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Journal-based self-studies of L1 English/L2 Spanish speakers learning L3 Kichwa in Ecuador and L3 Guaraní in Paraguay

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Resumen

Carol y Joshua, hablantes de inglés como L1 y de español como L2, tuvieron recientemente oportunidades para aprender dos de las lenguas indígenas más comunes en Sudamérica — Kichwa y Guaraní. Carol y Joshua vivieron con familias bilingües cuya lengua dominante era el español y quienes hablaban la lengua indígena que nosotros estábamos estudiando. Ambos autores llevamos unos diarios, reportando el progreso de nuestro aprendizaje. Después de resaltar la tradición de investigaciones de diarios en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, y de examinar las perspectivas sobre la interacción en la adquisición de segundas lenguas, primero describimos los contextos de bilingüismo en Ecuador y Paraguay respectivamente. Luego, presentamos los datos de nuestros diarios para mostrar cómo cada una de nuestras experiencias de aprendizaje fue influenciada, no sólo por el contexto bilingüe particular, sino por una confluencia de las fuerzas lingüísticas, pedagógicas, socioeconómicas, y culturales.

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Palabras clave

Lengua indígena, contextos bilingües, adquisición de segundas lenguas, estudios que usan diarios, estudios en el extranjero

Key words

Key words: Indigenous language, Bilingual contexts, Second language acquisition, Journal studies, Study abroad

Abstract

Both Carol and Joshua, speakers of L1 English and L2 Spanish, were recently granted opportunities to learn two of the most common indigenous languages in South America—Kichwa and Guaraní. We lived with Spanish-dominant bilingual families who spoke the target language (L3) we were studying. We both kept learning journals recording our language learning progress. After highlighting the tradition of journal-

based studies of language learning, and reviewing the perspectives on interaction in second language acquisition, we first describe the contexts for bilingualism in Ecuador and Paraguay. Second, we present data from our journals to illustrate how each of our language acquisition experiences was shaped not only by that particular bilingual context, but by a confluence of linguistic, pedagogical, socioeconomic, and cultural forces.

1. Introduction

Both Carol and Joshua, speakers of L1 English and L2 Spanish, were recently granted opportunities to learn two of the most common indigenous languages in South America, Kichwa and Guaraní. We lived in South America with Spanish-dominant bilingual families who spoke the target language (L3) we were studying. We both kept learning journals recording our language learning progress or lack thereof. In January and February of 2006, Carol lived for six weeks in Tena, Ecuador, and studied Kichwa with one instructor an average of two hours a day. She stayed with the bilingual Spanish-Kichwa family of her instructor's sister and had her Kichwa lessons both indoors in her living room and outdoors on a roofed patio. For six weeks during July and August of 2004, Joshua studied five hours a day with three instructors at a language institute in Asunción, Paraguay, and lived with a bilingual Spanish-Guaraní family. His formal instruction took place only in a school environment. For both learners, Spanish was the medium of instruction. Carol kept a written journal of her language learning experiences, making entries by hand on week-day afternoons in a snack shop in Tena. Joshua kept both a written and an audio journal, making entries twice a week in his host-family's home.

Carol is an Advanced High second language (L2) Spanish speaker according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for speaking (Breiner-Sanders, et al., 2000) and college English teacher who can speak Italian at the Novice level. Her motivation for learning Kichwa was to help her son who was in the Peace Corps working in a Kichwa village in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Joshua is

a Superior level (Breiner-Sanders, et al., 2000) Spanish speaker and a college Spanish teacher who can speak Portuguese at the Novice level. He was motivated to learn Guaraní by the challenge of acquiring an indigenous language after having participated in a Fulbright group-projects abroad seminar one year earlier that focused on the bilingual situation in Paraguay. As L2 teachers, another motivation of Carol and Joshua was to experience role reversal in order to empathize with their L2 students, a practice recommended by language teaching specialists for professional development (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001).

