

Communication and Education at Work: Latino Immigrants Making Sense and Dominating
Language in Koreatown, New York City

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the work-based language education practices of undocumented Latino and Korean immigrants employed in Korean supermarkets and restaurants of Koreatown, New York City. The primary goal of this dissertation is to understand how immigrants educate each other about the communication strategies necessary for accomplishing work together. In Koreatown, Latinos and Koreans engage in cooperative sense-making in workplace “communities of practice” where they participate in joint activities, build new ways of using language together, and learn to dominate language. Interviews, handwritten glossaries, and audio-recorded multilingual workplace conversations reveal how immigrants’ engage in sense-making together and learn about the rules, norms, and expectations of their new environments. Analysis of everyday labor practices shows how kitchen assistants, dishwashers, and supermarket workers transform their social positions through evolving language practices. This study also shows how experienced immigrants actively participate as teachers, translators, and guides for immigrant newcomers in Koreatown, transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries in the process.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| <u>List of Tables</u> | iii |
| <u>Chapter 1: Introduction</u> | 1 |
| A. Research Questions | 4 |
| <u>Chapter 2: Social Context and Methodology</u> | 16 |
| A. Challenges of Studying Immigrant Labor in Koreatown..... | 24 |
| B. The Supermarket and Restaurant Contexts..... | 27 |
| C. Methods..... | 30 |
| D. Using My Ignorance as a Primary Field Method..... | 55 |
| <u>Chapter 3: Literature Review</u> | 63 |
| A. Ethnographic Studies of Latino Immigrants in the U.S.: Some Contemporary Perspectives.. | 66 |
| B. Language and Work Competency of Immigrants and Language Minorities..... | 73 |
| C. Communities of Practice, New Literacy Studies, and Anthropological Accounts of Language Education Outside Schools..... | 82 |
| D. Using Barcodes to Decipher Korean at the Supermarket: Pablo’s Strategy..... | 90 |
| <u>Chapter 4: Latino Immigrants’ Transitions into Koreatown</u> | 97 |
| A. Juan and the Korean Supermarket..... | 104 |
| B. Communities of Practice in <i>La Sociedad Compania</i> -“The Company Society”..... | 113 |
| C. How Immigrants Learn to <i>Dominar</i> (Dominate) Language at Work..... | 112 |
| D. <i>La Necesidad de Entenderlos</i> (The Necessity to Understand): Teaching Newcomers how to Understand Koreans..... | 117 |
| <u>Chapter 5: The Pragmatic Use of Silence</u> | 131 |
| A. Carmen Laughs, Grandma Scolds, and Fernando Cuts..... | 132 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| B. Learning the Rules of Communication at a Korean Employment Agency..... | 139 |
| <u>Chapter 6: <i>La Ensalada de Lenguas</i> (The Mixed Language Salad)</u> | 152 |
| A. Glossaries..... | 157 |
| B. Glossaries: Some Further Insights..... | 161 |
| C. Connections between Language and Work Activity..... | 161 |
| <u>Chapter 7: Korean Supermarket Conversation: Coworkers Make Dinner Plan</u> | 162 |
| A. Educative Lessons in the Supermarket Communicative Event..... | 166 |
| B. Further Analysis of the Supermarket Dinner Planning Communicative Event..... | 182 |
| <u>Chapter 8: Seoul House</u> | 194 |
| A. Romance, Smartphones, and Korean Pop Music in Koreatown..... | 199 |
| B. <i>La Queja</i> – the Seoul House Law Suit..... | 203 |
| <u>Chapter 9: Conclusions</u> | 222 |
| A. For Future Research..... | 234 |
| <u>References</u> | 236 |
| <u>Appendices</u> | 246 |
| A. Organization of Juan’s Supermarket..... | 247 |
| B. Juan’s Glossary Lists..... | 248 |
| C. Rafael’s Glossary List..... | 249 |
| D. Rafael’s Coworker’s Glossary List..... | 250 |
| E. Santos’s Glossary List..... | 251 |
| F. Ricardo’s Glossary List..... | 252 |
| G. Korean Lessons with Ji-Eun..... | 253 |

Tables

Table 1: 16 Key Communicative Strategies and Patterns of Multimodal, Multilingual Workplace Communication in Koreatown.....61

Table 2: How Workers Figure Out How to Communicate in Koreatown.....62

Table 3: Summary-Overview of Methods for Studying Korean-Latino Interactions and Language Education at Work.....62

Table 4: English Translation of Korean Terms in Latino Worker Glossaries.....156

Table 5: Korean Terms that Appear More than Once in Different Glossary Lists (English Translation and Romanization).....158

Table 6: 16 Key Communicative Strategies and Patterns of Multimodal, Multilingual Workplace Communication Strategies.....226

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For My Mother and Sister

For Queens

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation explores the experiences of immigrant men who cross the United States (U.S.)-Mexico border illegally and end up hired by Koreans in New York City to wash dishes, prep vegetables, stock supermarket aisles, cook food, bus tables, and more. From *el campo* (the countryside) to the Korean food industry, the Latino immigrants in my study discover and fill a demand for low-wage labor that contributes to the growth and profit of businesses, ranging from family-run restaurants to multi-million dollar chain supermarkets. Every day, in kitchens and supermarkets across New York City, Latino immigrants take in the smell of fermented *kimchi* and the sounds of the Korean language spoken by Korean natives. In the words of one of my main informants, “Korean businesses are the most accessible for Latinos to find jobs, since the only requirements are that you be strong and have all your extremities intact.” Latino immigrants are certainly strong; not only do they perform physically demanding jobs but they also develop a range of strategies to survive in a foreign urban environment full of new sights, smells, sounds, workplace rules, languages, signs, technologies and much more.

As migrants transition into their home and work environments in the U.S., they encounter many established immigrants from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds. They engage in joint activities together, often working toward common goals. By working together, *aprenden a dominar lenguajes*- they learn to dominate language in groups, or communities of practice. Together, workers learn to navigate the responsibilities and challenges of their surroundings by having control over languages and communicative styles. Life as an undocumented immigrant in Koreatown (K-Town) is not always easy, but despite struggles and tensions, Latinos and Koreans manage to work together to make a living. In the process of working together, they must figure

out how to communicate and develop language together. Although it is known that immigrants from diverse backgrounds work together, there are few accounts of how immigrants from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds actually participate in these daily negotiations that hinge on communication. Therefore, this dissertation looks specifically at the education immigrants give each other, about each other, when they work together. I analyze this education because it is fundamental to the process by which foreign peoples and their practices become intelligible when there is work to be done.

I focus primarily on the instructional and educational aspects of my informants' collectively constructed *mutual intelligibility* (Garfinkel 1967), more so than individual subjectivity and shared beliefs. That is, how do people figure out what to do next, given the existing circumstances, such as no shared language background or work experience? How do immigrants instruct each other to participate in activities together, and how do they come to understand the order of things in their new environments? Thus this dissertation focuses on the education immigrants provide each other, and the educative moments they experience interacting, working, and living beside Koreans in the U.S. While it can be argued that education is an on-going phenomenon present everywhere social interaction takes place, I have narrowed my field of observation to the “work-based education” of immigrants in Koreatown, for a few main reasons.

First, work is the primary reason undocumented Latino immigrants decide to risk crossing the border to *el norte* (the U.S.) Thus the larger context of their presence in New York City is rooted in the pursuit of labor and labor participation. Therefore, much of the time and energy spent by the immigrants in my research is focused on work-based activities and gaining entry into the social field of employment in the urban labor market. Second, “work” implies a

collective effort or common purpose shared by a group of people working toward similar goals, whether those include stocking aisles or cooking meals. An analysis of work offers naturally occurring opportunities to observe how people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds solve problems. It also involves studying the ways immigrants create new problems together, which they must solve for the sake of their continued participation in the workforce.

An analysis of work based education also means understanding that workers take different trajectories during the course of their time in Koreatown. Some workers alternate jobs frequently while others master one job over several years. Becoming a “full participant” in Koreatown means different things for each worker as they confront constantly changing dynamics and social conditions both within the workplace and outside of it. This also calls for an exploration of how each workplace is distinctive in terms of the local orders and languages immigrants produce together. Lastly, focusing on work-based education allows for a close inspection of how work spaces and work-related objects and materials, from food delivery boxes to restaurant menus, play a fundamental and meaningful part in the everyday educational experiences of immigrants in the U.S. This dissertation highlights how immigrants transform and improve their work and living conditions in the U.S. while using language in unexpected ways that challenge assumptions about what counts as competent language, work skill, and education.

There are numerous ways of carrying out a study of work-based education. In the complex and multilingual environment of the Korean food industry of New York City, I place central importance on the role of communicative practices in work-related activities. This involves paying attention to communicative practices – the putting into action of semiotic resources in a socially situated context to create meaningful interaction. Studying communicative

practices enables the researcher to identify how “natural teams” (Kleifgen 2013, 2001) are formed through workplace participation. It also allows the researcher to examine how workers solve problems together and adapt to new “modalities,” such as languages, material objects, and technologies. This topic of inquiry illuminates what “sites of engagement” matter to workers, and how workers position themselves in relation to each other and various overlapping “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger 1991). Studying work-based education through the primary lens of communicative practices involves more than a simple description of the languages spoken in Koreatown. Communication is a collective activity that arises from, and transforms in, various unique social contexts where speakers use distinct language resources to engage in cooperative sense-making together and decide on their next moves.

A. Research Questions:

1. How do immigrants in Koreatown, NYC educate each other about how to make sense of their workplaces?
2. What is the role of language and communication as Latino immigrant workers adjust to new social roles and expectations in their Koreatown workplaces?

During two years of fieldwork from 2011-2013, I have sought to understand how immigrant men educate themselves and each other about how to survive in the New York City labor market, namely the “Koreatown” neighborhoods of Manhattan and Queens. As they make their transition from Latin America into New York City, they form new “communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991) through which they collectively and informally solve a variety of problems and learn from more experienced immigrants. For example, in Koreatown, Latinos and Koreans teach each other how to go about everyday work-based activities like getting a job

in a Korean business through an employment agency, cooking a Korean meal with unfamiliar ingredients, or flirting with a coworker using knowledge of Korean popular culture and smartphone translation applications. I view this process of developing and passing on meaningful and valuable knowledge as education at work- “the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort” (Cremin 1976:27).

My informants include approximately 30 Latin American immigrants and 10 Korean immigrants, who all chose to migrate to the United States within the past 20 years for the opportunity to earn money and support their families. This dissertation focuses primarily on the experiences of Latino males as they adapt to Koreatown workplaces populated by other Latinos and Koreans. Their work allows them to pay for their own living costs and send money home to buy pieces of property or land, build new houses, fund their siblings’ education, pay for weddings and other social events, and much more. In the U.S., labor migration has brought people together from distinct parts of the world. The local details and dynamics of their labor experiences illustrate the increasingly heterogeneous nature of the American workforce. Their workplaces are educative spaces of social interaction where cultural and linguistic boundaries among various immigrant groups in the U.S. evolve and transform through collective efforts. An analysis of how immigrants make sense of each other when they come into contact, it is possible to see how they work together to meet everyday challenges in new ways. Immigrants do not simply reproduce their cultural practices in isolated ethnic “enclaves,” apart from the rest of society. They frequently interact in supermarket aisles, kitchens, storage rooms, on the street, in bars, through smartphones, and in various other spaces and mediums of social interaction where they do the work required to get along and make a living.

I follow various configurations of educational processes as they unfold in Koreatown communities of practice by observing the moments in which Latino immigrants face uncertainty and make use of the available resources around them. This is the “when” of education, which involves both the “transformation in the life time of a person and the history of a polity” (Varenne 2007a). This means focusing on the present “difficult deliberations” (Varenne 2007b) and choices made by immigrants given the resources and options available to them, as they move through “powerfully differentiated” (2007b:1568) social fields, or spheres of participation in society. Workers come to dominate language and communication at work “always in concert with others” people “always in concert with others, work at changing themselves and their consociates through often difficult deliberations” (2007b:1562). Difficult deliberations create “openings” or possibilities for learning, made apparent through peoples’ language practices. Through an analysis of language practices in Koreatown workplaces (and the language immigrants use to describe their own language practices at work), it is possible to understand how people teach other the rules and norms of interaction necessary for dealing with moments of uncertainty presented by new situations and contexts.

Like millions of immigrants working in the U.S., my Latino informants did not migrate to pursue schooling, language instruction, or paths to citizenship. Yet they are active participants in American society. Instead of looking at “formal” institutional settings (non-profit organizations, schools, support groups, government agencies, etc.) where immigrants seek guidance about migration, work, and language education, I follow the less-researched path of immigrant life and informal education outside these institutions. During my fieldwork, I explored Latino and Korean immigrants’ workplaces, spent time with them at soccer matches, parks, restaurants,

cafes, at home, and other spaces in Manhattan and Queens, to understand how my informants produce social order in their daily lives.

Following an ethnomethodological (Garfinkel 1967) approach, I concentrate on *mutual intelligibility* and *orders of indexicality* (1967) built by immigrants in Koreatown, New York City. That is, I explore what participants do, in the moment, to build socially meaningful and recognizable actions. Importantly, this approach primarily focuses on the instructional and educational aspects of this collectively constructed mutual intelligibility, more so than individual subjectivity or shared beliefs. How do immigrant workers figure out what to do next, given the existing circumstances of their Korean workplaces, such as no shared background language or work experience? How do immigrants instruct each other about how to participate in activities together, and how do they learn the established order of things in their new environments?

These questions may seem obvious, even to my own study participants who have often stated “we just learned how to do it because we had to.” But I argue that the process of transitioning into Koreatown and surviving in a Korean workplace is anything but obvious. The struggles involved in immigrant labor participation are worth recording and recounting because they illustrate the informal means by which people develop knowledge together and decide on what directions to take next, despite undocumented status, limited financial resources, exhausting work schedules, and so on. I have intentionally refrained from situating their experiences in terms of race/ethnic relations, a critical analysis of unequal power relations at the workplace, identity formation or assimilation theories, and other dominant discourse on immigrants in the United States. Instead, I outline the problems presented to immigrants employed in Korean businesses, and how they explain and handle these problems using language resources and communication strategies.

Undocumented Latino immigrant men in New York City are important to study because their presence is pervasive throughout the United States. In 2012, it was estimated that “1 in 7 U.S. workers are immigrants, with one third of immigrant workers coming from Mexico alone” (Smith et al. 2012:4). The U.S. migrant workforce is “primarily comprised of Latinos, and thus the basis of U.S. primary industry falls in the hand of immigrant populations” (2012:4). Their numbers are often under-counted in census reports, and few ethnographic studies reveal the current nuances of their circumstances- how they live, where they work and with whom, what they do on a daily basis, and what social problems they identify as important in their lives.

Immigrants in the service-sector economy often work extremely long hours for low wages in physically demanding jobs. Yet most remain optimistic and invent a variety of creative means to deal with difficult circumstances. These solutions are designed by the people themselves and are forms of education that do not rely on government, private organizations, policy arrangements, or funding sources to function. Immigrants are autonomous in ways that “legal” workers are not, as they actively design alternative solutions to everyday problems in unexpected ways. Since arriving to Queens, for example, one of my Mexican informants has been hired by multiple Korean businesses, obtained a fake social security number, opened a bank account, acquired a credit card and cell phone plan, bought a motorbike, sent money home and contracted his brother to build a new house, found apartments to share with other immigrants in NYC, and successfully threatened his Korean manager to get multiple pay raises. He accomplished all of this by relying solely on the knowledge of undocumented immigrants in New York City. While politicians, educators, and academics continue to deliberate and worry about the social consequences of the ‘uneducated’ masses, immigrants are busy coming up with their own solutions for surviving in the U.S.

Despite increasingly complex and expensive efforts to halt undocumented immigrants from entering the United States, there is little chance that they will stop migrating. It is also unlikely that established immigrants like Koreans will cease hiring Latino immigrant workers. And once immigrants become established in the U.S., they often help many other immigrant newcomers navigate the United States. This expanding population, whose participation in the workforce is substantial, widespread, and present for the long-term, should be considered an integral part of the United States. However, discussions on the “skill levels” and educational attainment of immigrants in the United States often fixate on low educational achievement, school failure, and lack of competitive or valuable professional skills. In the U.S., immigrants who do not participate in U.S. schools have been constructed as social threats and problems.

Adult newcomers with few years of formal classroom education or English language instruction are considered “outsiders” or “aliens” who lack the adequate tools to become competent participants in American society. My informants are all “working class adult immigrants past the age of compulsory schooling,” (Young-Scholten 2007:5) a population that has been singled out as the most “disadvantaged” of all second language learners. Some words used to describe this population include “uninstructed,” “uneducated,” “low-educated,” “unskilled,” “low-skilled,” “pre-literate,” “illiterate,” and “low-performing” among other disparaging categories (2007:5). Their language abilities are considered incomplete or deficient because they have not been “properly” or formally taught “correct” English in school. This perceived language incompetence is viewed as an impediment to achieving upward mobility and integration into U.S. society.

Historically, English language skills have been tied to expectations about the fulfillment of specific rights and obligations that support the advancement of the state, often through

positive contributions to the state economy. “Skilled” and “educated” speakers of Standard English have been considered the most capable and powerful members of American society. This perspective has manifested in the U.S. in many ways over time. In 1850, the English literacy test was first adopted by Connecticut and Massachusetts to determine who could be allowed to vote, a right reserved “for those who spoke a common language for the American common good” (Oh 2012:116). Literacy tests were instituted as a component of the “Americanization campaign,” to ensure voters could read the Constitution. So-called “illiterates in English” were considered unfit to vote, and were deplored by politicians, educators, and many others (2012).

There has been a long-standing concern with the rise of illiteracy in the U.S. parallel to the rise of adult immigrants in the country. Schools have assumed the responsibility of solving the problems of illiteracy, and many have directed their efforts to remedying illiteracy by fixing illiterate peoples, who are positioned as incompetent or incomplete members of “civilized” society. In 1914, one hundred years ago, an article in the *North American Review* entitled *Our Illiterates: Who and Why* reported that “a recent Congressional report declared the existing illiteracy in the United States to be ‘a disgrace to the nation’...any considerable prevalence of illiteracy is discreditable to any civilized state” (1914:18) In 1920, Thomas Finnegan, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and President of the State Board of Education of Pennsylvania, argued that one-fourth of young men in the United States “within the draft age in the recent war” did not possess “sufficient education to interpret properly the orders from their superiors and were thus unprepared to become efficient soldiers” (Finnegan 1920:169). As a result, “if a young man, because of the lack of the fundamentals of an education in English, is disqualified to discharge his duties as a soldier at times of war, is he not also for the same reason

disqualified to perform his obligation in the civil affairs of citizenship in times of peace?” (1920:169).

The notion that English proficiency is central to occupational success was anticipated and advertised early in the century. For example, in 1915 in the city of Syracuse, forty thousand handbills, printed in five languages (English, Polish, Italian, Yiddish, and German) read: “Can you speak well? Do you want to be an American citizen? It is hard to get a job in America without English. Go to night school and learn it!” (Dixon 1916:23). Thus the connection between English competence and ability to perform duties as a U.S. citizen, soldier, or member of the American workforce has been emphasized continuously for well over a century. In 1954, an article entitled “8 Million Illiterates in U.S. are Deplored,” reported that the U.S. Commissioner of Education Samuel Brownell “told American teachers...it was ‘appalling’ that in a time of ‘struggle for men’s minds’ the Nation has eight million functional illiterates...a functional illiterate he defined as a person with less than five years of schooling.”

On average, Latino workers in Koreatown have 6 years of schooling experience or less, and would thus be considered “functional illiterates” by Brownell’s standards 60 years ago. Similarly disparaging ideas about these so-called uneducated, functional illiterates have continued to persist even in more recent decades. In 1985 the *Washington Post* published an article entitled “The Rising Tide of Illiteracy: Illiterate America,” after educator and writer Jonathan Kozol’s book, *Illiterate America*. Kozol argues that illiterates in America pose “a more immediate and dangerous threat to our social and political lives than the Sandinistas, Russian subs, or possibly, acid rain” (Kozol 1985:233). In a 1992 interview, Kozol pushes this fear of illiterates further by stating,

I wanted to write a book about what happens to the poor when they leave school. They don't have the skills to navigate society: They can't earn a living or hold a decent job, they can't understand the forms they get--the welfare applications, the tax forms, the mortgage forms--and some of them can't read a telephone directory of a newspaper. It's a terrible existence and a lot of them are driven to crime or prostitution. [Strong 1992:110]

Social science research also has a long history of contributing to the idea that illiterates, particularly poor ones, live a “terrible existence” because they lack the skills to navigate society and are compelled to crime and prostitution. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis gained widespread influence through his notorious “culture of poverty” (Lewis 1966) concept, an attempt to explain the “destructive effects of poverty,” (1966:19) reproduced in poor families, including Latino immigrants in New York City. Characteristics of the “culture of poverty” included patterned “disengagement and non-integration of the poor” in relation to “major institutions of society,” (1966:21) along with various other pathological traits such as suffering, helplessness, and emptiness. Thus poor people who failed to be properly integrated in dominant institutions like schools were more likely to exhibit negative, destructive patterns of behavior, because they lacked the skills to successfully navigate society. This non-integration, particularly in terms of language education, has been considered dangerous and detrimental. Poor immigrant adults are thought to “face considerable challenges in acquiring the linguistic competence and literacy skills that support participation in the economic and social life of their new communities” (Young-Scholten 2013:441).

The “adult immigrant literacy problem” has manifested in many areas of language and education policy research, particularly when the allocation of funding for literacy programs depends on the construction of immigrants as problems. The widespread concern about the immigrant literacy problem is increasingly discussed by researchers using statistics and sociological categories that try to predict immigrants’ social class mobility. Bean and Stevens

(2003) note how “recent research of contemporary immigrants shows that their skills in English and levels of literacy in English are consistently strong predictors of occupational status and earning” (2003:147-148). In 2007, a U.S.A Today article entitled *Programs focus on Illiterate Immigrants*, reported that “an estimated 400,000 legal and 350,000 illegal immigrants are unable to read or write even in their native language,” a number taken into account as states “decide how to distribute federal dollars to programs that provide English classes for adult immigrants” (Hollingsworth 2007). In the article, Barbara Van Horn, co-director of a Family Literacy Research Institute, is quoted as saying, “it’s easy to understand why immigrants struggle if they aren’t literate in their native languages;” these “preliterate people” just don’t have “that basic understanding of what literacy is about” (ibid).

According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are approximately 2 million foreign-born adults with less than a fifth-grade education in the United States (Batalova and Lee 2013). The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL 2013) defines literacy as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential” (ibid). According to NAAL, 22 percent of adults have “below basic” literacy levels, “indicating they possess no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills” (ibid). However, these concerns and assertions run contrary to the actual accomplishments and experiences of the immigrant adults in my research. This does not imply that all immigrants are assured success whether or not they go to school or become legal workers. But for a particular group of immigrants in New York City, education in schooling institutions is not considered a necessary component of social participation. Opting out of schooling doesn’t mean doing nothing- on the contrary, it involves a complex amount of social work “strongly framed and

powerfully constrained, and yet open to alternate and possibly unauthorized activities” (Varenne 2007b:1561).

Consequently, this dissertation explores language as a principal means by which immigrants “share information, solve problems together, control and direct people, negotiate their positions with powerful supervisors, and reshape workplace practices in their own interests” (Barton & Tusting 2005:41). In Koreatown, learning how to communicate in different languages with coworkers, employers, and customers has important implications for how workers are positioned in their work environments. Those who can communicate with ease achieve greater status and respect at the workplace, giving them a sense of belonging and job stability. Effective communication also allows more complex relationships to develop beyond the immediate demands of the workplace. In addition to teaching each other how to perform various job tasks and responsibilities, immigrants also rely on each other to learn what they need to know about living in New York City. Immigrants educate each other about the local, context-specific rules, norms, and expectations of Koreatown workplaces.

In the process of making sense of each other, workers learn to mediate tensions, form alliances, use honorifics, mix languages, and improvise new languages together. Research on immigrant languages at work celebrates the education immigrants give each other in spaces outside of school, where language education is not regulated by teachers or standardized curricula. It demonstrates how languages are taken up, modified, and manipulated by immigrants for their own purposes, in ways that cannot all be predicted or assimilated by schools. Language is a powerful tool; the more we understand how immigrants use languages, the more we can see how they subvert and transform the conditions of their lives. It can also provide us with an understanding of alternative models of education capable of incorporating the

vastly different life backgrounds and experiences of learners from different schooling, socioeconomic, racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Chapter 2: Social Context and Methodology

In the United States, immigrant flows were greatest during the first two decades of the 20th century when there were approximately 700,000 entrants per year to the United States (Bean and Stevens 2003). The passage of the National Origins Quota Act of 1924 reduced this number greatly, down to 70,000 per year from 1925 through 1945 (ibid). Since that period, immigration has been steadily on the rise, reaching its highest point in the 1990's (Foner 2005). After the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965, "family reunification criteria rather than national origins quotas became the main basis for granting entry visas" (Bean and Stevens 2003:19). Before the 1960's, most U.S. immigrants came from European countries or Canada. By the 1980's, only 12.5 percent of legal immigrants came from Europe or Canada, while 84.4 percent were from Latin American or Asian countries (2003).

According to the Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project (2012), there are over 50.5 million Hispanics in the United States. 63% (31,912,465) of these were born in the United States, and 37% (18,817,105) are foreign born. Of these 50.5 million, approximately 33 million are Mexican, 36% of which are foreign born. Puerto Ricans are the second largest group, numbering 4.6 million, followed by Cubans (1.8 mil.), Salvadorans (1.8 mil.), Dominicans (1.5 mil.), Guatemalans (1.1 mil.), Colombians (972,000), Hondurans (731,000), Ecuadorians (665,000), and Peruvians (609,000). Approximately 60-70% of Guatemalans, Hondurans, Peruvians, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Salvadorans, Dominicans and Cubans in the United States are foreign born (ibid).

A major source of migration into the country has been unauthorized or undocumented immigrants, who enter the U.S. legally and overstay their visas, or enter without inspection by border officials. Most undocumented immigrants enter the United States by crossing the U.S.-

Mexico border. The 1942 Bracero Program allowed Mexican migrants to enter the U.S. as temporary contract laborers, but after the program ended in 1964, unauthorized migration from Mexico began to increase substantially (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010). Currently, most undocumented immigrants in the United States originate from Mexico, although there are significant numbers of undocumented immigrants from other parts of Latin America (Central America, the Caribbean, and South America) as well as Asia.

The number of undocumented immigrants in 2011 was estimated at approximately 12 million (Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project 2012). Among these, Mexico (59%), El Salvador (6%) and Guatemala (5%) were the “top three countries of birth of the unauthorized immigrant population” (Batalova and Lee 2012). In 2011, there were an estimated 1.3 million foreign-born undocumented Asian immigrants in the U.S., with China, Philippines, India, and Korea in the top 10 source countries (Hoeffler et al. 2012). In 2013, it was reported that, “five of the top ten source countries for undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are Asian” (Lim 2013).

The availability of employment opportunities occupies a central place in many peoples’ decisions to migrate to the United States (Bean and Stevens 2003:27). Immigrant newcomers, particularly those who are undocumented, often take low-paying, labor-intensive, temporary or seasonal jobs without written contracts or employee benefits. The Latino immigrants in this study see work opportunities as the primary reason for migration to New York City. The absence of job opportunities in Latin America and/or the possibility of earning higher wages in the U.S. compels Latinos to migrate to the U.S. They migrate in search of wages to support families and communities in Latin America and the U.S. The guidance of family and friends who have migration experience is also critical. With their assistance, migrants can pay their smugglers or

coyotes to cross the U.S. Mexico border, make affordable housing arrangements with other immigrants, and seek potential job connections upon arriving to New York City.

Few men in my study have more than a middle school level education (average six to eight years of school experience in Latino America), and most have been working since they were 11-13 years of age, or earlier. Most men came from rural agricultural backgrounds, and grew up helping their family in *el campo*. They also learned worked as electricians, shop assistants, repairmen, car mechanics, or construction workers. Some had moved to different cities in Latin America in search of work before coming to the U.S. Through these varied labor experiences, Latinos are able to expand their work knowledge and skills. My study participants became “jacks of all trades,” constantly adapting to new work environments and job demands. For example, many New York City supermarkets and restaurants that hire Latino immigrants do not provide “formal” job training. Most Latino immigrants in these situations must figure out their own ways of getting things done. One Mexican in my study spoke of this pressure to learn and adapt to his Korean supermarket job:

Jaime: Nosotros somos los que necesitamos el trabajo, y tenemos que adaptarnos a los trabajos que tenemos. De pasar de acomodar bolsitas de arroz a cortar el pescado, después a cortar carne. No te preguntan si puedes hacerlo, ellos dicen tienes que hacerlo. Y desgraciada mente y a la misma vez es algo favorable para nosotros Latinos porque nos hacen un favor prácticamente. Es favorable para nosotros porque nos hacen aprender muchos oficios. El cual el día de mañana te sirve, te sales, te corren, o no se, te das un tiempo para buscar un nuevo trabajo...eh para desestresar un poco la rutina del día, tal vez entonces puedes encontrar un trabajo más fácil.

Jaime: We are the ones that need the jobs and we have to adapt to the jobs that we have. From arranging rice bags to filleting fish, or slicing meat. They [Koreans] don't ask you if you can do it, they tell you that you have to do it. And unfortunately, it's also a favorable situation for us Latinos because they're practically doing us a favor. It's favorable because we can learn many different kinds of jobs. Which might come in handy tomorrow, if you quit or get fired, or if you just need time to look for a new job or take a break from working to de-stress from the daily routine and then perhaps find an easier job.

Many workers find this labor pressure and flexibility to be advantageous. As they acquire more experience, they learn to seize opportunities for better wages and work schedules. Having a diverse range of work skills increases their chances of finding new work elsewhere if they lose their jobs, or desire a job change. Latino immigrants admit that they would take on almost any kind of job, no matter how difficult or challenging, as long as it enables them to meet their ultimate goals of earning money and providing for their families. They view the U.S. as a place where opportunities for work exist for Latinos. One Mexican from Oaxaca summarized, *uno no viene hacer mal acá, simplemente quiere trabajar y alcanzar sus metas* (one doesn't come here [to the U.S.] with bad intentions, one simply wants to work and achieve ones goals).

According to labor-market segmentation theory, the receiving country's labor market dynamics are an important consideration for migrants when they transition to the U.S. For example, New York City's labor markets draw large numbers of migrants searching for temporary work in service-sector industries. Another kind of labor segmentation that affects immigrants in the United States is employer hiring trends. Employers may hire immigrants based on "ascriptive characteristics such as gender, skin color, ethnicity, and nativity" (Bean and Stevens 2003:31). Bailey and Waldinger (1991) describe New York City's labor markets as typified by a hierarchy of hiring preferences. Employers often actively seek immigrants of a particular ethnicity or gender, and "once an immigrant proves he or she is productive at a job, the employer then stereotypes the immigrant group positively and continues to hire from that group in the future and place other groups lower in the queue" (Bean and Stevens 2003:31).

Latino immigrants quickly learn that the world of employment in New York City presents a myriad of new cultural and linguistic challenges. In Queens, one of the most ethnically diverse location in the world where an estimated 160 languages are spoken (Baker 2013), Latinos meet

an incredible diversity of people every day. This especially happens through their participation in the workforce. Each year, diverse ethnic businesses in the expanding service, retail, and restaurant industry seek out undocumented immigrants to hire as dishwashers, busboys, kitchen assistants, grocery store workers, shop helpers and more. A few years ago, while conducting preliminary fieldwork with Mexican immigrants employed in Greek restaurants, I learned that many of my informants had Mexican friends and family in New York City who were working in Korean businesses in both Manhattan and Queens. They used each other's knowledge to explain hiring trends in local neighborhoods and could easily identify where undocumented immigrants would have the best chance of getting hired quickly. In the words of one of my Mexican informants- *la mayoría de Latinos trabajan con Coreanos* (the majority of Latinos [in the area] work with Koreans).

Immigrant entrepreneurs often hire co-ethnics and employees from particular ethnic groups who are perceived to have desirable qualities such as a good work-ethic. Over the past four decades, a significant number of Korean entrepreneurs in U.S. cities have entered the retail and food industries, often relying on their Latino neighbors as a local and cheap labor source (Min 2011). Tensions between the groups have been known to exist not just in New York City, but in other parts of the U.S. For example, in the 1990's Latinos and other groups in Los Angeles protested against Korean business owners, demanding labor rights (Min 2013). However, Min's (2013) research shows that Koreans recruit immigrant workers from Latin America based on the belief that they are better workers than other groups such as African Americans. According to Min, Koreans believe that Latinos and Koreans share work and family values in common. Certain Asian business owners, including Korean and Indian entrepreneurs, hire Latino immigrants much more frequently than others, such as Chinese business owners who prefer

hiring “co-ethnics” (other Chinese). Min’s work also reveals how Latino men are recruited by Koreans more often than women to perform physical labor which is viewed as unfit for women. Instead, Latino women tend to work in other Korean businesses like laundromats, garment shops, or nail salons. Men are recruited more often than women for food industry positions like kitchen assistant, dishwasher, and supermarket worker. This gendered labor segmentation has historically occurred in many other segments of New York City’s labor market where undocumented immigrants from Latin America are hired (Fuentes-Mayorga 2005).

Capitalizing on Latinos’ labor flexibility and desire to work, many Koreans in New York City have developed their own strategies for attracting Latino immigrants. Most of the informants in my study have used Korean employment agencies at least once; and in most of these occasions, the employment agency was located in Queens and owned or managed by Koreans. Many Korean agency employees speak Spanish with their Latino customers and use Spanish to advertise different types of available work. For example, one Korean employment agency I visited in Queens had a bilingual sign on the wall that read *Vamos a trabajo! Markets! Dishwasher!* (Let’s go to work! Markets! Dishwasher!). Many agencies post signs outside that say *agencia de empleo* (employment agency) to attract Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Latino immigrants are usually hired through employment agencies or kin networks. They perform physically demanding and time consuming jobs such as prepping foods, washing dishes, stocking shelves, and cleaning work spaces, among many others. The average work week consists of 10-14 hour days, and workers often use the phrase *solo trabajo y casa* (only work and home) to describe a life that seems to be an endless back and forth between work and home. Latino immigrants in this study usually work 6 days a week, and earn between 300-500 dollars weekly. Based on previous research with immigrants in Queens, I also knew that Latinos

working in Korean establishments were likely to be undocumented males between 16 and 35 years old who had arrived in New York within the past 10 years.

According to the 2010 Census, New York City has the largest Asian population of any U.S. city. The concentration of Asians in the Flushing area of Queens “grew substantially between 2000 and 2010...in Flushing itself, the Asian population grew by 37% (13,469 people) - it was 52% Asian in 2000 and grew to 69% in 2010” (Center for Urban Research 2011). New York City currently has the second largest population of Koreans outside of Korea living in the United States, numbering over 100,000. It is estimated that two-thirds of Koreans in New York City reside in Queens County, with a majority located in the greater Flushing, Queens area. As of 2011, there were approximately 67,016 Koreans living in Queens County, New York City (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Among these, 51,400 were born in Korea, 22,414 of which are naturalized citizens (ibid).

Among the working Korean population of Queens (32,868), approximately half are male (16,623). 85.2% of employed Koreans are involved in business, management, service, and sale occupations such as running restaurants and supermarkets, clothing stores, laundromats, and hair and nail salons. Their median household income is approximately \$41,769 a year; approximately 77% of Koreans have health insurance and 88.9% of the population over 25 has a high school diploma or higher. In terms of language, 94.3% of Koreans in Queens report speaking a language other than English, and 59.3% report speaking English less than “very well” (ibid). In neighborhoods of Queens with the highest concentration of Asian and Latino immigrants, such as Flushing and Corona, it is reported that up to 35 percent of the population are non-English speakers (Asperin 2011). According to the 2010 Census, Queens had the highest percentage increase in foreign born residents of all New York City boroughs (Roberts 2012).

