condition. The only difference is that the tables for the first-graders are much lower to the ground than those for the fourth-graders. There are three to four wooden chairs at each table. In both

Figure 2.1 First- and Fourth-Grade Classrooms

first grade ***fourth grade***

classrooms students are expected to work in collaboration with their classmates, especially in the first grade, where the teacher (Gertrudis) frequently instructs the children to work together on in-class assignments. The fourth-grade teacher, Octavio, likewise promotes cooperative learning, although many of the lessons in his Spanish class are largely teacher-centered. Each student owns a Spanish book, *libro de español,* which is provided free-of-charge by the Mexican government at the elementary level, and a notebook for writing, or *libreta*. The children are also asked to bring with them to class a set of colored pencils and, in fourth grade, a dictionary. These are the materials most commonly used during literacy instruction.

Each classroom contains a chalkboard, spanning most of the front of the room, large glass windows on two walls, and a bookshelf at the back. Above the chalkboard in the first-grade classroom the teacher has posted cut-out sheets of paper with the letters of the alphabet. In fourth grade in the same location there are two, teacher-produced posters, one consisting of the class rules, and the other one a quote about the importance of

learning. The students keep their Spanish textbooks (as well as books for the other subjects in first grade) on the bookshelves, which also hold a few dictionaries, and, in the case of fourth grade, three fish tanks and a large, model wooden boat. Both teachers have a desk for themselves at the back of the room, the fourth-grade teacher's (who seems to have personalized his classroom) much larger than that of the first-grade teacher.

In addition to the alphabet in first grade and the two posters in fourth grade, both classrooms include other types of environmental texts. In Gertrudis' class there are small, commercially-produced, laminated posters containing the shapes and their names, such as "triangle", "rectangle", and "square", as well as a large picture of the human body with labels of the major body parts. Under the chalkboard appears each of the children's names. She has also hung in the back of the room some examples of student-produced work, namely small pieces of paper on which they have written several characteristics of "good" students (i.e. respect, responsibility). Octavio's class includes, at the back of the room, a bulletin board with large sheets of paper containing the students' grades (for both fourth and sixth grades). Moreover, he often posts poems or short stories, written by select students and edited by the teacher, over one of the windows.

2.3.3.2. Case-study children

By the month of November, the researcher began focusing his attention on three case-study children in each classroom, chosen based on perceived literacy abilities (1 low, 1 average, 1 high). Criteria included in this classification were level of in-class participation, oral reading fluency, and quality and quantity of writing. Choice of the students was made by both the researcher, who had intuitions regarding individual students' abilities, and by the teachers, who had known and interacted with these students

in their classes since the beginning of the semester, and were thus able to confirm the researcher's hunches. It is important to mention that Gertrudis had spent much more class-time with her students than had Octavio, given that he was only with these children during their literacy class. These six students were the focus of later classroom observations and were likewise interviewed during the months of December and January. As seen in Table 2.2, four of these six students were labeled as "transnationals", given that each of them had relatives living abroad, although the children themselves reported that they had never traveled outside Mexico.

As illustrated below in Table 2.2, the three case-study children selected from first grade were Fabiola, Alicia, and César (all pseudonyms). Fabiola is a 6-year-old female who has been in the school for only 6 months. She and her family recently moved to the area after living for three years in northern Mexico. She has three brothers and sisters. Fabiola's mother mentioned that they have relatives (uncles/aunts) who immigrated to the state of Florida. According to Gertrudis, her teacher, Fabiola is an excellent student who always pays attention and completes her assignments. She is likewise a good reader and writer, usually one of the first children to finish their work. At her table of three she often takes control and helps her peers. For example, when working with cut-out letters she

Table 2.2 Participating Case-Study Students

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Grade level	Years at current school	Literacy abilities	Trans-national status
Fabiola	6	female	first	6 months	high	Yes
Alicia	6	female	first	4 (since preschool)	average	No
César	7	male	first	1	low	No
Cristina	10	female	fourth	2	high	Yes
Mario	10	male	fourth	4	average	Yes
Alejandra	9	female	fourth	1	low	Yes

sometimes tells them which ones to choose and how to order them.

Alicia is also 6 years old and has spent a total of four years in the school, ever since she began preschool at the age of two. She has two sisters. The teacher commented that she is an average student who usually participates. Nevertheless, she is frequently scolded for chatting with her tablemates instead of working, which means that she sometimes fails to complete her assignments. For instance, during a recent observation she was told by Gertrudis to leave the classroom if she preferred to talk.

The final case-study child from the first grade is César, a 7-year-old male who enrolled last August. Prior to the current school year he attended a local preschool for two years. He is an only child. Early observations identified César as a distracted child who prefers to play around in class instead of working either individually or with other students. He seldom pays attention and only completes assignments when Gertrudis approaches and helps him. For some reason he does not seem to get along well with his classmates, given that he usually works alone (even while sitting at a table with other students) and talks principally to the teacher and researcher.

The three case-study children from fourth grade were Cristina, Mario, and Alejandra (pseudonyms). Cristina is 10 years old and has been in the school for two years. She commented that she has uncles/aunts and cousins who immigrated to Spain, in addition to a cousin currently living in North Carolina. Cristina spent her first years of elementary school in a local public institution, in which, according to her interview, the teachers were often absent and the classes too large. Octavio mentioned that she was always on-task and seemed extremely interested in the reading and writing activities in his class. During group activities she likes to be the leader, typically planning out each

member's task. For example, when the class was to perform a skit based on a play they had read (in which a man pretended to be dead so that his wife would feel bad about not cooking what he wanted), she determined their roles and instructed them on what to say and do.

Mario is a 10-year-old boy who has been in this school during all four years of his elementary education. He has two brothers and sisters and responded during the interview that his aunt and uncle moved to New York approximately eight years ago. Notes from the observations identify him as an average student who normally participates and completes the assignments, although often with some degree of difficulty. His mother commented in her interview that he had been born with slight brain damage, which affected his learning ability and made him quite hyperactive. However, he appears to try his best and is very sociable with his classmates.

Alejandra, a 9-year-old girl in the fourth grade, first enrolled in this school last August. She had spent the previous two years in a public elementary school in a nearby urban area. She has one sister. Moreover, Alejandra has aunts and uncles both in Chile and in the United States (California). Octavio claims that she is often distracted (preferring to socialize) during Spanish class. Indeed, the researcher has noticed that the teacher frequently asks her to be quiet and to pay attention. Nonetheless, she mentioned during her interview that she enjoyed Spanish class and considered that she was learning much more than in her previous school. Outside class she can usually be found with friends, as she is extremely friendly and talkative.

2.3.4. Parents

During the months of December and January, the researcher contacted and interviewed (see chapter three) the mothers of the six children chosen for case study. It was decided to interview mothers as opposed to fathers for two reasons. First, when the researcher went to the school to talk to parents (which occurred during one week at the time the children were picked up from school), it was the mother in all six cases who came for the child and thus with whom the researcher set up dates for the interviews. Second, it was assumed that the mother would be an ideal informant of each child's literacy abilities and interests, given that mothers regularly help children with their homework and have contact with their teachers. This assumption was confirmed throughout the study. These participants were questioned, with their informed consent, about literacy and literacy practices in order to compare and contrast their attitudes and perceptions. Below is a detailed description of these six families, including a calculation of their socio-economic status (SES) based on the following scale:

1. Parents' professions (unemployed – 0, employee – 2, boss – 4)
   Total: 0-8

2. Mother's formal schooling (some high school – 1, high school graduate – 2, technical degree – 3, college – 4)
   Total: 0-4

3. Number of people living in the home (five – 1, four – 2, three – 3)
   Total: 0-3

Low SES = 0-5
Middle SES = 6-10
High SES = 11-15

These three aspects were chosen as determinants of socio-economic status in accordance with the following rationale. First, these questions were asked of all the participants during the interviews; thus, this information could be compared for the six

parents. Second, it was assumed that profession, formal schooling, and number of people living in each home would serve as reasonable predictors of social category. It is important to mention that this research site is quite distinct from that of other contexts, specifically the United States, in that SES cannot be established on factors such as free or reduced lunch, which are non-existent in this particular setting. Therefore, it seemed logical to base this decision on the three aspects pointed out above. Significantly, profession seems somewhat more revealing than formal schooling considering that it is not uncommon for individuals with technical and university degrees to stay at home with the children. Likewise, it could be argued, at least in this context, that the number of people living in each home is inversely related to financial resources (i.e. more children implies more expenses).

The parents with children in the first grade are Lucia, Melisa, and Tania (pseudonyms). Lucia (Fabiola's mother) is a 26-year-old housewife who completed a two-year course at beauty school after finishing middle school. She comes from northern Mexico and has been living in the local community with her three children for six months. Her husband still works in the north as a trailer operator, and according to her, visits the rest of the family two or three times a year. When asked if she ever wrote letters to her father, Fabiola told the researcher that she only talked with him over the phone. Lucia and her husband have four children and have never traveled abroad. *SES = 6*

Melisa (Alicia's mother) is 38 years old and received a bachelor's degree in Chemistry from a local public university. Although having previously worked as a high-school science teacher, she presently stays at home caring for her three children. Her husband holds a degree in Education and is employed as an educational consultant. She

and her family (three daughters) have been residents in a nearby small town for a total of six years. They have never traveled outside Mexico. *SES = 9*

Tania (César's mother), age 34, works as a sales agent of heavy machinery. She comes from southwestern Mexico and is a high-school graduate. During the interview she responded that she had been living about a mile from the school for approximately two years, renting a two-story apartment. Her husband currently works for a local automobile industry. *SES = 9*

Table 2.3 Participating Parents

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Child's name and grade level	Current Occupation	Highest Level of Formal Schooling Completed	Years living in community	SES
Lucia	26	female	Fabiola - first	housewife	2-year beauty school	0.5	middle (6)
Melisa	38	female	Alicia - first	housewife	B.S. Chemistry	6	middle (9)
Tania	34	female	César - first	Sales agent	high school graduate	2	middle (9)
Ariana	33	female	Cristina - fourth	housewife	technical school (secretary)	11	middle (9)
Carla	33	female	Mario - fourth	school monitor, nurse	2-year technical school (nursing)	11	middle (6)
Susana	32	female	Alejandra - fourth	housewife	1 year of high school	1	low (5)

The parents of the three fourth-graders are Ariana, Carla, and Susana (pseudonyms). Ariana (Cristina's mother) is a 33-year-old housewife from a nearby urban area who has resided in the local community for a total of eleven years. She

completed a technical degree as a secretary, although now she has chosen to stay home with the two children. Her husband is a veterinarian. They have never traveled outside Mexico. *SES = 9*

Carla (Mario's mother) works at the research site as a nurse and school monitor (although some of the children are not aware of her duty as a nurse), watching the children during drop-off in the morning, during recess, and when their parents come for them after school. Currently 33, she graduated from a technical school (2.5 years) specializing in nursing. She and her family (three children, one of which is mentally retarded) have lived in the area for eleven years. At the moment, her husband is unemployed. *SES = 6*

The last parent interviewed was Susana (Alejandra's mother), age 32, who completed only one year of high school and is a self-identified housewife. Having spent most of her life in Mexico City, she and her husband, a sales representative, moved to the community one year ago in order to escape the crime and fast-paced life of the city. They have two daughters and have never traveled abroad. *SES = 5*

According to the linguistic census, described above, these mothers are typical parents at the Centro Telpochcalli. More specifically, on the census questionnaire a majority of the female respondents classified themselves as *amas de casa* [housewives], similar to four out of six of the women in this study. (The other two participating mothers hold steady jobs). Likewise, the participants are somewhat representative of other parents at the school in that half of them have completed at least a two-year technical degree. Finally, whereas 60% of the families who participated in the linguistic census were classified as "middle" SES, five out of six of the families in this study were assigned to

this category based on the scale described above. The other family was considered “low” SES, given the mother’s unemployment and the fact that she completed only one year of high school, coinciding with only a small percentage (17%) of those who were classified as “low” in the analysis of the census questionnaire. A major limitation of the study, which is elaborated in chapter five, is that very little is known about the male parents.

CHAPTER 3: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Data collection

3.1.1. Observations

Observations are essential in qualitative studies because they allow the researcher to witness certain patterns of behavior. Although one might argue that any desired information could be obtained solely through interviews, it is important to note that individuals are often unaware of their own conduct, especially of practices and routines to which they have become accustomed over time. Literacy classrooms are no exception. Both students and teachers possess unconscious attitudes and beliefs toward learning and teaching to read and write, which inexorably govern their actions in the classroom.

Accordingly, the first motivation behind the choice of using observations in this particular study was that these sessions permitted the researcher to identify characteristics of the classroom relevant to literacy instruction, such as the quality and quantity of student involvement, materials, and teaching styles and preferences. The second reason observations were conducted was so that the teachers and students could become somewhat familiar with the presence of the researcher prior to the onset of more personalized data collection procedures, namely participant observations and interviews. In this way, it was assumed that the participants would feel more comfortable and willing to share their ideas, work, and experiences at the time of such interactions.

The observations for this study took place once a week in each of the two classrooms, with the purpose of identifying patterns of behavior toward literacy and literacy learning. Between September and November, these observations were largely non-participative, again given that the researcher needed this time to become familiar

with new participants and the new context, and vice versa. As the research developed, around December, observations became increasingly participative, and the researcher began to interact to a certain extent with the students during their Spanish literacy lessons. This contact permitted a deeper level of understanding of the student-student and student-teacher collaboration in the classroom, especially regarding the acquisition of literacy.

Regarding participant observation, the first-grade teacher gave permission to assist students who were having difficulty completing the in-class assignments. These students were usually made to sit at the back of the room, in close proximity to the researcher. When the other students noticed this interaction, many of them likewise began to approach the researcher for help or revision, and the teacher welcomed this aid, as it allowed her to focus attention on other children. These instances also made it possible to closely observe the production of student work in the school context.

The fourth-grade teacher agreed to let the researcher implement a 40-minute class activity with his students a week before Christmas vacation. This session permitted the researcher to learn the names of many of the students, to ask them specific questions about their reading and writing practices, and to obtain an example of writing from each student. The children were instructed to write their names, the date, the number of years they had studied at the school, as well as three questions they would like to ask the researcher about his personal or professional life. Around the same time, a similar activity took place in the fourth-grade classroom at the other school involved in the larger study. As with the first-graders, this interaction yielded valuable, student-produced texts for subsequent analysis.

A total of 40 observations were carried out between September 2003-March 2004: 22 in the first grade, 9 in the fourth grade, and 9 on the school grounds. All of these visits were in the morning in accordance with each teacher's schedule for Spanish classes. It is necessary to mention that the first nine observations did not take place in actual classrooms, but rather on the school grounds in general. As explained in chapter two, although the research team of the larger project had already negotiated access to the school and classrooms, formalities delayed an introduction to and meeting with the two teachers, with whom toward the end of September the researcher was finally able to schedule the classroom visits. Also, the total number of observations is limited to 40 due to the fact that exams and festivities occurred at the school quite frequently, and on these days it was not possible to observe literacy instruction. Specifically, exams took place for most of a whole week every five weeks. Thus, time restraints, along with these occasional events, regulated the number of the observation sessions.

Throughout the observation sessions, the researcher took notes by hand and then transcribed them as soon as possible so as not to forget the data and context observed. In order to facilitate the organization and analysis of the data, each transcription included a heading with the following information: researcher's initials, observation number, date (day, month, year), time (beginning and end) of observation, name of school, teacher's name, grade level, subject (see Appendix C for example observation). With the aim of becoming reasonably systematic and consistent as far as what types of data were recorded, the researcher underwent training in taking field notes. Research meetings were held on a weekly basis, permitting members of the research team to exchange and read each others' transcriptions.

The observations themselves consist of two basic types of information. First, as Merriam (1998: 97-8) recommends, the focus should be on the physical setting (context, space allocation, objects, resources/materials), participants (who, how many, roles, important characteristics), activities and interactions (sequence, norms and rules, timing), conversation (content, silence, non-verbal behavior), and dress. This data is largely descriptive and objective, dependent on what the researcher was able to see and hear.

The second type of information in the notes and transcriptions includes observer comments (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), reflexive remarks made by the researcher during particular visits. These personal impressions, ideas, and opinions were bolded to distinguish them from the descriptive text and often were called into focus during subsequent observations or interviews. For instance, it was noticed early on that the fourth-grade teacher rarely seemed to use students' actual names in class. Instead, he preferred to say "compañero/a" (classmate) or "niño/a" (boy/girl). This pattern was confirmed through many subsequent observations.

3.1.2. Interviews

Interviews allow the researcher to "explore and probe participants' responses to gather more in-depth data about their experiences and feelings. They can examine attitudes, interests, feelings, concerns, and values…" (Gay & Airasian, 2002, p. 209). Many qualitative studies opt to combine observations and interviews as methods of data collection given that they can build on each other and prove quite complementary. More specifically, the data obtained through observation may be discussed, expanded, clarified, confirmed, and reflected upon during an interview session. In this fashion, participants typically reveal beliefs and attitudes toward the issue at hand. Considering that this study

focused on attitudes and ideologies toward literacy and literacy practices, it was evident that interviews were an indispensable tool. Only by means of face-to-face conversation could the researcher ascertain such deeply-engrained beliefs and opinions.

This research project included both formal and informal interviews. Informal interviews were carried out primarily with teachers and students before or after class, as well as on occasions in which the researcher happened to encounter a teacher on the school grounds during recess or after school. The first-grade teacher was notably more willing than the fourth-grade teacher to take a moment of her time to answer any questions or concerns. For example, she would frequently answer questions about student work, materials she had used that day, and student behavior and effort. Many of her remarks appear in the observation transcriptions, often as observer comments.

3.1.2.1. Individual Interviews

As in the study carried out by Rosales-Kufrin (1989), formal, in-depth interviews were conducted with students, parents, and teachers. Contrary to the focus of her study, which dealt with Hispanic dropouts in the United States, however, these interviews served the purpose of comparing and contrasting participants' attitudes toward different types of literacy practices. As mentioned above, such interviews allowed the researcher to gain a more profound understanding of the personal and community-wide ideologies underlying and informing literacy practices. These interviews (see below for a detailed description of the format and content) were modeled in part on previous interviews with elementary teachers, parents, and students in local schools and in the community (Ballesteros, 2003).

Interviews (in Spanish) with teachers, parents, and students were piloted during the month of November, specifically with two parents (of different socio-economic status), one teacher, and two students (of different socio-economic status). Most of these participants were associated with the same school, but at different grade levels (i.e. not first or fourth grades). Once the questions were revised, the interviews analyzed for this study were conducted in December and January. Participants included two teachers (first- and fourth-grade), six children (the case-study children described above), and six parents (the mothers of the case-study children). All interviews were tape-recorded (with each participant's permission (see Appendices D, E, and F)) and subsequently transcribed by a native speaker of Spanish. In addition, the researcher took brief notes during each session.

The six case-study children participating in this project were selected during late-November/early-December. By this time, the researcher had visited their classrooms enough to develop an idea of their literacy abilities. Once the list of potential case-study students was made, it was shown to each of the teachers, who confirmed the researcher's categorization of each child as low, average, or high with respect to skills in reading and writing.

Subsequently, it was decided to attempt to contact at least one of the parents of each of these six students. Both teachers recommended that the ideal time to meet parents was at two o'clock p.m., when the children were dismissed from class. The first-grade teacher was extremely helpful in this process, introducing the researcher to all three mothers in the course of two days. In contrast, in order to establish contact with the parents of the fourth-graders, the researcher had to stand with each of the case-study

students from that grade level and personally make an introduction to the parents when they arrived to pick up their child. All six mothers immediately agreed to participate after hearing a brief explanation of the goals and methods of the thesis project. Accordingly, they provided the researcher with a phone number, an address, and a possible date to visit their home.

The student and parent interviews were carried out during the months of December and January, mainly during the Christmas holidays. This occasion was chosen due to convenience for the participants; the parents admitted that they had more free time during the vacation as a result of fewer work hours. Moreover, the holiday period permitted the researcher to make home visits to most of the households, which proved advantageous for at least two reasons. First, it was assumed that the participants would be less intimidated and nervous in a setting so familiar to them. Indeed, they seemed quite disposed to interact and share their opinions. Second, and of extreme importance to the study, home visits allowed the researcher to observe texts in the home, such as posters, drawings, storybooks, pamphlets, and encyclopedias. Upon being asked what kinds of texts they and their children read at home, the parents would often take them out and display them. Likewise, during the student interviews, the researcher asked them to read from a text that they owned.

The same basic questions (see Appendices G, H, I, and J for a complete list of questions) were asked of participants in each of the three groups, modified only according to age and role (teacher, student, parent). For instance, while the teacher was asked, “What types of texts do your students read in Spanish class?”, the parent was asked, “What types of texts does your child read in his/her Spanish class?”, and the child,

"What types of things do you read in your Spanish class?" The questions were worded as similarly as possible to permit a comparison and contrast of attitudes among the three groups (e.g. the first research question). The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes with each parent and teacher and 20 minutes with each student.

3.1.2.2. Focus-group Interviews

Seidman (1998) recommends a three-interview series with each participant, considering that "interviewers who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an "interviewee" whom they have never met tread on thin contextual ice" (Mishler, 1986, cited in Seidman, 1998: 11). Taking into account this suggestion, it was determined that more than one interview would be desirable. Given the researcher's substantial involvement in the research site, however, focus-group interviews were conducted only with the some of the parents and with both of the teachers. In other words, the researcher's knowledge of the context compensated for the background information, thus making a third interview unnecessary.

After the first interview transcripts had been carefully read and analyzed, the researcher formulated further questions designed to probe participants' perspectives on literacy and literacy instruction, again with specific reference to the local school and community (see Appendices K and L for exact questions). Subsequently, five of the six mothers were contacted by telephone and asked if they would be willing to meet with the researcher as a group to answer several more questions. It was decided that the school monitor and nurse, Carla, would not be included in the focus-group discussion due to the fact that her presence as a school employee might inhibit the rest of the parents from expressing their true opinions about the institution.

Although all five of the mothers agreed to attend the interview session, which was held at the school in a quiet area in one of the administrative buildings, only three of them showed up, namely Tania, Ariana, and Susana. The discussion, which lasted approximately 35 minutes, was tape recorded with the parents' consent and later transcribed by a native speaker of Spanish.

That same week, the two participating teachers, Octavio and Gertrudis, were asked if they would dedicate an hour after school one day to elaborate on several of their comments during the first interviews. They both agreed and the researcher met with them for around 45 minutes on a Friday afternoon. As before, permission was obtained to record the conversation, which was later transcribed. These interview sessions yielded additional data which served to complement and enrich previous findings.

3.1.3. Document Analysis

In addition to observations and interviews, the researcher collected and analyzed formal and informal documents available in homes, in the school, and in the local community. School texts included posters, announcements (i.e. for food, outside the cafeteria), student work in Spanish classes, writing on the chalkboard, and classroom rules and regulations. Among the home texts there were written reminders, student drawings with text (i.e. cards for parents), letters to family members and friends, a religious proverb (hanging on the wall), and children's books. Community texts were limited to signs, posters, and advertisements (i.e. restaurants; apartments for rent). The community writings were taken directly outside the school.