After highlighting the tradition of journal-based studies of language learning, and reviewing the perspectives on interaction in second language acquisition (SLA), we will first describe the contexts for bilingualism in Ecuador and Paraguay. Second, we will present data summarized and quoted from our journals to illustrate how each of our language acquisition experiences was shaped not only by that particular bilingual context, but by a confluence of linguistic, pedagogical, socioeconomic, and cultural forces. Most of our experiences and hence our journal entries had to do with dissonance influenced by the above forces and by perceptions of learning failure. However, the inevitable conflicts were punctuated by moments of connectedness and perceptions of learning success. We conclude by emphasizing how journal-keeping can function to help learners cope with dissonance and thus create a more positive and effective study abroad experience.

2. The tradition of journal studies of language learning

Many types of L2 journal studies have been published in which at least one of the researchers is also the language learner whose learning process is being studied. There are single and double-authored journal self-studies as well as collaborative journal studies, both of which can be either open-ended or issue-driven. Bailey (1983, 1991) learned the methodology of journal or diary self-studies, which she also called "first-person case studies," (1991, p. 62) from her teacher John Schumann. With his wife Francine, who also kept a journal, Schumann published the first journal-based L2 learning account of their experiences learning Farsi and Arabic (Schumann & Schumann, 1977).

Collaborative journal-based studies, on the other hand, involve a native speaker of a language and a learner learning that language, both of whom study the learner's acquisition process and learning journal. Schmidt and Frota's (1986) study of Schmidt's language learning in Brazil analyzes how he developed basic conversational ability in Portuguese while learning in formal and informal contexts. The journal entries in the study serve as qualitative data sources that track Schmidt's acquisition of the formal linguistic aspects of Portuguese while also helping to describe how he used those linguistic forms in his interactions with native Portuguese speakers. Coupled with quantitative analyses of several taped conversations in Portuguese with the coauthor of the article, the journal entries suggest that noticing form is an important step in the process of L2 acquisition. Specifically, after becoming aware of linguistic forms and knowing how to use them correctly in

context, Schmidt argued that noticing helped him to successfully and more efficiently acquire Portuguese.

Journal studies can be either open-ended or issue-driven. In open-ended studies, the researcher analyzes the journal for common themes, as did Bailey (1980) and Severino (2002-3) when they examined their own journals for patterns and found language classroom anxiety to be the most common theme. In issue-driven studies, researchers can begin their study with a theme or issue they wish to explore, as did Cohen (1997) when he set out to investigate his own acquisition of pragmatics in Japanese. Because our own study was open-ended, we each analyzed our own journal and found the common themes of linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural-socioeconomic conflicts. If we had not kept journals, we would not have been able to arrive at these themes or construct detailed narratives and analyses of our experiences. Occasionally, we will quote from our journals to illustrate or dramatize a point about our perceptions.

Because both Carol and Joshua learned language by interacting with native speakers in both instructional and less formal social settings, it is important to examine some predominant views of the role of interaction in SLA. Researchers working from a cognitive perspective on SLA (Gass, 1997; Long & Doughty, 2003) have called interaction a kind of priming device that "sets the stage for learning" (Gass, 2003, p. 235). Others, while making use of sociocultural theoretical views, have argued that if the interaction involves genuinely collaborative dialogue, not only is the process of SLA facilitated,

but these collaborative moments are also said to be the site for L2 acquisition (Swain, 1997; Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2001, 2002). It can be hypothesized that the L2 output that Carol and Joshua produced during their interactions—both more formal instruction and less formal cultural exchange—might constitute a meaningful use of these learners' linguistic resources and an opportunity to test out their hypotheses about the L2. Their output would allow them to move from semantic to syntactic processing (Swain, 1985), thereby helping them acquire the L2.