In the past several decades, the Jackson Heights-Corona-Elmhurst area of Queens adjacent to Flushing has become home base to one of the largest Latino immigrant communities in New York City (Sanjek 2000). Latinos “grew the most in Corona (9,500) and North Corona (7,300) increasing their share from 52% to 63% and 78 to 85%, respectively” (Center for Urban Research 2011). Latinos comprise over one-quarter of the population in Queens, totaling approximately 620,000 (ibid). More Mexicans have arrived to Queens in the past two decades than any other Latin American population. An estimated 93,000 Mexicans live in the borough as of 2010 (U.S. Census 2010). Other Latino populations with significant population increases in Queens include Salvadorans and Ecuadorans. Many of these new foreign-born Queens residents are undocumented immigrants who make a living as busboys, dishwashers, grocery store employees, and other kinds of service-sector jobs in surrounding ethnic businesses, such as those owned by established Korean immigrants.

At the outset of my research, I chose two Korean neighborhoods of New York City: Koreatown in Manhattan, New York City and Koreatown in Flushing, Queens, New York. The literature on Korean immigrants in New York City indicated I would find Koreans and Latino immigrants working together in these locations (Min 2011, 2007). Based on my previous research, I knew that large numbers of Latino immigrants residing in Queens were employees in Korean businesses in both Manhattan and Flushing. I decided it would be important to live near these Korean businesses in order to get a more in-depth understanding of Korean-Latino dynamics. I rented an apartment in Flushing, Queens, where I could easily walk, ride my bike, or take the bus to various Korean establishments. Flushing is adjacent to the predominantly Latino neighborhoods of Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst which are home to most of the Latino immigrants in my study. Thus, living in Flushing made it convenient to visit workers in

their own neighborhoods. It was also much more affordable to live in Flushing instead of near midtown Manhattan. This was an advantage because I could spend more money and time in local Korean establishments where my informants work every day.

In Manhattan Koreatown, there is a street sign displaying the word “Koreatown,” near the supermarkets and restaurants where my informants go to work every day. The area is roughly demarcated on New York City maps as a neighborhood near midtown Manhattan, surrounding 32nd street. There is no comparable sign in Queens, and the area comprising Koreatown is less clearly defined. Unlike Manhattan Koreatown, Flushing Koreatown is much more than a commercial space for Korean business owners. It is also a neighborhood that comprises numerous Korean family residences, churches, community centers, senior centers, and more. I define Koreatown in Flushing as an area beginning on the border of Chinatown in downtown Flushing and stretching east on Northern Boulevard for several miles.

A. Challenges of Studying Immigrant Labor in Koreatowns

One of the difficulties of doing fieldwork with immigrant workers in Koreatown is that workers come and go very frequently. They are often hired for temporary jobs that may last a few days, weeks, or months. Workers may also decide to leave New York City and return to Latin America, or move to a different city if they are able to find a better paying job elsewhere. Some Korean businesses owners have multiple businesses and transfer their workers around different job sites in Queens or Manhattan. One Guatemalan worker in my study has been moved around job sites across Manhattan and Queens at least three times by the same employer. Sometimes businesses unpredictably shut down, temporarily or permanently, and workers must leave in search of new employment.

Few Latino immigrants stay at their K-town jobs for more than a five years. The turnover rate is high for most undocumented Koreatown supermarket and restaurant workers, especially because they are hired on an as-needed basis and do not typically have formal work contracts because their Korean employers prefer to manage the terms of their employment (wages, weekly schedules) informally. Latinos who wash dishes, sweep floors, stock shelves or help around in the kitchen are often considered to be easily replaceable. If a worker performs unsatisfactorily, there are usually more Latinos looking for work and ready to do the job. However, reliable and experienced Latino workers who are valued by their Korean coworkers and employers are often encouraged to stay, especially in order to train Latino newcomers.

Korean employers are used to their employees coming and going, so there is nothing abnormal about seeing new faces almost every other week. However, the quantity of available jobs in Koreatown is less than the number of available workers. Workers understand that there is a significant risk involved in quitting their jobs or temporarily returning to Latin America because their jobs might be filled by the time they return. During fieldwork, relationships with many workers in the Koreatown food industry were often short lived because workers were constantly on the move. While establishing rapport with workers, it was difficult to keep track of those who were transferred to other job locations or decided to quit without informing me of their destinations. Even experienced workers were frequently indecisive about whether or not to quit their jobs, especially if relationships with coworkers or employers were unstable.

I could never be sure I would see the same workers from week to week, even if they had been employed in the same place for years. For example, one Mexican busboy in my study has been deciding whether or not to quit his job at a Korean restaurant for several years. At the restaurant, his Korean and Latino coworkers have teamed up against their exploitative Korean

boss who has not been paying workers for overtime hours. Their boss has paid fines to the New York State Department of Labor in the past for violating labor laws. The Korean staff has asked Latino workers to stay in order to contribute testimonials to support the law suit against him, filed through the Asian American Legal Defense League (AADEF Press Release 2012).

My Mexican informant, Miguel, has agreed to contribute his testimonial, but he believes his boss will fire him for doing so even though it is against New York State law to fire a worker for providing testimony. He is tempted to quit before the conflict escalates any further, but he is unsure if he can obtain stable employment elsewhere. Returning to the employment agency for new work often means starting at the bottom of the social order at a Korean restaurant or supermarket. Koreans value workers with years of experience much more than newcomers and starting over involves the difficult task of earning ones place all over again. He also stands to make some money for retroactive unpaid wages if the staff wins the law suit, but he is not entirely convinced that they will succeed since most new Latino immigrant workers at the restaurant are too afraid of being fired for providing honest testimonials.

These are all factors that workers may need to take into consideration when deciding to stay or go. Ultimately, many workers who feel pressure, uncertainty, or risk in their positions at work decide to quit, rather than fight the system. The distrust many felt towards their employers was sometimes directed towards me, creating some limitations in my study. Revealing too much information about working in Koreatown is considered a risk for many immigrants who do not feel secure in their jobs. One Mexican immigrant told me his Korean boss threatened him by saying *Santa Maria* (a Mexican colloquialism meaning ‘you’re finished’) when Department of Labor officials arrived to talk to Latino workers. As a result, several informants only chose to

meet with me once, in the company of a trusted friend, which limited my ability to develop closer relationships with several informants.

B. The Supermarket and Restaurant Contexts

Being a regular customer and shopper was a key method for getting to know my new surroundings. In my preliminary study with Mexican immigrants in Astoria, Queens, I was told I could find Latinos working in Korean restaurants and markets. Because I had been successful meeting Latino informants employed in Manhattan's food industry, I decided to focus on similar businesses in Koreatown. Restaurants and supermarkets are often accessible because they are open to the public and provide seating areas for observation. This accessibility allowed me to choose restaurants and supermarkets that would be most suitable for fieldwork purposes. Smaller businesses where I had a clear view of workplace interactions were preferable, although larger establishments allowed me to wander around and be less visible or intrusive.

Food is a main attraction in Koreatown; advertisements on the street and on the internet frequently draw in tourists and other hungry customers. Walking down 32nd street, the main strip in Koreatown in Manhattan, one finds colorfully lit neon signs flashing in Korean and English, bilingual menus and large pictures of Korean dishes posted on storefronts, and television screens displaying Korean cooking shows or Korean pop music videos. Food products can be seen passing along the sidewalks at all hours of the day; workers are constantly unloading trucks full of food products, and customers can be seen walking around with recently purchased coffee, bubble-tea, and pastries like macaroons or red-bean doughnuts. The smell of Korean food and

the sounds of Korean language also permeate the streets, particularly in warmer weather when stores leave their front doors open.

I knew it would be relatively easy to find Latinos working inside those doors. Based on my fieldwork experience in restaurants and supermarkets, I also knew I would find Latinos engaged in many different food-related work activities. Latinos are involved in almost every stage of the Korean food business process, from unloading fresh products to cleaning dirty dishes. During fieldwork, I focused exclusively on the food industry, which allowed me to create helpful parameters in my study. All my informants handle food in some capacity, so I was able to make comparisons about their Korean food knowledge, including the “language of food practices”- ways of talking about food and food related activities. Studying the Korean food industry also provided me the opportunity to observe commonalities, trends, or divergences across many different workplaces. Korean food establishments differ in their menu offerings, prices, décor, and ‘feel’- some proudly adhere to “traditional” Korean cooking or products, while others embrace international, hybrid, and fusion foods.

Latino workers in Koreatown eventually eat Korean food available at their workplace or in the Koreatown vicinity. Many enjoy the spicy heat of Korean food and thin slices of Korean meat (*galbi*) served on table grills, which they compare to the meat used in their own *asados* (barbeques). Although there are many differences, there is probably one constant across all Korean food establishments- the presence of *kimchi* (fermented cabbage or other vegetable in red pepper sauce). Latino workers in Koreatown can describe different types of *kimchi* and many have practiced making it themselves. Latinos learn to cook Korean food at work and handle Korean ingredients with ease. During fieldwork I frequently observed food making practices, which differ across restaurant and supermarket contexts. For example, there are dozens of

varieties of *kimchi*, and workers use different cooking methods to produce Korean food depending on the resources available in the establishment.

In supermarkets, Latinos work together with Koreans to arrange, package, store, and keep track of products inventory, as well as maintain a clean and aesthetically pleasing environment for customers. Some Korean supermarkets include specialized sections where food is prepared or cooked for customers on the spot. Latinos who work in these sections have the opportunity to gain specialized food skills and knowledge (preparing seafood, separating vegetable varieties, serving Korean customers using Korean greetings). In restaurants, Latinos are also responsible for the storage of food products, and maintenance of a clean workplace. But they achieve a different kind of familiarity with the food products they handle on a daily basis. Depending on the size of the restaurant, some workers focus on the preparation of food- cleaning and chopping meat and produce, assisting cooks, cooking food, and retrieving ingredients when needed. Others focus on the service component, such as bussing tables, cleaning trays, washing dishes, wiping tables, cleaning floors and bathrooms, and occasionally waiting tables or assisting with catering events. In restaurants and supermarkets, workers depend on each other to establish an efficient work flow and rhythm.

Thus I decided to focus on restaurants and supermarkets because they allowed a point of comparison in types of labor involved, and the different communicative methods workers use to accomplish these tasks. They also offered good vantage points for observation, such as food aisles, supermarket sections or “niches,” and tables for sitting, eating, watching, and interacting with staff. They were accessible to the public and offered me enough room to move around and explore freely. In total, I choose 9 principle Korean establishments to explore for approximately 1-2 hours, at least 2-3 times per week each. These included:

1. Korean food court (multiple restaurants)- K-Town Manhattan
2. Korean chain supermarket- K-Town Manhattan
3. Korean fast food restaurant – K-Town Flushing Queens
4. Korean barbeque restaurant – K-town Flushing Queens
5. Korean traditional & fast food restaurant – K-Town Flushing Queens
6. Korean deli – K-Town Flushing Queens
7. Korean restaurant and catering center- K-Town Flushing Queens
8. Korean chain supermarket- K-Town Flushing Queens
9. Korean chain supermarket 2 – K-Town Flushing Queens

C. Methods

My initial strategy in Koreatown restaurants and supermarkets was to walk around different Korean establishments and talk to any Latino workers I could find. To familiarize myself with both Koreatown neighborhoods, I took notes on peoples' movements and activities in various Korean establishments. In Manhattan Koreatown, Korean businesses are concentrated closely together, making it easy to visit multiple restaurants and supermarkets during a single visit. In Flushing, Korean businesses are spread out along a major Boulevard. I started with Manhattan K-town. With its bustling energy, crowded establishments, and narrow sidewalks, K-town in Manhattan is a thriving neighborhood replete with Korean restaurants, karaoke bars, hotels, souvenir shops, café and pastry shops, and supermarkets.

Doing fieldwork in restaurants and supermarkets involves a tactful and careful approach to avoid interfering with work flow or putting workers at risk of losing their jobs. I knew

workers had experienced many difficulties and risks to find work New York City, and I did not want to jeopardize anyone's position or right to work. Although these establishments may seem chaotic from the outside, there is a systematic order of activities in each business that is necessary for it to function successfully. If my presence created too many disruptions, I knew workers would be much less willing to talk to me. While doing fieldwork with undocumented workers, I learned it was important to avoid several key things. I avoided asking about personal information on the first encounter, and made sure not to draw workers away from their work responsibilities for more than a few minutes at a time. I could follow them around but not separate them from their tasks. I had to be extremely flexible with workers' schedules and the immediate demands of their employment. I allowed workers to define suitable times for extended interaction, usually during work breaks, lunch breaks, after work, on the way home, or on their day off during the week.

In Manhattan Koreatown, I met my first informants in a Korean food "court" or mall and Korean supermarket. The food mall gave me the opportunity to observe multiple small restaurants up-close. I could see and hear Koreans and Latinos working together in small kitchens, preparing Korean food for customers, and engaging in conversation together during slow times. I familiarized myself with the environment by purchasing Korean food at the different restaurants and sitting in the middle of the seating area to observe while eating. In this early stage, I wanted to learn as much as possible about Korean food by tasting it myself, and becoming familiar with the food objects handled by workers daily. This allowed me to ask workers more detailed questions about their work experiences with food in restaurants and supermarkets.

Becoming acquainted with Korean food is a task that all workers must go through in the Koreatown food industry. I had no experience with Korean food, and so I used the workers to help me decide on food options. I approached food stalls in the food court and engaged in small talk in English with Korean cashiers, and occasionally directed questions about food in Spanish to the Latino cooks standing behind the cashiers. I based my selections on their recommendations and watched them prepare the food. This method of seeking advice on food was helpful in learning about the extent of workers knowledge about Korean food (ingredients, names, the taste, how it is served, and the correct way to consume it, according to their observations as workers).

I returned to the food court at least two times a week for the next several months, became acquainted with the staff, and learned the general routine or schedule of the food mall. Besides Latino cooks, there were also Latino staff busy cleaning, wiping tables, clearing trays and bringing items up and down the stairs to the kitchens and storage basement. Koreans were busy in the kitchens with Latinos, or occupied in the management office upstairs; they did not partake in the same labor as the Latino cleaning staff. I asked a Korean manager about applying for a part time job and he asked me if I had experience cooking Korean food (I did not). I did not follow up with him, but instead focused on using the food court as a space that could help me get my fieldwork off the ground.

In the Korean food mall, I met Sebastian, my first study participant. He agreed to talk to me and participate in an interview about his work experiences in Koreatown. He connected me with another Latino immigrant worker from Mexico at the food mall who was willing to participate in my study. Although these workers left their jobs at the food court just a few months later, I continued to visit the he food court and practice observation, listening, and eating skills.

It is difficult to hear workers communicate with each other at times because businesses are frequently filled with customers and tourists. I also realized that fieldwork in Koreatown restaurants involves a great amount of change and fast-paced transitions. Workers are always moving around and employees are required to fill new demands together every day.

During fieldwork I also saw that there were generally more male than female employees in the Korean restaurants and supermarkets. Korean women are hired for cashier, waitress, or hostess positions. One of my primary field sites, Soo Restaurant, was an exception to this rule, as the staff was almost entirely comprised of Korean and Latina women. The food court also taught me that Latino workers were not always willing to help each other out or be sympathetic to each other's problems. In various establishments, Korean managers appointed Latinos to manage Latino staff, and sometimes Latinos were viewed as traitors who shouldn't be trusted. I was careful about any information I revealed in order to avoid creating disruptions in the internal dynamics of the workplace.

The food court also taught me that workers sometimes feel quite anxious about sharing their concerns and experiences with outsiders. For example, Sebastian, my first study participant, insisted that I pretend to be his cousin in case his Latino manager started asking questions about my identity. He was afraid his coworkers would assume I was an investigator for the New York State Department of Labor, and that his manager would report his behavior to Korean managers, who might potentially fire him for being a "snitch." Therefore, he deliberately lied to staff so that he could feel comfortable talking to me. For this reason, I learned it was much easier to have extended conversations and interviews outside of the workplace, without the looming possibility of being "caught" or discovered by hostile Latino managers or Korean employers. The fear of being discovered accompanied me throughout my fieldwork. In this way, I gained

insight into what life as an undocumented immigrant worker must feel like, constantly dealing with the threat of being fired or even deported for talking about personal information or exploitative work conditions.

I learned that other researchers in the area, from universities and community organizations, had visited the food court and other businesses in the area, thus workers were not completely unfamiliar with being questioned about their work conditions. This prepared me to be more alert about my position and the way I presented myself to employees. I established rapport with Latinos first, instead of going through Korean bosses and asking them if I could talk to their employees. I did this because I did not want Koreans to regulate how, and with whom, I could talk to. I wanted to build a sense of solidarity with Latino workers separately from their Korean employers. I learned that Latinos would introduce me to Koreans if they considered them friendly and trustworthy. This method of accessing Latinos first was useful, because I learned about Koreans (and whether or not they could be considered friendly enough to approach) from the perspective of Latinos, much like a Latino newcomer in Koreatown would get advice about different Koreans from more experienced Latino coworkers. The food court mall also provided a place for me to hang out and have long talks over dinner with Juan, my main informant who I met at the supermarket next door.

The same week I began exploring the food court, I became acquainted with a group of workers at a Korean supermarket on the same street. The supermarket is a popular chain store with locations in other Koreatown neighborhoods around the United States, including Flushing Koreatown (I also met Latinos employed in chain locations in Flushing as well). I approached a group of workers near the produce section and met Juan, a friendly and talkative undocumented Mexican who helped me earn the trust of his coworkers. Juan was very responsive to my needs,

and offered to meet with me outside of work at a café on the corner. We talked for hours and soon began a long and complicated friendship and fieldwork partnership. He introduced me to several of his friends who agreed to participate in my study. He accompanied us to numerous Mexican and Korean cafés and restaurant in Manhattan or Queens where I conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with groups of workers. Sometimes Juan assisted by translating my academic jargon into a more vernacular Spanish, which made it easier for workers to understand me and my questions. He also translated their terms for me, whenever I had trouble understanding their “work language” or “insider” code for people, objects, and activities at work. We had informal group conversations and talked extensively about Koreans, Mexico, life in New York City, and much more. I eagerly learned about Juan’s work and personal life, and listened to his numerous insights about the social problems that were important to him.

Juan gave me many tours of Koreatown and taught me about Korean culture from his point of view. He helped me develop and fine-tune the interview questions I posed to workers, and suggested topics and methods for investigating different problems we encountered in the field. Juan helped me analyze my field notes and audio recordings of interviews and conversations. I shared my notes with him and he provided extensive feedback based on his own perspectives and observations. I also asked Juan to analyze and write about his own workplace environment. He wrote journal entries about his experiences as an undocumented supermarket employee. He shared these candid observations with me throughout the course of my fieldwork, and my knowledge about Koreatown and Latino immigrants was enriched and expanded through every conversation we shared. He also introduced me to Korean coworkers at his supermarket, which made me feel more welcome whenever I visited his workplace.

Through Juan, I learned about the various activities that Latino and Korean workers do together. For example, he explained how Koreans and Latinos coordinate and communicate to accomplish everyday tasks involving food items. He identified workers who were exceptional in certain tasks, like his well-respected coworker Pablo who invented a barcode system to organize dozens of imported products. He helped me understand spaces in the supermarket I wasn't able to see or access, such as the supermarket lunchroom, where workers share information, joke together, plan events, and so on.

Juan introduced me to Latino workers in both Manhattan Koreatown and Flushing Koreatown. A group of Juan's coworkers who live in Queens expressed interest in learning English and I offered to give a few free lessons at the public library in Flushing after their work shifts ended. Juan alleviated their apprehensions about meeting with me and sharing personal information. During these language lesson meetings, we practiced English, discussed Koreans and Koreatown, and talked about their issues with language, such as difficulties communicating with Koreans and how they were learning to make sense of Koreans at work. I learned that Latinos are curious about both English and Korean languages. During one lesson, one Mexican worker lifted his sleeve and showed me his name, written in Korean letters. Earlier in the day he had asked his Korean coworker to translate his name into Korean and write it on his arm using a pen, so that he could remember it and practice the shapes later on. Some workers had installed applications on their smartphones to learn Korean and English, or watch Korean pop music videos. These language meetings also helped me gain a deeper understanding of the language environments Latinos encounter in Koreatown and how they communicate with Koreans at the workplace. Becoming acquainted with this group through Juan also helped me refine subsequent interview questions and informal conversation topics.

In the initial weeks after moving to Koreatown in Flushing, I became a patron of several Korean supermarkets and restaurants where I consumed many different kinds of Korean foods. I looked specifically for places where I could, as unobtrusively as possible, observe Latinos and Koreans working together. I also looked for places that were welcoming and tolerant of my constant presence. I was respectful of businesses and made sure not to take up too much time at tables that could be used by customers. I visited different restaurants and supermarkets every day alternating between busy and slow hours. I used my field notebook as a tool to establish my identity as a student in front of Koreans employees and employers. I explained my research to workers, asked questions whenever possible, and made note of their responses. I paid careful attention to how workers reacted to my presence, and continued to visit places where I felt I could develop friendly relationships with the staff.

While eating and browsing, I observed the employees, customers, and general activities going on at the workplace. I became increasingly attuned to how workers talked to each other and how workers in different roles worked together to accomplish responsibilities. I made small talk with workers in the aisles and made sure they learned to recognize me. While eating meals or walking through aisles, I asked Latino and Korean workers questions and let them know I was appreciative of their helpfulness. I started to learn a few words in Korean by listening to workers talk and associating Korean signs with different food products. For example, in Koreatown, Korean and Latino workers emphatically greet customers in Korean whenever they enter or leave a business. Thus every time I entered or left a Korean business, I got a Korean lesson in common greetings such as *anyeonghaseyo!* (hello). I used these greetings everywhere and imitated Koreans' pronunciation as closely as possible.

During fieldwork, speaking Korean made it easier to establish relationships with Koreans, particularly older generations who did not often speak English. I made an effort to connect with Koreans by showing my respect through gestures as well. I imitated Korean customers and accepted money from cashiers with both hands, bowed my head slightly when greeting a senior manager or employer, frequently saying thanks, complimenting food, being courteous and well-mannered, and tipping generously for good service. I interacted frequently with young Korean workers who showed curiosity about my presence and enjoyed practicing English with me. I continued building relationships with workers and explained my research to them once we had become acquainted through small talk. Koreans in non-managerial positions (waiters, supermarket aisle employees, cashiers, etc.) were generally easier to approach and talk to than bosses, who were often absent. Since I was already known as a regular customer in various restaurants and supermarkets, workers opened up to me about their insights and worries. Some told me stories about their experiences working with Latinos and learning Spanish together, others asked me how I would choose to “represent Koreans” in my work.

I began to see the workplace as a location of many different activities going on simultaneously, not unrelated from each other, but each requiring its own grouping of workers and the interaction of their communication abilities and skills. In one of my principle field sites, a popular Korean “fast food” restaurant in Flushing, Queens, three busboys- two Koreans and an Ecuadoran- often work together on the task of taking care of a customer table. The Ecuadoran provides the customer with water, a menu, miso soup, and a side dish of *kimchi*. One Korean takes the order and brings it to the cooks behind the counter. The other Korean stands by as an assistant waiter, attending to the table if the main waiter became momentarily occupied or wants to switch tables. The Ecuadoran worker (or sometimes the Koreans) picks up the food prepared

by Latino and Korean cooks, and serves it to the customer, and refills their water and *kimchi* if necessary. Once the customer is gone, all three help clean off the table and divide the tips. While huddled around the table, they (in Korean, English, and/or Spanish) remark on the quantity of the tips or make jokes and gossip about customers quietly. They then bring a new customer to the clean table and start the process all over again.

I focused on how workers such as these coordinated around particular tasks that were connected to other tasks and groups of workers. Over time, sequences of events and coordinated activities became more and more apparent to me. Sometimes the coordinated activities would last just a few minutes or seconds, as in the case of clearing off a restaurant table. Other times, coordinated activities seemed to last for hours on end. For example, dishwashers at the restaurant stand for hours in front of the sink, cleaning and organizing dishes into neat piles for the cooks, and continuously receive dirty dishes from busboys, one after the other. During short breaks from washing dishes, workers play Mexican *banda* music on their phones, or joke around with the Korean cooks beside them. This method of following coordinated activities allowed me to understand how workers go about getting work done together. I observed gestures and non-verbal communication exchanged during these coordinated activities, such as Koreans and Latinos play-fighting, poking, chasing each other, pointing and gesticulating, or maintaining distance while occupied with separate tasks, for example.

Workplace activities and language interactions are linked in many important ways. The demands of the workplace require teamwork and cooperation, delegation and a degree of orderliness. Latinos and Koreans develop different relationships with each other, the materials in their surroundings, and the activities undertaken in their environments, depending on the work context. Language is critical for getting work done, and all kinds of work create different

problems, including working with foreign languages in the immediate environment. Communication arises from the peculiarities of the activities routinely undertaken in these types of businesses. For example, workers who handle fruit all day have an extensive vocabulary in Korean of fruit terms which they can use when communicating with customers, while workers who cook Korean fast food are highly receptive to kitchen slang and wait staff commands.

To understand how immigrants in Koreatown work together to tackle everyday demands, I focused on the communication involved in these coordinated activities. This approach to the study of social interaction is rooted in the ethnomethodological tradition, which analyzes

the methods people use for producing recognizable social orders. Ethno refers to members of a social situation or cultural group and ‘method’ refers to the things members continually do using those methods to create and recreate various recognizable social actions and social practices. [Ritzer and Stepnisky 2011: 90-91]

From this perspective, there are particular rules and orders of communication that may not be immediately apparent to outsiders or linguistic newcomers, but which must be learned in order to partake in meaningful interaction with others. In Koreatown, Latinos engage in cooperative sense-making with more experienced Latino and Korean coworkers to successfully participate in the production of local social orders of interaction. I focused on “the things (words, turns, gestures) people use to make meaning” which can have “many possible meanings and take on a particular meaning only as participants build an order of practice together using them” (2011:91). I noted things people used in Koreatown to make meaning and create order, including words, food objects, gestures, smartphone applications or translation devices, a coworker’s expertise, and many others.

Ethnomethodology focuses on the production of social order “that does not depend on shared beliefs” (2011:91). This approach to communication at work primarily focuses on the

instructional and educational aspects of collectively constructed mutual intelligibility, more so than individual subjectivity or shared beliefs. Therefore, since it is impossible to “get inside the heads” of interlocutors during conversation and interaction, I did not analyze the motivations behind speakers’ actions. I did pay attention to my own intentions, feelings, and challenges as a participant in unfamiliar language environments. This permitted me to better understand some of the challenges other speakers unfamiliar with Korean language or cuisine have encountered.

Ethnomethodology involves

a multifaceted focus on the local social orders that are enacted in various situations. The individual persons who inhabit these situations are, as individuals, uninteresting, except in so far as personal characteristics, such as blindness, reveal something about the competencies required to achieve the recognizable production of the local order that is the object of study. [Ritzer and Stepnisky 2011:91]

Over time, immigrant workers in Koreatown develop increasing awareness of the “recognizable boundaries of the game” (2011:91) - the methods necessary to communicate and work together according to local, context-specific expectations. Workers who partake in this linguistic “game” contribute their own unique linguistic resources as they co-produce these social orders with other participants. Sometimes, communication breaks down between Latinos and Koreans as they try to negotiate “conflicting rules for making sense and conflicting contexts of accountability” (2011:91). Communicating competently requires more than knowledge of grammar and vocabulary- it also demands sensitivity to the broader linguistic norms that are enacted by speakers (honorifics and status markers, rules about when speech is appropriate or when silence is preferred, the correct order for properly serving particular Korean dishes, etc.).

While interacting with workers, I studied how they managed the ambiguity that results from managing multiple language codes, linguistic norms, and expectations. Managing ambiguity in coordinated ways creates “endogenously produced intelligibility” (2011:93) or

locally valid sense-making and communicative competencies. The conditions for constructing intelligibility are located in the concrete, everyday details of peoples' immediate social environments. Ordinary social events are produced from patterned details that are recognizable to a particular group.

Garfinkel's ethnomethodological approach (Rawls 2008, Garfinkel 1968) is particularly helpful in understanding the nuanced details of multilingual, multimodal conversations among speakers of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds. The communicative problems and opportunities that arise when populations of speakers with no shared native language come into sustained contact deserve close inspection because they can inform us on the ways everyday people-particularly Asian and Latino immigrants who are frequently stigmatized as linguistically deficient- solve problems on their own terms, using their own methods. Mutual intelligibility does not mean that workers actually understand each other's' intended meanings. There is often a great deal of "productive ignorance" that arises when Spanish and Korean speakers figure out how to work together efficiently, even if they don't "really understand" each other. According to Varenne and McDermott (1998),

such externalizations of apparently inappropriate performances are a problem for any analyst convinced that the units of analysis of human interaction must be derived from an observation of the behavior and not through a deductive process. [Varenne and McDermott 1998: xii]

Varenne quotes McDermott and Dore's (1982) approach to the observation of these performances and interactions:

the analyst must first DISCOVER (a) the units of behavior to which the participants are oriented; (b) the particular contexts, frames, or constraints which are most immediately in effect; and (c) the ways in which the most immediate contexts are embedded in more inclusive social and institutional contexts (also available in the behavior of the participants). [Varenne and McDermott 1998:6]

The outcome may not indicate “learning” according to externally defined standards about what counts as learning (i.e. proficient language and literacy skills). Regardless if the student falls short of these previously established expectations about ideal learning trajectories, he has arrived at a new place and position in a dynamic field of relations, having used his own methods along with the knowledge, resources, and skills of fellow participants and the local environment. The education of the student often depends on how he attempts to learn and how others acknowledge his attempts to learn- the methods for figuring out what to do next. As Varenne and McDermott note, “each step is a complex setting where human beings work together and, eventually achieve something, a ‘thing’ that is recognized as having happened and stands as the fact on which further history can be made” (1998:6).

These perceived “attempts,” moves, and shifts in the production of local orders simultaneously establish the “trust” necessary to sustain these orders. According to Garfinkel, “all mutually intelligible ordinary actions have an observable structure” (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2011:93). I chose to study the patterned orderliness that emerged from workplace interactions, rather than looking to participants’ individual learning trajectories. These basic principles are elaborated by Hymes (1962) in his “ethnography of speaking” approach, which provides a useful analytical framework for understanding multilingual, multimodal interactions in Koreatown:

The speech of a group constitutes a system; 2. Speech and language vary cross-culturally in function, 3. The speech activity of a community is the primary object of attention. [Hymes 1962:42]

Like Garfinkel, Hymes argues that even ordinary conversation contains different kinds of orderliness;

A vast portion of verbal behavior in fact consists of recurrent patterns, of linguistic routines. Description has tended to be limited to those with a manifest structure, and has not often probed for those with an implicit pattern. Analysis of routines includes identification of idiomatic units, not only greeting formulas and

the like, but the full range of utterances which acquire conventional significance, for an individual, group, or whole culture. [Blount 1974:213]

Hymes's concept of *utterances* acquiring conventional significance can be likened to Garfinkel's notion of *mutual intelligibility*, in that local interactions are achieved through multifaceted, continuous routines. Hymes recommends a focus on "linguistic routines" in particular, which are a "recurrent sequence of verbal behavior, whether conventional or idiosyncratic" (Hymes 1962:43). Since "any stretch of speech is an imperfect indication of the knowledge that underlies it" (1962:43) the job of the anthropologist is to account for the details of communication involved in the "artful accomplishment of a social act, which represents the patterned, spontaneous evidence of problem solving and conceptual thought" (Hymes 1986:55)

Therefore, studying multilingual contact languages from an ethnomethodological standpoint involves focusing on the local nuances and specific details of interaction. This can be particularly complicated, for a few reasons. First, according to Gumperz (1971) conventions may exist within the local, multilingual speech group which are not necessarily shared (or are only partially shared) with other speech groups, or "speech communities" even those of similar populations (Duranti 2009). Another problem is that each speaker in the multilingual work-speech community may have their own variety of "jargon" which is continuously changing in response to circumstances within and beyond the localized workplace environment. For example, a Latino worker may decide to take an English class and practice his new English language skills with coworkers, or a Korean manager/employee may decide to make menus and signs bilingual or multilingual to accommodate the different languages spoken at work, encouraging the use of multiple sets of language resources.

I asked all the Latino workers in my study to describe how they communicated with Koreans at work and listened to them talk about each other and their own languages. I listened

to workers as they provided me with metalinguistic analyses of their own language practices. Documenting workers' metalinguistic analysis allowed me to understand the ways they interpreted their language environments, and the necessary rules for communicating with individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Metalinguistic analysis also revealed the ways workers felt accountable for speaking and behaving in certain ways- the boundaries of the game. I learned a great deal by listening to workers talk to each other about a myriad of topics, including women, money, food, phones and other gadgets, family and friends, among others. Listening was a very important method for understanding communication at the workplace. I listened to the patterns and rhythms of talk, the silence of workers, the intonation or tone of workers voices, the actual sounds and words they used together, the coordinated movements of bodies around the workplace. I learned by listening to silence that silence itself does not indicate lack of understanding or communication among workers. Silence revealed workers coordination and efficiency, in being able to accomplish tasks without verbal explication or direction, even in the busiest of work hours.

One interesting aspect of doing fieldwork in multiple Korean restaurants and supermarkets is that workers consistently claim *not* to know or “dominate” the local languages of their workplace, yet I see them all using language in many different ways. This is a basic problem in anthropological field work: what people say they do is not always what they actually do. To manage this problem, I recorded random samples of audio in each establishment, took observational notes of interactions, and asked informants to analyze my descriptions of their language environments. I presented them with different “findings” and solicited their input as I tried to piece together the local rules of interaction which varied across work contexts.

Latinos have said to me “the Koreans only speak in *their* language,” a statement which is confusing for a couple of reasons. First, Koreans don’t always only speak in Korean. Even Korean newcomers know some English words (from pop culture, dramas, school, etc.) which they may sporadically incorporate into their repertoires. Young generations of Koreans are also known for their frequent use of English loan words in Korean. Many Koreans also have experience with Spanish, either through their work in Koreatown or time spent in Latin America. That they *choose* to speak in Korean is a different issue than not *being able* to speak different language varieties. Also, this raises the question of whose language is whose, given the frequent mixing of languages that is constantly occurring? Franz Boas (1920) pointed out long ago that one language cannot be tied to a single people/ethnicity/race/nationality. Populations have been migrating, mixing, and moving around throughout history. One Korean’s way of speaking cannot be said to be the way all Koreans speak, and same goes for Latino immigrants, who bring their own ways of speaking from Latin America.

Another challenge of studying the mix of different languages in various workplace contexts is that even in one small restaurant setting there can be multiple communities of practice oriented around different activities (cutting and prepping vegetables, washing dishes, making *kimbap*, sorting rice bags etc.) Each of these activities requires a different set of language tools, so workers who are in the American food section in aisle seven may not understand the language of Korean noodles in aisle two. The Ecuadoran making Korean dumplings cannot expect the Mexican dishwasher to know the names of Korean ingredients or how to fetch them from the Korean market in order to make ‘passable’ Korean dumplings.

Another difficulty is that sometimes it may seem like no language exchange is happening between Koreans and Latinos because Latinos can be silent for hours while Koreans are busy

chatting, singing, yelling, and so on. Then, out of nowhere, a Korean will ask a Latino to do something in Korean, and the worker will oblige without skipping a beat. Thus, it is possible for workers who don't *speak* much Korean to actually *understand* enough Korean to know what's going on. Thus it was very difficult to gauge just *how much* a worker knows in Korean, or how much a Korean knows in Spanish, when they don't necessarily want or need to speak those languages to get along. Then, of course, my own language learning process felt slow and disjointed at times; other times, it felt like I could understand what was being said around me even though I couldn't make out individual words.

I occasionally detected the presence of languages besides Korean, Spanish, and English (and their various mixed arrangements), such as Mandarin. Some Koreans staff and customers (and occasionally Latino workers) could speak Chinese languages, but they were rarely heard, as were indigenous Latin American languages spoken by some Latinos. The fact that these languages are not frequently heard or seen in most of my field sites does not mean that they are unimportant to speakers. I chose to focus on the languages used "most" at the workplace, the particular language varieties that are more commonly expressed than others. These varieties do not comprise a "whole" or "complete" picture of all language resources available to workers.

It was difficult to navigate moments where Latinos and Koreans were carrying on in spontaneous, rapid conversation in 3 or more language varieties. Sometimes it seemed I couldn't even document what I had just heard because workers had already moved onto the next thing and were occupied with something else halfway across the store by the time I had even had a chance to digest what had just happened. The fast paced and busy environment of many of these workplaces disguises a lot of the nuances of how language operates. As a customer and researcher I was denied access into certain spaces of various businesses, mainly kitchens

(although many were open and viewable from the seating area), basement storage areas, administrative offices, male restrooms, and truck loading spaces. I was restricted for many reasons: lack of trust, New York State laws about sanitation and safety that define employee-only zones, my gender, because my presence would be a physical obstruction to work flow, or simply because I felt unsafe or unwelcome. Thus I tended to do fieldwork in spaces where I was welcome to sit, stand, observe, and participate with workers and their workplace materials and activities.