Pictures were taken by members of the research team both before and throughout the duration of the project. Importantly, the researcher had access to all photographs

collected for the larger study. Many of the documents were photocopied, copied in the observation notebook, photographed with a digital camera, and/or scanned with a digital scanner. On some occasions the texts were not completely copied (especially in the homes), although the researcher made note of their presence and a summary of the content. All three groups of participants (students, parents, teachers) were asked for permission whenever a piece of their own writing was copied.

Such document analysis permitted a comparison and contrast of texts produced in the distinct contexts mentioned above, as well as an authentic, illustrative source of triangulation for data collected during the observations and interviews. Indeed, Bogdan & Biklen (1998) mention the immense value of documents and photographs as "cultural products".

3.2. Data analysis

This research project, as pointed out previously, followed a qualitative paradigm based on ethnographic methods. Consequently, most data took the form of extensive, typed transcriptions of field notes and interview sessions. Data analysis was carried out in accordance with constant comparative methods suggested by Bogdan & Biklen (1998). In other words, the formal analysis began early in the study and was nearly complete by the end. Key issues, recurrent events and activities in the descriptive data – focus categories – were given names and resulted in the concentration of further data collection, specifically more focused observations and interviews (explained in more detail below). Such procedures led to the gathering of data related to these categories, allowing the formation of sub-categories that provided a more in-depth picture of literacy practices

and instruction. These classifications were constantly compared and contrasted with those obtained by other members of the research team involved in the larger project. Accordingly, the researcher could be more confident that the findings were in fact representative of the context at hand.

With the objective of organizing the data, a coding system was developed. Although many computer programs are currently available to facilitate data analysis (i.e. NUD*IST, Ethnograph), it was decided that a mechanical sorting of the data was preferable, given the researcher's lack of experience with such computer software and the relatively limited number of texts included in the analysis. Thus, the transcriptions of the observations and interviews, as well as any other useful documents, were read numerous times on a weekly basis, during which time repeated words, phrases, behaviors, attitudes, and events were marked and eventually assigned to a general category and a more specific subcategory (utilizing a cut-and-paste method). Particular attention was paid to the observer comments. The units of analysis of focus included those possibly related to the research questions stated in the first chapter of this thesis. Additionally, the following coding families, suggested by Bodgan & Biklen (1998:172-6), were taken into consideration: setting/context, subjects' perspectives, subjects' ways of thinking about people and objects, activities, events, strategies, and relationships and social structure. The various readings of the data permitted the creation, revision, and refinement of all topics and bits of text judged valuable for the goals of the project.

Accordingly, the analysis yielded the categories and subcategories listed below in Table 4. The patterns revealed in this coding system formed the basis of the results and analysis presented in subsequent chapters. Where possible, these findings have been

illustrated through the quotation of participants' words, photographs, and documents. Moreover, this project has adopted (to a large extent) the three stages of data organization proposed by Wolcott (1994), cited in Ballesteros (2003): description, analysis, and interpretation. According to this author, description occurs when the data are kept in their original form, while the analysis consists of the isolation of the features of the data which

Table 3.1 Categories and Subcategories

READING	• Board / Cards • Out loud • Discussion • Silent • FOLK • Home
WRITING	• Date and names • Letters, words, and syllables • Phrases and sentences • Copying • Dictation • Communicative • Home
LIMITATIONS AT SCHOOL	• Reading • Writing • Home vs. school • Scolding for misbehavior
CLASS INTERACTION AND TEACHING STYLES **ENVIRONMENTAL TEXTS**	• Noise • Praise / Encouragement • Student-teacher interaction • Cooperative learning • Comments about school • Two classrooms • School grounds • Outside school

are important for the study, particularly the research questions. The last step, interpretation, involves the researcher's knowledge and experience in presenting the data in an insightful way. Such interpretation often yields the construction of new theories.

In this manner, the analysis revealed existing similarities and differences pertaining to attitudes and ideologies associated with each of the proposed research contexts: school, home, and community. Likewise, it helped to establish a comparison of the types of literacy common to home and community settings as opposed to formal instruction in the classroom. These findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1. Overview of Results

The reader will recall that the main objective of this study was to identify the processes and ideologies underlying the learning and instruction of literacy in a particular Mexican elementary school. In order to ascertain the attitudes and values related to the teaching of reading and writing, data from three contexts - school, home and community - were collected, coded, and analyzed. Of specific interest to the researcher was the extent to which local educators recognized and incorporated funds of linguistic knowledge in their classrooms. While the research questions themselves are addressed in detail in the final chapter, this chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the overall findings.

The results were obtained after careful analysis of the observation and interview transcriptions. The categories and subcategories reflect patterns in the observations which have been compared to and complemented with findings from the interviews. Each of the five categories below includes a brief description of the specific practices documented throughout the process of data collection, as well as authentic, illustrative examples (i.e. photographs, quotes) where appropriate. The discussion also mentions any counterexamples, in other words, data that seemed to challenge the general patterns revealed in the categories.

4.2. Reading

As far as reading instruction and learning in the school context, three practices were observed to occur on a somewhat regular basis. In the first grade classroom, most reading took place from the chalkboard or from cards containing the students' names. In

both first and fourth grades, a common exercise was for the children to read out loud, either individual words or sentences they had written, and, in the case of first grade, texts from the Spanish book provided by the Mexican government. To a less extent, the teachers would stimulate discussion about a particular reading assignment. The researcher noted a total of only four instances of silent reading, in addition to one example of funds of linguistic knowledge (i.e. a community text used in the classroom). The description of reading practices common in the school is followed by a brief overview of home reading activities, which were reported by parents and children in the interviews.

4.2.1. Reading from Board / Cards

An activity observed quite frequently in the first-grade classroom was for the students to read letters, syllables, and words from the chalkboard and from cards, either silently, chorally, or one student out loud. The teacher commented during her interview that these were the materials she typically used to teach reading. Additionally, Gertrudis had hung all the letters of the alphabet, both upper and lowercase, above the board. She often would move to the board, take a stick, and point to each of the letters while the children read them out loud. For example, during one class session the teacher announced,

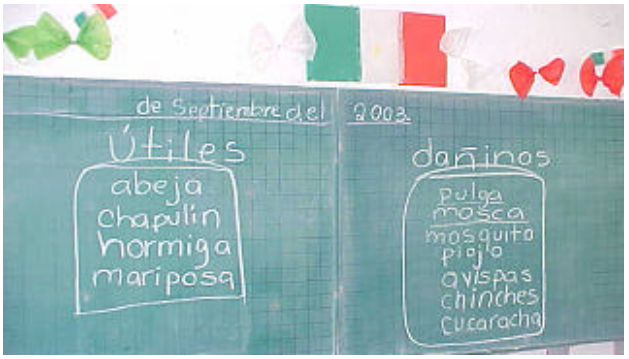
> "*vamos a dar un repaso a las consonantes y vocales ya que la próxima semana tenemos examen*" [let's review the consonants and vowels because we'll have an exam next week]. She begins pointing at the letters above the board, asking how each one sounds, until they have reviewed the entire alphabet. Throughout this activity she encourages the students to give examples of words beginning with each of the letters (10/30/2003).

On another occasion, Gertrudis distributed cards containing the students' full names, and she pointed to the letters one-by-one above the board as they located and covered them

up on the cards. As before, she had the children to sound out the letters in unison (01/14/2004).

The chalkboard was also used regularly for reading words and, more rarely, sentences. For instance, as can be observed in Figure 4.1, the teacher would write lists of words on the board. The students were asked to read them aloud, either in unison or individually.

Figure 4.1 List of Words on the First-grade Chalkboard



It was likewise noticed that the teacher would often select particular students to approach the board and read out certain terms. On January 28, 2004, for example, Gertrudis posted the words *azul* [blue], *paloma* [dove], *cielo* [sky], *bajó* [came down], *de* [from], *el* [the], and, *que* [that]. After the whole class had decided on the order of the clause, *la paloma azul que del cielo bajó* [the blue dove that came down from the sky], she called on seven different children to go to the board and take down the seven words, one-by-one. Clearly they had to be able to read the terms in order to know which one to choose.

During one interesting class lesson, the teacher had prepared cards containing the letters *e, b, u, q, n, a, e,* and *t*. She asked eight students to go to the front of the room and to form a horizontal line. Each child was given a card, and they held them up for their

classmates. After reading the letters individually and sounding them out, Gertrudis instructed the students to try to form a word with them. They quickly moved about and created the term *banquete* [banquet], one of their weekly vocabulary items. The teacher took advantage of this opportunity to have the children to respond to the following questions:

1) *¿Qué dice?* [What does it say?]
2) *¿Cuántas letras tiene?* [How many letters does it have?]
3) *¿Cuál es la primera letra? ¿la segunda? ¿la tercera?*
   [What is the first letter? the second? the third?] (2/11/2004)

4.2.2. Reading Out Loud

In both the first and fourth grades, the students were frequently asked to read words, sentences, or even short texts out loud. In the first grade, the children read primarily from the board (see above) and from their textbook. According to Gertrudis, the Spanish book provided by the government free-of-charge to students at the elementary level contains stories appropriate for children of this age (interview, 01/12/2004). She would ask the children to begin reading a story, and they would proceed to read (often mumble) through it until everyone had finished. In fact, they even seemed to understand that the instruction to read meant reading out loud, given that on very few occasions did they actually read silently (see below). To give some specific examples, on October 15, 2003 the researcher observed them reading a story entitled *Los Changuitos* [*The Little Monkeys*]. During another class, the teacher gave out the lyrics to a song about a dove, and the children were asked to read them out loud (01/28/2004).

Interestingly, on neither of these occasions did Gertrudis use the texts for more than an oral read-aloud. In other words, the students did not discuss the meaning of the texts nor did they complete a follow-up activity such as a writing assignment.

Nevertheless, during her interview she expressed the following: "*Alguien que te…después de leer te sabe decir de qué trató el texto, o la lectura…cuál es el mensaje, la idea principal*" [A good reader is] someone who, after reading, can tell you what the text or reading was about…the message, the main idea] (01/12/2004).

Given that many of the first graders apparently began schooling without knowing how to read or write (i.e. no formal instruction in literacy) (interview with Gertrudis, 01/12/2004), the teacher usually allowed those who were still having trouble reading to follow along with their fingers. In other words, they listened to their classmates while reading silently. The teacher likewise encouraged the students to do the best they could, which often resulted in their mumbling instead of actually reading out the text. Such difference in reading proficiency was noted both by the researcher in the observations and by the teacher during the interview. Gertrudis mentioned that she hoped these types of activities would promote scaffolding through cooperative learning. She quoted, "*Doy libros…y lo leen por pareja…por parejas o tríos…y, este, algunos están combinados, un niño que sabe leer les lee a los demás*" [I give them books, and they read it in pairs, in pairs or in groups of three…and, umm, some are mixed. A child who knows how to read reads to the others] (01/12/2004).

Octavio, the fourth-grade teacher, regularly had his students to stand up beside their tables and to read out questions, sentences, and short texts. For instance, during the first observation in this class the researcher noted,

> The teacher asks each of the students to stand up and read out some of his/her sentences to the rest of the class. They must not use the same verb as their classmates, and they are to identify the subject and predicate in each sentence. One girl stands up and reads, "*La niña juega en el patio de la casa*" [The girl plays on the house patio]. She has underlined *juega en el patio de la casa* [plays on the house patio] and has labeled it as the predicate (10/13/2003).

On another occasion, Octavio instructed a number of students to stand up and read out several questions they had been dictated about the dictionary. Examples of these questions were 1) ¿Qué es un diccionario? [What is a dictionary?] 2) ¿Qué orden tienen las palabras en un diccionario? [How are the terms in a dictionary ordered?]. The children read the questions and provided the answers that they had been required to research as a homework assignment (10/27/2003).

Regarding larger texts, during one class session the students were given photocopies of a play and were asked to prepare a skit in groups to be presented to the others and to the teacher. All of the children read directly from their papers when it was their turn to speak. It was noted that Octavio interrupted two of the students throughout this reading activity to correct their pronunciation and grammar, respectively. For example, one boy said *habra* instead of *habrá* [there will be], and the teacher corrected his placement of stress. Moreover, a female student was corrected for using the feminine article as opposed to the masculine with the word *acto* [act] (12/01/2003).

4.2.3. Discussion of Reading

Only a few instances of reading discussion were documented. In first grade, Gertrudis once asked the students to recount what they remembered after having read a children's story. Perhaps not accustomed to this kind of questioning, no one responded. Thus, she proceeded to ask them more specific questions, such as "*¿Quiénes fueron los personajes?*" [Who were the characters?] and "*¿Por qué no usan camisa?*" [Why don't they wear shirts?]. Observing that not many people were paying attention to her attempt to begin a discussion, she decided instead to have them read the story out loud as a group (10/15/2003). Additionally, on at least two other occasions, Gertrudis solicited opinions

about a reading assignment, remarking *"¿A quién le pareció chistoso el cuento?"* [Who found the story funny?] (10/15/2003) and *"¿A quién le gustó?"* [Who liked it?]. (11/19/2003). The reply from the children consisted of a simple *"a mí"* [I did]. In other words, no further discussion took place.

Similarly, the fourth-grade teacher, Octavio, once asked his students to remind him what they remembered about a play they had read, specifically with reference to the plot and characters. However, before they even had a chance to answer, he interrupted and provided his own summary and interpretation of the play. When he had finished speaking he called on various children to mention the points he had forgotten, also questioning them on how the play ended. In this way, it seemed as though the instruction was not allowing the students to grow as readers.

Significantly, this particular reading had been done from photocopies, and the day the researcher observed this brief discussion, only one in every four or five people had a copy. Indeed, the teacher commented during the first interview that the shortage of materials was a major problem in his class: *"Sí, lo que pasa es que el problema es que a veces no…no me ha dado el tiempo de sacar tantas copias para todos, ¿no? Y aparte que es…gasto"* [Yes, the problem is that sometimes I don't…I don't have time to make photocopies for everyone, you know? And also, it's…an expense] (01/09/2004).

This overall lack of reading discussion in the two classrooms contrasted with what one of the mothers expressed during her interview, namely *"(un buen lector es) el que entiende. El que entiende lo que está leyendo. El que puede aplicar después lo que, lo que entendió en ese libro…ése es un buen lector"* [(a good reader) understands. He/she understands what he/she is reading. He/she is able to apply later on what, what he/she

understood from that reading…that's a good reader] (Melisa, 01/08/2004). The reading practices observed in both classes tended to serve the purpose of learning to read, not reading to learn. In-depth discussion and follow-up activities regarding the assignments were practically non-existent.

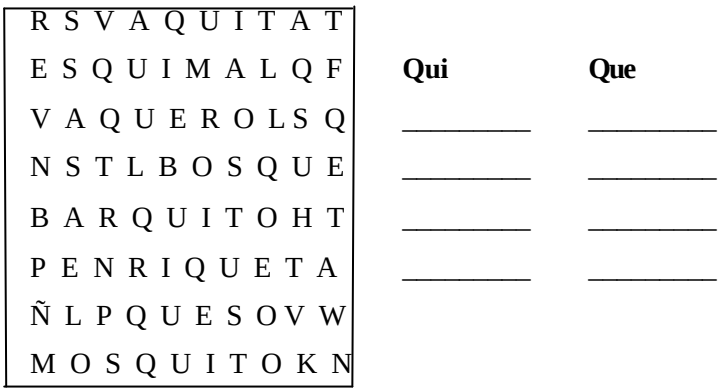
4.2.4. Silent Reading

As opposed to reading out loud (see section 4.2.2.), which occurred quite frequently, silent reading was rare. In fact, the researcher noted just four instances of this sort of activity, all of which took place in Gertrudis' class. Moreover, the task consisted not of reading during an extended period of time, but rather moments in which the children were asked to read the text and provide specific information. For example, on one occasion, the students had read a story from their textbook and were instructed to look for and to circle specific terms. These are the notes from the observation that day:

> Gertrudis: *"Vamos a sacar nuestro lápiz rojo. Vamos a encerrar donde dice 'caracol'"*. [Let's get out our red colored pencils. We're going to circle where it says 'snail']. The children do this exercise to see which group can finish first. The teacher continues: *"¿Cuántas veces dice 'caracol'?"* [How many times does it say 'snail'?] *"¿Con qué letra empieza 'caracol'?"* [What letter does 'snail' begin with?] *"¿Cuántas veces se repite?"* [How many times is it repeated?] Gertrudis then says, *"vamos a ver cuántas veces se repite 'gusanitos'"* [Let's see how many times 'worms' is repeated.] A little later, she comments, *"vamos a ver cuántas veces se repite 'casa'"*. [Let's see how many times 'house' is repeated] (11/19/2003).

On another visit, the teacher distributed a word search and asked the children to bok for words containing the syllables 'que' and 'qui', terms that she had written for them on the chalkboard. Figure 4.2 below is a reproduction of the *sopa de letras*, or word search, and activity (02/11/2004).

Figure 4.2 Word Search Activity in the First Grade



A third example of silent reading was noted on February 12, 2004, when the teacher asked the students to read a menu included as part of a story in their Spanish book. Nevertheless, she allowed them only a minute or so to complete the reading before she began giving instructions for them to reproduce their own menu based on the model. In summary, the time dedicated to silent reading was minimal in the first grade and completely absent in the fourth grade. Furthermore, the texts used for silent reading were generally very short and simple, not at all challenging for the children.

4.2.5. Funds of Linguistic Knowledge

Both teachers claimed to be at least somewhat aware of the type of reading done by their students outside the classroom. Gertrudis commented during an interview that she had encouraged her children to obtain library cards at the school and to check out books on a weekly basis. According to her, the children would take these books home with them, read them either alone or with their parents, and then talk to her in class about what they had learned (01/12/2004). Octavio told the researcher that he often had his students to bring texts from home, such as stories or fables, and that they would use these materials during class. Interestingly, he pointed out that not all of the children

participated, given that "*un…cincuenta por ciento de alumnos que sí tienen esa, esa oportunidad y que los papás les gastan en libros o cuentos…Muchos de esos libros son de sus papás*" [Around 50% of the students have this, this opportunity. Their parents spend money on books or stories. Many of these books are their parents'] (01/09/2004).

Despite this reported incorporation of local texts in the classroom, only one such instance related to reading was actually documented throughout the duration of the study. This particular class session was devoted to a discussion of newspapers, as the children read out the titles and talked about where they had acquired the texts. The objectives that day included identifying the purpose of a newspaper, its sections, and the distinction between national and international news (01/19/2004). Nonetheless, it is doubtful that the students actually read these types of texts in their homes. According to the parents interviewed, they usually read only from their Spanish book (i.e. homework assignments) and, in a few cases, other stories and environmental texts such as the writing on cereal boxes and grocery lists. This general lack of reading at home was presumably true for other children in the school as well.

4.2.6. Reading in the Home

When asked whether or not they read frequently at home, only the first-grade children replied affirmatively. Indeed, their parents told the researcher that since they were just now beginning to learn how to read, they enjoyed it. The fourth-graders, on the other hand, reported that reading was not an activity they particularly liked. For example, Mario stated, "*Nada más en la escuela y un poco en casa*" [(I read) only at school and a little at home] (12/19/03).

The kinds of texts typically read in the home setting included schoolbooks, both from the current and previous semesters, as well as children's stories, adventures, magazines, and student encyclopedias. Some of the parents also expressed that their children liked to read billboards and road signs while traveling. Susana said, "*¿Sabes qué le gusta hacer? Que cuando vamos en el carro o algo va leyendo todos los…los este promocionales de la calle y eso…O sea, sí me doy cuenta que, que lo hace… 'Mira, mamá, ahí dice esto'*" [You know what she likes to do? That when we're in the car or something she reads out all the…the umm advertisements on the street. I realize that, that she does it. "Look mom, there it says this."] (01/06/2004).

The students commented that sometimes they preferred to read alone, whereas on other occasions they would read with their parents, generally with their mother, and often with older or younger brothers or sisters. One parent, Tania, pointed out that her first-grade son César had no choice but to read alone: *"Por lo regular no porque mi esposo se va ya en la tarde a trabajar entonces no, este…también no…no comparte mucho tiempo. Los dos no compartimos mucho tiempo…con él mas el fin de semana…y en la noche que llego me pongo a hacer trabajos con él*" [Usually (he reads by himself) because my husband goes to work in the evening so, umm…also, he doesn't have much time. Neither of us has much time…just on the weekends…and sometimes at night when I get home I sit down and work with him] (01/17/2004). The other mothers reported that they read with their children every once in a while, and that when they did, they would take turns reading to each other. Favorite spots to read included the living room and the children's bedroom.

Not only did the students read very little at home, most of the parents also admitted that reading was not a common activity in their own lives. For instance, Lucia and Tania said that they read at most four or five pages a day, and only when they had a moment of spare time. The texts they and their husbands read included magazines, newspapers, comics, short romance stories, and, very rarely, a book or novel. Many of the texts read by parents, especially the fathers, all of whom were reported to hold steady jobs, were limited to things directly related to their employment. To give an example, Melisa mentioned that her husband, an educator, enjoyed reading books about education, as well as about intercultural issues (01/08/2004).

Despite these findings concerning the overall lack of interest in reading, the parents replied that reading was important. When questioned why people read, common answers were "*para aprender*" [to learn], "*para saber más*" [to know more], "*informarse*" [to be informed], and "*porque es un placer*" [because it's enjoyable]. No one said that reading was useless or irrelevant in their lives. In other words, their ideas contradicted their actual practices. Nevertheless, the mothers who participated in the focus-group interview confessed that reading had not been culturally engrained in them, and that for this reason trying to get people in the local community to dedicate time to this activity would be difficult, if not impossible.

4.3. Writing

Classroom writing activities were quite prevalent, significantly more so than reading. The students in both grades were required to write their names and the date prior to beginning all of the assignments in their notebooks. The first-graders' writing was then almost completely limited to syllables and individual words, whereas the fourth-graders

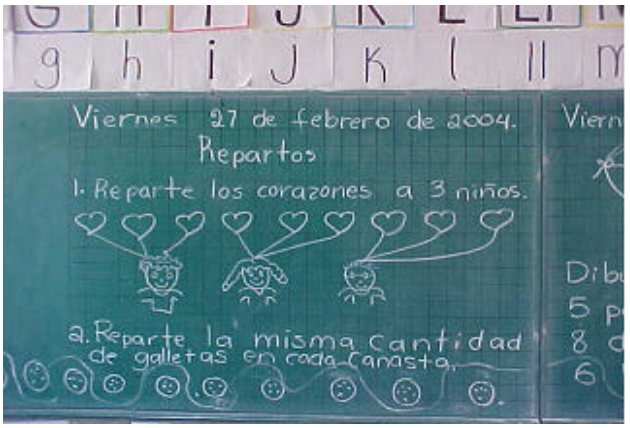
were asked to write at the sentence level. Most texts were either copied (i.e. from the blackboard, cards, or books) or dictated by the teacher. Exercises involving copying were documented in both classrooms, while dictation was much more frequent in the fourth grade. As with reading, only a few written assignments could be classified as communicative (meaning-based), namely in Octavio's class. These practices, along with a discussion of writing in the home setting, are now explained.