3. Bilingual contexts: Ecuador and Paraguay

In both countries, Spanish is considered the formal, public language of government, media, and commerce, whereas the indigenous language is the informal, private family language of intimacy. In both countries, Spanish has greater prestige because of its social, economic, and educational value (Choi, 2005). Kichwa is the northern variety of Quechua, the language of administration in the Twantinsuyu (the Inca domain) spoken in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Colombia. Quechua and its varieties, used by an estimated eight to twelve million people, is the most widely spoken language in the Americas (Escobar, 2004, p. 644). Kichwa is spoken by well over two million of Ecuador's total population of 13.5 million (Haboud, 2004), and is the most widely used of Ecuador's 22 indigenous languages. (Escobar, 2004, based on Summer Institute of Linguistics data www.sil.org). It is important to note that "Kichwa" is the new, non-Spanish-influenced spelling of "Quichua" in Kichwa Unificado, a consensus dialect and spelling system agreed

upon in 1980 by the varied Ecuadorian Kichwa communities throughout the Andes and the Amazon (Santillán, 2005).

An estimated 78,000 Kichwa primary school children are enrolled in a bilingual school, learning Kichwa literacy and orality as an L1, or for the increasing number of Spanish-dominant heritage learners, as an L2. Spanish-Kichwa bilingual program participants constitute three quarters of Ecuador's bilingual school population (Dirección Nacional de Educación Bilingüe, 2006). Despite this elaborate system of bilingual education, Kichwa language and culture are threatened by attrition, with many parents speaking Spanish instead of Kichwa to their children, wanting them to be as fluent as possible in the language of power (Rindstedt & Aronsson, 2002). When speakers of a language stop using that language at home, sociolinguists agree that it is in danger of dying (Baker, 2003). Kichwa has already all but vanished in some provinces such as Pichincha, where the capital Quito is located, although it has undergone revitalization in others, for example, in Otavalo (Meisch, 2002). Otavaleños have preserved and reinvigorated many aspects of their culture and commerce, especially their weaving traditions, and have marketed their products in Otavalo, throughout Ecuador, and internationally. Along with this cultural and commercial rebirth has come a strengthening of Sierra (Mountain) Kichwa. In other more isolated areas of Ecuador, for example, villages in the Amazon, Kichwa is alive and even the dominant language, especially among women and children, because of lack of contact with mestizo Spanish-speakers. However, because of ever-increasing development of

transportation, mass-communication, and the oil industry, Spanish, as the public language of power, seriously competes with Kichwa in the Amazon and has already overtaken it in some Andean provinces (Haboud, 1998). The attrition situation is exacerbated because bilingual programs are often of poor quality (King, 2003) with poorly trained teachers and a curriculum of repetition of a simple vocabulary that barely expands on students' strong oral/aural Kichwa foundation.

The situation of attrition in Kichwa homes and bilingual programs is compounded by mainstream Ecuadorians' lack of interest in learning the language themselves (Haboud, 1998), making Ecuador ironically a multicultural country of one-way bilingualism; that is, Kichwa (and Shwar and Huaorani) minorities must learn Spanish, but mestizos are not required to learn any other Ecuadorian language besides Spanish. A few Ecuadorian universities, Institutes, and Casas de la Cultura teach Kichwa, for example, the Catholic University of Ecuador and Experiences in International Living, but a smattering of scattered programs, including a few in the United States (Universities of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Arizona State) has not significantly increased the national and international visibility and vitality of Kichwa.

In Paraguay, by contrast, the racial and linguistic situation is very different; Guaraní, the indigenous language, is in fact the majority language and receives substantial governmental and popular support. Unlike Ecuador, Paraguay has been described as a bilingual, monocultural nation (de Granda, 1988) where 90% of the 95% mestizo population of six and a half million speaks

Guaraní, recognized in 1967 as a national language (Choi, 2003). Forty-nine percent of the population is bilingual in Guaraní and Spanish; 39% of the population is monolingual in Guaraní, but unlike Ecuador whose majority is monolingual in Spanish, only 6.4% of the population is monolingual in Spanish (Paraguay, 1993).

