THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON THE PRODUCTION OF ENGLISH NARRATIVES BY SPANISH-ENGLISH BILINGUAL CHILDREN

by

WEI CHEN

(Under the Direction of Liang Chen)

ABSTRACT

The social and linguistic demographics of U.S. schools are constantly evolving. In recent years, the number of English learners (ELs) entering the U.S. educational system has increased substantially. Unfortunately, statistics have consistently shown that ELs are at risk for poor educational outcomes. Programs of language assistance, such as bilingual dual immersion programs, are designed to help ensure that ELs attain language proficiency in both English and their native languages, and meet the same academic content and achievement standards that are expected of all students nationwide.

The goal of this dissertation is to document an in-depth investigation of narrative skills by Spanish-English bilingual speakers who are enrolled in bilingual immersion programs and in monolingual English instruction. This dissertation consists of three independent studies, which are built upon each other in that they all investigate a particular type of narrative skill. The specific focus includes ELs’ use of referring expressions, evaluative expressions, and relative clauses in oral narratives in English. The data are drawn from the frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) from the Child Language Data Exchange System (MacWhinney, 2000). Environmental factors, such as instructional models, family
socioeconomic status, and home language use, are considered when evaluating both the quantity and quality of language use in the English narratives produced by Spanish-English bilinguals. The findings did not provide supportive evidence that ELs in dual immersion program outperform their peers in the accuracy and richness of their narrative production. Instead, socioeconomic status was found to play a more important role in predicting individual differences in adequately managing references and using richer evaluative devices in oral narratives. Immersion learners from different grade levels have also showed a clear pattern of growth in syntactic complexity.

The current investigations provide significant insights into the pragmatic-discourse function of bilingual speech in constructing coherent, engaging, and sophisticated messages in oral narratives that facilitate successful multilingual communications. This dissertation also contributes to the field by drawing implications of the immersion curriculum design to boost bilingual children’s narrative readiness and academic attainment, and capitalize on facilitating factors to maximize language and literacy outcomes of dual language learners.

INDEX WORDS: Bilingual dual immersion programs, Spanish-English bilingual children, Corpus investigation, Referring expressions, Evaluative expressions, Relative clauses, English language learners, Narrative development, Environmental factors.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem statement

The number of English learners (ELs) entering the U.S. educational system has increased substantially in recent years. The percentage of ELs in U.S public schools was up to 9.2% according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2015), and 20% (10 million) of ELs enrolled in public schools are Latino, serving as the largest population of ELs in the United States (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Unfortunately, statistics have consistently shown that ELs are at risk for poor educational outcomes. For instance, Latino children were outperformed by non-Hispanic white students in reading in Grades 4, 8, and 12, and they were also shown to remain behind throughout their academic careers (Rooney et al., 2006). Thus, national attention has focused on promoting ELs’ academic and language abilities. Programs of language assistance, such as bilingual immersion programs, are designed to help ensure that ELs attain language proficiency in both English and their native languages and meet the same academic content and achievement standards that are expected by all students nationwide. Despite the startling growth of school-age children learning English as a second language, little systematic research has focused specifically on the development of their narrative skills in English.

The production of oral narratives involves the communication of a series of information that comes in succession. The language is organized into a complex yet structured network, rather than being randomly tossed to the audience, so as to be interpreted and understood (Pinker, 1994). Children grow in their narrative ability to organize the massive amount of
information into coherent and increasingly complicated structure throughout school-age years. Narrative skills have been identified to be a strong predictor of subsequent school progress (e.g., Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Paul & Smith, 1993). Whereas children from mainstream cultural and linguistic backgrounds typically enter schools familiar with the narrative structure that is valued in schools, EL children do not have that privilege (Heath, 1982). Narrative skills have been pointed out as being associated with cultural background and ethnic-group membership (Minami & McCabe, 1991; Wang & Leichtman, 2000). For instance, Latino children tend to focus on the enjoyment of talking and participating in discourse rather than on relaying specific information or describing a series of events (Silva & McCabe, 1996). Also, the de-emphasis of event sequencing reflects a preference for using a style that focuses on other narrative features, such as description, location, and the evaluation of experiences (Bliss et al., 2001). Thus, compared with English monolingual peers, Spanish-speaking ELs may be disadvantaged in their specific style of narrative discourse. This is not only because of their lack of comparable English language proficiency, but also because of a mismatch with the mainstream narrative style. Consequently, Latino children may be more likely than their English speaking monolingual peers to have later academic problems.

Given that the investigation of narrative becomes more complicated when considering children growing up in bilingual or multilingual environments (Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002), the bilingual development of narrative skills has been an intriguing facet of inquiries in scholarship. Despite this interest, understanding of the development of Spanish-speaking ELs’ narrative skills is still limited (Uchikoshi, 2005). As the largest minority group and the fastest-growing segment in the United States, Latinos constitute over 20% of school-aged children nationwide (Simpkins 2011). It is crucial to make sure that they attain language proficiency and meet the same
academic content and achievement standards that are expected of all students nationwide, especially if one agree with the contention that Latinos are “inextricably bound up with the future of the United States” (Gándara 2010: 27). Based on these considerations, investigation of English narrative development of Spanish-speaking ELs deserves more attention from researchers in the field of second languages acquisition (SLA).

1.2. Research Gap

Narrative is “a form of decontextualized extended discourse” (Uchikoshi, 2005, p. 466), and has been defined as a way of recounting past events, with its structure being “established by the existence of temporal juncture between two independent clauses” (Labov, 2008, p. 2). Narrative competence generally demonstrates the narrators’ ability to sustain their expressions of the world beyond here and now. Telling oral narratives also helps children gain knowledge about the structure of narratives, which may be helpful as children learn to decipher and understand text (Gardner-Neblett & Iruka, 2015). Previous scholarship has identified some core dimensions of narrative skills, such as story structure, temporality and reference, and evaluation (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Peterson & McCabe, 1983).

A developing body of research on bilingual and second language acquisition in the last decade has considered narrators’ formulation of more accurate linguistic elements to fit the current discourse context of an utterance construction, so as to enhance narrative cohesion (Wolleb, 2013). One linguistic domain where this knowledge is particularly relevant is the use of referring expressions when the speaker refers to a particular individual or object. In a speech act, interlocutors do not always share the same knowledge or perspectives about the conversation topic. The speaker needs to take into consideration the listener’s state of mind in deciding what
to say. They then make referential choices between less specific expressions, like pronouns, and more explicit ones, such as proper names or noun phrases. Appropriate use of referring expressions is essential in achieving success in communication.

In addition to providing information about narrated events, narrators often need to express the emotional and mental states of protagonists through the use of evaluative devices in narratives. The evaluative information in oral narrative discourse contains “comments that transcend the recounting of actions to provide an interpretive sense of the mental states of characters and of the causal links among events in a story” (Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002, p. 2). As another domain of narrative ability, the choice of evaluative expressions is regarded as one of the contributing factors to the foundation of literacy skills (Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002). While some research is devoted to the acquisition and use of evaluative expressions in the first language, very few studies have addressed the development of evaluative expressions in children learning English as a second language (Chen & Yan, 2011).

Linguistic complexity within narrative discourse is another strong predictor of later language and literacy achievement (Nippold et al., 2007). Grammatical complexity is also hypothesized to be positively associated with oral discourse skills in English, and is suggested to be a goal of early literacy instruction for second language learners (Lucero, 2015). As a complex syntactic structure, relative clauses (RCs) serve a particularly prominent role in the study of syntactic complexity, since they “exemplify one of the formally most complex corners of natural language syntax and play a key role in how language achieves its full richness of expressive capacity, and partly because they have been a rich source of empirical syntactic-complexity results” (Levy et al., 2013, p. 465). The use of complex syntactic structures facilitates the link between previously mentioned episodes and later ones. The ability to formulate the
grammatically-complex construction increases with age. For instance, 9-year-old children use more relative clauses to introduce new referents and re-identify previously included characters and events than 5-year-old children do (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994). Recent scholarship indicates that bilingual children’s production of narrative macrostructures, such as the story structure, is largely language independent and invariant across a bilingual child’s two languages at a given age, with similar awareness of the intentions and goal-directed behavior of the story protagonists, irrespective of language (Bohnacker, 2016). Similarly, findings from research on microstructures in second language acquisition indicate that bilingual children exhibit the same rate of morphosyntactic development as monolingual children (see De Houwer, 2005). However, research also shows that bilinguals’ syntax construction demonstrates cross-linguistic features due to the incorporation of structures from their dominant language (Matthews & Yip, 2003). Contradicting evidence across the field calls for more attention on dual language learners’ use of complex syntactic constructions such as relative clauses.

Various environmental factors, such as socioeconomic status (SES), the amount of language exposure, and parental style, affect the development of children’s narrative skills (Gardner-Neblett & Iruka, 2015; Hoff, 2006; Jia et al., 2011; Jia & Paradis, 2015; Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe, 1999; Qi, 2010; Uchikoshi, 2005). Particularly, the quality and quantity of language input play an important role in predicting individual differences in children’s language and literacy skills. Given the fast growth in the number of school-aged ELs nationally, bilingual immersion programs - an instructional model that provides language assistance to help ensure that ELs attain language proficiency in both English and their native languages - have surged within the past three decades (Giacchino-Baker & Pillar, 2006). As an innovative instructional model, the language immersion instruction approach allows students the opportunity to be taught
through the medium of a second language. Accordingly, these dual-immersion learners who are enrolled in bilingual immersion programs would have different amounts of language exposure from their peers who receive regular monolingual English instruction. Although the bilingual language immersion approach has generated increasing research interest, only a handful of studies are devoted to immersion learners’ narrative discourse. For instance, Hipfner-Boucher, Lam, and Chen (2015) examined the French narratives produced by French learners in Canadian-French immersion programs and found that higher-order L2 oral language skills contributed to reading comprehension outcomes. However, the broader sociolinguistic context of Spanish-English bilingual programs in the U.S. is considerably different (Hipfner-Boucher et al., 2015). More empirical attention is needed to draw generalizations on the development of immersion Spanish-speaking ELs’ narrative skills.

Thus, the goal of this dissertation is to document an in-depth investigation of three components of narrative skills in the English oral narratives by Spanish-speaking ELs. A corpus investigation is carried out on these narrative skills of Spanish-English bilingual children. The data are drawn from the frog story narratives in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES; MacWhinney, 2000). The specific focus of this investigation is on ELs’ use of referring expressions, evaluative expressions, and relative clauses in their oral narratives in English. Environmental factors such as instructional models, family socioeconomic status, and language spoken at home, are considered when evaluating both the quantity and quality of the English narratives produced among Spanish-English bilingual children. All of these are in line with an overarching goal of revealing the developmental trajectories of learners with dual-language exposure who grow up in linguistically diverse environment. In the following section, I will present a brief introduction of the corpus from which the data drawn in this dissertation.
1.3. Research Data

The data chosen for discussion in this empirical investigation are drawn from frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). This corpus includes frog story narratives collected at Dade County public schools in Miami, Florida. As is reported by the Directory of Foreign Language immersion Programs in U.S. schools, there were 448 schools with immersion programs in 38 states (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). Bilingual dual-immersion model outnumbers other immersion models (Lenker, 2007). Florida's Dade County schools were the first to pilot this dual-immersion model. The Pearson corpus includes a total of 447 oral stories produced by 160 bilingual Spanish-English bilinguals and 80 monolingual English speakers. 269 stories are in English and 178 in Spanish.

All these children were born in the United States. They were enrolled either in regular monolingual English class or in Spanish/English dual immersion programs, in which both languages were used as the medium of instruction, with 40% of instruction time in Spanish and 60% in English (Oller & Eilers, 2002b). In previous studies, the sampling of Hispanic children has typically been biased toward the lower socio-economic status, due to an absence of the possibility of matching for socio-economic status across subject groups (Oller & Eilers, 2002b). In this project, all parents needed to fill out an extensive demographic questionnaire. These selected participants were socio-economically well balanced. They were either from high- or low-SES families as measured by family income, parental education level, and parental occupations (Oller & Eilers, 2002b). Parents from high SES families generally had a mean of from 14.1-15.6 years of education, while the low SES families had a mean of 10.5-12.7 years of education, which included vocational training. Compared with precious studies, the patterns of
income and socio-economic status in the data gathered in this project showed no disadvantage among Hispanic groups compared with non-Hispanics. Participants were also categorized based on the home language use. The children either lived in homes where primarily Spanish was spoken at least until the children were 5 years old, or were raised in homes where English and Spanish were spoken approximately equally from the time of those children’s birth.

The whole corpus data were produced by a subset of all participants who were involved in the Miami project. The main objectives of the Miami project were to assess children’s oral language and academic performance in both English and Spanish. All children were given full set of Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery (Woodcock, 1991), written language tests, and the Peabody Vocabulary Tests (Dunn & Dunn, 1981), in both Spanish and English in counterbalanced order (Pearson, 2001). Besides a series of the standardized tests, a subset of 240 children participated in this narrative probe study as a way to examine children’s literacy and narrative skills. These children narrated the wordless picture book *Frog, Where Are You?* (1996), which has been used in the large cross-linguistic study reported by Berman and Slobin (1994) and is also widely used for researchers around the world to study language acquisition in developing populations (Pearson, 1996).

In this dissertation, three individual studies are conducted to investigate three components of narrative skills in the English oral narratives by Spanish-speaking ELs. The data in each study are drawn from part of the corpus. The structure of the dissertation is presented in the following section.

**1.4. Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of three independent articles. These empirical chapters are built upon each other in the sense that they all investigate a particular type of narrative skills of the
bilingual children who participated in the Miami project.

Besides the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 addresses the use of English referring expressions in narratives of ELs who enrolled in Spanish/English dual immersion language programs and English monolingual programs. The data consists of 88 English oral narratives produced by 88 Spanish-English bilinguals who are around ten years old. All these children were born in the United States. The analyses seek to document the differences in the use of referential devices that perform the discourse function of both introducing and maintaining characters in narratives between Spanish-English bilingual children enrolled in two different instructional models. Environmental factors, such as family socioeconomic status and language spoken at homes are also considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of references within the context of two instructional models. Chapter 3 is devoted to examining the use of evaluative expressions in the oral discourse of Spanish-speaking ELs, using the same data as in Chapter 2. The density of evaluative devices, types of evaluative expressions, and narrative maturity in the oral narratives will be examined to explore the relative impact of environmental factors, including the instruction model type, socioeconomic status, and home language. In Chapter 4, data from 8-year-old Spanish-speaking ELs are compared with those of 10-year-old Spanish-speaking ELs. I consider a series of functions in relative clauses as a reflection of the development in both bilingual children’s syntactic and narrative competence. Two categories of functions in narrative discourse are examined in this study based on the taxonomy developed by Dasinger and Toupin (1994), including general discourse functions and narrative functions. Finally, a comprehensive summary of findings in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 is presented in Chapter 5. Limitations of the study and pedagogical implications are also discussed in the final conclusion chapter.
CHAPTER 2

REFERRING EXPRESSIONS IN NARRATIVES BY ENGLISH LEARNERS IN
MONOLINGUAL AND DUAL IMMERSION PROGRAMS

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Abstract

The ability to successfully refer to entities and manage reference through the choice of referring expressions is a prerequisite for successful and meaningful communication. When referring to a character, the speaker ought to choose between a linguistic form that is very explicit, such as a specific name (Filli) or description (the frog), or less content-filled expressions, like a pronoun (he) or ellipsis (Ø fell). The current study examined the role that language environmental factors play in predicting the production of referring expressions in L2 English by Spanish-English bilinguals. The data were drawn from the frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) located in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). The sample included 88 English oral narratives produced by 88 Spanish-English bilinguals who were enrolled in either Spanish/English dual immersion language programs or in monolingual English programs. Environmental factors including family socioeconomic status and language spoken at home were also considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of referring expressions within the context of two instructional models. The analysis documented ELs’ use of referential devices that perform the discourse function of both introducing and maintaining characters in narratives, as well as the distribution of referring expressions based on referent types. The findings did not provide supportive evidence that ELs in a dual-immersion program outperform their peers in the accuracy of their choice of referring expressions. Instead, socioeconomic status and home language use seemed to play more important roles in predicting individual differences in adequately managing references. This study provides significant insights into the pragmatic-discourse function of bilingual speech in constructing coherent messages in oral narratives that facilitate successful communication.
2.1 Introduction

The number of students who have limited proficiency in English in U.S. schools has more than doubled since 1990. Approximately 79% of English learners (ELs) nationally have Spanish as their first language (Bassiri & Allen, 2012). The academic attainment of ELs has been historically lower than that of English proficient peers. The achievement gap has narrowed little over the years (Abedi & Dietel, 2004). Recent NAEP data highlights a substantial gap in both reading and math across grade levels. For instance, 71% of ELs scored below “basic” on NAEP reading and math tests in 8th Grade. Only 4% of them are proficient in reading and 6% in math (Garcia & Miller, 2008). Promoting language proficiency and academic success among ELs is a challenge faced by schools locally and districts nationally. Programs of language assistance, such as bilingual dual-immersion programs, are designed to help ensure that ELs attain language proficiency in both English and their native languages, and meet the same academic content and achievement standards that are expected of all students nationwide. Despite the startling growth of school-age children learning English as a second language, little systematic research focused specifically on the development of their narrative skills in English.

Narrative skills have long been identified as a critical link to later school success (Paul & Smith, 1993). Given that narrative skills are proposed to be a strong predictor of language and literacy development in both monolingual and bilingual children later in school (Griffin et al, 2004), narratives are a valuable means of studying bilingual language development in that they “approximate language use in context and thus allow researchers to study language properties that emerge only in connected speech” (Pavlenko, 2008, p. 311). Narratives typically contain one or more participants in a story line that contains a beginning, one or more climaxes, and a conclusion. A very important part of constructing a narrative involves choosing appropriate
linguistic forms to refer to the participant in first and subsequent mentioning. Thus, successfully managing reference through the choice of referring expressions is essential for the successful construction of narratives. Efficient communication requires a joint effort on all parties involved in speech acts. The efficiency, to some extent, depends on speech participants’ shared knowledge about events. When there is more than one entity or participant involved in a narrative event, the speaker needs to use their knowledge to cross-reference a cast of characters by wielding names, pronouns, and descriptions to unambiguously characterize the entity they intend to refer to, so that the recipient can understand the message in the absence of shared context. In other words, it is the speaker’s task to make clear the identity of each participant as they are introduced and maintained in the narrative through their choice of a particular form of referring expressions. Thus, how the speaker encodes participants (that is, the amount of linguistic material used in making reference to them) to ensure that reference is unambiguous is essential to maintaining the organization and coherence of the story.