Juan volunteered to record conversations with coworkers using his iPhone. Juan gave me the audio files and we analyzed them together, which helped me understand the content and context of the conversations. On some occasions, workers knew he was recording conversation, at other times he hid the phone in his pocket. The conversations were each just a few minutes long, but they gave me insight into (semi) naturally-occurring Latino-Korean worker interactions. Juan's method of recording audio was very useful because he identified the conversations and interactions that he thought would "showcase" interesting dimensions of communication at work. These included mixtures of Korean, English, Spanish, and improvised words developed at work with fellow Latino and Korean employees. Although they are not representative of how communication takes place in all Korean businesses, the audio provided me with a better understanding of how Latinos and Koreans at Juan's workplace address each other, plan activities together, tease each other, and frequently engage in language mixing.

While doing fieldwork I focused more on staff interactions than staff-customer interactions. Every day of fieldwork in these workplaces introduced dozens if not hundreds of new customers that I could not easily observe or follow around. When restaurants had "slow" hours, usually between lunch and dinner times, or late at night, it was easier to observe staff-

customer interactions. These usually took place in Korean and English, due to the client base (predominantly 1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation Koreans), especially in Flushing Koreatown where there are far fewer tourists and non-Koreans than in Manhattan's Koreatown. Latinos in Korean restaurant did not typically engage in extended language interactions with customers (with the exception of a few busboys who doubled as waiters and a deli-counter attendant who liked making conversation with his "clients"). I also focused on Latinos language strategies for learning Korean, more so than Koreans' strategies for learning Spanish, or English. Although I developed close relationships with several Koreans during my fieldwork, I had more access to Latinos' perspectives, especially because I speak Spanish and workers could easily explain things to me in Spanish.

Also, many Koreans would not speak with me in the same ways they spoke to their Latino coworkers. Some Koreans did not speak to me at all, while others spoke to me in more "formal" English instead of their usual vernacular work jargon which I was eager to learn. Korean bosses are often present only a few days a week to check in on their store, and Latino workers explained to me that their managers were reluctant to speak to outsiders without the consent of Korean superiors. Another main reason why it was difficult to build trust with Korean employers or managerial staff was due to language. Most employers I observed are Korean males over 40 years of age who migrated to New York as adults and spoke English as a second language. These men usually spoke Korean with each other and did not generally have a need to speak to outsiders in other languages, with the exception of non-Korean employees. Unfortunately, interactions with older Korean males were usually very short and curt.

I tried to initiate conversations with Korean employers, cooks, and waiters, who were friendly toward Latino employees, but often felt our interactions were highly restricted. In the

many restaurants, supermarkets, or delis where I tried to make small talk with Korean men, the usual response was silence or a very brief acknowledgment of my presence; sometimes eye contact was not reciprocated at all. This made me feel like an outsider in many Korean businesses I visited during the first few months. I discussed this phenomenon with Latino workers, and learned that this type of interaction is not unusual or unexpected. Many Latinos feel that their employers are weary to speak with outsiders, particularly non-Koreans. They describe talk with Korean superiors as generally very business and task-oriented, and not typically pleasant or friendly. I occasionally noted exceptions to this, in the form of brief greetings or periods of light banter between bosses and their workers. I learned from Latinos that Korean employers are very secretive about their business practices, particularly because Korean business owners frequently violate labor laws (almost exclusively hiring undocumented immigrant employees, withholding overtime wages, etc., firing workers for disclosing information to city or state officials, etc.).

I devised various methods to get around this problem of limited interaction with Korean men because I wanted to understand their points of view. I focused on meeting younger Korean men who were interested in interacting with English-speaking customers. At the Korean fast food restaurant I talked to Korean male waiters who were part-time students in the CUNY system. One of them became my second Korean language tutor, and we met several times to discuss Koreatown and practice Korean and English together. I also enlisted the help of a Korean graduate student at CUNY, who was writing her dissertation on Korean students in Manhattan. She helped translate an online advertisement through a Korean message board, where I found two Korean male informants. I met and interviewed these Koreans about their experiences working with Latinos in Koreatown. The Korean grad student also connected me with a Korean

undergraduate student and language tutor in Queens who became my translator. She helped me transcribe Korean audio recordings and analyze data such as Korean glossaries and other notes from the field.

I also befriended Jung Il-Woo, my Korean neighbor whom I met in the park outside my apartment building. Jung is a male in his mid-twenties who had previously worked with Latino immigrants in his father's bar-restaurant in the state of Georgia. Jung and I developed a special bond, and in many ways he was the Korean counterpart to Juan. Jung and I became good friends and remain close friends today. We went to many Korean restaurants and bars together, had many conversations about Koreatown and Latino immigrants, watched Korean dramas together, visited parks, and various popular local Korean community spots. Jung frequently shared his knowledge about Korean business practices in our community using his inside knowledge and experience. He introduced me to his family and friends, helped me translate and explain audio recordings of Korean conversations, and answered many questions about Korean language and culture in New York City. His help was especially valuable because he provided feedback on my observations which I incorporated into my research. While spending time with Jung Il-Woo I learned about the concept of *jeung* – a bond that is based on caring and reaching out to others. Jung explained how Koreans often experience *jeung* with Latinos, especially because they perceive similarities in family values and work ethic. I developed *jeung* with Jung, who could speak and understand basic words and phrases in Spanish, enjoyed eating Salvadoran and Mexican food, and expressed interest and attraction toward Latina women like me.

I also decided it would be important to discuss my research with the leading scholar on Korean immigrants in New York, sociologist Dr. Pyong Gap Min, at CUNY Queens College. I contacted him and discovered he was carrying out a study on Korean-Latino relations in New

York City. I explained my research interests, and was hired by Dr. Min to conduct surveys with Latino employees in Korean businesses located in New York City. Dr. Min's survey questions served as the initial basis for my interviews with Latino immigrants in Koreatown. The questionnaire focused on background questions (place of origin, age, etc.) and relationships with Korean employers, work conditions (hours and wages), and attitudes about Korean food and language. His project also offered compensation for survey participants (\$30 per worker), which certainly served as an incentive for workers to talk to me in the beginning. Dr. Min's survey questions formed part of my initial rapport-building process in Koreatown, and gave me a sense of general characteristics of the survey participants. However, I did not rely on them for my own dissertation project. I had informal, informative conversations with each worker, and developed my own separate questions for interviews. During times when I was not conducting participant observation in my principle field sites, I interviewed workers and spent time with them in their work and home neighborhoods in Manhattan and Queens.

Another method I used in the field was accompanying Latinos and Koreans to dinner outings. Juan and his coworkers invited me to eat dinner at a Korean restaurant in Flushing, where I learned about various food rituals, and how Latinos and Koreans interact outside of work. I was able to listen to their conversations and gain better understanding of language mixing. Eating together was a way to establish rapport and meet new informants. During a dinner outing with Juan and his coworkers, I met another key informant, Antonio. Antonio is a Mexican waiter with over 10 years of experience working in a Korean restaurant. He speaks Korean with ease and switches frequently between Korean, Spanish, and English, when attending customers at the restaurant. He married a Korean woman who used to be a waitress at the restaurant, and the two live with their child in Flushing, Queens. I immediately noticed

Antonio's expertise in Korean food and language, and asked him to be a part of my study. He taught me about Korean culture and language, particularly honorifics and rules regarding status and respect.

Antonio invited me to his home and introduced me to his wife, Ji-Eun and daughter Natalia. Ji-Eun, an undocumented Korean woman with a degree in Chinese literature from a Korean university, gave me Korean lessons 1-2 times per week in their home for three months. It was my first time developing a friendship with an undocumented Korean woman. I observed her interactions with Antonio in Korean, and listened to her speak in English about similarities and differences she perceived between Koreans and Mexicans. I learned the Korean alphabet, numbers and rules for counting, and basic Korean phrases. It was my first experience “formally” learning Korean, and we used children’s books, beginner lesson books, and other strategies to practice the language. I spent much time writing and memorizing the shapes of different Hangul characters, and associating sounds with them, so that I could pronounce words and sentences.

I experienced an “awakening” to the Korean language as I became visually and aurally aware of the differences in Hangul characters. Shapes that were once strange become familiar to me, a tremendously gratifying experience of recognition that made me feel more connected to my surroundings in Flushing. This is a process that many Latinos go through in Koreatown, particularly in situations where their performance at work depends on memorizing Hangul shapes. For example, Latino cooks in kitchens become aware of different Korean shapes when they must read and interpret food tickets written by Korean waiters. Other Korean waiters, busboys, catering assistants, and kitchen assistants, learn the configurations of Korean shapes and their pronunciation using food menus. In my own work as an anthropologist, I also wanted

to perform well and felt the “necessity to understand,” much like workers do in their unfamiliar language environments.

Ji-Eun gave me homework, which usually consisted of composing simple sentences in Korean. This encouraged me to use the internet and other resources for help when I couldn't figure out how to write about something. While using the internet for homework, I found free language resources, and started perusing Korean websites where I learned about Korean popular culture. I began watching Korean television, particularly Korean dramas, and listening to Korean pop music (also known as “K-Pop”) which is played in most restaurants, cafes, and shops around Koreatown neighborhoods. Becoming acquainted with Korean popular culture was another way to understand the media Latinos encounter daily at the workplace. My informants often name trendy K-Pop groups and even showed me different videos and smartphone applications where they streamed television or played language games for fun. Therefore, my introduction to Korean language led me to Korean media, entertainment, and technology, which is very much a part of life in Koreatown.

Another principle field site was Soo Restaurant, run by a Korean woman whom I refer to as “Grandma.” I selected this place for several reasons. All of the employees are Korean and Latino immigrants. The restaurant was small enough so that I could hear and see most activities and interactions taking place. The restaurant was also affordable enough to visit several times a week for over a year. The staff was welcoming and helpful, particularly Grandma, who took a special liking to me from the beginning. Since all the signs and menus are written in Korean I relied on the help of Grandma and her staff to guide and teach me. Grandma mixed English, Spanish, and Korean when talking to me, and thus I got first-hand experience in developing a relationship with a Korean boss by mixing multiple languages to communicate.

At the restaurant, I was recognized as a Latina, a student of Korean language and culture, and an anthropologist in graduate school. I received Grandma's instruction on Korean food and culture, and heard many stories about her life as a female Korean immigrant business owner. To obtain the "unique adequacy" required to become a "competent practitioner" immersed in the local order of the workplace, I ate food at Grandma's restaurant innumerable times, interacted with her Korean employees, family members, and friends at the workplace, received lessons on how to prepare Korean dumplings from Latino staff. With Grandma, I practiced Korean, allowed her to correct my homework, took a tour of the surrounding Koreatown neighborhood in her car, watched Korean documentaries on her laptop at work, and consistently observed Grandma, customers, and employees interacting.

D. Using My Ignorance as Primary Field Method

For Latino immigrants, making sense of the language and communicative styles of Korean coworkers, bosses, and customers, is a central part of working in Koreatown. Juan, my main informant, described this challenge as *la necesidad de entender* (necessity to understand). While doing fieldwork I also felt this necessity to understand Koreans. The more observant and studious I was of Korean language, the more attention I received from Korean employees and employers. The more I practiced the language, the greater access I had to their world. I was often praised by Koreans who identified me as "a student of Korean." This opened many opportunities to engage in conversations with Koreans and make new connections in Koreatown. I displayed my desire to learn by carrying around my Korean language exercise notebook, watching Korean dramas on my laptop while eating Korean meals, and using Korean phrases to

ask about food and express gratitude. I was greatly awarded with the attention and curiosity of both Latinos and Koreans, who wanted to teach me more and demonstrate their expertise.

For Latino newcomers like me, learning the languages of local speech communities was key method for developing and deepening relationships in Koreatown. My efforts to understand Koreans also brought me closer to Latinos, because we shared similar struggles and I depended on their knowledge to guide me. Their knowledge also gave me insight into the various problem Latinos identify as important to know in Koreatown, and their ways of going about devising problem-solving strategies through language. One of the best ways to understand how immigrants educate each other is to allow oneself to be taught by immigrants about the things that matter to them in their local environments. While consistently being taught by Koreans and Latinos in Koreatown about things I didn't know, I discovered their rules, strategies, and methods for teaching and making sense of each other.

Allowing my ignorance to guide my research became one of my most important tools in the field. In a way, my own ignorance was a context for action. Making full use of my ignorance as a peripheral participant entailed reflecting on the "moves" or strategies put to work by workers. For example, I could find Latino immigrants cooking traditional Korean cuisine or speaking Korean comfortably with coworkers. I wondered how workers had managed to accomplish learning a new language or learning a new cuisine in Koreatown, without being formally taught how to do so in an overtly systematic way. Their accomplishments were apparent, but I was ignorant about the steps workers had taken together to arrive at these accomplishments. I had no choice but to take some steps myself, using workers' guidance, instruction, and suggestions.

My discovery of local procedures was a learning process that my informants experienced in their own ways, and continue to experience every day. This method revealed the extensive knowledge immigrants have and how they creatively develop solutions to local problems and puzzles. Also, the “moves” required to transition from one position to another are different in each restaurant and supermarket setting, so my ignorance seemed to multiply as I continued fieldwork. There are many “right” ways to cook a Korean soup, for example. When observing Latinos cooking with Koreans, I wasn’t interested in *how well* Latinos could produce Korean soup (the “quality” of the soup according to my outsider standards). Instead, I was interested in the various steps Mexicans took in their unique settings to arrive at a locally valid version of that soup that would pass the boss’s instructions and sell to Korean customers.

A correct procedure in one place would appear completely wrong in another- and I learned there are many ways to learn to arrive at acceptable outcomes, even when the end result appears the same. No recipe book on Korean cooking could give me the answers about how to learn Korean cooking in Koreatown: I had to determine how workers themselves became viewed as competent workers in their daily responsibilities. This of course, meant appreciating misunderstandings and mistakes as cues that existing knowledge, strategies, and moves, were not going to work. There had to be another path, another step in the dance to learn. Latino immigrants with work experience in multiple Korean restaurants seemed familiar with the general “tune” of the song (same ingredients, same Korean words), but the dance steps (in what order to acquire or mix the ingredients, how and when to use known Korean words) had to be re-learned and re-taught, time and time again.

When I began my fieldwork, I knew close to nothing about the Korean language. I made the conscious decision to avoid taking Korean lessons before entering the field so I could learn

Korean in the ways my informants had been learning in the field. I could not clearly distinguish Hangul characters from Mandarin characters, or Korean sounds from Mandarin sounds. I had never eaten Korean food before, and I had never shopped in a Korean supermarket (to my knowledge). I had never listened to Korean music, except for a few excursions to Korean karaoke bars years prior. Much like my Latino informants, I was ignorant about Koreatown before my “work” began. There were many instances where I put my ignorance to use. As puzzles emerged in the field, I often thought about the problem for many days, or talked about it out loud with other workers. Sometimes, when I felt ignorant about something, I continued to watch my surroundings until a suitable or potential answer emerged. I followed clues and cues in my environment to help me solve these puzzles. Sometimes conversations in a restaurant with one set of workers would give me the answer or explanation for something I was puzzling over in a supermarket. I acquired pieces of knowledge from one source, and pieces from another, to make my way through the obscurities of my peripheral position.

In a similar fashion, recent immigrants piece together information on a very broad range of topics from numerous sources. Many immigrants are avid seekers and collectors of important survival knowledge (such as practical information necessary to make a living in New York City), and they possess information that is valuable to others. The challenges of adapting to a completely foreign environment are real and immediate, and most immigrants can’t afford to remain ignorant about most things that concern their livelihood, or the well-being of their families and friends. Thus, in this context, being an ignorant person in a critical moment is both a condition of being an outsider but also an impetus for action. My own “work” to be carried out in Koreatown didn’t involve the same kinds of responsibilities as my informants, but it had its own very real pressures and challenges. I was not completely ignorant as a fieldworker (due to

my preliminary research) but the setting was completely foreign, and the quality of my work depended on the relationships I could build through communication with people in the field.

Building relationships with people in Koreatown was difficult because I didn't have the language to express myself freely in all situations, or comprehend all that was being said. I was ignorant not only to languages spoken in the field (Korean) but also the diverse styles of communication present in Koreatown, even among Spanish speakers. As a Spanish speaker I was actually surprised how often I had trouble understanding other Spanish speakers in Koreatown. Sometimes they were silent, other times they mixed Korean, English and Spanish, and other times they used hand signals or slang terms I had never heard before. My own knowledge of Spanish left me in the dark sometimes. And with every new thing I learned, I realized there was much more to figure out. In this way, my ignorance was productive because it created new questions and pointed me in new directions.

Learning a new vocabulary word often indicated a larger semiotic system at work, a (to-be-discovered) context in which that word could be valuable and useful for communication. Before arriving to Koreatown, my Latino informants were all ignorant about the grammar, syntax, and sounds of Korean, as well as general "rules" of conduct regarding Korean elders or superiors. They eventually learned that particular sounds attached to the ends of words (suffixes) were actually status markers, connected to broader systems of status and honorifics in Korean. They used clues in their environment and each other's knowledge to solve the puzzle of why particular sounds always occur when certain people are present, or when particular situations arise. Koreans were also actively trying to make sense of their surroundings with semiotic clues. On one occasion, a Korean cook explained feeling enlightened after his Latino coworkers taught him how to say some Spanish curse-words. Being able to recognize and pronounce Spanish

profanities was a way to tease and play with Latinos, participate in jokes and stories, elicit laughter, and appear approachable and trustworthy.

My field sites were often busy and filled with customers. This indicated a degree of orderliness necessary for working efficiently to serve large volumes of customers. This orderliness is constructed over time, moment by moment, over the course of an endless series of encounters and events. I was often baffled by the orderliness. Using my ignorance as a method enabled me to arrive at an understanding of local rules and knowledge exchange. Interestingly, my ignorance about language and communication also served me in other ways. Being obviously clueless was an occasion for people in my environment to come to my assistance on their own volition, in their own ways. For example, when I first entered one of my main field sites, Soo Restaurant, I realized there were no signs or menus in English. My ignorance about how to order food in this restaurant was clear to the staff (I was obviously not the first person to have trouble discerning food options). I spent a long time looking at the list of food options in Korean, searching for clues, staring at the characters in confusion and asking, "I wonder what that means." Every time I hesitated, a Korean cook or waitress would help me out by pronouncing the list of available food options in Korean while pointing to the actual food itself. Over time, I learned their names, and found myself teaching them to others months later (whenever I invited a friend or family member to eat Korean food with me, for example). Eventually, as I became a more legitimate field worker, I gained enough competency to educate others about my knowledge of Koreatown.

After finishing my fieldwork, I found it useful to categorize and analyze communication in Koreatown according to Latinos', Koreans', and my own methods of cooperative sense-making. I organized commonalities found among various communicative strategies I detected

and learned while doing fieldwork. Therefore, this method of framing interactions arose from my own sense-making process, and the ways I observed others making sense of me and each other. As I encountered ambiguity in the field, I found these strategies helpful for understanding my surroundings. I noticed similar communication strategies used by workers across various workplaces while analyzing my field notes, audio recordings of interviews, and multilingual conversations. In order to explore multilingual workplace conversations in detail, I used my own transcription conventions (see Appendix for transcript). When translating the conversations (which often included 3 or more language codes), I provide a summary of the intended meaning whenever the literal translation was unclear. For example, “hana mango comero” (literally: one mango eat) is translated to “I ate one mango” in order to let the reader understand how the conversation unfolds in more “standard English” form. I arrived at these “translations” using Juan's knowledge and help with transcriptions. The observations and analyses of language and communication in Koreatown workplaces are not exhaustive, of course, but simply provide an outline of the ways immigrant workers from Korea and Latin America make sense with each other. Workers teach each other these strategies and many learn them by listening, watching, and practicing. Becoming an active participant in Koreatown workplaces involves awareness of various local communicative strategies that enable workers to arrive at new positions and forms of knowledge.

Table 1: Examples of Common Language Practices at Work, and Methods for Figuring out How to Communicate in Koreatown

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain, instruct, learn work tasks together• Give directions• Assign responsibilities• Write/read multilingual signs (menus, posters, package containers, barcodes, etc.)• Scold/reprimand workers• Praise and/or defend coworkers |
|--|

- Argue for pay raise or promotions
- Talk to customers
- Get a Job
- Show respect and employ honorifics
- Flirt romantically
- Play and tease
- Insult or make fun of others
- Sue
- Gossip
- Converse during meals
- Text
- Use smartphone language apps
- Talk to Anthropologists/ other outsiders

Table 2: How Workers Figure Out How to Communicate in Koreatown

- Listen and watch each other speak and move around all day
- Listen or watch Korean/Latin American music, movies, YouTube videos, etc.
- Associate sounds and signs with work tasks and objects
- Create written glossary lists
- Teach each other informally at work (in kitchens, in aisles, storage rooms, on the subway, when hanging out)
- Consult knowledge of customers or coworkers
- Use technology (smartphone translators, dictionaries)
- Become a frequent customer in your own workplace
- Date, marry, have children together
- Fake it and pretend to understand
- Seek another person to help/translate

Table 3: Summary-Overview of Methods for Studying Korean-Latino Interactions and Language Education at Work

- Methods for Studying Korean-Latino Interactions and Language Education at Work:
- Multi-sited participant observation (restaurants, markets)
 - Field notes and recordings of interactions
 - Interviews with Latinos and Koreans
 - Picture-word matching exercises
 - Glossary writing
 - Shopping with Latino and Korean workers

- Language classes with Korean tutors, and Latino group class
- Using internet/smartphone technology for translations
- Watching Korean pop culture (dramas, music)
- Using a Korean employment agency for undocumented immigrants
- Going out to eat and drinking with informants
- Using a translator for conversation analysis
- Being ignorant and letting workers explain things to me

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In the following literature review, I present three main points. First, I argue that ethnographic accounts of Latino immigrants in the U.S. have focused heavily on the disadvantaged position of Latinos. Their experiences in the U.S. are often seen through the lens antagonistic class and race relations, and deterministic paradigms of legality and illegality. This produces a representation of immigrants as isolated, alienated, and powerless. As a result, their experiences are reduced to a constant struggle against more powerful individuals and social institutions. This overshadows immigrants' accomplishments and contributions in the U.S. and the various ways Latinos frequently negotiate relations with other immigrants and non-Latino populations in their new home and work environments.

Additionally, it is believed that Latino immigrants overcome their essential position of powerlessness through different assimilation and integration experiences (Suarez-Orozco and Pérez 2009, Smith 2005, Portes and Guarnizo 2003). This includes paths of incorporation through schooling, legalization, or participation in community organizations serving Latino communities (Oliver 2010). Challenges to assimilation are often discussed using individual, cultural, and structural/societal explanations, such as oppositional identity (Ogbu 1992), culture of poverty (Lewis 1966), and/or racial/ethnic, geographic, class, and linguistic segregation (Lareau 2003). Yet many immigrants, such as those in my study, do not participate in these paths

of incorporation like going to school or getting work visas. They have come up with all kinds of ways of getting around the pressures and powers of social institutions in order to obtain what they came to the U.S. to find- namely, jobs and money.

Integration and incorporation assumes the legitimacy of a “core” center or ideal of participation in U.S. society, which is unattainable since peoples' positions are constantly shifting in relation to each other. There is no single center of participation, nor is there just one way of becoming a skilled, “masterful” worker. Individuals are always engaged in countless ongoing activities, obtaining varying degrees and kinds of competencies, given the resources, opportunities, and constraints they encounter daily.

Research on newcomers in the U.S. can benefit from a focus on their abilities to make choices and decisions that sometimes include rejection of incorporation in favor of other forms of participation. More studies should emphasize how newcomers such as immigrant workers educate each other and figure out alternate pathways to meet the problems *they* identify as important in their lives. This can be done without necessarily explaining their experiences within dominant ideological discussions about literacy skills, citizenship, or overarching structures of racism or classism.

Second, I argue that immigrant newcomers in the contemporary workforce are often described as lacking “basic” language and work skills. These assumptions are rooted in school-based notions of achievement and performance. Employees without a socially valued diploma or degree, especially “low achieving” and “limited English proficient” minorities, are considered inadequate and unfit members of the workforce. Contemporary research of workers and work sites has focused on worker productivity and workers’ potential contribution to the U.S. economy. I argue these competency measures reduce immigrant newcomers in the workforce to

a position of powerlessness. Workplace studies have failed to study the diversity of the U.S. labor market, in terms of types of workplaces, and kinds of workers, skills, and languages found in different work contexts. English is not the sole language of the workforce, and not all workers are American citizens.

My informants are all accustomed to workplaces where the majority of staff is foreign-born and “standard” English is hardly spoken. The Korean corner store is just as much a part of the American landscape as the multi-million dollar tech corporation. Small businesses run by immigrants and their children are not traditionally studied as legitimate spaces of social participation. These workplaces employ thousands of immigrant newcomers in cities across the U.S. each year, operating and often making profits without needing workers to be fluent English speakers or legal residents. Formal work and language training programs have become increasingly popular interventions for solving the “crisis” or threat of a deficient, “illiterate” workforce. However, a growing body of ethnographic research on workplaces has shown that workers traditionally labeled as unskilled and incompetent are always capable of devising their own creative methods of adjusting to workplace challenges. I believe it is necessary to continue focusing on the methods devised by workers themselves, to show how they are capable of arriving at new knowledge and negotiating their positions with the resources already available to them.

Third, I argue that focusing on the language practices of immigrant newcomers can help us understand the education they give each other. Many anthropologists, literacy researchers, and “community of practice” scholars have provided valuable insights on the communicative and educative practices of immigrants and language minorities. I present research that has opened rich ways to explore language, work, and education among Latino and Korean workers in

Koreatown, New York City. This research shows how language practices are socially situated, and notions of “competency” vary according to the local rules that emerge in different social contexts. Being a newcomer is only a temporary position, and difficulties that arise from “ignorance” are not deficiencies, but potential avenues for learning and collaboration. Finally, I present a case from my own research that illustrates how these themes correlate to the experiences of Latino and Korean immigrants in Koreatown.

A. Ethnographic Studies of Latino Immigrants in the U.S.: Some Contemporary Perspectives

Several anthropologists interested in Latinos in the United States have focused on undocumented Mexican immigrants in urban settings. The majority of my informants are undocumented Mexicans who live and work in New York City, thus I have found the following ethnographies to provide interesting contrasts to my own findings. I also wanted to demonstrate cases of what Latino newcomers do in their everyday lives after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally, and how they transition into new home and work environments. These cases show how Latino immigrants are not lost or always disadvantaged. They construct churches in Mexico using remittances, participate in religious “torch runs” across the U.S.-Mexico border, and communicate in English and Spanish with Italian-Americans in Chicago, among other examples.

Based on nearly 15 years of fieldwork with Mexicans from Ticuani, Robert Smith’s *Mexican New York* (2005) explores how migrants and their children remain linked to their home countries for several years after arriving to the U.S. Smith argues that Mexican immigrants experience either negative or positive “trajectories of assimilation” (2005:19) in the United States. From this transnational perspective, he demonstrates how Mexicans develop various

unique strategies to deal with the challenges of migration and supporting communities in Mexico. Many migrant communities throughout Mexico are heavily dependent on remittances for everyday needs and overall development, including infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and church repairs. As a result, the Ticuani in Smith's study formed a committee to address remittance issues and pool resources together to fund large projects. They were able to control the flow of remittances from New York City to their village for their own means, illustrating how migrants figure out creative ways of participating in both U.S. and Mexican society.

Gálvez's *Guadalupe in New York* (2010) describes a group of Mexican immigrants living in the Bronx, New York City, many of whom are undocumented. The Mexicans in her study are members of *comités guadalupanos* or religious associations such as the *Asociacion Tepeyac* in New York City. Instead of viewing the Mexican immigrant experience through "assimilation," she uses terms such as membership and citizenship to describe the ways individuals negotiate their belonging "and, by extension, their rights and responsibilities in a polity; a process that articulates personhood while also producing collectivities" (2010:20). Unlike Smith, she argues against the theory of assimilation which entails starting in one place and "aspiring to another in a unidirectional fashion" (2010:20). She implies that linguistic and religious practices should not be viewed as "static as luggage, carted along but not changing, and eventually abandoned" (ibid).

Gálvez explores the dynamic formation of Mexican collectivities in the Bronx, and highlights aspects of Mexican identity which are both transformed and transformative. She suggests migrant practices are advancing an alternative mode of citizenship and membership, not simply working within a predictable framework of participation dominated by U.S.-Mexican economic political relations. Her book demonstrates how *Asociación Tepeyac* and other "guadalupanos" (religious followers of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*) organize activities such as the

Guadalupe Torch Run, during which Mexicans carry a torch from the *Basilica de Guadalupe* in Mexico all the way to New York. Mexicans develop and transform “modalities of collective organization” (ibid) through their devotion to *La Virgen*, and their religious and political activism in New York City. She writes,

Undocumented Mexican immigrants are finding the will and vocabulary to demand rights, immigration reform, and respect...not only is their faith transformed into a platform for making claims to rights but they transform themselves, becoming emboldened in their struggle to provide for their families and build their lives in the city with dignity. [Gálvez 2010:3]

Both Smith and Gálvez also illustrate how Mexicans are not isolated from other “polities” or communities in the United States. According to Gálvez, many Catholic Churches in New York City are also “immigrant churches” that have historically welcomed immigrants from many parts of the world. Among these are Irish immigrants, some of whom operate church services attended by Mexicans in New York City. Gálvez notes how Irish clergy often relate to Mexicans due to their family histories of migration struggles. Similarly, Smith (2005) describes a *fictive coethnicity* shared by immigrants from diverse backgrounds. Fictive coethnicity, developed through collective labor participation, is defined by Smith as

identification of employer and employees as fellow immigrants (and sometimes also as Christians), making them different from those born in the United States. The demand for Mexican instead of Greek (or Korean, or other group) labor stems from Greeks' (or Koreans') very high rates of self-employment in New York and the lack of cheap immigrant labor from these countries. Greek immigrants want to own restaurants, not work for others. During the 1990's, Greek employer networks sought Mexican employees, and Mexican immigrants became aware of this need, with the result that nearly every Greek restaurant now employs Mexicans. My research shows that Greek restaurants have offered Mexican immigrants an internal labor market- the chance to start with few skills and learn and advance on the job and in many cases to enjoy the 'enclave effect,' by which one earns more than one's educational level would predict. Such results do not show up in the census per capita income data because the earnings of the upwardly mobile segments of the Mexican community are outweighed by miserable wages of new workers. [Smith 2005:27]

For Smith, fictive coethnicity is a product of local labor conditions that have led to the formation of an internal labor market where Mexican immigrants with “few skills” have the opportunity to advance and improve their social position by learning on the job with non-Mexican immigrants. Thus researchers have observed and analyzed a variety of social situations in which Mexicans in the U.S. come into frequent interact with non-Mexicans. Yet Greek, Korean, Mexican, and Irish immigrants are still described as belonging to separate “enclaves,” (ibid) particularly in urban settings such as New York City and Chicago. Rooted in the Chicago school’s community study approach (Park and Burgess 1925), urban environments are seen as ecological microcosms in which migrant labor “niches” and practices are shaped by economic factors.

This “enclave effect” creates a problematic view of immigrants as isolated from each other, and overshadows the various ways they frequently engage and work with people from different backgrounds. It can also produce the notion that immigrant “groups” are oppositional to “mainstream” social institutions (Lewis 1966). An emphasis on immigrants in enclaves creates a homogenous representation of immigrants as having essential or “shared experiences” - particular behaviors and dispositions thought to be reproduced within the group in a cyclical fashion, making it difficult for immigrants to overcome their circumstances. Little attention has been paid to the ways diverse immigrant workers describe their own unique strategies for participation in U.S. society and transcend these ethnic, linguistic, economic, and political boundaries in the process.

Nicholas De Genova’s *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and Illegality in Mexican Chicago* (2005) describes the experience of undocumented Mexicans in Chicago. De Genova’s research is based on his experiences as an instructor for English as a Second language and Basic

Mathematics courses in ten industrial workplaces, mainly metal fabricating factories. These “highly politicized” sites were places where “Mexicans explored questions about labor subordination and class formation” (2005:4). In addition to these classrooms, De Genova also explores Mexican’s participation in Chicago community organizations and other non-workplace settings that form the basis of “Mexican Chicago,” a

conjecture of social relations...a conjecture of the national and transnational constituted through the everyday social relations and meaningful practices of a racialized labor migration, capitalist enterprises, and the U.S. nation state. [De Genova 2005:7]

In other words, De Genova argues that the experiences of Mexicans in the U.S. are largely shaped through their labor subordination and the historical production of “illegality” according to dominant structures of citizenship and immigration law. Rather than viewing the Mexican experience as “assimilation,” De Genova views Mexicans as being incorporated “into a racial order, re-racialized as Mexicans” (2005:4). He highlights workplace conflicts and struggles between Mexicans and their employers in “over racialized urban spaces in Chicago” (2005:5) as examples of how U.S. notions of national identity and citizenship have created boundaries of inclusion and exclusion felt especially by low paid migrant workers.

De Genova explains how Chicago factory owners secured state funding for workplace ESL for factory workers, including many Mexican employees. He considers the implementation of workplace literacy training as a “modernizing pedagogical apparatus in the service of nationalist assimilation” (2005:5). He also argues that this workplace literacy training had a “colonizing, deauthenticating character, predicated in the politics of labor subordination and racialized relations of oppression” (2005:5). However, he notes that there were several Mexicans with 15-20 years of work experience in the factories, who never experienced the need to learn English to do their jobs. Instead of focusing on how many Mexicans managed to avoid the

colonizing effect of literacy lessons, De Genova interprets their language practices as discipline and oppression.

The positioning of immigrants within dominant class, citizenship, and racial systems is a common theme in many narratives about Mexicans in the U.S. While De Genova focuses on factory work, more recent work by anthropologist Gomberg-Muñoz focuses on restaurant work. This may be indicative of the changes that occurred in the U.S. labor market after factories and industrial jobs disappeared during the 1970's and 1980's, and immigrant workers in cities found service sector work. As factories shut down, restaurants became increasingly viable sources of employment. In *Labor and Legality* (2010) Gomberg-Muñoz explores the lives of a group of undocumented Mexican workers in Chicago's restaurant scene. In 2007, Gomberg-Muñoz began her job as a waitress in an Italian restaurant, Il Vino, where she met her group of Mexican informants and befriended a group of busboys.

Like Gálvez, Gomberg-Muñoz focuses on “collective agency” of Mexican networks in the U.S. She describes how they band together at the restaurant to cover for each other if someone is absent from work or messes up. The busboys and dishwashers create nicknames for each other and joke around a lot at work. Although she does not focus on the details of communication between Mexicans and their Latino employers, she notes that some Mexicans have learned English while working in the U.S. They occasionally hang out with the “white” waiters and waitresses at the restaurant (children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants), and marry White anthropologists (like the author herself, who is married to a Mexican male).

Smith and Gálvez discuss the interaction of Latinos and non-Latinos based on “fictive coethnicity” or shared histories of migration; in contrast, Gomberg-Muñoz claims that relations between White employers and Mexicans are antagonistic and reinforce racial stereotypes and

boundaries at the restaurant. Each of the ethnographies focuses on a different sphere of Mexican experience in the U.S. Smith explores households and community events in both Brooklyn and Ticuani; Gálvez looks at religious practices based in the Bronx and other parts of New York City; De Genova focused on factory workers, and Gomberg-Muñoz gives a glimpse of restaurant life. The task of representing any group of Latin American immigrants in the U.S. is a very complex and difficult one. In order to talk about Mexicans it is also impossible to discount the unfair and unequal practices experienced by Mexicans in the U.S. such as below minimum wage pay, no health coverage, extremely long work hours and no vacation time, among others that migrant laborers may experience. Anthropologists and others have long struggled with trying to represent marginalized individuals. In the U.S., for example, Checker (2005) discusses how African Americans have historically been accused of being helpless due to a history of slavery which has left them without ambition or hope of ever being able to achieve success in society. Scholars have argued that poor African Americans are “disorganized and resigned” among other pathological behaviors supposedly reproduced from generation to generation, leaving them “unable to break cycles of poverty” (Checker 2005:26).