4.3.1. Date and Names

As the children got out their notebooks in preparation for a writing task, the first instructions from both teachers were almost always something along the lines of "*vamos a escribir nuestros nombres y la fecha*" [let's write our names and the date]. In Gertrudis' class, the date was almost always displayed on the top of the blackboard, as seen in the picture below. Accordingly, the students could either write it on their own or copy it. In fourth grade, the blackboard was rarely used for instruction, not even for the date. Instead, the children were simply instructed to write the date without a model. All the students were aware that writing the date was required of them, clearly an example of a schooled literacy practice. They often did so automatically, and, on some occasions, even reminded their teachers that it should be included at the top of their papers.

Another common activity, especially in the first grade, consisted of the children writing their own names. Realizing that some of her students were still not proficient at writing their names, Gertrudis usually gave out cards containing this information to each child. Those who wished thus had the option of copying directly from the card, while the others were encouraged to write from memory. During several visits the writing task for the day centered on the multiple repetition of each person's name, until an entire page of

Figure 4.3 Date Written on the Top of the First-grade Chalkboard



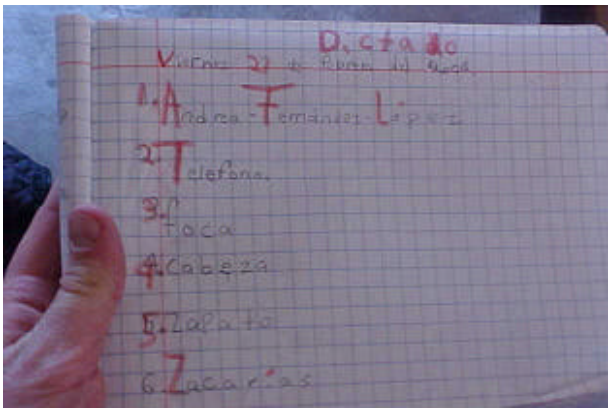
the notebook had been filled. For example, Gertrudis instructed her students to write their names a total six times (10/30/2003) and five times (02/11/2004) on these particular dates.

As is discussed in detail in section 4.4, students were typically expected to write capital letters and numbers with a red colored pencil. As illustrated in Figure 4.4. below, most children complied with this practice in the writing of their names and the date, as well as for other words and sentences, often not having been given explicit indication to do so. Some of the children included accent marks in their names (usually in red), although it is difficult to know whether they copied or had actually learned them.

4.3.2. Syllables and Words

As might be predicted for a first-grade classroom, most of the writing at this level consisted of individual syllables or words. In fact, each week Gertrudis would select a specific letter, such as *q*, *j*, or *m*, and focus the children's attention first on syllables and then on whole words containing these letters. To give an example, during the week of November 24th-28th, the target letter was *q*. After having her students to identify the *q*

Figure 4.4 Use of Red Colored Pencil for a Written Assignment

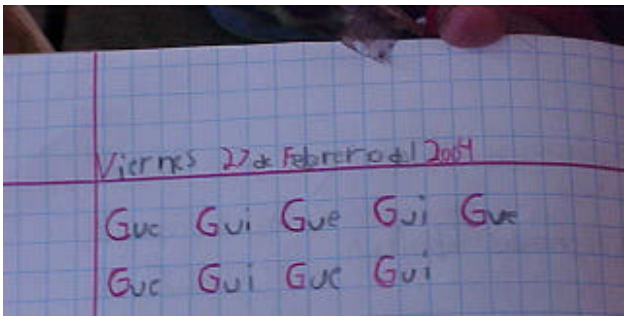


in the alphabet above the board and to make its sound, she wrote the syllables *que* and *qui* on the board. She then wrote the following words (among others), each of which was missing one of these two syllables:

___ ___ ___ *s o*	[queso = cheese]
___ ___ ___ *s a d i l l a*	[quesadilla]
b a n ___ ___ ___ *t o*	[banquito = small bench]
r o n ___ ___ ___ *d o*	[ronquido = snore]

She proceeded to call out the names of certain students to go to the board and to fill in the words with the missing syllable. On another occasion, the class was working with the letter *g*. They briefly discussed how it sounds and were asked to copy the syllables *Gue* and *Gui* in their notebooks, as seen in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Syllables *Gui* and *Gue* Written Repeatedly in a Student's Notebook



As far as the word level, the first-graders were frequently required either to form words with small, cut-out pieces of paper containing letters and/or to copy them directly off the board into their notebooks. For instance, during one session the teacher wrote up the terms *mago* [wizard], *gato* [cat], *gusano* [worm], and *gota* [drop], and in groups the children ordered each of them with cut-out letters and then proceeded to copy them repeatedly in their notebooks (12/10/2003). For another class the homework was to write two words using the syllable *je*, two with *jo*, and two with *ju*. Gertrudis called various students to the board to write what they had done for homework. One student, Juan, wrote *jefe* [boss], *jesús* [Jesus], *joya* [jewel], *hijo* [son], *juez* [judge], and *junio* [June] (2/18/2004).

4.3.3. Phrases and Sentences

Writing at the phrase and sentence levels turned out to be much less common, excluding the sentences and short texts which were copied or dictated (see below). In first grade, the researcher documented only one example of sentences created by the children. Specifically, they had been asked to write two sentences with words containing the syllable *vo*. A girl named Stephanie had written the following:

El volca es hermoso.	[The volcano is beautiful.]
El volante del coche es negro.	[The car's steering wheel is black.]

Although Gertrudis had given Stephanie a checkmark for her work, she had not corrected the child's misspelling of the word *volcán*, which also includes an accent (01/14/2004). Thus, the purpose of the assignment appeared to be communication rather than a strict focus on form.

In the fourth grade, again most sentences were either copied or dictated, but at least three instances of student-generated sentences/short texts were observed. For one

class the homework was to write five sentences in which the task was to underline the predicate (10/13/2003). A week later, the children were instructed to write a poem comprised of ten sentences. Octavio made it explicit that every two sentences should rhyme with each other (10/24/2003). Another homework assignment in his class was for the students to write five "interesting" riddles (11/24/2003).

Clearly, all of these exercises involved a minimal amount of creativity on the part of the learner, as compared to the copying and dictation activities explained below. However, it is important to mention that due to difficulties gaining access to the fourth-grade classroom toward the latter part of the data collection process, there may have been more examples of sentence production that were not documented.

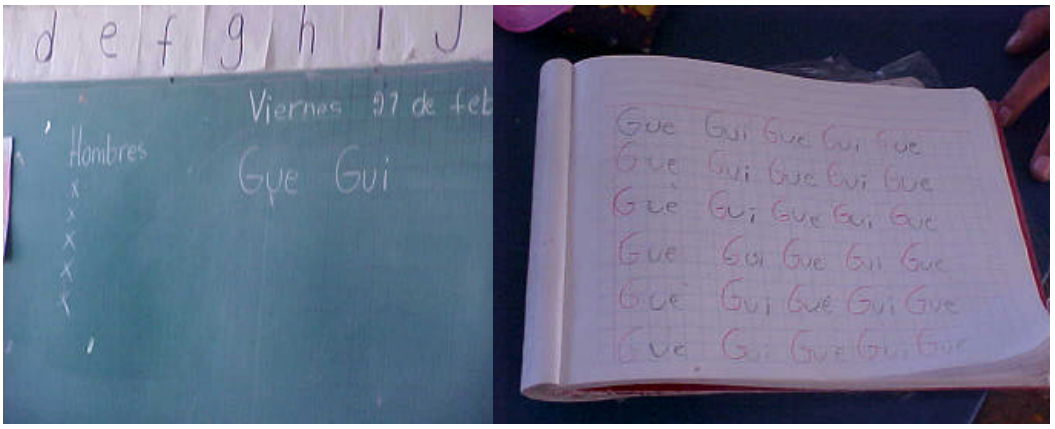
4.3.4. Copying

One of the most established writing tasks in both classrooms consisted of copying, either from the blackboard, books, or cards. As mentioned in section 4.3.1, the first grade students would often copy the date from the blackboard. They would likewise be told to copy their names from cards on which Gertrudis had already written them. In the case of the children with lower writing abilities, such as César, the teacher would also model the date and their names in their notebooks for them to copy.

Other copying activities in the first grade involved letters, syllables, words, and sentences. For instance, during one class on cursive writing the teacher wrote the letter *a* on the blackboard, both upper and lowercase, fives times each. After describing how the cursive letters were distinct from those printed (i.e. more connected), she instructed the children to copy the examples on the board directly into their notebooks. This exercise was completed for all five vowels (02/19/2004).

Regarding syllables, the teacher would similarly write the syllables-of-the-week on the board for the students to copy. The researcher noted that many of the children would fill up a whole page in their notebooks with between two and five syllables. During one visit, for example, the class had been studying the syllables *que* and *qui*. Gertrudis wrote these on the board for review and, automatically, the students began copying them repeatedly (11/26/2003). More recently, the target syllables were *gue* and *gui*. The teacher wrote them on the board in both capital and lowercase forms for the children to copy. The photographs in Figure 4.6 illustrate both teacher and student writing on this particular day (02/27/2004):

Figure 4.6 Teacher Modeling of Syllables *Gue* and *Gui* on the Chalkboard and an Example of Student Copying



Word copying was also a frequent activity in the first grade. As with the letters and syllables, the teacher would write up a list of words to be copied by the students. For instance, during one class she put up the following words: *esquina* [corner], *paquete* [package], *quince* [fifteen], *quiero* [I want], *raqueta* [racket], *queso* [cheese], *toque* [touch], *aquí* [here], *quema* [it burns]. Clearly, all of these terms contain either the syllable *que* or *qui*. The students read the words off the board and then copied them in their notebooks (02/11/2004).

On February 16, 2004, the first-graders were instructed to copy four sentences from the blackboard. These included:

Javier es mi amigo.	[Javier is my friend.]
Mi torta es de jamón.	[My sandwich has ham.]
La jaula tiene pajaritos.	[The cage contains little birds.]
El jabón huele bien.	[The soap smells good.]

Thus, the copying activities at this level consisted of a combination of letters, syllables, words, and sentences. In the fourth grade, the teacher was often overheard asking his students to copy larger texts for homework. For example, he once announced that the homework assignment was to *"copiar un trabalenguas e ilustrarlo abajo e investigar qué es un trabalenguas"* [copy a tongue-twister and illustrate it below and find out what a tongue-twister is] (11/17/2003). He told the children to consult books or even their parents to locate these expressions. On another occasion, his instructions were for the students to *"copiar el párrafo del libro de lecturas de la página 28*" [copy the paragraph from page 28 of the reading book]. After copying, the task was to explain the use of punctuation, specifically commas and periods, in the paragraph (01/26/2004).

All this copying seemed contradictory to what Octavio claimed in his first interview: *"(la gente escribe) pues para que…para transmitir...lo, lo que desea, ¿no? O el mensaje que quiere, este, dar…y por el otro lado pues, siempre para comunicarse, de manera escrita claro"* [(People write) well to…to transmit…what, what they desire, right? Or the message that they wish, umm, to express…and, on the other hand, well, always to communicate in written form, of course] (01/09/2004). Likewise, most of the parents interviewed in this study replied that the purpose of writing was for expression and communication, as opposed to formal aspects, such as handwriting, accentuation,

punctuation, and spelling, all of which, according to Octavio, the copying exercises were designed to improve (second interview, 2/27/2004).

4.3.5. Dictation

Aside from copying, a great deal of writing consisted of teacher dictation, most notably in the fourth grade. Octavio would read out a text, either from memory or from a book, and the students would write it in their notebooks. Many times these dictations lasted for most of the 45 minutes of the Spanish literacy class.

For instance, during one class Octavio instructed the students to find a clean page in their notebooks and to write the title *Ejercicios* [Exercises], along with the date. (Titles and subtitles were typically written in red to distinguish them from the rest of the text.) The dictation continued: *"contestar el siguiente cuestionario correctamente"* [answer the following questionnaire correctly.] *"Dejar 2 renglones"* [Skip two lines.] *"Escribir uno punto guión"* [Write 'number 1' and a hyphen.] *"Abrimos una interrogación"* [(Inverted) question mark.] *"¿A qué tipo de texto pertenece la poesía?"* [What type of text is poetry?] *"Se cierra el signo de interrogación"* [End question mark.] The actual dictated questions were:

1. *¿A qué tipo de texto pertenece la poesía?* [What type of text is poetry?]
2. *¿Qué expresa una poesía?* [What does poetry express?]
3. *¿Cuál es la característica de la poesía?* [What is the characteristic of poetry?]
4. *¿Qué es una rima?* [What is a rhyme?]
5. *¿Qué es un verso?* [What is a verse?] (10/20/2003)

As can be observed in this example, Octavio's dictations were very explicit in that not only did he read out the words themselves, but also the punctuation and indications of

how many lines to skip. Likewise, the next example illustrates how he often included instructions on spelling and accentuation:

> *"Anoten: Ejercicio, con "j" y doble "c". Ordena alfabéticamente las siguientes palabras y anota adelante de cada una de ellas su significado" "Avestruz, con "v", Pecera, con "c", Amanecer, con "c" y Ventana, con "v"* [Write: 'Ejercicio' [Exercise], with "j" and double "c". Order alphabetically the following words and write down beside each one its meaning. 'Avestruz' [ostrich], written with "v", 'Pecera' [fish tank], with "c", 'Amanecer' [dawn], with "c", and 'Ventana' [window], with "v"] (10/27/2003).

Dictations of this sort were documented in practically all of the fourth-grade Spanish lessons. In first grade, on the other hand, there were only two dictations. During one class, Gertrudis dictated five sentences for the children to copy in their notebooks. These sentences included:

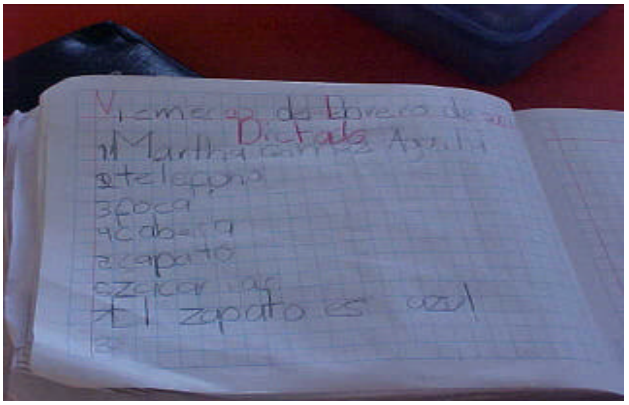
1. *Ese oso es mío.*	[That bear is mine.]
2. *La sopa es de mi tía.*	[The soup is my aunt's.]
3. *Susana usa poca ropa.*	[Susan doesn't wear much clothing.]
4. *La oveja juega junto a los conejos.*	[The sheep plays with the bunnies.]
5. *La oveja es de José.*	[The sheep is Jose's.] (02/20/2004)

In contrast to Octavio, Gertrudis did not provide any indication of accents, punctuation, or spelling. She simply read out the sentences and allowed the students to write them as best they could. In fact, it was noted that many of the children had trouble with the spelling, as they confused some of the letters. Nevertheless, the message of their writing was completely understandable to the researcher.

On another occasion, the first-grade teacher prepared the children for a dictation by writing the word *"dictado"* [dictation] on the board, along with the numbers from one to six. After the students had copied this information from the board, the teacher began the activity. She told them to write their whole names for number one and then the following terms and one sentence for the rest of the exercise: 2. *Teléfono* [telephone], 3.

Foca [seal], 4. *Cabeza* [head], 5. *Zapato* [shoe], 6. *Zacarías* [Zachary], and 7. *El zapato es azul* [The shoe is blue.] (02/27/2004). Below is a sample page from one student's notebook, which shows this dictation:

Figure 4.7 Example of Student Writing after Dictation



Clearly, this child did not include accents in the terms *Gómez* (her last name), *teléfono*, and *zacarías*, and she wrote the words *cabeza* and *zapato* with the letter *s* instead of *z*. These mistakes were neither pointed out nor corrected by the teacher.

4.3.6. Communicative Writing

Many of the interviewees stated that the main purpose of writing was for meaningful communication and expression. A few of them claimed that writing should be a passion. For example, Melisa said that people write *"para que sepan…Yo creo que quien escribe tiene algo que decir…tiene mucho que decir, de muchas cosas"* [so that they know…I think that those who write have something to say…They have a lot to say, about a lot of things] (01/08/2004). Susana replied that a "good" writer is *"una persona que disfruta…lo que está haciendo…Para hacer algo…te tiene que gustar…Escribir…es su pasión"* [a person who enjoys what he or she does…To do something…you have to like it…Writing…is your passion] (01/06/2004). Nonetheless, throughout the duration of

the study only two examples of authentic, communicative texts were documented, both in the fourth grade.

On one occasion, as a homework assignment Octavio asked his students to write an advertisement in which they were to announce a local event. The children had the option of working individually or with a partner. During the class each student or pair of students stood up and read out their advertisements, which dealt with topics as diverse as parties, school meetings, and sports events. Although Octavio was quite notorious for correcting students' written work, he did not make any such comments on this particular day. To the contrary, he praised all the learners for having put so much effort into their posters (12/01/2003).

For another session, the fourth-graders had read newspaper articles and were instructed to write two short articles of their own. The directions were that one was to be an example of a national news story, and the other one international. The students were encouraged to look for authentic examples in newspapers on which their own articles could be modeled, as well as to ask their parents for help in completing the assignment (01/19/2004).

4.3.7. Writing in the Home

Most of the parents interviewed in this study told the researcher that their children did not enjoying writing at home. Although five out of the six case-study children initially responded that they liked to write, they later admitted that they preferred drawing to writing. However, it was discovered that many of these drawings were often accompanied by texts, albeit short ones. For instance, three of the mothers expressed that their children would regularly draw pictures for their parents or siblings, often including

phrases such as *"para mamá"* [for mom], *"para papá"* [for dad], *"para hermano/a"* [for brother or sister] (Lucia, 12/22/2003), as well as with longer texts like *"papá, te quiero mucho y gracias por ser el mejor papá"* [dad, I love you a lot and thanks for being the best dad] (Susana, 01/06/2004).

In addition to these drawings/cards, the children reported that they sometimes wrote short stories, such as Cristina, who liked to write about hummingbirds, and Alicia, who said she often wrote about the circus. César, one of the first-graders, claimed that he enjoyed practicing the numbers and the letters of the alphabet. This was confirmed by his mother, Tania. Favorite places to write included the kitchen table (a hard surface) and each child's room (private and comfortable).

However, these same parents and even some of the children confessed that most of the writing done in the home was related to school or homework. For example, Mario said *"Escribo un poco…mi tarea"* [I write a little…my homework] (12/19/2003). Susana, when asked about Alicia, responded *"pues la verdad …si no es tarea pues no. Se dedica a jugar, o sea, no, no mucho"* [well, honestly, if it's not homework, no. She passes her time playing, in other words, no, not very much] (01/06/2004). The only mother who reported that her daughter wrote a lot was Lucia, who said, *"pues sí escribe mucho ahorita como está en la etapa de que apenas está empezando a leer y a …escribir"* [well, yes, she writes a lot now that she's just beginning to read and….to write.] (12/22/2003).

As far as other people in the home who write, most participants told the researcher that writing was usually associated directly with employment or with household management. To give some examples, Tania, a sales agent, stated that she wrote lots of sales quotes for her clients, as well as a list of groceries and other things she

needed to buy for the home (01/17/2004). Even though Ariana admitted that she no longer wrote (she said that used to write poems), her husband, a veterinarian, had to fill out reports on the animals he treated (12/20/2003). Carla, the school monitor and nurse, said that she wrote about the students' conduct as well as medical reports (12/19/2004). All of these texts appear to be immediately relevant and useful to the participants' lives, in contrast to much of what is written by the children at school.

4.4. Limitations at School

This category includes a description of the ways in which both texts and behavior were regulated, or controlled, within the school context. As found in other studies conducted in this area of Mexico (Ballesteros, 2003; Jiménez et al., 2003), writing in particular was subject to constant correction in the classrooms, especially in the fourth grade. Reading was much less restricted, although a few points are worthy of mention. Control was likewise reported to a certain extent for the home setting, specifically with regard to writing. Lastly, scolding for misbehavior turned out to be a very notable pattern throughout the data collection process, given that practically every transcription included references to verbal or physical discipline.

4.4.1. Reading

As mentioned in section 4.2.2, many of the reading exercises consisted of reading out loud. Students would either stand up beside their desks to read in the fourth grade, or, in the case of first grade, read off the board from their seats. Both of the teachers, Gertrudis and Octavio, would often interrupt the student who was reading and ask him or her to read more loudly. For example, once in Octavio's class a girl was reading the text she had written on her poster (the advertisement described above). The teacher stopped

her and said, *"más fuerte, hija"* [louder, dear] (12/01/2003). In fact, it was noted on this particular day that many of the children appeared to read softly because they were afraid of making a mistake. In other words, it seemed to be that if the teacher could not hear them well, he would be less likely to notice their errors. On another occasion, one of Octavio's (male) students read very softly, even to the point of incomprehensibility. Although the teacher did not interrupt him, once he finished he remarked, *"hijo, hay que leer mejor"* [son, you've got to read better] (01/19/2004).

Moreover, during a few class sessions, the teachers corrected students' pronunciation and stress. In mid-October, a student in the fourth grade read out one of his sentences and happened to say *"lión"* instead of *"león"* [lion]. Octavio quickly corrected the mistake, provoking laughter from many of the child's classmates (10/13/2003). On one visit to Gertrudis' class, a student was called on to read out the clause *La paloma azul que del cielo bajó* [The blue dove that came down from the sky.]. This girl said *"bajo"* as opposed to *"bajó"* (stress on the final syllable), and the teacher corrected her pronunciation (01/28/2004).

Apart from volume and sometimes pronunciation, the teachers did not usually regulate the children's reading. Only during one other instance was a student asked to repeat a sentence. According to the teacher, he needed to read more fluently (Octavio, 10/13/2003).

4.4.2. Writing

In contrast to reading assignments, written texts were constantly controlled and corrected, especially in the fourth grade. First, during dictations Octavio would typically

comment on spelling, punctuation, and accentuation. The following example illustrates this technique:

> He gives the example *avión* [airplane], asking them, "*cómo se escribe 'avión'*? [How is 'avión' spelled?] *"A-V-I-O-N, con /v/ y con acento en la /o/"* [A-V-I-O-N, written with /v/ and an accent over the /o/] (10/27/2003).

In practically all the dictation exercises of this sort, the teacher would remind his students of the correct spelling and accentuation. In fact, the children were so accustomed to hearing this information that they would often ask Octavio how a word was written or where to place the accent, if necessary. For instance, during one dictation a male student yelled out whether there was an *h* in *aprender* [to learn]? (11/17/2003).

Although Gertrudis seldom made comments concerning accents (perhaps because of her students' age), both she and Octavio typically evaluated the children's handwriting. Toward the beginning of the school year Octavio would have his students to line up around his desk so that he could grade the writing in their notebooks. On one occasion the researcher heard him tell a child that his handwriting was messy and that he would talk to him about it later (10/20/2003). That same day, he told another child that if he did not copy a certain part of his work over with better handwriting that he would be required to copy over his whole notebook. Gertrudis, not so harsh in her correction of handwriting, frequently told her students that they were going to compete to see who wrote the "prettiest". At other times she commented to individual students that they should make an attempt to improve their handwriting. Overall, it seemed as though she was much more tolerant than Octavio, again probably due to the children's age.