Generally speaking, there are four different linguistic devices used for referring expressions in narrative texts (Givon, 1983). A full noun phrase is typically used to introduce new entities into the discourse, or to reintroduce them if they have been absent for some time. Once a participant has been introduced to a story, pronouns (phonetically realized or null) typically are used to refer to that participant. The present study addresses the use of English referring expressions in narratives of ELs who enrolled in Spanish/English dual-immersion language programs and English monolingual programs. The analysis carried out seeks to document the differences in the use of referential devices that perform the discourse function of both introducing and maintaining characters in narratives between Spanish-English bilingual children enrolled in two different instructional models. Environmental factors, such as family
socioeconomic status (SES) and language spoken at home (HL), are also considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of references within the context of two instructional models.

2.2. Background

2.2.1. Referring Expressions in English

The ability to refer to entities is a prerequisite for successful and meaningful communication. When referring to a character, the speaker ought to choose between a linguistic form that is very explicit, such as a specific name (*Filli*) or description (*the frog*), or less content-filled expressions, like a pronoun (*he*), or ellipsis (*Ø fell*). The specific form that a referring expression takes is based on a speaker’s assessment and assumption about the listener’s mental and awareness state concerning the referent in the particular context in which an entity is mentioned (Arnold, 2008). The identifiability of a referent is essential for communication success, especially when “speech situations in which the only access of a listener to a particular universe of discourse is through the language provided by the speaker” (Küntay, 2002, p. 78). Ariel (1990, 2001) proposes that language users do not switch between different referential devices arbitrarily; rather, there is a systematic pattern that can be articulated by an accessibility hierarchy. The choice of referring expressions needs to coincide with the level of cognitive accessibility of the intended mentions in the listener’s knowledge of the event (Ariel, 1996; Colozzo & Whitely, 2015). The level of accessibility reflects the marking of noun phrases (NPs) based on whether an entity is introduced for the first time or has already been mentioned previously, and how accessible the referent is within human memory. The less accessible a referent is, the more elaborate the referential markers that will typically be used by the speaker.

In order to select a form of referring expression that encodes an appropriate amount of
information, speakers make judgments about the identifiability of referents as well as their context-driven assumptions about the addressee’s psychological state (Küntay, 2002). Speakers may achieve narrative coherence by differentiated use of different forms of referring expressions in accordance with whether an entity is introduced into discourse for the first time or is referred to again after it has been already mentioned before (Azar & Ozyurek, 2015). Discourse linguists (Gundel et al, 1993; Küntay, 2002; Lambrecht, 1994) indicate that the semantic-pragmatic features of referent identification contribute to different characteristics of various types of referring expressions, especially the distinction between definite (the boy) and indefinite nominals (a boy). For instance, Chafe (1976) suggests that speakers employ definite nominal expressions such as nouns preceded by definite articles, rather than indefinite nominals, when they assume that their addressees already know and can easily identify the referents in the context.

Referring expressions in English are proposed to fall on a continuum that presupposes the existence of the referents (Gundel et al., 1993; Hickmann, 2003), ranging from the briefest and least informative (Ø) to the fullest with most lexical content (indefinite NPs) shown in (1)

(1) indefinite nominal < definite nominal < pronoun < Ø (null pronoun)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a boy} & \quad \text{the boy} & \quad \text{he} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Adapted from Hickmann, 2003)

When new entity or information is introduced for the first time, nominal expressions that carry descriptive content, such as indefinite NPs, are used to mark the newness of the referent without causing ambiguity. Definite NPs and pronominal expressions, like pronouns and null forms, are used for subsequent mentions that maintain the previously introduced referent based on the given information within the context.
Concerning the distinction of a definite nominal and a pronominal in maintaining a reference to a recently-mentioned character, pronominal forms on the highest level of presupposition, such as pronouns and null forms, are preferred when there is immediate coreference within a local domain across clauses. Definite NPs, a form of nominal expressions, are selected when the denoted referent has been out of the focus of attention temporarily and requires a stronger coreferential tie.

2.2.2. The Referential Choice in Discourse in English as a First Language

The acquisition of referring expressions, particularly personal pronouns, involves manipulation of a series of semantic, pragmatic, syntactic, and morphological features of a language (Chiat, 1986). It is a demanding task for children, who need to learn “to combine language-specific syntactic rules and context-dependent pragmatic considerations” (Wolleb, 2013). Chomsky (1981) claims that binding phenomena exist in all human languages. Referring expressions are thus universally subject to binding conditions that govern the distribution and interpretation of anaphoric elements within and between sentences. However, the binding behavior differs in nuanced ways across languages, since languages vary “in terms of the repertoire of forms and the syntactic constraints governing their use in discourse” (Andreou, 2015, p. 2). When acquiring a language, children not only need to develop cognitive principles to address the identifiability of referents in the discourse context, but also to grasp the linguistic forms and discourse-pragmatic constraints in their native language. This may be especially challenging for bilinguals. Dealing with form-function mapping is more complicated, and awareness needs to be given to differentiating two referring systems in terms of their language specific usages (Qi, 2010; Yip & Matthews, 2007). There is a developing body of literature on
the development and use of referring expressions. This study focuses especially on the production of referring expressions in the English narratives of Spanish-English bilinguals.

Milestones in the monolingual development of reference production in character introduction and maintenance have been studied cross-linguistically (Hickmann et al, 1996; Hickmann and Hendriks, 1999). Children are observed to be sensitive to the forms of new and given information in their narratives from a young age, but patterns of form–function mappings only emerge at around the age of ten, in which they start to employ the anaphoric strategy (Bamberg, 1987) by choosing nominal expressions for reference introduction and predominantly anaphoric pronouns for maintaining references. For instance, Hickmann and colleagues (1996) have studied how monolingual children around the age 4, 5, 7, 10, and adults introduce referents in four typologically distinct languages by examining their uses of nominal determiners and utterance structure. Children who spoke Chinese, French, German, and English participated in story-telling tasks based on two short sequences of pictures that involved multiple characters. The study showed that all four groups demonstrated increasing accuracy with age in appropriate marking of referent introduction. Children who belonged to the three Indo-European language groups used indefinite forms to introduce characters from 7 years old and demonstrated adult-like proficiency around the age of 9 -10. The results for English, particularly relevant to the current study, showed that the proportion of indefinite nominals in character introduction increased significantly from the age of 4 to10 years, ranging from 27% to 88%. Their French counterparts did not show such significant increases. By the age of 10, English speakers already showed a comparable accuracy with that of adults. Hickmann and Hendriks (1999) further examined how children (aged 4, 7, and 10) and adults speaking the same four languages maintain reference to the animate characters. The study highlighted the role discourse coreference plays
on form variation across all groups. Children as early as age 4 start to use nominals and promominals contrastively. More specifically, in coreferential contexts where two or more expressions share the same referent, children tend to use mostly pronominals, while nominals are used mostly in non-coreferential contexts. The study shows that these English preschoolers are already sensitive to “referential continuity vs. discontinuity” (p. 445) earlier than their use of indefinite nominals to mark newness. English-speaking children gain adult-like ability in character introduction around the age of 10, suggesting that children master the forms of referent reintroduction and maintenance before their mastery of referring expressions in referent introduction.

However, it is pointed out that the proportions of accuracy in the use of referring expressions in referent maintenance are not very high (Chen & Lei, 2013). Researchers (Colozzo & Whitely, 2015) also question if the stories to elicit oral narratives cited above were not demanding enough for children to manage character maintenance and reintroduction. Recent studies (Chen & Lei, 2013; Serratrice, 2007) examining the production of referring expressions to fulfill discourse functions of introducing, re-introducing, and maintaining reference to story characters have used more complex stories, namely the frog stories (Mayer, 1969). These studies produced not entirely consistent findings from Hickmann and Hendriks (1999). Serratrice’s (2007) study examines a group of 12 simultaneous English-Italian eight-year-old bilinguals, and two groups of monolingual children of the two languages. The study shows that the English monolingual group demonstrates awareness in dealing with both the language-universal and language-specific aspects of acquisition and uses referring expressions contrastively to fulfill various discourse functions. This suggests that the referential system, especially character introduction and reintroduction, is still developing. Chen and Lei (2013) conducted a study with
thirty 9-year-old children from each of the three groups: Chinese–English bilinguals and monolingual peers in each of the two languages. The data show that these nine year olds choose clearly a majority of indefinite NPs (87%) for character introduction, definite NPs (84.4%) for reintroduction, and pronouns (64.1%) for maintenance. Their results support Serratrice’s (2007) inference by showing older children’s contrasting use of referring expressions in fulfilling three discourse functions. More importantly, Chen and Lei’s study (2013) shows a more mature referential system in selecting forms that are better suited for each function, especially in character introduction and reintroduction.

Beyond function constraints, referent type is also hypothesized to impact children’s choice of referring expressions (Chen and Lei, 2013; Karmiloff-Smith, 1981; Colozzo and Whitely, 2015). Karmiloff-Smith (1981) proposes that young children typically employ a “thematic subject strategy” by showing a preference for pronominal forms. They reserve the use of pronominal forms in utterance-initial positions predominantly for main animate characters of the story and frequently maintain the thematic subject with pronouns. Colozzo and Whitely (2015) also suggest that the relative prominence of story characters, though small compared to the influence of discourse functions, impacts the use of pronominal of English-speaking children from kindergarten to second grade (ages 5;6–8;8).

2.2.3. The Referential Choice in Discourse in English as a Second Language

National statistics show a dramatic growth of individuals who are raised in bilingual environments. An increasing proportion of the literature on the use of referring expressions has thus focused on bilingual children. Bilinguals who are exposed to two languages from birth are considered to acquire two first languages simultaneously, or what is generally referred to as bilingual first-language acquisition (BFLA). Research examines whether these simultaneous
bilinguals acquire two languages as two separate systems or, instead, there is cross-linguistic influence. Alvarez (2003), for example, conducted a longitudinal case study on the character introduction of a Spanish–English school-age simultaneous bilingual child. The data suggests that the degree of appropriate use of forms for character introduction develops at the same rate in two languages and is comparable with monolingual developmental trends, though the frequency of use is different from that of monolingual children. Serratrice (2007) also proposes that there is no significant difference in the manipulation of referring expressions in discourse functions between simultaneous English–Italian bilingual with consistent and balanced input in two languages and monolingual speakers of two languages. Qi (2010) suggests that different processing strategies are employed to approach the pronominal systems in two languages by a Mandarin-English bilingual child, indicating that bilinguals acquire pronominal systems in a language-dependent manner from early production onwards. The imbalanced amount of exposure to each of the two languages is hypothesized as a source contributing to the different rate of bilingual language acquisition and proficiency (Paradis & Genesee, 1996; Yip & Matthews, 2007).

Though there is a developing body of research examining the acquisition and use of referring expressions, limited attention has been paid to the production of referring expressions among children who learn English as a second language. The bilingual language development is suggested to be more complicated than that of monolingual peers (Yip & Matthews, 2007), and bilinguals may experience cross-linguistic influence on their narrative production in two languages. Chen and Pan (2009), for example, examined the development and use of referring expressions in L2 English of sixty Chinese-speaking participants around the age of 5, 8, 10, and young adults. While the overall results suggest that, rather than depending on their own linguistic
background or on whether they are acquiring a certain language as a first or second language, children are guided by universal strategies in their development of referring expressions to fulfill various discourse functions, Chen and Pan suggest that the use of referring expressions in bilingual narratives shows a pattern that is “unique, and falls in between those produced by their monolingual peers in each of the languages” (p. 444).

2.2.4. Environmental Factors and the Use of Referring Expressions

Various environmental factors, such as socioeconomic status (SES), the amount of language exposure, and parenting style, have been shown to influence both the quantity and quality of narratives produced by children (Hoff, 2006; Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe, 1990; Uchikoshi, 2005). Given the rapid growth in the number of school-aged ELs nationally, it is unsurprising that bilingual immersion programs, as an instructional model that provides language assistance, have surged within past three decades (Giacchino-Baker & Pillar, 2006). While this innovative instructional model has generated increasing research interest, unfortunately very little attention has been given to its effects on immersion learners’ narrative development, including the use of referring expressions in oral narratives of children in bilingual immersion programs. A recent study by Jia and Paradis (2015) examines the use of referring expressions for first mentions in Chinese narratives by Mandarin-heritage language learners and monolingual children. Their results show that heritage language speakers use less adequate forms to introduce characters than their monolingual is due to incomplete acquisition. They also exhibit different degrees of L1 attrition and individual differences in various areas. The authors suggest that input predicts stronger narrative outcomes. An older age of arrival, a rich and diverse language environment, and higher maternal education levels all benefit heritage language development and
maintenance. In all, previous studies show that the quality and quantity of language input influenced by environmental factors plays an important role in predicting individual differences in children’s literacy skills. Yet, there are almost no studies investigating specifically the production of referring expressions in English narratives by EL children enrolled in bilingual immersion programs.

2.3. Research Questions

The current study fills this research gap by examining the role that language environmental factors play in predicting the production of referring expressions in English as L2 by Spanish-English bilinguals. A comparison was conducted between bilinguals who enrolled in Spanish/English dual immersion language programs and those in English immersion programs. The analysis documented ELs’ use of referential devices that perform the discourse function of both introducing and maintaining characters in narratives, as well as the distribution of referring expressions based on referent types. Environmental factors including family socioeconomic status (SES) and language spoken at home (LSH) were also considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of references within the context of two instructional models. Since the main aim was to explore the effect of environmental factors on EL’s narrative skills in terms of appropriate reference choice, the comparison was made only among EL groups, so as to draw implications concerning which instructional model would be more effective developing ELs’ narrative abilities, and whether and what role the SES and home language environment play in this process. Research questions include:
1. Do Spanish-English bilingual speakers who are enrolled in bilingual immersion programs differ in the use of referring expressions from Spanish-English peers in monolingual English instruction? If yes, how?

2. Does socioeconomic status play a role in predicting individual differences in the use of referring expressions by Spanish-English bilinguals?

3. Does home language (Spanish only or Spanish/English) play a role in the use of referring expressions by Spanish-English bilinguals?

2.4. Method

2.4.1. Materials

Naturalistic narrative data helps researchers observe young children’s linguistic production unobtrusively. A number of studies of child language acquisition rely on various methods for eliciting narratives. One popular elicitation tool is the use of wordless picture book “Frog, Where are you?” (Mayer, 1969). The book has been widely used by researchers internationally to study developing language acquisition. Using the same stimulus with participants from various linguistic backgrounds potentially provides insights into “children’s minds in terms of the cognitive underpinnings for the necessary but supposedly limited form-meaning mappings” (Guo et al, 2010, p. 129). During the story-telling process, participants assist themselves by actively exploring and appropriating the systematicities in a framework of practice and discourse. Narrators’ cognitive demands are lessened due to the presence of pictures during the task, so they can focus more attention on generating narratives without additional psychological demands on recalling the story (Wilcox & Morford, 2007; Deng & Yip, 2015).

The book consists of 24 pictures. It portrays the adventure of a boy and his dog who are
involved in a series of complicated events when searching for the boy’s pet frog who has escaped into the woods. Three main characters in the book include the boy, his dog, and his pet frog. They encounter four secondary characters—a squirrel, an owl, some bees, and a deer. The interactions between main and secondary characters provide a rich context for the study of oral narrative skills examined in this study.

2.4.2. Participants

The present study is a corpus investigation of naturalistic speech from Spanish-English bilingual children. The data are drawn from the frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). This corpus includes frog story narratives collected at Dade County public schools in Miami, Florida. Data in the current study consists of a subset of this corpus, with 88 English oral narratives produced by 88 Spanish-English bilinguals who are approximately 10 years old (5th Grade). All these children were born in the United States. They were enrolled in either regular monolingual English classes or dual-immersion bilingual programs with 40% of instruction time in Spanish and 60% in English. 41 bilinguals studied in regular monolingual English schools, which can be considered English total immersion, while 47 bilinguals were enrolled in English-Spanish dual immersion programs. Students from each instructional model were further identified as coming from either from high- or low-SES families as measured by family income, parental education level, and parental occupations (Oller & Eilers, 2002b). Participants are also categorized as either having Spanish spoken at home or English and Spanish spoken equally at home based on self-report. The current study investigates whether and how the above three variables influence the use of referring expressions by Spanish-English bilinguals. Participants fell into eight groups based on
their characteristics determined by the combination of these factors (see Table 2.1.). This study design allows simultaneous investigation of the effects of multiple indicator variables (instructional model, SES, and home language use).

**Table 2.1** Participant characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Model</th>
<th>Language of the Home</th>
<th>Mostly Spanish</th>
<th>English and Spanish Equally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Total Immersion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1 (n = 11)</td>
<td>Group 3 (n = 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Dual Immersion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 5 (n = 14)</td>
<td>Group 7 (n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 6 (n = 10)</td>
<td>Group 8 (n = 12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.4.3. Data Coding and Analysis**

All references to the main and secondary characters in the corpus were identified. Each reference was coded based on three categories. First, every reference was identified as either indicating a main character or a secondary character. Secondly, referring expressions were coded either for reference introduction or maintenance, determined by their discourse functions. Thirdly, referring expressions were coded based on their forms, such as definite nominal, indefinite nominal, pronouns, possessive construction, and zero anaphora. Table 2.2. shows examples of coding categories.

After coding the data, the percentage of referring devices was calculated based on referent types and functions. In other words, referring expressions that are used to introduce the main charterers, to maintain the main characters, to introduce the secondary characters, and to maintain the secondary characters, were calculated. A comparison was made among students from 8 groups based on instructional models, SES and home language use.
The percentage of appropriate introduction of the main and secondary characters and the percentage on the appropriateness of maintenance for the main and secondary characters were calculated for each group to answer the second research question comparing adequate use of referring expressions among groups. Appropriate use for character introduction was operationalized as the use of either a) an indefinite nominal (e.g. *a frog*); b) a possessive NP (e.g. *his frog*); or c) the first person singular pronoun *I* (for cases in which narrators identified themselves with the main character of the story and told the story from a first-person perspective).

Several considerations were made regarding appropriate forms for character maintenance. Appropriate use for character maintenance was operationalized as a) the use of a definite NP or b) a possessive NP. The use of a referring expression for character maintenance was regarded as appropriate as long as it clearly indicates the previously mentioned entity, even if the previously mentioned character itself was not appropriately referred to. Inappropriate use of referring expressions was defined as a) the use of an indefinite NP to mark a previously mentioned entity; b) use of a definite NP to mark newness, c) use of a wrong lexical item or the use of pronouns that cause ambiguity (see Table 2). Ambiguous pronouns refer to those expressions for which it is not easy to determine the referent or those having more than one referent, such as ones without prior mention. The following example illustrates some ambiguous use of pronouns.