Unlike other countries in South America where indigenous languages are spoken together with Spanish, Paraguay is a unique bilingual context for a variety of reasons. Several important events in the country's history have contributed to the preservation and existing widespread use of Guaraní alongside Spanish by a large number of Paraguayans. Spanish settlers, in pursuit of *El Dorado*, found that Paraguay's geography was difficult to penetrate (Choi, 2003). Once they finally arrived, they quickly discovered that Paraguay did not have precious metals and gold as were found in other countries in South America. Given that Paraguay was landlocked and therefore geographically isolated, many Spanish settlers who reached Paraguay were primarily men (Choi, 2003). The absence of Spanish women led to an unprecedented mix of Spanish men with Guaraní women (Benítez, 1985). This helped to maintain the use of Guaraní.

Another important factor in the maintenance and prominence of Guaraní in colonial Paraguay was the role of Jesuit missionaries. Many historians and linguists have argued that the Guaraní language was not affected by Spanish settlements due to the fact that the Spanish Jesuits who lived in Paraguay became proficient in Guaraní and used it to promote their religious views to the indigenous population in many parts

of the country (Benítez, 1985; Cordozo, 1985). Finally, several dictatorships in Paraguay during the 19th century have also affected the promotion, use, and survival of Guaraní. While some dictators tried to prohibit the use of the indigenous language during their tenure, others succeeded in politically, economically, and socially cutting off Paraguay from the outside world. This, in effect, continued to preserve Guaraní as Paraguayans had little chance to interact with other Spanish-speaking countries. Many of these historical circumstances have helped to create a unique bilingual context of a modern-day Paraguay where Guaraní continues to exist alongside Spanish.

More recent actions and laws have been implemented to preserve such a distinctive bilingual environment. In 1992, the National Constitution declared Guaraní an official language of Paraguay along with Spanish (Paraguay, 1993), and in 1994, the government implemented an educational reform policy mandating that both Guaraní and Spanish be taught in schools “with the purpose of proficiency and literacy in both languages” (Choi, 2003, p. 84).

Many social and educational organizations offer Spanish and Guaraní, with some offering radio classes via programs such as *Programa Rural de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural por Radio* (PREBIR, 2003). It is clear that the prestige afforded to Guaraní, as witnessed in its everyday use by a large number of Paraguayans, represents an anomaly among indigenous languages spoken alongside Spanish in South America. It is in this context that Joshua spent his time reflecting on, living in, and struggling with his acquisition of Guaraní.

4. Linguistic problems: Differences between English/Spanish and Kichwa/Guaraní

Carol and Joshua’s language learning experiences were generally problematic and frustrating for reasons that were linguistic, pedagogical, socioeconomic, and cultural. First, the linguistic nature of the indigenous languages of Kichwa and Guaraní presented several difficulties for both in their respective learning contexts. These problems ranged from syntactic-based complexities to phonological difficulties. Some of their language learning problems were caused by differences between the target language and the English and Spanish they already spoke. In Carol’s case, problems were caused by Kichwa’s different syntactic structure as a Subject Object Verb (SOV) language, unlike English and Spanish which are Subject Verb Object (SVO) languages. After stating the subject and producing all the direct and indirect objects (remembering to attach postpositions rather than prepositions) and adverbs that belong in the middle, she would often forget what the verb was, an experience akin to starting a sentence in L1 and forgetting what you are about to say.

Carol’s syntactic problems were compounded by dialect conflicts. Most of the available curricular materials, which Carol studied before, during, and after her stay, were based on either Andean Kichwa or Kichwa Unificado, but she was living in Amazonia where a different, less inflected dialect was spoken. Many of the suffixes taught in the books were deemed unnecessary, even pretentious. For example, the sentence “I’m going to Quito by car with my dad” would be rendered thusly:

Nuka(ka) Quituma(n) karru(p)i ñuka(pak) taytawa(n)/yayawa rikerini/rinkarawni.