In the 1960's, American anthropologist Oscar Lewis argued that African Americans and Latinos were caught in a “culture of poverty,” having been “deprived of economic resources for so long meant that poverty had become a way of life for many people” (2005:26). Anthropologists have reacted against these assertions by arguing that “poor people of color engage in adaptive and creative solutions to their conditions” (2005:27). While this has served to “debunk many ideas about poor people’s behavior” (ibid) they may also reinforce the idea that poor people of color live in isolated enclaves.

B. Language and Work Competency of Immigrants and Language Minorities

Research on the skills, or perceived lack of skills, of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. workforce has centered on school-based notions of literacy and literacy attainment. In a recent article by the U.S. Department of Labor, entitled “Building Career Ladders for the Working Poor through Literacy Training,” (Bruno et al. 2010) the “working poor” (including Latinos) in the U.S. are described as having low levels of “quantitative literacy.” According to the authors, this leads to significant “literacy gaps [that] are sufficient to prevent the average working poor from functioning adequately in most (76 percent) occupations that could raise their incomes...” (2010:6).

The article suggests the implementation of workplace literacy training programs to help the working poor become functional and climb the ladder out of poverty. This articulates a misleading correlation between language skills and intelligence or ability to function as a competent member of a particular workplace or even society. This view also marginalizes workplaces where English is neither the principal or commonly used language, ignoring the tremendous linguistic diversity found in U.S. labor market.

Goldberg and Corson (2001) explore the “social construction of language skills” (2001:1) in Ontario workplaces where immigrants, refugees, and aboriginal Canadians are employed. The authors argue that the concept of skill is a social construction, and they draw on Dunk’s (1996) notion that “the assessment of the worth of an individual’s or group’s labor power is tied to the overall valuation of that individual or group” (Goldberg and Carson 2001:5). Additionally the authors argue that minority languages learned informally are “not valued as a skill that yields returns in the market in the same way the official languages or formally learned languages do”

(2001:1). They found that minority languages learned “informally” are viewed inferior because “‘standard’ grammar structures are less likely to be mastered” (2001:8).

Ontario workers who learned languages informally through their workplaces were considered “talented” as opposed to “skilled” (2001:9). By conceiving of “minority language skills in this way, the skill need not be valued or rewarded in the labour market the same way as minority language skills that are learned formally, requiring ‘effort’ and ‘challenge’ to learn” (ibid). This study highlights how informal workplace language education among immigrants and minorities tends to be devalued by employers as an improper way of learning language. The actual work involved in this “informal” process is usually ignored or taken for granted because it is not considered “real” learning, and the languages involved in the process are not considered “good” languages.

Katz (2000) writes about workplace language education and the “intercultural construction of ideologies of competence” (2000:1) among immigrants in a California manufacturing plant. She argues that employers in the U.S. are too quick to blame their immigrant workers for workplace mishaps, because they are seen as lacking “workforce preparedness” due to “skills deficits” (2000:145). She argues that behind these “deficit-oriented views of workers” are “overly simplistic, skills-based definitions of language and literacy, and conjectures about workers who are portrayed as under-educated, and as lacking appropriate linguistic tools and other basic workplace knowledge” (146). Katz warns against the dangers of viewing language as a skill isolated from social activity. Workers languages are not separate from their workplace participation. Gee et al. (1996) argue that workplace language training programs in the United States have become increasingly concerned with “retooling workers”

(Katz 2000:146) and “transforming employees whose skills and knowledge, including language and demeanour, are perceived as being in need of repair” (ibid).

Language training programs attempt to shape how employees communicate to encourage collaboration and teamwork, while ignoring the ways employees are already communicating and teaching each other new languages. According to Hull (1997) reading and writing skills are often considered “generic skills” that once mastered, “can and will be used in any context for any purpose” (1997:17). The language demands of workplace environments are tied to the local context, including participants involved and responsibilities required of workers. In line with Dunk (1996), Hull argues that this simplistic view of skills demonstrates that “skills are always defined with reference to some socially defined version of what constitutes competence” (1997:18). Treating language as an autonomous and discrete skill “fails to account for the complexity of language” (Katz 2000:149). Katz believes workers’ competence is increasingly measured according to their sociolinguistic behavior. In her ethnography of a cable manufacturing company Katz found that simplistic notions of language resulted in dismissal or penalization of workers’ language practices.

In line with these broad assumptions about language skills and worker competence, the methods workers devise for learning new languages with each other are not considered relevant, valuable, systematic, or transferable across contexts. [Katz 2005: 149]

Li (2000) argues that “the workplace is an important but little studied context where novices to a culture become socialized into new discourse systems and environments” (2000:62). In new working environments, novices may experience “double socialization,” meaning they are “novices in the new working environment-which may be in a different field from their prior training and experience” and they may also be “novices in the new language and culture” (2000:62) of the workplace. Li draws on Ochs & Schieffelin’s (1986) notion of language

socialization to describe the activities of Chinese immigrant women in an “inner-city immigrant job-training program operated by the Chinese American Association” (Li 2000:62). She documents how these women develop communicative competence in English using strategies outside the classroom. The immigrants in Li’s study developed “communication style by learning...the 'American Way' of conducting discourse in the workplace” and in doing so, workers learned to express their “pragmatic intentions more directly and effectively” (2000:65). Immigrant workers accomplished this through “sociocultural exposure and participation in social interactions and with the assistance of experts or more competent peers” (2000:63).

Li demonstrates how Chinese women observed the English language practices of other women from America, Poland, and other countries, to discover effective techniques for communicating with English-speaking employers. They exchanged stories about English in and out of classrooms and shared techniques for communicating that were effective for interacting with superiors. What was equally as important as learning English words and phrases, was that they taught each other English in new and diverse social contexts. Her work demonstrates that immigrants are capable of identifying their language needs as well as important and necessary linguistic knowledge, according to identifiable local language conventions. It also shows how immigrants educate each other to meet those needs using a variety of resources and strategies already at their disposal.

Interestingly, workers can also resist language instruction by choosing to speak their native languages when communicating with each other. Goldstein's (1997) study of female Portuguese factory workers in Toronto demonstrates how Portuguese assembly-line workers spoke in Portuguese with each other to resist the rigid demands of formal English instruction required by the company. Her work also shows the relationship between communication

practices and the actual workplace space. The organization of work space influences language interaction. Being on an assembly line or in a small kitchen space with other workers increases chances of language exchange and discussions about the language environment itself. Engaging in tasks that require collaboration in shared spaces opens opportunities for new language practices to emerge.

Job training programs for newcomers tend to adopt teaching strategies commonly found in schools that try to produce outcomes in terms of increased work skills, employee advancement, and business profit. These strategies include formal instructors and structured learning goals, curricula, and learning assessments. This school-based approach is used for immigrant newcomers, despite the fact many do not have extensive experience in schools. My informants all learned the knowledge and skills needed to make a living by working with friends and family outside of classrooms (on the farm, in the mechanic shop, in the kitchen). Still, workplace training programs tend to be modeled after modes of instruction offered by schools.

Additionally, evaluations of workers are not restricted to text-based reading and writing skills or speaking competency. Workers are also evaluated on their “numeracy and technologised literacies” at the workplace. In their case study of boat-building apprentices in Australia, Zevenbergen and Zevenbergen (2009) argue that “there is a growing concern with regard to the literacy and numeracy levels of young people entering the workplace” (2009:183). Employers lobbying governments argue that young people are “ill-prepared” for the “literacy and numeracy demands of contemporary work” (ibid).

Zevenbergen and Zevenbergen (2009) argue that math is often considered a skill learned in school that is isolated from practice, process, and environment. Thus, a common approach to evaluating workers’ numeracy competence is to uncover and locate how “school mathematics” is

put into practice. As a result, this search for school-based forms of “knowing and doing” mathematics “fails to recognize and validate the processes employed by workers as they undertake their tasks and how they go about solving problems” (2009:184). In other words, searching for school mathematics in workers’ activities overshadows how workers actually make calculations and solve numerical challenges. Boat builder apprentices differed in their uses of “formal” units of measure, in their estimation techniques, and in the choice of tools used to make necessary calculations. To successfully build a boat and be recognized as effective boat builders, apprentices used versions of school math, but “not those found in text book examples” (2007:204).

They demonstrated the ability to communicate about numbers and “engage in effective problem solving,” using “little of the mathematics encountered in school other than arithmetic” (2007:202). Researchers found that within the workplace, “there are very different ways of working from that of schools” that the “complexity of workplace practice has not been recognized” (2007:204). The authors emphasize the need to look at work activities as complex processes where new forms of practice and participation emerge out of the specific conditions of the work environment. So-called “informal” tactics and skills should be taken more seriously as researchers continue to learn about the “education people give each other” (2007:204).

The dichotomy between “informal” and “formal” learning is still maintained in much education research, lending more authority and validity to specific kinds of educational practices and institutions over others. Cremin (1977) discussed this problematic distinction in Dewey’s work (1916), arguing that scholars of education who base their ideas of learning on this dichotomy are more likely to interpret education as synonymous with schooling. Cremin noted

that although there are multiple individuals and institutions that educate, they are not usually considered educational or capable of educating.

Yet Cremin returns to one of Dewey's central concepts- that experience itself is pedagogical. He argues that education is "ordinary in the best sense of the term" (McDermott and Raley 2007). Various researchers who study educational spaces and practices outside of schools have stated and re-stated this idea, arguing that "everyday activities can at any moment present an opportunity for learning" (Hamilton 2006:125). Hamilton points out the difficulties with locating and defining the parameters of what constitutes informal learning, which has traditionally been defined "by what it is not-that is, an absence of formal learning" (2006:126). The quest to locate informal learning is entangled with the problems of studying learning that is "embedded" in the "everyday flow" of activities (2006:127).

Lee and Roth (2003) explain that the everyday "work involved in getting the job done" is often hidden and "rendered invisible" (2003:154) in the eyes of the uninformed observer, and requiring "special efforts to bring it to the surface" (2003:154). Many researchers have neglected everyday work as merely routine or just representations of labor exploitation. Other anthropologists concerned with work have developed a distinct vocabulary to talk about informal learning. For example, Kusterer (1978) focuses on the work performed by truck drivers, welders, meat cutters and warehouse workers, among others. He argues that in order to do their jobs successfully, all workers must acquire a stock of what he calls *basic working knowledge* as well as *supplementary working knowledge*. These are the informal practices all workers develop through their creative participation with people and tools to problem solve, deal with unpredictable variables, and avoid disruptions at the workplace.

Kleifgen (2013) explores the communicative practices of a circuit manufacturing plant and the “informal opportunities employees have for learning 'on the job' and moving along a career path in the company” (2013:12). Kleifgen argues that there is little known about the details of everyday work in small businesses, even though over “80 percent of all jobs in the U.S. are in companies that employ fewer than 150 people” (2013:17). Additionally, Kleifgen asserts that workplace researchers often assume that “working immigrants and language minorities lack strong communication and literacy skills” and therefore “studies focus almost exclusively on learning English as the path to improved work performance” (2013:97). Her analysis of workplace learning in “Genesis” (a circuit board manufacturing plant) draws on the theory of Russian linguist and Bakhtin Circle member, Valentin Voloshinov, who argued that “language is organized dialogically, at the level of the utterance where participants' contributions shape others' responses” (2013:7). For Voloshinov, ideology and power relations exist at the level of the utterance, which is never monologic, but comprised of multiple, constantly evolving voices. Kleifgen's unique study illuminates how team members at the manufacturing plant drew “on multiple linguistic and interactional resources,” including workplace technology, to “display their social relationships within the constraints of problem solving activities at work” (2013:97). Specifically, the linguistic resources used by Vietnamese-speaking workers included “person-reference systems, honorific alternants, and politeness terms” (ibid) and the “efficient use of their home language during much of the interaction” which incorporated English and “assembly terminology” (2013:59).

Much like Latino and Korean immigrants in Koreatown workplaces, multilingual employees at Genesis experienced a need to “create social alignments” with each other as they made decisions in the course of their talk. Additionally, Kleifgen's research demonstrates the

important ties between communicative practices and the distribution of knowledge that arises as teams engage in “learning-in-interaction” (2013:134) at work. Although conflict necessarily arises whenever individuals from different backgrounds come together for solving problems and accomplishing tasks together, “creative shifts in power-relations and social identification” (2013:151) occur as they attain “new knowledge and skills” (2013:150) despite differences in status and challenging work situations. She recommends that future researchers of workplace settings should focus on the global convergence of individuals who bring diverse ways of acting, speaking and knowing into workplaces, particularly through “more on-the ground ethnographic observations of workers” (2013:167) as they learn at work. This kind of research has the potential to reveal the rich semiotic resources and “mediating tools” put into practice by workers in contemporary workplace “sites of engagement” (2013:151).

Blommaert (2013) explores “superdiversity” and “colorful blends of locality and globality that emblematically characterize contemporary cosmopolitan societies (2013:111). For example, he analyzes multilingual and multimodal menus in a tavern called “Bellefleur” in the Statiestraat of Antwerp in Belgium. In this tavern, Indian immigrants, elderly Belgians, and younger, recently migrated middle class people converge in a “polycentric space and cooperate there in different kinds of joint activities” (2013:110). The “newcomers” - Indian restaurant owners- have learned to attract a steady clientele base at the tavern by adding an “Indian accent” to the “curious combinations” on the menu, which includes classic Antwerp dishes alongside Indian cuisine offerings-“beef stew in trappist beer next to mutton kottu rotty” (2013:111).

Blommaert explains that coherence can be found in patterned interaction and interdependence between different parts of a complex semiotic or “sociolinguistic system” (2013:9-10). These systems are not unified wholes; they are characterized by mobility and

polycentricity, which involves different *scale levels* or fragments. The observable elements of complex sociolinguistic systems have taken form over time and continue to change- they “are the outcome of historical processes of becoming” (2013:11). In Belgium, for example, immigrant workers and local business owners constantly interact and transform their neighborhoods while engaging in commerce activities together. As diverse populations figure out ways to “effectively communicate”(2013:81), they contribute to the formation of new “specialized professions,” “class stratum” and repertoires of “economic activity” that offer diverse populations opportunities to acquire new knowledge, qualifications, access to prestige, and new layers of “ethnic enterprise [in] service industries” (2013:73). He states the importance of taking into account “mundane objects” like menus, store signs, and “plastic shopping bags” which are “not usually considered to be reading material” but which can point to “ways in which communities are organized and, indirectly, in the history of presence they have in the neighborhood; and they inform us about processes of emergence and the development of such communities” (2013:66). Blommaert argues that ethnographic research should continue to highlight the “complex and multifilar features and their various different origins that are contained in synchronized moments of understanding,” (2013:13) or acts of “ordered and localized communication” in superdiverse spaces of interaction.

C. Communities of Practice, New Literacy Studies, and Anthropological Accounts of Language Education Outside Schools

Barton and Tusting (2005) use a *critical social linguistics* approach to argue that language plays a central role in the articulation of community of practice activities. In the

context of the workplace, language is a principal means by which people “share information, solve problems together, control and direct people, negotiate their positions with powerful supervisors, and reshape workplace practices in their own interests within communities of practice” (Barton and Tusting 2005:41). A community of practice is defined as a set of relations among “persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991:98). This perspective on human interactions values the locally-specific and “relational character of knowledge, and learning, the negotiated character of meaning, and the concerned (engaged, dilemma-driven) nature of learning activity for the people involved...there is no activity that is not situated” (1991:33).

Lave sees learning as a process built and generated collectively through participation in communities of practice. Influenced by a Marxist historical approach, Lave explores the complex, shifting, and diverse relationships created within the concrete, material world while also attending to issues of access to resources, and unequal power relations. Lave describes these differences in community membership as “legitimate peripheral participation,” a descriptor of “engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent” (1991:35).

Not all workers participate in the same ways or from the same “peripheral positions” – nor is there one single “core” of mastery or participation. For example, newcomers to Koreatown communities of practice may be more peripheral participants than experienced staff as they figure out how to carry out various work responsibilities and the rules of the workplace. Underlying conflicts are likely to emerge as participants work out these differences in position, through the “renewed construction of resolutions” (1991:35). Yet conflicts that arise from peripheral participation are also opportunities for arriving at new knowledge and forms of engagement. Lave and Wenger argue

The partial participation of newcomers is by no means ‘disconnected’ from the practice of interest. Furthermore, it is also a dynamic concept. In this sense, peripherality, when it is enabled, suggests an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement” [Lave and Wenger 1991:37]

Thus legitimate peripheral participation helps us see how individuals gain access to sources of understanding, and the ways social order is constructed and negotiated in locally observable actions. In Koreatown workplaces, for example, immigrants arrive at new kinds of knowledge while developing changing forms membership in communities of practice. As Latino workers master cooking Korean food or pronouncing Korean words, they become more involved in overlapping communities of practice (kitchen staff, waiters, customers, etc.) that center and rely on their successful labor participation.

Lave’s (2011, 1991) study of apprenticeship in Liberia demonstrates how legitimate peripheral participation occurs among Vai and Gola tailors. Lave showed how apprentices became masterful tailors as they engaged in common, structured pattern of learning experiences without being taught, examined, or reduced to mechanical copiers of every day tailoring tasks. Her analysis of learning through apprenticeship highlights the situated nature of learning and the complex, interrelated, and differentiated ways individuals becoming full cultural-historical participant in the world.

Individuals experience growing involvement in communities of practice particularly through increased communication with other community of practice participants. However, accounts of how participants actually communicate are often absent from community of practice studies. Analysis of language in communities of practice can enable a deeper understanding of how different forms of language use emerge in socially situated contexts where novices and

experts learn how to act and adapt in culturally appropriate ways in the workplace. Language analysis can also provide insight on how workers manage the “structural constraints” and “limitations imposed on them by social structures” (Buscholtz 1999:209) to make purposeful choices and improve their work conditions and overall standards of living.

Several scholars have argued for a more situated approach to the study of language interaction, literacy, and language education. The ways individuals are exposed to different language practices that vary across social contexts has been referred to as language socialization. Language socialization is meant as the process by which novices acquire the “knowledge, orientations, and practices that enable him or her to participate effectively in the social life of a particular community” (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002:339). Language is the primary medium through which cultural knowledge is “communicated and instantiated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed.” Language does not happen separately from real-life social interaction; it is a form of social practice. The field of New Literacy Studies (Baynham et al 2008) encompasses a group of scholars who research literacy from the perspective that

literacy is not only embedded in the flow of everyday activities, but is configured by the institutional life of organizations that shape such activities, the ideologies and social relations that frame them. [Hamilton 2006:6]

New Literacy Scholars have developed a range of approaches to the study of literacy over the past thirty years. According to Baynham (2004), their theories have been informed by “situated and informal learning,” and posit a “variety of relationships between the everyday and ‘schooled’ learning” (Hamilton 2006:4). The main problem New Literacy Scholars have set out to address is how informal learning is embedded in everyday practices that incorporate different language and communicative resources.

Several studies have demonstrated how workers make use of language resources to solve problems together and negotiate their social positions at work. Orr's (1996) ethnography of field service technicians describes how workers use language to accomplish tasks such as repairing photocopiers. He argues that talk at the workplace is instrumental in the success of workers. Kleifgen (2013, 2001) uses conversation analysis to examine social positioning between Vietnamese workers in a circuit board manufacturing plant. Her analysis of talk illustrates how interlocutors attempt to achieve "symmetrical positioning in high pressure moments of problem solving" through the use or omission of Vietnamese directives and vocatives.

Herrick (2005) explores a Chicago plastics manufacturing company, where English, Spanish and Romanian is spoken. Herrick contends that workers use a variety of strategies to achieve mutual understanding across linguistic barriers. To communicate with workers who may not understand their language, the production planning team practices words together through repetition, hand and facial expressions, and available props. When a communicative rupture is perceived, Herrick demonstrates how team members intervene to enable communicative goals to be reached. (2005:370)

Blommaert (2010) discusses the *multilingual repertoires* that have emerged in "globalized neighborhoods" where diverse immigrants interact in diverse urban establishments. He argues that some of these repertoires may appear "fragmented" or "truncated" (2010:12) because they combine "highly specific 'bits'" (ibid) of language and literacy varieties that may not be easily transferred to contexts beyond the workplace. These repertoires are often considered inferior, invalid codes because they deviate from idealized standards of language use. However, Blommaert suggests that these multilingual repertoires or language resources do achieve local validity, and researchers should focus on how speakers acquire these language

competencies. Incorporating Hymes (1974, 1996) “ethnography of speaking” approach into a “sociolinguistics of globalization,” Blommaert connects global migration patterns to local situations in which migrants are confronted with communicative requirements that “stretch their repertoires and complex patterns of shifting and mixing occur” (Blommaert 2010:12) Language competencies are “co-occurring” (ibid) and develop through collaboration. In Koreatown, Latinos and Koreans cooperate in the linguistic work required to feel understood and respected.

Tomas Kalmar’s *Illegal Alphabets and Adult Biliteracy: Latino Migrants Crossing the Linguistic Border* (2001) presents an important and innovative contribution to the field of New Literacy Studies. Kalmar demonstrates how adult Mexican immigrant farm workers in Cobden, Illinois teach each other how to speak English, using their knowledge of Spanish. His work focuses on how these Latinos created their own ways of developing linguistic competence using the resources at their disposal. Kalmar’s analysis of this language education involves three components, the game, discourse, and scene of writing. Immigrants play a “game” in which they match Spanish sounds to English words. They play with the Roman alphabet to establish consistent relationships between sound and letters, which allows them to pronounce English words more easily. Discourse is a way of talking about the game, and what counts as a valid move or the best possible move. Mexican immigrants collaborate to decide on what game strategies are the most effective for making sense of English. Kalmar discusses the “scene of writing” (2001:61) developed by workers as they engage in the language game and discourse. This scene includes the production and dissemination of Cobden glossaries, lists of English words that are written using Spanish sounds. These glossaries represent an ‘institutional no man’s land between two legal systems, two economies, two sovereign states, two languages, and between two institutionalized forms of alphabetic literacy” (2001:2).

He gives examples like “dolodasnt protect as” (the law doesn’t protect us) or “juellulib” (where do you live) to show the ways workers put together sounds and played with alphabet to communicate and participate in activities with local “Anglos” (2001:20). This act of organizing to create a new alphabet and way of communicating is integrally connected to their participation as immigrant laborers in a foreign language environment of Cobden, Illinois. Kalmar illustrates that literacy is not just a mental possession of individuals; it is a social relationship among people. Gee (2001) argues that literacy is “primarily and fundamentally out in the social, historical, and political world” (Kalmar 2001:iv). Kalmar shows field workers “doing linguistics as part and parcel of their very survival, their politics, and their transformation of society, and the historical workings of the field of professional linguistics constructing and construing languages and cultures, language variation and language universals on the other hand” (2001:v). Language and culture are not “stable” “objective” phenomena, but always temporal, emergent, and disputed.

Kalmar’s farm workers can be seen as a community of practice in Illinois, who used education to adapt to challenging environments and transform their social positions. Such is also the case in Grey Gundaker’s essay “Hidden Education among African Americans during Slavery” (2007) which discusses how slaves in the United States were able to learn English, despite being denied the right to read, write, and engage in other forms of expression. Gundaker explains that while plantation slavery was a total institution with “massive hegemonic structures operating at all levels,” (2007:1592) enslavers took an “out of sight out of mind” (2007:1593) approach toward activities of the enslaved. In some places where absentee plantation ownership was practiced, a certain degree of literacy was regarded as advantageous for key enslaved personnel to keep accounts, order supplies, and communicate by letter with the property owner.

Planters also ‘educated’ the enslaved with an edited selection of bible passages garnered to support capture and involuntary servitude.

Yet these ideas were often rejected by those who had knowledge of the scripture. The “hiddenness” of African American education from whites was not absolute. Gundaker describes how much of the care of white children was left to black caretakers who would carefully gather snippets of schooled knowledge. Gundaker shows how “education proliferated underneath and with the stuff of everyday life;” (2007:1594) the enslaved and the “free blacks in the north and south constituted a community of practice dedicated not merely to exploiting loopholes, but more importantly to furthering transformation personally, locally, and on a massive social scale” (ibid). According to Gundaker, “educational activities during slavery were thus more diverse, flexible, and contingent than what the rubric ‘schooling’ could ever encompass, even more so because regimes of slavery varied across the diaspora and within north America” (2007:1594).

Gundaker explores invisible or seemingly extraneous aspects of schooling and efforts to orchestrate school-like activities, hidden and not so hidden literacy acquisition, and expressive practices with educational dimensions for participants that remained largely invisible to outsiders. African Americans made education fit their circumstances. School children would sometimes barter bits of schooled education for apples, oranges, or marbles. When playing at school, white children usually assumed the role of the teacher, passing along basic skills. From that point on African American learners proceeded rapidly on their own. The enslaved have

contributed a complex theory of education and left a legacy of valuable educative skills that schools today often undervalue; such as knowing how to say more than one thing at a time; scanning for opportunity, grasping material and participatory complexity, recruiting networks and distributing information, and sorting truth from lies. [Gundaker 2007:1609]

Humans in difficult positions often establish alternative avenues for educating themselves and each other about the knowledge they need to survive and succeed. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) Jacques Rancière describes how Jacotot, a French teacher, assigned his students the task of learning the French text contained in *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1765), a French novel by Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, with the help of a Flemish translation of the same book. Even though Jacotot had not explained anything about French spelling or grammar, his students were still able to read the text and produce French “sentences whose spelling and grammar became more and more exact as they progressed through the book” (Rancière 1991:3-4). His students figured out how to read, write, and speak French without the “aid of explication” (1991:9) from a master explicator.

Similarly, in Koreatown, immigrants learn languages together without formally appointed language teachers to provide lessons in grammar or spelling. For example, Latino workers learned to read Korean by “observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done” (1991:10). In the following example, I describe an example of how this process takes place in a Korean supermarket of New York City. Pablo, an undocumented worker from Guatemala who never attended school, develops his own “barcode strategy” to deal with difficulties involved in working with dozens of Korean products at his workplace. Although he might be described as an unskilled worker who lacks basic language competencies, the following vignette illustrates how individuals develop alternative solutions to accomplish their goals and gain respect, status, and new forms of knowledge along the way.

C. Using Barcodes to Decipher Korean at the Supermarket: Pablo’s Strategy

One of Juan's Latino coworkers is Pablo, a 23 year old Guatemalan immigrant who migrated to the United States in 2005. Pablo never attended school in Guatemala and cannot read or write in his native indigenous language, Kaqchikel. He was only recently taught how to read and write some Spanish, his second language, by a group of Latino immigrants in Queens who share the same apartment with him. He describes his knowledge of English as very limited and says he doesn't understand much Korean either, although he is slowly learning to recognize particular words, phrases, and gestures used by his coworkers at the supermarket. Every morning, Pablo and a few coworkers retrieve deliveries from a truck parked outside the supermarket. The heavy boxes containing produce and pre-packaged foods are brought into the store to be opened, sorted out, and taken to various locations in the supermarket. These products, many of which are imported from Korea, are taken to the basement for storage or to their appropriate aisles to be stocked on shelves.

In his designated supermarket aisle, Pablo is in charge of organizing, stocking, keeping inventory, and placing additional orders of these products when supplies run low, using the supermarket's computerized inventory system. The products in Pablo's aisle are rarely labeled in English. Prepackaged foods such as sauces and noodles are contained in wrappers covered with Korean (and sometimes Japanese) text and colorful images. Juan explains that Latino workers consider Pablo's aisle to be the most notoriously complicated aisle in the supermarket. Other sections of the store contain products like vegetables, fish, and meat that don't require handling multitudes of packages with confusing signs and symbols in unfamiliar alphabets. In fact, Latinos have actively avoided Pablo's aisle because they don't want to deal with the extra hassles it entails.

When he was first assigned this aisle by his Korean bosses, Pablo quickly realized he was confronting a serious challenge that had to be solved quickly and efficiently to avoid disruptions in the supermarket work flow. With limited Spanish, and unable to speak Korean or English when he started working at the store, he had difficulty explaining his confusion to his Korean employers. Many Latino coworkers wanted little to do with his aisle, and offered no helpful advice on how to keep track of everything. Pablo received no formal work training in how to deal with these foreign objects. As a newcomer positioned in the periphery of his supermarket communities of practice, he could not afford to give up or complain. He had come too far to quit, and whole reason he was there was to make money to send back home to his family.

So, without any training from coworkers or bosses, Pablo came up with his own solution. He realized every product package has a barcode accompanied by a series of 13 numbers known as a Uniform Product Code (UPC). This series of numbers is used at the cash register during check out and when placing product orders through the store inventory system. All products and their numbers are logged in a binder by product type and corresponding product prices. Barcode printers in the store are programmed according to these UPC numbers, and are used to print price labels for items that are packaged manually by workers, such as produce and meats.

Pablo realized that in order to create a system necessary for completing his job he needed to distinguish inventory by product number instead of product name. He has memorized approximately 100 different permutations of barcode numbers for dozens of imported products. He has also taught his system to Latino newcomers that are assigned to his aisle. Gradually, Pablo has also learned to pronounce some of these products by listening to Koreans speak at the cash register. Using this barcode system, Pablo gets his work done while gaining the respect of

his bosses and coworkers. Juan, who eventually noticed Pablo's system and was amazed by his ingenuity, describes a conversation with Pablo at work:

Juan: El hablo con migo, me dijo que no tiene papa...platica para no sentirse tan solo...le pregunte y dijo que no tenía papa, ni mama, ni estudio, sabe su nombre, había aprendido escribir aquí. Y leía un poco y escribía un poco. Y todavía sigue ahí, ahora trabaja en una sección de sauce. Y es completamente en Coreano. Y el solamente dice, es con los códigos de barra...los productos traen un código, y no sabe exactamente que es, pero sabe esto. Sabe que hace falta, con el número nada más. Casi nadie aguanta en esa sección. Yo le he preguntado, como le haces? "Solo el código de barra."

Juan: he spoke with me, he told me that he had lost his father...[we made] conversation so as to not feel so alone...I asked him [about his life] and he said he didn't have a father, or mother, hadn't gone to school, but he knew his name, he had learned to write here [in the United States]. And he could read and write a little bit. And he is still there [at the supermarket], now he works in the "sauce" section. And [the section] is completely in Korean. And he just tells me, it's all about the barcodes...the products come with a code, and while he doesn't know exactly what the products are, he knows the barcodes. He knows what products he needs, just by using barcodes [while keeping track of inventory]. No one can endure that section. I've asked him, how do you do it? "Just with the barcodes."

Pablo explains his barcode system at the supermarket:

Pablo: Where I [work] now, everything is in Korean and Japanese. But all I know is the barcodes. I know some of the product names in their Korean dialect, but most of them- the products, the boxes, the companies where they are shipped from, I identify with barcodes. The barcodes were the solution I came up with. Because, by name, I couldn't do it. So the only way to was to go by the codes."

Pablo's interaction with barcodes and barcode printers provides an interesting example of a strategy adopted by a Latino immigrant to overcome a linguistic barrier he encountered at his workplace. The particular task he was assigned involved interacting with completely unfamiliar signs, so he adapted to his environment in order to fulfill the work responsibilities he was given. Pablo's work environment is a multilingual one where variations of Korean, Spanish, and English dominate. Yet, because workers interact with a plethora of material objects during work activities, they are sometimes required to "read" the signs and texts they handle throughout the day. Barcode numbers tied to products and the computerized inventory system gave Pablo a way

to “read” these signs and facilitate communication with other workers who rely on Pablo to his job. This is a kind of communication strategy that involves multimodal objects and workplace technologies used to achieve local order and intelligibility. These barcode symbologies and store technologies are strategies used by workers accomplish complex acts and generate ongoing series of interactions. Instead of viewing Pablo as an incompetent language user lacking basic literacy skills, Pablo’s coworkers and employers describe Pablo as a competent worker who has created a unique system for dealing with the challenges of his environment. Thus, he has become a fuller participant in his workplace communities of practice, by “reading” Korean characters/words (product names) through the use of numbers and technologies.

This merging of technology and language can be described as “newly acquired technolinguistic skills” arising from the “intersection between mobile people and mobile texts” (Jacquemet 2005:261). Latinos migrate to Koreatown in search of work, and sauce and noodle products travel from Korea to Koreatown supermarkets where they are picked up and handled by these Latino workers. The Universal Product Code is a standardized number code that can be used by anyone who is unfamiliar with the text on the imported product packages. These are mobile, transferable communicative resources that workers can use, regardless of their Korean, English, Spanish, or other language repertoires.

The products handled by immigrants, such as the Ramen package pictured above, can be considered “multimodal ensembles” (Kress 2003) – materials that combine a variety of modes (images, numbers, colors, texts) that provide their handlers with multiple “affordances” or resources. These affordances offer openings for “choosing how to read” (2003:56) the object being handled. Reading can occur “across” multiple modes, such as text and numbers, “allowing for the transformative action of the reader in any reading” (2003:157). Readers like Pablo

perform a “modal scanning” of materials like the ramen package “page,” providing a strategy for reading the material in new ways. In this modal scanning, readers identify

chunks, elements, units of meaning, of differing function, structurally in their relation to each other and in their meaning-relation. The first scanning might give sufficient sense to the experienced ‘reader’ of such a page for her or him to proceed with a reading ‘below’ the level of these elements. ‘Experience’ here would indicate both prior encounter of such pages or texts, and membership of the relevant social/textual community, that is, someone who both understands what is at issue socially and culturally, and understands usual modal forms of realization of these issues. [Kress 2003:159]

This scanning enables readers to choose different “reading paths” and construct “profoundly differing readings” depending on the experience of the reader, his or her familiarity with the multimodal ensembles, and knowledge of the local rules and norms of interaction. The correct or appropriate reading path may not be immediately obvious to newcomers, depending on the social context and situated nature of the reading activity. For example, Pablo was initially unfamiliar with the multimodal ensembles presented by Korean products in the supermarket—through multiple modal “scannings” he developed his own reading path over time to make sense of the products for which he was responsible.

Kress also distinguishes between reading *as interpretation* and reading *as design*. The former “tends to go with the established reading path of the traditional written text, the latter with the to-be-constructed reading path of the image, or the to-be constructed reading path of the multimodally constructed text” (2003:50). As workers with various experiences and language resources or “funds of knowledge” gather around new tasks and new materials, they will continue to develop different reading paths that have yet to be constructed, and which go beyond established or conventional readings. For example, other possible “designs,” given the affordances of Korean noodle and sauce packages, might center on colors, or images located on the products, rather than barcodes. Ultimately, the “reading paths” chosen by workers enables

them to participate in the workplace in new and more involved ways. These activities also demonstrate that Latino immigrants and others who may be considered “illiterate” or incompetent language users are actually not “lost” but actively creating new solutions and problem solving strategies to deal with everyday problems.

Chapter 4: Latino Immigrants' Transitions into Koreatown

Few Latino immigrants I encountered in Koreatown had a clear idea of what their everyday lives would be like in New York City, especially in Koreatown. Although immigrants often hear stories about New York before making their first journey to the U.S., there is little that can prepare them for the kind of “culture shock” they experience as they transition into multi-ethnic, multilingual communities and work spaces. Juan describes the challenges he encountered working in Korean supermarket for the first time, and the “culture shock” he and many other Mexicans experienced upon beginning work in Koreatown;

Juan: Todo se te hace difícil, desde la primera hora que primera hora, es un proceso, todo es difícil...comunicación, no saber que hacer, el sistema de trabajo, de la compañía, todo ese proceso es difícil, no hay algo específico que sea difícil.

Juan: Everything seems difficult, from the first hour of the first day, it's a process, everything is difficult...communication, not knowing what to do, the system of your workplace, of the company, that whole process is difficult.

During a conversation with Juan and Miguel, both undocumented Mexican men from Veracruz in their mid-twenties with over five years of experience working in Koreatown, I asked what they learned about life in the U.S. before crossing the border:

Karen: Que te decían de la vida aquí?

Miguel: Que era difícil, no era nada fácil. Entonces, los peligros. Es un riesgo. Tienes que animarte, pensarlo dos veces, no? Pero cuando estas decidido, no hay negatividad, no?

Karen: Y sabias que esperar cuando llegaste a Nueva York? Sabias algo de Queens?

Miguel: Nada, nada

Juan: Sabias que te esperaban los Coreanos? (laughter)

Miguel: Sabia por el tele que Nueva York era una de las ciudades más bonitas del mundo.

Karen: Como conociste como encontrar trabajo?

Miguel: Un tío me llevo a la agencia, y de la agencia fui a mi trabajo.

Karen: What did they [friends and family] tell you about life here [in the U.S.]?