CHI: The deer ran and ran and ran [^c] .
CHI: and the boy was screaming +"/.
CHI: +" help , help (. ) [^c] .
CHI: all of a sudden *he [^
] stopped (.) [^c] .
CHI: and *he fell [^c] .
CHI: *They had luck [^c] .
CHI: <they were fall> [/ they fell <on a pon> [/] in a pond (.) [^c] .
CHI: and *they heard their frog [^c] .
This speaker mainly uses pronouns. The first “he” refers to the deer, which carried the boy on its back. The second pronoun refers to the boy, who is thrown to the water because the deer stopped. The third pronoun “they” refers not only to the boy but also the dog, who is chasing the deer and boy. However, without the previous mention of the dog, it is difficult to figure out the dog’s participation merely from speech. In addition, multiple pronouns in a short excerpt make the comprehension of the story plot very difficult. The percentage of appropriate use of referring expressions was then calculated by dividing the appropriate introduction and maintenance by the total number of referring expressions used for character introduction and maintenance, respectively.

Table 2.2. Examples of coding categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>*An owl comes out and Ø knocked <em>him down.</em> (Group 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>*Then a deer picks <em>him up.</em> (Group 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite NP</td>
<td>*Once there was a little boy who had <em>a frog in a jar.</em> (Group 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite NP</td>
<td><em>The boy was calling the frog.</em> (Group 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive NP</td>
<td><em>Once there was a kid with his dog and his frog in a bowl.</em> (Group 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare NP</td>
<td>*He had caught <em>frog and put it in a jar.</em> (Group 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of a definite expression to introduce a new referent</td>
<td><em>The little boy has just caught a frog.</em> (Group 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of an indefinite expression for a referent</td>
<td><em>When the boy was looking through an ant hole, a dog almost got bitten by a bee.</em> (Group 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Examples of inappropriate referential choices</td>
<td>previously introduced referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous use of a pronoun or null element.</td>
<td><em>The deer picked him up on his head and then was running with the dog barking at</em> <strong>him</strong>. <em>Then he stopped at the edge of a cliff and he fell in the water with his dog.</em> (Group 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of a different and inappropriate lexical item</td>
<td><em>And then out came like a mouse from that hole where the boy was screaming.</em> (Group 8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical analysis included both descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square tests were performed to examine the types of referring expressions used among individuals across different groups. Logistic Regression analyses (Cox, 1966), which was built for probability (correct use) as a function of group membership (as measured by IM, SES, and HL), were conducted to explore the impact of the three environmental factors including the instruction model type (IM), socio-economic status (SES) and home language use (HL) on participants’ use of referring expressions in their narratives. This model, followed by a procedure called "Step AIC", was conducted to examine which of the three factors, and with what interactions, most parsimoniously explained the variation in the probability of individual’s choice of appropriate referring expressions and characterized the degree of adequate use among groups. Two measures were conducted under this model to capture the accuracy of the use of referring expressions. The first measure involved the calculation of the proposition of adequate referring expressions based on different discourse types and functions. There were three main characters and four secondary characters. Thus, each speaker necessarily could only make three attempts on new mentions of main characters and four introductions of secondary characters. On the other hand, compared
with the fixed number of attempts in character introduction, speakers were able to make far more attempts at maintaining both main and secondary characters. A second measure was thus conducted specifically on character maintenance to further capture the in-group variance. By considering both the number of occurrences and their accuracy, the difference between appropriate and inappropriate uses was calculated in each speaker’s production. Significance levels were set to \( p < .05 \) prior to data analysis. If significant between-group differences were observed for a particular variable, the group means for that variable were compared to determine how the children from different groups differed from each other on that narrative measure.

### 2.5. Results

#### 2.5.1. Character Introduction

**2.5.1.1. Referring Expressions to Introduce Characters in English Narratives**

Table 2.3. presents the mean proportions of referring expressions used for character introduction.

**Table 2.3.** Mean percent of referring expressions used for character introduction (occurrence in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters Introduction</th>
<th>Referential Forms</th>
<th>Group 1 (n = 11)</th>
<th>Group 2 (n = 10)</th>
<th>Group 3 (n = 10)</th>
<th>Group 4 (n = 10)</th>
<th>Group 5 (n = 14)</th>
<th>Group 6 (n = 10)</th>
<th>Group 7 (n = 11)</th>
<th>Group 8 (n = 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite NPs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.6% (13)</td>
<td>48.3% (14)</td>
<td>60.7% (17)</td>
<td>70% (21)</td>
<td>42.9% (18)</td>
<td>56.7% (17)</td>
<td>68.8% (22)</td>
<td>61.1% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite NPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.5% (12)</td>
<td>34.5% (10)</td>
<td>14.3% (4)</td>
<td>13.3% (4)</td>
<td>30.9% (13)</td>
<td>16.7% (5)</td>
<td>28.1% (9)</td>
<td>22.2% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>10.7% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4% (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive NPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.9% (7)</td>
<td>10.3% (3)</td>
<td>10.7% (3)</td>
<td>6.7% (2)</td>
<td>23.8% (10)</td>
<td>23.3% (7)</td>
<td>3.1% (1)</td>
<td>16.7% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare NPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4% (1)</td>
<td>3.6% (1)</td>
<td>10% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3% (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite NPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.5% (23)</td>
<td>70.3% (26)</td>
<td>64.7% (22)</td>
<td>64.1% (25)</td>
<td>71.7% (38)</td>
<td>67.6% (25)</td>
<td>75% (27)</td>
<td>70.7% (29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concerning the character introduction of main characters, indefinite nominals were typically used to mark newness. Chi-Square test revealed significant differences among groups in their use of referential forms to introduce main charterers ($\chi^2 = 38.6361; p = .01$). Table 4 showed that Low SES bilinguals who were enrolled in monolingual English programs with both Spanish and English spoken at home (Group 4) were most likely to use indefinite nominals (70%) to introduce characters; their peers in the same instructional models but were of higher SES with only Spanish spoken at home (Group 1) used the least amount of indefinite nominals (40.6%) in their character introduction. Among groups that were enrolled in bilingual immersion programs with regular exposure to dual languages, their low SES peers with only Spanish spoken at home (Group 7) used more indefinite nominals (68.8%) to mark newness. ELs who were from a high SES background (Group 1, 2, 5, and 6) overall used less indefinite nominals ($\leq 56.7\%$) for first mentions, while their low SES peers (Group 3, 4, 7, and 8) generally used a higher percent ($\geq 60.7\%$) of indefinite NPs to mark new referents. No obvious patterns of reference choice can be observed among groups with different types of home language use. Some participants from English monolingual schools with low SES who had two languages spoken at home (Group 4) used NPs without any determiners to introduce characters.

Regarding secondary character introduction, all participants uniformly used only nominals to introduce secondary animal characters. Results show that ELs (Group 7) from low SES background who were enrolled in dual immersion programs with mostly Spanish spoken at home
used most indefinite NPs (75%) to refer to new characters. However, the Chi-Square test did not reveal any significant difference among groups in using referential forms to introduce secondary characters, all the groups behaved similarly in patterns of their referential choice ($\chi^2 = 12.7193; p = .5487$).

2.5.1.2. Accuracy/Appropriateness of Introductory Referents

Table 2.4. presents a summary of the mean proportions of appropriate introductions of main versus secondary characters.

**Table 2.4.** Mean percentages of appropriate introductions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction Appropriateness</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
<th>Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 first show that Group 6, with participants from high SES background who were enrolled in dual immersion programs and had both languages spoken at home, demonstrated the highest proficiency (80%) in introducing main characters appropriately. ELs with the same SES background and home language use but a different instructional model showed the least degree of appropriateness (58.5%) in main character introduction. Logistic regression analysis identified SES as the most prominent predictor with a logistic coefficient of -0.3283. The negative coefficient suggested that High SES students were less likely to have appropriate usage of
referring expressions to introduce main characters. Neither HL nor IM was identified as significant predictor.

Regarding the introduction of secondary animate characters, Table 2.4. shows that the bilinguals (Group 7) from dual-immersion programs with low SES and had the home language of Spanish outperformed all other groups (75%); their peers (Group 1) with same home language use but a different instructional model and higher SES showed the least accuracy in secondary character introduction. The logistic regression analysis identified none of the three environmental factors as a significant predictor, suggesting that none of the indicator variables (instructional model, SES, home language use) impacted speakers’ ability to adequately introduce secondary characters.

2.5.2. Character Maintenance

2.5.2.1. Referring Expressions to Maintain Characters in English Narratives

The distribution of the different types of referring expressions used in the maintenance of main and secondary characters by eight groups of ELs is presented in Table 2.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters Maintenance</th>
<th>Referential Forms</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
<th>Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite NPs</td>
<td>0.2% (1)</td>
<td>0.02% (1)</td>
<td>0.7% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite NPs</td>
<td>57% (245)</td>
<td>53.6% (226)</td>
<td>43.9% (147)</td>
<td>60.6% (258)</td>
<td>58.8% (408)</td>
<td>52% (267)</td>
<td>46.8% (213)</td>
<td>51.7% (267)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>37.9% (163)</td>
<td>41.7% (176)</td>
<td>50.1% (168)</td>
<td>41% (132)</td>
<td>34% (236)</td>
<td>39.8% (204)</td>
<td>47.3% (215)</td>
<td>41.1% (212)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare NPs</td>
<td>0.2% (1)</td>
<td>0.06% (2)</td>
<td>0.7% (3)</td>
<td>0.8% (4)</td>
<td>0.8% (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definite NPs and pronominals (explicit pronouns or null elements) were considered as appropriate; the indefinite NPs or pronouns that may cause ambiguity were not considered accurate to mark the given information. The results showed that bilinguals who were enrolled in monolingual English schools with low SES and had two languages spoken at home were most likely to use definite NPs (60.6%) to maintain main characters, while bilinguals from the same SES backgrounds and instruction model but had Spanish spoken at home were most likely to use pronouns (50.1%) for main character maintenance.

Figure 2.1. Mean of referring expressions used for maintaining reference to Main Characters as a function of group

Figure 2.1. displays the distribution of referential types used by each group in main
character maintenance. The overall pattern was an average of 54% of Definite NPs, 40% of Pronouns, and 6% (Null + Other) in each group. A Z-statistics test showed that Groups 1, 2, 6 and 8 behaved similarly, but speakers who (Groups 4) were enrolled in monolingual English schools from the low SES background with both English and Spanish spoken at home preferred the use of Definite NPs \( (z = 1.97) \) significantly more than average but used fewer pronouns \( (z = -2.86) \), as did speakers (Group 5) who were enrolled in bilingual dual immersion programs with high SES and had both English and Spanish at home \( (z = -1.97; z = 2.55) \). However, Groups 4 and 5 did not seem to share any characteristics regarding instructional models, SES, and home language use. Thus, even with significant differences in certain forms over others among groups, interpretation about the influence from three factors would be difficult. A Chi-Square test further revealed that the use of pronouns was significantly different among groups \( (\chi^2 = 73.4104; p < .0001) \). The speakers (Groups 3 and 7) who were from low SES with mostly Spanish spoken at home, regardless of being enrolled in bilingual dual immersion program or monolingual English immersion program, tended to produce significantly more pronouns than other groups. In this sense, the effect of instructional model types seemed to be unclear in predicting individual differences in character maintenance. Both Groups 3 and 7 correspond to low SES and having mostly Spanish spoken at home, so there was some evidence that students with this set of characteristics had some tendency to use Pronouns over definite NP compared to other groups. These two groups used pronouns (50.1% vs. 47.3%) and definite NPs (43.9% vs. 46.8%) about equally often, while the typical groups used definite NPs about 54% of the time and pronouns 40% of the time. The evidence supported that low SES and Spanish used mostly at home were factors that tended to inflate pronoun use and, hence, deflate the use of definite NPs.
For secondary character maintenance, Chi-Square tests revealed that there was significant difference in the use of referential forms among groups \((\chi^2 = 36.6843; \ p = .0183)\). A review of the Table 2.5 suggests that the difference is largely due to the impact of SES. Specifically, low SES bilinguals from dual immersion programs with Spanish spoken at home (Group 7) use most definite NPs (69.8%), but their counterparts from Group 5 with high SES background as the only difference showed a preference for pronouns (21.5%).

2.5.2.2. Maintenance Referent Accuracy/Appropriateness

2.5.2.2.1. Measure 1

Table 2.6. presents the accuracy of character maintenance among different groups.

**Table 2.6. Mean percentages of appropriate maintenance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance Appropriateness</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
<th>Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between two groups that both had Spanish spoken at home, the high SES bilinguals (Group 5) enrolled in dual-immersion programs demonstrated the highest accuracy (88.2%) in main character maintenance, while their counterparts (Group 3) with low SES who were enrolled in monolingual English schools performed with the least appropriateness (70.4%) in maintaining main characters. However, bilinguals in Group 3 who had the lowest accuracy in main character maintenance actually outperformed the rest of groups in secondary character maintenance.
(97.4%). Both Groups 1 and 8 with totally different instruction types, SES backgrounds and home languages showed the least accuracy (82.2%) in maintaining secondary characters.

Two separate logistic regression analyses were conducted to assess the impact of the three environmental factors on the use of referring expression for character maintenance, one for the main characters and the other for the secondary characters.

Table 2.7. Model summary and expected probabilities for maintenance of main and secondary characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Maintenance: Main Characters</th>
<th>Estimated</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Model Evaluation</th>
<th>Deviance=486.16</th>
<th>AIC=774.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.8960</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>1.0700</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL</td>
<td>0.7210</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES*HL</td>
<td>-1.0640</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Maintenance: Secondary Characters</th>
<th>Estimated</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Model Evaluation</th>
<th>Deviance=90.56</th>
<th>AIC=156.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.5390</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.6360</td>
<td>0.2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL</td>
<td>-0.7811</td>
<td>0.1241</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES*HL</td>
<td>1.6507</td>
<td>0.0169</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results show that both SES and home language use and their interactions were significant predictors in the appropriate maintenance of both main and secondary characters. Both SES and home language use were significant and associated with more correct answers, while high SES students or students with both Spanish and English spoken at home outperform their peers in appropriate maintenance of main characters. The negative coefficient suggested a negative interaction between these two factors. It indicated that both high SES and bilingual home environment had positive effects, but the combination of these two was not additive in predicting students’ narrative skill. In other words, high SES students with two languages spoken at home were less likely to produce appropriate referring expressions for the maintenance of main
characters than their peers. Concerning the maintenance of secondary characters, both students from higher SES and those with both languages spoken at home were weaker in make adequate maintenance of secondary characters. However, high SES students with two languages spoken at home perform better in producing appropriate referring expressions compared with other groups.

Overall, the notion of the significant interaction between the two predicators suggested that students of high SES background did not necessarily perform better in narration than those from low SES background by a fixed trend, since their narrative skills depended on which home language environment the individual was situated in. Given that the signs of these coefficients in Table 2.7 were completely different, it would be difficult to make much of a generalization for the effect of SES or home language use in predicting students’ ability to maintain main and secondary characters.

2.5.2.2.1. Measure 2

Besides calculating the proportion to detect the appropriateness use of character maintenance, an additional measure was conducted by combining the amount of production with accuracy, so as to further reveal the picture, at least the role SES plays, in the maintenance of secondary characters.
Table 2.8. Difference between attempts and accuracy in the maintenance of main characters

According to Table 2.8., SES (ISE) was significant in predicting the accuracy of maintenance of the main characters (Coef. = 10.7596, \( p=0.001 \)). Students with higher SES tended to perform better in using adequate referring expressions to maintain main characters. The same effect can be observed from Table 2.9., in which students from high SES background maintained secondary characters with higher accuracy (Coef. = 1.2317, \( p=0.042 \)). Thus, students from high SES perform significantly better in character maintenance.
Table 2.10. Summary of statistically significant findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Introduction</th>
<th>Main Characters</th>
<th>Secondary Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of Forms</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Maintenance</th>
<th>Main Characters</th>
<th>Secondary Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of Forms</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Pronouns:</td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>English and Spanish Home languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>English and Spanish Home languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish as Home languages:</td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.10. summarizes the results from the statistical analyses, and shows that some of the variables are significant in some discourse functions and referent types, but the variable “instructional model type” is never significant. While SES seems to be the most consistent environmental factor, it sometimes needs to be considered together with home language use in order to predict individual differences.

2.6. Discussion

Linguistic and narrative ability growth trajectories vary in each individual, be it monolingual or bilingual. The objective of the present study was to determine whether and the degree to which the use of referring expressions in the English narratives of 5th Grade Spanish-speaking ELs may be influenced by three environmental factors. Results from the present study highlight the impact of the heterogeneous quality of the participants in the study on the use of referring expressions in their English narratives. Since the statistical analyses did not clearly demonstrate the impact of the individual environmental factors, we are going to consider their
influence separately in this section.

2.6.1. The Effect of Instructional Models

The benefits of starting a second language as early as possible have been well noted (Johnson and Newport, 1989). Language immersion programs attempt to reap these benefits by incorporating intensive second language education into public elementary schools. As bilingual immersion programs have become increasingly popular nationwide, research findings proposed that immersion education benefited learners both linguistically and academically (Martin-Beltran, 2010; Potowski, 2007; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Learning in immersion settings was also hypothesized to be associated with higher literacy skills (Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon, and Davison, 2013). The present study aims to find out if models of instructional programs for bilingual children will impact aspects of their narrative skills, more specifically, their ability to properly refer entities in storytelling in English. Our results revealed no significant difference in the use of referring expressions in the English narratives of Spanish-English bilinguals who were enrolled in monolingual English programs and those in English-Spanish dual-immersion programs. The lack of difference was found in both the choice of specific devices for introducing and maintaining both primary and secondary characters and overall referential accuracy. It may suggest that the bilinguals’ ability to use referring expressions is more likely to be influenced by age (Hickmann et al., 1996) and the first language (Chen & Lei, 2013) rather than by the instructional models they are enrolled in.

Though researchers attributed the success of immersion education to learners’ intensive exposure to highly contextualized input in a naturalistic learning context (Wesche & Skehan, 2002; Ranta 2002), results from this study highlight the need to look at the linguistic input of bilingual dual immersion programs with caution. Researchers in bilingualism have been touting
the decisive role that the quality and quantity of linguistic input played in determining learners’ language production. The dominant language, in which exposure outweighed that in a weaker language in terms of quantity, quality and variety, usually develops faster and with a more solid system for linguistic manipulation (Andreou et al, 2015; Yip & Matthews, 2000). However, some researchers (Iluz-Cohen & Armon-Lotem, 2012) argue that the benefit of dominance in linguistic input does not necessarily translate into higher scores in proficiency. The extent to which linguistic input influences bilingual performance needs to be evaluated in contexts. Bilinguals tend to develop unbalanced proficiency and skills, since they are not only exposed to different languages, but also different linguistic aspects and registers of each language.