I Quito to car in my dad with will go

Using the subject marker (*ka*) or the possessive marker (*pak*) might be met with laughter in Amazonia, yet Carol became dependent on these markers for processing messages she heard. When she didn't hear them because they weren't used, comprehension was made even more difficult. Even at the end of her stay, she was able to notice very little in the conversational flow of others that was familiar. In general, the language not directed at her was opaque. She could understand mainly pronouns, especially *ñuka* (I) and *ñukanchik* (we), and family member names: *yaya* (father), *ñaña* (sister of a girl), *pani* (sister of a boy), *churi* (son), *ushi* (daughter), and *cachun* (daughter-in-law). However, she found it hard to notice the verb forms that accompanied these pronouns and nouns except for the future tense, which stood out to her because it had so many syllables [*shamunkarawnkichik*—You (plural) will come]

Joshua first tried bottom-up processing strategies to break down and understand an utterance such as *Nderepytasëipa* (Don't you want to stay?), but by the end of his six-week course, he learned top-down processing strategies that helped his ability to read and understand spoken Guaraní. Given Guaraní's agglutinative nature, he initially was unable to dissect the chunks of language that he heard in conversations with his instructors. His journal entries at the beginning of his language study in Paraguay document his frustration with his inability to effectively parse what he was hearing. However, by the

time the six weeks were over, this particular linguistic difficulty was mitigated by his ability to listen for root words (i.e., mostly verbs) within the flow of language coming from native Guaraní speakers.

Similarly, he also found the Guaraní phonological system challenging. While linguists in Paraguay still argue about how to adequately represent and differentiate particular sounds from each other in writing, he found that physically producing nasal vowels, when reading them within a text or part of word, was taxing. As he wrote in his journal at the beginning of the course, "The pronunciation is just killing me. People give me this pained look on their faces, that, if translated, would mean, "What did you just say?" Kichwa phonology, on the other hand, is similar enough to Spanish and even to English (the "sh" sound for example), so it did not present as much of a problem for Carol as did syntax and grammar in speaking, but especially in listening comprehension.

5. Pedagogical conflicts

Both Carol and Joshua's journals reveal that they had an especially difficult time adjusting to pedagogical methods that they knew to be controversial, criticized, or even maligned in the United States. That is, their teachers' methods conflicted with the ways they themselves both taught and learned L2s. At first, Carol's teacher used Total Physical Response (TPR), a method he used when he taught L1 Kichwa elementary school students, but Carol found having to give and

obey commands in the jungle heat (“Come here,” “Go Away”; “Grab her by the ears, the nose,” etc.) to be fatiguing, demeaning, and age-inappropriate. In addition, Carol knew verbs and their conjugations to be the foundations of language mastery, but her Kichwa teacher insisted that she memorize long lists of nouns, for example, ALL the parts of the body, many of which she did not know even in Spanish (e.g., the names of each of the five fingers) before he would teach her verbs, which she eventually decided to learn on her own from books, even though she wasn’t sure of the correct conjugations for Tena. Her instructor also insisted on teaching revitalization vocabulary, for example, for days of the week and months of the year, which few Kichwas used at least in conversation. When Carol used these words in her son’s village, people either stared or laughed at her.

In addition, after the first few TPR lessons, it seemed her teacher had run out of curricula. Reading over her journal entries, Carol realized she had to participate more in curriculum construction. She reported in her journal how she worked by herself to develop conversational topics—questions and answers about self, family, and country, for example, “What are you most afraid of? Where does your oldest son live? What do you think of the President of Ecuador?” When those topics failed to spark interest or ran out, she proposed they read children’s stories from a book she procured from her son’s village school. They worked on translating these stories about animals word for word, a slow and painful process due to the teacher’s lack of familiarity with Kichwa Unificado. As most SLA professionals would argue, Grammar Translation does very little

to improve a learner’s speaking and listening abilities (Homstad & Thorsen, 2000). When she went to her son’s village two hours into the jungle to attend a *minga* (a communal work project), communicating with the villagers was a test of her Kichwa learning, a test that she failed. She wanted to communicate, to help, to connect, but felt left out instead. She wrote in her journal:

Preparing food with the village women at the minga: “I said, ‘Pimientara pitini?’ (I cut peppers?) and the women gave me a bucket top and a *tapa de la olla* for cutting with instructions to cut the pieces much smaller. They cut everything very fast, even with dull knives. I was slow, but at least I was contributing. I was surrounded by Kichwa jokes and laughter (people making fun of me?), and because I didn’t understand and found the cutting conditions challenging, I rarely looked up except to smile occasionally, probably complicit in my own mockery.