Miguel: That it was hard, not easy at all. So...the dangers. It's a risk. You have to motivate yourself, think about it twice, no? But when you've decided, there's no negativity right?

Karen: And did you know what to expect when you got to New York? Did you know anything about Queens?

Miguel: Nothing, nothing.

Juan: Did you realize that Koreans would be waiting for you? (laughter)

Miguel: I knew from TV that New York is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Karen: How did you figure out where to find work?

Miguel: An uncle took me to the [employment] agency. And from the agency I went to my job.

Miguel's family and friends warned him that crossing the border would be a big risk and that life in New York would be difficult. Juan jokes that Miguel probably could have never imagined that he would end up working and socializing with *Coreanos* (Koreans) on a daily basis in Queens. Much of what Miguel imagined about New York City came from watching television in Mexico and talking to family and friends. Having an uncle in New York when he arrived helped him adjust to his new surroundings and find the Korean employment agency that led him to his current job at a Korean restaurant.

Adjusting to unfamiliar Korean stores can be difficult for newcomers. Some exploitative employers take advantage of the cheap labor and long work hours provided by Latinos. In the restaurant and supermarket world of Koreatown, Koreans employers are always in the process of seeking and hiring undocumented Latino workers, and Latinos consistently seek and find employment in Korean businesses. Some Latinos feel exploited by their Korean employers and managers, and in some cases they are also discriminated against by Latinos in Koreatown. While discussing labor issues with Juan and his two Latino coworkers, the group explains that Koreans prefer hiring Latinos because they are undocumented. They believe Korean employers view Latinos as non-threatening because they don't have the language abilities to stand up to employers:

José: La mayoría de Latinos trabajan con Coreanos.

Karen: Alguna idea porque?

Roberto: los documentos- ellos no miran eso- con blancos tienen que están en regla

José: A ellos lo que les interesa es que trabajan

Juan: como saben que Latinos no tienen documentos en regla o papeles y eso. Saben que si ellos les hacen algo, pagar menos puede decir...saben que no van a poder reclamarlo fácil. Una, no

dominan el idioma, otra no tienen papeles. Esa es la idea que tienen. Si pasa algo con ellos tienen esa facilidad que no van a decir nada y no les van a reclamar algo.

Karen: están de acuerdo?

All: Si.

Roberto: A mi si me gustaría trabajar con Americanos

José: The majority of Latinos work with Koreans.

Karen: Any idea why?

Roberto: Legal work documents- they don't check those- with Whites, papers have to be in order

José: What they [Koreans] are interested in is that you work

Juan: Since they know that Latinos don't have proper documents or any papers and that...they know that if they do something like pay less [wages] than they should for example...they know that Latinos won't be able to claim them easily...**first of all, they [Latino workers] don't dominate the language [Korean/English], another is that they don't have papers.** That's the idea they have. If something happens with them, like if they decide to pay Latinos less [than minimum wage] they are at ease knowing their workers won't say anything and they won't demand anything.

Karen: Do you all agree?

All: Yes

Roberto: I personally would like to work with Americans.

Because Koreans hire undocumented Latinos who don't have legal permission to live or work in the United States, workers are more vulnerable and easily exploited, particularly because they don't "dominate the language" of their workplace. Without proper documents or knowledge of the local languages of the workplace, workers find it difficult to speak up and defend themselves. This group of supermarket employees has several years of experience in Koreatown, and they understand the potential for this conflict because they have witnessed many Latino newcomers struggle to receive fair treatment from employers. Having experienced some of these struggles themselves when they first arrived to Koreatown, they understand firsthand the central role of language in becoming a more legitimate participant in the company society.

Miguel also explains how Koreans don't seem to care if the worker arrived yesterday or 5 years ago; they'll talk to him in Korean regardless if he "understands" or not:

Miguel: Cuando alguien llega le hablan igual que cualquier otro que tiene tiempo, aunque no entienden. Pues tienen que aprender pues...hay 2 o 3 personas que trabajan en la cocina que lo dominan. Hay unos que ya tienen 15 o 10 años y entienden más. Yo llevo poco tiempo.

Miguel: When a person [Latino worker] first arrives [to the restaurant] they [Koreans] speak to him the same as they would to a worker who has been there more time, even if that person doesn't understand. Well, **they have to learn...there are 2 or 3 people who work in the kitchen that dominate Korean.** There are some that have been there [Koreatown] for 10 or 15 years and they understand more. I've only been there a short while.

Miguel states it is necessary for Latino newcomers to learn Korean and claims that some Latinos eventually “dominate” Korean. Miguel and other workers have used the Spanish word *dominar* (dominate) to describe achieving competence in a new language. Miguel considers workers with 10 or 15 years of experience as being experts in the local Koreatown workplace language. Thus having more control and dominance over language is a complicated process that happens over time. Speech community expectations can be difficult to navigate as a newcomer, and things don't always go smoothly. Heller (2013) argues, “talking to someone from a different speech community is hard not just because you don't know the words, but because you don't share the whole apparatus for understanding what they mean, what they do, what they signify, how to feel about them, which ones to attend to, and so on” (2013:397).

Ultimately, the relationships between Latinos and Koreans cannot be reduced to antagonistic labor struggles. Latinos and Koreans find ways to cooperate in order to accomplish tasks and manage businesses efficiently together. Separated from their families in Latin America, many Latinos develop “fictive kinship” (Smith 2005) with Koreans and other Latinos at the workplace. Others solidify their ties with Koreans through marriage as well, such as Antonio, a Mexican waiter in a Korean restaurant in Flushing:

Antonio: La verdad estoy en ese restaurant porque yo gaño un buen dinero ahí...

Karen: Te ha ayudado aprender Coreano?

Antonio: Sí, el Coreano y el Inglés también.

Karen: Te aceptan como familia?

Antonio: Me ven como familia ya. La patrona me habla como si fuera hijo de ella.

Karen: Tienes esposa Coreana?

Antonio: Si, fue mesera ahí, lleva un año que no trabaja ahí.

Karen: Te sientes, “fluent”

Antonio: Si...la verdad yo me enfadaba cuando hablaban solo Coreano, porque decía estamos en Estados Unidos, porque no hablan en Inglés, y ellos me dijeron que aprendiera Coreano, me compraron libros, y yo dije, porque yo no necesito esto. La mayoría de los trabajadores son Hispanos, y todos ahí me dicen yo soy hijo de la dueña, porque la verdad ella me quiere mucho.

Antonio: To be honest, I’m working in this restaurant because I make a lot of money.

Karen: Has learning Korean helped?

Antonio: Yes, Korean and English too.

Karen: Do they accept you like family?

Antonio: They already see me like family. The owner talks to me as though I were her son.

Karen: Your wife is Korean?

Antonio: Yes, she was a waitress, it’s been a year since she’s worked [at the restaurant].

Karen: You feel “fluent?”

Antonio: Yes...truthfully I used to get annoyed when they only spoke to me in Korean, because I said we are in the United States, why don’t you speak in English, and they told me to learn Korean, they bought me books, and I said, why do I need this? The majority of workers are Latinos, and they all say I’m the owner’s son, because she really does care about me a lot.

Thus, Antonio found that learning Korean was a way of earning the respect and care of his Korean boss, which also bolstered his status among Latinos at the restaurant. Other Latinos create a sense of community with Koreans by hanging out with them after work, eating Korean food several times a week, dating or flirting with Korean women, and practicing languages with Koreans at work or the local karaoke bar, on the subway, or through smartphone texting. In general, Latinos get along well with Korean coworkers, some of whom are also undocumented struggle with financial resources, are separated from family, and come to Koreatown with limited knowledge of English (Lim 2013). In cases where conflict does arise, it is usually between Korean employers and Latino immigrants, but hardly ever between Korean and Latino coworkers. In over two years of fieldwork in various workplaces, I have never seen or heard an openly aggressive or physically violent confrontation between a Latino immigrant worker and a Korean coworker.

My Korean neighbor Jung Il-Woo, describes why his own father and father's friends preferred to hire Latino workers for their bar and restaurant businesses:

Jung Il-Woo: They [Latino immigrants] are good workers because they have endurance, they work hard, as long as you feed them well...As long as you encourage them they work harder. How do you encourage Latino workers? Being nice and not bitching at them, give them a pat; show appreciation of their work. Half [of Korean employers] appreciate Latino workers half don't.

His impressions echo many of the ideas about Latino immigrant workers expressed by both Koreans and Latinos during fieldwork. During informal conversations with Korean employees and employers, Koreans expressed the belief that Latinos are better workers because they are more "hard-working" and will take on most tasks they are assigned around the workplace. Others, like my Korean tutors, claim that Latinos also share similar values concerning family and friendship- they see Latinos as being very invested in the well-being of their kin, perhaps because they personally witness how hard Latinos work for wages to send home. Of course, many are also realistic in the sense that Latino immigrant workers- like workers anywhere- occasionally can and do fall short of their expectations by not showing up to work on time, drinking on the job, taking too many breaks, stealing money, or even flirting with customers inappropriately, etc. Min (2011) and others have also discussed some of these tensions with employers.

Jung Il-Woo and others who are familiar with the operation of Korean food businesses know there is no easy way to generalize about Latino-Korean relations in New York City. As he explains, there are both "good" and "bad" Korean bosses, and the amount of respect and amicability shown to Latino workers depends on a lot on the personality of the boss and the business environment. Both Jung and Juan understand that not all Korean employers are "bad;" however, many are happy to hire Latinos because they are cheaper than other workers and pose

less of a threat to their authority than others might. Ultimately, Korean employers see value in the work provided by their Latino workers, but they often refuse to hire Koreans to perform the same work as Latinos- a fact that many Latinos understand all too well.

However, Santos, a Mexican worker at a supermarket in Flushing has explained that Korean employers will be quick to punish or fire Latinos that don't follow their rules, but tend to be more lenient toward Korean employees. Santos was transferred to different supermarket (belonging to the same chain) by his Korean managers multiple times after getting written up for being defiant (talking back to managers) and being accused of flirting with a female customer (he admitted this bashfully). He claims that Koreans are not held to the same the standard as their Latino coworkers- they get away with taking more cigarette breaks, asserting their rights as employees, and sometimes even stealing food from restaurants for example.

Miguel, who works as a restaurant busboy, told me that his Korean boss posted Spanish-only signs up on the walls of the employee area, warning workers not to bring home food from the restaurant. His boss occasionally checks workers bags before they go home to make sure they are not taking food from the kitchen. Miguel claims that his boss is suspicious of Latinos stealing food despite the fact that multiple Latino workers at the restaurant have seen Koreans pack containers full of food to take home and feed their families. Even if Korean managers and bosses suspect both Latinos and Koreans of committing wrong-doings at the workplace, out of loyalty to fellow Koreans it is more likely that Latinos will be openly reprimanded or shamed for suspected behavior.

However, directly and indirectly, Koreans also teach Latinos how to manage and operate a business in the food industry. In the process, Latinos learn to deal with different types of clientele and develop an appreciation for diversity of languages, religions, and ways of dressing,

eating, and socializing during their time in Koreatown. One Mexican supermarket worker in Queens explained, *cada persona tiene su idioma* (every person has their own language). Several Mexicans in my study have expressed the desire to use the work knowledge they have learned in Koreatown to start their own *negocios* or businesses in Mexico. Latinos frequently make efforts to gain the trust and respect of Koreans, to improve their position at the workplace, obtain better wages, more flexible work schedules, less monitoring, and more favorable working conditions.

A. Juan and the Korean Supermarket

On my first day of fieldwork in Koreatown, I walked into a Korean supermarket in bustling Manhattan to check out the scene. There I met Juan, who would soon become the principal informant in my field research. From the first moment I saw Juan, he was busy communicating with coworkers. Besides being an experienced produce section worker, Juan is also a teacher, skilled translator, and trusted employee and friend at his workplace. Looking back to our first meeting, it is no wonder he was the first person I approached on my first day in the supermarket. Newcomers, particularly Latino immigrants, are drawn to his helpful, caring personality and easy-going, talkative manner.

As an outsider I wandered the narrow aisles carefully and hesitantly, looking around at the various imported products with Korean labels and catching glimpses of Latinos occupying almost every corner of the store. Some Latinos squeezed in the tight aisles with Koreans, moving and passing around boxes, bags, crates, and other objects in their hands. I made my way toward the produce section at the back of the store, where I encountered a cluster of male Latino workers engaged in conversation with each other. I approached their circle and asked if I could

speak with them for a few moments. The group shifted their gaze toward me and suddenly became silent. The workers looked to Juan, who stood in the middle, and stared straight at me. I anticipated rejection or confusion, but Juan spoke for the group and asked: *de que se trata el estudio?* (what is your study about?).

I quickly relayed the details of my research, hoping the supermarket managers or employers wouldn't become annoyed or suspicious of my presence. No one interrupted us so I asked the Latino workers if I could speak with them individually after work. Juan instantly took charge in representing the group and responded: *si, yo creo que si se puede* (yes I think it should be possible). The others intently watched our interaction. It was as though they had unanimously agreed to follow Juan's lead. I handed him my business card and he called me back that evening. That day marked the beginning of an intense friendship and fieldwork partnership that would bring me into the realm of Latino life in Koreatown. In the months and years that followed he would introduce me to over a dozen of his coworkers and Latino friends around Koreatown in Manhattan and Queens. We quickly found common ground in our preoccupations with social problems and impediments to social justice.

Juan is an experienced worker who takes on multiple workplace roles with his "supermarket family." He talks to coworkers about life, current events, philosophy, anthropology, financial advice, and more, sharing ideas learned from friends, television, or internet research done at home. He listens to workers and encourages them to envision a future beyond Koreatown. Other times, he teases and jokes with his favorite Korean coworkers in the supermarket aisles, shifting into a mix of languages to communicate together. Juan chose to drop out of his college law studies in Veracruz, because he was tired of corruption in the Mexican judicial system. In his Koreatown job *acomodando* (organizing or arranging) produce inventory,

Juan works with undocumented Latino workers who feel disenfranchised by their own local and national governments. Juan acts as their protector and mediator by listening to their concerns and guiding them at work. Together, they share their dissatisfaction about economic and political conditions at home and the difficulties of life in New York City.

As their work guardian, Juan is also sensitive to the internal dynamics of his workplace. He understands the difficulties of adjusting to a foreign work environment and learning about new cultures and languages. He watches interactions between new Latino employees and Korean employers, and is always ready to mediate their interactions and smooth over miscommunications. From the basement to the frozen food aisle, Juan can be seen interacting with workers, unpacking boxes, stocking aisles, arranging fruits and vegetables, and exchanging amicable greetings with female Korean elders in Korean. He understands Koreans have a different way of doing things that seems unfamiliar and strange to newcomers. With over 6 years of Korean supermarket experience, he feels capable of interpreting their gestures, words, and intonations. Despite his ability to navigate Korean's expectations and adapt to the supermarket system, Juan has a pessimistic view of Latino employee-Korean employer relations in Koreatown. He believes this unequal power dynamic allows some powerful Koreans to profit while many Latino workers struggle.

Juan knows that not all Korean bosses exploit Latino immigrant employees, and he admits there are good and bad Korean bosses, just as there are good and bad Latino employers. However, he argues that many Korean bosses in Koreatown have a superiority complex rooted in racist attitudes toward Latino workers. He believes Koreans never promote Latinos to managerial positions because they view Latinos as inferior and incapable of learning and mastering complex jobs or tasks reserved for "more competent" Korean workers. Through his

observations of Koreans in his workplace and other Korean businesses, he believes there is a difference between Korean-Korean interactions and Korean-Latino interactions, particularly when a Korean superior is involved. He says *el trato y hasta la manera de hablar es diferente* (the conduct and even the manner of speaking is different) depending if a Korean is talking to another Korean, or to a Latino. Korean superiors show greater preference toward Korean employees through greetings and acknowledgments, engaging them in conversation, making eye contact, showing interest through body language, and giving them more promotions and pay than Latinos.

Juan works 60 hours a week, which is about average for Latino workers in Koreatown. He found the supermarket job through a Korean employment agency in Queens, like many of his coworkers and friends in Koreatown. For over 6 years has been responsible for stocking, sorting and organizing vegetables in the produce section. The section has over 30 compartments of various sizes, each containing a different kind of imported food. Working in pairs or groups, he also trains Latino newcomers how to do their various jobs. He is always moving around, fetching food items from the basement storage room, translating and mediating interactions between coworkers, checking up on workers and listening to their life stories. There are approximately 15-18 Latino workers in the supermarket at any given time, as workers come and go unexpectedly on various occasions. All of the Latino employees are men, most of them from Mexico and Guatemala, and all are undocumented. The number of Latinos is roughly equal to the number of Korean employees.

Most of the Koreans at the supermarket are male, although there are approximately 5 Korean females who work the cashier and front of store. Latinos often exchange greetings with these older Korean women throughout the day, addressing them using the Korean word *ajuma* to

show respect. Because I did not frequently interact with Korean staff in this particular supermarket, most of the details regarding their backgrounds are unknown to me. However, according to Juan, his Korean coworkers and employers were born in Korea and came to the United States as teenagers or adults. I also learned that several Korean employees are undocumented and share similar financial pressures as Latino workers. Most Latinos at the supermarket are younger than their Korean coworkers and employers at the supermarket. Latino workers are between 16 and 35, while most Korean staff at the store is 35 and older. Among Latinos, various dialects of Spanish are spoken, depending on workers' backgrounds. Some Latinos can also speak Quechua and Nahuatl although it almost never heard at work. At the supermarket, Koreans speak in Korean with each other; although a few also claim to speak Mandarin or other Chinese language. Juan claims that his Korean bosses at the supermarket have occasionally hired an Indian or Chinese immigrant, although they are the exception and minority.

Koreans and Latinos have learned English to varying degrees while working in Koreatown. According to the Latinos at the supermarket, most of the staff never received formal English instruction in schools, and neither Latinos nor Koreans can speak English very well. But over time, workers get to communicate with customers who bring the English language into the supermarket vicinity. Because both Koreans and Latinos have similar exposure to English in their work environments, they use their evolving knowledge of English when speaking with each other. English is frequently appropriated by workers for everyday talk, although it is most often accompanied by another language in the same utterance. Latinos also spend many hours each day listening and watching Koreans speaking in Korean, and some Latinos at the supermarket claim to understand more Korean than English. Koreans, who also listen and watch Latinos

talking throughout the day, often prefer to use Spanish instead of English in their everyday talk with Latinos.

Regardless of differences in language background or language “skills,” the staff members figure out how to communicate with each other to keep the store operating. Workers are always moving around and the staff is always changing as employees come and go. Supermarkets and restaurants of Koreatown are always in the process of hiring new workers to replace old ones. However, the staff manages to pull together and run the business without much apparent disorder. Aisles are consistently stocked, produce always appears fresh, and cashiers are always busy. In the following section, I explain what I learned from Juan and his coworkers about the supermarket system and how workers relate to each other within the system.

B. Communities of Practice in *La Sociedad Compania*-“The Company Society”

While eating Korean food with Juan one evening, I asked him to describe his supermarket workplace for me in writing. Juan grabbed my pen and field notebook and drew a diagram demonstrating the organization of his supermarket workplace (see Appendix A). The diagram can be interpreted as both a hierarchy and network, where powerful bosses and less powerful employees are connected in various ways through their relation to the *Sociedad Compania* (the Company Society), located at the center of the diagram. The Company Society is Juan’s term for people in the supermarket and the conditions that influence their relationships to each other. Above this central node, he sketches a social hierarchy with *Jefes Compania* (Company Bosses) at the top, and he draws another adjoining circle to the right which contains the word *Jefes* (Bosses) with an arrow, signifying that there are some bosses who are visible

within the Company Society and some who exist beyond it. The supermarket is part of a larger supermarket chain, thus there are many supermarket bosses in other stores, and some who exist at the very top and actually own all the stores. Juan connects the Bosses node to three circles or groupings directly below: Hispanos (Hispanics), Koreans, and Chinos (Chinese), the three main groups of workers he distinguishes at the supermarket. The presence of these three groups is made possible by the hiring decisions of Company bosses.

In the diagram, Company bosses not only decide who works at the Company, they also influence workers' behaviors and interactions. This is indicated by an arrow which connects Bosses to *Personalidades Dentro de la Compania* (Personalities Inside the Company). Bosses, although they may not always be physically present, set the terms for their work participation, assigning work roles, ensuring they are followed according to their expectations, and compensating workers as they see fit. Latinos learn how to respond to bosses' authority from each other and Koreans who are also expected to act appropriately according to the rules and boundaries of the system. Also located under the central Company Society node are two other groups which Juan considers central to the functioning and order of the Company Society. These are *Conducta & Reglas* (Conduct and Rules), and *Excusas & Razones* (Excuses and Rationales). Juan explains that the Company Society brings together different personalities; it requires workers to learn and obey rules of conduct of the workplace. Peoples' behavior in the Company Society are influenced by the authority of bosses, individual personalities, rules of conduct and interaction, and peoples' rationalizations or "excuses" for sustaining the social order. The order of the Company is sustained despite some of the inequalities and injustices of the system that ultimately benefit the Bosses.

The workers and their actions collectively contribute to the final node: *Objetivos* (Objectives), which include *Hacer Dinero* (Make Money), *Hacer La Empresa* (Make the Corporation), and *Obetner Ganancias* (Obtain Profits). For Juan, the activities of Hispanics (Latinos), Koreans, and Chinese, are all for the ultimate goals of making money so the company can function, expand, and earn profits for bosses at the top. The relationships that emerge and are built around this Company Society are *netamente laboral* for Juan: truly labor-based. Work is the common activity shared by Hispanos, Koreans, and Chinos, and they each bring unique traits, resources, rationales, and expectations about work and the proper order of things. For these groups to participate in Company Society, they must communicate and figure out a way to work towards common goals- whether that means neatly arranging imported Korean products together, or working extra shifts to send additional remittances home. Becoming a member of the Company Society involves learning the rules of the system, behaving according to certain work expectations (often defined by Koreans with authority), relating to coworkers personalities and their rationalizations (unique approaches to accomplishing what needs to be done), and contributing to the maintenance and success of the larger system through this participation.

These pieces of the Company Society sketched by Juan can be understood as interconnected communities of practice that are produced by common objectives. These come together and overlap to form a larger community of practice, the Company workplace society.

Communities of practice can be defined as

an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement as an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations- in short, practices, emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor...[the community of practice] it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages (this does not mean that communities of practice are necessarily egalitarian or consensual- simply that their membership and practices grow out of mutual engagement. [Ahearn 2012:115]

Multiple “aggregates” are defined by Juan by the circles he draws around particular groupings on the diagram. He views Latinos, Koreans, and Chinese employees as belonging to their own aggregates, for example. In the supermarket, Latinos tend to group together with other Latinos, and Koreans with other Koreans, and those employees with ties to China may form their own subgroups as well. But together, all workers in the Company occupy the same “tier” on the diagram, forming a community of practice in relation to bosses who occupy their own tier or grouping at the top. The Company Society is not always “egalitarian or consensual,” as demonstrated by Juan’s hierarchical drawing. Koreans are often given higher pay and access to promotions, whereas Latinos are expected to remain content with the same minimum-wage salary for years, without the promise of ascending in status at the supermarket. “Mutual endeavors” are numerous, within and across aggregates, and become particularly visible when communication breaks down and misunderstandings or problems arise that require immediate attention. Many of these mutual endeavors are tied to accomplishing work tasks (or appearing to be competently doing work, which is its own kind of work).

However, many of the mutual endeavors undertaken within aggregates and across aggregates at the Company are not directly related to bosses expectations about workers’ responsibilities, nor do they always profit bosses. Latinos and Koreans use their time at the Company to do many other things that are not planned or structured by bosses, such as secretly organizing a worker revolt (see chapter 8 section on Seoul House law suit) planning dinner outings together while working (see chapter 7 on Latino and Korean coworkers making dinner plans, or creating systems for carrying out work responsibilities that are more effective than the systems already in place (such as Pablo's barcode system in chapter 3). These mutual endeavors are part of the activities of the Company Society, but they are not directly supervised, predicted,

or appropriated by bosses for making profit. However, this does not mean that these activities can be detached from the context in which they arise. All of my Latino informants have had to contend with the authority of Korean superiors or more experienced Latinos in various moments. Some Latinos find it difficult to get outside the constraints of their particular work positions; others easily shift positions within and across aggregates, or form their own aggregates within the various Company Societies in which they find themselves.

In the following section I discuss how Latinos make sense of their positions as workers in Koreatown, and how they manage to achieve greater movement and more legitimate participation in their communities of practice, particularly through the development of new communicative strategies and ways of speaking.

D. How Immigrants Learn to *Dominar* (Dominate) Language at Work

Having control and ownership of linguistic knowledge is critical for workers to organize with each other when they feel taken advantage of, express grievances, and assert their rights. Getting a handle on the local languages and norms of interaction is a process that enables workers to shift positions within and across communities of practice with more ease, and become recognized as legitimate workers by employers with authority. Latinos quickly learn that it is very improbable they will ever obtain the same status or salary as Korean their coworkers and managers. However, they understand that Koreans favor Latino employees who make the effort to understand Korean language and culture. Koreans view these efforts as signs of attentiveness and respect. Workers understand that learning Korean is an effective method for gaining their bosses approval, which may come in handy at some point. Latinos are proud of their ability to

serve as translators and teachers of Korean language and culture for newcomers at work. Those who actively use this knowledge to negotiate work-related issues have more responsibilities and roles at work when compared to workers with little experience in Korean language.

Workers demonstrate their competence with Korean language in different ways, and much of this competence is acquired through trial and error. For example, knowing how to joke around with Koreans involves understanding of the local language, and a “good” sense of timing and delivery depending on one’s position in the business. Some Koreans who joke and play pranks on Latino employees don’t always like getting it in return. One Latino restaurant worker explained that when he tried to get even with his Korean coworkers a few days after they played a prank on him, the intent of the joke was completely lost, and the Koreans became quickly offended at him. The feedback was so negative that he decided never to play another prank on them again. Poorly executed jokes or attempts to assert equal “pranking rights” may be considered as a lack of respect or awareness of one’s place as an employee of inferior status, thus it is important to be mindful of these “unspoken” rules of conduct that can have serious consequences.

Latinos workers also learn the significance of talk among Koreans. Some Latinos believe that Koreans are experts or masters at the art of talking, capable of spending hours simply entertaining each other with conversation. One Latino compared this phenomenon to the importance of dancing in Latino cultures- in a party organized by Latinos it is almost expected that dancing will play a central role in the festivities, but Koreans would much rather talk than dance.

Ricardo, a Guatemalan immigrant who works in a Korean deli describes the rules for conduct and communication at his workplace, as well as Korean’s “mastery of talk”:

Ricardo: Numero uno es el jefe...respetan mucho lo que es un jefe, que es una persona mayor de edad. Respetan mucho, lo saludan, inclinan la cabeza cuando hay una persona más alto, avanzada de edad lo respetan, por ejemplo regañan...por ejemplo si dicen este es el manager, todos respetas...uno a trabajaba más tiempo, eso respetan eso mucho también, uno que entra no puede pasar ya otro, tiene que obedecer las reglas, porque el tiene más tiempo, es más bueno, uno tiene que seguir esa ley y no puede pasar. Por ejemplo yo vine ahí hace 2 años, ellos me respetan, entonces, cada vez cuando uno entra al trabajo, en un deli, eres encargado, okay, y no te molestan, no puede entrar otro...uno tiene que tener la responsabilidad de estar ocupando sus cosas así, para ver...tiene que estar en balance, respetan mucho el trabajo duro de uno, la experiencia de uno, respetan mucho eso. Ellos son estrictos, pero entre ellos si se joden...Yo tengo muchos amigos Coreanos, pero son jóvenes, del trabajo y los clientes también...cuando entran yo les digo “anyehonghaseyo” y ellos dicen, wow tu pronuncias bien, eh. Okay.

Karen: Te invitaron a comer?

Ricardo: Solo una vez fuimos a un karaoke, solo Coreanos, ahí arriba en Flushing y estuvo buena la fiesta, y ellos si son Buenos para tomar, tequila tequila tequila y tequila y sushi y todo eso, y música, me pasaba yo cantando la música. No es como discoteca hispana, ellos les gusta mucho hablar, hablar, son dueños del habla. Es la vida de ellos entonces yo me quedo adentro con ellos, escuchando, si les gusta hablar mucho.

Karen: Entonces en el trabajo, Coreanos y Hispanos se llevan bien?

Ricardo: Unos se llevan mejor que otros. Es por la comunicación también. Comunicación y es falta de orientación a veces, orientación y ahí viene todo la baja...mas que todo nos llevamos bien ahí. Hay unos que llegan ahí., saben poquito, y entonces yo...me dicen explicanle un poco de esto, como se dice...yo les explico, yo hablo con mi jefe y explicando que es lo que quiere uno, cual plan tienen. Entonces ahora saque mas menús para vender mas. Hice mas menús. Antes teníamos poquitos. Me invente diferentes cosas para vender...Mezclo todos los ingredientes, yo las hago, y la gente les gustan, llegan mis customers, una forma que uno los atiende, para hacer...así envolver con la gente es tener mucha paciencia, aguantar, aguantar; aguantar, pero uno aguanta, es como saber todo, seguir aprendiendo con la gente, y ahí. voy. Uno cree las cosas cuando uno quiere. Entonces eso estoy haciendo, aquí con puros Coreanos.

Ricardo: The boss is number one. [Koreans] have a lot of respect for a boss, who is an older person. They show respect, greet him, incline their head when an older person is present, [Koreans] respect those who are older, for example they scold...for example, if they say this is the manager, everyone respects [that person]...a person who has worked for longer time, they respect that too, a person can't just walk in and get ahead of somebody. They have to obey the rules, because that person has been there longer, is a better worker, and one needs to follow that law and cannot get ahead. For example, I came here two years ago, they respect me, so, every time I enter my job at the deli, I take charge, okay...and they don't bother me, another can't just come in...one has to have responsibility of being busy with ones work...so that there is...work has to be in balance. They have a lot of respect for hard work, a person's experience, they respect that a lot. They are strict, but among each other they do mess around. I have a lot of Korean friends, but they are young, from work and customers too...when they come in the store I say “anyehonghaseyo” (welcome) and they say, “wow your pronunciation is good.” Okay.

Karen: Have they asked you out to eat?

Ricardo: Once we went to a karaoke, just Koreans, out in Flushing and the party was good, they are good drinkers, tequila, tequila, tequila, tequila, and more tequila, and sushi and everything, and music, I spent time singing along with the music. It's not like a club for Hispanics. **They really like to talk, talk, they are masters of talk. It's their way of life, so I stay inside with them listening, they really do love to talk a lot.**

Karen: So at work, do Koreans and Latinos get along well?

Ricardo: Some get along better than others. It's due to communication also. Communication and sometimes lack of orientation, [lack of] orientation and there things can spiral downward...but more than anything we get along well there [at work]. There are some newcomers who arrive and don't know much, and so I...they [Koreans] tell me, "explain them a bit of this, how to say..." and I explain for them, I talk to my boss and explain to the newcomer what he [the boss] wants, what his plan is. Recently I made new menus to sell more [food]. I made more menus. We had few before. I came up with different things to sell...I mix all of the ingredients, I make them [from scratch], and people like it, my customers arrive, and it's a way of serving them, to make...developing relations like this involves a lot of patience, endurance, endurance, endurance, but one endures, it's just knowing about everything, one keeps learning with people, and that's where I am. One creates things when one wants to. And so that's what I'm doing, here with all these Koreans.

Knowing how to partake in talk at work is a delicate matter, a dance of its own. Talk is organized around the pace of the business. Korean businesses are organized in a hierarchical fashion. There are strict rules about status and position; newcomers cannot assume they will get ahead of more experienced workers, and that kind of mentality would be heavily frowned upon, if not outright unaccepted. Less talk is better when business is busy and there are multiple work tasks to attend to. Banter is accepted among Latino and Korean workers as long as the work is being carefully attended to. Informants have described Koreans as very detail-oriented; so workers feel the pressure to perform their work properly and fulfill their bosses' expectations, before they feel any freedom to engage in relaxed conversation that does not immediately deal with work tasks and responsibilities.

As Ricardo explains, the longer an employee works and contributes to the business, the more likely it is that linguistic exchanges with Koreans will become more complex and engaged. When a Latino worker arrives for the first time, most of the interactions with Koreans consist of directions and instructions for carrying out work tasks and responsibilities: throw out the

garbage, get a pot of water, sweep the floors, wash the dishes, or unload the truck. Initially, much of this involves the use of gestures, imitation, and watching other workers do their jobs. More experienced Latinos will answer questions posed by newcomers: for example, what does that sign mean?, where do I find X product?, or when can I take my break? As workers become more immersed in the linguistic environment, the need for a mediator, teacher, or translator is lessened. They listen for sound patterns and memorize words and phrases in Korean or English that have the most immediate utility, such as “downstairs” “food” “here” “there” “water” “I need” “give me.”

Workers with more experience and time learn to communicate comfortably in a mixture of languages. They become aware of appropriate ways of mixing languages together in ways that are comprehensible to Korean and Latino coworkers. Koreans learn new sound combinations and words in English and Spanish, and Latinos are thus always learning how Korean adopt and transform language in new ways. Although new Latino workers stick together when they first arrive, they eventually branch out. Communities of practice take shape in different ways according to the workplace context and different “Company Society” arrangements. They are always tied to objects and activities of the workplace, the languages and communicative resources enlisted by workers, as well as the unwritten or unspoken norms of interaction.

E. *La Necesidad de Entender* (The Necessity to Understand): Teaching Newcomers how to Understand Koreans

Juan believes that Latinos have *la necesidad de entenderlos*: the necessity to understand Koreans at the supermarket. Gaining this understanding is a process which is facilitated by more experienced workers who help newcomers deal with the challenges of trying to understand a new language and work system. Latinos have this necessity, because without being able to understand Koreans, they would be lost or confused at the workplace, and in some cases, give up and quit their jobs as a result of misunderstandings or miscommunications. The necessity to understand means more than just learning words and pronouncing them correctly. Ottenheimer (2008) writes, “learning a language is more complex than merely learning sounds and forming grammatically correct sentences...understanding cultural expectations about language use is essential for knowing how to use a language” (Ahearn 2012:115).

Juan explains that making sense of Koreans involves learning “their morals”- *uno va aprendiendo los morales de ellos* (one gradually learns their [Koreans] morals). He can also distinguish between the words Koreans use with each other and the words they use when speaking to Latinos. He notes that older Koreans get upset when Latinos speak informal Korean to elders, even though Latinos don’t mean to be disrespectful- Latinos simply *desconocen la palabra* (are unfamiliar with the correct word).

Juan: La misma expresión que te quiere decir a ti, se lo dice a Coreanos con otras palabras...y ellos quieren que tu le hablas exactamente lo que se le merece. Por ejemplo, a un señor, tú no le puedes decir palabras que se dicen a persona menor. Tú las dices...pero se enojan...es falta de respeto. Pero tu desconoces la palabra.

Juan: The same expression they want to say to you, they will say to Koreans with different words...and they want you to speak to them the exact way they deserve to be spoken to. For example, an older male, you can’t speak to him using the same words you would with a younger person. You can say them but they get angry...it’s considered a lack of respect. But you don’t know the proper word.

This *desconocer* or unfamiliarity with Korean’s expectations can create problems for immigrants because they may be violating a rule without intending to do so. Juan senses that

older Koreans who adhere to traditional rules about honorifics may view the lack of formality as disrespectful or irreverent. Although he is sometimes reluctant to admit it, Juan has obtained a great deal of respect and status at his job, and much of this has been made possible by his efforts to understand Koreans and their ways of doing things, and using this knowledge to educate fellow workers. He plays the role of teacher and translator without being told by Koreans to do so. The act of informally educating Latino workers about Koreans is viewed as a sign of respect and appreciation of Korean values, which in turn makes Koreans value Latino workers more. This can potentially result in more prolonged, amicable, and economically beneficial relationships (pay increases, more flexible schedules, cash loans, dinner or party invitations, etc).