One contributing factor to immersion success was the notion of interaction as a stimulus for effective input and output (Long, 1996). Learners usually seize opportunities to use two languages simultaneously and come up with metalinguistic analyses to bridge the understanding for each other in a linguistically diverse classroom (Martin-Beltran, 2010). However, research findings have also suggested that though immersion students usually develop native like comprehension as well as high level of fluency to successfully negotiate meanings, they are disadvantageous with respect to grammatical accuracy and sociolinguistic appropriateness (Harley et al, 1990; Potowski, 2007). These phenomena seem to be in accordance with Grosjean’s (2008) notion of the “complementarity principle”, which assumes that bilinguals develop different degrees of proficiency in multiple domains for varied functions and in response to different communicative occasions. This principle has also been applied to certain language skills such as reading, writing and stylistic levels. In the current study, the nature of tasks in immersion education, the specific kind of input that students had access to, and the emphasis on negotiation of meanings rather than linguistic forms in an immersion class may have contributed
to the findings of this study in that the immersion instruction did not necessarily promote the accuracy in Spanish-speaking ELs’ narrative ability in terms of making adequate and unambiguous reference in narrative retelling.

Some immersion students in the present study were observed to show flexibility in their choice of referential forms in character introduction. For instance, (2) shows an example of referential choice of an EL from the immersion group:

(2) *One night Mike and his dog found a little frog.* (Group 6)

In this example, rather than introducing three main characters with indefinite NPs, this speaker used a proper name\(^2\), a possessive NP and a definite NP with an adjective “little” to modify the character “frog” for introduction with accuracy, showing diversity in choosing various lexical items. Another speaker from the same group also used the proper name “Gerel” to refer to the boy. These two participants were the only ones that used specific names for characters among the 88 stories.

Though the immersion students seemed to use a wider range of nominals for first mentions in this study, such as the use of prior name, previous research has indicated that immersion learners are more likely to have low lexical variety due to their focus on the communicative competence. They tend to use a restricted vocabulary that is limited to school settings, and they also overuse the simple and high-coverage verbs rather than morphologically or syntactically complex verbs (Harley, 1992). Consequently, we carried out an additional examination into the diversity and complexity of noun phrases used in introducing main characters in order to see how

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\(^2\) Proper names are coded as definite NPs, but they are deemed as appropriate for both character introduction and maintenance.
immersion and nonimmersion narrators managed the of referents with sophisticated structures. Complexity, described as “elaborated language” (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 139), has been suggested to be an indication of development or proficiency rather than a property of language production (Pallotti, 2009). We found that that ELs in the present study typically used a simple noun phrase that includes a determiner and a noun (e.g. *a dog*) for the first mention. Some participants inserted an adjective (e.g. *a little boy; his curious dog*) in noun phrases, and a few others used a relative clause (e.g. *a boy who had a frog in a jar with no lid; a little boy that had two pets*) that functions as an adjective and modifies the noun that precedes it to introduce characters. The use of the latter two was coded as complex NPs. The percentage of the complex NPs was then calculated by dividing their number with the total number of referring expressions used to introduce main characters. Figure 2.2. below showed the comparison of the use of complex NPs by immersion and non-immersion ELs. The results presented that ELs who received monolingual English instruction (17.1%) used slightly more complex NPs than that of their immersion peers (14.9%).

![Figure 2.2. Percentage of complex noun phrases](image)

Moreover, bare NPs without determiners were also used by ELs to introduce the main characters, and 83.3% were used by speakers from monolingual English instruction. Bilinguals who received solely English instruction seemed to be more likely than immersion students to
omit determiners to introduce new entities. The use of an indefinite NP is typically considered to be inappropriate for character maintenance. However, participants from three groups that were enrolled in monolingual English schools were observed to use indefinite NPs to maintain reference to story characters. Though it was observed that ELs in mainstream English class had access to more input of target language and probably received more explicit instruction in English grammar, these outliers in terms of the use of bare NPs to mark newness and the inappropriate use of indefinite NPs for character maintenance suggested that some students in monolingual English programs appeared to have more difficulty using English articles than their immersion peers. In the present study, all participants were Spanish heritage speakers and may have been subject to certain degree of L1 influence. In Spanish, articles demonstrated a more complex pattern than English ones. For instance, its definite article has 4 forms, depending on whether the noun is masculine, feminine, singular, or plural. Since Spanish was considered to have a more consistent orthography than English, the literature has indicated that having two instructional languages together helped Spanish-English bilinguals develop both Spanish and English literacy skills at a faster rate compared with learners from other linguistic backgrounds (Reading, 2007). Though this study did not show a significant influence of immersion instruction on Spanish-English bilinguals’ referential choice overall, ELs with both English and Spanish instruction did not omit determiners or use indefinite articles to maintain characters. It was probably because the Spanish instruction made them be more aware of the use of articles, especially when their first language tended to have a more complex system in the use of articles.

It is highly unlikely that the bilingual dual immersion approach would be equally effective in all aspects of ELs’ language and literacy development. Future investigations that identify which aspects of narrative skills are potentially influenced by the instructional model or which
aspects that the bilingual immersion model may fail to promote would be very meaningful. The demographics of the research sites showed that bilingual children may not have the optimal environment to acquire both linguistic and academic skills in English due to a majority of Hispanic children and a lack of traditional monolingual English-speaking peers in this district. It was worth noting that even in the monolingual English schools, 93.7% of students were of Hispanic origin (Oller & Eilers, 2002b). Thus the ELLs enrolled in bilingual dual immersion schools did not appear to have an ideal environment to interact with native speakers of English and lack the advantages of the exposure of authentic English input both inside and outside of the classroom. Though results from the present study showed an opposite pattern that seems to be against the popular perception that bilingual immersion education benefits students’ language and academic ability overall, the findings suggest that linguistic input from the school instruction needs to be addressed carefully and attention also needs to be paid to the overall climate of local and district school areas.

2.6.2. The Effect of Socioeconomic Status

In the context of globalization, English has been increasingly associated with social and economic power and has become a means of individuals’ pursuit of upward mobility. The increasingly growing learning materials and bilingual programs to facilitate ELs’ language learning and academic achievement have raised concerns regarding a potential correlation between English learning and learners’ socioeconomic status (Butler, 2013). The increasing economic disparities appear to lead to an unequal access to learning resources and opportunities that would lead to widened achievement gaps. Research has supported the assumption that children from higher SES families reliably outperform their peers from lower SES families on
various developmental outcomes from infancy to adulthood (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002; Vasilyeva et al, 2008). While the current study has found that SES is an important indicator in mediating students’ performance in the accuracy of introduction of main characters as well as the maintenance of main and second characters, the overall results presents a more complex picture.

In the present study, referring expressions that were used for the maintenance of both main and secondary characters by ELs from high SES background were significantly more accurate and less ambiguous compared with those of lower SES peers. Though no significant difference in introducing the secondary characters was found between ELs with high SES and those with low SES, there was an observable pattern in the use of these two groups. Among all secondary characters, an interesting animate character was “bees”, the only character in a plural form. When introducing bees, it was not uncommon to see ELs’ using the definite article “the” in front of “bees”. The definite NPs would be deemed to be inappropriate for first mentions of the character. “Bees” as a noun is plural, and it doesn’t need to be modified by the indefinite article “a” or “an”. Table 15 below shows the percentage of the inappropriate introduction of secondary character “bees” with the use of indefinite article “a” or “an” out of the total number of attempts at introducing “bees” for ELs from high SES and low SES.

![Figure 2.3. Percentage of inappropriate introduction of secondary character “bees”](image)

The figure above showed that, compared to ELs with high SES (47.8%), ELs from low SES
background (67.9%) experienced more difficulty introducing plural characters appropriately by using appropriate determiners. The inappropriate use of indefinite articles in English might have resulted from the influence of their knowledge of Spanish which, as Table 2.11. shows, has four types of indefinite articles depending on whether the noun was masculine, feminine, singular or plural.

**Table 2.11.** Indefinite articles in Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>el</td>
<td>la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>los</td>
<td>las</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indefinite nominal “bees” in Spanish would be “las abejas”. Thus, some Spanish-English bilinguals may have overused the article “the” without considering the appropriateness. Another reason might be due to the occurrence of “beehive” in the previous clause. For instance, several participants produced something like the utterance in (3).

(3) *There was a beehive, and the bees were flying over them.* (Group 4)

The speaker firstly used the indefinite article “a” to modify “beehive”. Then he inappropriately introduced “bees” in the next clause by using the definite article “the”. The participant might have considered “bees” to be a second mention and not a new character anymore since he has already introduced the “beehive” which seemed to be the same as introducing “bees”.

Furthermore, ELs from high SES background significantly outperformed their lower SES peers in character maintenance. Most children of high SES background had parents that held a
college degree or above, and they showed better control over the choice of referring expressions appropriately. This finding is consistent with other studies showing the impact of SES on language development. For instance, college-educated mothers talked more often to their children with a richer vocabulary, they issued fewer directives, and asked more questions than did high school-educated mothers (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991, 1998) The extemporaneous speech that higher SES families produced during book reading with preschool children was syntactically more complex and lexically richer than speech in other settings (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991). In addition, children from low SES background tended to use language less frequently to reflect, analyze, reason, and justify, or to predict and consider alternative possibilities than children from high SES background (Hoff, 2006).

Another interesting finding of the present study is that ELs from low SES background were found to use more pronouns than ELs from high SES background when maintaining reference to story characters. When multiple story characters are present, inappropriate or excessive use of pronouns instead of noun phrases may lead to ambiguous reference. The results from the present study are consistent with what previous studies have found about the impact of SES on referential communication. Lloyd and colleagues (1998), for example, observed that low SES children were less likely to orally produce sufficiently information to describe an unfamiliar object for listeners to identity in a referential communication task, nor would they use the information in messages they heard to make correct choices about the objects.

It should be pointed out, however, that ELs with high SES did not outperform their low SES peers across the board: they actually performed significantly poorer in adequately introducing main characters in English. Some researchers (Amastae, 1982; Jia, 2008) suggest that immigrants with high SES background value the use of heritage language more and are more
aware of maintaining of the heritage culture and language. This may explain why high SES children in the present study had less accuracy in main character introduction in English as a second language.

### 2.6.3. The Effect of Language of the Home

According to parents’ self-report, bilinguals who participated in the current project either had mostly Spanish or a combination of Spanish and English equally spoken at home. Early home language and literacy have been considered as a crucial predictor of differences in school success, since “when entering school, children are expected to be able to engage in language about cognitively complex topics in a distanced manner, without relying on shared situational knowledge or deictic cues” (Henrichs, 2010, p. 7). Research showed that children from non-mainstream cultural and linguistic backgrounds or with lower SES usually enter school with different narrative styles than those valued in mainstream schools (Minami & McCabe, 1991), and they are not as well prepared for schooling in English literacy instruction as those children from middle-class English-speaking homes (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In general, students from families with Spanish as the only language tend to perform less well academically and linguistically than peers from families with both English and Spanish as home languages (Dolson, 1985).

Findings from the current study seem to be consistent with the previous literature. ELs with both English and Spanish spoken at home showed a significantly higher degree of accuracy in main character maintenance. However, bilinguals with both languages spoken at home did not necessarily perform better in adequately maintaining secondary characters, only those who were also from the high SES background were significantly better due to the significant interaction of
SES and home language use factors in predicting the ability to adequately maintain secondary charterers. These findings suggest interesting interactions between home language use and SES. The home environment was also more complicated in immigrant families where more than one language spoken. SES-related differences can be factors that influence the choice of the type of language that would be used in the family. For instance, Mexican-American families with low SES backgrounds have been found to have a tendency to use Spanish more than those with high SES backgrounds, probably because the latter intends to be more assimilated into the mainstream culture (Sánchez, 1983). SES-related differences can also influence the amount and quality of languages that are spoken to children at home. For example, high SES families showed a higher degree of richness of maternal speech (Hoff, 2006). Thus, the home language environment in which individual ELs are situated needs to be considered with the family SES background in specific contexts such as evaluating ELs’ ability to maintain secondary characters.

This study also revealed that ELs from families where Spanish was spoken mostly at home used significantly more pronouns compared to peers with both English and Spanish as home languages. This might be the result of the influence of Spanish on the use of English. Previous literature suggested that speakers used more explicit forms (e.g., full NPs) when their own focus of attention was distributed among more than one potentially competing referents in the discourse (Arnold & Griffin, 2007). Contemori and Dussias (2015) recently examined the process of choosing between pronouns and proper names in L2 speakers of English whose L1 was a pro-drop language like Spanish. He found that learners used more overt pronouns in contexts with more than two referents than native speakers of English, since an overt pronoun was not that ambiguous for L2 learners due to their native language parameters, which allowed more missing information. But, in fact, these pronominals were not explicit enough to an English
native speaker. It may be reasonable to predict that Spanish-English bilinguals with largely Spanish exposure at home may be more likely to consider a pronominal to be explicit enough and would not cause ambiguity when there were more than one character involved in the story.

2.7. Conclusion

Bilingual immersion programs continue to boom in the United States. By comparing referential choice in English narratives by Spanish-speaking ELs from dual immersion programs and monolingual English educational setting, the present study examines the effect of language environmental factors, such as instruction types, socioeconomic status background, and the use of home language. This study provides significant insights into the pragmatic-discourse function of bilingual speech in constructing coherent, engaging, and sophisticated messages in oral narratives that facilitate successful multilingual communications.

However, the use of referring expression is only one aspect of narrative skills; more investigations that explore the language and literacy development of bilingual children in different educational settings are needed. The current study did not provide supportive evidence that ELs in dual-immersion program perform better in adequately managing references in oral narratives. Socioeconomic status is a more prominent indicator in predicting ELs’ narrative coherence. Such information will help researchers and practitioners develop an awareness in programs like this, modify curriculum to boost bilingual children’ narrative readiness and academic attainment, and capitalize on facilitating factors to maximize language and literacy outcomes of dual language learners.
CHAPTER 3

EVALUATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN NARRATIVES BY ENGLISH LEARNERS IN MONOLINGUAL AND DUAL IMMERSION PROGRAMS

3 Chen, W. To be submitted to *Journal of Pragmatics*. 

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Abstract

Evaluative expressions are expressions used to express narrators’ emotions, intentions, and other psychological responses within the context and signal the point of the story from narrators’ own perspectives. The present study examined the use of evaluative expressions in the narratives of L2 English by Spanish-English bilinguals. The data were drawn from the frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) located in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). The sample included 88 English oral narratives produced by 88 Spanish-English bilinguals who were enrolled in either Spanish/English dual immersion language programs or in monolingual English programs. Environmental factors including family socioeconomic status and language spoken at home were also considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of evaluations within the context of two instructional models. Narrative analysis was conducted based on the examination of 1) evaluative clauses, 2) types of evaluative devices, and 3) two measures of evaluative perspectives. The results showed that immersion ELs produced longer narratives and used more causal connectors than non-immersion EL peers. Narrators from high SES background were found to be less likely to use evaluative expressions to signal global evaluative perspective, and instead to be associated with more use of expressions with references to feelings and mental states of characters. Home language use does not present itself as a significant factor impacting Spanish-speaking ELs’ choice of evaluative devices. This study investigated the in-group variance of Spanish-speaking ELs of the same grade level and provided valuable insights into the high variability that may result from complex interactions between the three environmental factors.
3.1. Introduction

A developing body of literature has found consistent evidence across cultures that narrative skills contributed to academic success. Children are exposed to oral and written narratives as early as kindergarten, since teachers frequently use stories and dialogues to communicate the content and information (Feagans, 1982). Narrative skills, a form of relatively self-contained discourses that are known and appreciated by most young children (Mason, 2008), have been highlighted as strong predictors of later language and literacy achievement for school-aged children. The development of narrative discourse skills is a relative complex aspect in language acquisition, especially for persons who are acquiring two languages simultaneously (Minami, 2004). Being able to coherently and accurately retell a story or depict an event is challenging enough in one’s native language; constructing an oral narrative in a second language like English is made even harder. Labov (1972a) once mentioned that, “narrative as a whole contrasts sharply with ordinary conversation, which shows a much more complex structure” (p. 378). Nevertheless, the development of narrative skills is rarely addressed (Hipfner-Boucher, Lam, & Chen, 2015; Uchikoshi, 2005), even for advanced English learners (ELs). In PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards (TESOL, 2006), we see an emphasis on conversation skills with the emphasis on the spontaneous sentence formation in oral communication but a lack of concern for improving English narrative skills in the curricula. Given the importance of narrative development, there is an urgent need to pay more attention to bridging the gap by theorizing English narrative competence and making narrative skills as a critical education goal in a multilingual context like the United States required. The current study focuses on one domain of bilingual narrative skills—the use of evaluative expressions in the oral narrative discourse of English learners.
Evaluative information in oral narrative discourse contains “comments that transcend the recounting of actions to provide an interpretive sense of the mental states of characters and of the causal links among events in a story” (Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002, p. 2). Besides providing information about narrated events, good narrators are capable of holding their listeners’ attention and are able to express their own emotional and mental states by using evaluative expressions. Evaluative devices are used to express narrators’ emotions, intentions, and other psychological responses within the context (Uchikoshi, 2005) and signal the point of the story from narrators’ own perspectives (Labov, 1972). As another domain of narrative ability, the choice of evaluative expressions is hypothesized as one of the contributing factors in the foundation of literacy skills (Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002).

The present study addresses this critical component of English narrative skills by examining the oral discourse of Spanish speaking ELs. Though the number of young ELs has dramatically increased over the last three decades (Uchikoshi, 2005), there is still a substantial gap in academic achievement between ELs and their English-speaking monolingual peers over the years (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Garcia & Miller, 2008). There are many types of programs of language assistance that are developed to promote ELs’ language proficiency in English so as to ensure they meet the same language and academic requirements and are better equipped in their pursuit of upward mobility in the mainstream society in the future (May, 2008; Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). This study focuses on the use of evaluative expressions between ELs who were enrolled in two program types: English monolingual programs and Spanish/English dual-immersion language programs. Bilingual dual-immersion programs provide instruction not only in English but also in students’ native languages. The analysis seeks to find out whether these two different instructional models will have an effect on how narrators appropriately use
evaluative expressions to express their feelings, emotions, and points of view during the process of constructing a coherent story. Environmental factors, such as family socioeconomic status (SES) and language spoken at home (LSH) will also be considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of evaluative expressions within the context of two instructional models.