Although Kichwa was spoken in Carol’s home, it was spoken much too fast for her to understand and often spoken in hushed undertones precisely so she would not understand. Unlike Carson (Carson & Longhini, 2002), who was able to learn Spanish indirectly and inductively from her interlocutors in Argentina, Carol faced a problematic lack of comprehensible + 1 input. Either Kichwa was spoken by family members and relatives at a rapid fire + 3 level, or it was + 0, spoken in an exaggerated, simple and school-ish manner that Carol often found too insulting to care to respond seriously to. Because most Kichwa are to some degree bilingual, living as they do in a one-way bilingual country, any time Carol had a hard time communicating, she resorted

to Spanish. She felt guilty and incompetent communicating so much in Spanish, but she rationalized that her Spanish as a second language needed work too and would ultimately be more useful to her professionally. Thus, Carol herself was both a victim and a perpetuator of Kichwa attrition.

Joshua's language pedagogy also conflicted with that of his teachers—a case of his

<i>Aguap'ya ápe?</i>	(Do I sit here?)	<i>Rekaru ápe.</i>	(You sit here.)
<i>Rekar'ya ápe?</i>	(Do you sit here?)	<i>Aguapy ápe.</i>	(I sit here.)
<i>Oguap'ya ápe?</i>	(Does he sit here?)	<i>Oguapy ápe.</i>	(He sits here.)
<i>Jaguap'ya ápe?</i>	(Do we sit here?)	<i>Jaguapy ápe.</i>	(We sit here.)

Joshua perceived that his instructors set unrealistic goals, for example, teaching him a grammatical structure on day 1, which was not reviewed again until day 6. They used a deductive approach of general rule to examples of the rule, which conflicted with the inductive ways he taught and learned languages from examples to generalization. He was also frustrated with the lack of measuring tools to assess what he was learning; he asked for an exam in week 3 to keep himself focused and motivated, but he didn't receive it until week 5. He expressed his frustration with behaviorally based rote pedagogy in his journal:

...and he's asking me to read these questions, line by line, with words that I had never even looked at or studied before and he says (in Spanish) *Hey, this is easy, this is basic stuff. Some of these words are from lessons 1, 2, and 3. Okay, let's look at the vocabulary list.* So we run down the vocabulary list for

own Communicative Approach meeting his instructors' Audiolingual Methodology. He was subjected to disconnected, mechanical grammar drills five hours a day, which led to frustration and mental fatigue by the middle of the second week. For example, he and his instructor took turns role-playing by either asking or answering such questions as the following:

lesson 7, and then it's right back to the exercises of him reading the question and me responding—me sort of giving him this Pavlovian response to the stimuli (i.e., the questions) in the dialogue. I have no idea of what the hell I'm saying in response to him. I find myself processing the input (i.e., a question) and waiting for up to a minute for me to dissect it because I want to know exactly what I am saying. I find myself getting extremely frustrated.

6. The family stay: Cultural and socioeconomic dissonance

Living with a family that spoke the target language did not prove as helpful to Carol and Joshua as they expected it would—for a number of reasons. The first had to do with Spanish dominance and the ratio of the indigenous language to Spanish spoken in both homes. For example, because adults

were often not at home, the family members Carol spoke most to were Spanish-dominant children who understood but didn't speak Kichwa. Hence, she and the children spoke in Spanish. Joshua's family members were also often not around; they had another home in the country and had had many exchange students before. Thus, there was a lack of genuine interaction between him and his host family. Instead, his Guaraní practice was with the house maid, taxi drivers, and the instructors at the language institute. Not having meaningful interactions during their home stays in Kichwa and Guaraní relegated Carol and Joshua's language learning more to the pedagogically problematic instructional context than the informal situations they were counting on to give their L2 acquisition a boost.