A common observation in both classrooms centered on the use of the color red for titles, subtitles, capital letters, and numbers. Indeed, all of the students were expected to

arrive to school with a box of colored pencils. The teachers would repeatedly remind them to use color to distinguish certain words and letters (uppercase) from others. Recently, the researcher questioned two first-graders on this practice. They replied, "*usamos rojo para algunas letras porque son más grandes*" [we use red colored pencils for some of the letters because they are bigger] (02/26/2004). This habit was so automatic to the children that on occasion they would not complete a writing assignment just because they had forgotten to bring their colored pencils to school. During one visit, for example, César admitted that he did not have a red colored pencil, and the teacher interrupted class to ask if someone would lend him another color so he would continue writing (01/14/2004). This practice can be observed in several of the texts included as examples in the previous section on writing.

Although such control proved to be the norm for the two grade levels, there were at least two instances in which the researcher documented a lack of correction. First, the fourth-graders once presented advertisements they had written to announce a local event (see above). Many of these posters contained misspellings, such as the word *necesitados* [needy] written as *nececitados*. However, Octavio made no comments on spelling; instead, he praised the students for their effort (12/01/2003). In Gertrudis' class, it was noted on one occasion that a child had written the following sentence in her notebook: *El volca es hermoso* [The volcano is beautiful.]. Readers with a knowledge of Spanish will notice that the correct term is *volcán*, spelled with an *n* and with an accent over the *a*. As in the previous example, the teacher saw this sentence and chose not to point out the error (01/14/2004).

During the interviews both teachers and students were asked about the importance of the correction of student work. All of them agreed that it was necessary to control spelling, accents, and punctuation, although not so much handwriting. The quote below illustrates the fourth-grade teacher's opinion:

> *"Pues básicamente lo que yo hago, es, es si yo dicto, yo voy, a la hora que voy dictando, voy haciendo hincapié en cómo se escriben, eh…determinadas palabras, para que no cometan un, un error de ortografía. Posteriormente, cuando…reviso las tareas, voy checando y corrigiendo…la ortografía. Les digo el porqué. Y también si reviso el trabajo del salón hago lo mismo"* [Well, basically what I do is, is if I dictate, I, while dictating, I emphasize how, umm, certain words are written so that they don't make a, a spelling error. Later, when…I check their homework, I check and correct...spelling. I tell them why. And also, if I check their work in the classroom, I do the same thing] (01/09/2004).

The parents expressed that not including an accent or misspelling a word could change its meaning and that these types of mistakes should be corrected early on. To give an example, Tania said, *"para mí sí (es importante), porque, por ejemplo, si, si tú no pones un …punto en un…en un párrafo entonces…pues no, no entenderías muy bien la lectura. (Y los acentos)…para, para diferenciar las…las palabras…unas de otras, no?"* [to me (it's important), because, for example, if, if you don't include a…period in a…in a paragraph then…well no, you wouldn't understand the reading very well. (And accents)…to, to differentiate the…the words….some from the others, no?] (01/17/2004). A couple of the parents even confessed that seeing a misspelled word called their attention and that it bothered them.

During the focus-group interview, the teachers mentioned that one of the reasons they dedicated so much time to correcting students' writing was because they knew that the parents expected them to do so. Octavio quoted, *"no le entienden y creen que por eso el niño no…no aprende o el maestro no enseña"* [they don't understand and they think

that for this reason the child doesn't…doesn't learn or the teacher doesn't teach] (02/27/2004). They added that on past occasions some of the children had come to school commenting on how their parents were upset that the teacher had not corrected a certain mistake that for them was quite obvious.

4.4.3. A Comparison of Home and School

Given that many of the parents were concerned about their children's writing at school, they likewise responded during the interviews that they typically corrected the writing in the home. For example, Melisa commented that her daughter Alicia would write something and then show it to her for approval, specifically with reference to spelling (01/08/2004). Alejandra also mentioned that her mother regularly told her where to include accent marks on words (01/06/2004).

When asked about whether home/community texts were similar to or different from those produced in the school, a few of the parents replied that they were different with regard to both topic and stylistics. Ariana, for example, quoted,

> *"Es totalmente diferente…nada que ver…porque…aquí, este, trae muchas frases vulgares, no? Y…en la escuela no, en la escuela no…o los libros de texto son…son…muy, este, constructivos. No, no tiene nada…vulgar. Nada que se le parezca"* [they're totally different…nothing in common…because…here, umm (in the community) they're full of vulgarities, no? And…at school, no, at school, no…or the textbooks are…are…very, umm, constructive. No, they don't contain anything…vulgar. Nothing at all] (12/20/2003).

Carla expressed the following:

> *"Yo creo que es muy diferente…para empezar…mal escrito, no? Mucha falta de ortografía…Este, son temas…cómo podemos decir, corrientes. Yo siento que no tienen ninguna enseñanza, ningún…ninguna aportación buena"* [I think it's very different…to begin with…badly written, no? Lots of misspelled words…Umm, the topics, what would we say? Simple topics. I feel like they don't teach anything, no…nothing good] (12/19/2003).

Other parents, such as Susana, agreed that school as opposed to community texts were much more varied and educational (01/06/2004).

4.4.4. Scolding for Misbehavior

In both classrooms the researcher observed that a great deal of time was spent reprimanding the students for misbehavior. In fact, on many occasions it seemed as though the teachers wasted much of their class time trying to get the children's attention and controlling the noise level. Of all the subcategories in the study, this one yielded the most data.

As mentioned in chapter two, Gertrudis had placed three or four students at each of the tables to work together on the assignments. However, instead of completing the activities, they often took advantage of this arrangement to talk and play around with their classmates. Thus, the teacher constantly found herself interrupting the exercises to get their attention. During a couple of visits she remarked, "*Recuerden que si hacemos ruido no aprendemos*" [remember that if we make noise we don't learn] (10/15/2003, 10/22/2003). She would also have to tell the students to get in their seats, to be quiet, and to pay attention to either her or their classmates. Figure 4.8 is a picture of César, who, in this particular class, was playing with a toy he had brought from home.

In response to this disruptiveness, Gertrudis utilized five strategies to control the students. First, she frequently counted from one to three, sometimes one to five, and expected them to be quiet and ready to continue the lesson by the time she reached the last number. This technique usually worked. A second strategy included having the children to count with her and move through positions with their arms at the same time.

Figure 4.8 César Playing with a Toy during Class

In the last position the students crossed their arms, which prevented them from playing around at their desks.

The third way to get the student's attention was to sing a song they all knew. Gertrudis would begin singing, and the class would eventually join her. By the end of the song, everyone was paying attention. Fourth, on two occasions the teacher had the students to clap in unison, specifically after she had called out a certain number, such as two, five, and even one-and-a-half. The final technique consisted of threatening to give people *caritas tristes* [sad faces] in their notebooks for talking. For good behavior Gertrudis would award *caritas felices* [smiley faces], and it seemed as though the children were pleased to receive them.

In the fourth grade, the students were reprimanded for similar acts of misconduct. They would often arrive late to class, given that they came from recess and could not hear the bell very well. Like the first-graders, they also talked a lot with their tablemates, often holding conversations unrelated to the class lesson. Many of them likewise had trouble paying attention, and, in some instances, forgot to bring their homework.

Unlike Gertrudis, who hardly ever raised her voice to scold the children, Octavio was immediately identified by the researcher as a strict disciplinarian. He would yell at the students until they became quiet and paid attention, and even humiliated them on occasion. For instance, during one class a boy had forgotten to write the sentences for homework. Knowing that he would be reproached, when called on to read out loud he attempted to improvise. Octavio quickly figured out what he was trying to do, asked him to stand, and said, *"El señor no hizo la tarea. Está inventando. ¿A quién quieres engañar? Eso no es honesto"* [This gentleman didn't do his homework. He's making it up. Who are you trying to fool? That isn't honest] (11/24/2003). On another visit, when a girl had not brought her notebook to class, he made her stand up for a total of fifteen minutes while the rest of the class continued with the lesson (01/19/2004).

Octavio, in contrast to Gertrudis, frequently explained to the students why he was punishing them. For example, when they arrived late he yelled at them and then proceeded to lecture them on how arriving late represented a lack of respect and responsibility on their part. In other words, he informed them why he was upset (10/13/2003). On another occasion, after he had shouted for them to be quiet and to pay attention, he apologized and explained to them that, in his opinion, talking while the teacher was talking showed ill manners (01/12/2004).

4.5. Class Interaction and Teaching Styles

This section consists of a discussion of class interaction, both between the students themselves and between teacher and student. One of the most common findings during the course of the study was the high level of noise permitted in the classroom

(much more than observed in classrooms in the United States), specifically in the first grade. Similarly, the researcher documented numerous instances in which the students enjoyed considerable freedom, as opposed to the restrictions placed on their writing. Teacher praise and encouragement likewise turned out to be an important subcategory, especially given that it was much more prevalent in the first grade than in the fourth grade. The next two aspects to be discussed in this part include student-teacher and student-student interaction. Significantly, it was noted that the children at both grade levels were often encouraged to complete assignments through cooperative learning. This section ends with a summary of student and parent comments concerning the school, particularly those which relate to teaching styles.

4.5.1. Noise

Although the children's writing, and to a lesser extent, reading, were quite regulated as far as what was acceptable in the academic setting, the teachers allowed them a surprising amount of freedom to talk amongst themselves, move about the classroom, and even play around during the lesson. Such liberty was especially noticeable in the first grade, where the students would frequently get up out of their seats, walk around in the classroom, play with toys, and yell as they pleased. For example, one very common practice was for the first-grade children to complete part of their assignment and then to stand up, walk or run to Gertrudis, and show her their work. She never made them raise their hands or ask for permission to get out of their seats. In fact, on many occasions it even seemed that she encouraged and expected them to do so. During one visit early in the school year, when the students were filling in words written on the board with the

syllables *qui* and *que*, it was observed that almost all of them ran up to Gertrudis once they had finished the assignment (10/22/2003).

While most of the first graders got up from their seats every once in a while, there were two children in particular who did so much more than their classmates. Indeed, Gertrudis commented during informal interviews with the researcher that these two boys (one of which was Carlos, a case-study student) were easily distracted and that, for this reason, it was difficult for her to keep them on task. For instance, César would generally run up to the teacher and ask her to help him begin the writing assignments. On most of these occasions she walked with him to his seat, opened his notebook, and modeled the syllable, word, or sentence so that he could copy it below. However, once she had moved on to another table, he would become distracted again and play around instead of writing (see picture of César playing in Figure 4.8).

In addition to standing up and moving about throughout the classroom, the first-grade children would often play with toys. During one lesson a boy named Antonio, who was sitting with two females, made a paper airplane, bragged to them about it, and spent at least five minutes playing with it before the teacher asked him to put it away (11/19/2003). On another occasion, a girl who had brought a Barbie doll to school with her took it out of her book bag and began brushing its hair. When Gertrudis approached her table she returned it to her book bag (01/14/2004). Most recently, the researcher documented that Gabriel, an excellent student according to the teacher, played with a 10-peso coin for the first half of a class session. Only when several other children walked over to his table to watch him did Gertrudis make him return to work (02/16/2004).

Besides the constant yelling and movement in the classroom, it was noted on two visits that Gertrudis permitted her students to challenge her authority. On the first occasion, she had told César that he would have to stay in during recess if he did not finish his assignment. Upon hearing her say this he replied, "*¡ah, maestra!*" [come on, teacher!], and she just walked away (10/22/2003). The second time, Gertrudis was announcing which groups were going to receive *caritas felices*, smiley faces, for their effort and good work. Before she had even finished speaking, a male student yelled out, "*¡a nosotros nos debes ocho caritas, ¿eh?!*" [you owe us eight smiley faces, you know]. The researcher was quite surprised that she let him address her in this manner (02/11/2004).

In response to the noise level and the difficulty getting the children to pay attention, Gertrudis would sometimes make comments such as, *"se sigue oyendo ruido"* [I still hear noise] or "*si hacemos mucho ruido, no vamos a escuchar*" [if we continue making so much noise, we won't hear]. Nevertheless, her reprimands, as mentioned above in section 4.4.4, were limited to five, non-threatening strategies. Octavio, on the other hand, was quite stern with the students, and indeed, his class seemed much more controlled than Gertrudis'. Occasional disruptions, such as talking, forgetting homework, and not paying attention (see above), resulted in his yelling at or humiliation of them.

4.5.2. Praise / Encouragement

While the first-graders received quite a bit of praise and encouragement from their teacher, the fourth-graders were rarely commended for their work. Gertrudis gave positive encouragement in a number of ways, including having the children to compete amongst themselves, making remarks like "good job" and "very pretty", and rewarding

them with smiley faces. Octavio, in contrast, often spoke of responsibility and dedication as values that the students should already be expected to have. In other words, it seemed as though in his opinion it was not necessary for the children to receive external praise.

One of the most popular ways of encouraging the children in first grade to work quickly and to keep on task was for Gertrudis to announce that they would compete against one another. More specifically, she would regularly comment, for example, *"a ver qué equipo termina primero*" [let's see which group is the first to finish], or *"voy a ver quién lo hace más bonito"* [I'm going to see who does it the prettiest]. These statements appeared to work very well, given that most of the children would rush to finish and then run up to the teacher and show her their work. Once the first group had completed the assignment, Gertrudis would often announce the names of these students, and, on at least on two instances, she asked their classmates to applaud them (02/11/2004, 02/12/2004). Moreover, she sometimes recognized second and third places so that after the first team had finished the others would continue working.

Furthermore, Gertrudis continually commended the children in her class by making comments like *"muy bien"* [very good] and *"qué bonito"* [how pretty]. In fact, throughout the duration of the observation sessions it was noted that she gave much more positive than negative feedback, perhaps explaining why her students always wanted her to check their work. In other words, they knew she would praise them. Likewise, she made a special effort to compliment César, who rarely participated and completed the assignments. She expressed during one of the informal interviews that by encouraging him as much as possible she hoped to show him that he was capable of doing his work independently.

The last way in which Gertrudis stimulated the students in her class was by offering *caritas felices*, or smiley faces, to those groups and individuals who worked efficiently. These smiley faces were drawn by the teacher in their notebooks. Usually, she would point out which tables were working and say that only those particular children would receive a smiley face for the day. To give some examples, during one visit she commented, "*sólo el equipo de Arlette va a tener dos caritas felices*" [only Arlette's group is going to get two smiley faces] (11/12/2003). On another occasion, she announced that Marco Antonio's table would be rewarded smiley faces for getting out their Spanish books so quickly (01/14/2004).

As opposed to Gertrudis, who gave continuous positive feedback and encouragement, Octavio seldom did so. He would simply tell his students that the *trato*, or deal, had been for everyone to participate, to be organized, and to work hard (11/17/2003, 01/12/2004). He likewise used the term *compromiso*, commitment, meaning that they were in school to learn and not to waste time talking or playing around. Finally, as mentioned above in section 4.4.4, he would frequently speak to the fourth-graders about respect and responsibility. Toward the end of one class, he remarked,

> "*Antes de cambiar de grupo, es importante reflexionar lo siguiente: todos lo hicieron bien, pero algunos se esforzaron más que otros*" [Before changing classes, it's important to reflect a little. Everyone did the activity well, but some of you worked harder than others] (01/12/2004).

He went on to say that the objective of the exercise was for them to get organized quickly and to prepare a skit based on a play they had read. Moreover, he mentioned that they should have been more respectful during the presentations (they had whispered amongst themselves while the other groups were speaking). Clearly, he expected his students to do their best without the constant praise observed in the other class.

4.5.3. Student-teacher Interaction

In this study, there were three principal ways in which the two teachers interacted with their students, both collectively and individually. First, both Octavio and Gertrudis would give assignments and then circulate throughout the classroom to the tables to check the students' progress and to keep them on task. Gertrudis did so much more than Octavio, although this discrepancy might be due to the fact that more observations were conducted in the first grade. Second, it seemed as though the weaker learners were given special attention, especially by Gertrudis. More attention meant that the teacher spent more time with them and that she ensured that they had opportunities to practice. Last, Gertrudis in particular would often model texts in the children's notebooks for them to copy. Her practices suggested that she understood that her students possessed a variety of literacy levels.

As described in chapter two, both classrooms included approximately nine tables around which the children sat with two or three classmates. Thus, the teachers encouraged a great deal of cooperative learning (see section 4.5.4) and likewise frequently gave feedback to entire tables as opposed to individual students. Octavio and Gertrudis would provide an explanation of a particular point, usually regarding writing, and then walk around the classroom to each table while the children worked in their groups. Whereas Gertrudis would kneel down to interact actively with the first-graders, Octavio would simply be available in case his fourth-graders had any questions. For example, during the activity in which the students were instructed to plan a skit to be acted out to the rest of the class, Octavio wandered around the room as they worked. Not once did he intervene to ask how they were doing. Nevertheless, he did scold them for

not organizing better once they actually presented (01/12/2004). Gertrudis made an effort to keep all the children on task, even though this typically meant moving as quickly as possible from table to table given the large number of students (28). In other words, she did not allow so much freedom and was always aware of their progress.

In addition to circulating throughout the classroom, Gertrudis also attempted to give special attention to those children who she considered needed it the most. One of these individuals was César, who, as mentioned above, generally became distracted and therefore had a hard time completing the assignments. On one occasion, for instance, the teacher called him to the board to fill in a word with either the syllable *que* or *qui*. Noticing that he was not going to succeed on his own, she approached the board, re-explained the task to him, took his hand in hers and helped him to write the syllable (11/26/2003). She commented during an informal interview that César had problems learning and that she did everything in her power to encourage him to try.

Gertrudis likewise realized that her students had begun the school year with a range of abilities and experiences as far as reading and writing. During the first formal interview she quoted, "*al entrar está el cincuenta por ciento que sí sabe, leer y escribir, y el cincuenta por ciento que no…en su preescolar aprendieron*" [when they first came to school 50% of them knew how to read and write, and 50% didn't. (Those that did) learned in preschool] (01/12/2004). As a result, she was observed permitting some of her students to write (copy) the syllables, words, or sentences only a couple of times while the others were expected to fill up an entire page. That is, each learner worked at his or her own pace with a minimal amount of pressure from the teacher (02/16/2004). Octavio, on the other hand, reproached the children in his class if they were caught lagging behind.

4.5.4. Cooperative Learning

Practically all the in-class assignments at both levels were completed in groups. The classrooms consisted of tables instead of individual desks, and the children were encouraged to cooperate among themselves in order to do their work, often much more explicitly in the first grade. An exception was found in Gertrudis' class, considering that she would often put one of the more disruptive students, such as César, at the back of the room by him/herself. She claimed that she had made this decision because it appeared that these children worked more efficiently when not sitting with others. Otherwise, the students sat close together.

A few examples documented during the observation visits illustrate the value placed on cooperative learning. On one occasion, Gertrudis announced to the class, *"los responsables de cada equipo, quiero que chequen si todos ya terminaron"* [I want the responsible people in each group to check to see if everyone has finished] (10/15/2003). The very next week, she asked the children who had already completed the assignment, which was to fill in several sentences with the correct word, to help their tablemates (10/22/2003). More recently, she gave them the following instructions: *"vayan comparando su trabajo con el de sus compañeros para ver si encontraron las mismas palabras"* [compare your work with that of your classmates to see if you came up with the same answers] (02/11/2004).

Not only did Gertudis promote collaboration, she also offered various opportunities for the children to provide feedback and opinions to their peers. For instance, she would sometimes have students to go to the board and either write or fill in part of a word or sentence. Once they had finished, she would elicit comments (i.e.

agreement/disagreement) from the rest of the class. During one visit she instructed the children at one of the tables to read out the lyrics to a song (printed on a handout). After they had read, she asked the others, *"¿qué les pareció el trabajo de ese equipo?"* [What do you think about this group's work?] (01/28/2004). Clearly, she was encouraging a form of peer evaluation. This type of scaffolding and cooperative learning was quite common in her class. Octavio, in contrast, never asked his students to work together; however, given the seating arrangement, they often chatted amongst themselves while completing the assignments.

4.5.5. Parents' and Students' Comments about the School

When asked why they chose the Centro Telpochcalli for their children, many of the parents gave responses such as the high level of academics, the teaching quality, the relatively small class sizes, and the individual attention received by each of the students. Lucia, for example, quoted "*simple y sencillamente, la atención que les ponen los maestros a los niños*" [simply the attention given by the teachers to the children] (12/22/2003). Tania commented on the teachers, the academics, and the subjects: *"pues el…que el nivel académico era muy, este…muy bueno, que…bueno que tenían, este…maestros de, de buena calidad…y, este…y aparte las materias que llevan pues…las materias que llevan ahí…pues también me llamó la atención"* [well the, the level of academics was very, umm, very good, that, well, (the school) had quality teachers, and, umm, also the subjects the children take, well, the subjects they take there, also caught my attention] (01/17/2004). It is important to mention that these responses regarding the school are very similar to those obtained by the linguistic census described in chapter two, and thus seem to be reliable.

The children were likewise questioned on whether or not they liked the school and why. All of them responded affirmatively, and common answers were *"porque aprendo mucho"* [I learn a lot], *"buenos maestros"* [good teachers], *"nos enseñan bien"* [we're taught well], and *"explican bien las clases"* [the teachers explain well in class]. For instance, Cristina had the following to say about her teacher, Octavio: *"bromea con nosotros…este, nos enseña muy bien…este, me gusta cómo es su actitud…y todo lo demás"* [he jokes around with us…umm, he teaches very well…umm, I like his attitude…and everything else] (12/20/2003).

Two of the fourth-grade parents mentioned some of the differences between the Centro Telpochcalli and the previous schools in which their children were enrolled. Ariana, Cristina's mother, expressed that in the other school the classes were large, the teachers often arrived late or not at all, and that the level of instruction was bad. She also pointed out that the students were quite repressed (not free to voice their opinions) and that the teachers could be quite abusive (12/20/2003). Susana told the researcher that for the first time her daughter Alejandra actually enjoyed going to school: *"me gusta todo el sistema que tienen, tanto como…que juegan, como que siembran, como que…su tiempo, hasta el cambiarse de salón…le, le ha parecido muy, muy…ahora sí que fantástico a ella"* [I like the whole system they have, as much, that they play, as that they provide knowledge, it's like…their time, even changing classes...has seemed very…really fantastic to her] (01/04/2004). None of the parents had negative comments about the school, even when asked this question explicitly.

4.6. Environmental Texts

In addition to student writing at home and in the classroom, this study documented the variety of texts surrounding the children on a daily basis. Among these were the texts displayed in the two classrooms, the texts found on the school grounds, and the texts visible within one kilometer of the school. As far as the two classrooms, both similarities and discrepancies were observed regarding the use of wall space. Specifically, while the first-grade teacher often posted a great deal of writing, neither she nor Octavio displayed student work with any frequency. Most of the texts on the school grounds were concentrated in three locations: in the library, around the cafeteria, and on the bulletin board close to the entrance. Those outside the school were limited to advertisements for local businesses. This section discusses each of these contexts separately, including participant comments where appropriate.