3.2. Literature Review

Narratives are an essential means by which people make sense of their experience (Pavlenko, 2002). There is a growing consensus that narrative skills are related to academic achievement for school-aged children. One important element of successful narratives is the speaker’s evaluation of the story’s on-going actions. According to Labov and Waletzky (1967), a narrative includes not only sequences of narrative clauses about what happened, but there may also be individual clauses or clusters of evaluative clauses about why the events may have occurred. Evaluative expressions, for example, are expressions referring to emotional and mental states. They allow the narrators to not only provide information about narrated events, but also to indicate the perceived significance of narrated events to themselves and others. Through evaluative expressions in oral narratives, narrators adjust the linguistic form and content of their utterances to maintain recipients’ interest and attention. This is “a complex skill that requires linguistic, cognitive and affective/social abilities and its achievement exhibits a long developmental route” (Beijsterveldt & van Hell, 2009, p. 677). There is a rich body of literature that documents how monolingual English-speaking children develop their ability to provide evaluative comments in oral narratives (Berman, 1997). These studies have shown that the variety and frequency of use of evaluative devices increases substantially with age (Peterson & McCabe, 1983), including especially references to speech (Ely & McCabe, 1993) and references
to cognitive states (Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Bamberg & Reilly, 1996). In addition, younger children have been found to be more likely to use phonological stress and repetition than older children (Peterson & McCabe, 1983). Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) analyzed the use of evaluative comments in oral narratives elicited with the wordless picture book *Frog, Where are You?* (and henceforth ‘frog story’). They reported that adults used more evaluative devices than those of nine-year-old children, and nine-year-old children used evaluative devices significantly more often and in more sophisticated ways than five-year-old children. However, as early as age 4, children were able to include in their narratives some information concerning the mental states of characters. Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) also showed that as early as the age of five, children were already able to include some information about the mental state of characters in their story retelling. Berman and Slobin (1994) analyzed frog stories produced by children of different age groups across languages in terms of story-grammar structure and evaluative details. They showed that the narratives produced by monolingual children differed significantly across age groups. For instance, three-year-old children addressed the task of ‘relating events in narrative’ in a remarkably different manner than five-year-olds, who in turn differed significantly from the narratives produced by nine-year-olds. To examine participants’ use of evaluative devices, they analyzed participants’ use of evaluative comments in the description of the Deer Scene based on whether narrators specify the main character’s misperception of a deer’s antlers as tree branches and how this mistake influenced the narration of the following plots. They found that children who formulated a more coherent narrative by organizing stories most tightly around the central theme provided less evaluative information than those students who produced a less coherent and mature narratives. They suggested that there seemed to be a tension between producing a coherent narrative and including specific
evaluative details for school-age children. Manhardt and Rescorla (2002) also observed such a tension between the coherence and complexity in children’s narrative production in a study that examined the use of evaluative expressions in the oral narratives of late talkers at ages 8 and 9. They analyzed children’s description of the Deer Scene in the frog story in the same way as Berman and Slobin (1994). Manhardt and Rescorla found that most late talkers and their typically-developing peers were not able to formulate explicitly the role of the primary character’s misperception and its consequences. The results also showed that children in the late talker group may possess weaknesses in their ability to process and express the interpretive elements of narrative discourse compared with their typically-developing peers in retellings of picture-elicited narratives, since they focused on the inclusion of evaluative comments and struggled to maintain the general flow of the narrative.

Research was also carried out to document how social contexts shape students’ use of evaluative expressions. Harkins and colleagues (1994) examined the effect of maternal story-telling on children’s use of linguistic evaluative devices by using picture books that provided the components of a narrative. They found that these children from middle-class families increased the use of linguistic evaluative devices in story-telling as a consequence of hearing their mother narrate the story. They also observed a transfer of these skills, since they found that five-year-old children generalized their increased use of evaluative devices in an unfamiliar story after they heard their mothers’ narrating two different, but related, stories. Peterson and Biggs (2002) assessed the explicit emotion labels and the use of linguistic forms of evaluation to convey emotion in personal experience narratives of children (ages 3, 5, and 8 years) from white, middle-class families. They indicated that, in their narratives, children used more linguistic devices to provide evaluation than they used explicit labels to express emotions. It was also
found that five-year-old boys were the most likely to use explicit labels for anger. In addition, three-year-old girls showed earlier mastery of evaluative devices especially in reference to emotional states, than did boys.

In contrast to the rich literature on the production of evaluative expressions by monolingual children, evaluation in bilingual narratives has received little empirical attention (Chen & Yan, 2011). Research on narrative skills of monolingual children has shown that the youngest children tend to relate the contents of each picture to isolated events. At the end of preschool age, they are able to chain events and to mark chronological sequences, and they will eventually create causally related episodes as the stories proceed. Adolescents and adults usually use rich evaluative devices to elaborate on plot-advancing events and include personal interpretations of the episodes they recount (Berman and Slobin, 1994). In cross-linguistic perspective, children from the youngest age on have already produced texts with typologically unique features of each target language, so that the task of “becoming native speakers interacted importantly across age-groups with the task of becoming proficient narrators” (Berman, 2014, p. 30). More importantly, previous studies have revealed unique patterns in the development and use of evaluative devices in bilingual children as compared to their monolingual peers. For instance, Chen and Yan (2011) examined the development and use of evaluative expressions in the English narratives of Chinese–English bilingual children around the ages of 5, 8, 10 years, and adults as well as their monolingual peers. Their findings revealed that there was clear age-related developmental growth in both monolingual and bilingual children’s’ use of evaluative expressions. However, Chen and Yan also noted two important differences between monolingual and bilingual groups. First, Chinese–English bilingual children produced more evaluative clauses (relative to story length) than monolingual English-speaking children. The second difference
between monolingual and bilingual groups relates to the ability to integrate evaluative comments into global hierarchical relationships between the events portrayed in the picture book. Specifically, bilingual speakers, particularly younger children, were found to have more of a tendency to adopt a local perspective of the story character’s frame of mind. Shrubshall (1997) also noted important differences between monolingual and bilingual children in their use of evaluative expressions in narratives. Shrubshall found that narratives of monolingual children were more highly evaluated and more episodically structured than those of Portuguese–English bilingual peers, particularly for the seven and eight-year-old age groups. Shrubshall interpreted this as a monolingual advantage in the use of evaluative devices and suggested that since the features of narrative discourse that bilingual children lacked were partly constitutive of academic literacy discourses, bilingual children needed to strengthen certain aspects of their narrative skills so as to bridge the gap between bilingual and monolingual children in mainstream education settings.

To sum up, the existing literature has focused largely on monolingual children’s development in the use of evaluative devices. The effects of environmental factors, such as the quality and quantity of language input that bilinguals have access to or their varied socioeconomic status (SES), have rarely been addressed. There are almost no studies investigating specifically the production of evaluative expressions in the English narratives of EL children enrolled in bilingual immersion programs.

The current study aims to fill the research gap by examining the specific use of evaluative expressions in the narratives of English as an L2 by Spanish-English bilinguals and the possible role that language-environmental factors play in predicting individual differences. A comparison was conducted between bilinguals who were enrolled in Spanish/English dual immersion
language programs and those in monolingual English programs. Environmental factors including family socioeconomic status (SES) and language spoken at home (LSH) were also considered when evaluating the quantity and quality of evaluations within the context of two instructional models (IM). Specifically, the current study seeks to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are the forms of evaluative devices 5th Grade Spanish-speaking ELs use in their English oral narratives?

2. Will environmental factors such as IM, SES and LSH influence 5th Grade Spanish-speaking ELs’ use of evaluative expressions? And if so, how?

3. What insight can 5th Grade Spanish-speaking ELs’ use of evaluative expressions bring to our understanding of narrative development in bilingual children in general?

3.3. Method

3.3.1. Materials

Spoken narratives were elicited from Spanish-speaking English ELs using Mayer’s (1969) wordless picture book “Frog, Where are you?”(Mayer, 1969). The book has been used by researchers around the world to elicit standard narratives from speakers of different age groups and of different languages, and to study first and/or second language acquisition in both typically and atypically developing populations. These narratives are typically called “frog stories,” and the research method is now commonly known as the frog story method (Berman & Slobin, 1994). The book consists of 24 pictures (with no accompanying text) portraying a series of complicated events involving several animate referents. There are three main characters: a boy, his dog, and his pet frog. The frog escapes one night, and on their way to search for him, the boy
and the dog have several adventurous encounters with four secondary characters: a ground squirrel, an owl, some bees, and a deer. Eventually, the boy and the dog find their frog with a mate and some baby frogs, and return home with one of the baby frogs in the boy’s hand. The pictured events afford numerous opportunities for the narrator to infer or attribute emotions and mental states to characters (e.g., fear, joy, surprise, desire, thoughts), relationships between characters (e.g., friendship, animosity), as well as motivations and causal explanations for the characters’ actions. Thus it provides a rich context for the study of evaluative devices in bilingual narrative development.

3.3.2. Participants

The sample comes from an existing data corpus frog stories produced by Spanish-English bilingual children. Specifically, the data are drawn from the frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) located in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES).

The frog stories that the current study analyzes include 88 English oral narratives produced by 88 Spanish-English bilinguals who are around 10 years old (5th Grade). These children were enrolled in Dade County public schools in Miami, Florida at the time of data collection. All these children were born in the United States. They were enrolled in either regular monolingual English classes or dual-immersion bilingual programs with 50% of instruction time in Spanish and 50% in English. Forty-one bilinguals studied in regular monolingual English schools, which can be considered English total immersion, while 47 bilinguals were enrolled in English-Spanish dual immersion programs. Students from each instructional model were either from high- or low-SES families as measured by family income, parental education level, and parental occupations (Oller & Eilers, 2002b). Participants were also categorized as either having
Spanish spoken at home or English and Spanish spoken equally at home based on self-report.

The current study mainly investigated whether and how the above three variables influenced the use of evaluative expressions by the 5\textsuperscript{th} Grade Spanish-English bilinguals. Participants fell into eight groups based on their characteristics determined by the combination of these factors (see Table 3.1.). This allowed simultaneous investigation of the effects of indicator variables (instructional model, SES, and home language use).

**Table 3.1** Participant characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Model</th>
<th>Language of the Home</th>
<th>Mostly Spanish</th>
<th>English and Spanish Equally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Total Immersion</td>
<td>Group 1 (n = 11)</td>
<td>Group 3 (n = 10)</td>
<td>Group 2 (n = 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Dual Immersion</td>
<td>Group 5 (n = 14)</td>
<td>Group 7 (n = 11)</td>
<td>Group 6 (n = 10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.3. Data Coding and Analysis

Narrative analysis was conducted based on the examination of 1) evaluative clauses, 2) types of evaluative devices, and 3) two measures of evaluative maturity (see Table 3.2.). Bilingual children's general production of narratives was assessed first, including the average length and the total number of clauses in every narrative. Berman and Slobin (1994) referred to the clause as “any unit that contains a grammatical unit containing a predicate” that “expresses a single situation (activity, event, or state)” (p. 657). Given that longer sentences are typically hypothesized to be more complex than shorter sentences, the average length is considered to be the best measure of second language acquisition, especially in writing (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).
In each transcript, every clause was categorized as either an evaluative clause or a narrative clause, following the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) who made a distinction between two types of elements in a story. Referential elements convey information about the characters and events in the story (e.g. *The boy was looking in a squirrel hole*.), whereas evaluative elements convey the narrator’s attitudes toward events and their interpretation of the protagonist’s motivation and reactions to the events (e.g. *The boy was really happy*.). The proportion of evaluative clauses in each narrative was then calculated by having the number of evaluative clauses divided by the total number of clauses in the whole transcript.

**Table 3.2. Measures of the present study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Density of Evaluative Devices</strong></td>
<td>Average narrative length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of total clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of evaluative clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of evaluative clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of Evaluative Expressions</strong></td>
<td>Frames of mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Hedges”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative qualifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Causal connectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluative Perspectives</strong></td>
<td>Local and global perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mention of false belief (Deer Scene)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, I followed Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) and coded each transcript for five types of evaluative devices that were commonly examined in previous research. These five included 1) references to feelings and mental states (or “frames of mind”), 2) the direct and indirect reported speech of characters, 3) distancing devices (or “hedges”), 4) references to negative actions and states of mind (or negative qualifiers), and 5) causal connectors. The “frames of mind” functioned as references to characters’ mental and emotional states and behaviors (e.g. *happy, sad*). Emotion verbs, such as transitive actions that would initiate
emotions in others were also categorized in this type (e.g. scare). Frames of mind also included references to purely mental activities (e.g. think). The character speech was narrators’ assigning of an intentional state of the characters in characters’ speech, such as describing the boy’s shouting out of the window, “froggie, are you there?”. Both direct and indirect speech were included in this category. Hedges were used as distancing devices that suggested “non-commitment to the truth value of the proposition” (Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991), common examples included probably, kind of, looks like. Negative qualifiers referred to any negation (e.g. no, not) or the lexical devices with negative prefixes (e.g. un-). Causal connectors included interclausal connectors, such as the use of conjunctions because and so.

Furthermore, two measures were used to assess evaluative perspectives. The first measure was conducted to analyze the narrative perceptive based on narrations of four scenarios; the second one focused mainly on the Deer Scene. Since the use of evaluative expressions generally reflects narrators’ perspectives on character and events in the story, the evaluative perspective is an essential indicator in revealing narrators’ manipulation of narrated events. Following Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991), Chen and Yan (2010) and Eaton et al., (1999), the analysis of evaluative perspective was based on four scenarios of the frog story that presented rich facial expressions, hand gestures, or body language. These include the events in pictures 1, 3, 7, and 24 as shown in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1. Events selected for the analysis of narrative perspectives

In the first scenario, the boy is sitting on the floor and looking at his frog that is in a jar; he has a smile on his face. In the second scenario, the boy and the dog are looking at the empty jar with a distressed facial expression, since they have found that the frog has escaped. The third scenario depicts the boy holding the dog with an angry look on his face. That is because the dog has fallen out from the window from the second floor and smashed the jar on his head. In the last scenario, the boy finally finds his little frog, who was with his family, his frog then gave the boy one little frog. The boy and the dog were happy and waved goodbye to the rest of the frog family. These situations would be an ideal arena to show whether and how narrators express their comments and evaluate the flow of the story. Narrations of these scenarios were categorized into three types. The first type referred to no mention. The second type indicated a local evaluative perspective, in which the narration was based on local situational and/or immediate facial cues. For instance, the boy is described as angry when he finds that his frog has escaped; this was only based on the current picture. Regarding the third type, a global evaluative perspective was adopted, as the narration was based upon eventual outcome of the story and the immediate facial expression was ignored or overruled. For example, when the boy and his dog jump out of the window, he is described as happy to see that both of them are okay and both of them are also happy because they got out of the house and can go to the woods. In other words,
the narrator focused on the overall plot-structure and attempted to make the structure hieratically explicit so as to facilitate the communication, rather than solely describing the immediate facial expressions of the boy. In order to examine whether and how bilinguals differed in their development of the ability to adopt a global evaluative perspectives in their narratives, their use of the evaluative device “the frame of mind” was coded in each of four pictures. Every picture can be coded as adopting the local perspective, global perspective, or no mention of the events. Since there are four pictures, each narrator has four points in total.

The second measure of narrative perspective was to assess the false-belief mentioning in terms of children’s inclusion of evaluative internal state of the main character when depicting the deer scenes which is presented in Figure 3.2.
Berman and Slobin’s (1994) study provided evidence that older narrators were more likely to explicitly mention this false belief by using mental verbs. Following Berman and Slobin (1994) and Pearson (2001), a narrative received a score of zero to three in this study, depending on the clarity with which the boy expressed his misconception of the deer’s antlers as tree branches by using the mental verbs. The explanation of the boy’s misbelief was not absolutely a requirement for the story to make sense and proceed. The scratch of the deer antlers in the first two pictures above seemed to be not that observable, but it encouraged narrators to pay more attention to mark their misbelief. Narrators’ clarification of the details would strengthen the complexity of the story, since a series of events related to the deer signaled a turning point of the adventure of the boy and the dog, as they are thrown to the water by the deer later. The evaluation in this scenario can be an indicator for the maturity of narrators’ narrative ability. The criteria used for this study is illustrated in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3.** Criterion for false belief mention in Deer Scene

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No mention of the boy’s mistake or no mention of the deer.</td>
<td><em>Then the boy falls on the deer.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mention about the change, but not clearly.</td>
<td><em>The twigs moved and it was a deer.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Mention the change that branches are actually antlers, but do not mention whether the boy realized his mistake or not. 

*Then he climbed on a rock and touched like this branch, but it was like a moose.*

3 Mention about the boy’s misunderstanding and he also realized it. 

*And he grabbed onto a branch because he thought it was a branch.*

Reliability of the coding system was assessed with a second coder, using sixteen randomly selected stories, two (20%) from each group. Cohen’s kappa (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986) was used to estimate the corrected-for-chance agreement between raters. The interrater reliabilities ranged between 83% and 96%. Disagreements were resolved by discussion among the coders.

Statistical analysis included both descriptive and inferential statistics. ANOVA and Regression analyses (Logistic or Poisson) were conducted to explore the impact of the three environmental factors including the instruction model type (IM), socio-economic status (SES) and home language use (HL) on participants’ use of evaluative expressions in their narratives. Significance levels were set to $p < .05$ prior to data analysis. If significant between-group differences were observed for a particular variable, the group means for that variable were compared to determine how the children from different groups differed from each other on that narrative measure.
3.4. Results

3.4.1. Density of Evaluative Devices

3.4.1.1. Average Narrative Length

The average length of narratives as measured by the total number of words is presented in Figure 3.3 below. As the figure shows, high SES Spanish-English bilinguals who were enrolled in bilingual immersion programs with both English and Spanish spoken at home (Group 6) produced the longest narratives among their peers, with an average length of about 343.9 words per narrative. The ELs from low SES background who were enrolled in English monolingual schools with only Spanish spoken at home (Group 3) produced the shortest narratives, with an average of 232.9 words per narrative.

![Figure 3.3. Average length of English narratives produced by Spanish-English bilinguals](image)

In addition, the average length of narratives produced by ELs who were enrolled in bilingual immersion programs was 310 words per narrative, which was 12.3% longer than those produced by non-immersion peers, with an average of 272 words per narrative. Concerning the difference in SES, the average length of narratives produced by high SES ELs was 306.7 words per narrative, which was 10.2% longer than those produced by low SES peers, with an average of 275.3 words per narrative. Regarding the home language, bilinguals with both English and
Spanish spoken at home produced 304.1 words per narrative, which was 8.6% longer than did the ELs with only Spanish spoken at home. The average length of narratives presented the pattern that bilingual immersion ELs with high SES and had two languages spoken at home typically produced longer narratives.