While doing fieldwork I also felt the *necessity to understand* Koreans. The more observant and studious I was of Korean language, the more attention I received from Korean employees and employers. The more I practiced the language, the greater access I had to their world. I was often praised by Koreans for being “a student of Korean,” which opened opportunities to engage in conversations with Koreans in Koreatown. Once I displayed my efforts to learn (bringing my Korean language exercise notebook to work, or watching Korean dramas on my laptop while eating Korean meals, using Korean phrases to ask about food and express gratitude), I was greatly rewarded with the attention and curiosity of Koreans, who wanted to teach me more. For Latino newcomers like myself, learning the languages of local speech communities was key to developing and deepening relationships with Koreans. My efforts to understand Koreans also brought me closer to Latinos, because we shared similar struggles and I depended on their knowledge to guide me. Their knowledge also gave me insight into the various problems Latinos identify as important to know in Koreatown, and their ways of going about devising problem-solving strategies.

Experienced workers often play the role of teacher to new immigrants who are unfamiliar with the local work rules and norms of interaction. These educational activities are carried out by immigrants in different ways depending on the local contexts, but they are all critical for helping newcomers make sense of their surroundings and develop a sense of belonging in their workplace.

Juan: Tienes que entenderlos a ellos, la comunicación, el sistema de ellos, por que llegas completamente confuso, no entiendes lo que te dicen, no hablas el idioma, no sabes cual es el sistema, cuales son las reglas, nada de eso conoces. Simplemente cuando llegas, haces lo que te dicen. “sabes que, pon esto aquí, pon esto allá...”

Karen: Como aprendiste tu trabajo?

Juan: A través de compañeros hispanos, los que tratan con las personas nuevas, son los mismos Hispanos.

Juan: You have to understand them [Koreans], the communication, their system, because you are completely confused when you arrive, you don't understand what they're saying, you don't speak the language, you don't know what the system is, what are the rules, you know none of that. Basically, when you arrive, you just do what they say, “you know what, put this here, put that there...”

Karen: How did you learn to do your job?

Juan: Through Hispanic coworkers. The ones who deal with newcomers are Hispanics themselves.

Juan believes it is necessary to understand their language and local workplace rules and norms of interaction to do one's job properly and be accepted by Koreans. José, a Mexican friend of Juan's who used to work at the same supermarket, is now employed in a nearby Korean deli. Based on his experience in multiple Korean workplaces, he argues that Latinos help each other at work in Koreatown by explaining the details of the job, translating languages, and providing other kinds of informal job training;

José: Es algo que tenemos los latinos de que...por ser latino, siempre nos ayudamos. De algún o otra manera. Si tu estás haciendo algo que no va lo que te están pidiendo, llega otro y dice, estas mal, hazlo así...y cuando eres nuevo tienes que aceptar lo que te están diciendo, hacerlo. No te lo dicen porque saben más que tu, no pero unos lo toman al revés. Cuando tienen oportunidad de enseñar alguien que es nuevo., decimos, mira paisa, hazlo así si? porque la dueña le gusta que hagas las cosas así. O ella le gusta que hagas las cosas así. Entonces tu vas aprendiendo.

Coreanos te dice hazlo así así así, Coreanos dicen a el Hispano “dile que haga esto esto esto.” Es una ventaja que tenemos nosotros Latinos.

José: It’s something we have, Latinos...because we are Latino, we always help each other one way or another. If you are doing something [at work] that isn’t what they [Koreans] are asking you to do, someone [a Latino/Hispano] will come over and say, you’re not doing it right, do it this way instead. And when you are new you have to accept what they are trying to tell you, and do it. They are not telling you because they know more than you, but some take it the wrong way. **When there is an opportunity to teach someone that is new, we say, look *paisa*, do it this way, yea?** Because the boss likes it when you do things like this. Or she likes it when you do things like that. So you start learning. Koreans say, do things like this like this. Koreans will tell a Hispanic [worker] “tell him to do it like this, like that.” It’s an advantage we have, us Latinos.

José has gained the trust of his Korean employers, who rely on him to translate their demands and expectations for new Latino employees. José believes it is important to help newcomers figure out the local workplace system, even though he realizes some Latinos aren’t always open to being told how to do things at first. He believes Latinos have the advantage of relying on other workers for this informal education and knowledge exchange, which is critical for workers to do their jobs well, gain the approval of their Korean superiors, and meet their ultimate goal of earning money to send back home.

According to José, understanding Koreans and communicating in multiple languages with them is a tricky process, for several reasons.

José: Se me complica la forma de que ellos hablan. Una persona habla de una forma y otras de otra entonces me confundo.

Karen: Como de bien hablas Coreano?

José: Realmente, palabras no mas. El idioma, no. Como ellos, con el Español. Por ejemplo usan la palabra “bueno” para decir que algo esta bien. Si eres inteligente, te dicen “mucho bueno” porque piensan que si tu eres inteligente eso es bueno. Si el quiere decir que soy habilidoso, dice soy “bueno.” Pero realmente no concretan a lo que se refieren. Tienen la misma palabra para muuuuchas actividades.

José: The way they speak to me gets complicated for me. One person speaks one way and the others speak a different way so I get confused.

Karen: How well do you speak Korean?

José: Honestly, just words. Not the language. Like them, with Spanish. For example, they use the word “bueno” (good) to say that something is alright. If you are intelligent, they say “mucho bueno” (a lot good) because they think that if you are smart, that is good. If they want to say that I am skilled, they say I am “bueno.” But they don’t really specify what they are referring to. They have the same word for maaaany activities.

Like most of the Latinos in my study, José has never received classroom instruction in English. He has learned most of the English he knows while working in Koreatown. He claims that it’s difficult to know the “correct way” to pronounce English words because not all Englishes he hears in Koreatown are the same. He differentiates between “American” English spoken by customers and “Asian” English spoken by his Korean coworkers. This can be confusing to keep track of at times, *se me complica* (it gets complicated for me). For José, there are many different English accents, styles, and pronunciations in his environment. His experience of the language environment is not homogenous. The codes he hears are not all the same, each person has their own *forma de hablar*, (way of speaking), and finding commonalities among everyone’s different language varieties can be a challenge.

Even though José has knowledge of common Korean words, expressions, and signs, he believes this does not count as real knowledge of the Korean language: *palabras, no mas...el idioma, no* (just words, not the language). He positions himself as an outsider to the language because he views his Korean language repertoire to be incomplete. At the same time, José can speak at great length about the rules of speaking Korean and how to understand Koreans when they speak. He also positions Koreans as outsiders to the Spanish language, when he asserts that Koreans have the same problem with Spanish that he has with Korean- they only know some words, but not the *actual* language itself.

This outsider status arising from an “incompleteness” of linguistic knowledge motivates Latinos to learn and teach each other. During our conversation José goes on to interpret Korean’s usage of Spanish, and their strategies for communicating with Latinos. This indicates that he understands what Koreans are trying to do with the Spanish language resources they have, even though he doesn’t consider this type of interaction as “real” language use. He identifies a principal communicative strategy used by Koreans at his workplace: *applying a word or phrase to multiple situations*. This general communicative strategy enables interlocutors to expand a word or phrase’s meaning in order to use or adapt it to multiple situations and thus increase its utility. He says, *tienen las mismas palabras para muuuuchas actividades* (they have the same word for maaaaany activities), that is, they rely on sets of words that have acquired shared meanings among workers in the local context to multiple situations and activities. In the above conversation, José describes Korean’s use of the word *bueno* (good). When Koreans say *bueno* to José and other Spanish speakers, *realmente no concretan a lo que se refieren* (they don’t really specify what they are referring to). Despite this lack of “referent,” through his experience working with Koreans, he knows they use *bueno* to mean *intelligente* (intelligent) or *habilidoso* (skilled). He knows Koreans use this word when praising Latinos for a job well done, thus Koreans do not have the necessity to describe exactly what they are referring to using Spanish words- simply using *bueno* is enough to achieve mutual intelligibility.

Thus the lack of a more elaborate vocabulary to explain the referent doesn’t necessarily constrain or inhibit workers from coordinating in creative ways. José can contextualize Korean’s language use by providing his own interpretation of the “missing” or ambiguous referent. José can then pass on this knowledge to Latino newcomers who might be initially confused by Koreans when they say *mucho bueno* (literally: a lot of good) in seemingly disconnected

situations. In his role as a teacher and translator, José tries to prevent miscommunications and helps facilitate orderly interaction at the workplace. It is possible that Koreans don't actually mean *skilled* when they say *bueno* but José's positive interpretations and contextualization efforts may encourage more amicable Latino-Korean relations, which can potentially lead to a more expansive shared language repertoire over time. Therefore, applying the same word or phrase to multiple activities and situations is a valuable strategy when speakers are learning a language, because it allows them to use the words they already do know to express themselves in new situations. Even if the word or phrase does not quite suit the new situation, the speaker will try to adapt it to the situation in a way that the listener understands the context and can identify the intended application of the word.

Gumperz (1968) has explored the issues that arise during communication between minority populations whose language background is different than the surrounding majority. Gumperz focuses on the key notion of “conversational inference - “discursive practices that actors employ in the pursuit of communicative ends and in negotiated shared understandings in the course of their everyday lives” (DiLuzio 2000:37). He defines conversational inference as “the situated assessments by which participants in an encounter interpret what is intended at any one point in an exchange and on which they depend in planning their responses” (Gumperz 1982). Conversational inference sets a framework for making interpretive assessments, and this framing is part of the social process of meaning making necessary for coordinating action. Gumperz argued that it was necessary to identify the “observable traces” of this framing process in interaction. It is possible to see how frames “get built, and how they work” by exploring “contextualization cues” –

Those concrete modes of communication (whether verbal or not) which signaled not simply a neutral reference to an objective world, but rather constituted what

was being talked (or written) about, which elements were important or new, what the speaker's stance toward it might be, how she or he wanted interlocutors to react, indeed all elements of relevant frames of interpretation, and crucial to the core process of inferencing. In order for *conversational cooperation* or *coordination* to occur, speakers would need to be able to decode contextualization cues, interpret utterances and gestures or actions in a shared frame, and know which culturally-conventionalized actions would be not only interpretable, but also appropriate, next. [Heller 2013:396, italics in original]

José makes inferences about Korean's common use of words like *bueno*, based on his ideas about what counts as locally acceptable behavior. He knows that his Korean boss takes a positive stance toward hard work, skill, and intelligence, and interprets their cross-situational use of *bueno* within this frame of shared expectations about work performance. Thus, Koreans provide contextualization cues that need to be decoded and situated in relation to these expectations, because their meanings (referents) are not immediately apparent (and may never be completely defined). Constructing a shared frame for interpreting Koreans allows José to figure out what to do in his future actions as well. He knows that particular activities may be considered more *bueno* than others, and being *bueno* at making sandwiches, stocking aisles, dealing with customers, or communicating with employers, is far better than being considered an inept or incompetent worker. His inferencing of contextualization cues keeps communication from breaking down.

However, José notes that there are many instances where communication does in fact break down between Koreans and Latinos, resulting in misunderstandings, blaming, stereotyping, hurt emotions, and disruptions in the social order. For Gumperz, these misunderstandings are "key situations" where "a lot may be riding on successful interactions" (Heller 2013:397). Misunderstandings may be more difficult to repair in multilingual environments, because workers may be at a loss for words needed to clarify and smooth over miscommunications in the moment they occur. Michael Agar (1994) discusses these "key

situations” as “rich points,” or moments in which something goes wrong in a speech situation and something new is learned as a result. Rich points highlight contrasts “between the expectations of the speech communities involved” (Otteneimer 2008:111).

Recognizing such rich points or misunderstandings encourages individuals to mobilize communicative resources to repair interaction, and they can be “instructive because they remind us that speech styles and competencies can be fairly fluid, and that you can develop multiple competencies” (2008:113). José describes rich points in Koreatown as moments of despair that are situated in the particular language environment of each workplace- in some cases, there may be more at stake in learning to understand Korean. Despair comes from the literal “crash” between languages- *chocan los idiomas ahí* (languages crash [in these situations]). Koreans may become exasperated with Latinos when miscommunications arise and their expectations are not met.

José: Las necesidades de los Coreanos. Es algo curioso...de que.. Ellos no te van a preguntar puedes. Si no que si tu necesitas el trabajo tienes que hacerlo. En cuestión del idioma si es coreana la marqueta...bueno desgraciadamente donde he trabajado siempre te van hablar en Coreano. Las señoras que trabajan ahí. y los señores ya son adultos y no pueden hablar el Inglés, siempre te van hablar en su idioma. Ahí uno como Hispano tiene que ver como le arrastras pero tienes que entenderlos. Si, porque llega el momento en que ellos se desesperan. Cuando no entiendas te gritan, te hacen entender que te quieren golpear vez, porque no les entiendes. Te hacen sentir que eres un...vaya, una persona...un inútil porque no les entiendes. Y tu le hablas en tu idioma en Español y tampoco...chocan los dos idiomas ahí. Y hay otros lugares donde es principalmente el Inglés. Actualmente donde yo trabajo, ahí. es el Inglés primordial. Ahí no es el idioma de ellos.

José: The necessities of Koreans. It’s something strange that...they are not going to ask you if you can [do your job]. If you need the job, you have to do it. In terms of language, the market is Korean, and well, unfortunately where I have worked, Koreans are always going to speak to you in Korean. The women and men that work there are older, and they can’t speak in English, so they always speak to you in their language. **And as a Latino you have to drag out some method, because you have to understand them. Yes, because there comes a moment when they become exasperated.** When you don’t understand, they yell at you, and make you understand that they may even want to hit you see, because you don’t understand them. They make you feel that you are...well, a person...a useless person because you don’t understand

them. And you speak to them in your language in Spanish and that doesn't work either... **the two languages crash there.** And there are other [work] places where [the language at work] is principally English. Where I'm working at the moment, English is primordial. There, [the primordial language] is not their [Koreans] language.

José argues that Koreans aren't going to spell out the meaning of Korean words for newcomers, and sometimes they aren't necessarily interested in modifying their language choices or ways of speaking to accommodate a newcomer's ignorance. José's use of the verb *arrastrar* (to drag out) is interesting in this context because it implies a struggle to haul out a method for understanding. More than just "figuring out" what to do, the task of engineering a means for communicating can feel like urgent and hard work. And just digging up a method isn't enough, it is necessary to "carry" it, for as long as it works. Sometimes workers come up with solutions that function well, and the burden is ultimately diminished as people learn, share, and distribute these semiotic resources, adopting them for their own purposes. But it can be an uphill climb where the weight and pressure of this "necessity to understand" is deeply felt. In the process, workers may falter, particularly in moments where miscommunications have real and potentially violent implications. In some cases, the necessity to understand is not just motivated by the desire to do one's job and earn money, or build friendly relations with Koreans, but to avoid verbal abuse in the form of harsh scolding and reprimanding that may arise from such misunderstandings. Koreans may become infuriated with Latinos, who may in turn also become infuriated with Koreans, and many more problems may ensue (employers and other employees may get involved in the conflict, the work flow might be disrupted, customers may not receive proper attention and service, etc.).

Lorenzo, a 16 year old Guatemalan teen from Solola, Mexico has been working in Juan's supermarket since 2011. He says, *hay días que te provocan* (there are days when they [Koreans] provoke you). Being provoked does not always occur verbally; a "clash" of languages is not

always an audible clash. Sometimes workers described how a brief exchange of a look or gesture would create negative feelings and tension between Latinos and Koreans. The “unspoken” or “silent” dimensions of interaction are important to consider as well, because people communicate a great deal without words, using their bodies to establish boundaries and transmit messages about social relationships and norms of interaction.

Newcomers may be moved around to other work stations if they are perceived as “incompetent” as a result of miscommunications. If Korean bosses are unsatisfied with a newcomer’s performance, they will move him to other positions that require less verbal interaction to complete the work tasks. For example, Lorenzo found it difficult to communicate and keep up with Korean cashiers while doing his job *embolsando* (placing products in plastic bags for customers). As a newcomer, he was quiet because the cashiers *solo hablaban en Inglés y Coreano, y uno como recién llegado, fue difícil* (they only spoke English and Korean, and as a newcomer it was hard). He believes that Koreans interpreted his silence as incompetence. As a result, he was moved to the periphery of the store, and told to stock sodas and soups by himself instead- *Vieron que no podía, entonces me mandaron afuera, acomodar la soda, me pasaron acomodar sodas, sopas* (They saw I couldn’t do it, so they sent me outside, to accommodate sodas, they shifted me over to accommodate sodas, soups).

Being moved to more solitary jobs does not necessarily mean that workers are not learning anything. While they may be silent or separated from “busier” communicative spaces, workers still develop a great deal of awareness about their environments. Lorenzo eventually learned to speak Korean *solo, preguntando que significa* (by myself, asking questions about what things mean). When Latino newcomers don’t have a person close by to explain what to do, they often seek the advice of other workers by asking questions like *como se hace esto, como se llama*

esta cosa, que esta diciendo el Coreano? (how do you do this, what is the name of that thing, what is the Korean saying?).

Constantly asking questions is a learning strategy that should not be underestimated. Not only does it help workers figure out their jobs in Koreatown, it also helps newcomers in the United States transition into completely foreign environments. Seeking answers and advice by asking people is a strategy used by all of my informants to do things like find a job, find housing, figure out how to use transportation, how to understand people who don't speak the same language, etc. Ricardo, a Korean deli worker in Flushing, explained the importance of *preguntando* (asking) when he first arrived to New York, and how his constant questioning eventually enabled him to get a better position at his first job in a Turkish restaurant:

Ricardo: Cuando yo llegue la primer vez, que es "metrocard?" que es "trenes," que son "los buses," los números? no sabía yo todo eso

Karen: Te ayudaron amigos o como hiciste?

Ricardo: Si con la gente, hay unas personas que son buenas gentes y entonces yo le pregunto de donde va esto, como hago esto, de que forma obtengo la dirección. Todo eso, así es, así es, okay okay okay, has esto, comprate esto, este bus, esta dirección es esto, va a la otra calle, sube, uno aprende cuando uno va preguntando las cosas.

(Koreans laugh)

Karen: Eran otros Hispanos?

Ricardo: Si eran otros Hispanos y los de Turkia también. Los de Turkia me ayudaban también.

Karen: En Inglés?

Ricardo: Habían Hispanos-Americanos ahí. Me traducían. Había uno de Sinaloa...sus padres son de Sinaloa y el nacido ahí. Y el me enseñaban como decir las cosas, los nombres, incluso...y uno de Perú también., le preguntaba eso, a veces se molestaba con migo "porque no aprendes rápido?" Y yo seguía preguntando las cosas. Y así paso ahí. Después me subieron, preparando ensaladas, me quitaron dishwasher, ya buscaron otro, entonces yo subí a preparar las cosas.

Ricardo: When arrived for the first time, "what is 'metrocard'?" what are "trains?," what are "the busses," the numbers? [bus numbers] I didn't know any of that.

Karen: Friends helped you, or what did you do?

Ricardo: Yes with people, there are some people that are good people and so I can ask where does this go, how do I do this, through what means can I find the direction. Everything like that, that's how it is, "okay okay, do this, buy this, take this bus, this direction is that, go to the other street, walk up...**one learns as one asks about things.**

Karen: Were they Latinos? [the people you asked]

Ricardo: Yes, other Latinos and also the Turkish people too. The Turkish [coworkers] helped me too.

Karen: In English?

Ricardo: There were Hispanic-Americans there that would translate. There was one from Sinaloa [Mexico], his parents were from Sinaloa, and he was born here. He would teach me how to say things, the names, and also...and one [worker] from Peru too, I would ask him things, sometimes he would get annoyed at me and say "why don't you learn quickly?" and I would just keep asking him things. And that's how it happened there. Then they promoted me, to prepare salads, and they took me away from the dishwasher position, found a replacement, and I was promoted to preparing things [at the restaurant].

Asking about things is thus a very important strategy for any newcomer who wants to learn and understand new settings and the expectations contained in these settings. Asking also involves knowing whom to ask, how to ask, and what to ask. Ricardo's coworker, who became irritated with his frequent questions, demonstrates that there are rules and limits to this strategy. Asking questions to people with experience and authority can be a daunting process, and sometimes it is discouraged by employers and others who believe workers should just watch how something is done and memorize it on the spot to avoid redundant explanations. Just as Latinos and Koreans teach each other new ways of speaking, they can also teach each other how and when to be silent.

Chapter 5: The Pragmatic Use of Silence

Koreans with authority use silencing strategies to organize and structure their work environments. Silence is also a communicative strategy. In some cases, Korean employers would rather “see their employees than hear them.” In Korean businesses, Latino *and* Korean workers are taught to be silent. They are not silent because they are lost, confused, or incapable of communicating. The act of performing work silently communicates a great deal to Koreans about workers' abilities, and whether or not they meet their standards. Silence is also considered a form of respect, particularly toward Korean elders, who are thought to interpret questioning or “talking back” as insolence. One Mexican busboy-waiter at a Korean restaurant explained that when a Korean elder or person of higher social status speaks to a restaurant employee, the employee is supposed to remain silent, even if being yelled at- *cuando uno es menor y una persona mayor le esta hablando, y le dices disculpame, me dice no me hables la voz, y el le puede dar una cachetada y usted no mas se queda ahí* (when an older person is speaking with you, and you say excuse me, he says ‘don’t raise your voice’ and can give you a smack on the face and you are just supposed to stand there). Talking back is simply not an option- and if the worker tries to interject, this action might even warrant a slap in the face or some other punishment for questioning the elder’s authority. Thus, workers are quickly educated in how to keep one’s voice down, remain silent, and refrain from questioning, particularly when there is a significant age and/or status difference between interlocutors.

In the following section, I describe a day at Soo Restaurant, one of my principle field sites, which is owned and managed by my Korean “Grandma.” Grandma is always present at the restaurant, taking and filling orders, cooking, arranging repairs and decorations, trying out new

recipes, taking care of finances and balancing account books, supervising work activities, teaching newcomers how to do their jobs, talking to customers, socializing with family visitors, playing on her smartphone, watching documentaries on her laptop, and even singing Korean classical music whenever she feels inspired. She speaks Korean with Korean cooks, servers, and customers, except for when she speaks to me, her Latino staff, or the occasional Chinese or American customer, at which point she mixes languages and relies on a variety of other communicative strategies. Grandma makes sure the restaurant runs smoothly and efficiently, and her presence can be felt and seen everywhere as she busily moves around the small restaurant space. Grandma relies on male and female Latinos from Ecuador and Mexico for a variety of jobs including washing dishes, prepping food, cooking food, and cleaning. The Korean staff cooks beside the Latinos, interacts with customers, packages orders for takeout, and handles financial transactions. She has extensive experience teaching and showing newcomers how to do their jobs and fit into her orderly system.

One interesting aspect of Soo Restaurant is the fact that Korean staff and customers can be heard talking all of the time, while Latinos hardly ever speak, even when working in close quarters or performing tasks together. For several months I tried to understand this silence, since it stood in such stark contrast to the frequent sound of Korean at Soo I gained insight on one particular day when I observed two instances: Carmen, an Ecuadoran worker, spontaneously erupting into laughter while silently working, and Grandma reprimanding Fernando, a new Ecuadoran employee, for asking about his pay during a lesson on how to properly cut pumpkins.

A. Carmen Laughs, Grandma Scolds, and Fernando Cuts Pumpkins

In late December, the mood of Grandma's restaurant was tranquil and light. Grandma had decorated the restaurant with wallpaper pictures of green hills and gardens from Korea, and there were Christmas lights around the restaurant and adjacent supermarket, brightening the atmosphere. Customers ate their hot soups and meat *bulgogi*, sipped fishcake broth soup and savory sour radish *kimchi*. The newly acquired television stood above the food display case, streaming images of Korean porridge dishes and soups served by Grandma. I became hungry when I saw the *kimbap*, my favorite food at the restaurant, neatly arranged in the glass case behind the counter. Carmen, an Ecuadoran female worker, stood in her usual place by the entrance of the store, shaping dumplings carefully in her hands on a plastic mat, surrounded by bowls of dough and dumpling fillings- pork, *kimchi*, and other seasoned vegetables. Every day, Carmen carefully and quickly packs small portions of dough with filling, creating dozens of dumplings in a single hour. She does this quietly, occasionally lifting her gaze to observe her surroundings. She has listened to Koreans speak around her at the restaurant for 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, for over 6 years.

Sometimes, while shaping dumplings in silence, Carmen begins to laugh out loud for seemingly no reason. The first time I observed this, I was confused until I realized she had been listening to the Koreans around her tell a funny story and was actually laughing at the punch line. I had missed the joke, and Carmen had been able to participate in it, communicating her membership in the group simply by working in silence and chiming in the laughter at the appropriate time. Carmen is not alone in her spontaneous laughter that erupts from silence. Other Latino workers around Koreatown have reported instances when they are listening to Koreans tell funny stories around them, and can't help but laugh at their jokes, sometimes

creating an awkward pause in Koreans who realize the Latino had been listening –and understanding- what they were talking about the entire time.

Antonio, another Korean restaurant worker in Flushing describes his experience laughing along with Koreans and startling them in the process:

Antonio: Hay veces yo vengo en el bus, y vienen hablando los Coreanos, platicando entre ellos mismos, “ahora yo me dormí así, y tenía la pata...” y esto y esto, y yo empiezo reír. Y ellos no piensan, porque me ven así, que yo los entiendo. Dicen una mala palabra y yo les entiendo.

Antonio: There are times when I'll be on the bus, and Koreans are talking, having conversation with each other, “I fell asleep like this, and I had my foot that way,” this and that, and I start to laugh. Because they see me this way [a Latino appearance] they don't think I would understand them. They say bad words and I understand them.

Carmen's spontaneous laughter, like Antonio's, indicates an understanding of surrounding conversation that would otherwise go unnoticed. Appreciating Korean's humor in the right way and at the right time is a communicative gesture that is learned over time. Although it may startle Koreans initially, once they know a Latino in their presence may be following along and understanding their conversations, Latinos subtly become incorporated as peripheral conversation participants. They may also become increasingly well-respected for their abilities to understand Korean without having been directly instructed.

On the evening I observed Carmen laughing, the restaurant staff worked in a quiet, coordinated rhythm. Grandma, dressed in her usual black dress/frock, held a conversation in Korean with customers in the adjacent room. In the kitchen behind the food counter, Grandma 2 (a female Korean cook in her late 60's) maneuvered around and gave cooking directions to Diego and Daniela, the Mexican and Ecuadoran kitchen assistants beside her. I sat near the counter and observed the workers move around. Their eyes were fixed on their work and their hands were busy tossing fried seaweed noodle rolls and battered squid into fryers containing hot

oil, and stirring spicy *dukbokki* (rice cake noodle soup). Grandma 2 frequently utters short Spanish phrases such *come eso? come mucho eso?* (do you eat this? do you eat this much?) or *cocina dos, ahora rápido* (Cook two, now, quickly). Grandma 2 sometimes asks Diego or Daniela to get more water to boil on the stove by saying *mas agua, mas agua* (more water, more water). Diego quietly obliges and fills a bucket of water at the sink. Latinos nod or smile in response to Grandma 2 and go about their business.

Shortly after I heard Carmen laugh spontaneously, Grandma appeared from the back room with an oven roasted sweet potato in her hand and handed it to me. She said “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year” in English, then uttered something else in Korean to her workers which I couldn’t understand. The sweet potato was warm, sweet, and delicious. Grandma stood next to me and asked me in English if it tasted sweet: “sweet?” I responded to her in Spanish and said *delicioso* (delicious), then gave her thumbs up to show my approval. She responded “good” and nodded her head. Grandma 2 walked up to me, stood next to my table and asked if I wanted *kimchi*: “*kimchi?*” I responded “yes, please” and she then asked me if I wanted *napa* (napa cabbage) or “radishy?” (Grandma and Grandma 2 often add a Y sound after radish). I replied that I wanted radish *kimchi*. I like the sweet and bitter taste of radish *kimchi*, as well as its manageable size which makes it easy to eat with chopsticks. While eating my *kimchi*, I realized my chopstick skills had improved since I began hanging out and eating at Grandma's. I had better control over the slippery metal chopsticks offered at Grandma's. I could actually pick up my food without worrying it would fall apart on my plate, or clothing, before reaching my mouth.

While eating, I observed silently and watched the staff. My own silence was instructive. I listened to the crescendos and drops in the many Korean voices around me. I understood only a

few words, but I associated them with actions and activities around me such as pointing at a specific food and talking about it, or patterns in greetings or exclamations that repeated over and over and became recognizable. That evening, I saw Fernando, an Ecuadoran worker for the first time. He wore a bright yellow, red, and blue Ecuadoran soccer shirt under an apron. He stepped into the open side room where Grandma was preparing, packaging, and selling food to customers at the window facing the parking lot. Fernando has been in the United States for 9 years. He speaks Quechua (his first language) and Spanish, and has learned “a little” Korean and English during his time in Koreatown. He left his previous Korean restaurant job because he felt Korean employers did not treat him respectfully. Although he says the long hours are tough, he prefers his job at Grandma’s restaurant a lot more than his previous workplace. Daniela, the other kitchen assistant at Grandma’s, worked with Fernando at his previous job and encouraged him to come to Grandma’s when an opening became available. Fernando enjoys eating Korean food and tells me he has also learned to prepare and cook Korean cuisine through his years of working in Korean restaurants.

Fernando sat on the floor beside Grandma, who had carefully laid out a few pumpkins, knives, and bowls. Suddenly, in a loud exasperated voice, Grandma began to scold Fernando about work schedule and money issues:

Grandma: Espera poquitico. Ocho?

Fernando: Dame dinero

Grandma: No me diga, dame dinero. Primero yo pago poquito dinero. Ten dollar, twenty dollar, entiende?

Grandma: Wait a little bit. Eight? [till 8pm]

Fernando: Give me money

Grandma: Don't tell me, give me money. At first I pay little money. Ten dollar, twenty dollar, understand?

Fernando did not respond verbally, but instead simply looked at Grandma and nodded his head. Although it sounded like Grandma was angry at Fernando for asking about his payment, I had heard her yell at other Latino and Korean staff before, for leaving things unattended or demonstrating carelessness. Thus yelling was not an unusual way for Grandma to communicate her irritation with workers. Fernando remained silent as Grandma attempted to dictate Fernando's schedule and how much she would pay him for his work. When he inquired about his pay, she commanded him *no me diga* (don't tell me), instructing him not to speak. In this way, she has taught Fernando that it is unacceptable to question her authority on the matter of schedules and pay, which she controls. Most Korean employers who hire Latino and Korean undocumented workers in Koreatown are invested in instructing their workers on how to remain quiet about pay and hours, which works to the benefit of employers who can ignore state mandated hour and wage provisions.

While listening and observing Grandma and Fernando's interaction, I continued to eat my *kimbap*, fried shrimp, and radish *kimchi*. Fernando crouched down beside Grandma who began teaching him how to peel and cut the pumpkins for her popular pumpkin soup:

Grandma: Ven. Firma. Calabaza, entiende? Firma, firma. Araso?(알았어?) Firma aqui. Entiende? Todo, todo último, entiende?

Grandma: Come. Firm. Pumpkin, understand? Firm, firm. Understand? Firm here. Understand? Everything, everything til the last [all of it], understand?

During this interaction, Grandma grabs a knife and pumpkin, showing Fernando how to grip and cut the pumpkin. She watches Fernando cut his own pumpkin, and then instructs him to hold the pumpkin firmly. She uses the word "firma" as a simplification of *firmente*, or firmly. Even though it is the "wrong" word in Spanish (the "correct" word to use here would be *firme* not *firma*, which instead means "signature" in Spanish), it is close enough to the right word that

Fernando would likely understand her intended meaning. She asks him repeatedly if he understands what she is saying, and he nods his head yes while cutting the pumpkin. She asks *entiende?* (the Spanish translation for “understand?”) followed by the Korean translation of “understand” - *araso?* [알았어?].

He silently communicates his understanding and abilities by watching Grandma and cutting the pumpkins on his own. Latino workers at her restaurant frequently use eye contact, a nod, or smile, and other gestures and movements to demonstrate they acknowledge Korean’s directions, although it is unclear if they actually understand what Koreans are saying in every case. Proving “full understanding” is often unnecessary because Grandma will move onto the next task if workers can successfully convince her that they know what she’s talking about. Eventually, Latino workers must do more than just “pretend” to understand her directions, because she frequently returns to assess and verify if they actually carried out her request according to her expectations.

By asking Fernando (in Spanish) if he understands her directions, and then providing the translation of “understand” in Korean, she is instructing him not only how to properly cut the pumpkin, but also how to understand and recognize a new word in Korean. She will repeat this word many times until Fernando understands the Korean and English words for “understand.” Choosing to speak Spanish and Korean indicates that she is trying to establish the best method for communicating with Fernando who is new at the restaurant. She only spends a few minutes (if at all) to teach workers like Fernando how to do their jobs. Their competence is put to the test in the immediate situation, whether or not workers are prepared or experienced. If workers learn how to properly do their jobs in the short lesson she provides, they will earn her trust for that particular task and will likely be assigned more work on days that follow. Indeed, I noticed

Fernando prepping vegetables at Grandma's restaurant in subsequent weeks. By keeping him silent and "checking" his knowledge, she has created an orderly sequence of events which is carried out nearly every day. Her expectations of workers are based on what they can do with their hands and how well they follow her orders and appear to "understand" her directions.

Even though everyone at the restaurant participates in orderly silence, Koreans are heard much more frequently than Latinos. The structure and orderly sequence of work activities at Grandma's and other Korean workplaces also creates another kind of linguistic silencing. On the occasions when Latinos do speak with each other, they do so in Spanish. Despite the fact that at least three of her Latino employees are from Ecuador and speak Quechua, I have never heard Quechua spoken at Grandma's restaurant. At least a third of my informants in Koreatown reported the ability to speak an indigenous language of Latin America, such as Kaqchikel, Quechua, and Nahuatl.

These workers seldom speak their native languages at the workplace, although they claim to practice it with other native speakers outside of work (at home, in other community settings). They choose to speak Spanish instead when surrounded by other Latinos and Koreans. The exception to this rule is Ricardo, the Korean deli worker who occasionally makes the effort to teach his Korean coworkers a few words in Kaqchikel. When writing down the Korean words he has learned at work, he uses Kaqchikel orthography to pronounce Korean. Although these native languages might not be *heard*, some workers still find ways to incorporate and utilize these language resources while learning to communicate at the workplace.

C. Learning the Rules of Communication at a Korean Employment Agency

I obtained my own lesson on the importance of silence as a communicative strategy shortly after I embarked on a quest to find part time employment using Korean employment

agencies. My participation as an outsider and job-seeker allowed me to understand the restrictions and rules involved in communicating with Korean agency employees. These rules are important to understand because almost all of my informants had experience with Korean employment agencies, which often serve as gateways or channels into Koreatown for Latino immigrants in New York City.

Being successfully connected with job opportunities also depends on how a job-seeker communicates with Korean agency employees, and how they respond to Koreans' questions and requests. After I was kicked out of a Korean employment agency for asking too many questions, I learned that getting a job in Koreatown isn't as simple as asking Koreans for available job openings. In the following section, I describe my learning process as a newcomer to the Korean employment agency system, and how I was taught by a Guatemalan immigrant named Ricardo about proper ways of behaving and speaking in employment agencies.

I found my first Korean employment agency while walking around Koreatown in Queens. The name of the business was written in Korean, but underneath the Korean was a bilingual English-Spanish sign that read "employment agency/*agencia de empleo*." I walked inside to inquire about getting a job, and was greeted by a Korean woman who spoke to me in English and asked me to take a seat. I told her I was looking for a part time job, and she informed me that the only available jobs were full time positions in Korean hair salons. I was interested in finding work in a restaurant or supermarket because I wanted to better understand food businesses similar to those which employ the Latinos immigrants in my study.

I realized I was being offered the hair salon job because of my gender- supermarket and restaurant work is usually offered to men. I decided to move on and explore my options elsewhere. Down the street I found another Korean employment agency with a bilingual sign

advertising services in English and Spanish. I walked inside and was greeted by a Korean woman who appeared to be between the ages of 40 and 50, and a younger Korean male in his 20's. Behind their desks I saw a sign with the Spanish phrase *vamos a trabajo* (let's go to work). It was interesting to note their use of the word *trabajo*, or work. The verb *trabajar* was not conjugated "correctly" on the agency board because *trabajo* is a noun. Therefore, it should read *vamos a trabajar*, but the message is still clear.

The words "restaurants" and "markets" were also written on the board, indicating the kinds of jobs available to job-seekers. In English, I asked the female employee who appeared to be in charge if she had any available part time positions in restaurants or supermarkets. She replied in English and asked me what kind of work experience I had. I told her I had cashier experience and she informed me there were only full time jobs available. She asked for my phone number and told me she would call me back if any opportunity came up.