Socioeconomic factors contributed significantly to dissonance and interfered with their language learning, but in different ways: Carol's family, although headed by an elementary school teacher and a craftswoman, was much poorer than the typical middle class family in the U.S. On the other hand, Joshua's family, headed by a government custom's official and a dentist, were much more wealthy than the typical U.S. family. The poverty of Carol's family and the wealth of Joshua's seemed culturally foreign to them; they were far out of their comfort zones and often confided their struggles in their journals. Poverty affected Carol's language lessons because when the family couldn't pay the electricity bill, there was no light to study at night although sometimes they had lessons by the candle or cell-phone light. Even when the bill was paid and the lights were back on, there were frequent power and water outages

common in the area. Political problems also plagued Carol's family. Her teacher was too preoccupied to focus on lessons when he was ousted from his job in the bilingual program and when a business conflict in the extended family erupted and resulted in the arrest and jailing of his brother-in-law, the father of the household in which Carol lived.

Joshua's feeling of disconnectedness while at home and away from his instructors at the language institute hindered his ability to fully immerse himself in Guaraní throughout his six-week stay. Specifically, his family's wealth limited his access to and practice with Guaraní in a number of ways. His host family consisted of a mother and father, their two teenage sons, and a teenage daughter. While the father and mother grew up in small villages outside of Asunción and had therefore spoken Guaraní on a daily basis when they were younger, Joshua rarely heard them speak Guaraní to each other and almost never heard them speak it to their three children. Furthermore, the three kids had a limited vocabulary in Guaraní and could not speak it fluently.

While educational initiatives in the three teenagers' schools did include classes in Guaraní, they chose not to speak it outside of class nor with their parents or with each other while at home. When Joshua asked why they chose not to speak it, they responded by saying that they would not need it for their future and that it's a generational and economic issue. That is, they associated Guaraní with people who were older and/or poorer than they, such as the house maid who was affectionately known as Ña Blanca. Joshua found that the only person with

whom he practiced his Guaraní was with Ña Blanca—mostly while she was making or serving meals. While Ña Blanca also spoke Spanish, her first language was Guaraní. She stayed with the family in Asunción during the week and would travel to her home in the outskirts of the capital city on the weekends. Her lower socioeconomic status therefore helped to establish what her L1 (Guaraní) and L2 (Spanish) were. In all, Joshua felt linguistically isolated while at home; carrying out mini conversations with the maid was beneficial, but he lacked extensive interactions in Guaraní with other family members. Several journal entries reveal that this was a disappointing aspect of his language learning experience.

Yet, there were moments of connectedness, when the conflicts and hurdles seemed to be worth experiencing. For example, the long list of parts of the body paid off when Carol and her Peace Corps son taught them to Kichwa children in the bilingual school in his village. Here she writes in her journal about connecting with the children despite her linguistic limitations; after the parts-of-the-body lesson and after asking the children questions in English, her son had them ask her questions in Kichwa. She was pleased with their interest in her life.

I was not much better [than the students in English] when it came to them asking me questions in Kichwa. Most of the time I had to ask them to repeat the question or I had to ask my son to repeat it slowly, dissecting it word by word, or to translate it into Spanish. Most of them wanted to know my name, how many kids I have, their names, my husband's name and his work, my work, what I teach, my dog's name, my Kichwa

teacher's name, how long I'd be in their village, how long I'd be in Ecuador, and the most interesting question—what all was in my house.

In addition, Carol and her teacher began communicating more effectively when he recovered his job as a bilingual program administrator and was in charge of giving the Kichwa exam to teachers. He taught Carol how to answer the questions on the exam and how to handle various written genres the exam demanded—a *solicitud* (letter of request), a folktale, an invitation to a meeting. She was also invited to be *compadres* (co-parents) with her teacher and godmother to one of his daughters.