3.4.1.2. Proportion of Evaluative Clauses

The mean number of evaluative clauses as well as the total number of clauses in the English narratives of Spanish-English bilinguals is presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4. Mean number of evaluative clauses (proportion in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
<th>Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Clauses</td>
<td>5.6 (17.4%)</td>
<td>6.7 (19.7%)</td>
<td>6.1 (22.2%)</td>
<td>5.8 (17.5%)</td>
<td>7.3 (18.4%)</td>
<td>8.9 (23.9%)</td>
<td>6.1 (20.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Clauses</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that Group 6 with participants from high SES background who were enrolled in bilingual immersion programs with both English and Spanish spoken at home produced most evaluative clauses in their narratives, taking up an average of 23.9% per narrative. On the contrary, Group 1 narrators enrolled in monolingual English schools with high SES background and with only Spanish spoken at home produced the smallest number of evaluative clauses among their peers. However, a logistic regression analysis on the proportion of evaluative clauses in Table 5 revealed that the expected probability is 0.1969, which was the same for the eight groups with the combinations of the three environmental factors. This indicated that each group produced about 20% evaluative clauses, so there was no significant difference in the proportion of evaluative clauses in narratives produced by each group.
3.4.2. Types of Evaluative Devices

Table 3.5. summarizes the distribution of the five types of evaluative expressions produced by the Spanish-English bilinguals in these eight groups.

Table 3.5. Mean proportions of evaluative devices (relative to the total number of evaluative devices) in the English narratives of Spanish-English bilinguals as a function of instructional model, home language status, and socioeconomic status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative Devices</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
<th>Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frames of mind</td>
<td>41.5% (27)</td>
<td>27.6% (21)</td>
<td>24.3% (18)</td>
<td>37% (23)</td>
<td>36.9% (41)</td>
<td>30.7% (31)</td>
<td>22.7% (17)</td>
<td>25.3% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character speech</td>
<td>16.9% (11)</td>
<td>10.5% (8)</td>
<td>20.3% (15)</td>
<td>17.7% (11)</td>
<td>17.1% (19)</td>
<td>14.9% (15)</td>
<td>10.7% (8)</td>
<td>20.3% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hedges”</td>
<td>6.2% (4)</td>
<td>3.9% (3)</td>
<td>4% (3)</td>
<td>4.5% (5)</td>
<td>3% (3)</td>
<td>1.3% (1)</td>
<td>3.8% (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative qualifiers</td>
<td>20% (13)</td>
<td>19.7% (15)</td>
<td>32.4% (24)</td>
<td>17.7% (11)</td>
<td>17.1% (19)</td>
<td>20.8% (21)</td>
<td>26.7% (20)</td>
<td>21.5% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal connectors</td>
<td>15.4% (10)</td>
<td>38.2% (29)</td>
<td>18.9% (14)</td>
<td>27.4% (17)</td>
<td>24.3% (27)</td>
<td>30.7% (31)</td>
<td>38.7% (29)</td>
<td>29.1% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Tokens</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A chi-square test of group difference in ELs’ choice of evaluative devices revealed no significance difference ($\chi^2=37.26$, df=28, $p=0.11$). There was no strong evidence that any of the groups were much different from the overall distribution, which was approximately 31% frame of mind, 16% character speech, 3% hedges, 22% negative qualifiers, and 28% causal connectors. Though evidence for difference among groups was weak, some trends were observed from a subsequent z-test of group means. Concerning evaluative expressions to show frame of mind,
Groups 3 (z = -1.00) and 7 (z = -1.27) who shared the same low SES background appeared to use less than average, whereas participants in Group 1 with high SES used relatively more. Also, both low SES participants in Groups 3 (z = 1.97) and 7 (z = 0.91) used negative qualifiers more than other groups. There also appeared to be differences with respect to causal connectors in that Groups 1 (z = -1.92) and 3 (z = -1.48) used relatively less, while group 7 (z = 1.95) used more than average. It seemed that ELs with differences in instructional models behaved slightly differently in using causal connectors so that bilingual immersion ELs in Group 7 used somewhat more causal connectors than other peers, especially those who were enrolled in monolingual English schools in Groups 1 and 3. An ANOVA analysis further revealed a trend towards significant effect of SES (F(1,10)=3.44, \( p = .0671 \)) on the use of “frame of mind” evaluative expressions.

### 3.4.3. Evaluative Perspectives

#### 3.4.3.1. Local and Global Perspectives

The proportion of the different types of evaluative perspectives for each group is summarized in Figure 3.4.

![Figure 3.4](image.png)

**Figure 3.4.** The distribution of evaluative perspectives as a function of group

Figure 3.4. shows that a global perspective is the preferred evaluative perfective for all
groups of bilinguals. A Poisson regression analysis revealed that the expected probability for the use of global perspectives out of all attempts was 0.8353, which was the same for eight groups with the combinations of the three environmental factors. This indicated that about 83.5% of all narrative perspectives were global perspectives, no matter which group was observed. An ANOVA analysis further revealed that a significant effect of SES \((F(1,3)=4.54, p<0.05)\) on the no mention. Narrators from high SES background were less likely to mention evaluative expressions in these scenarios.

3.4.3.2. Mention of false belief (Deer Scene)

Results for false belief mention in the Deer Scene are presented in Table 3.6., which shows the total number of false belief mentions in the Deer Scene as well as the number of participants who attempted a detailed 3-point mention to signal the misbelief of the boy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
<th>Group 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of 3-point mention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall pattern in Table 3.6. shows that there were only 12.5% of narratives that included a detailed description in the appearance of the deer and boy’s misbelief. A review of the story transcripts revealed that these children all used one of the three mental verbs, \textit{think}, \textit{know}, \textit{believe}. \
and notice, with one exception. Only one narrator from the bilingual immersion program with high SES and had Spanish as the home language used the word “astonished” as below:

The boy was astonished when he got carried suddenly by two of the branches behind the rock. But it wasn't branches, it was a deer.

Instead of directly describing “the branches”, this child elaborated on the boy’s mental state first when he encounters some strange thing unexpectedly. The cohesive tie “but” was then used with the negative qualifier “not”, leading to further inquiries for the boy and the listener to wonder what happened. “It was a deer” was stated at the end of the description in this scenario, so both the listener and the boy finally realized this misconception. This child caught the logical connection between the sequences of events and elaborated on the boy’s mental state with the “frames of mind” device and a negative qualifier, making it a unique story among all the stories in describing the same scenario.

Figure 3.5. also suggests that narrators in Groups 3 and 7 who come from a low SES background and speak mostly Spanish at home tend to elaborate more on the events involved the appearance of the deer. These narrators were more likely to describe the mental state of the boy when he found that he made a mistake in identifying the deer. This pattern is shown more clearly in Figure 5, which shows the average score of false belief mention for each group.
Figure 3.5. Average score of false belief mention in the Deer Scene as a function of group

3.5. Discussion

This study examined the use of evaluative expressions in the narratives of 5th Grade Spanish-speaking ELs and the impact of the three environmental factors including the instruction model type (IM), socio-economic status (SES) and home language use (HL). The results clearly show that the Spanish-speaking ELs in the current study are able to make use of a variety of linguistic devices to fulfill the evaluative function in the frog narratives that have a complex story line. But more importantly, results of this study show a great variability in these ELs’ use of evaluative expressions in narratives. In her study of frog story narratives produced by Spanish-English adolescents around 15 years old who were enrolled in elite bilingual schools in Colombia, Ordonez (2004) observed high variability in evaluation. She suggested that this high variability ‘may be a characteristic of adolescent language development’ (p. 472). Results from the present study, however, suggest that the high variability may result from complex interactions between the three environmental factors and possibly to other factors that are not explored here.

We will first discuss the impact of the instruction model. The density of the evaluative
devices in immersion ELs’ narratives were not necessarily higher than their non-immersion peers, but they typically produced longer narratives and included more clauses compared with peers who received monolingual English instruction. Bilingual immersion ELs also produced more causal connectors than non-immersion peers. This seems to suggest that English language learners in immersion programs may be more aware of the logical connection between events and thus make explicit efforts to enhance the coherence of their narratives. Researchers have mentioned that learning in immersion settings is associated with higher literacy skills (Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon, and Davison, 2013), but narrative skills of immersion learners and their difference with non-immersion peers have rarely been addressed. This study contributed to this body of research by showing that bilingual immersion instruction improved the bilingual narrative outcome in terms of the length and awareness of the coherence of narratives.

Spanish-English ELs’ use of evaluative devices in their fictional narratives may be impacted by SES as well. Narrators from high SES background in this study were found to be less likely to mention evaluative expressions in the four scenarios selected to examine evaluative perspective. In addition, higher SES seemed to be associated with greater use of certain types of evaluative expressions such as references to feelings and mental states of characters (i.e., frame of mind). The results showing the impact of SES on the use of evaluative devices in Spanish-speaking ELs are consistent with Shiro’s (2003) study of monolingual English-speaking children. In a study of 1st and 4th Grade children from upper and lower SES homes, Shiro (2003) found that, for both grade levels, the children from lower SES homes used not only significantly fewer evaluative devices but also fewer types of evaluative devices in their fictional narratives than their peers from upper SES homes. These findings are not surprising, since a body of literature has already highlighted that children from higher SES families reliably outperformed their peers
from lower SES families on various developmental outcomes from infancy to adulthood (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002; Vasilyeva et al, 2008). For instance, previous research has consistently revealed that parents of high SES background are more likely to participate in their children’s learning by engaging in responsive language interactions and learning activities with their children, and this would afford children more opportunities to learn through complex and constructive play (Hammer et al., 2016).

Home language use does not present itself as a significant factor impacting the use of evaluative devices in the Spanish-speaking ELs in this study. It should be noted, however, that those participants who speak both English and Spanish at home produced longer narratives than those who speak only Spanish at home. In addition, we find important interactions between home language use and SES in the use of evaluative devices in the present study. Specifically, Spanish speaking ELs from low SES background who also speak only Spanish at home were found to differ from other groups of ELs on several measures such as references to feelings and mental states of story characters.

3.6. Conclusion

Diverse forms of educational models have been put into practice so as to achieve various socially valued goals. The results suggested that while bilingual immersion instruction can assist in some aspects of narrative skills of bilingual children, socioeconomic status played an even more important role in predicting differences in narrative skills in terms of providing evaluative comments. Unlike previous research examining the development of narrative skills that showed quite observable patterns in the production of evaluative expressions in narratives of monolingual and bilingual speakers among different age groups, this study investigated the in-
group variance of Spanish-speaking ELs of the same grade level and considered the impact of three environmental factors that have been commonly found to affect the acquisition and use of language in bilingual populations. The interactions between these environmental factors present a complex picture in these bilingual children’s use of evaluative expressions in their English narratives.
CHAPTER 4

RELATIVE CLAUSE PRODUCTION IN THE ENGLISH NARRATIVES OF IMMERSION SPANISH-ENGLISH BILINGUALS: A DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY

Chen, W. To be submitted to *Journal of Linguistics*. 
Abstract

This study investigates the use of relative clauses (RCs) in the narratives of L2 English by Spanish-English bilinguals. The data were drawn from the frog story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). It consists of 88 English oral narratives produced by 2nd grade (n=44; age 7-8) and 5th grade bilingual children (n=44; age 10-11) enrolled in bilingual dual-immersion programs. Two categories of functions in narrative discourse are examined based on the taxonomy developed by Dasinger and Toupin (1994), including general discourse functions and narrative functions. The findings show that English learners (ELs) from both age groups show a preference for the use of OS structure over other types of relative clauses. In addition, older ELs used more narrative clauses in almost all functions that were examined, and demonstrated more maturity in their relative constructions, such as in plot development and in adopting global perspectives.
4.1. Introduction

There is a surge in the number of language immersion programs across United States within the past three decades, especially the bilingual dual immersion programs (Giacchino-Baker & Pillar, 2006). Due to the large number of Latino students in U.S. education system, Spanish/English dual immersion program have become the most popular instructional model nationwide (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011), and it is considered to be “an efficient and culturally sensitive way to meet the linguistic and academic needs of both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children” (DePalma, 2010, p. 7). While a large body of literature has attempted to address the academic achievement and linguistic development of students in Spanish/English immersion programs, insufficient attention has been paid specifically to English language development of Spanish-speaking dual language learners in programs like this (Uchikoshi, 2006).

One frequently-used gauge of child language development is narrative skills. Syntactic complexity within narrative discourse deals with narrators’ ability to formulate grammatically complex sentences that signal relations between focal events and subordinate, background events (Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002). As a complex syntactic structure, relative clauses (RCs) serve a particularly prominent role in the study of syntactic complexity, since they “exemplify one of the formally most complex corners of natural language syntax and play a key role in how language achieves its full richness of expressive capacity, and partly because they have been a rich source of empirical syntactic-complexity results” (Levy et al., 2013, p. 465). The acquisition of RCs has attracted extensive scholarly interest over the past few decades, but immersion students’ acquisition of RCs has rarely been documented. In this study, I focus specifically on the use and development of relative clauses in Spanish-speaking English learners (ELs) who are enrolled in
Spanish/English bilingual immersion programs.

In the current study, I document developmental differences in the English production of 2nd grade (n=44; age 7-8) and 5th grade ELs (n=44; age 10-11). I consider a series of functions in RCs as a reflection of the development in both bilingual children’s syntactic and narrative competence. Two categories of functions in narrative discourse are examined in this study based on the taxonomy developed by Dasinger and Toupin (1994), including general discourse functions and narrative functions.

4.2. Background

4.2.1. Relative Clause in English

In English, relativization is realized syntactically with one clause embedded in another clause when these two share a co-referential noun or noun phrase (NP). As a dependent clause, a relative clause in English typically functions as an adjective that modifies the noun or noun phrase in the main clause, so as to make the head noun more specific or to provide additional information about the head noun (de Villiers et al., 1977). Generally, relative clauses are categorized as either restrictive or nonrestrictive based on their major purpose in discourse. More specifically, whether a relative clause is of a head-noun modifying “restrictive” function or a predicating ‘non-restrictive’ function depends on the necessity of information it provides (Comrie, 1981; Dasinger & Toupin, 1994; Jisa & Kern, 1998). A restrictive relative clause usually provides essential information that is needed for identifying or further specifying the antecedent head noun or NP it modifies. For example,

(1) **Restrictive** relative clause: The student *who studies linguistics at UGA* was a math teacher.
A nonrestrictive relative clause typically provides additional, non-vital information to the head noun or NP and predicate or comment on some aspects of an already identified antecedent. Non-restrictive RCs in English usually require relative pronouns, such as *who*, *whom*, *which*, and *whose* (Comrie, 1981). For example,

(2) **Nonrestrictive** relative clause: Mr. Johnson, *who studies linguistics at UGA*, was a math teacher.

In (1), the speaker assumes that *the student* is insufficient for listeners to identify the person in question and describes specifically about the person’s education background, but this sentence still seems to be ambiguous for listeners to locate the man’s identity. In (2), the head NP *Mr. Johnson* is sufficient enough to provide information about the identity of the man, so the non-restrictive RC *who studies linguistics at UGA* only gives unnecessary, possibly interesting, information about the antecedent that has already been known to the listener.

In addition, based on two features of RC constructions, relative clauses can be categorized into four types. The first feature is the syntactic role of the element that is gapped or relativized inside of the RC, also referred to as the *embeddedness* of the RC. This addresses the position of the RC in the sentence (right-branching vs. center-embedded). The second feature is the syntactic role of the main-clause element functioning as the head of RC, also called the *focus*. This denotes the role played by the head noun in the RC (subject vs. object) (Diessel & Tomasello, 2000; Jisa & Kern, 1998). The following examples, adapted from de Villiers et al. (1977, p. 500), illustrates these four types of RCs:
Table 4.1. Types of relative clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embeddedness (role of complex NP)</th>
<th>Focus (role of head noun inside the relative clause)</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>The cat [that ___ bit the dog] chased the rat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>The cat [that the dog bit ___] chased the rat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>OS</td>
<td>The cat bit the dog [that ___ chased the rat].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>OO</td>
<td>The cat bit the dog [that the rat chased __].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both SS and SO are center-embedded, in which the RCs are embedded in the middle of another independent clause. The OS and OO are right-branching, since the RCs occur at the end of the whole sentence.

4.2.2. The development of Relative Clauses in Discourse in English

RCs provide a good source for investigating the underlying rules and strategies that speakers use to process complex sentences (Abdolmanafi & Rahmani, 2012). Experimental literature on monolingual children’s comprehension of RCs, such as grammaticality judgment tasks (e.g., Schachter and Yip, 1990) and acting out tasks (Sheldon, 1974), has attempted to identify the processing strategies children employ in the process of comprehending syntactic meaning (e.g., Sheldon 1974). Based on the errors made by children in comprehension tasks, different hypotheses have been proposed for children’s processing strategies and difficulties in interpreting RCs. For instance, the often-invoked parallel function hypothesis (Sheldon, 1974) predicts that comprehension and interpretation is relatively easy for children when the head noun has the same grammatical role in the main clause and the embedded clause, so children should find it easier to process SS and OO RCs than SO and OS RCs. In addition, the non-interruption hypothesis (Slobin, 1973) contends that children will have greater difficulty processing relative
clauses that interrupt the matrix sentence, meaning that center-embedded SS and SO relative clauses will be more difficult to interpret than others. Moreover, the filler gap hypothesis (O’Grady, 1997) asserts that children’s difficulty in processing RCs depends on the distance between the filler (the head noun or NP) and the gap. Research in RC production also suggests that English adult speakers show a preference for subject RCs over direct object RCs. They often convert targeted direct object RCs into subject RCs with the help of passivization (Gennari & MacDonald, 2012).

Research has documented monolingual children’s milestones in producing RCs, showing that the ability to formulate grammatically complex sentences is enhanced with age. For instance, nine-year-old children use more relative clauses to introduce new referents and re-identify previously introduced characters and events than five-year-old children do (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994). Diessel & Tomasello (2000) conducted an extensive analysis of spontaneous conversational data from four children acquiring relative clauses (RCs). They found that the preliminary RCs children produced were the ones that modify predicate nominals, which provided new information concerning the NP introduced in the presentational construction (e.g. Here’s a tiger that’s gonna scare him). They also mentioned that children’s development of RCs started from presentational relatives that were propositionally simple. They later gradually learn the use of complex relative constructions that contain two propositions.

Relative clauses, being considered as a universal linguistic phenomenon (Keenan & Comrie, 1977), have also been a classic topic for comparison of languages (Nau, 2011). Keenan and Comrie (1977) proposed the well-known Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH) regarding the relative clause formation. This hierarchy demonstrated a crosslinguistic consistency concerning the types of relative clauses that a language allows. More specifically, if
a language can relativize a given NP, then any other NP in a higher position on the hierarchy can also be relativized. The NPAH is shown in (3), with the symbol “>” indicating the ease of relativization.