4.6.1. Texts in the Two Classrooms

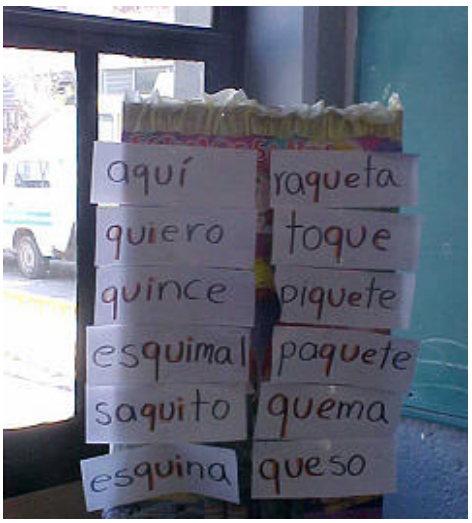
The first-grade classroom was generally filled with different kinds of texts. During initial visits the researcher noticed that each of the student's names had been written by the teacher on sheets of papers and hung below the chalkboard. On occasion these texts were used for literacy instruction, namely when Gertrudis would call on several of the children to come to the board and look for a particular letter or syllable in someone's name. For instance, when they were studying the syllables *qui* and *que*, one of the activities was for the children to identify the names of all the students, like Enrique, that contained at least one of them (11/26/2003). Aside from the names, Gertrudis had also posted cards with all the numbers from 1-40 around the room. It was assumed that

these numbers served some purpose during mathematics lessons, which were not observed as part of this study.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, above the chalkboard in the first-grade classroom the teacher had taped all the letters of the alphabet, both upper and lowercase. She mentioned to the researcher during the first few visits that having the alphabet visible like his seemed to her to be a good way for the children to learn and practice it. Indeed, she would often take a stick and point to individual letters for the students to read and pronounce (see section 4.2.1).

Moreover, Gertrudis had hung around the room cut-out pieces of paper containing the names of colors and shapes, such as *rectángulo* [rectangle], *círculo* [circle], *rojo* [red], and *marrón* [brown]. She was also accustomed to displaying on a poster board to the left of the blackboard the terms already studied during previous classes. For example, in Figure 4.9 she had posted the words seen as part of the lesson on the syllables *qui* and *que* (02/12/2004).

Figure 4.9 Example of Environmental Text in the First-Grade Classroom



Toward the beginning of the school year, this poster board contained the names of six animals, particularly *garza* [heron], *rana* [frog], *zorra* [fox], *leopardo* [leopard], *osito* [little bear], and *gorila* [gorilla].

Although both teachers were noted not to display very much student-produced work in the classroom, in the first grade there was one exception. Gertrudis had hung up the following text outlining the class rules, written by her.

Figure 4.10 Class Rules Written by Teacher

¿Qué?	[What?]
Respetar a mis compañeros y compañeras.	[Respect classmates]
¿Cómo?	[How?]
-No pegando	[-No hitting]
-No insultando	[-No insulting]
-No poner apodos	[-No nicknames]
-Respetar el cuerpo de los demas	[-Respect others' bodies]
-No ser tramposos	[-No cheating]
-No abentar objetos	[-No throwing objects]

The teacher failed to include the accent on the word *demás* and misspelled the word *aventar*. However, what is essential in this section are the examples of student texts which were posted directly to the right of Gertudis' rules. Among these were the following:

Figure 4.11 Class Rules Written by Students

No pegar	[No hitting]
No desir apodos	[No nicknames]
Mejor mis trabajos	[Improve my work]
Escibir bien	[Write well]
Aser mi tarea	[Do my homework]

As may be obvious to the reader, many of these words contain mistakes, such as *desir* instead of *decir* [to say/tell], *escibir* for *escribir* [to write], and *aser* as opposed to *hacer* [to do/make]. Nevertheless, these errors had not been corrected by the teacher. Also, it is

not certain whether these rules had been copied from the teacher's poster or rather if they had been completely produced by the children. Importantly, this was the only example of student work which had been exhibited in the first-grade classroom.

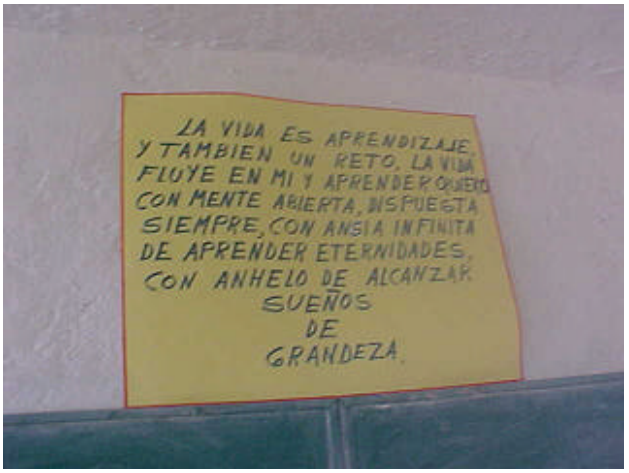
In contrast to the first grade, there were very few environmental texts in the fourth-grade classroom. This type of writing was limited to a poster of the class rules, a proverb about learning, and a listing of the students' grades, the first two of which are shown in Figures 4.12 and 4.13. Both of these texts had been hung above the chalkboard at the front of the room and were written by the teacher using all capital letters. Octavio admitted during the focus-group interview that he often used uppercase letters to avoid having to include the accent marks (02/27/2004), either because he was not always certain where to place them or because he did not want to have to think about them. Indeed, none of the words was accented.

Figure 4.12 Poster of Class Rules in the Fourth Grade

REGLAMENTO DEL SALON	[Class Rules]
1. *EVITAR COMER EN CLASE*	[No eating in class]
2. *MANTENER LIMPIO EL SALON*	[Keep the room clean]
3. *EVITAR JUGAR EN CLASE*	[No playing in class]
4. *RESPETARNOS*	[Respect each other]

5.	*GUARDAR SILENCIO MIENTRAS OTRO HABLA*	[Remain quiet while others are speaking]
6.	*EVITAR LOS APODOS*	[No nicknames]
7.	*CUIDAR EL MOBILARIO*	[Care for furniture]
8.	*PEDIR LA PALABRA PARA PARTICIPAR*	[Ask for permission to speak]

Figure 4.13 Proverb about Learning in the Fourth Grade



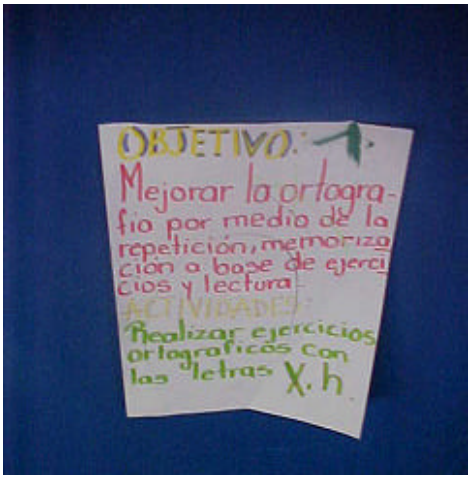
LA VIDA ES APRENDIZAJE,	[Life is learning,
Y TAMBIEN UN RETO, LA VIDA	and also a challenge. Life
FLUYE EN MI Y APRENDER QUIERO	flows through me and I want to learn
CON MENTE ABIERTA, DISPUESTA	with an open mind, always willing
SIEMPRE, CON ANSIA INFINITA	with endless yearning
DE APRENDER ETERNIDADES,	to keep learning
CON ANHELO DE ALCANZAR	with a desire to achieve
SUEÑOS DE GRANDEZA.	great dreams.]

The third environmental text, a *concentrado de calificaciones,* or listing of the students' grades, was displayed at the back of the classroom. According to the teacher, this poster was changed every month, given that the children's grades were calculated on a monthly basis. As pointed out before, students' work was not posted on the wall.

4.6.2. Texts on the School Grounds

Regarding texts found outside the two classrooms but on the school grounds, it was discovered that most of them were concentrated in three areas: the library, outside the cafeteria, and on the bulletin board close to the gate. One very interesting piece of writing in the library consisted of a sign, probably produced by the school librarian, encouraging the improvement of spelling. It is illustrated below in Figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14 Library Text Encouraging the Improvement of Spelling

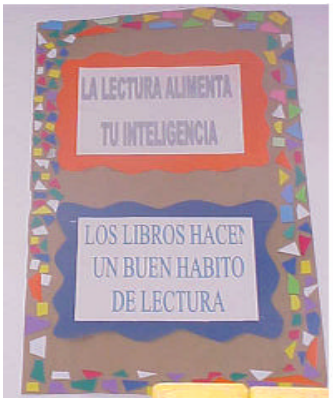


OBJETIVO:	[OBJECTIVE:
Mejorar la ortogra-	Improve spelling
fia por medio de la	through repetition,
repetición, memoriza-	memorization
ción a base de ejerci-	based on exercises
cios y lectura.	and reading.
ACTIVIDADES:	ACTIVITIES:
Realizar ejercicios	Do spelling
ortograficos con	exercises with
las letras X, H.	the letters X, H.]

Ironically, this sign, which talked about spelling, included two terms that were missing accents: *ortografía* [spelling – (noun)] and *ortográfico* [spelling (adjective)].

Most of the other texts hanging in the library were posters that promoted reading.

Figure 4.15 Library Text Promoting Reading



LA LECTURA ALIMENTA *TU INTELIGENCIA*	[Reading improves your intelligence]
LOS LIBROS HACEN *UN BUEN HABITO* *DE LECTURA*	[Books make a good reading habit]

The second place in the school in which texts were typically posted was around the cafeteria. Most of these writings consisted of menus, such as that illustrated in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16 Menus Posted Outside the School Cafeteria

Fast Food Pizza *Deliciosas pizzas.* *Ven a disfrutar su sabor* (09/15/2003)	[Delicious pizzas Come and enjoy the taste]
¡Hello! *Tu tienda escolar te ofrece:* *Comida corrida $20.00* *Cocktail de frutas* *Yogurth* *Licuados* *Corn Flakes* (11/10/2003)	[Your school store offers you: Fast food $2.00 Fruit cocktail Yogurt Milkshakes]

These texts had been written on small pieces of poster board by someone in the school, presumably a cafeteria employee. Other writings in this space included posters asking the students to keep the area clean, specifically by throwing away their trash.

In addition to the library and the cafeteria, there was also a large bulletin board near the school entrance that usually contained some type of student-produced text. As noted in the observations throughout the data collection process, the texts on this board were frequently modified, more or less once a month. For instance, it had been decorated with red, green, and white in celebration of Mexican Independence Day (September 15). The writing said "*México, Somos Todos*" [We're all Mexico]. In October, the same bulletin board contained the text "*Encuentro de dos mundos*" [Meeting between two worlds], as illustrated in Figure 4.17.

Figure 4.17 Bulletin Board Close to School Entrance: Encuentro de dos mundos

In the bottom left-hand corner of the poster there was a list of the four students who had been in charge of creating the text and graphics, as well as the name of the supervising teacher.

Throughout the remainder of the school year, the bulletin board included a text promoting respect and responsibility (important values in the school) (11/12/2003), happy wishes for the Christmas vacation (12/10/2003), writing done by third- and fourth-grade students regarding opinions of their teachers (01/28/2004), and an announcement of

the social, educational, cultural, and sports-related activities which had been sponsored by the institution during the course of the academic year so far (02/12/2004). Significantly, these posters were produced by both teachers and students, usually from the middle or high schools.

4.6.3. Texts Immediately Outside the School

As mentioned in chapter three, photographs were taken not only in the classrooms and on the school grounds, but also directly outside the school (within a one-kilometer radius). These writings included texts with which the students came into contact on a daily basis as they arrived at and left school, namely restaurant advertisements, promotions at the local styling salon, announcements regarding foreign exchange programs (specifically in Canada), and postings publicizing apartments for rent. Clearly, it cannot be certain how often the children actually read these texts despite their presence.

The following two photographs are examples of the kinds of texts found right outside the school. Figure 4.18 is an advertisement for an outdoor restaurant that sold mainly *pollitos*, chicken. Apparently, it made use of the MacDonald's "M" for purposes of business. The second picture contains two pieces of writing, one produced by employees at the beauty salon and another which announces the selling of *dulces y regalos*, candy and gifts, at an adjacent establishment. The reader will notice that the promotion sign for the hair salon had been torn on the left side. However, it was left hanging like this for a number of weeks.

Figure 4.18 Restaurant Advertisement Outside School

Pollitos Mmmm!!!	[Chicken Mmmm!!!
Receta Original	Original Recipe]

Figure 4.19 Advertisements for Beauty Salon and Gift Store

DULCES Y REGALOS	[Candy and Gifts]
PROMOCION:	[Promotion:
EN LA APLICACION	with the application
DE TU TINTE	of hair dye
TE REGALAMOS	we'll give you
UNA LIMPIEZA	a free facial
FACIAL.	cleansing.
MASAJES DE	Relaxation
RELAJACION	massages
CON PREVIA CITA	by appointment]

The second advertisement (Figure 4.19), which was written in all capital letters, included three words that were missing accents: *promoción, aplicación* and *relajación.* Indeed, it was noted both in the school and outside it that terms written with uppercase letters rarely included the appropriate accent marks.

4.7. Conclusion

The results presented in this chapter is now analyzed with the aim of answering each of the research questions outlined in chapter one. These findings are compared to the researcher's predictions, and conclusions are drawn. The study ends with a discussion of the limitations, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion of Research Questions

In this section, the findings of the study are correlated with each of the three research questions presented in chapter one. After a brief review of the questions and the researcher's predictions as far as possible outcomes, results are discussed, including interpretations that attempt to provide logical explanations. The findings are also related to the trends and developments outlined in the literature review in the first chapter.

5.1.1. *Research Question #1: What attitudes do teachers, students, and parents hold toward different types of literacy and their importance? In what ways are these attitudes similar and/or different?*

As pointed out in section 1.3.1, the reason for investigating this research question was to identify and understand the attitudes and ideologies held by teachers, students, and parents, namely with respect to reading and writing in a specific Mexican context. Given that literacy practices are closely related to the local values of a specific society and culture (Barton, 1999), it was claimed that the participants' opinions and perspectives would play a significant role in the teaching/learning of reading and writing, both in the school as well as in the homes and community. This part of the study was modeled methodologically on that conducted by Rosales-Kufrin (1989), which compared the attitudes of students, teachers, and parents on the issue of first-language maintenance in the context of bilingual schooling in the United States.

It was predicted that the three groups interviewed as part of this project would express contrasting attitudes regarding types of literacy and their respective importance. Whereas the two teachers were predicted to express attitudes in favor of more academic

literacy, often limited to the school context, the six parents, and to a lesser degree, their children, were expected to be more supportive of local home and community literacies. Nevertheless, the findings suggested that all three groups were more or less in agreement and that they favored school-based reading and writing. Also, to a large extent, the parents' and children's opinions contradicted the actual practices reported to occur in their homes.

When asked whether reading was an important activity, all six of the case-study children responded affirmatively. They maintained that reading was *"divertido"* [fun] and that it served to *"aprender"* [learn] and to *"saber más información"* [acquire more information]. For example, Cristina stated, *"sí, me gusta mucho porque así puedo aprender más, puedo…saber…comprender lo que dicen esos libros…todo"* [Yes, I like it (reading) because that way I can learn more, I can…know…understand what the books say…everything]. All of the students said that they enjoyed reading.

The parents likewise claimed that reading was important. They replied that the purpose of reading was to learn and to know more. One parent, Susana, even commented that reading was a pleasurable way to spend one's time. These mothers told the researcher that children best learned to read by being encouraged (both at home and in school), by being given interesting material, and by constantly practicing. For instance, Susana said that parents and teachers should *"buscar la forma que ellos vean algo entretenido en la lectura…de los libros que les gustan mucho"* [find a way in which they (the children) see something entertaining in the reading…books that they really like]. They answered that a "good reader" was one who understood the main ideas, hence able to express what had been read, and that he or she made a habit of reading.

Correspondingly, all of them argued that comprehension was more important than speed given that it was useless to read quickly at the expense of understanding.

The teachers agreed with the parents in that the purpose of reading involved understanding the main ideas, or "*mensaje*" [message], of the text. They added that reading was an ideal way to expand vocabulary. Gertrudis, for example, commented that reading served to "*informarse sobre diversos temas…ampliar su vocabulario…sus ideas*" [become informed about different topics…expand their vocabulary…their ideas]. Octavio and Gertrudis also pointed out that people read to learn, and that individuals should be encouraged to read on a regular basis. As did the parents, they commented that comprehension was more important than speed, again asserting that understanding could not be sacrificed for fast reading. In their opinions, children best learned to read by memorizing the letters and combining syllables (Gertrudis) and by using their imagination and employing strategies such as focusing on key words and reading in chunks (Octavio).

With respect to writing, five out of the six students reported that they enjoyed this activity and that it was "*divertido*" [fun] for them. Cristina, who said that she did not like to write, told the researcher that her hand began to hurt after long periods of writing. One child, Alicia, replied that writing helped her to read. All of the students claimed that writing was important. They expressed that it was fun, a learning experience, necessary for school and work, and that everyone should be able to write stories. When questioned on spelling, handwriting, and accentuation, they mentioned that they were all an essential part of writing, especially considering that they were "*regañado*" [scolded] for most of their mistakes in these areas. Mario pointed out that "*el maestro (está) viendo y si le falta*

el acento, le tienes que decir. Nos regaña" [the teacher is looking and if you forget to put the accent, you have to tell him. He scolds us].

The parents gave varied responses when asked for a definition of a "good" writer. While some of them argued that anyone who expressed him/herself clearly could write, others claimed that only certain individuals were writers, specifically those who wrote books and magazines. Susana said that writing existed as an enjoyable pastime. Purposes for writing mentioned by the parents included communication, expression, legacies for future generations, and transmission of knowledge. When asked about spelling, accents, and handwriting, they replied that the first two were more important than the latter given that spelling and accent mistakes could cause a change in meaning, while there were many forms of acceptable handwriting. Several of these mothers admitted that, in general, errors in spelling and accentuation were "*molestos"*, or bothersome, for them.

Similarly, the teachers commented that spelling and accents were more important than handwriting given that errors in either could result in a change of word meaning. They pointed out that a "good" writer wrote clearly and that the aim of writing was to express one's ideas as clearly and simply as possible, ultimately with the goal of communicating with others, whether family members (messages), clients (advertisements), or readers from the general public (magazines, newspapers, and novels).

The parents and teachers also agreed that school texts were different from home and community texts for several reasons. They claimed that the reading done at school was overall more "*cultural*" (Lucia), "*constructiva*" [constructive] (Ariana), and that "*tiene una enseñanza*" [it teaches something] (Carla). In contrast, texts commonly read in

the community, including magazines and comic books, were considered somewhat vulgar and lacking in instructional value. As far as writing, both groups asserted that at school the texts (i.e. summaries, compositions) were more academic and relatively varied, whereas at home and in the community the writings (i.e. grocery lists, advertisements, price records) were less professional, "limited", and almost always directly related to their own personal lives. For example, Susana said, "*pues yo pienso que en la escuela tienen más que escribir*" [Well, I think that at school there's more to write].

The similarity of these groups' perspectives on reading and writing appeared to be due to the fact that many of them had grown up, lived, and studied in the research context. Indeed, most of the parents and both of the teachers reported that they had resided in the local community for a number of years. In addition, the parents seemed to be in close contact with their children's teachers, either through meetings, school activities, or by simply talking with them before or after school. For instance, both teachers commented during the interview sessions that they knew how important it was for the parents that they corrected the students' written work. Octavio told the researcher that, in the past, parents had complained to him about the mistakes their children were making in their writing. In turn, the teachers reacted to these concerns by constantly correcting the children's writing in the classroom. Thus, in all likelihood, community-wide ideologies existed as the source of local attitudes and beliefs concerning literacy and literacy instruction.

Interestingly, despite these common responses, it was found that they contradicted significantly with actual practice. As described in chapter four, classroom reading was quite limited and rarely involved reading for meaning or for pleasure. Instead, the

students tended to spend their time reading out loud to practice pronunciation of the letters, syllables, and words (first grade) or from dictations or copying activities (fourth grade), and reading de-contextualized letters, syllables, words off the board or from cards (first grade).

At home, the parents reported that most reading revolved around the children's homework assignments. In other words, the students seemed to be concentrating on the form much more than on the comprehension of actual ideas and messages, as reported in previous studies conducted in the area (Ballesteros, 2003; Jiménez et al., 2003; Kimbrough, 2004; Smith et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2003). Moreover, neither the teachers nor the parents encouraged reading using material that the children themselves had selected as interesting. That is, they failed to stimulate an environment in which reading could be perceived as an enjoyable activity performed recurrently as opposed to an obligation imposed from above by parents or teachers.

A great deal of the writing in the two classrooms consisted of copying, dictations, as well as simple texts such as names and the date (first grade). Indeed, writing beyond the word level was basically non-existent in the first grade and, in the fourth grade, almost always included a text which was merely copied or dictated; in other words, not to be discussed or applied as part of other activities. These practices contrasted somewhat with the attitudes and opinions reported by the children, parents, and teachers, all of whom agreed that written texts should express clear, meaningful ideas for communication. Similarly, Ferreiro (1989) and De la Garza and Ruiz Ávila (1994) have noted how Mexican school systems tend to focus on form over meaning.

The reason for the discrepancy between the participants' attitudes and actual practices may be best understood in terms of ideal conceptions of literacy. In other words, the respondents consistently provided favorable answers, perhaps those that they believed the researcher wanted to hear. To give an example, practically all of the children reported that they enjoyed reading and writing and likewise that both activities were important to them, although it is likely that these types of responses resulted from a weakness in the research design, particularly the interview protocols. Indeed, a few of the interview questions for the children required only a "yes" or "no" answer.

The parents and teachers also seemed to hold positive attitudes toward reading and writing. Given that Mexicans are frequently criticized for the low number of books and newspapers read annually (for example, Juárez, 2002 & Reyes Calderón, 2002, cited in Smith et al., 2002), it may be that the participants responded in a way to impress the researcher. Nonetheless, the notes from the observations, and even other questions from the interviews, demonstrated that reading and writing, as least among the case-study children, were typically limited to the school context and that, within this setting, most literacy activities centered on form as opposed to meaning.

Interestingly, no differences in responses were found based on the socio-economic status (SES) of the participants. The family classified as "low" SES (see chapter two) expressed the same positive attitudes as the others, whose calculated SES was somewhat higher. A possible explanation for this outcome is that the "low" SES family was only one point away from the "middle" category; in other words, their SES was actually not very different from that of the other participants (i.e. a total of 5 as opposed to 6). Moreover, all of the children had their own bedrooms, which supports the

idea that the families were not as dissimilar as the classification system described in chapter two might have implied. Given this resemblance, the attitudes and beliefs articulated by all the parents and children were related.

5.1.2. *Research Question #2: What do school, community, and family literacies have in common, and how do they differ?*

This question was intended to explore similarities and differences between literacy activities in three contexts: school, home, and community. According to Taylor (1998), everyday life can provide children with a richness of texts often unnoticed by educators. In her book she refers to home and community practices as "local" literacies, which indeed may contrast with those characteristic of the school. Another aim of researching this point was to identify funds of linguistic knowledge (Smith, 2001), with specific reference to reading and writing, which teachers could potentially integrate into classroom instruction.

The researcher had predicted that school literacy practices would turn out to be quite distinct from those in the homes and in the community. As mentioned in the previous section, other studies conducted in the same research context reported that while school literacy was found to be somewhat regulated, especially writing, local texts seemed to serve a communicative function in which the formal aspects drilled in the classroom were often overlooked (Jiménez et al., 2003).