Joshua experienced moments of connectedness when he and his host family found that they shared many of the same views on issues of U.S. immigration and foreign policy. These discussions, though infrequent, allowed him to converse with family members about a topic that was important to everyone involved. While these conversations were predominantly carried out in Spanish, they did evoke emotional exchanges where host family members expressed their views by adding chunks of Guaraní alongside their Spanish. Those moments allowed Joshua to hear Guaraní within the context of naturally-occurring exchanges—something that his classroom experience did not always offer. Similarly, he was pleased to notice Guaraní's *partículas* while listening to everyday conversations in the streets of Asunción, for example, *Esperána*, which is Spanish (*Espera*) combined with Guaraní (*na*) that means "Could you please wait." As he wrote in his journal,

I hear Guaraní outside of class in the streets all the time...I think that's part of the process of noticing these little *partículas* and their function in the language; hearing them outside of class, hearing them in conversations."

He passed his Guaraní exit exam with flying colors, fielding questions about his study abroad experience from a roomful of instructors. On his last day in Paraguay, he understood most of what the maid and a friend told him. This, in his mind, was one of the few moments of linguistic success.

7. Insights from and about journals

Given the linguistic complexity of Kichwa and Guaraní, and the brief period of time learning these indigenous languages, there were few opportunities to collaboratively dialogue in the third language (L3) under study, especially with host family members. This resulted in a lack of meaningful, pushed output which, in turn, prevented both Carol and Joshua from processing the syntax of the L3 and merely focusing on their receptive skills (i.e., semantic processing). However, in Joshua's case, interaction with Guaraní speakers in class and with the maid at home did indeed set "the stage for learning" (Gass, 2003, p. 235) and did help him to begin noticing specific linguistic aspects of Guaraní in everyday, conversational contexts.

As Carol's case shows, learning journals enable learners to see patterns in problematic learning conditions and to try to intervene to resolve those problems by suggesting alternate curricula and activities. Both cases reveal that learning journals act as a safety valve and confidante to cope with linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural dissonance. Studying learning

journals—one's own and others—teaches us about the relationship between contexts for learning and the learner's affective state. Studying learning journals highlights language learning as not only a linguistic and cognitive experience, but a deeply social, psychological, and emotional one. While these latter aspects of L2/L3 acquisition often influence how much and how fast one learns a language in traditional, classroom settings, Carol and Joshua's journal entries revealed how affective factors became evermore important in their respective L3 immersion settings. Their role reversal experiences of becoming L2/L3 students have further sensitized them to the effect of the home environment on the classroom progress of their own L2 students. How does the home environment enhance or detract from language learning? What effect do the linguistic and socioeconomic conditions in the home have on students' progress?

SLA studies that rely on introspective accounts of individual language learners that document how and why they acquire languages are not new. However, as SLA research increasingly gives pause to investigate the social and cultural facets of language learning (Block, 2003; Lantolf, 2006), journal studies will continue to shed light on features of L2/L3 learning that are typically left out of mainstream, cognitively-oriented SLA research. Specifically, data from journal studies such as those presented here afford researchers a window on learners' emotional states of being while acquiring an L2, an L3, or beyond. These affective characteristics of language learning are difficult to capture via surveys, grammatical judgment tasks administered in laboratory settings, or through classroom observations. Journals

lend themselves to providing researchers with rich, qualitative data by which a deep understanding of particular learners and/or language learning contexts can be attained.

Finally, it's important to note that language learning journals will continue to be important tools in researchers' methodological arsenals. Now that more learners are able to record their learning on their own or through courses that offer them the ability to document their experiences via Blogs, Wikis, and online discussion forums, language researchers will have access to a treasure chest of data about self-perceptions of L2/L3 learning. Future journal-based, language learning studies will no doubt take advantage of emerging technologies that will help researchers to better understand the complex nature of L2 (or L3) acquisition in a variety of settings. ■

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