




AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Bilingual literacy learning in adult education

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



ABSTRACT

Community-based literacy teaching workshops attend to the learning needs of new students who have not been able to benefit from enrollment as children in the public school system. The following report from the field calls attention to the special circumstances of this heterogeneous group of literacy learners. The workshop described here engages learners who are literacy learners as well as second language learners of the national language, in this case Spanish. Literacy learning proceeds in parallel with second language learning. The report summarizes a series of informal interviews with students and their teacher and observation of their adult literacy program, during a period of approximately ten years. As such it provides preliminary findings for better understanding the problems of community literacy programs in bilingual communities in general. The tasks of learning to read and write present themselves in a special situation of language contact, that of community language and national language.

KEYWORDS

language awareness, oral tradition narrative, bilingual communities, Gender Parity Index, Spanish, Nahuatl

INTRODUCTION

This report will focus on the literacy and language learning context in Spanish-speaking Latin America for adult learners, region where our project has been based. For a number of reasons the research problem of integrating beginning literacy learning and second language (L2) learning is similar among the Spanish-speaking countries with large populations of second language learners residing outside of the urban centers.¹ In contrast, readers will take note that the research questions will be different in a number of important ways where Portuguese or French, for example, are national languages of instruction.

For rural communities in Latin America school attendance has significantly improved over the last thirty years and with it literacy learning for populations that historically have been underserved (Acosta, Cruces, Galiani, & Gasparini, 2019; Manrique, 2021). The expansion of public education has brought millions of new school-age children into K-6 and *secundaria* [middle school] and teenagers to the *bachillerato* [high school] system. While many children and teenagers in the rural areas still do not either enter first grade or stay in school to complete sixth grade, advances have been robust and broad-based (Rodríguez Nava, Couturier Bañuelos, & Jiménez Bustos, 2020). The progress has been especially noteworthy for those sectors that in the past have been disfavored or have faced discrimination.

Learning how to read and write in the bilingual context has been the topic of extensive discussion without having converged on consensus (Ricco & Aguirre Godínez, 2019). In the special circumstances of adult literacy learning the factor of previous knowledge, in particular prior exposure to writing and L2 attainment (usually associated with school enrollment), is revealed in the wide variation in entry-level ability. But for the new generation of the adult

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¹In a similar Latin American language contact situation of community bilingualism (Inga-Quichua and Spanish, Colombia), researchers applied a participant observation approach (Soler Castillo, 1999). Similar tendencies were proposed for further study: for example, along the rural-urban migration interaction, the shift toward greater use of Spanish as a second language linked to schooling and L2 literacy.

learners an important dimension of the language-literacy interaction has shifted dramatically. In the community upon which we will sharpen our focus in the next section the local census estimate for 1990 (INEGI, 1990) for the percentage of persons who did not speak Spanish (i.e. monolingual in the local autochthonous language) was given as 20.3%; 72.4% were bilingual Spanish speakers, and 7.3% monolingual Spanish. Thirty years later, the census (INEGI, 2020) indicated that the non-Spanish speaking population accounted for only 2.13%. The most important increase, both locally and nationally, in knowledge of Spanish during this period occurred among teenage girls and women who in the recent past had not participated in economic activity outside of the home or who had not attended or completed elementary school. This local tendency is a reflection of the same sociolinguistic shift across all of Latin America (Chanona Pérez, 2014; Francis, 2016; UNICEF, 2015). Interestingly, the trend in favor of a growing participation by teenage girls and women in programs of basic language and literacy may not apply internationally to all other regions (Iñiguez-Berrozpe, Carmen Elboj-Saso, Flecha, & Marcaletti, 2020). This aspect of recent social change clearly suggests that the new generation of adult literacy learners possesses a working knowledge of Spanish, as L2 learners, in significantly greater numbers in comparison to previous generations.