As described in chapter four, the reading exercises observed in the school were almost completely limited to reading out loud (i.e. from the board, the Spanish book), along with reading activities based on cards and on the chalkboard. During the interviews, the teachers responded that the students in their classes read "*cuentos*" [stories], "*leyendas*" [legends], and "*fábulas*" [fables]. Octavio pointed out that he

sometimes asked the children to read newspapers, and Gertrudis claimed that her students checked out library books to be read in class. Despite these responses, it seemed as though this large variety of reading tasks, and even reading itself, was much less common than the teachers reported, at least in the literacy classes observed. Perhaps these activities took place during other parts of the school day and/or in other subjects.

Reading materials and time spent reading in the home setting were reportedly less frequent. Although the parents and children responded that at home they read stories and magazines, most of them clarified that most of the reading they did involved what was assigned for homework. Susana, for instance, said that in her home *"por lo regular leemos lo de su tarea. Cosas de la escuela"* [usually we read her (Alejandra's) homework. Things related to school]. A few of the parents told the researcher that their children enjoyed reading the text appearing on road signs and advertisements. Reading done by the parents was also quite limited and included magazine articles, newspapers, romance stories, and, rarely, books and novels. Many times these texts, particularly the books, were directly related to their professions. To give an example, Carla commented that she often read "*de mi profesión de enfermería, pues sí se requiere estar actualizándose, ¿no?*" [for my nursing profession, well one needs to keep up, don't you think?].

Most of the respondents agreed that community reading practices were minimal. Indeed, both the parents and the teachers replied that reading was not a priority for the residents of the local community, due to a lack of time or interest or even laziness. According to them, the few texts actually read included newspapers, magazines, comic books (vulgar content), and cartoons. When asked whether or not these texts resembled

those commonly read at school, the participants argued that community reading material tended to be much more limited, vulgar, and "non-scholastic" in content (see quotes above).

Writing in the school consisted of dictations, copying, simple texts such as students' names and the date, and the formation of single syllables or words with cut-out slips containing letters. During the interview Gertrudis replied that, in addition to the texts mentioned above, some of her (more advanced) students wrote short stories. Octavio said that the children in his class also wrote lots of descriptions and "*resúmenes*" [summaries]. Indeed, writing seemed to be much more prevalent than reading at both grade levels. As commented in chapter four, much of this writing was corrected and edited for form, similar to findings from other recent studies carried out in the same area (Ballesteros, 2003; Kimbrough, 2004).

In the children's homes, writing appeared to occur much less frequently than at school. As with reading, most texts were reportedly related to homework assignments. Other student-produced writing consisted of drawings containing short texts (for siblings or parents), letters and numbers (the first-graders), messages, cards, and, according to one fourth-grader, stories about hummingbirds. Parents replied that they typically wrote texts having to do with their jobs, such as reports, notes, receipts, budgets, and inventories. Otherwise, home-based writing by parents and children was fairly uncommon.

Many of the participants claimed that writing in the community was basically non-existent. In their opinions, a large number of local residents had never learned to read or write and that those who knew how rarely did so. Gertrudis replied, for instance, that "*la mayoría de los adultos no sabe leer ni escribir…y, algunos que sí saben, no tienen el*

tiempo necesario para hacerlo" [most of the adults don't know how to read or write…and those who do don't have enough time for it]. Both teachers responded that, in most cases, only the students wrote in the home context, usually for purposes of completing homework. The parents commented that writing was generally limited to lists of things needed to be bought, advertisements, and graffiti. Tania reported that housewives like herself wrote "*su lista de, su lista de despensa que utilizan en la semana*" [their grocery, grocery list that they use during the week]. Parents added that these texts were very different from those written at school, especially since they were hardly ever formal and often contained mistakes in spelling, accentuation, and punctuation.

The findings of this study suggest that the frequency of reading and writing practices in the home and in the community was much less than at school. Likewise, in the school setting, writing was taught and practiced considerably more often than reading. It seems as though Serpell's (1997:596) statement that parents "regard the cultivation of literacy as more the responsibility of school" applied in this context. Moreover, as mentioned in response to the first research question, the findings proved somewhat contradictory in that while the parents claimed to promote reading and writing as useful activities, neither they nor their children read or wrote on a regular basis and almost never for pleasure/enjoyment.

The parents and teachers provided several reasons explaining this low frequency of reading and writing. First, they asserted that as a result of long workdays and numerous other duties, like childcare and household chores, the time available to sit down to read or write was minimal. Likewise, many of the local residents were said to be

completely uninterested in literacy given that they saw no use for it in their lives (i.e. farmers). That is, participants assumed that these individuals were more concerned with earning money and providing for their families than with reading and writing. This interpretation appears to explain why most forms of reading and writing outside the school dealt directly with personal needs and professions (i.e. obligations). School, on the other hand, was perceived as a place where a variety of literacy practices were expected and acceptable. Last, as pointed out by some of the mothers who participated in this study, reading was not encouraged within families, and, for this reason, most of the children had not been socialized in a society in which reading was particularly valued.

Both the teachers and parents believed that the children should learn to write "correctly". Perhaps they considered that it was important to stress conventional handwriting, spelling, accentuation, and punctuation so that the students would not be labeled later as "uneducated". Indeed, during the second interview with some of the parents, they commented that they expected their children to learn to write "properly" because someone who made errors was perceived negatively in society. Octavio pointed out that he felt a great deal of pressure from the parents to practice and correct writing in the classroom, and this was one of the reasons why he constantly monitored their work for form.

Regarding the prediction that teachers would view home and community texts as unacceptable or "lower" forms of literacy, for the most part the findings suggested that this hypothesis was accurate. Although both teachers claimed that they made an attempt to incorporate local texts into classroom instruction, the notes from the observations showed otherwise. In fact, as described in chapter four, only a very limited number of

instances of using local funds of linguistic knowledge as a resource were documented. The data from the interviews seemed to indicate that these local texts were typically seen as "vulgar", "non-constructive", "of no learning value" and "poorly written", namely by the parents. Carla, for example, commented that community texts were "*para empezar…mal escrito, no? Mucha falta de ortografía….Son temas…cómo podemos decir, corrientes*" [to begin with…poorly written, no? Lots of spelling mistakes…They are…how would we say it…simple topics].

Perhaps the teachers were aware of the parents' perception of local texts and practices and thus chose not to include them as part of what they taught in the classroom. In other words, not only did parental pressure drive the teachers to constantly monitor the form of their children's writing, it similarly may have led them to focus on traditional school-related literacy, including dictations, copying, and reading aloud for "proper" pronunciation. These findings and interpretations are discussed further in the next section.

5.1.3. *Research Question #3: To what extent does the school integrate home and community literacies in the classroom (i.e. local funds of linguistic knowledge)?*

This question was meant to explore whether the teachers were aware of community resources that could be tapped for use in the literacy classroom, and likewise whether they actually took advantage of them. It has been argued that such local funds of linguistic knowledge (FOLK), specifically the knowledge and skills the children bring with them to school, can bridge the gap between concrete experiences (with which the students are familiar) and more abstract, academic practices (Moll et al., 2002). Given the commonly-reported low academic achievement in public schools in Mexico, much of

which is probably a result of a mismatch between home and school settings (Pérez, 1998), it seemed worthwhile to investigate this question throughout the research.

The researcher hypothesized that since, in all likelihood, educators would fail to recognize local literacy practices as legitimate, they would also exclude such forms of reading and writing from instruction. Indeed, based on the findings of previous studies conducted in this area (Ballesteros, 2003; Jiménez et al., 2003; Kimbrough, 2004; Smith et al., 2003), it was predicted that school-based literacy would tend to focus on more formal aspects of the language, presented in the SEP textbook, as opposed to giving students the opportunity to work with communicative texts existing in their everyday lives. All in all, these assumptions were present, given that only a limited number of instances of FOLK were documented. Nonetheless, it seemed as though both of the teachers had the familiarity with the resources and family contacts to incorporate this knowledge if so desired.

As described in chapter four, there was only one example documented of a reading exercise in which the students made use of a community text. Octavio had instructed each child to locate and bring in a newspaper, and class time was spent discussing the different sections comprising newspapers and, subsequently, reading out the titles and parts of articles (i.e. focus on form). The students appeared to enjoy this activity, perhaps because it was something new for them. Although Gertrudis reported during an interview that she often had the first-graders to check out books from the library, read them, and then talk about them in class, this practice was never observed. According to her, these texts were chosen based on their personal interests.

Funds of linguistic knowledge related to writing were likewise scarce. As mentioned in the results, all of these instances occurred in the fourth grade. On at least two occasions, Octavio told his students to consult with their parents about *adivinanzas* [riddles] and *trabalenguas* [tongue-twisters], which they were required to write for homework. During another visit, the assignment was to make a poster advertising an event in or around the school. The students, who completed the task either individually or in pairs, presented their work to the rest of class without being corrected by the teacher, albeit having made numerous errors in spelling, accentuation, and punctuation (example: *necesitados* written incorrectly as *nececitados*). Clearly, the texts they created resembled the community texts around them much more than the ones produced at school. Finally, Octavio once instructed the children to use a newspaper as a model to write similar articles dealing with local topics. The children were probably already familiar with these materials/texts, although perhaps not with the tasks themselves.

While school materials/texts included the SEP textbook, the chalkboard, and cards, those commonly found outside the school were newspapers, magazines, comic books, road signs and cartoons. Octavio commented during one of the interviews that he would sometimes ask the fourth-graders to bring books from home for discussion in class. However, similar to what Gertrudis said about the library books, this practice was not documented. As far as writing reported in the observations, while at school the students produced letters, syllables, words, and sentences for the purpose of learning to write "correctly", at home and in the community most of the writing (besides homework) consisted of grocery lists, advertisements, sells receipts, and grafitti. The latter consisted of things directly related to the families' lives. In other words, whereas much of the

writing done at school was copied or dictated, that taking place outside the school was performed for authentic communication. Accordingly, considerably more emphasis on form was observed in the classrooms.

When asked if the teachers talked to them about their reading and writing interests outside the school, five of the six students replied that the only time Octavio and Gertrudis discussed literacy was in relation to homework. The only exception was Cristina, who told the researcher that since she was fascinated by hummingbirds, she had once turned in a written description about them as an assignment. She also mentioned during the interview that she had talked with her teacher about her interest in birds.

A few of the parents replied that, in their opinion, the teachers knew their children quite well. According to them, considering that the teachers had spent lots of time with the students, it was obvious that they had established a certain relationship with them. Furthermore, the mothers claimed that they themselves would often take a moment to chat with either Octavio or Gertrudis in the morning when they dropped off their children or else in the afternoon when they returned to pick them up. Last, they pointed out that the teachers always checked the students' homework and, in that way, learned more regarding each individual's needs.

The parents likewise expressed that knowing their children was important in that, based on each one's personal interests and experiences, classroom instruction could be more enriching, reinforcing, and meaningful. Octavio and Gertrudis gave basically the same answer, although they admitted that they had not made an effort to draw on local reading and writing practices at school. They also told the researcher that they had never visited their students' homes. From a FOLK perspective, it would be necessary for them

to realize the importance of these visits and to be trained methodologically to document the knowledge and skills of their students while in this context.

Therefore, it appeared to be the case that both the teachers and parents were familiar with local literacy practices, even though these resources were rarely integrated into the school curriculum. Interestingly, there seemed to be many opportunities in which the educators could have discovered existing funds of linguistic knowledge. First, according to the mothers, there was constant contact between the parents and teachers on a daily basis. Thus, the teachers could have taken advantage of this time to question the parents about their children's reading habits and interests. This information could have influenced the selection of future class discussions and assignments. Second, both Octavio and Gertrudis were residents in the local community. Thus, they had first-hand knowledge of the reading and writing done outside the school. In fact, during their interviews each one of them provided an in-depth description of the kinds of texts typically read and produced in the homes and in the community. Last, both teachers had attended talks describing the larger study at the school and were given the chance to learn more about FOLK, including its definition and applications, as well as examples of local community texts.

Another of the researcher's predictions was that the first-grade teacher would make more of an effort to incorporate FOLK texts in the classroom, particularly given that her students were just beginning to learn to read and write. In other words, at least for those who did not choose to attend pre-school, this was their first year of school and probably their first real exposure to academic literacy. Hence, it was hypothesized that Gertrudis would bridge the gap by relating new types of reading and writing to situations

with which they were already familiar (i.e. as one girl reported, reading from a cereal box).

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the few instances of FOLK that were observed took place only in Octavio's fourth-grade classroom. One possible explanation for this outcome is that Octavio had been teaching in the school much longer than Gertrudis, and perhaps over the years he had become more knowledgeable regarding the students' lives and interests. Additionally, he commented that he wished to cover the curriculum set by the SEP, which included having students to read and to be able to describe a variety of texts such as newspapers and advertisements. Significantly, these texts were not included in the textbook itself and thus required the teacher to look for supplementary materials. Gertrudis, on the other hand, may have elected to introduce her students to academic literacy all at once.

Despite the examples described above, the results suggested that both of the teachers were somewhat resistant to using possible funds of linguistic knowledge in their classrooms. As Lewis (2001) indicates, some forms of literacy are more dominant and influential, specifically those generally found in the context of the school, and apparently Octavio and Gertrudis chose to center most of their instruction of reading and writing on such academic practices. One interpretation could thus be that these educators felt that local texts were not appropriate at school (Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001). Indeed, among the school's missions is that of providing educational opportunities to those children who have been unsuccessful in other schools. Perhaps the two participating teachers decided that, in order to accomplish this goal, it was necessary to base instruction on more

academic forms of literacy. However, such a strict focus on the acquisition of standard conventions meant that the children were rarely allowed to express their own ideas.

Similarly, with reference to the preference of form over meaning in writing, the findings implied that the teachers had decided to hone the basic writing skills, including handwriting, spelling, accentuation, and punctuation, before allowing the children to produce more authentic, communicative texts. That is, it could have been that their objective was to "train" students to write in accordance with academic conventions as a prerequisite to employing this knowledge in actual texts. Moreover, as commented earlier, it seemed as through the teachers felt intense pressure from the parents to monitor and correct student writing for form. It is imperative to note that the funds of linguistic knowledge that educators could tap for instruction are, in some cases, invisible to the parents, and, in others, regarded by the mothers themselves as lower forms of literacy which would not be acceptable in an academic context.

5.2. Limitations of Study

One of the limitations of this study centered on its generalizability. More specifically, given that it was conducted in only two classrooms (first and fourth grades) in a single, semi-private school, the findings cannot be assumed to be applicable to other grade levels and to other academic settings within Mexico. Likewise, all the classes observed were intended to teach reading and writing (i.e. language arts). Considering the prevalence of literacy instruction in the first and fourth grades, it may be that many of the teaching techniques observed throughout this project were uniquely characteristic of these particular levels and classes, or even only of language arts instruction. Teachers of

other subjects and age groups may choose to focus more on the content, such as history, mathematics, or music, than on the language itself. Also, they may have different ways of viewing/working with literacy. Future research would need to compare the results with those obtained in all the settings mentioned above.

Another limitation of the investigation was that, due to reasons of access, there were a disproportionate number of observations between the two classrooms. Octavio made it very clear to the research team that visits should be limited to a particular day of the week at a specific time. If his students had exams, other activities, or last-minute schedule changes during that period, none of which was unusual, the observation session was automatically canceled for that week. Had the researcher been allowed more access to this classroom, it is likely that more instances of FOLK would have been documented.

Gertrudis, on the other hand, permitted the researcher to sit in on any of her literacy classes, regardless of the day or time and including unannounced visits. Moreover, during the last two months of data collection (February and March), the researcher began carrying out all his observations (two per week) in the first grade. Although it had been planned that another member of the larger project would do the same in the fourth grade, access was never obtained during the course of the study. As a result, 22 observations were conducted in the first grade as opposed to only 9 in the fourth grade. (The other nine visits were spent documenting texts on the school grounds). Thus, the findings from Gertrudis' class were more substantiated.

A third limitation involved the relatively small number of interviews. Given that one of the major goals of this study was to document local beliefs and attitudes toward literacy and literacy instruction, it would have been ideal to interview more than six

parents, six children, and two teachers. Obviously, it cannot be certain whether these participants' views match those of other community members, even though data from the linguistic census suggest that the sample is quite representative of other families in the school. Also, although the interview protocol included questions regarding transnational status, its effects on the perceptions and uses of literacy was not explored in those families who reported having relatives abroad (United States, Chile, Spain).

Similarly, due to the reasons outlined in chapter two, all the parents interviewed were mothers. The fathers' perspectives, which may have yielded different findings, were considered only indirectly through the mothers' comments, particularly during the focus-group interview. Although it may be that the fathers were not very involved in the children's education (this seemed to be the consensus among the mothers), their attitudes regarding literacy are equally important for a more complete understanding of the local ideologies which influence how diverse forms of reading and writing are taught and perceived, especially since they hold jobs outside the home. For instance, given that many of the fathers who responded to the linguistic census were white-collar professionals (i.e. lawyers, doctors, professors, astrologists), they might tend to favor critical and/or analytical approaches toward literacy. If this position were true and they were aware of what the children were learning at school, they might convince their wives (and perhaps teachers) to be less adamant about mechanical, form-based instruction. These differences, if they exist, would certainly play a role in how children come to perceive literacy and, accordingly, how they learn to read and write.

Fourth, one significant aspect that possibly affected the interview responses was the researcher's gender and background. All of the participating parents were Mexican

females, only one of whom had completed a college degree. In contrast, the researcher was a white male from the United States who was completing a master's degree in a local, prestigious university. Accordingly, it is probable that the parents, and perhaps even the two teachers, felt somewhat intimidated by the presence of a previously unknown researcher. These factors may have affected the nature of the information they shared during the interviews, particularly if they decided to tell the researcher what they thought he wanted to hear (see discussion in section 5.1.1). One solution would have been to spend more time with each of the families in order to get to know them better before conducting the interviews (Seidman, 1998).

Moreover, in addition to the interviews conducted with parents, teachers, and students, it would also have been worthwhile to talk with school officials and other community members. The school officials might have been more qualified than the teachers to express the rationale behind the institution's views on literacy, especially at the level of curriculum. Even though an interview with the founder of the school was contemplated, it was never carried out due to a lack of time. Also, talking with other community members not directly associated with the Centro Telpochcalli may have either supported or challenged the study's findings, particularly with reference to local attitudes and ideas about forms of literacy present (or not) in the community and in the school.

Last of all, the study's findings would have been enriched if the researcher had had the opportunity to see more examples of environmental texts in the homes. In a researcher-guided interaction, the participants could have commented on these texts (i.e. which ones were important to them and why) in order to uncover their beliefs and

attitudes toward different types of literacy. Indeed, only one example of such writing was documented, specifically a picture of Jesus Christ containing the text *Nuestro Señor* [Our Lord] hanging in a living room, and the presence of the text was simply noted without any form of discussion. The decision not to intrude on the families in this way limited the results in that it could not be certain what kinds of texts actually existed in the children's homes and for what purpose.

5.3. Implications

The results and analysis of this study yielded various implications related to the two classrooms observed, the overall school curriculum, and the connection between school and community. Detailed below, the purpose of these ideas is to suggest alternative ways in which reading and writing may be taught at the Centro Telpochcalli and, by extension, in other similar schools within Mexico.

As far as reading, one suggestion is that the two participating teachers (and others) could choose books and other reading materials which drew on their students' personal interests and activities. Although Gertrudis pointed out that the stories in the SEP textbook were appropriate for the level of the children in her class, for example, these readings could be supplemented with outside resources selected by the students themselves (i.e. things their parents had bought them or that they had checked out from the school or community library, to which they already have access). In this way, the children would be more likely to enjoy the topics, and they might be more motivated to read. Similarly, teachers in the school could ensure that everyday included a special time for reading by setting aside 30 minutes to an hour during which the children were asked

to read a text of their choice. If the school promoted reading activities in this fashion, then the students might begin reading more on their own.

As mentioned in chapter four, most of the reading tasks observed were designed with the aim of learning to read as opposed to reading to learn. Teachers should discuss what has been read and encourage learners to apply this newly-gained knowledge to real-life situations. For instance, the fourth-graders could read about different academic disciplines and then create a list of interview questions for professionals in these fields based on the information. Subsequently, they could interview a teacher, a doctor, or a lawyer, for example, and make a presentation to the rest of the class. Moreover, these types of activities would show the children how reading and writing are interrelated and how one process supports the other. Although similar ideas are present in the SEP Spanish books, it appears as though the teachers ignore them. It could also be that the teachers have not been trained to use the SEP materials for literacy.

The reading done in class and for homework should also be much more varied. The data suggested that most school-related reading consisted of short, simple texts such as individual letters, syllables, and decontextualized words (first grade) and words and sentences with the objective of understanding grammar in the fourth grade. Depending on the grade level, teachers could integrate newspapers, adventure stories, magazine articles, internet excerpts, community advertisements, and short novels, to name a few examples. As noted in chapter four, Octavio used these types of texts, specifically newspapers, on only one occasion. This variation would make the reading more interesting and, equally important, more challenging for the learners. As before, all these exercises should be selected with a clear purpose and usefulness for the students' lives.

With respect to writing, educators could make more of an attempt to balance the formal, mechanical aspects of text production with student freedom and creativity. The findings revealed that a great deal of writing in the school context centered on copying and dictations, what Barton (1999) refers to as "scribal" functions. Aside from being tedious for the children, these practices are largely decontextualized in nature. Indeed, Carrasco Altamirano (2003) comments that most school literacy practices in Mexico are restricted to the school context and hence have little or no application in the real world. Allowing students to produce writing creatively would demonstrate to them the importance of meaningful communication. It would also encourage them to write about topics that interested them, both in and out of school.

Likewise, at least some of the writing activities performed at school should be related to the educational and professional contexts in which the learners might one day find themselves. In other words, texts produced in the elementary school classroom should be intended to prepare learners for what they will encounter at the middle and high-school levels and as prospective employees in an increasingly competitive job market. In fact, much of the writing that the children are learning to do not only deemphasizes meaning, it also places them at a disadvantage regarding future opportunities, which, according to the school's mission, include empowering learners to become productive and independent members of society (clearly requiring a high level of functional literacy). That is, although the school (see chapter two) claims to "promote cultural, human, intellectual, economic, and social development through education and material resources", its current literacy practices, reduced in large part to the basic skills,

may in reality be holding students back, given that they are not permitted to use literacy as a tool for learning.

Additionally, instead of scolding students for having bad handwriting or for making mistakes in pronunciation, spelling, accentuation, and/or punctuation, educators should treat these errors as natural phases in the development of 'good' readers and writers. Indeed, it was obvious throughout the study that neither Octavio nor Gertrudis consistently followed these writing conventions (similar to findings in Ballesteros, 2003 and Kimbrough, 2004), so it only follows that they should not have expected perfection from the children in their classrooms. Learning of any type and of any subject is a gradual process. Significantly, it seems as though control over writing may be more of an issue than simply abiding by prescriptive conventions (Bourdieu, 1991).

Another suggestion is that teachers value students' efforts to write by displaying their texts in the classroom and throughout the school. Neither of the two participating teachers regularly displayed work produced by the children, and perhaps this practice made the students feel that what they wrote was not worthy of being seen publicly, either because they were thought to make many mistakes or because they were simply not considered to be capable writers. Displaying these texts would serve as a form of praise for the learners, and it would emphasize what they were able to do instead of what they could not do. Even though there was a considerable display of student work on the school grounds, most of it was done by middle- or high-school students, perhaps because their writing was assumed to be more "perfect".

