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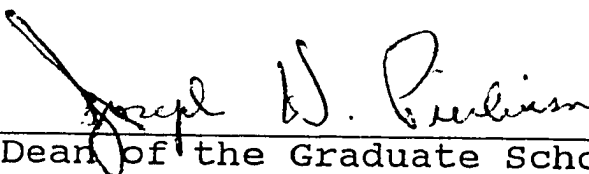
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PREVIEW

FOSTERING BILINGUALISM WITHIN THE FAMILY:
A CASE STUDY

APPROVED:


for Annastae
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Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to Edward, my husband, and to Amy and Laurel, our two daughters, for their patience and support throughout my graduate career.

PREVIEW

FOSTERING BILINGUALISM WITHIN THE FAMILY:

A CASE STUDY

by

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MASTER'S PAPER

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PREVIEW

Regardless of who attempts to define the phenomenon of bilingualism, whether it be the average person on the street, a researcher in the field, or a bilingual person himself, almost everyone seems to think that being bilingual means speaking two languages perfectly or fluently. However, as Harding and Riley (1986:22) point out, "Unfortunately, we cannot even describe what speaking one language perfectly involves." The results of an actual survey conducted by Grosjean (1982:231) support this general view: most people, even those who are bilingual themselves, feel that being bilingual means speaking two languages fluently. In Grosjean's opinion, however,

... far too much weight has been put on fluency, to the detriment of other factors such as the regular use of two languages, their domains of use, and the bilingual's need to have certain skills (reading and writing, for instance) in one language but not in the other (1982:231).

Grosjean feels that a functional definition of what constitutes bilingualism (the regular use of two languages) is the most useful. While the parameters of what constitutes "regular" may be open to dispute, Grosjean's definition is the one I feel to be the most

appropriate for the purposes of the present investigation, given the complexity involved in any attempt to pin down bilingualism.

Though it began as a case study of one individual's bilingualism, this project grew into an expanded study concerning the development of bilingualism in an entire family. The method used to gather material for the study involved a series of personal interviews with each family member as well as an investigation into other relevant studies. The results are presented with the hope that they will provide helpful insights to anyone who is considering bringing up a bilingual family. Due to the personal nature of the interviews, the names of the family members have been changed to provide privacy through anonymity. The subjects interviewed include Laura Scott, a woman from Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico, and her immediate family: Jim (her husband) and their three children -- Jimmy, age ten; Lisa, age seven; and Emily, age five. Laura is a Spanish/English bilingual; she also speaks some Portuguese and French. Her husband is American of American/Brazilian extraction. (His father is American; his mother, Brazilian.) Laura considers her husband to be trilingual in English, Portuguese,

and Spanish, and says that he is also quite fluent in French. All three children are English/Spanish bilinguals and also know some Portuguese.

There is a tradition of bilingualism on both sides of the Scott family. Jim's father is bilingual in English and Portuguese; his mother is fluent in both of these languages as well as French. Jim's maternal grandmother, who is a native of Brazil and still lives there, also speaks English as well as Portuguese, although his grandfather spoke only Portuguese. As far as Laura's ancestry is concerned, her grandparents were all from Mexico: her paternal grandparents came from Monterrey; her maternal ones from Coahuila. While neither her mother's parents nor her paternal grandmother spoke English, her paternal grandfather did because he was sent to St. Louis, Missouri, to study as a young man. Evidently this educational pattern began a tradition for the men in her father's family because she has an uncle who studied there and when her father was sent away to school, he too was sent to Missouri, as was her brother.

Both of Laura's parents were well educated, and both learned English as their second language. Her father (now deceased) learned English in Missouri where