The demographic trend described here has the following important implication for the theory of adult literacy education and for day-to-day practical application in local literacy workshops. Even if most of the new adult literacy learners are beginner or beginning-intermediate speakers of Spanish, the working hypothesis of our project proposes that this level of bilingual proficiency will be sufficient for learners to profit from beginning literacy instruction in Spanish. Learners will also, by hypothesis, be able to productively use the official literacy readers and workbooks provided uniformly by the national program for adult literacy. The initial and tentative observations of the present study cannot yet clearly support (or reject) this hypothesis. But the partial results, so far, suggest that the *L2 beginner literacy hypothesis* is plausible and should be taken as a strong proposal for further study, to confirm it or disconfirm it. This was the research question that guided the first approximation toward designing a study of the above-mentioned literacy workshop.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT: METRO-AREA MEXICAN COUNTRYSIDE

In recent studies (focused on the academic performance of elementary school-age girls) our project has tracked the social and language learning changes in one community to compare them to the current situation in two other bilingual localities of Latin America (Chireac & Francis, 2018). The three communities, from Mexico (two) and Ecuador (one), are similar in many ways, as predominately rural and in recent years undergoing rapid integration into the regional

economy. At the inception of the first Mexican project in 1991, a large portion of the local child population of elementary-school age, estimated by the official door-to-door census at 30%, was not enrolled in school (INEGI, 1990). Today, the estimate of non-enrollment is in the single digits, an attainment reflected in the rate of sixth-grade completion nation-wide across all regions of Mexico. In 1991, the graduating class of sixth graders was overwhelmingly boys. Thirty years later the 6th grade Gender Parity Index closely approaches, if not attains, 1.00, accompanied by a spectacular overall increase of total enrollment in both K-6 and middle school.

The community Writing Workshop, subject of this report, serves a semi-rural locality of approximately 30,000 residents on the southern slope of the Malintzin volcano overlooking the metropolis of Puebla city. In fact, the conglomeration of the two adjoining towns, site of the above-mentioned project initiated in 1991, is located within short commuting distance to the city's downtown district. What distinguishes all of the neighboring communities of the larger highland region, and sets them apart from the city, is a widespread bilingualism, a factor that plays an important role in literacy learning.

The workshop primarily consists of women, of all ages typically mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers (with daily economic and familial responsibilities closer to home) whom the educational expansion of recent years has not found a way to properly serve.² As the following field report will suggest, a question is posed (for both program implementation and for basic research): How can community-based educators and fieldwork investigators design a comprehensive program of *formative* assessment that can provide us with better information about learner progress? As we will see, a system of formal, *summative*, assessment already exists. However, since it appears that only a minority of learners attempt the two-part final exam, a set of research tools, both qualitative and quantitative, need to be considered for studying how, and to what extent, learners make progress. The implementation of formative assessment would also allow researchers to be able to test the *L2 beginner literacy hypothesis*.

Residents of the communities of the Malintzin highlands are direct descendants, in their overwhelming majority, of the contemporaneous Aztec empire, Tlaxcalan confederation and dominions of Huexotzinco and Cholula. While politically separate prior to the European contact (1519), they shared the same language. In the modern day, the descendent populations of the same four cultural entities still speak the same variant (dialect) of the language: Central Nahuatl (historically associated with Classical Nahuatl).

²The workshop is not reserved for women. As of this writing, the few men who began to attend were lost to attrition, a tendency noted by Torres (2008) across the region. The workshop's composition is nevertheless an irrefutable reflection of the historical trend toward equal participation of girls in the elementary and secondary grades in rural Latin America, including now in recent years in the most remote and culturally conservative municipalities. Over the years, the example of children has evidently been a contributing incentive for their parents.



Including neighboring towns and villages, the above-mentioned bilingual locality, research site of the present study, forms the largest concentration of Nahuatl speakers in Central Mexico. In general, the higher the elevation along the slopes of the Malintzin volcano, the more rural the landscape becomes and greater is the concentration of proficient Nahuatl speakers.³

An important note regarding literacy and the Nahuatl language should be taken into account. Following the Spanish conquest, well into the 17th century, the colonial authorities promoted the lingua franca of the defeated Aztec empire for academic/evangelization purposes, in key social contexts even surpassing Spanish in publishing and active learning and use of literacy. During the subsequent colonial period (mid-17th to 19th centuries), and continuing during the years following independence, the Nahuatl language was progressively displaced from this position of literary/written medium. In Mexico, this “heritage of writing and literature” remains as an important historical data point in discussions of language and literacy. Today, nevertheless, literacy, from a sociolinguistic point of view, is almost universally associated with Spanish. See the study of the entire period by Heath (1972) for the most complete account available.