(3) The Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH):
Subject (SU) > Direct Object (DO) > Indirect Object (IO) > Oblique (OBL) > Genitive (GEN) > Object of Comparison (OComp)

The hierarchy shows that the subject (SU) is the highest in the hierarchy, followed by direct objects (DO), indirect objects (IO), obliques (OBL), genitives (GEN), and objects of comparison (OCOMP). Much research on the acquisition of RCs has been conducted to test this hypothesis in the field of second language (L2) acquisition (Abdolmanafi & Rahmani, 2012; Gass, 1982; Hamilton, 1994). For instance, Yip and Matthews (1991) analyzed RCs produced by advanced Chinese learners of English and found similar types of error with those produced in other L2 contexts. Furthermore, Mellow (2006) examined 7 months of longitudinal, natural production data from a 12-year-old L1 Spanish learner of English and found that the child started to produce SU relatives much earlier than object relatives. This child also produced 18 tokens of SU relatives but only 2 tokens of object relatives. These studies are consistent with the previous findings and highlight universals of interlanguage syntax. In natural production, learners at the beginning level of RC development seem to be less likely to use RC types that are considered more marked in the hierarchy of the NPAH.

The discourse-pragmatic functions of RCs have also been a subject of interest to child language development researchers. They have been examined in some studies by analyzing
picture-book based stories (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994; Jisa & Kern, 1998). Dasinger and Toupin (1994) conducted a crosslinguistic study on RC functions in frog story narratives by comparing subjects in five different languages. They proposed two main functional categories: general discourse functions and narrative functions. General discourse functions refer to constructions that are used to introduce or reintroduce referents. The use of RCs in general discourse functions is observed to precede the use in more specific narrative functions, as “[i]n the course of telling a story, proficient narrators, however, must do more than track referents” (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994, p. 629). A few studies have followed the framework of Dasinger and Toupin (1994) and looked at functions of relative clauses in oral narratives (Aksu-Koc, 1994; Jisa and Kern, 1998).

For instance, Jisa and Kern (1998) examined the use of relative clauses in French children’s monologues and investigated the general discourse and narrative functions and other aspects of narrative complexity in their oral production. The findings were consistent with Dasinger and Toupin’s (1994) observations about developmental trends in RC functions, and suggested that subject RC were acquired early and used frequently, but the development of their multifunctional use in diverse narrative functions extended well beyond childhood.

The discourse-pragmatic functions of RCs have been studied mostly from developmental perspectives on monolingual children’s acquisition of RCs in different languages (Aparci et al, 2015). Dual language learners’ development in the function of RCs has not drawn sufficient scholarly attention. The current study tends to examine the developmental trends of functions of RCs in Spanish speaking ELs with the bilingual dual-immersion instruction. Relative constructions are coded following the categories defined by Dasinger & Toupin (1994); namely, general discourse functions and narrative functions. Three research questions will be addressed, and these include:
1) What are the frequency and types of relative clauses used by younger and older Spanish-speaking ELs in English narratives?

2) What similarities and differences can be observed in general discourse functions of relative clauses used by ELs at two different ages?

3) What similarities and differences can be seen in narrative functions of relative clauses used by ELs at two different ages?

4.3. Method

4.3.1. Materials

Naturalistic data helps researchers observe young children’s linguistic production unobtrusively. A number of studies on child language acquisition rely on various methods for eliciting narratives, one popular elicitation tool is the use of wordless picture book “Frog, Where are you?” (Mayer, 1969). The book has been widely used by researchers internationally to study developing language acquisition. Using the same stimulus with participants from various linguistic backgrounds potentially provides insights into “children’s minds in terms of the cognitive underpinnings for the necessary but supposedly limited form-meaning mappings” (Guo et al, 2010, p. 129). During the story-telling process, participants assist themselves by actively exploring and appropriating the systematicities in a framework of practice and discourse. Narrators’ cognitive demands are lessened due to the presence of the pictures during the task, so they can focus more attention on generating narratives without additional psychological demands on recalling the story (Wilcox & Morford, 2007; Deng & Yip, 2015).

The book consists of twenty-four pictures. It portrays the adventure of a boy and his dog who are involved in a series of complicated events when searching for his pet frog who has
escaped into the woods. Three main characters in the book include the boy, his dog, and his pet frog. They encounter a series of secondary characters during the search of the pet frog. The interactions between main and secondary characters forms a rich context for the study of oral narrative skills and relative clauses examined in this study.

4.3.2. Participants

The present study is based upon a corpus investigation of naturalistic speech from Spanish-English bilingual children. The data are drawn from the frog-story narratives in the Pearson Corpus (Pearson, 2002) in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). This corpus includes frog story narratives collected at Dade County public schools in Miami, Florida. The data in current study consists of 88 English oral narratives produced by 88 Spanish-English bilingual children. The population includes two groups of 44 subjects each: 2nd graders (age 7 or 8), and 5th graders (age 10 or 11). All these children were born in the United States. They were enrolled in bilingual dual-immersion programs, with 40% of instruction time in Spanish and 60% in English. The socioeconomic status (SES) of the population that participated in this study were counterbalanced, so as to make prominent the overall trends of certain aspects of syntactical development of bilingual children who receive the dual-immersion instruction. These bilingual children are either from high- or low-SES families as measured by family income, parental education level, and parental occupations (Oller & Eilers, 2002b).

4.3.3. Data Coding

In order to answer Research Question 1, 88 frog-story narratives are coded following the taxonomy of the functions of RCs in narrative discourse developed by Dasinger and Toupin
Relative clauses in each narrative are coded according to their general discourse functions and narrative functions. Intelligible discourse needs the speaker to provide enough information about the entities referred to, so that listeners know who or what is being talked about. Since “relative clauses allow for various combinations of given and new information when referring to an entity” (Dasinger and Toupin, 1994, p. 458), the general discourse functions refer to constructions that are used to introduce or reintroduce referents. Narratives typically consist of “a sequence of events experienced by a set of characters located in time and space… to construct a narrative entails describing a series of events as related both temporally and causally” (Dasinger and Toupin, 1994, p. 458). Since narrators usually bear the responsibility to deliberately conceal or adeptly reveal at appropriate moments, the narrative functions deals with RCs that serve to achieve specialized narrative goals.

A set of nine classes of relative clause functions are thus identified. Four general discourse functions include: (i) naming referents (NAME), (ii) situating new referents (SIT-NEW), (iii) situating old referents (SIT-OLD), (iv) reidentifying old referents (REID). The five specific narrative functions contain: (v) presenting main characters (PRES), (vi) motivating or enabling narrative actions (MOT), (vii) continuing the narrative (CONT), (viii) setting up expectations about narrative entities and events (EXP), and (ix) summing up over past or upcoming events (SUM). The following table illustrates these nine functions of relative clauses.

**Table 4.2. Functions and examples of relativizing structures (adapted from Dasinger & Toupins, 1994, p. 460-478)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Discourse Functions</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Naming referents (NAME)</td>
<td>The head of the RC makes reference to a general category expressed by an indefinite expression (i.e. something)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The animal that the kid found was following the dog.</em> (2\textsuperscript{nd} Grader)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Situating new referents (SIT-NEW)</td>
<td>A new referent (not three main characters: the boy, the frog, and the dog) is introduced in a main clause in a position that is not the subject or topic. The subordinate relative clause provides further information about its existence and appearance in the scenario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Situating old referents (SIT-OLD)</td>
<td>The RC is used to reintroduce a referent that has already been introduced previously in the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Reidentifying old referents (REID)</td>
<td>The RC reactivates the old information concerning an already introduced referent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrative Functions**

| (v) Presenting main characters (PRES) | The main clause introduces one of the three main characters (the boy, the dog, the frog) in post verbal position. The character NPs serve as the head of the RCs. | Once upon a time there was this boy that had a frog. (2nd Grader) |
| (vi) Motivating or enabling narrative actions (MOT) | The RC serves to depict an event that is antecedent to an event expressed in the main clause. The event in the relative motivates the event in the main clause. The RCs can contain information concerning the physical possibility of the event or the psychological state of the head referent. | The deer pushed him off the cliff with his dog right into the pond where they got all wet. (5th Grader) |
| (vii) Continuing the narrative (CONT) | The RCs have the effect of continuing or advancing the narrative plotline by providing consequences of the action expressed in the main clause. | Then the owl chased him up a rock where he climbed to call the frog's name. (5th Grader) |
| (viii) Setting up expectations about narrative | The relative clause creates an expectation about the upcoming events, as narrators choose to delay. | The first thing he wanted to do was to see the frog. (5th Grader) |
entities and events (EXP) revealing the identity of an entity that is known to the listener for suspenseful effect.

(ix) Summing up over past or upcoming events (SUM) The RC summarizes past events or events that are about to come up.

He looks in the boots under his bed in the jar, under the stool, in the slippers, out the window, in the bushes—everywhere he could think of where a frog would hide. (5th Grader)

I also examine the overall use of RCs in each group of ELs. Besides the functions of narrative clauses, I then coded the four types of relative clauses (i.e. SS, SO, OS, OO). I coded the relative pronouns (e.g. what, who) as well, so as to analyze particular scenes in narratives. Regarding the relative pronouns, I only considered finite relative clauses marked by a relative pronoun, a complementizer (i.e., that), and the question word where (after locative head nouns; e.g., the house where we are living). I did not consider reduced RCs that contain nonfinite verbs and headless RCs that lack overt head nouns.

In the following sections, I first use the quantitative information to compare the frequency and types of relative clauses that the two groups of Spanish-speaking ELs use in their English narratives. I then conduct a qualitative analysis on the similarities and differences in the functions of relative clauses used by the two different age groups. Each one of the general discourse functions and more specific narrative functions is analyzed individually with details and examples.
4.4. Results and Analysis

4.4.1. Frequency and Types of Relative Clauses

In this section, I address Research Question 1 by presenting an overview of Spanish speaking ELs’ use of RCs in terms of the frequency of occurrence and types of relative clauses (see Table 4.3.). In order to examine the developmental trend of the use of RCs between 2nd graders and 5th graders, Table 3 provides quantitative information on the distribution of RCs in the selected corpus as well as the types of RCs used by two groups of subjects. The first part of the table includes the percentage of subjects who have used the RCs, mean number of RCs produced by each child, and the mean percentage of RCs per total clauses. The second part of the table presents the information about the types of relative constructions being used, including SS, SO, OS, and OO structures.

Table 4.3. Distribution of relative constructions by relative frequency and types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2nd Graders (N=44)</th>
<th>5th Graders (N=44)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of Relative Clauses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects using RCs</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean RCs per subject</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean percentage of RCs per total clauses</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of Relative Clauses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-embedded: SS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-embedded: SO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right branching: OS</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right branching: OO</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of RCs</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that there are more ELs in 5th grade use RCs than those in 2nd grade. In addition, the mean number of RCs produced by each child in 5th grade is higher than that in 2nd grade. 5th graders also use a higher percentage of RCs per narrative. Research points out that the
ability to formulate the grammatically complex sentences increases with age (Slobin, 1985; Manhardt & Rescorla, 2002); for instance, nine year old children use more relative clauses to introduce new referents and re-identify previously introduced characters and events than five-year-olds do (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994). The overall developmental patterns in this data seem to be consistent with previous research findings.

Concerning RC types, the 5th graders used more RCs than 2nd graders in each type. Both groups show a strong preference of using right-branching constructions over other types, especially the type OS (e.g. The little boy took one of the babies [that ____ was his favorite]). Both the center-embedded structures occur less frequently than right-branching ones. Interestingly, the SS construction only emerges in 5th grade, since ELs in 2nd grade totally avoid using this specific structure. This pattern provides some evidence for de Villiers et al.’s (1979) assertion that the noun-verb-noun sequence in the main clause is interrupted by SS, so the sentences should be more difficult. The overall trends of RC production in the present study also appear to be consistent with the non-interruption hypothesis (Slobin, 1973), which suggests that children have difficulties processing relative clauses that interrupt the matrix sentence. This hypothesis predicts that center-embedded relative clauses, such as SS and SO relatives, would be more difficult than other types and would be less likely to be used by children. Furthermore, some research on comprehension and production (see e.g. in Jisa & Kern, 1998) of RCs also showed that the similar outcomes that right-branching OS RCs were the easiest among all RC tested.
4.4.2. Functions of Relative Clauses

Dasinger and Toupins (1994) divide RCs into two categories: general discourse functions and more specific narrative functions. The following Table 4.4 summarizes the overall distribution of the functions of narrative discourse in the RCs produced by ELs from the two different age groups.

Table 4.4. The distribution of RCs in the English narratives of Spanish-English ELs by age and the functions of RC (with the number of participants using RC for a particular function in parentheses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2nd Graders (N=44)</th>
<th>5th Graders (N=44)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total RCs produced</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General discourse functions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>5 (5*)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIT-NEW</td>
<td>10 (10)</td>
<td>18 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIT-OLD</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>12 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REID</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (% of all RCs produced)</strong></td>
<td>21 (25%)</td>
<td>37 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative functions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>14 (14)</td>
<td>18 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOT</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (% of all RCs produced)</strong></td>
<td>20 (39%)</td>
<td>28 (52%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number of participants using this function

Regarding the amount of production, 5th graders use more relative clauses than 2nd graders do. Fifth-graders also produce more clauses in both general discourse functions and narrative functions, though 2nd graders may produce the equal number of or slightly more RCs in certain
functions. In the following sections, I will discuss the two functions of RCs used by these two groups in details.

### 4.4.3. General Discourse Functions

The term “general discourse function” is reserved for the uses of RCs that serve the basic discourse need. Four general discourse functions include: (i) naming referents (NAME), (ii) situating new referents (SIT-NEW), (iii) situating old referents (SIT-OLD), (iv) reidentifying old referents (REID).

#### 4.4.3.1. Naming Referents

Regarding the function “naming of referents”, the head NP can be expressed by an indefinite pronoun (e.g. someone, something) or a superordinate lexical category that will be further specify by its RC (Dasinger & Toupins, 1994). This function also implies a lack of sufficient information in referring to the referent. The “naming” function appears in 2nd-graders’ narratives more often than it does in 5th-graders’ stories. The following example is from a 2nd-grader:

(4) And then the dog is barking at where bees live. (2nd Grader)

This headless, restrictive RC suggests the speaker’s apparent lack of knowledge of the appropriate lexical item “beehive”. Concerning RCs produced by 5th graders, two head NPs in their relative constructions were referred to as “an animal”. Their referents, *the groundhog* and *the deer*, were further explained in the following RCs. This may also suggest a lack of lexical
knowledge, or the possibility of a failure to access this lexical item when needed. Though the “naming” function involves the use of indefinite pronouns, this does not necessarily mean the speaker always lack the specific lexical item. The following example is from another 5th-grader:

(5) When he fell, he was listening to the sounds that something was making. (5th Grader)

Though the indefinite pronoun “something” was used to refer to the entity, the narrator later revealed that it was the frog family that has made the sound. Thus, even the listener cannot immediately identify the entity being talked about; the later reveal of the character referenced makes the plot more intriguing. Instead of showing the limitation of the 5th-grader’s lack of lexical knowledge, this delay of information leaking shows maturity and creativity. In a word, younger ELs used the “naming” function slightly more than older ones. Also, 5th-graders in this study seem to demonstrate more maturity in narrating due to their employment of a strategy to make a certain referent more vague and leave the listeners in suspense. This pattern is in accordance with Dasinger and Toupins’s study (1994) showing that younger narrators tended to use more “naming”-function devices than older narrators cross-linguistically.

4.4.3.2. Situating New Referents

Unlike the “naming” function, the function “situating new referents” entails introducing new referents by using full lexical (i.e. nonpronominal) NPs and with a preference of introducing them in nonsubject/nontopic positions. Because new entities are introduced in nonsubject positions, certain syntactic structures, such as there-cleft and it-cleft constructions in (6) and (7) are observed to occur repeatedly in both second and fifth graders’ production.
(6) Now it was a short way that he fell. (2nd-Grader)

(7) And there were lots of bees chasing the dog (5th-Grader)

Though this function of RCs is devoted to introducing new referents, it is usually the less important entities that are introduced, be they animate or inanimate. The new mentions of three main characters are to be discussed below in the section on narrative functions.

### 4.4.3.3. Situating Old Referents

The ability to refer to entities is a prerequisite for successful and meaningful communication. The study of referring expressions provides ample theoretical support for different characteristics of various types of linguistic forms used to refer adequately to animate characters. In the function “situating old referents”, both the animate and inanimate entities that have been introduced previously, can be referred again by using RCs. Like other functions, 2nd graders produce fewer relative constructions than 5th graders do. It is worth mentioning that 75% of relative constructions in 5th graders’ narratives have relative pronouns placed after locative head NPs. Examples are shown as follows.

(8) The dog pushed the tree where the beehive was so hard that the beehive fell. (5th Grader)

(9) When he woke up the next morning the frog escaped from the jar that he was put into. (5th Grader)

In both (8) and (9), the relative pronouns, including the question word where and the
complement that, occur after the head NPs (i.e. the tree and the jar) that are in the object positions to provide locative information for the following subjects in RCs. Among all these similar relative constructions, the head NPs are either the tree that the owl flies out (33%) or the jar (also referred to as the container or the bottle) that the frog jumped out (67%). This pattern suggests that 5th grade ELs are more likely to use RCs to make reference to previously mentioned entities in the frog escaping scene and the owl scene. Both these two scenes involve characters emerging from or re-appearing at some places; thus locative head NPs are used more often in describing the two scenarios by 5th-graders. There are only two similar relative constructions that were used in second graders’ narratives, with one describing the owl scene and the other the frog escaping scene. The complex plots in these two scenes may be the trigger for narrators to use more complex syntactic constructions, such as relative constructions.

4.4.3.4. Reidentifying Old Referents

In coherent discourse, the listener must be able to keep track of referents over time. The RCs reactivating old information concerning an already-introduced referent need to meet the discourse function titled “reidentifying old referents”. The current data shows that older ELs use more RCs of this function than younger ELs do. Among the total 6 relative constructions of this function used by all narrators from two groups, they uniformly have the character the frog as the old referent that is to be reminded or reidentified (see examples below).

(10) Then the little boy noticed that that was the frog that escaped from his little house. (2nd Grader)
(11) And there was the mother and the father of the baby frog that they had gotten that day. (5th Grader)

The reason that the character the frog especially needs to be pointed out and identified later might be because searching for the frog is the main purpose of the whole story. In addition, the example (11) above may also suggests that when the boy finally found the frog, the frog was not alone and was with a bunch of other frogs. This might be a reason that ELs in both groups need to provide extra information in the RCs to activate listeners’ prior knowledge to reidentify this particular frog that the boy and the dog was looking for. The latter example produced by the 5th-grader also shows a higher degree of maturity compared with that in 2nd-grader, since he sums up the previous plot and promote narrative coherence.