Another way that might improve literacy instruction in the school would be to offer educational workshops (in addition to those already given by other members of the

research team). Teachers, school officials, and parents could be invited to these sessions in order to share ideas about reading and writing practices in the homes, school, and community, especially suggestions as to how to promote literacy development among the children. These forums would allow a discussion of the many different types of literacy in the community and would hopefully convince both teachers and parents that all forms of reading and writing are acceptable in certain contexts. It would likewise be a good opportunity for teachers to learn more about home and community literacy practices and, at the same time, for parents to learn more about academic literacy.

Similarly, teachers could take advantage of the moments they have to speak with the parents (before and after class) to ask them about the interests and needs of their children. Based on the responses, teachers could design literacy tasks permitting and encouraging students to use their prior knowledge and experiences (FOLK). For instance, if a child were fascinated with hummingbirds (as was Cristina in the fourth-grade), the teacher could create a lesson or thematic unit on birds, which included reading, discussion, writing, and perhaps a short presentation. Although it is probably not feasible to base assignments on the topics of interest of each student, the teacher could find out what types of materials are interesting to the majority of the children in the class.

As mentioned in section 5.1.3, one obstacle in implementing funds of linguistic knowledge in the classrooms was that the parents themselves perceived many home and community literacy practices as unacceptable in the school setting. For instance, they commented that community texts were often poorly written, non-constructive, vulgar, and of little educational content. In order to begin to change these attitudes, teachers would need to become explicitly aware of local resources and then attempt to convince

the parents of their value by discussing specifically what the children could learn from them (i.e. an awareness of who reads and writes different kinds texts for what purposes). They could also describe to them how working with familiar practices serves child learners as a bridge to academic literacy.

Along the same lines, educators could invite professionals from the community (i.e. doctors, lawyers, businessmen) to come in the classrooms and talk about how they make use of reading and writing on a daily basis. In this fashion, the children would see the connection between what they are learning and what they might be expected to do in the future. Likewise, the students could be instructed to analyze different texts found in the local community (i.e. newspapers, advertisements, billboards), specifically with reference to author, message, purpose, and audience. This kind of assignment would raise their awareness of a variety of writing practices and also push them to think critically about who writes and for what reasons.

5.4. Suggestions for Future Research

Considering the limitations of this study (outlined in section 5.2), as well as interesting issues which arose throughout the duration of the project, this section proposes several suggestions regarding future research on school, home, and community literacy practices.

First, it would be useful to carry out qualitative studies of this type in other schools in Mexico, including at different grade levels (i.e. not only first and fourth) and in diverse regions of the country. The findings of this research could be compared and contrasted with those of the present study (as well as with those of Ballesteros, 2003,

Jiménez et al., 2003, Kimbrough, 2004, and Smith et al., 2003), with the ultimate aim of identifying important similarities and/or differences between school literacy practices throughout the nation.

Similarly, future research on literacy could compare reading and writing practices at distinct levels of instruction – elementary, middle, high school, and university – in order to explore how what is taught at one level facilitates or impedes subsequent learning. In other words, is there a gradual and logical progression of literacy activities throughout formal schooling? Peredo Merlo (2003) claims that elementary and middle-school curriculums in Mexico tend to focus literacy instruction on routine, mechanical activities that require minimal development of knowledge and learning skills. According to her findings, based on what participants who had reached different levels of formal public schooling were able to recall from their own educational experiences, it is not until high school that Mexican students are encouraged to reflect, analyze, interpret, and synthesize written material. Thus, it would be useful to compare and contrast literacy practices across grade levels (i.e. *primaria*, *secundaria*, *preparatoria*, and *educación superior*).

Another related suggestion is that researchers could conduct longitudinal studies analyzing the reading and writing challenges that Mexican students face as they advance through school. One way to accomplish this task would be to select a few case-study students and to document these learners' progress during three or four years. It is important to mention that the larger project (Smith et al., 2002) will continue to focus on the six case-study children described in the present study.

It would likewise be interesting to carry out research exploring the most common school-based literacy practices in different parts of Latin America. The results of these studies could be compared and contrasted with research in Mexico, in the United States, and in other places such as Europe, especially given that literacy policies and instruction in Latin America are often influenced by research carried out in the latter (Seda-Santana, 2000). Significantly, it is predicted that contextual differences would result in distinct forms of reading and writing in each setting, prompting the need for a re-examination of local policy and practice.

As far as research on home literacy, one suggestion is that future qualitative studies include interviews with both parents. As mentioned in section 5.2, one of the limitations of this project was that the fathers' perspectives were obtained indirectly through comments made by the mothers. Both parents' views are important in documenting a more complete picture of values related to literacy and, consequently, of context-specific literacy instruction. Moreover, researchers investigating home literacy practices should make an effort to spend a great deal of time with the families in their homes (González et al., 1993; González, 1995; Moll & González, 1994, 1998). In this way they could get to know the participants and, simultaneously, observe first-hand the actual types of reading and writing that occur in this setting. It would also be important to explore the effects of transnationalism on attitudes toward certain literacy practices.

Researchers could also study the types of literacy knowledge and skills that Mexican children acquire prior to beginning the first grade. More specifically, they could observe literacy practices in the homes of pre-school age children, focusing on those practices in which the children were actively involved. Furthermore, researchers could

continue to document the most frequent literacy practices in Mexican pre-schools (Kimbrough, 2004) and identify whether and how these activities serve as a stepping stone for the formal reading and writing typically introduced in the first grade.

With respect to community literacy, researchers could conduct qualitative studies in which they observed the literacy practices which take place in different parts of the community, such as in libraries, parks, and on buses and metros. The findings of such investigation could be compared and contrasted with the reading and writing that participants actually report doing. Other similar studies could document the types of literacy that occur in urban versus rural contexts, as well as in indigenous communities and/or as a function of socio-economic status (SES). Considering that literacy is closely intertwined with social and cultural phenomena (Barton, 1999), important differences are likely to be discovered.

5.5. Concluding Remarks

This study has attempted to compare the attitudes toward literacy held by teachers, parents, and children in a Mexican elementary school. It has likewise described many of the most common reading and writing practices in the school as well as in the children's homes and surrounding community. It is important for local literacy educators to be aware of these beliefs and of this diversity of practices since classroom instruction will greatly profit by recognizing, valuing, and drawing upon the knowledge, skills, and experiences that students already bring with them to the learning process. The final chapter of this project has provided a number of ideas with which teachers may wish to

experiment, in addition to suggestions for useful future research in areas related to school, home, and community literacy.

Bibliography

Álvarez, A. S., Corro, G. & Lorandi, M. (1992). *A la sombra de la pirámide: Estudio socio-económico de San Andrés Cholula*. COESPO: Universidad de las Américas, Puebla.

Ballesteros, R. (2003). *Prácticas de lenguaje y lecto-escritura en una escuela pública mexicana*. Unpublished master's thesis, Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.

Barton, D. (1999). *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Barton, D. (2000). Researching literacy practices: Learning from activities with teachers and students. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton & R. Ivanic (eds.), *Situated literacies: reading and writing in context.* London: Routledge. 167-179.

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton & R. Ivanic (eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context.* London: Routledge. 7-15.

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Braslavsky, B. (2003). ¿Qué se entiende por alfabetización? *Lectura y vida*. Año 24 (2), 6-21.

Carrasco Altamirano, A. (2003). La escuela puede enseñar estrategias de lectura y promover su regular empleo. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa,* (8) 7, 129-142.

Chouliaraki, L. & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity.* Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Cirianni, G. D. (2003). Leer con los maestros. *Programa Nacional de Lectura*. México. Secretaría de Educación Pública. http://lectura.ilce.edu.mx.

De la Garza, Y. & Ruiz Ávila, D. (1994). La producción del texto escrito en el sexto año de primaria. In L. E. Galván, M. Lamoneda, M. E. Vargas & B. Calvo (eds.), *Memorias del Primer Simposio de Educación* (pp. 163-173). México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.

Desarrollo y Evaluación del Proyecto Educativo Telpochcalli. Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos, Vol. XXII, 3er trimestre 1992, Número 3. México: Centro de Estudios Educativos.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan, pp. 119-161.

Ferreiro, E. (ed.). (1989). *Los hijos del analfabetismo*. México: Siglo XXI editores.

Freire, P. & Macedo, D. (1989). *Alfabetización: Lectura de la palabra y lectura de la realidad.* Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós.

Gay, L. & Airasian, P. (2002). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application* (7th edition). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

González, N., Moll, L. C., Floyd-Tenery, M., Rivera, A., Rendon, P., Gonzales, R., & Amanti, C. (1993). *Teacher research on funds of knowledge: Learning from households.* Santa Cruz, CA: The National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. pp. 1-18.

González, N. (1995). The Funds of Knowledge for Teaching Project. *Practicing Anthropology*. 17 (3), 3-6.

Goodman, Y. (1998). Foreword. In D. Taylor, *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harris, T. & Hodges, R. (eds.) (1995). *The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, México (2001). *Tabulados Básicos. Estados Unidos Mexicanos. XII Censo General de la Población y Vivienda, 2000.* México, D.F. http://www.inegi.gob.mx.

Jiménez, R.T. (2002). Fostering the literacy development of Latino students. *Focus on Exceptional Children.* 34 (6), 1-10.

Jiménez, R.T., Smith, P.H. & Martínez-León, N. (2003). Freedom and Form: The language and literacy practices of two Mexican schools. *The Reading Research Quarterly, 38* (4), 488-508.

Juárez, N. (2002, April 11). Aumentan lectores de libros y revistas. *Reforma.* Terra Networks de México.

Kimbrough, J. (2004). *Literacy learning and instruction in a Mexican bilingual school.* Unpublished master's thesis, Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.

King, L. (1994). *Roots of identity: Language and literacy in Mexico.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Levinson, B. (2001). *We are all equal: Student culture and identity at a Mexican secondary school.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lewis, C. (2001). *Literacy practices as social acts: Power, status and cultural norms in the classroom*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

McCarthey, S. (2000). Home-school connections: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Research,* 93, 145-153.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mishler, E. (1986). *Research interviewing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mlade, L. G. (2001). *Gender relations and the religious cargo system in San Andrés Cholula*. Unpublished master's thesis, Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.

Moll, L., & Díaz, S. (1987). Change as the goal of educational research. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 18*, 300-311.

Moll, L. & González, N. (1994). Lessons from research with language minority children. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 26*, 439-456.

Moll, L. & González, N. (2002). Cruzando el puente: Building bridges to funds of knowledge. *Educational Policy,* 16 (4). 623-639.

Peredo Merlo, María Alicia. (2003). Las habilidades de lectura y la escolaridad. *Perfiles Educativos*, Vol. XXIII, 57-69.

Pérez, B. (1998). Language, literacy, and biliteracy. In B Pérez (ed.), *Sociocultural contexts of language and literacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. 21-48.

Reyes Calderón, G. (2002, April 12). Cada vez se lee menos. *El Norte*, p. B2.

Rogers, A. (2001). Afterword: Problematising literacy and development. In *Literacy and Development: Ethnographic Perspectives*, first ed., Street, B. (ed.), London: Routledge. 205-222.

Rosales-Kufrin, R. (1989). *Caste, collusion, and conflict: An ethnographic study of factors affecting the dropout of Mexican-American students in a Chicago barrio elementary school.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Secretaría de Educación Pública (2001). *Programa Nacional de Lectura*. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública.

Secretaría de Educación Pública. (2003). *Visión y Misión de la SEP*. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública. http://www.sep.gob.mx/wb2/sep/sep_Vision_y_Mision_de_la_SEP

Seda-Santana, I. (2000). Literacy research in Latin America: Context, characteristics, and applications. *Reading Online*. http://www.readingonline.org/articles/handbook/seda

Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing As qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Serpell, R. (1997). Literacy connections between school and home: How should we evaluate them? *Journal of Literacy Research*, 29 (4), 587-616.

Smith, P.H. (2001). Community language resources in dual language schooling. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 25 (30), 375-404.

Smith, P.H., Martínez-León, N. & Jiménez, R.T. (2002). *La construcción social de lectores y escritores en México: Estudio etnográfico del uso de la lengua escrita en escuelas primarias y su entorno comunitario*. CONACYT research proposal, Universidad de las Américas-Puebla.

Smith, P.H., Martínez-León, N. & Jiménez, R.T. (2003). Other countries' literacies: What U.S. educators can learn from Mexican schools. *Reading Teacher*, 56 (8), 772-781.

Smith, P., Jiménez, R. & Ballesteros, R. (in press). ¿Hay una pedagogía nacional de la lecto-escritura? Una mirada a la construcción social de lectores y escritores en México. *Lectura y Vida*.

Spindler, G. & Spindler, L. (1992). Cultural process and ethnography: An anthropological perspective. *The handbook of qualitative research in education*, London: Academic Press, 53-91.

Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Street, B. (2001). *Literacy and development: Ethnographic perspectives*. first ed. London: Routledge.

Suárez-Orozco, C. & Suárez-Orozco, M. (1995). *Transformations: Immigration, family life, and achievement motivation among Latino adolescents.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Taylor, D. (1998). *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools*. *An ethnographic portrait.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Vázquez, C. (2003). *Centro Educativo Ixtliyollotl, A.C.: Who are we?* Unpublished manuscript.

Vélez-Ibáñez, C. (1995). The challenge of funds of knowledge in urban areas: Another way of understanding the learning resources of poor Mexicano households in the U.S. southwest and their implications for national contexts. In J. Freidenberg (ed.), The anthropology of lower income urban enclaves: The case of East Harlem. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 749, 253-280.

Vélez-Ibáñez, C. & Greenberg, J. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among U.S.-Mexican households. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 23 (4). 313-335.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whitehouse, M., & Colvin, C. (2001). "Reading" families: Deficit discourse and family literacy. *Theory Into Practice, 40*, 212–219.

Wolcott, H. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix A. Permission Letter for School

9 octubre de 2003

Dra. Magdalena Lorandi Tavizón
Directora de Desarrollo Humano, Social y Comunitario
Centro Telpochcalli

Estimada Dra. Lorandi Tavizón,

Por medio de la presente quiero manifestarle mi agradecimiento por la participación del Centro Telpochcalli en nuestro proyecto de investigación, *"La construcción social de lectores y escritores en México: Estudio etnográfico del uso de la lengua escrita en escuelas primarias y su entorno comunitario."*

El objetivo general del estudio es entender los procesos y las ideologías que contribuyen a la formación de lectores y escritores en México. El estudio se basará en datos naturales y reales de observaciones, entrevistas y documentos como trabajos escritos por los estudiantes, tomando el hogar, la comunidad y la escuela como espacios fundamentales para el desarrollo inicial de la lecto-escritura. Nuestra finalidad es documentar la manera en que los participantes ubicados en el contexto de esta ciudad contribuyen, a través de la interacción social, en la construcción de prácticas y patrones de uso que forman a los lectores y escritores en nuestro país.

Esperamos reportar los resultados finales del proyecto durante el año escolar 2004-2005. Sin embargo, durante el año en curso nos gustaría compartir con los maestros y otros miembros interesados del Centro Telpochcalli, algunos resultados preliminares mediante talleres, materiales y lecturas.

Cordialmente,

_____

Dr. Patrick H. Smith
Depto. de Lenguas
Universidad de las Américas, Puebla
229-31-17
patrick@mail.udlap.mx

Appendix B. Linguistic Census

El siguiente cuestionario forma parte de un proyecto de investigación para el cual solicitamos su colaboración.
Instrucciones: Lea cuidadosamente y responda las siguientes preguntas:

Fecha: _____
Edad: _____
Sexo: _____
Lugar de nacimiento: _____

¿Dónde vive actualmente? _____
¿En qué año de primaria va su hijo/a? _____
¿Es su primer año como familia en esta escuela? SÍ NO
Si NO, ¿cuántos años han estado aquí como familia? _____

1. ¿A qué se dedica?
2. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su casa?
3. ¿Tiene acceso a los siguientes servicios **en su casa**? Marque con una cruz:

Agua _____	Electricidad _____	Otros _____
Teléfono _____	Internet _____	
Gas _____	Auto _____	

4. La casa donde vive es: (marque con una cruz)

Propia _____	Rentada _____

5. Señale con una cruz los niveles escolares que ha cursado:

Primaria _____	Carrera Técnica _____	Posgrado (especifique) ____
Secundaria _____	Escuela Normal _____	_____
Preparatoria _____	Universidad _____	

6. ¿Tiene conocimientos de otra(s) lengua(s) diferente(s) del español? ¿Cuál(es)?
_____ _____

7. En su opinión, su manejo de esa(s) lengua(s) es: (seleccione con una cruz)

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Básico _____	Básico _____
Intermedio _____	Intermedio _____
Avanzado _____	Avanzado _____
Casi nativo _____	Casi nativo _____
Nativo _____	Nativo _____

8. ¿Dónde o con quién la(s) utiliza? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Nadie _____	Nadie _____
Casa _____	Casa _____
Trabajo _____	Trabajo _____
Amigos _____	Amigos _____
Familiares _____	Familiares _____
Tienda _____	Tienda _____
Vecinos _____	Vecinos _____
Otros _____	Otros _____

9. ¿Con qué frecuencia la(s) usa? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Nunca _____	Nunca _____
Raramente _____	Raramente _____
De vez en cuando ____	De vez en cuando ____
A menudo _____	A menudo _____
Todos los días _____	Todos los días _____

10. ¿Cuáles de las siguientes habilidades tiene en esa(s) lengua(s)? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Leer _____	Leer _____
Hablar _____	Hablar _____
Escribir _____	Escribir _____
Escuchar _____	Escuchar _____

11. ¿Qué lee en esta(s) lengua(s)? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Revistas _____	Revistas _____
Periódicos _____	Periódicos _____
Libros _____	Libros _____
Páginas de Internet ____	Páginas de Internet ____
Manuales técnicos _____	Manuales técnicos _____
Propaganda _____	Propaganda _____
Otros _____	Otros _____

12. ¿Dónde y cómo aprendió esa(s) lengua(s)?

13. ¿Qué tan importante es para usted que su hijo sea bilingüe? Explique sus motivos.

14. ¿Tiene parientes en el extranjero? _____ ¿Dónde? _____

15. ¿Ha visitado otro país? _____ ¿Cuál? _____ ¿Por cuánto tiempo? _____

16. ¿Ve televisión en inglés? _____ ¿Con qué frecuencia? Indique con una cruz:

Nunca _____
Raramente _____
De vez en cuando _____
A menudo _____
Con mucha frecuencia _____
Todos los días _____

17. ¿Escucha música en inglés?

18. ¿Por qué eligió esta escuela para su hijo/a?

19. En su opinión, ¿qué características tiene para usted una buena educación?

Appendix C. Sample Observation Transcription

****BLT-018. November 26, 2003. 8:40-9:40 am. Centro Telpochcalli. Mtra. Gertrudis. First grade. Spanish.**

*I arrive at the school around 8:40 am. I greet Don Crecencio, who is at the gate, and sign in. I then walk toward Gertrudis's class. As usual, she sees me approach and immediately invites me in. I wave to the students and sit down at the back of the room, beside César (who again is alone). The teacher is asking the students questions about words she has written on the board: *queso, quesadilla, banquito, paquete, mosquitos, ronquido*. The date is also written: *Miércoles 26 de Noviembre del 2003* .

*Gertrudis writes "que qui que qui que qui" on the board and tells the students to copy these syllables in their notebooks. "Voy a ver quién lo hace más bonito". As they begin working, I take out my list of possible case-study children and locate each of them in the room. César is sitting alone beside me. Marco Antonio and Axel are sitting at the same table, along with a girl, on the right side of the room in the back. Fabiola and Juan are sitting at two of the middle tables. I am not sure who Arlette is, though, and the teacher never said her name during the class (although she usually does). **OC: Fabiola is not the one I thought she was. Instead, I was thinking of Martha. However, both seem to be good students and could be included with the advanced literacy learners.**

*I notice that César is not working. The teacher also observes this and walks up to him, saying "César, escribe la fecha para que te ponga la mosca". She opens his notebook for him, and writes the date and the syllables mentioned above. She then asks him to copy them. However, he starts talking to her, and she says, "No, apúrate, al ratito me platicas", and walks away. **OC: César does not do much unless the teacher is on top of him making him work. In fact, he did not do much of anything during the entire time I was there.**

*Axel stands up and then sits back down with his group. He finally seems to get to work after a few minutes. Marco Antonio and the girl sitting with him are also writing. Gertrudis goes up to the board and writes "Que, Qui" once more. She proceeds to walk around to each table to help them out. Students begin running up to her to show her their work, but she says (although in a sweet voice), "Levantamos las manos. No nos paramos." **Clearly the students are used to running up to her, and she usually lets them do so.** Marco Antonio is among those who run up to her. He shows her his notebook and she replies "muy bien". **OC: She gives a lot of positive feedback, as opposed to Octavio, who is usually negative.**

*I then turn my attention to Martha (who I thought was Fabiola) and see that she has written the date and the syllables "que" and "qui" a couple of times. She stands up, looks at the board, and then sits back down. In other words, she seems as least moderately interested in what they are doing. Gertrudis goes to the board and writes the same words as before, although leaving out the syllables that would correspond to "que" or "qui":

*Queso __ __ __ s o
Quesadilla __ __ __ s a d i l l a
Banquito b a n __ __ __ t o
Ronquido R o n __ __ __ d o
Mosquitos M o s __ __ __ t o s
Paquete P a __ __ __ t e

She then adds "raqueta" r a __ __ __ t a and "taquito" t a __ __ __ t o to the previous list.

*César, I notice, is playing around with colored pencils, rolling them around in his hand. Axel stands up, and he and Marco Antonio walk up to Gertrudis. She says, "¿ya?", referring to whether or not they have finished. They nod, and she walks with them back to their table to see what they have done. After this, she moves to the table where Juan and Martha are sitting. She tells them to continue writing. César and Marco Antonio walk up to her and ask her something. She quickly sends them back to their seats, telling César to

hurry. **OC: I have noticed that Marco Antonio goes up to the teacher a whole lot. I wonder if he is used to getting so much special attention at home, and thus expects it at school as well.**

*The teacher writes "que" and "qui" on the board again. The children seem to be getting restless, as many of them start running up to her, yelling " dios e". Marco Antonio goes up to her again and asks her a question seemingly related to what is on the board. She nods and motions for him to return to his seat. A fair-skinned boy, who sits in the front left corner of the room, walks up to Gertrudis and acts like he is sick. She feels his forehead and sends him back to his seat. Axel, meanwhile, is sitting, looking down at his notebook (i.e. no longer writing). **OC: Clearly, some students finish much more quickly than others. What does Gertrudis do to keep them busy, if anything?**

*It is 9:05, and Gertrudis says, "a ver, sólo faltan dos equipos". The students reply "¿cuáles?" Martha, who must have finished a while ago, is just sitting, looking around. Juan, who is beside her, also seems to have finished working. However, in contrast to many, they remain relatively quiet. Gertrudis announces, "ahora vamos a trabajar con la carita feliz de la dios e Karina". She goes to the back of the room and takes the carita feliz in her hand. She then tells the students to sit down and be quiet: "Acuérdense que estamos con la boca cerrada".