At the same time, Spanish-Nahuatl bilinguals, virtually “automatically” (so to speak), read Nahuatl texts even without any previous language-specific literacy instruction in the language if they received literacy instruction in Spanish in school. This ability obtains even in the absence of any bilingual education program during the elementary school years, as the respective orthographies, since the 16th century, are closely aligned in regard to the relevant phoneme-grapheme correspondences. This historical coincidence evidently carries an important implication for the development of bilingual literacy in this case and in others of similar orthographic parallel.

THE RURAL-URBAN LITERACY LEARNING GAP

For many years neglected by educational services, national census responses by residents revealed, until recently, significantly higher rates of illiteracy in the highland semi-rural communities than the average for nearby communities located closer to the urban center. Over the years, this imbalance in reading and writing ability has been gradually attenuated (not completely closed), accompanied by the accelerating rate of Spanish as Second Language learning. For better understanding the current tasks of adult literacy education, it is important to take note of this correlation. An emblem and contributing factor of the social transformation has been the massive influx of girls into elementary and middle school, and most recently young women into the

higher levels of an expanding school system. Thirty years ago, during the first series of door-to-door interviews of the project, it was not uncommon to be received by residents who did not speak Spanish; today, such encounters are uncommon.

Mindful of the progress since 1991, local adult literacy promoters and teachers see the need to reach out to two groups: the 30 year and older adults, non-attending as children, who did not go on to learn to read and write on their own, and young adults and teenagers who have been left behind during the years of the great educational expansion of recent years. In a recent interview, *Taller de Escritura* [Writing Workshop] advisor/teacher emphasizes the special situation of the most marginalized: teens and pre-teens who are currently still not enrolled, added to the above, accounting for a diverse population that today seeks out extracurricular literacy instruction. Unlike in years past, employment opportunities for first-time job seekers who do not speak Spanish and who cannot read or write are virtually non-existent.

METHOD

The research design of the adult learner study, during its initial stage, is exploratory in the sense that its provisional conclusion consists of a proposal for the implementation of a full ethnography that would in fact be able to critically evaluate the *L2 beginner literacy hypothesis* presented in the Introduction. The current tentative study, limited by the constraints of participant observation, hopefully points in the direction of forming the definitive research design. Some of the features of the hypothesis assessment are proposed in the following two sections: “Challenges and perspectives” and “Cross-language networking.” These two sections stand as the partial and provisional results of the present stage of fieldwork.

The conversations with learners and advisor/teacher and observation of workshop activity were conducted over the span of ten to twelve years, initially as principal investigator of the parallel study, mentioned above, focused on language contact and child language development in school (Francis, 2019). In the successor (adult learner) study, informal discussion and observation were conducted as participant observer of the Writing Workshop (Fig. 1) coinciding with the progressive convergence of the respective studies: the first, school-based data-gathering, the second, community-based literacy promotion. In effect the school-based study came to completion during the convergence with the adult literacy study, both forming part of the same overall bilingual literacy project.

The passage toward the new community literacy study brought with it a limitation in the case of the Writing Workshop observations: specifically, the shift to a participant observer approach needs to be taken into account in readers’ assessment of the fieldwork findings and provisional conclusion. Nevertheless, given that the elementary school-based study focused on literacy learning in two languages,

³The total combined population of San Miguel and San Isidro alone is approximately 30,000 (INEGI, 2020). The majority is still bilingual or monolingual Nahuatl-speaking. In the surrounding rural localities, the percentage of Nahuatl speakers ranges from large minority to small minority.





Fig. 1. Workshop meeting

transition to the adult learning Writing Workshop was able to recover a common linguistic thread: L2 learning and bilingualism in the same two languages.

Observation-as-participant in the successor study was distributed among three settings: (1) classroom learning activities focused on learning Spanish and L2 literacy, (2) home visits, accompanied by the advisor/teacher, and attendance at extra-curricular social events sponsored by the workshop for students and invited guests, and (3) observation of and participation in a bilingual narrative project linked to the Writing Workshop.

The first setting was the predominant source of direct information, divided equally between observation of teaching sessions and instructional activity with students by the participant observer, monitored by the advisor/teacher. In both cases, special attention was directed at the learning of decoding skills and the practicing of letter and word formation by beginning-level learners. Both official adult literacy learning workbooks and locally produced materials provided the opportunity to observe student engagement with the learning objectives, ranging from highly scaffolded attempts at reading to completely independent handwriting. Literacy tasks selected from the different stages of mastery served as informal assessment for the highly diverse group of students, from non-literate level-1 beginners to candidates for proximate 6th grade or middle school equivalency. At the meeting with visiting National Institute for Adult Education regional coordinator we were able to discuss the range of learning materials, corresponding to each level, that had been previously examined during instruction.