The day after my first visit, I got a call back from the employment agency. I answered the phone in Spanish and a male voice responded in Spanish. He told me there were some jobs available for me and that I should go back to the agency office in order to find out more about the jobs. I went back to the office the same day and sat with the same Korean woman and her younger male coworker. I told them I had received a phone call and the young Korean male spoke up and said it was he who had called. I was a little surprised because his Spanish on the telephone had been very good. I hardly detected an "accent" in his Spanish pronunciation and he had been able to carry a conversation with me in Spanish comfortably. Yet once in the office I spoke with them in English- my "Standard American English" dialect, mostly because they had initiated the conversation with me in English first. I inquired about the jobs and I was given a form to fill out.

After filling out some of my contact information on the form, I read the fine print where a signature was required. The male explained in English that I had to pay upfront in order to get the address and information of a potential employer. However, the contract fine print (in English) stated that the employment agency should get paid only if the client is successfully hired. I asked the male why I should give him money upfront if the contract stated I should only pay him after getting a job. He responded “that’s how the system works,” and that they wouldn’t be able to provide me with any information unless I gave them money. The Korean woman asked her coworker a question in Korean, to which he responded in Korean. She then reiterated in English what her coworker had explained to me.

I restated my objection to signing something which did not reflect the actual policies of the employment agency. This angered the Korean woman, who told me that if I didn’t like how it works then I should go somewhere else. I agreed and she snatched up my contract and threw it in the garbage. Surprised and annoyed, I asked that she give me the contract back because it had my contact information, which I felt uncomfortable leaving in their hands. At this point the Korean woman was livid and yelled that I could not have the contract; she then yelled in Korean and fished my contract out of the garbage then sent it through the shredder.

I took this as my cue to leave, so I walked out feeling a little frightened and curious about why they had been so sensitive about the whole thing. I had even tried to negotiate and give them half of my money to get the information, but their response was so cold and unfriendly that I chose not to insist on the issue any further. Disappointed and rejected, I decided to consult my friend Ricardo to get his perspective on what had gone wrong. Ricardo is a 25 year old undocumented Guatemalan immigrant who lives in Corona and has worked in Korean businesses for nearly 5 years. When I first met him, he was working in a Korean deli down the street from

my apartment in Flushing, Queens (he now works in a Korean deli in Manhattan). I became friends with Ricardo by hanging out at his deli during the late night shift and talking to him on his walks to the subway after work. Ricardo and I have had many deep conversations about his life as an undocumented immigrant. While walking around, sharing meals, and riding the subway together, he has given me insight into how many immigrants in New York City see their time working in the U.S. as a process. They understand that being an undocumented immigrant in Koreatown involves a lot of hard work and perseverance.

By consulting Ricardo for advice, I was doing what Latino newcomers do all the time when they face uncertainty: seek expert knowledge and consolation from a more experienced immigrant worker. Ricardo has a seemingly endless supply of optimism, which comes through when he talks about his life as an immigrant in Koreatown. Ricardo is an “expert” in the sense that he can skillfully navigate relations with both Latino and Korean coworkers, teach and train newcomers with ease, and obtain the goals he has set out for himself during his time in New York. Ricardo has a successful record of working with Korean employers. Whenever his boss (a chain deli owner) decides to move store locations, he always takes Ricardo with him. He is affectionately known by customers and coworkers as the friendly worker who makes savory sandwiches, salads, and Korean dishes.

Ricardo is proud of his work accomplishments, and frequently goes above and beyond Koreans’ expectations. He makes the effort to speak and learn Korean, develops new bilingual (Spanish-English) menus for his deli station without being asked by his bosses to do so, remembers clients’ food orders, and greets everyone with a smile. He confidently interacts with customers and coworkers, unafraid to make mistakes while speaking English or Korean. He has helped many undocumented Latinos figure out how to do their jobs and stay positive through the

process. I knew he would be a valuable source of information on the peculiarities of gaining entry into the Koreatown labor market.

Therefore, I asked Ricardo to help explain why I had been kicked out of the employment agency. I knew he could provide me with suggestions on how to navigate the system and improve my chances of being hired by Koreans, because he had used Korean employment agencies successfully in the past. I also asked Ricardo to take me to the Korean employment agency where he had gone to find work several years before. During our conversation on the 7 train, Ricardo informed me that Korean agencies commonly withhold information about job opportunities in order to get money from immigrants in need of work. Immigrants who pay for information about the location of prospective employers are not always hired. They may discover they don't like the job, or employers may decide they don't want to hire the worker for a number of reasons (already hired someone else, has insufficient work experience, doesn't understand enough Korean or English, etc.).

However, if the job-seeker returns to the employment agency and asks for a refund after being denied the job, in most occasions he will be rejected and told to wait until he is contacted about a different opportunity. Ricardo explained that I had caused trouble by asking too many questions. I hadn't followed the "rules" because I spoke too much and stood up for myself instead of just signing the paper and giving them money. He explained that Latinos who go to these employment agencies, just as he had once done, are often in desperate need of work and are not in a position to argue over the terms of the contract. All they hope for is that they get a job quickly, with as little fuss as possible. This works out for Koreans who are weary of legal troubles involved with frequently channeling undocumented Latinos into Koreatown jobs. In the following conversation, Ricardo explains that Koreans have learned that if they give information

about job location before charging a fee, Latinos might go to the business themselves, rendering employment agency useless. For both parties to get what they want (jobs and money), these agencies silently withhold information and require silent cooperation from clients.

Karen: Me echaron de la agencia de empleo

Ricardo: Donde, allá en Flushing?

Karen: Si, son todos Coreanos. que trabajan ahí.

Ricardo: Mmm.

Karen: Yo dije, primero dígame donde es [el trabajo], no? Y después me dijeron no, no te vamos a decir hasta que tu nos pagas.

Ricardo: Si tu pagas, ahí. te van a decir

Karen: Pero si yo quiero saber dónde es...antes que te doy el dinero

Ricardo: Pero si te dicen donde es, tu vas a decir, ah okay, ahorita regreso, no?

Karen: (Laughter) ya conocen...

Ricardo: Ya conocen...así es la agencia...es como un cajero automático

Karen: Es como un cajero automático?

Ricardo: Si, tu pagas, y si no...

Karen: They threw me out of the employment agency

Ricardo: Where, in Flushing?

Karen: Yes, they're all Koreans who work there.

Ricardo: Mmm.

Karen: I said, first tell me where it is [the job], no? And then they said no, we won't say anything until you pay us.

Ricardo: If you pay them, they'll tell you on the spot

Karen: But if I want to know where the job is...before I give the money

Ricardo: But if they tell you where it is, you're going to say, ah okay, I'll be right back, no?

Karen: (Laughter) they already know [the trick]

Ricardo: They know, that's how the agency is...it's like an ATM machine

Karen: Like an ATM machine?

Ricardo: Yeah, you pay, and if not...

I tell Ricardo I would like a job in a supermarket or restaurant, possibly as a cashier. He tells me it would be difficult to find a position as a cashier, and then jokingly boasts that he is a manager at his deli- a higher position than a cashier. I tell him I'm ignorant about how to communicate with Koreans in employment agencies in order to get a job in Koreatown. He then warns me not to ask too many questions in the next employment agency because Koreans will

assume that I expect to be paid an hourly minimum wage. Thus part of my silence is meant to convey the fact I would be willing to accept whatever wages employers are willing to offer. Ricardo then gently teases me by suggesting that I wouldn't be able to endure 12 hour work days, which are commonplace in Koreatown.

Ricardo: Cashier casi difícil. Te dicho yo soy manager

Karen No se que decir ni que hablar

Ricardo: Si preguntas mas, piensan que pagan la hora...

Karen: Si quiero trabajar un rato, para ver

Ricardo: Un rato pero son 12 horas

Karen: Si, esta bien, yo lo haría

Ricardo: (laughter)

Karen: Sábados y domingos...

Ricardo: Ya no vas a tener descansos.

Ricardo: Cashier, it's difficult [to find]. I've told you I'm a manager

Karen: I don't know what to say or how to talk [at the agency]

Ricardo: If you ask more questions, they think you expect them to pay by the hour

Karen: I want to work for some time, to see [what it's like]

Ricardo: Some time, but it's 12 hours [work days]

Karen: Yes, that's okay, I would do it

Ricardo: (laughter)

Karen: Saturdays and Sundays...

Ricardo: You won't have time to rest anymore.

During our walk to the employment agency he had used years before, Ricardo points out several Latinos standing beside vans on the street in front of the agency. He tells me they are waiting to be hired for moving jobs. Another Latino walked past us and mumbled *tengo social* (I have social security numbers for sale) in Ricardo's ear. Ricardo then said to me, *tienen social, tienen ID's, tienen de todo* (they [Latinos standing outside] have social, they have ID's, they have everything). I realized that on a single corner, there were people whose job is to get other people jobs (employment agency workers and social security dealers), people seeking jobs (myself and others seeking work at the employment agency), people with jobs working for others (Ricardo

and other employed individuals), people making their own jobs (the movers with vans), and people whose job is to potentially swindle others without jobs.

Heading into the employment agency, Ricardo shares some advice with me about how Korean employment agencies work:

Karen: Entonces hoy solo tengo que dar mi información y decir, esto es lo que estoy buscando?

Ricardo: Mmhmm.

Karen: Y si tienen algo, me llaman?

Ricardo: [Nods]

Karen: Bueno, no hay que pagar hoy verdad?

Ricardo: No

Karen: No, verdad? Okay

[Enter employment agency]

Karen: Hablo en Inglés o Español.?

Ricardo: En Español. Aquí las muchachas saben Español.

Karen: So I just have to give my information and say, this is what I am looking for?

Ricardo: Mmhmm.

Karen: And if they have [a job] they will call me?

Ricardo: [Nods]

Karen: Okay, I don't have to pay today right?

Ricardo: No

Karen: No, right? Okay

[Enter employment agency]

Karen: Should I speak in English or Spanish?

Ricardo: In Spanish. The girls here speak Spanish.

During our visit to his old employment agency, Ricardo sat beside me while I inquired about jobs at the front desk. The Korean woman spoke English to me, and I responded in English, and so did Ricardo. We were told there was a supermarket job available, and if I paid the fee she would tell me where to go. Ricardo advised me that we could return for more information after checking out options at other agencies. Ricardo has learned that there are multiple Korean agencies serving Latinos, and not all of them are equally well-connected to employer networks in Koreatown. He suggested we “shop around” and see what other agencies

had to offer. Ricardo and I left the employment agency and returned to Flushing to have lunch at my apartment. He agreed to do a small “anthropology” experiment with me. We decided to call the employment agency where I had been kicked out the previous day. I was curious how they would respond to a Latino male who was competent in the “language” of employment agencies in Koreatown. I provided Ricardo with some limited instructions- simply inquire about the available jobs and pretend to be looking for a job.

In the following conversation, the Korean woman who ripped up my contract answered the phone in English (EA), and Ricardo responds in Spanish, to which she then answers in Spanish:

EA: Hello, okay?

Ricardo: Hola

EA: Yeah, hi, hola.

EA: Hello, okay?

Ricardo: Uh..tiene trabajo?

EA: De que?

Ricardo: De...delivery o dishwasher?

EA: Si tengo. Delivery o dishwasher.

Ricardo: Oh...

EA: Dishwasher tengo. Caminar.

Ricardo: Cuanto paga?

EA: Ahora viene. Cuatro cientos.

Ricardo: Y dishwasher cuanto paga?

EA: 350 mas propina. Delivery.

Ricardo: Oh...donde?

EA: Lava plato 400.

Ricardo: Y cuanto hora? Cuanta hora?

EA: Doce hora, es todo. Doce hora.

Ricardo: Oh, doce hora.

EA: Mm.

Ricardo: Okay. Mañana o tarde?

EA: Mañana a las dos cero. Hoy viene, hoy Miércoles. Mañana a las dos cero. Adelante viene, okay?

Ricardo: Okay. What's the address la agencia, Como la dirección?

*EA: *** Street.*

Ricardo: Oh okay, gracias.

(Hang up phone)

(Karen and Ricardo both laugh)

Karen: Ves que habla bien?

Ricardo: Nah, como. (mocking laughter)

Karen: Y como aprendió?

Ricardo: Si, esos son muy inteligentes...puros cojones (laughter)

EA: Hello, okay?

Ricardo: Hi

EA: Yeah, hi, hello.

Ricardo: You have work?

EA: What kind?

Ricardo: Of...delivery or dishwasher?

EA: Yes I have. Delivery or dishwasher.

Ricardo: Oh

EA: Dishwasher I have. Walk.

Ricardo: How much does it pay?

EA: Come now. Four hundred.

Ricardo: And how much does dishwasher pay?

EA: 350 plus tip. Delivery.

Ricardo: Oh. Where?

EA: Dishwasher 400.

Ricardo: And how many hour? How many hour?

EA: 1 2 hour. That's all. 12 hour.

Ricardo: Oh, twelve hour.

EA: mm.

Ricardo: Okay. Early or late?

EA: Tomorrow at two zero. Today come, today Wednesday. Tomorrow at two zero. Before come okay?

Ricardo: Okay. What's the address the agency? What the direction?

EA: *** Street.

Ricardo: Oh, okay, thanks

(Hang up phone)

(Karen and Ricardo both laugh)

Karen: You see she can speak [Spanish] well?

Ricardo: Nah, how (mocking laughter)

Karen: And how did she learn?

Ricardo: Yea...they [Koreans] are very intelligent...such assholes (laughter).

By shifting the conversation into Spanish at the outset, Ricardo signals his identity as a Latino immigrant in search of employment. She immediately responds by code switching from English into Spanish - “hi, *hola*.” When he asks if she has available work, she answers him with *si tengo* which is the proper conjugation of the Spanish verb *tener*, to have. This suggests she has sufficient experience with Spanish to communicate using the “correct” Spanish in response to his question. However, at some points through the conversation she employs the infinitive form of Spanish verbs like *caminar*, (literally meaning ‘walk’) when she is trying to say “let’s go” or “come to the employment agency.”

For example, she tells Ricardo *ahora viene* which means “coming now” but she means to tell him “come here now.” An interesting point in the conversation happens when she says *lava plato* instead of *lavar platos* (‘wash dish’ instead of ‘dishwashing’). This simplification of Spanish words is then mirrored by Ricardo, who chops off the endings of his own words in Spanish *cuanta hora?* (instead of *cuantas horas?*). There is no such word as *cuanta*, and Ricardo obviously knows this, but he detects that his Korean interlocutor is using a simplified version of Spanish. He decides to modify his own speech to more closely match her variety of Spanish. Another interesting point in the conversation comes when she says *doce hora, doce hora* which literally means “twelve hour” (instead of twelve hours) and Ricardo once again mirrors her speech patterns, by simplifying his Spanish too.

This conversation demonstrates that Korean employment agency employees can make sense with Latino immigrants in Koreatown, and vice-versa. Had Ricardo wanted the job, he could have walked to the agency, paid the fee, and been sent to the employer in Koreatown on the same day. He understood her instructions clearly even though she made some “mistakes” in her Spanish. She responded swiftly to his inquiries, almost as though the conversation were

routine for her. When I point out that the woman's Spanish was good, he positions himself as more knowledgeable Spanish speaker- then grudgingly acknowledges that Koreans "are very intelligent" although they can act like "such assholes" sometimes.

Chapter 6: *La Ensalada De Lenguas* (The Mixed Language Salad)

In the previous chapter, I discussed what's at stake for Latinos in making sense of their local workplace environments, and how some deal with the challenges that arise from this *necesidad de entender* or necessity to understand. These strategies included contextualization, the application of a single word to describe multiple situations, silence, imitation, verification, assessment, and positioning/honorifics. This chapter will explore *la ensalada de lenguas*, (mixed language salad): the language varieties that emerge from Latino-Korean contact at the workplace. I will present language glossaries, or vocabulary lists created by Latino workers in three supermarkets in Koreatown. I demonstrate the kinds of language a group of Latinos develop during their time working in Koreatown, and the strategies they use to achieve mutual intelligibility with the resources they have.

I use Juan's term *ensalada de lenguas* (a salad of languages/mixed language salad) as a way to describe the language mixing that goes on at work. This term is appropriate because it comes from a worker who is experienced in mixing English, Korean, and Spanish on a daily basis. His term also incorporates the term "salad," a reference to his own daily work in the produce section of the Korean supermarket where he works. It demonstrates how ways of talking (and ways of describing this talk) about work language emerge from the activities and materials of the workplace. Other words used by Latino workers to describe language mixing at the workplace were *mezcla* (mix) or un "revuelto de lenguas" (scrambled languages).

Ricardo also explains how he "plays" with Koreans, using his mix of four languages:

Ricardo: En el trabajo uso Inglés, Español, Coreano, y ahora mezclo Kaqchikel...para jugar con ellos, yo mezclo los cuatro...para jugar con ellos digo "¿La üt awäch?" y dicen borago?! (뭐라고?!) y yo les digo "I said, how are you"

Ricardo: At work I use English, Spanish, Korean, and now I mix Kaqchikel...to play with them, I mix the four [languages]...to play with them I say "How are you" [in Kaqchikel] and they say "what?!" [in Korean] and I tell them, "I said, how are you" [in English]).

When asked how Koreans speak with him at work, Ricardo describes the process of exchange and mixing of languages, depending on the language resources other workers have:

Ricardo: Los que no saben Inglés, me comunican en Coreano, y mas o menos yo tengo idea lo que dicen, porque yo entiendo, por ejemplo...es como mímica. Por ejemplo, dicen 'quieres esto' y me enseñan, por ejemplo "quieres esto" uh huh, uh huh, "yogi" que significa yo quiero y te voy a dar....ok, te voy a dar, okay. Y ellos también aprenden Español., y yo aprendo de ellos, a intercambiar lenguajes. No es tan lejos de que uno aprende, no es tan lejos, solo es uno mismo, es como salir a recoger un poco de aprendizaje, y si eres bueno lo guardas, lo aprendes, y es suyo.

Ricardo: The ones that don't speak English, communicate with me in Korean, and I have an idea, more or less, what they are saying, because I understand, for example...it's like mimicry. For example, they say "do you want this?" and they teach me, for example, "do you want this" [and I respond] uh-huh, uh-huh, "yogi" signifies [in Korean] that I want something and I'm going to give it to you...[then I understand] okay, [it means] I'm going to give it to you, okay. And they also learn Spanish, and I learn from them, to exchange languages. The process to understand is not a long one, understanding is never far, it just depends on oneself, it's like going out and picking up some learning, and if you're good you'll keep it, you'll learn it, and it's yours.

Ricardo's playful approach to language includes teaching Koreans words from his own native language in Kaqchikel, which creates instructive moments of confusion with Korean coworkers, who ask Ricardo (in Korean) for clarification, which he provides (in English). At his workplace, close relations among workers help this language mixing flourish. Through *aprendizaje*, (the learning process), Ricardo's *mezcla* (mix) becomes *suyo* (his own). Not only do various workers deploy their *mezclas* to communicate, they also "pick up" resources on the way, re-appropriate them, and use them in personally meaningful ways. As these languages become one's own, they are incorporated into expanding repertoires, shaping new ways of speaking.

Orlando, a Mexican worker employed as a kitchen assistant at Seoul House, a Korean restaurant in Flushing, also explains how he frequently practices mixing languages at work:

Karen: Has aprendido unas palabras?

Orlando: Si he aprendido unas palabras. Lo que esta es mezclado los idiomas, se practica poco el Inglés, el Español., el Coreano, para comunicarse uno con ellos.

Karen: Aprendiste algo en tu trabajo que te gusta?

Orlando: Si, la cocina, me ha agrado mucho.

Karen: Cocinas comida Coreana?

Orlando: Es Coreano, al principio fue difícil., son diferentes ingredientes y los nombres, sabores, los vegetales, todo eso, son muy diferentes...ya se los productos en los mercados. Los idiomas son mezclados porque todo lo mezclan todo...decir “ya no mas a la casa” dicen “finito” “no mas casa” o algo verdad, cosas que uno por lo menos viene también, acostumbrarse...así como ellos también. Nosotros aprendemos mucho de ellos. Eso es lo que uno aprende de ellos.

Karen: Have you learned some words [in Korean]?

Orlando: Yes I've learned some words. The way it is, the languages are mixed, one practices a little English, Spanish, Korean, to communicate with them [Koreans].

Karen: Have you learned anything at work that you like to do?

Orlando: Yes, [working in] the kitchen. It has pleased me a lot.

Karen: Do you cook Korean food?

Orlando: It's Korean, at first it was difficult, the ingredients are different and the names, flavors, the vegetables, everything, they were so different...now I'm familiar with the products in the markets. The languages are mixed because they mix everything...they say “ya no mas a la casa” (no more now go home) they say “finito” (finished) or something right, things that you get used to over time...and just like they learn from us, we learn a lot from them. That is what you learn from Koreans.

For Orlando, practicing language with Koreans is intertwined with his work as a kitchen assistant. While learning how to cook he has encountered new words that have helped him identify Korean ingredients and flavors. He describes feeling familiar enough with Korean products that he can comfortably find them in Korean markets when necessary. He is also accustomed to Koreans mixing Spanish phrases into daily conversations with kitchen workers.

In the following section, I focus on workers who were willing to share their writing and language experiences with me, in their own ways, in the particular moments they found themselves able to produce Korean. In order to gather a sense of what Latino workers *do* know about Korean, especially among those who are rarely heard speaking it, language glossaries were an interesting method of discovery. Tomas Kalmar's *Illegal Alphabets and Adult Biliteracy: Latino Migrants Crossing the Linguistic Border* (2001) stands as one of the only works that presents language “glossaries” or vocabulary lists created by Latino immigrant workers in the

United States. In their attempt to speak English, Mexican farm workers in Cobden, Illinois played a language “game” of matching unfamiliar English sounds with familiar Spanish sounds to produce hybrid words, written in the Latin alphabet, which are neither one language or another, but a “grey no-man's land” (2001:3) of language. Kalmar also notes how this practice of translating and figuring out new languages using one’s own languages is a game that has been played by anthropologists, language scholars, philosophers, missionaries, and many others.

The grey space is what language scholars have called “contact varieties,” “jargons,” or even “pre-pidgins.” Whatever the name, the phenomena is the same: people of different geographical origins coming together for a sustained period of time and figuring out how to communicate with each other, exchanging and mixing their verbal and nonverbal communicative resources in novel ways. Some words in the glossaries seem to exist in a place that Kalmar calls the “no-man’s land” in between languages. These are words that originated in the approximation of known sounds, (much like JUELLULIB in Kalmar) but which do not seem to correspond with or originate from any particular language.

I discovered a few of these words while working with a Korean translator (a Korean language teacher born and raised in Korea) who examined Latino workers’ glossary lists. I asked her to take a look at the terms on the list and identify words that did not seem to correspond with any known Korean word, but which had been identified by Latinos as examples of Korean terms. Where did they come from? For example, the word *chandory* confused my Korean translator. She could not explain why the word appeared on Juan’s list of Korean terms, since it did not sound like any Korean word she knew. When I asked Juan where the word *chandory* came from, and why it appeared on his glossary list under “Korean” terms, he could not recall or remember where the word originated. He simply remembers using the word and being (seemingly)

understood by a Korean person about its meaning. There were several mysterious words, according to my Korean translator, principally because they did not resemble Korean on paper, and she was an outsider to the context where the words had achieved local validity. Without Juan there to pronounce and explain the meaning of his particular Korean vocabulary, she was unable to understand words derived from her own native language.

These words included in the following glossaries were never taught to workers in school. Workers acquired these words through their interactions with Koreans at the workplace. These lists are examples of how Latinos hear and interpret their sounds, but they are much more complicated than that. When talking about these lists, many Latinos are shy and become hesitant to assert their knowledge of the language. Some claim they did much of this learning on their own, while others viewed Korean coworkers as the primary source of their language learning. They did not go to school to learn these words, and a ‘formal’ teacher was never in charge of correcting or making sure they were “right.” Thus many workers convey a sense of apprehension about whether or not their knowledge is “good enough.” Also, the words are derived directly from their workplace interactions which may not have always been positive. They may have liked talking to their Korean coworkers, but hated their jobs and their boss. They have mixed feelings about the workplace, just like most other employed human beings.

The glossaries were written by 5 different Latino immigrant workers in Koreatown. Four out of five were written by supermarket employees, all employed in the same supermarket company (although in different chain store locations). Rafael and his coworker are employees at the same chain store location; Juan and Santos are employed in different chain store locations. Except for Rafael and his coworker, none of the workers have met each other. The fifth worker, Ricardo, works as a cook and kitchen assistant in a Korean deli-restaurant. Ricardo is

Guatemalan, and the others are Mexican. Juan and Gerardo graduated high school (in Mexico and Guatemala), the others have a middle-school level education from Mexico. Juan has the most years of experience in Korean businesses, followed by Santos, Ricardo, Rafael, and his coworker. The lists are not exhaustive and they do not represent the entirety of Latino’s Korean language repertoires. These glossaries were prepared individually by Latinos and given to me as samples of their knowledge.

A. Glossaries (See Glossary Lists in Appendix)

Table 4: English Translation of Korean Terms in Latino Worker Glossaries

| Rafael | Juan | Rafael Coworker | Santos | Ricardo |
|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| It's okay | Fat | Pretty | Excuse me | Hello |
| Easy | It's okay | I love you | Grandmother | Vegetables |
| Love | Same, equal | Hello | Grandfather | Water |
| Young Lady | Cheap | A lot | Young Lady | Hi |
| Young Girl | What is this? | Thank you | Pretty | Where |
| Young Male | Little or little bit | Excuse me | Fat | Onion |
| Excuse Me | Leftover, or something is leftover | I don't know | Older woman | Egg |
| Crazy | Delicious | Grandfather | Apple | Here |
| There are none | To know, understand | Older woman | Grape | Love |
| There are | You know, understand | A little bit | Watermelon | Bean sprout |
| It's not okay | Egg | | Potato | Radish |
| No | Appetizers | | I love you | Five |
| Hello | I need the rest of the order | | | Understand |
| Fast | This one | | | Pork/Pig |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|-------------|
| I don't like it | Rebel, bad | | | Is it there |
| How is it | Boy | | | Young Lady |
| No Problem | There isn't any | | | |
| Is tired | Eat | | | |
| What's his/her/its name | Pardon, What did you say? | | | |
| Be Careful | Onion | | | |
| Where you going | Red lettuce | | | |
| Older woman | Seriously, you sure | | | |
| | Here please | | | |
| | Beef | | | |
| | Half | | | |
| | Crazy | | | |
| | Like this/Like that | | | |
| | Hi | | | |
| | One | | | |

Table 5: Korean Terms that Appear More than Once in Different Glossary Lists (English Translation and Romanization)

| English Translation | Rafael's Romanization | Juan's Romanization | Rafael's Coworker's Romanization | Santos's Romanization | Ricardo's Romanization |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Hello | Anaseo | Ano | Anaseo | | Anaseo |
| It's okay | Quenchana | Quenchana | | | |
| Love | Soran | | | | Saran |
| I love you | | | Saranjeo | Sarangeo | |
| Young Lady | Agachi | | | Agachi | Agashi |
| Excuse Me | Chancama | | Chancamano | Chancamanio | |
| Crazy | Vichoso | Michosoo | | | |
| There are none | Ocoo | Oxoo | | | |
| Older woman | Ayuma | | Ajuma | Ayuma | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------|--|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| Little bit | | Chocon | Choco | | |
| Understand | | Araa/Araayoo | | | Araso |
| Egg | | Keraan | | | Igeran |
| Onion | | Yaanpaa | | | Yanpa/ pa |
| Here | | Yoguihoo | | | Yoki/ Choqui |
| Grandfather | | | Jarabulli | Jarabuyi | |

Some words and phrases appear multiple times in different lists. For example, the terms “hello,” “love,” “crazy,” “it’s okay,” “young lady,” “excuse me,” “there are none,” “where are you going?” “older woman,” “little bit,” “understand,” “egg,” “onion,” “here,” and “grandfather” are words that appear more than once on workers’ lists. Sometimes the workers agreed on the “Romanization” or phonetic pronunciation of the Korean word: for example, the term “it’s okay” is written as “quenchana” by both Rafael and Juan, who work in different supermarkets (same chain, different locations) and have never met each other. Other words do not have perfect agreement across the lists. For example, all of the workers except Juan spelled “hello” in Korean as “anaseo.” He spells the word “ano” which is a simplified, more informal version of “anaseo,” usually appropriate only when speaking with a friend or person of equal status and age.

Thus Juan may be illustrating his familiarity with Koreans by choosing to write down the informal version of a common greeting. This is not because he doesn’t know the more formal or proper version, simply that he feels comfortable using “ano” instead of “anaseo” at work. In some places, the workers show knowledge of the differences between informal and formal versions of a word. For example, Juan writes Korean word “araso” (to understand) as both “araa” and “araayoo.” In Korean, the suffix “yo” indicates formality and is added to the end of a term when speaking toward an older person, or someone with authority. “Araa” is a simplified

version of the word, which is used in conversation with coworkers of similar age and status (as seen in the supermarket conversation in chapter 7).

Some words only differ slightly, by one or two letters, such as the term “love,” which is spelled “Során” and “Saran,” the term “I love you” which is represented as “Saranjeo” and “Sarangeo,” or “older man” which is written “agashi” versus “agachi.” “Older woman” is written with both a Y and a J: “ayuma” versus “ajuma” which represents very little difference in Spanish pronunciation (in Spanish, Y sounds exactly like J). Another example of the interchangeable Y and J appears in the Spanish Romanization of the Korean term “Grandfather” which is represented as “Jarabulli” and “Jarabuyi.”

Most of the terms on the glossaries fit into the categories of “love and compliments,” (I love you, pretty) “greetings,” (hello) “declaratives” (declarations or statements like ‘he’s tired’), “insults and jokes” (fat, crazy), “food” (egg, onion, potato), and “address terms” (young lady, grandfather). Differences in the kinds of terms that appear in each glossary are most likely a result of who the worker interacts with on a daily basis. Working in close quarters with Koreans in a kitchen versus working separately in a supermarket aisle will produce different kinds of knowledge that are reflected on the glossaries. Juan and Ricardo have the most positive and friendly relations with Koreans at the workplace. They express a “meta-awareness” of their language use, by actively playing, transforming, and explaining the nuances of different Korean words they use on a daily basis. However, even workers who have less direct contact with Korean coworkers are still surrounded by the sounds of Korean all day, and can easily produce a glossary list of terms based on this indirect style of learning.

Juan also includes an interesting section that he entitled *palabras mixtas/improvisadas* (mixed/improvised words) which he explains are combinations of Korean, Spanish, and English,

as spoken by his Korean friends and coworkers (see Appendix A). According to Jan Blommaert (2010), these combinations of “fragmented” (2010:8) bits of highly context specific local language varieties form part of the “multilingual repertoires” (2010:102) of immigrants in globalized neighborhoods, where people of diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds frequently interact. Koreans and Latinos have invented these improvised words that are useful for communication and draw on familiar language resources. For example, Juan explains that Koreans at his supermarket like to add the “o” sound at the end of these mixed words because “o” is a common ending in Korean. This observation correlates with other Latino workers observations in Koreatown, such as Antonio, who claims that Koreans frequently end words (especially verbs, requests, directives, orders) with “YO” to indicate politeness and respect. Several words in Juan’s list combine English or Spanish with an “o” ending (comer-o, help-o, free-o, hajlp-o [half-o]). These examples are also “estimations” of Koreans pronunciations; Juan uses Spanish to convey Korean and English sounds as closely as possible, forming new, improvised words or *palabras mixtas*.

B. Glossaries: Some Further Insights

The glossaries demonstrate that workers

1. Understand Korean words
2. Use Korean words on a daily basis
3. Represent Korean sounds differently depending on their background knowledge of Spanish or Kaqchikel
4. Have different levels of familiarity with Koreans
5. Can distinguish between formal and informal Korean
6. Demonstrate respect for status by using proper address terms
7. Make use of words that are common in their work environment; words are connected to work activities
8. Develop more than a strictly work-based relationship with

Koreans; play and joke with Koreans 9. Are mixing, transforming, and improvising Korean words and sounds; can identify mixed or new words 10. Show metapragmatic awareness of their language use and can explain their Korean language styles 11. Hear different styles of spoken Korean (not just differences in honorifics, also differences in age, gender, etc.) 12. Can communicate with other Latinos using their personal Romanization of Korean words- some words achieve greater currency than just the local supermarket context (*quenchana*, which could be understood as “okay” by Latinos in Koreatown who have never met each other). 13. Knowledge of Korean increases with time and experience in Koreatown.

C. Connections between Language and Work Activity

For those who may believe that undocumented immigrants and English language learners are disabled by their language inabilities, the proof of human creativity is all around, in the basic and everyday facts of life. Supermarkets carefully organize bins full of produce, shipped in from various parts of the U.S. and abroad. These colorful displays are arranged and cared for by humans who are paid to do so. As they sort through these food items they develop a way of talking about their work. They communicate through their work and about their work. And sometimes their work communicates to them and through their language. An apple, for example, can communicate many things, depending on the context and one’s relationship to apples. For a worker in charge of assorting shipments of 15 types of apples, this becomes more complicated, and more ways of talking about apples become necessary. It is complicated even more when people start wondering about your knowledge of such apples, or if your knowledge about those apples is acceptable and fitting to their standards.

The relationship is further complicated when work entails objects that are unfamiliar and with which the worker has limited or no previous experience. Instead of apples, workers may handle *kimchis*. You can ask most any Latino worker in Koreatown about kimchi, and they will describe it in a variety of ways, and describe a range of associations with it. The more interaction workers have with the object, the stronger their associations and the more expressive their vocabularies. The relation to the object and the relations the object enables, change as workers handle, taste, consume, distribute, serve, share, and talk about it with others. Food is a part of all my field sites. Everywhere I have observed restaurants and supermarkets, workers are always touching, cooking, packing, or cleaning up food.

There are hundreds of products in supermarkets, and some larger supermarkets have the resources to set up corners and stalls throughout the store for preparing, selling, advertising, and serving food to customers. For example, on Sunday at Han supermarket, at least 10 Korean female employees can be seen sitting behind tables handing out samples of food, often cooked or plated on site using ingredients and products from the supermarket. The aromas fill the aisles, where workers unpack items and stock shelves, chat with each other, listen, and sing along to Korean music on the supermarket speakers. The women at the stalls call out to customers in Korean, inviting them to try the assorted samples of meats and vegetables. I have often visited these tables, and women will smile in a friendly way and encourage me to try the samples, sometimes saying “you try” while offering up the dish.

Once, one of the female Koreans from the Grandma’s restaurant (one of my principle field sites, adjacent to the supermarket) spotted me at the table and loudly greeted me in Korean. She gave me a big hug, smiling, laughing, and speaking to me in Korean the whole time. I really didn’t know what she was saying but she was clearly happy to see me. In the end, these food

objects at the stall, and my own work (as a fieldworker in a supermarket of Korean foods) have allowed me to encounter new moments where I have come into contact with unfamiliar things of which I could make sense. And slowly, the more and more I visited these supermarkets, and all their little niches and stalls on display, I realized that almost every corner of the space has a potential for teaching people something new. There are countless opportunities for learning in these environments, and learning moments are happening all the time. One simply has to stop and look, touch, taste, feel, listen, and relate.

There are many who would argue that these spaces of learning and moments of learning are insignificant, given the larger and “more important” problems immigrants (and the politicians who have a say in the lives of these immigrants) confront on a daily basis. The point of this ethnography of communication in Koreatown, NYC is not to say that those things don’t matter. It’s about providing a different account of the stuff people say and do with each other that matters to them in those very moments of their lives. Focusing on “immigrants' problems” can itself be problematic, because it makes problems out of people instead of looking at how people themselves come up with solutions or even new spaces of participation that have evaded the “immigrant problem” debate or broader discourse.

But the learning moments are real and the things they produce are often tangible, sometimes edible. Education at work is desired and encouraged (whether or not for exploitative purposes, is a different issue). The constraints on the educative moment offer openings and opportunities to relate to the activities of everyday life in different ways. They lend complexity to our language, thus changing language at the same time. Workers transform language, sometimes because they *need* to (problem: I don’t speak Korean and I need to translate this Korean scribble on the food ticket into something I am supposed to cook in less than 10 minutes

or else the waiters and customers will become impatient with me), and other times because they *want* to.