4.4.4. Narrative Functions

Besides introducing new referents as well as maintaining and reintroducing old referents, narrators also need to appropriately organize and articulate events, since “to construct a narrative entails describing a series of events as related both temporally and causally” (Dasinger & Toupins, 1994, p. 467). The five specific narrative functions contain: (i) presenting main characters (PRES), (ii) motivating or enabling narrative actions (MOT), (iii) continuing the narrative (CONT), (iv) setting up expectations about narrative entities and events (EXP), and (v) summing up over past or upcoming events (SUM). I will discuss each function in details in the following section.
4.4.4.1. Presenting Main Characters

NCs with the function “presenting main characters” need to have the main clause introduce one of the three main characters (the boy, the dog, the frog). The younger ELs again produce fewer RCs with this function than older learners do. The data shows that all the character NPs are in post-verbal position and serve as the head of the RCs. The example (12) shows a typical relative construction under this category.

(12) One day there was a little boy who had a pet dog and a pet frog. (2\textsuperscript{nd} Grader)

This is a restrictive right-branching OS construction, which the head NP (a little boy) is in the object position of the main clause and the subject of the RC. An average of 88% of all the relatives children produced are of the same construction, in which the RCs modify the predicate nominal of a presentational copula clause (e.g. there-cleft, it-cleft). When introducing main characters, 78% of older ELs and all younger ELs use presentational constructions. Cleft relatives are a special type of relative constructions. English is generally known to make ample use of cleft constructions (Nau, 2011). The data in this study shows a strong preference for ELs, especially the younger ones, to use such presentational constructions to introduce referents.

4.4.4.2. Motivating or Enabling Narrative Actions

RCs of the function “motivating or enabling narrative actions” serve to depict an event that is antecedent to an event expressed in the main clause, presenting inter-propositional relations that provide an inferential basis for discourse cohesion. The event in the relative motivates the event in the main clause. In the current study, RCs of this function only occurred three times in
selected corpus. Two participants used this function: one is from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade and the other the 5\textsuperscript{th} grade, with the latter producing two relative constructions of this function. The three occurrences were listed below.

(13) They fell into the water where they heard a noise. (2\textsuperscript{nd} Grade)

(14) The deer pushed him off cliff with his dog right into the pond where they got all wet. (5\textsuperscript{th} Grade)

(14) And then the boy saw a log, a nice log where they heard frog sounds. (5\textsuperscript{th} Grade)

All three head NPs refer to the location preceded by the relative pronouns \textit{where}. The use of RCs provides the “enablement” condition for a main clause event (Zorriqueta, 1988, as cited by Dasinger & Toupins, 1994), which provides the prerequisite for the following plots to develop. Interestingly, all three scenarios happen between the deer’s throwing the boy and the dog into the pond and their finding of the frog later on.

4.4.4.3. \textit{Continuing the Narrative}

This function seems to be similar with the previous “motivating” function. Under the function “continuing the narrative”, the RCs have the effect of continuing or advancing the narrative plotline by providing consequences of the action expressed in the main clause. It is the action of the head referent that causes the continuance of the story in following RCs. There is only one 2\textsuperscript{nd}-grader who used a relative clause of this function, which is shown as follows.

(15) And then the boy swam back and saw something that went up the hill. (2\textsuperscript{nd} Grade)
This relative construction is also categorized as the “naming” function of general discourse function because of the use of the indefinite pronoun “something”. In this sentence, the young EL introduces a new secondary character in this scene in an OS structure and then uses a relative clause to continue the narrative by immediately making this character a part of the following action. In contrast with younger ELs, the older ELs use relative constructions of this kind 5 times. A 5th-grader used a similar construction as the 2nd-grader did:

(16) Any (*) animal that he sees bothers him. (5th Grade)

The narrator introduced a new character by using the embedded RC to modify this independent head NP. He then assigned the newly-mentioned character the thematic role for the action followed, so as to advance the plotline. Fifth graders also used relative constructions of greater diversity. For example:

(17) Then the owl chased him up a rock where he climbed to call the frog's name. (5th Grade)

In this OO structure, though the head NP “a beehive” is a location rather than the agent of the relative clause, the subject NP “all the bees” is the active agent of RC and the following event. Thus, the relative clause “where he climbed to call the frog's name” depicts event that closely follows upon the main clause event of the boy and the frog’s finding of a beehive. Concerning this function, 5th-graders seemed to produce more RCs of this function with a higher degree of quantity and quality.
4.4.4.4. Setting up Expectations about Narrative Entities and Events

The RCs in this function create an expectation about upcoming events, as narrators, for suspenseful effect, choose to delay revealing the identity of an entity that is known to the listener. An example is as follows:

(18) The first thing he wanted to do was to see the frog. (5th Grade)

Instead of directly saying the boy found that the frog was missing, this narrator intentionally attached the RC to an isolated head NP “the first thing” and made the relative construction as a nominal complement to serve as the subject of the presentation predicate. This structure clearly delays revealing the event and shows a sign of narrative maturity. As is mentioned by Dasinger and Toupins (1994), “[t]he practice of withholding information is in the realm of a narrator’s creative license” (p. 472). The data presents that only 5th graders use RCs to establish the expectation for listeners, showing maturity in depicting sequential events.

4.4.4.5. Summing up over Past or Upcoming Events

Narration is more than recounting a series of sequentially ordered events that happen in the story. The RC of this category functions as summarizing past events or events that are about to come up. An example from a 5th-grader is as follows.

(19) He looks in the boots under his bed in the jar, under the stool, in the slippers, out the window, in the bushes- everywhere he could think of where a frog would hide. (5th Grader)
In this sentence, this child depicted the scenario that the little boy was searching for the missing frog all over his room. Rather than being in accordance with the concept “coda” (Labov, 1972), in which the narrator attempts to relate the significance of a sequence of events and provide closure for the story, this summary above happens in the middle of the story in an attempt to close off a sequence of complicating actions related to searching for the frog. The narrator used the indefinite pronoun “everywhere” as the head NP to collectively refer to all possible hiding places of the frog, followed by a relative clause “where a frog would hide” with encapsulating function to point out that the boy was searching with the intention to locate the frog in question. There are two 5\textsuperscript{th}-graders who used RCs of this function but no of 2\textsuperscript{nd}-graders who do so. Since the collective sense of narrating events reflects the global perspective of the storyteller, the data shows that the older ELs demonstrate more maturity in their narratives.

### 4.5. Conclusion

The use of relative clauses serves as an indicator of the language learners’ achievement of expressive richness in syntactic complexity (Levy et al., 2013). In this study, I investigated the production of relative clauses in the narratives of Spanish speaking ELs who were enrolled in Spanish-English bilingual dual-immersion programs. Two categories of relative-clause functions were examined in this study, including general discourse functions and narrative functions (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994). The production of relative clauses of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} graders and 5\textsuperscript{th} graders were examined and compared. Overall, relative clauses occurred more frequently in older ELs’ narratives. Older ELs also used more narrative clauses in almost all functions that were examined, except for the “naming” function, which potentially suggested a lack of lexical knowledge. Furthermore, ELs from both groups showed a preference for the use of OS structure
over other types of relative clauses. This pattern is consistent with existing literature and hypotheses on both the acquisition of monolingual and bilingual language acquisition (Slobin, 1973; Villiers et al., 1979). The qualitative analysis of the functions of relative clauses also showed that presentational constructions as a specific kind of OS were widely used in the selected corpus, mostly being employed in introducing, maintaining, and reidentifying referents. In addition, unlike 2nd-graders, 5th-graders demonstrated more maturity their relative constructions, such as in plot development and in adopting global perspectives.

One limitation of this study is the selection of participants. Drawn from the CHILDES corpus, the data selected for the current study were produced by bilingual learners of English who received the bilingual immersion instruction. The literature has asserted the important effect of environmental factors such as instruction models for ELs, SES and home language use (e.g., Jia & Paradis, 2015). In the future, it is necessary to draw data from monolingual children who are also enrolled in the same immersion instructional model or bilingual children who are enrolled in the regular English schools so as to better understand the role of different environmental factors and their interactions on the developmental trajectories of children’s narrative skills over time.
5.1. Summary of the Findings

As the social and linguistic demographics of U.S. schools continue to evolve in speed, more and more second-language programs are developed to satisfy the changing needs of local communities. Diverse forms of educational models have been put into practice so as to achieve various socially-valued goals. The bilingual immersion program is one such fast-growing instruction model. The present investigation of the L2 acquisition of three components of narrative skills was motivated by the desire to describe the learner language that reflects the coherence, richness and complexity of the narrative texts and the association between EL children’s language and social environment and narrative outcomes. It aimed to address (1) whether and to what degree the use of referring expressions in the English narratives of Spanish-speaking ELs may be influenced by environmental factors such as instructional models, socio-economic status, and home language use (Chapter 2), and (2) whether and to what degree environmental factors may influence Spanish-speaking ELs’ use of evaluative expressions (Chapter 3), and (3) how Spanish-speaking ELs who are enrolled in bilinguals dual immersion programs develop and use relative clauses to fulfill various functions in their oral narratives (Chapter 4).

The comparison between the 2nd-grade and 5th-grade immersion bilingual learners has revealed a clear pattern of growth in syntactic complexity, as older ELs were observed to use more relative clauses and demonstrated more maturity in their choice of relative clauses. The
comparison between age-matched bilingual children who were enrolled in dual-immersion programs and in monolingual English programs shows that bilingual immersion instruction can assist in some aspects of narrative skills of bilingual children. For instance, bilingual immersion learners tended to produce longer utterances. They were also more sensitive to the logical connection between events and made more explicit efforts to enhance the coherence of their narratives than their peers in English-only programs. However, the findings of current study did not provide supportive evidence that ELs in dual-immersion programs outperform their peers in the accuracy and richness of their production. Instead, socio-economic status seems to play a more important role in predicting individual differences in adequately managing references or using richer evaluative devices in oral narratives. Home language use plays an essential role in predicting ELs’ narrative outcomes in certain aspects, such as influencing the choice of evaluative devices to express feelings and mental states of story characters. However, it is worth noting that home language use does not present itself as a significant factor in any cases, but rather it has to be combined with ELs’ family SES so as to function as a significant contributing factor.

Contrary to expectations, the impact of the instructional model that ELs were enrolled in plays a limited role in ELs’ use of referring and evaluative expressions in oral narratives. The relative impact of immersion instruction models versus family factors including SES and home language use on these components of narrative skills in these bilinguals’ development reminds us of an observation that, “(t)he family seems to be the most effective and economical system for fostering and sustaining the child’s development” (Brofenbrenner, 1974, p. 279).
5.2. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were highlighted as three individual studies were conducted. In this section, we will look at these limitations and discuss a few suggestions and directions for future research focusing on the subject matter for reducing the effect of the limitations. The most obvious limitation of the study is the sample itself. While the sample consists of narratives from eight groups of ELs who differ in SES, instruction model, and home language use, and thus presents itself as an ideal context for factorial design of narrative skills in these ELs, the sample size nonetheless is small for each group. The small sample size has made it a challenging task to adequately show effects that may in fact exist, since the use of multiple predictor variables may have been more feasible with a larger sample. A second limitation is the exclusive focus on English narratives produced by these bilinguals. In the future, the frog story narratives in Spanish produced by these bilingual children need to be analyzed in order to figure out the potential influence of the knowledge of Spanish on the use of English, and how cross-linguistic influence may interact with the three environmental factors explored in the present study. A contrastive analysis of the stories in both languages of bilingual children will also help us to better understand if these Spanish-English bilinguals’ oral narratives in both languages show similar degrees of appropriate use of grammatical means for discourse purposes, or if they follow the characteristic style identified for each of the two languages and present an autonomous development.

Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is that ELs enrolled in bilingual dual-immersion schools did not appear to have an ideal environment to interact with native speakers of English. The demographics of the research sites presented a majority of Hispanic children and a lack of traditional monolingual English-speaking peers in this district.
unavoidable paucity of monolingual English-speaking peers for children in bilingual dual-immersion programs and English immersion schools may explain the lack of significant effect of instructional models for bilingual children. The findings regarding the role of the instructional models for bilinguals thus need to be interpreted with caution. Future evaluation of language immersion programs needs to be based on certain characteristics and contexts that the programs are situated in. More specifically, future studies may need to take into consideration a series of factors such as the demographics of school areas, the distribution of races and ethnicities of student body, and the choice and commitment to English in schools, families, and communities as a whole.

In addition, the present study focused on English narratives produced by ELs without comparing them with those produced by their monolingual English-speaking peers. This focus is intentional because one of the major goals this dissertation is to examine the effects of environmental factors on ELs’ narrative skills; but monolingual English data that are available in the corpus are not matched for the corresponding environmental variables. However, such bilingual-monolingual comparisons are essential to identify commonalities and differences between the different groups of ELs and their monolingual peers.

5.3. Implications of the Findings

Children who learn two languages vary widely in their exposure to two languages in early years, and they are extremely heterogeneous in the development rate in language and literacy skills (Hammer et al, 2014). Previous literature has documented ample empirical evidence that children who grow up bilingually and who come from high SES background are advantaged and privileged in their language and cognitive development. However, these two factors are usually
studied separately, with limited attention to the effect of SES strata on bilingual language acquisition (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014). This study addressed this literature gap by taking into consideration multiple environmental factors and their interactions. The findings pointed out the essential role a family’s socio-economic background played in children’s development of some aspects of narrative competence. Through the investigation presented in this dissertation, it was also observed that the effect of naturally occurring life experiences shaped by a variety of environmental factors was rather imbalanced and mixed in predicting different aspects of developmental course and outcomes of learners with dual language exposure. Needless to say, the assignment of these English learners into eight groups that differ in their instructional models, SES, and home language use was inevitably influenced by the unique political and linguistic climate of Miami. This observation itself brings us to the reality that the life situation of each individual is complex, and that life does not provide the opportunity for random assignment to groups based on a limited series of criteria. Though children enrolled in different instructional models seemed to master certain aspects of narrative skills equally well, results should not be interpreted as suggesting the dual bilingual dual-immersion approach cannot compete with regular English monolingual instruction. Instead, more rigorous attention needs to be paid to the identification of risk and protective factors behind this innovative instructional model. Such information will help researchers and practitioners develop programs that capitalize on protective factors that facilitate the process of immersion learners’ acquisition of both linguistic and academic skills in two languages. In addition, there is an urgent need for research that aims to identify the characteristics of instructional and home environments that benefit dual-language learners, as well as the characteristics of learners who benefit from the given environment and approach, so as to further draw generalizations maximizing linguistic and
academic outcomes of dual-language learners.

Given that the importance of narrative development is enhanced as researchers find that narrative skills can predict later literacy and academic achievement (Griffin et al., 2004; Snow & Dickinson, 1991), the findings in this dissertation have potential practical importance. The results highlighted the essential role that the home environment played in children’s development of some aspects of narrative competence. A combination of literacy-rich home environments and preschool experience can be beneficial in assisting EL children’s narrative development and helping them prepare for the mainstream schooling experience. A rich body of literature has revealed evidence and features of literacy-rich home environments, including children’s books in the home, joint book-reading time with parents, and exposure to rich native language vocabulary from parents and to rich English language from educational television (Harkins et al., 2001; Edwards et al., 2009). For instance literacy-based educational programs *Arthur* and *Between the Lions* were empirically supported to respectively promote specific narrative skills of Spanish-speaking ELs whose parents did not speak English after extensive classroom exposure for the course of over a year (Uchikoshi, 2005, 2006). However, we cannot expect that parents of immigrant children fully expose their children to the mainstream society language in contextually supportive settings such as book-reading at home. Such intervention, like the literacy educational programs, is not easily accessible as well. If this kind of support from the home environment is limited in this way, then the gap must be filled in the school setting. Thus, identifying pedagogical strategies that can be implemented through an instructional approach, like bilingual immersion education, seems to be more practical for the goal of facilitating ELs’ development of narrative skills.

The current investigation on the development of multiple narrative skills in English
learners suggests the need for bilingual immersion education to support English language development of bilingual children more effectively. Though the philosophy of bilingual immersion education is to use an efficient and culturally sensitive way to meet the linguistic and academic needs of both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children (DePalma, 2010), immersion learners are still hypothesized to be disadvantaged with respect to grammatical accuracy, lexical variety, and sociolinguistic appropriateness (Harley et al, 1990; Potowski, 2007). The findings here provide additional evidence that immersion ELs lack the advantage in accurately managing references and providing evaluative information in their story telling.

Given the predominant focus on the meaning negotiation in immersion context, more form-focused instructional practices need to be emphasized in immersion curriculum. Based on the socio-cognitive perspective, Lyster (2007) proposes a counterbalanced approach, which encourages systematic integration of both content-based and form-based instruction. This concept also involves finding a balance with the overall learning environment of the classroom by shifting learners’ focus as a way to increase the salience of the target features. According to Lyster (2007), “scaffolded interaction with its many opportunities for learners to negotiate language through content serves to fuse content and language, thereby providing instructional coherence across curriculum in immersion and content-based classrooms” (p. 137).

Now that the explicit integration of grammatical rules into the delivery of the content seems to be appropriate and needs to be encouraged, it is necessary to cautiously consider what skills are optimal to be embedded in this process. Previous literature has pointed out that narrative skills are associated with cultural background. Bilingual children from minority backgrounds are more likely to be disadvantaged or even marginalized in school settings because they tend to lack socially appropriate/expected literacy skills in general (Heath, 1982; Minami,
The initial step is for educators to understand that bilingual children from linguistically diverse backgrounds entering the educational system are not necessarily deficient academically and intellectually, so educators can take measures to help ELs overcome the educational disadvantages resulting from the home school language mismatch. Thus, it is very necessary for teachers to develop an awareness and sensitivity to help immersion ELs’ to improve their narrative discourse and consequent academic language. In addition, more opportunity can be provided for immersion learners to use story-telling to demonstrate the content knowledge they have learned. As is indicated by Gardner-Neblett and Iruka (2015), telling oral narratives helps children gain knowledge about the structure of narratives, which may be helpful as children learn to decipher and understand texts. There may be value to provide ELs with classroom-based story-related experiences that expose them to literate language. Consequently, teachers in immersion classrooms can be encouraged to teach the narrative structure that is valued in schools and society, as well as to teach the knowledge of “what makes a good story and how to tell a good story” in particular. Teachers can provide students with explicit and implicit instruction on the characteristics and rules of a good and potentially engaging story. For instance, ELs can be encouraged to insert more evaluative comments in their stories so as to provide the listeners with emotional information about the events narrated in the story. Furthermore, since bilingual dual-immersion programs provide an ideal context for the exposure of two languages and authentic interactions between native speakers of both languages, educators may consider not only teaching bilingual children the mainstream culture’s standards and expectations for oral narratives, but also incorporating the traditions and standards of narrative discourse in ELs’ home language to help them embrace their heritage. Teachers and students in immersion programs should be encouraged to appreciate the privilege of having a bilingual population in
classes and take advantage of rich linguistic resources to improve educational practices in the multilingual environment.
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