During home visits, of special note was the use of religious pamphlets and the presence of children's schoolbooks. In the case of the former, the often largely memorized text material appears to facilitate the, hypothetically, productive practice of repeated reading. Both family visits and organized social gatherings provided the opportunity to gauge the frequency and contexts of use of Spanish and Nahuatl by students. Ongoing informal interview for feedback from students and regular meetings

with the advisor/teacher to review field notes provided corrective and confirming information.

The parallel work of production and compilation of narrative material by students potentially informs the idea of discourse-level support (from L1) for basic literacy learning (in L2). In reality, the concept of bilingual facilitation, in the use of both languages via this medium, is a proposal for further research. In the same way, observations of what appeared to be developing language awareness are subject to confirmation. Readers can consult the completed text samples of the project's *TV Malintzin* channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TVMalintzin>. Again, studying the different contexts of use of the two community languages, and the patterns of alternation between them, contributed to better understanding students' learning strategies.

While the kind of qualitative study of second language literacy learning, described here, did not form part of a systemic ethnographic data gathering program, the observations serve to formulate proposals and specific hypotheses for a follow-up field study by outside (non-participant) researchers.

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Program design

Month to month monitoring of workshop progress mainly proceeds from consultations between the local teacher (official title: *asesora* [advisor]) and the regional Puebla city-based coordinator for the *Instituto Nacional para la Educación de Adultos* (INEA) [National Institute for Adult Education] who regularly visits the program sites. Learners, after self-assessment and consultation with their teacher/advisor, volunteer to sit for one of two kinds of evaluation: (1) a progress test, the *diagnóstico* [diagnostic], or (2) a final exam, for *acreditación* [accreditation]. Passing the final exam is for credit, for receiving elementary school (6th grade) equivalence. Administration of the assessments is one of the most important assignments of the coordinator, being the most anticipated visit for teacher/advisor and student alike. A second final exam grants credit for middle school equivalence, qualifying the student for application to a high school equivalency program. In addition, the exam procedure is closely tied to the INEA's system of remuneration: student enrolment is monitored with an official registration form corresponding to one advisor who receives payment for each exam on which the student attains a passing score.

Close examination of the learning materials and their use by workshop participants presented important insights on the question of how the learning program might advance towards its mission. A leading hypothesis proposes that ongoing improvements in the instructional program will build on an existing orientation toward literacy-linked aspects of *language awareness*. This orientation follows from an emphasis on the systematic use of the INEA learning materials beginning with the basic grapheme-phonology correspondences (GPC) facilitated by handwriting activities.

Ideally, the GPC reading development modules align with the corresponding activities of letter and word formation (writing). In turn, practicing the writing-related visual-motor patterns is potentially linked to developing word recognition in beginning reading activity as suggested by recent research with adult learners (Kolinsky, Leite, Carvalho, Franco, & Morais, 2018, 2020).

This aspect of the INEA-recommended program design could be an important question for future ethnographic research as it is central to the learning program of community workshops. According to participants, there are two additional workshop programs located in the same community. A second motivation for proposing such a research project is that the role played by language awareness (Schmitt & Sha, 2009) has been a major focus of research internationally, taking into account a large sample of linguistic and orthographic systems. The findings from a wide range of language contexts, in particular as these include the factor of bilingualism (Hernández Rodríguez, 2018; Wolter & Dilworth, 2013), has suggested that awareness lies at the heart of the development of literacy and academic language use in general (Lee & Schmitt, 2014). By hypothesis, language awareness plays a central role in this development at all levels. It appears at the level of GPC awareness in learners' INEA workbook, then all the way up through to awareness of discourse level patterns for text comprehension.