*She calls on Axel's table to read the first word on the board, "queso" (she points to the word and asks them what it says). She continues going around to the other tables and asks them to read out one of the words on the board (see above). When this is over, she says, "vamos a dios er el trabajo de Gabi" and hands her the carita feliz. She is to go to the board and look for an example of a student's name (their names are posted directly under the board) that contains either the syllable "que" or "qui". At first, she chooses the name Alicia, but Gertrudis corrects her, telling her that Alicia does not include either of these syllables. She then points to Enrique, as the students begin yelling out random names. Gertrudis asks the others, "¿están de acuerdo?" and they reply "sí". She continues, "¿está al final o al principio?" "Al final", they answer.

*Wanting to choose another student, she says "ahora, quiero que pase al pizarrón…" Nevertheless, she does not finish the sentence. Instead, she pauses and asks them "¿cuántas palabras tenemos en el pizarrón?" They count and respond "nueve". She then explains to them that she has rewritten the words, although they are missing some letters. Their task is to complete the missing syllable, by choosing either "que" or "qui". This said, she selects Edson to begin. She hands him the carita feliz and asks him to come to the board and fill in the syllable in the word _ __ __ s o (queso). He does so correctly, and Gertrudis says "muy bien". She then tells him to write it darker so that everyone can see. He erases what he has written and writes it once more, this time larger and darker.

*Gertrudis then calls on Alicia. "Escoge la que tú quieras". She chooses __ __ __ s a d I l l a (quesadilla) and begins writing. "Más grandes, Alicia", says Gertrudis. Like Edson, she does it well. The next student to go up to the board is Julieta, who chooses r o n __ __ __ d o (ronquido). However, she writes r o n que __ __ do. Gertrudis tells her to erase this and write one letter per space, walking up to the front to help her. At this point, Marco Antonio gets up out of his seat and approaches the teacher, who sends him back.

*Gertrudis calls on Flor Aranza, and tells her that she can choose whichever words she wants. She goes up to the board and, selects p a __ __ __ t e (paquete), and writes p a p a q t e (repeating the first two letters in the word). Gertrudis immediately asks her to check it again, to notice which letters are already present and which ones need to be added. "Florecita, observa cuáles son las que ya tienes y cuáles faltan". César, meanwhile, continues playing around with the colored pencils. Another boy has sat down with him and laughs at him. He eventually begins playing, too. The teacher walks up to the board and helps Flor Aranza to fill in the blanks correctly. She holds the girl's hand, pointing to each of the letters, as they pronounce them together.

*Antonio is chosen and selects the word t a __ __ __ t o (taquito). He fills in the syllable "qui" very quickly. Gertrudis walks over to Axel and Marco Antonio, who are playing around and giggling, and says "¡Ya!" She proceeds to warn César, "ahorita te toca" so that he will start paying attention. He is still

Appendix E. Permission Letter for Parents

Universidad de las Américas, Puebla
Departamento de Lenguas
Santa Catarina Mártir
Cholula, Puebla 72820
México

Dr. Patrick Smith
Profesor Titular
Tel: (222) 229 31 17
patrick@mail.udlap.mx
Fax: (222) 229 31 62

Lic. Brad Teague
Asistente de Investigación
Tel: 044 22 24 00 97 04
linguist_udla@yahoo.com.mx

Estimado (a) Padre/Madre de Familia: Diciembre de 2003

Estamos haciendo un proyecto para saber cómo l@s niñ@s aprenden a leer y escribir en la Escuela *Centro Educativo Telpochcalli*. Parte de este proyecto incluye una tesis de maestría, del Lic. Brad Teague, quien actualmente está llevando a cabo observaciones y entrevistas en esta misma escuela. Queremos hacerle a usted algunas preguntas relacionadas con el aprendizaje de la lectoescritura y sus opiniones al respecto. Esta información ayudará a mejorar la enseñanza de la lectoescritura de todos los estudiantes en esta escuela.

Si usted participa en nuestro proyecto será entrevistado acerca de sus perspectivas en cuanto a la lectura y la escritura. Con su permiso, también nos gustaría visitar su hogar para realizar las entrevistas. Sus ideas son muy importantes para nuestro análisis.

Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Si desea, puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento a lo largo del proyecto. Toda información recolectada durante este estudio será estrictamente confidencial. La información será exclusivamente diseminada en medios académicos: trabajos de tesis, publicaciones, congresos y presentaciones, asegurando, en todo momento, el anonimato por medio del uso de pseudónimos.

Por favor indique claramente en la parte inferior de esta carta si nos **da su permiso** para incluirle en este proyecto. Si tiene preguntas sobre el proyecto, por favor no dude en contactarnos por teléfono o por correo a los números que aparecen en la parte superior de esta carta, o bien en el *Centro Educativo Telpochcalli.*

Esperamos contar con su participación. Creemos que esta investigación ayudará a mejorar la enseñanza que se les da a los estudiantes que están en el proceso de aprender a leer y a escribir en español. El proyecto también proveerá a los maestros mayor información acerca de la alfabetización.

Atentamente,

Dr. Patrick Smith
Lic. Brad Teague

Doy mi consentimiento para que todos los datos recopilados puedan ser usados para fines académicos de este proyecto.

Fecha_____
Nombre completo: _____
Firma : _____

Appendix F. Permission Letter for Teachers

Universidad de las Américas, Puebla
Departamento de Lenguas
Santa Catarina Mártir
Cholula, Puebla 72820
México

Dr. Patrick Smith
Profesor Titular
Tel: (222) 229 31 17
patrick@mail.udlap.mx
Fax: (222) 229 31 62

Lic. Brad Teague
Asistente de Investigación
Tel: 044 22 24 00 97 04
linguist_udla@yahoo.com.mx

Estimado (a) Maestro (a):

Enero de 2004

Estamos haciendo un proyecto para saber cómo l@s niñ@s aprenden a leer y escribir en la Escuela *Centro Educativo Telpochcalli*. Parte de este proyecto incluye una tesis de maestría, del Lic. Brad Teague. Queremos hacerle a usted algunas preguntas relacionadas con el aprendizaje de la lectoescritura y sus opiniones al respecto. Esta información ayudará a mejorar la enseñanza de la lectoescritura de todos los estudiantes en esta escuela.

Si usted participa en nuestro proyecto será entrevistado acerca de sus perspectivas en cuanto a la lectoescritura. Con su permiso, también observaremos su salón de clases para ver qué hacen los estudiantes mientras leen y escriben. Sus ideas son muy importantes para nuestro análisis.

Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Si desea, puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento a lo largo del proyecto. Toda información recolectada durante este estudio será estrictamente confidencial. La información será exclusivamente diseminada en medios académicos, publicaciones, congresos y presentaciones, asegurando, en todo momento, el anonimato por medio del uso de pseudónimos.

Por favor indique claramente en la parte inferior de esta carta si nos **da su permiso** para incluirle en este proyecto. Si tiene preguntas sobre el proyecto, por favor no dude en contactarnos por correo o por teléfono a los números que aparecen en la parte superior de esta carta.

Esperamos contar con su participación. Creemos que esta investigación ayudará a mejorar la enseñanza que se les da a los estudiantes que están en el proceso de aprender a leer y a escribir en español. El proyecto también proveerá a los maestros mayor información acerca de la alfabetización.

Dr. Patrick Smith
Lic. Brad Teague

Doy mi consentimiento para que todos los datos recopilados puedan ser usados para fines académicos de este proyecto.

Fecha_____
Nombre completo: _____
Firma: _____

Appendix G. Interview Questions for Each Teacher

Entrevista: Maestros (as)

Nombre Completo: _____
Edad: _____
Sexo: _____
Grado que imparte: _____

Dirección actual: _____
Teléfono: _____

Años de ser maestro/a en esta escuela: _____
Trabajo anterior: _____ ¿Cuánto tiempo? _____

Estudios Profesionales: _____

I. Experiencia Personal

a) ¿Por qué quiso ser maestro/a?

b) ¿Cuántos años de experiencia tiene como maestro/a? ¿En esta escuela?

c) ¿Cómo ha cambiado la escuela desde que empezó a dar clases?

II. Lectura

a) ¿Qué tipo de textos leen los estudiantes en su clase?

b) ¿Por cuánto tiempo leen los estudiantes?

c) ¿Qué tipo de materiales didácticos utiliza en la enseñanza de la lectura?

d) ¿Hay algún tipo de adaptación de materiales para cada grupo? ¿Cuál?

e) ¿Cómo cree que aprenden mejor los niños a leer?

f) En su opinión, ¿qué es un buen lector?

g) ¿Qué propósitos tiene la lectura?

h) Al leer, ¿es más importante la comprensión o la rapidez? ¿Por qué?

III. Escritura

a) ¿Qué tipo de textos escriben los estudiantes en su clase?

b) ¿Por cuánto tiempo escriben los estudiantes?

c) ¿Cómo enseña usted la escritura? ¿Qué materiales utiliza?

d) ¿Usted corrige la escritura de los niños? ¿Cómo la corrige? ¿Por qué?

e) En su opinión, ¿qué es un buen escritor?

f) ¿Qué propósitos tiene la escritura?

g) En su opinión, ¿qué tan importante es la ortografía? ¿La letra bonita? ¿La acentuación? ¿La puntuación?

IV. Fondos de conocimiento lingüístico

a) En esta comunidad, ¿qué tipo de cosas lee la gente en sus hogares? ¿Cómo lo

sabe? Si dice que no se lee mucho, ¿a qué se debe, en su opinión?

b) Estos textos, ¿cómo se parecen a lo que se lee en la escuela? ¿Cómo difieren?

c) ¿Está enterado de lo que leen sus estudiantes fuera de la clase? (hogares, comunidad) ¿Cómo lo sabe?

d) ¿Alguna vez ha visitado el hogar de uno de sus estudiantes? Si es así, ¿por qué? ¿Con qué frecuencia hace estas visitas?

e) ¿Trata de incorporar en la enseñanza de lectura los textos que se encuentran en los hogares y en la comunidad? Si es así, ¿de qué manera lo hace?

f) ¿Qué tipo de cosas se escriben en la comunidad? ¿Cómo lo sabe?

g) ¿Cómo se parecen estos textos a lo que se escribe en la escuela? ¿Cómo difie ren?

h) ¿Está enterado de lo que escriben sus estudiantes fuera de la clase? (hogares, comunidad) ¿Cómo lo sabe?

i) ¿Trata de incorporar en la enseñanza de la escritura los textos que se encuentran en los hogares y en la comunidad? Si es así, ¿de qué manera lo hace?

Appendix H. Interview Questions for Each Parent

Entrevista: Padres/Madres

Nombre Completo: _____
Edad: _____
Sexo: _____
Profesión: _____
Nombre completo de su hijo/a: _____
Grado: _____ Edad: _____

Dirección actual: _____
Teléfono: _____

Años de vivir en esta comunidad: _____
Residencia anterior: _____ ¿Cuánto tiempo? _____
¿Tiene parientes en el extranjero? _____ ¿Dónde? _____
¿Usted ha visitado otro país? ____ ¿Cuál? _____ ¿Por cuánto tiempo? _____

Estudios: _____

I. Experiencia Personal

a) ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene su hijo/a estudiando en esta escuela? ¿Dónde estudiaba antes?

b) ¿Por qué eligió esta escuela para su hijo/a?

II. Lectura

a) ¿Qué tipo de textos lee su hijo/a en su clase de español? ¿Cómo lo sabe?

b) ¿Lee mucho en el hogar? ¿En qué otros lugares lee?

c) ¿Qué tipo de cosas lee su hijo/a en el hogar? ¿Hay alguien que lea con él/ella? ¿Quién es?

d) ¿Quién más lee en su hogar? ¿Qué lee? ¿Lee algo para el trabajo? ¿Qué tanto

lee? ¿Dónde consigue usted estos textos?

e) ¿Cómo cree que aprenden mejor los niños a leer?

f) En su opinión, ¿qué es un buen lector?

g) ¿Qué propósitos tiene la lectura?

h) Al leer, ¿es más importante la comprensión o la rapidez? ¿Por qué?

III. Escritura

a) ¿Qué escribe su hijo/a en la escuela? ¿Cómo lo sabe?

b) ¿Qué tipo de textos escribe su hijo/a en el hogar o en la comunidad (fuera de la escuela)?

c) ¿Qué tanto escribe? ¿Dónde lo hace? ¿Alguien le ayuda?

d) ¿Quién más escribe en su hogar? ¿Quién es? ¿Qué escribe? ¿Escribe algo para el trabajo? ¿Qué tanto escribe?

e) En su opinión, ¿qué es un buen escritor?

f) ¿Qué propósitos tiene la escritura?

g) En su opinión, ¿qué tan importante es la ortografía? ¿La letra bonita? ¿La acentuación? ¿La puntuación?

IV. Fondos de conocimiento lingüístico

a) En esta comunidad, ¿qué tipo de cosas acostumbra leer la gente? Si contesta que no se lee mucho, ¿a qué se debe, en su opinión?

b) Estos textos, ¿cómo se parecen a lo que se lee en la escuela? ¿Cómo difieren?

c) ¿Qué tanto cree usted que conoce el maestro de español a su hijo/a?

d) ¿Cree que el maestro esté enterado de lo que lee su hijo/a en el hogar? ¿Por qué? ¿Debería estar enterado?

e) ¿Qué tipo de cosas se escriben en la comunidad? ¿Cómo lo sabe?

f) ¿Cómo se parecen estos textos a lo que se escribe en la escuela? ¿Cómo difieren?

g) ¿Cree que el maestro esté enterado de lo que escribe su hijo/a fuera de la clase? ¿Por qué? ¿Debería estar enterado?

Appendix I. Interview Questions for Each Fourth-Grade Student

Entrevista: Niños (as) – 4º grado

Nombre Completo: _____
Edad: _____
Sexo: _____
Grado: _____

Años de estudiar en esta escuela: _____
Escuela anterior: _____ ¿Cuánto tiempo? _____
¿Tienes parientes en el extranjero? _____ ¿Dónde? _____
¿Has visitado otro país? ____ ¿Cuál? _____ ¿Por cuánto tiempo? _____

I. Experiencia personal

a) ¿Te gusta estudiar en esta escuela? ¿Por qué (no)?

II. Lectura

a) ¿Te gusta leer? ¿Por qué (no)?

b) ¿Lees rápido? ¿Entiendes todo lo que lees? (ejemplo)

c) ¿Qué lees en tu clase de español?

d) ¿Lees mucho en tu casa? ¿En qué otros lugares lees? ¿Cuándo?

e) ¿Qué tipo de cosas lees en tu casa? (ejemplo) ¿Quién lee contigo? ¿Tú les lees o ellos te leen?

f) Cuando lees, ¿dónde es tu lugar favorito para leer? ¿Por qué?

g) ¿Crees que sea importante leer? ¿Por qué?

III. Escritura

a) ¿Te gusta escribir? ¿Por qué (no)?

b) ¿Qué tanto escribes? ¿Dónde lo haces? ¿Alguien te ayuda?

c) ¿Dónde más te gusta escribir?

d) ¿Tienes buena ortografía? ¿La letra bonita? ¿Sabes poner todos los acentos? (ejemplo)

e) ¿Crees que sea importante escribir? ¿Por qué?

IV. Fondos de conocimiento lingüístico

a) ¿Qué lees fuera de la escuela?

b) ¿Es diferente o parecido lo que lees en la escuela y fuera de ella? ¿Por qué?

c) ¿Te pregunta el maestro qué lees fuera de la escuela? ¿Cuándo te pregunta?

d) ¿Alguna vez usas lo que lees fuera de la escuela como parte de tu clase? ¿Cuándo? ¿Cómo lo usas?

e) ¿Es diferente o parecido lo que escribes en la escuela y fuera de ella? ¿Por qué?

f) ¿Te pregunta el maestro qué escribes fuera de la escuela? ¿Cuándo te pregunta?

g) ¿Alguna vez usas lo que escribes fuera de la escuela como parte de tu clase? ¿Cuándo? ¿Cómo lo usas?

Appendix J. Interview Questions for Each First-Grade Student

Entrevista: Niños (as) – 1º grado

Nombre Completo: _____
Edad: _____
Sexo: _____
Grado: _____

Años de estudiar en esta escuela: _____
Escuela anterior: _____ ¿Cuánto tiempo? _____
¿Tienes parientes en el extranjero? _____ ¿Dónde? _____
¿Has visitado otro país? ____ ¿Cuál? _____ ¿Por cuánto tiempo? _____

I. Experiencia personal

b) ¿Te gusta estudiar en esta escuela? ¿Por qué (no)?

II. Lectura

a) ¿Te gusta leer? ¿Por qué (no)?

b) ¿Lees rápido? ¿Entiendes todo lo que lees? (ejemplo)

c) ¿Qué lees en tu clase de español?

d) ¿Lees mucho en tu casa? ¿En qué otros lugares lees? ¿Cuándo?

e) ¿Qué tipo de cosas lees en tu casa? (ejemplo) ¿Quién lee contigo? ¿Tú les lees o ellos te leen?

f) Cuando lees, ¿dónde es tu lugar favorito para leer? ¿Por qué?

g) ¿Crees que sea importante leer? ¿Por qué?

III. Escritura

a) ¿Te gusta escribir? ¿Por qué (no)?

b) ¿Qué tanto escribes? ¿Dónde lo haces? ¿Alguien te ayuda?

c) ¿Dónde más te gusta escribir?

d) ¿Tienes buena ortografía? ¿La letra bonita? (ejemplo - nombre)

e) ¿Crees que sea importante escribir? ¿Por qué?

IV. Fondos de conocimiento lingüístico

a) ¿Qué lees fuera de la escuela?

b) ¿Es diferente o parecido lo que lees en la escuela y fuera de ella? ¿Por qué?

c) ¿Te pregunta el maestro qué lees fuera de la escuela? ¿Cuándo te pregunta?

d) ¿Es diferente o parecido lo que escribes en la escuela y fuera de ella? ¿Por qué?

e) ¿Te pregunta el maestro qué escribes fuera de la escuela? ¿Cuándo te pregunta?

Appendix K. Focus-Group Interview Questions for Parents

I. Escuela

a) Me comentaron ustedes que hay muchos aspectos del Centro Telpochcalli que les gusta – el nivel académico, buenos maestros, clases divertidas, etc. ¿Hay algo que no les guste? ¿Algo que, en su opinión, la escuela podría mejorar?

b) ¿Qué tanto conocen sus esposos esta escuela? ¿Hablan frecuentemente con los maestros? ¿Asisten a eventos organizados por la institución? ¿Cuáles y cuándo?

II. Lectura

a) Muchas de ustedes mencionaron que a sus hijos no les gusta leer en el hogar, que por lo normal se limitan a leer solamente lo de la tarea. En su opinión, ¿por qué no leen otras cosas? ¿Qué medidas se podrían tomar para que leyeran más en el hogar, para que disfrutaran esta actividad?

b) Hay quienes dicen que se debe de promover "un amor a la lectura". ¿Están de acuerdo con esto? ¿Por qué (no)?

III. Escritura

a) Reportaron que en el hogar sus hijos escriben cartas, recados, dibujos con pequeños textos, etc., cosas que les interesan mucho. ¿Creen ustedes que les interese lo que escriben en la escuela (i.e. resúmenes, composiciones, oraciones)? Si no, ¿hay manera de hacer que la escritura en la escuela sea más interesante/significativa para ellos? ¿Qué se podría hacer?

b) ¿Es importante que los maestros de español corrija la escritura de los niños de primaria? ¿Qué se debe de corregir y por qué? ¿Qué pasa si el maestro no corrige tanto?

IV. Fondos de Conocimiento Lingüístico

a) Muchas contestaron que los maestros (Octavio, Gertrudis) conocen bien a sus hijos, particularmente lo que les gusta leer y escribir. También comentaron que esta relación entre maestro-alumno es muy importante. ¿De qué manera podrían los maestros usar lo que saben de los niños al momento de dar una clase de lectura o de escritura? En otras palabras, ¿qué beneficios podría haber para la instrucción?

b) Tanto los maestros como ustedes dijeron que en la comunidad de San Andrés Cholula hay bastante gente que no sabe leer y/o escribir. ¿Opinan ustedes que no poder leer y escribir sea un obstáculo o impedimento para ellos? Expliquen.

Appendix L. Focus-Group Interview Questions for Teachers

I. Escuela

a) Dice Gertrudis que actualmente hay menos alumnos de origen indígena en la escuela. Si el Telpochcalli promueve programas para la comunidad indígena, como señala Octavio y también muchos documentos de la escuela, ¿por qué hay menos estudiantes de origen indígena?

b) ¿Por qué les han quitado las becas a muchos alumnos indígenas (comentario de Gertrudis)? Puesto que muchos de estos niños van a las escuelas públicas, me pregunto si estas escuelas tienen la misma calidad a nivel académico que el Telpochcalli. ¿Qué opinan?

II. Lectura

a) ¿Están conformes con los materiales que usan para enseñar la lectura? ¿Por qué (no)? Si pudieran tener acceso a otros materiales (i.e. más libros, tecnología), ¿cuáles serían y por qué?

b) ¿Cómo ha cambiado la enseñanza de la lectura y la escritura en esta escuela desde que empezaron a trabajar aquí?

c) ¿Qué tan diferente es la enseñanza de la lectura en otras escuelas de Cholula?

d) Los dos comentan que no se limitan a usar los libros de la SEP (Gertrudis saca libros de la biblioteca y Octavio les pide a sus estudiantes que traigan textos de sus casas). ¿Por qué usan materiales adicionales? ¿Creen que lo hagan otros maestros del Telpochcalli? ¿Cómo lo hacen?

e) En cuanto a los textos traídos de casa, ¿se nota una diferencia entre los hogares de altos y los de bajos recursos económicos? Expliquen.

III. Escritura

a) Durante las observaciones he visto que los estudiantes copian mucho del pizarrón o de tarjetas (Gertrudis) y que escriben muchos textos dictados (Octavio). ¿Cuál es el propósito de estas actividades? ¿Qué es lo que están aprendiendo los niños al escribir de esta manera?

b) Si en la comunidad una persona escribe un texto con mala ortografía / sin acentos o acentos mal colocados / mal uso de la puntuación, ¿qué consecuencias hay? ¿Es probable que alguien lo juzgue? ¿Qué se podría decir de él/ella?

c) He observado que en los salones de clase no ponen a la vista muchos ejemplos de textos producidos por los niños. ¿Por qué?

IV. Fondos de Conocimiento Lingüístico

a) Casi todos los entrevistados para mi estudio opinaron que en general los residentes de San Andrés leen muy poco. En su opinión, ¿cómo podría fomentarse la lectura en esta comunidad? ¿Habría resistencia? ¿Obstáculos? Expliquen.

b) Muchos comentaron que mientras los estudiantes escriben mucho en la escuela (resúmenes, composiciones, oraciones, etc.), fuera de la escuela lo hacen muy poco. ¿A qué se debe esto? ¿Hay manera de animarlos a seguir escribiendo fuera del contexto escolar?

c) ¿Qué pensarían de la idea de que los maestros visitaran los hogares de sus alumnos? ¿Estarían dispuestos a hacer esto? ¿Bajo qué condiciones? ¿Podría haber algún beneficio para la enseñanza de la lectura y de la escritura? ¿Cuál(es)?