At the same time, new readers and writers might reflect on the relationship between the two languages they speak—awareness of bilingualism—when composing a narrative text, for example. In fact, in some contexts of teaching and learning, the “levels” might be arrayed in the opposite direction (from higher order to lower) according to the dual-language approach of a given Writing Workshop session. For example, reading aloud to students from the locally edited and published anthology of traditional Nahuatl-language narrative (Navarrete Gómez, 2015) might facilitate access to relevant conceptual frames (higher order) and specific comprehension strategies. This recourse to text-level competencies in no way works at cross-purpose to the emphasis on GPC learning activities featured prominently in the INEA learning materials. Rather, the two processes appear to interact in a complementary manner, productively so if teacher implementation strikes the right balance. There is no reason why the hypothesis of *narrative foundation for literacy learning* (Schatt & Ryan, 2021), proposed for research in the domain of school-age literacy development, should not also apply to older learners, especially considering that adult learners generally count on an even more highly developed discourse processing ability (the “higher order” processes, mentioned above).

Anecdotal evidence, subject to confirmation, suggests that adult literacy learners from rural communities in Latin America may even count on superior discourse processing ability than their urban peers. Findings from years of ethnographic compilation of oral tradition in the community (linked to the narrative documentation project, mentioned below) suggest that the anecdotal evidence

deserves more research attention. The contributing factor favoring this hypothetical advantage on the part of the rural narrators is the significantly higher level of preservation of oral tradition literary genres in everyday language use in the local contexts. Coincidentally, in regard to the Schatt and Ryan (2021) hypothesis, Kolinsky, Carvalho, Leite, Franco, and Morais (2020) favor the view that child and adult literacy learning are not fundamentally different. To be clear, the narrative foundation proposal, while intuitively plausible, still awaits empirical confirmation. Such would be another central objective of systematic ethnography in subsequent work.

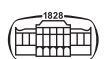
Workshop sessions

Beginning reading and writing is guided by the student workbook *La palabra de la experiencia* [The word of experience] (Solís Sánchez, 2018), in small groups or individually with the teacher/advisor. Awareness of GPC begins with the unit of the syllable, generally avoiding the letter names of consonants or the sounding out of individual letters of the word. In this way, the first, beginner level, correspondence (C) that learners forge is between the spelling and the consonant-vowel sound pattern of the syllable: linking the grapheme (G) sequence to the entire phonological (P) unit of the syllable to which it corresponds, rather than single letter to single phoneme.

Nevertheless, identification and decoding of vowels (within syllables), for good reason, is also a central learning strategy.⁴ Reading words and phrases progresses rapidly from forming words by combining two open syllables (consonant-vowel/consonant-vowel), to words consisting of three open syllable words (c-v/c-v/c-v). Finally, the workbook activities guide learners to combine syllables of all the occurring phonological patterns of the language.

A specific unit, for beginners, starts with the reading of students' first and last names and the basic motor patterns of writing, pencil in hand. The attainment of skill for these learning objectives in fact marks an important milestone for many of the students of the workshop: the ability to produce a legal signature. Interviews with learners, during which they mentioned this learning objective, highlighted for us the need to combine qualitative methods of formative assessment with the already established summative assessment procedures. Collecting useful research data regarding learner progress cannot rely only on results of the final diagnostic and accreditation exams. Intermediate (formative) assessments thus allow us to track progress in reading and writing of beginning L2 learners of Spanish in particular.

⁴Fortuitously, in Spanish, all five vowels, by themselves, can also form a free morpheme, in addition to forming individual syllables within words. As in the case of similar regular orthographies, the learned generalizations of beginning experience with the writing system are highly productive and reliable, particularly taking into account the prominence in Spanish of the open syllable (cv) in phonological structure.



CROSS-LANGUAGE NETWORKING

An important feature of the workshop, in all likelihood unique among similar community-based programs, is its link to the Nahuatl language preservation and documentation project, mentioned above, *TV Malintzin*, on YouTube and Facebook. The documentation project is an interactive archive for the language, coordinated by the very same advisor/literacy promoter of the workshop. Narrators are often recruited from among the students of the workshop and their relatives. The underlying concept of the link is: advanced narrative competence and performance in one's native language stands as a resource for second language learning as well as for written language comprehension and expression (in the L2). Thus, literacy education is not limited to the customary language of schooling (Spanish) and not limited exclusively to the written medium. Beyond the positive valorization of Nahuatl, the logic of this approach is that support from the language knowledge that learners possess, completely as native speakers, can facilitate both L2 learning and literacy learning if this support is implemented correctly.

The antecedents of the workshop can be traced to an informal collaboration with another community-based teaching program involving school-age children, completed in 2012. The Nahuatl language documentation project was shared between the two programs, result of a common interest in preservation efforts in the face of ongoing displacement of the local community language by Spanish (a topic for another discussion). The workshop's *bilingual approach to literacy learning* coincides with the example of previous research in rural areas of Michoacán and Hidalgo states. See Groff and Bellamy (2020) and Hamel (2009) for reports of findings that represent a precursor conceptual framework for both the current research component and the community-based literacy workshop.

Partnerships and initiatives for diversifying the activity of workshop participants (as a number of them have now established a social network beyond the extended family) present themselves as new opportunities. Interviews and visits with potential collaborators have explored the possibility of organizing: the first ever local special education program for children and their parents, outreach to families with non-school attending children, and economic co-operatives (e.g., handicraft production and animal husbandry). We take note that these and similar social and economic initiatives promote the use of learners' second language.

CONCLUSION: PROPOSAL FOR CONTINUING RESEARCH

While the above-mentioned precursor project to the current Writing Workshop was conceived and carried out primarily as quantitative research based on the analysis of language and literacy performance data, readers will note that this

report is based on purely exploratory and descriptive findings. In addition, its conclusion must be tentative given the provisional and incomplete results of interviews and observations. A multiyear study, implementing an observation protocol, systematically coupled with interviews with all participants, could lead eventually to confirming or contradicting the above inferences and intermediate conclusions. An ethnographic follow-up study of this kind can contribute to better understanding the current challenges that the Writing Workshop faces. For example, observation sessions of teaching-learning interactions, by this author, suggested high degrees of attentiveness and engagement, without exception, in the workshop activities described above. The encounters between teacher and students, always in small groups of three or four, could be described as collegial interaction of reciprocal exchange, in the same measure whether they involved students younger or older. Progress in reading and writing skills was evident, from informal assessment, on the part of a number of level-1 beginning learners; and every year the most advanced learners receive accreditation for primary or middle school. The observation of the highly positive learning environment, however, conceals, so to speak, a limitation. Our method, revealing a seemingly productive collaboration, could not gain access to evidence regarding the actual learning experience of participants as a whole. One example of this limitation, among others, involves information about frequency of attendance and verifiable time-on-task. This is the challenge for future ethnographic work and direct assessment of reading and writing ability.

As both Rodríguez Nava et al. (2020) and Torres (2008) point out, that, for adult programs, in the end, the observation of participation should not be confounded with evidence of learning efficacy and ultimate attainment. For different groups of learners (based on level of reading and writing ability upon entry, knowledge of Spanish, age, etc.), how many students remain in the workshop until passing the first diagnostic test, and how many attempt the final exam for *primaria* [primary school]? What are the average number of hours of attendance per month for each group that would predict accreditation? The official exam that students take for 6th grade accreditation, of course, is one measure of literacy attainment. Then, are there other ways (available to the local teacher/advisor) to evaluate progress for students who do not sit for the test, administered by the visiting regional coordinator? The question here refers to *formative assessments* that show evidence of important intermediate benchmarks attained. In turn, they should be able to provide evidence, for or against, the *L2 beginner literacy hypothesis*.

On another level, there is a need to better understand the practice of narration of the traditional stories within the family unit. This historically significant discourse form, recovering it from a decline in recent years, might represent a mutually beneficial sharing of the literary culture of the community in line with recommendations of international literacy specialists (UNESCO, 2017). The intergenerational engagement with literacy-related language, for children



learning to read, hypothetically, as referenced in the subsection on “Program design,” promotes advanced comprehension ability. For adult literacy learners/narrators (the parents), it might promote the development of complementary abilities. These are higher order discourse-level abilities that are likely to be perfected by parents through the practice of narration. This development of *literacy-related* language use should favor literacy learning, for them, in other domains, such as in a Writing Workshop.

Then there is the important question of the access to readable texts at home. Conversely to the renewed experience with traditional narrative, might there be an effect of *children sharing with parents*: reading the stories from their school anthologies as the adult learner follows along? In Mexico, elementary school textbooks are issued to families to keep. In communities with no bookstore or library, these valuable paperback materials are often preserved, on display in the family room of the home. A systematic linguistic ethnography, with the object of study being the one described in this section, would provide invaluable data, scarcely available to this day. It would contribute toward evaluating the broader proposals regarding the relationship between literacy and language use discussed in the preceding sections.

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