For example, Santos, a Mexican worker in a Korean supermarket in Flushing, likes to tease Latino newcomers at work by using Korean words they don't understand. He teases them by calling them *telly* (pronounced te-ji), meaning 'fat pig' in front of his Korean coworkers. Santos deliberately makes Latinos feel like outsiders by insulting Latino newcomers using Korean words with Korean coworkers. It is not particularly clear why Santos positions fellow Latino coworkers as outsiders (there could be multiple reasons). Yet he uses Korean to communicate with workers and assert his position. During these work encounters, Santos picks up and distributes new language resources related to objects, people, and activities of his everyday life. This evolving language use is distributed among participants in situated contexts. We move and learn through and with language. Language orients us and we orient language. And sometimes, when we have the opportunity to work closely with others who are doing similar "orienting" work, the overlaps and potentialities of these new expressive forms unfold.

Chapter 7: Korean Supermarket Conversation-Latino and Korean Coworkers Make Dinner Plans

In the previous chapter, I discussed how immigrants in Koreatown make sense of their workplace environments together using available materials such as food and glossary lists. I demonstrated how they exchange and mix language resources in the process of this sense-making. I have argued that the more we observe people in their concerted efforts to orient each other, the more we can understand what language teaches us, and how people use language to teach each other. In this chapter I continue to expand on this argument by demonstrating the strategies workers in Koreatown use to work and plan activities together, deepening and transforming their relationships in the process. I will discuss how a group of Latino workers and their Korean coworker use various language resources to make dinner plans while working together at the supermarket.

I present a multilingual workplace conversation in which participants are trying to figure out what restaurant to go to, who will be responsible for paying the bill, what time of the day/week they should go out to eat, what food they should order, how to share the food, who should be invited, what the spending limit should be, and who should be in charge of calling coworkers who are invited to the dinner party. Their group can be considered a community of practice located in the supermarket aisle, working together to make dinner plans, and instructing each other at various points on the order of events and what roles each member should play in the planning process.

I have divided the conversation into five parts, to illustrate how the workers arrive at new conclusions together by instructing, questioning, and positioning each other in different ways using specific communicative strategies and linguistic resources to do so. The principle

interlocutors are Juan, Jorge, and Chino; Ernesto enters the conversation sporadically. Juan, Ernesto, and Jorge are undocumented Mexican immigrants in their early to mid-twenties. Juan has worked in the supermarket for about five years and is the most experienced Latino supermarket worker in the group. Ernesto and Jorge have worked in the supermarket for approximately two years. Chino is an undocumented Korean immigrant of Korean and Chinese descent who lived for several years in China and speaks both Korean and Mandarin. According to Juan, Chino has worked at the supermarket for approximately four years. These workers assist each other in daily activities at the supermarket, including unloading, stocking, and arranging produce and other food products in various aisles.

I chose to analyze this conversation because Juan recorded it using his iPhone while working in the produce aisle of his supermarket. He wanted to capture an ordinary conversation with workers to share with me, and he chose the topic of food to get others his coworkers involved in the conversation. It is not surprising that he chose to talk about food during this recording since they work in a supermarket and have shared many meals together in the lunchroom or around Koreatown. The Korean supermarket context (and its location in Koreatown) offers abundant food options for workers when they want to eat together. Many of these options are Korean, but there are also Chinese, Japanese restaurants, and various chain food stores within walking distance of the supermarket.

During the conversation, these coworkers tease each other about being cheap *chandory* (cheap), and try to negotiate who should pay for their next dinner outing. As they make plans together, they position each other according to who is more *chandory* and who actually has the resources to spend up to \$500 dollars in one evening. This is the average price of food and alcohol for a small group at a nearby Korean restaurant, usually consumed over the course of a 2

hour dinner gathering. The conversation participants instruct one another about who paid the previous dinner bill, who can afford their phone bill, and who is trying to devise strategies for keeping the dinner bill down (invite less people, share the meat). While playfully assessing each other, they are also assigning responsibility for the bill according to who makes the more convincing case for not having financial resources (while not appearing too *chandory* at the same time).

They each present their “cases” and suggestions, and move forward with plans by taking each other’s statements into consideration and devising strategies to avoid being responsible for paying the entire bill. Joking and addressing each other in tactful and acceptable ways, making a case for oneself, and successfully negotiating competing interests, are all skills and strategies learned with experience and time. Not all workers can successfully organize and lead an event while also passing along the responsibility for the whole bill to someone else. For the system to work in a fair way, workers carefully keep track of who assumed responsibility for the bill in the past, and who is owed a meal in return, as a sign of balanced reciprocity.

A. Educative Lessons in the Supermarket Communicative Event

| | | | |
|------|--------|---|---|
| 0:05 | Chino: | Ernesto...you <i>paga</i> xxx me hana 하나 | Ernesto...you pay xxx me one. (Ernesto...you pay, I already paid once) |
| 0:10 | Juan: | Mango hana <u>comero</u> 하나 | Mango one eat (I ate a mango) |
| 0.15 | Chino: | Ernesto...ooh | Ernesto...ooh |

| | | | |
|------|--------|--|--|
| 0.16 | Juan: | <u>Toomachi</u> <i>come</i> , bagel hana <u>comero</u> 하나 | Too much eat, bagel one eat (I ate too much, I had a bagel) |
| 0.17 | Chino: | Later me Ernesto igo large hana suwjo ara? 이거 하나 사줘 아라? | Later me Ernesto here buy me a large one? |
| 0.21 | Juan: | <u>Toomachi chandory</u> , you <u>toomachi chandory</u> | Too much cheap, you too much cheap |
| 0.25 | Chino: | Ernesto <u>chandory</u> , me <i>come</i> | Ernesto cheap, me eat |
| 0.29 | Juan: | Jorge tocate 똑같이 | Jorge with us (Jorge should come with us) |

In the first part of this conversation, Juan uses the English phrase “you pay?” to ask Ernesto if he is going to pay for the dinner outing they are planning. Their Korean coworker, El Chino, chimes in and instructs Ernesto to pay instead, by saying “you *paga*” (you pay), combining English and Spanish words. He then alternates between English and Korean and says: “me hana (하나)” (me one), indicating that Ernesto should pay for the next dinner outing because he already paid once. Juan teases Chino for eating too much, pointing out that Chino also ate a bagel (bagel hana (하나) comero). Juan uses English, Korean, and improvised words “toomachi” (too much) and “comero,” (eat) which contains the Spanish verb *comer* (to eat) and the common Korean suffix sound “o.”

Chino refers back to Ernesto (Ernesto igo (이거)) and restates his wish that Ernesto pay for his food: “buy me one large.” In this instance, Chino alternates between Korean and English

to communicate with Juan and Ernesto that he wants to go to dinner but that Ernesto should pay. Juan responds by telling Chino he is too *chandory*- their improvised word for “cheap.” Juan tells me that he often uses the word *chandory* to tease Chino and other Koreans who he perceives as being stingy with their money. In the next conversational turn, Chino responds by playfully accusing Ernesto of being the *chandory* one, then in English and Spanish states he just wants to eat- “me *come*” (me eat).

Interestingly, Chino chooses the Spanish word *come* instead of their improvised Spanish-Korean word *comero*, previously introduced by Juan. Juan playfully tests Chino’s generosity in Korean by suggesting that a new worker (their friend, Jorge) should join the party too – “Jorge tocate (똑갈애)” Chino responds with dismay at this suggestion “Aigo mwyoa (이거 뭐야)” (oh goodness, what’s this) then sticks up for himself and argues that he’s not cheap – “me no *chandory*.” Eventually, Ernesto chimes in, agreeing to pick up the bill, but on the following day: “okay tomorrow tomorrow me pay.”

Ernesto cleverly agrees to pay at a later date, which positions him as both generous and *chandory* at the same time. Jorge enters the conversation after noticing Ernesto’s attempt to pass on responsibility for the bill. Jorge asks Ernesto, in Korean, why he won’t pay the bill now: “wae jigeum? (왜 지금).” Here, Ernesto demonstrates that he comprehends Jorge’s question in Korean and responds, in both English and their improvised code, that the bill is simply too large for him to afford and that he’d rather pay later- “toomachi. I pay later.” At this point, workers have revealed their inhibitions about spending money, while also giving each other lessons on who assumed responsibility for the bill in the past, and who should pay the bill in the future.

Chino then enters into negotiation with Ernesto, admitting that although a large meal

would be good, a small meal would also be delicious too.

| | | | |
|------|--------|---|--|
| 0.49 | Chino: | Large, large kenchana...small mashiso 괜찮아 맛있어 | Large, large is good...small delicious. (Large is good, small is delicious) |
| 0.53 | Jorge: | Okay, okay small kenchana 괜찮아 | Okay, okay small is good |
| 0.55 | Juan: | Small, small kenchana 괜찮아 | Small, small is good |

Chino understands the bill can sometimes get too high and he is willing to eat a smaller meal to lessen the financial burden on Ernesto. Even though Chino concedes that a small meal would be okay with him, he is still suggesting that Ernesto should pay the bill. Chino's clever strategy positions him as a generous and considerate friend while still passing on responsibility for paying the bill. Juan, who frequently plays the role of mediator and translator at the supermarket, sides with Chino's considerate money-saving strategy, and says "small, small kenchana (괜찮아)" (small, small is good). Interestingly, by suggesting that he is content with the compromise, he is excluding himself from the responsibility of having to pay the bill himself.

Juan's position of authority is apparent in the opening part of this conversation. He accuses Chino of being cheap, and agrees that Ernesto should pick up the bill, while never being challenged or asked to contribute to the bill himself. Juan tries to settle the negotiation (his coworkers aren't cheap after all: they will eat a small dinner later, Ernesto will pay). He appears as a voice of reason, summarizing everyone's wishes in order to maintain order and come to a

conclusion. For Juan, being *chandory* is a primary inhibitor to everyone getting along and enjoying a fun dinner outside of work. The restaurant bill should be settled beforehand as a sign of formality and acknowledgment of generosity. Juan asks interlocutors in Korean, English, and Spanish-Korean to confirm that they have no problem with the arrangements discussed thus far:

1.10 Juan: Kenchana, no problem? Jorge, kenchana? It's good, no problem?
팬찮아 팬찮아 Jorge, it's good? No
cheap? Ahh
No chandory? Ahh

Juan also asserts his authority by restating that he would like Jorge to join the dinner too. This is problematic because both Chino and Ernesto have expressed concerns that the bill will be too expensive, and adding another person to the dinner party will inevitably drive up the bill. This move is intended to incite a reaction from the group, and Chino ultimately threatens to back out of the dinner party. He responds in English that he'd rather go to dinner "next Friday" instead. For these workers who earn approximately \$500 dollars per week, negotiating dinner plans is important because a bill at a Korean barbecue restaurant can exceed what they each earn in a week. Participating in the arrangements of this dinner party is an important way for workers to indicate that they want to socialize with each other, but also need to be careful about their financial resources.

Participants indicate they are comfortable and close enough to engage in conversation about money by commenting on each other's financial resources, and how they should use those resources. Insisting, instructing, and questioning others in acceptable ways allows workers to move into positions of higher status and authority. They display their knowledge and experience about acceptable ways of speaking behaving in the process. Only those who have participated in several dinner parties and kept tabs on each other's finances can use these facts as evidence in

their “case” to not pay the bill. The participants’ goal is to communicate generosity (not *chandory*-ness) without being expected to contribute to the bill. Yet the communicative event is also about workers cooperating on a joint activity and building relationships together, regardless of whether the workers end up paying for the bill together or if one person pays for the whole thing, or if they even end up going out at all.

The first part of this conversation can be divided into different instructive moves enacted by speakers, which build on previous knowledge and allow workers to arrive to new conclusions about the dinner party. Workers use Korean, English, Spanish, and Spanish-Korean, and a variety of other communicative strategies, and arrive at the conclusion that Ernesto will pay the bill for a small dinner outing. In addition to referencing locally intelligible or familiar words such as *chandory*, they engage in repetition (repeat same phrase two or more consecutive times), they ask for clarification (by questioning each other), and bring in other participants to join and contribute to the conversation.

In the first part of the conversation, participants move on to deciding when the dinner gathering should take place, and who should be in charge of organizing the actual gathering by broadcasting a formal invitation using their cellphone. This indicates that the workers are now collectively moving toward accomplishing a mutual goal: getting everyone’s physical body in the same setting, at the same time.

- | | | | |
|------|--------|---|---|
| 1.19 | Juan | Next Friday, okay? xxx kenchana 괜찮아 | Next Friday, okay? Xxx it’s good. |
| 1:25 | Chino: | You <i>habla</i> , you...you phone no where ara? 아라? | You talk, you...you phone no where you know? (You talk to |

| | | | |
|------|--------|---|--|
| | | | the others, do you know where your phone is?) |
| 1.33 | Juan | No pay, chinchá! <i>Mucho chandory</i> 진짜! | No pay, seriously! Very cheap. |
| 1.36 | Jorge: | Me too much <u>chandory</u> , me no pay igo, <i>charla</i> , 이거 <i>Santa Maria</i> , AT&T mobile, AT&T chat | Me too much cheap, me no pay here, talk, Santa Maria, AT&T mobile, AT&T chat (I'm too cheap, I didn't pay, AT&T phone service is dead, I only have AT&T chat) |
| 1.40 | Chino | AT&T neun xxx kenchana. Igeo beonho isseo. 는 괜찮아. 이거 번호 Eobseo iss-eo kenchana. 없어요있어 괜찮아 | AT&T is okay. This has phone number. You don't have a phone it's okay |

Chino and Juan plan their dinner outing for “next Friday,” repeating this phrase to each other in consecutive turns. Juan asks Chino to confirm the plans for next Friday by asking him in Korean if it’s “okay” (괜찮아). This word, pronounced *kenchana*, is the most commonly used phrase throughout the conversation, and is one of the first Korean words learned by Latinos. It was also one of the first words I learned while doing fieldwork in Koreatown. Chino tells Ernesto to organize the plans using his cellphone, combining English, Spanish, and Korean in the same sentence. He asks Ernesto if he understands, using a simplified version of the Korean word for “understand?” (ara?). This informal Korean term is familiar to the group and also appears on Juan’s glossary list of frequently used Korean words (see Appendix A).

Combining English and Korean, Ernesto tells Chino he doesn't have a cellphone, and also adds "ara" at the end of the sentence to make sure that Chino has understood him. Speaking almost exclusively in Korean, Chino demonstrates he has understood Jorge by calling him crazy (미쳤어) for not having a fully functional cellphone. Juan sides with Chino and exclaims (진짜) (seriously!). Here, Chino playfully accuses Ernesto of being *chandory* for not paying his phone bill. Jorge explains that he doesn't have a fully functional cell phone because he hasn't paid for the "talk" service on his AT&T plan- he can only use the "chat" function. He draws on another interesting locally intelligible phrase introduced by Latinos in the Korean supermarket; he says "Santa Maria," (it's over/dead/finished) to express the fact his talk service on his phone no longer functions. Although Juan imitates Chino and expresses similar astonishment at Ernesto's dead phone, it is Chino who yet again displays eloquent generosity and clever *chandory*-ness. He tells Ernesto that "it's okay" if he doesn't have a fully functional phone plan because he still has everyone's phone numbers saved inside the phone. Therefore, Ernesto can still be in charge of making the arrangements, *and* paying the bill, because the one who invites others to dinner is expected to have the financial resources to pay the bill.

Juan then offers possible options for dinner party locations, including Chinese, Mexican and Korean restaurants. Chino sees this as an opportunity to step in and ask Juan what he would like to eat. By getting Juan to vocalize his desires about the dinner party, Chino is asking him to take some responsibility in organizing and paying for the dinner party, instead of simply arbitrating and instructing others to do so. Juan falls into Chino's clever trap and admits, with delighted laughter, that he'd really like to eat chicken today.

1.59 Chino: Juan mwomeog-eo José?

What are you having,

| | | | |
|------|--------|--|--|
| | | 호세 뭐먹어 호세 | Juan? |
| 2.00 | Juan: | <u>Chique</u> ? (laughter) <u>Hoy chique</u> | Chicken (laughter) Today chicken |
| 2.06 | Chino: | You <i>habla</i> igo kenchana <u>toomach-i</u> -so igo. 이거괜찮아 있어이거 | (You arrange it with the others, here in Koreatown there are a lot of restaurants) |
| 2.10 | Juan: | <u>Hoy chique</u> kenchana only hana duge bill, okay 괜찮아 하나 두개 | Today chicken okay only one two bill, okay (Today I'll pay for the chicken if I only have to pay for one or two other people on the bill) |

Chino immediately responds by instructing Juan to speak with the group and make a formal invitation to dinner (implying Juan should offer to pay). Here, Chino is testing Juan's assumed authority and apparent generosity in front of the others; he basically tells Juan "if you want chicken so much, then go ahead and extend a dinner invitation to your friends- there are many restaurant options in the area to choose from as you know." Juan realizes he has been challenged and, in order to maintain his generous and non-*chandory* appearance, he immediately agrees to pay the bill- so long as he only has to pay for one or two other people. Fortunately for Juan, Ernesto interjects impatiently by stating *vamos a comer hoy mismo, guey* (let's go eat today, dude). He speaks a complete Spanish sentence without mixing other languages, interrupting the flow and sequence of previous multilingual utterances. Ernesto uses an informal Mexican address term (*guey*) to demonstrate closeness with Juan, who is also Mexican.

Although Ernesto's move pressures others to respond, it also distances Ernesto from Chino. This takes the pressure off of Juan, and presents him with an opportunity to change the

topic and once again assume his demanding, arbitrating tone: “what time, what time *come?*” (what time do you want to eat?).

In the third segment of the conversation, participants work toward finalizing the location of the proposed dinner party. Chino and Jorge debate restaurant locations, alternating between Chinese and Korean food options (China? No Korea?). When Jorge shows preference for Korean food, Juan steps in and states that he will gladly take Jorge’s place at the Chinese restaurant party if he is unwilling to eat Chinese food. Chino steps in and offers his expert knowledge of Chinese restaurants.

| | | | |
|------|--------|--|---|
| 2.42 | Jorge: | No Korea? | No Korea? |
| 2.43 | Juan: | No <u>comero</u> ? Kenchana! Me <u>comero</u> ! 괜찮아 | No eat? That’s okay! I’ll eat! (You won’t eat [Chinese food]? That’s okay! I’ll eat) |
| 2.44 | Jorge: | Opso, opso yogi? 없어, 없어여기? | There aren’t any here? There aren’t any Korean restaurants? |
| 2.47 | Chino: | Hana China-iso. You <i>casa</i> China, me pay 하나 있어 kenchana. 괜찮아 | There is a Chinese restaurant. You home China, me pay it’s okay (There is a Chinese restaurant. You’re at home in China, I’ll pay it’s okay) |
| 2.49 | Juan | Oh shit. | Oh shit. |
| 2.50 | Chino | Juan. Later, ara? 아라? | Juan. Later, understand? |

| | | | |
|------|-------|---|---|
| 2.53 | Juan: | Chincha you pay? Kenchana. Oh shit. 진짜 팬찮아 Yogi, yogi, China <i>habla</i> 여기 여기 | Seriously you pay? That's good. Oh shit. Here, here, China talk (You're seriously paying? That's good. Oh shit. Let's go to a restaurant here, China you call) |
|------|-------|---|---|

Juan purposefully demonstrates his preference for Chinese food and Chinese restaurants. He eagerly states he would gladly eat Ernesto's Chinese food if he doesn't want to eat it, which demonstrates fondness and respect for Chinese food. Juan's remark appeals to Chino's experience and knowledge of Chinese food (he lived in China for several years). This time, Chino falls for Juan's trap, and immediately offers his knowledge of a good Chinese restaurant nearby. Chino acts as a generous representative of China by offering to pay the bill - "you casa China, me pay kenchana" (when you're in a Chinese restaurant, you're in my home territory, so I will assume responsibility for the bill). Juan demonstrates his appreciation of Chino's offer to pay, while also expressing incredulousness at the sincerity of Chino's offer- "oh shit. Chincha you pay?" (you're seriously going to pay?). Juan also exerts his authority by instructing Chino to follow through on his promise to pay by calling workers and making official arrangements. He immediately asks Chino to back up his offer by telling him to speak with the others and make the formal dinner invitation. At this point, he has found Chino's soft spot for Chinese food and cornered him into publicly acknowledging that he will pay the bill, using the same exact rhetoric Chino used to get Juan to make the invitation- "you *habla*" (you speak [with the others]).

In part four, participants shift their focus to what they would like to eat, and how much they would like to eat. Chino convinces Juan that he is sincere in his offer to pay the bill by addressing Juan with a Korean term, *ajusshi* (older man, uncle). In terms of age, Juan is at least 15 years younger than Chino, so it is significant that Chino refers to him as an equal in terms of age (Latinos refer to Chino as an *ajusshi* at the supermarket, since he is older than most of them).

This demonstrates respect for Juan and the close bond they share, as well as their equal status as undocumented supermarket workers. Juan and Chino have worked at the supermarket for the same number of years and share similar job responsibilities. However, conversation participants know that Chino is paid slightly more per week than Latinos workers with similar or more experience at the supermarket. Juan’s insistence that Chino is *chandory* perhaps serves to remind Chino that he is in a more secure financial position, and that he should feel obligated to redistribute his wealth by treating his friends to dinner. Chino reassures the group of his sincerity by using the Spanish phrase *todos come?* (everyone eats?) to suggest he would like all his Latino friends in the conversation to eat together.

- | | | | |
|------|--------|---|---|
| 3.02 | Chino: | Chincha ajusshi me pay kenchana. Me pay 진짜 아저씨 팬참아 twenty, eighteen kenchana 팬참아 | Seriously uncle me pay it’s okay. Me pay twenty, eighteen okay. (It’s okay I will pay the bill. twenty, eighteen dollars per person is okay) |
| 3.06 | Juan: | Okay | Okay |
| 3.07 | Chino: | <i>Todos come?</i> Ara, <u>beef-o</u> ara? 아라? | Everyone eats? Understand, beef, understand? (Will everyone be eating? We’re eating beef, understand?) |

After Juan is convinced that Chino is sincere in his desire to pay the bill at the Chinese restaurant, workers deliberate on their choices (beef or pork) and how they would like to share the meal in order to keep costs manageable for all, given their financial situations. This talk about food results in excited remarks “seriously! beef!?” “beef, speak-a del beef!” and rapid alternations between Korean, English, and Spanish. They work together to clarify the details of

Korean food is typically shared by all participants at the table, a person who eats too much may drive up the bill by ordering too much food.

- 4.10 Chino: *Yo hablo* kenchana, kenchana, dul kenchana.
 팬찮아 팬찮아 둘이 팬찮아
 Gabriel toomachi come
 I'll talk it's okay, it's okay, two is okay. Gabriel too much eats (**I'll talk, it's okay, just two of us is okay. Gabriel eats too much**)
- 4.18 Juan: Toomachi pay (laughter)
 Too much pay (laughter) (**If Gabriel comes, we'll pay too much [laughter]**)
- 4.22 Chino: Gabriel gaseo maybe five hundred dollars nawa
 가서 나와
 Gabriel goes out maybe five hundred dollars (**If Gabriel goes out with us the bill may be five hundred dollars**)
- 4.25 Juan/ (laughter)
 Jorge: (laughter)
- 4.30 Juan: Okay kenchana, only three people okay? Jorge,
 팬찮아
 Jorge, kenchana?
 팬찮아
 Okay it's okay, only three people, okay? Jorge, Jorge, okay?

Their practice of humiliating workers who don't observe proper eating etiquette can be seen as a "social leveling mechanism" that prevents members of the group from displaying future impoliteness during eating rituals. The impolite act of ordering too much food may result in a financial burden on the group or a potential cause for tension. Chino shows his disapproval of Gabriel's eating habits when he remarks "if Gabriel comes, his portion of the bill alone might equal 500 dollars." This is a cause for laughter in the group, at Gabriel's expense. No matter how "generous" and "non-*chandory*" coworkers try to appear, a person who orders too much

food and breaks the rules and expectations established during the planning event will probably not be invited to dinner in the future. In his ethnography on food etiquette among the !Kung bushmen of the Kalahari, Richard Lee writes: “As I read it, their message was this: There are no totally generous acts. All 'acts' have “an element of calculation” (Lee 1969:34). Similarly, words that may come across as innocent teasing may actually be a calculated message about the limits of generosity according to the group.

C. Further Analysis of the Supermarket Dinner Planning Communicative Event

Juan chose to record this conversation because he believed it could teach me something about how workers talk to each other. We listened to the audio together and I asked him to explain the conversation. Interestingly, as I paused the audio ‘frame by frame,’ or ‘phrase by phrase,’ he only provided me with a rough sketch of what was going on- who was talking to whom, the general context of the conversation, and what some of these unfamiliar sounds were communicating. Yet throughout the whole audio analysis activity, I was most fascinated by Juan’s disposition. Juan smiled and laughed as he listened to the audio. The sounds made perfect sense to him, even if he couldn’t explain why speakers mixed and improvised language in particular ways.

Their ways of communicating sounded foreign and incomprehensible to me. But Juan’s delight in teasing and communicating with his friends at work helped me understand their supermarket conversation. For Juan and his coworkers, making dinner plans is about having something enjoyable to look forward to with friends. Watching Juan listen to his conversation was an educative moment for me. His reaction to his language interaction is what Hymes (1974)

meant as the “K” (Key) part of his S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G acronym. This “key” or tone is essential to pay attention to because it reminds us to not take learning moments for granted, even if they don’t fit into pre-established criteria about what counts as important or relevant learning. The tone invites us to appreciate and wonder at human creativity, instead of searching and identifying for gaps in understanding. In order to do so, it is important to focus on how speakers’ language codes do or don’t fit into pre-established language structures. The “key” is not contained in any specific word or conversational turn or in the analysts’ explanations of these components after the fact. I suggest the key is Juan’s amusement and amazement at his own language use. Ottenheimer (2008) writes,

As you test the water and attempt to develop competency in a new speech style, you need to pay attention to the reactions from members of that speech community...it is a never ending process, of course, and it is one that anthropologists make use of every time they enter a new field situation. [Ottenheimer 2008:115]

While listening to the supermarket conversation with Juan, I realized I was a language outsider who felt inadequate about my capabilities to understand. I sensed I had to get a handle on the language- a “necessity to understand.” In order to accomplish my work in Koreatown, I felt the need to control and structure the language according to something reference-able and familiar. As I observed Juan’s reactions to his conversation, I had many questions about the very specifics of the “actual substance” of their language. I wanted to know what new language they were producing, and how and why they were blending languages, and what motivating mechanism was behind this language mixing.

Yet as I watched and listened to Juan talk about this dinner party conversation, his experience and comfort with workplace language became immediately apparent. Juan is no longer a linguistic outsider or peripheral participant in his communities of practice at work. He

has the linguistic skills and strategies necessary to accomplish a lot with his coworkers. Language is more than a structured code; it is about evolving relationships. Language allows relationships like those between Juan, Jorge, Ernesto, and Chino to change and flourish. I also realized that much about language and communication evades full or precise comprehension. There is always a gap between the “signified” and the “signifier” (de Saussure 1959) which is necessary for meaning to be produced with others members of the language community.

As a linguistic outsider to a community of practice, the tendency to look for recognizable structures in language can be productive but also dangerous. It can help the analyst parse out the information that is important and form associations or inferences about what people do with language, and what these means in terms of ‘language’ and ‘those people.’ But this can also take the analyst away from the participants’ active roles in the construction of these moments, and the system they have created for themselves to accomplish their own goals. The different terms workers use are embedded in the social context and the evolving relationships among workers in this particular community of practice.

Their workplace language help them organize their experiences in order to transmit knowledge, accomplish joint activities like dinner parties, and establish their social roles and positions in relation to one another. The dinner party planning process is a “communicative event,” involving a rule-governed, “sequential structuring of acts” (Carbaugh 2007). Therefore, “the linguistic code is displaced by the speech act as the focus of attention” (Hymes 1964:13). The workers’ patterned speech actions, situated in the Koreatown supermarket setting, are the starting points of this analysis, more so than the specifics of their “linguistic codes.” From this perspective, workplace communities of practice are systems of communicative events that take shape around specific “ways of speaking” and putting language into action.

The drinking rituals of the Subanun in the Philippines, described by Frake (1980) provide an example of a communicative event with an observable sequence of actions similar to those in the supermarket dinner party planning event:

The Subanun drinking encounter...provides a structured setting within which one's social relationships beyond his everyday associates can be extended, defined, and manipulated through the use of speech. The cultural patterning of drinking talk lays out an ordered scheme of role play through the use of terms of address, through discussion and argument, and through display of verbal art. The most skilled in "talking from the straw" are the de facto leaders of the society. In instructing our stranger to Subanun society how to ask for a drink, we have at the same time instructed him how to get ahead socially. [Frake 1980:172]

Frake argues that "variations in the messages sent" during the drinking encounter form part of four different qualities of the "strategic plan" or communication, which he calls "discourse stages" (1980:168). These discourse stages in the drinking encounter include "invitation-permission, jar talk, discussion, and display of verbal art" (1980:168-169). Among the Subanun, Frake noted that invitations to drink often include address terms that indicating social closeness and distance. During the invitation to drink process, speakers "manipulate" different variables- "the order in which he addresses the other participants and the terms of dress he employs" (1980:170). In the supermarket conversation, Juan, Ernesto, Jorge, and Chino participate in "invitation and permission" discourse stage, by coming up with a plan to go out to eat together. Chino and Juan propose a Friday dinner date, and interlocutors begin to negotiate which workers they would prefer to include in this dinner party. They use teasing about being "cheap" to establish both closeness and distance- one can be included in the conversation and teased playfully for being cheap, but being *too* cheap can also be criteria for being excluded from the dinner party.

The second discourse stage of drinking encounter, “jar talk” is marked by a focus on the drink itself, and information about how much “drinking and talking time” (1980:171) should be involved in the gathering. In the supermarket, workers engage in “food talk” as they figure out what kinds of food to eat and what restaurant they should go to together. According to Fraake, the third discourse stage, is “discussion,” during which litigation and debate take place in order to arrive at decisions. Putting decisions into effect depends on speakers assuming “a commanding role in the encounter and on debating effectively from that position” (ibid). As Juan, Ernesto, Jorge, and Chino debate, they attempt to direct the conversation toward particular outcomes. For example, Juan and Chino propose possible restaurant settings, and Jorge proposes a time for the dinner gathering. Their ability to execute decisions and come to conclusions about their next move depends on their abilities to effectively communicate their leadership through language.

As they give each other instructions, they demonstrate command of their social surroundings (Chino knows the good Chinese restaurants in Koreatown, and claims China to be his “home”) and experience with locally valid communicative styles (language mixing, repetition, questioning, etc.) The underlying “litigation” involved is about debating who should assume responsibility for the bill at the end of the conversation. The last discourse stage, “display of verbal art,” (1980:172) involves play with messages that follows “stylized patterns” of verse composition. During this stage, debates turn into “verbal artistry,” the most prestigious of which “require the mastery of an esoteric vocabulary by means of which each line is repeated with a semantically equivalent but formally different line” (ibid). The last stage also typically involves a sense of euphoria and “good feelings among all participants” (ibid). In the supermarket conversation, workers increasingly participate in laughter together, creating “good

feelings” toward the end of the conversation. For example, once Chino takes responsibility for the bill, workers begin making fun of Gabriel (who is not present in the group) for eating too much, and the conversation ends with everyone’s laughter.

Much like the Subanun drinking encounter, the dinner planning encounter at Juan’s supermarket demonstrates how workers negotiate their relationships in an ordered scheme of interaction. Taking charge of paying the bill and organizing the dinner party are ways of practicing leadership and conveying mastery and knowledge of food, language, and the social dynamics of the supermarket. The most skilled and experienced workers use improvised words, draw on multilingual resources, and practice argument or “litigation” strategies to get what they want and achieve greater status within workplace communities of practice.

Not only must workers be aware of each other’s different language abilities, they also have to take into consideration context-specific rules and expectations for how to communicate about food and dinner parties. In this community of practice, it would be unacceptable for a worker to overstep his boundaries by overtly coercing a coworker into paying for the bill. The operational structure of this communicative event means the dinner party planning must be debated and discussed in ways that are acceptable to the group. Thus participants must feel they can present their cases, subtly display their knowledge and authority, and arrive at conclusions together. At various points, different members of the group assume authority to make decisions and instruct others. Less experienced workers who are not as familiar with the languages of their workplace or previously established rules for planning dinner parties, are positioned in more peripheral ways and have less authority to determine the planning outcomes. However, in this conversation, participants ultimately work to maintain awareness of equal status as workers and friends using humor and the appropriate address terms.

On occasions when workers are feeling *chandory*, they may not want to invite outsiders, and thus choose to strengthen their bonds with only their closest coworker friends at the supermarket. This group of workers will deepen their relationships and continue to expand their verbal repertoires as long as they have the opportunity to socialize and work with each other. Chino plays another role for Latinos here as well; he acts as a restaurant guide for his Latino coworkers, introducing them to new cuisines and “ways of eating” in addition to “ways of talking” about food. Sharing food, talking about food, handling food, referencing food, and food-related activities is once again a central part of the lives of these supermarket workers, an important shared resource for all supermarket workers. Yet this is more than simply a dinner for these workers. The chance to socialize and spend their hard-earned money with friends is a special occasion that must be carefully planned, and occur under the appropriate circumstances.

I quickly learned this after I tried organizing dinner outings with these workers on several occasions. Out of my own ignorance, initially I didn’t see why it should take so much deliberation to simply go out to eat after work. I was an outsider to their “procedures” and rules for selecting an appropriate setting, figuring out what an acceptable bill looks like, who should pay the bill, and who should be invited. When the supermarket workers finally invited me to participate in a dinner excursion, I was surprised to find that almost everything about the dinner had already been planned hours and days before. This group of Korean and Latino workers knew what they were going to eat, in what order, and who would be responsible for paying. In fact, I was shown everything from how to eat appetizers in the correct order, how to hold my food properly, and how to respectfully accept a beverage from an elder and return the favor.

In my own dinner socializing rituals with friends, I was accustomed to being relatively flexible with arrangements, or simply taking them for granted. My usual way of relating to food,

money, and people in dinner outings was not useful for building relationships in this new context of fieldwork participation. As an outsider to this group, I was quickly checked and instructed when it came time to joining them for dinner. This learning process allowed me to appreciate the time and effort spent on the dinner plans even more. I felt more like a “full participant” because they chose to share their time and money to socialize with me and teach me about their ways of doing things. This learning process has also allowed me to get insight into why Juan’s recording of this conversation is significant. It is an activity of the workplace which is not necessarily about work but which has arisen from circumstances of the workplace. They have found a place to laugh, tease, express financial concerns, and share food and conversation together- all things which make life and work in New York City much more bearable, particularly as an immigrant worker.

The fact that workers are able to organize such outings through multilingual conversations indicates that they have achieved enough mutual intelligibility to coordinate and cooperate. According to Garfinkel (1967), checking for common understanding is an ongoing process or operation that is important for the conversation to move forward.

Shared agreement refers to various social methods for accomplishing the members’ recognition that something was said-according to a rule and not the demonstrable matching of substantive matters. The appropriate image of a common understanding is therefore an operation rather than a common intersection of overlapping sets. [Garfinkel 1967:30]

What Garfinkel says here is relevant for multilingual workplace language environments, such as the supermarket setting. Shared agreement between a Mexican immigrant employee and his Korean immigrant co-worker in a Korean store does not entail a perfectly recognizable “overlap” or blending of two, three, or four distinct sets of linguistic codes (Spanish, English, Korean). Instead, language mixing occurs in an operation of utterances and actions that follows rules according to the particular work context and community of practice. They also draw on

unique improvised or combination words that have emerged from their interactions at the workplace (chandory, comero, beefo, etc.) to get their messages across.

Juan, Ernesto, Jorge, and Chino all use English, Korean, Spanish, and improvised words in sequences which make sense to the speakers in the conversation. At each turn, they are confronted with the need to speak in a way which the others will likely understand, given the languages they each know. Enough of a sentence must be understandable, given a worker's environment, the degree of familiarity with an interlocutor, and previous knowledge or familiarity with foreign signs and sounds. Actors must choose what course of action to take to make themselves understood and accomplish their everyday responsibilities, especially when working toward common goals (such as properly cooking and executing a food order, or establishing a work schedule that suits both employee and employer).

Speakers such as these supermarket workers may not view their own language varieties as valid ways of communicating, since they do not resemble or conform to idealized notions of language competency. Auer (1999) argues that "some people consider hybrids to be impure and detrimental to the speakers, while others consider such mixing to be creative, possibly even constituting a new language together, called a monolect or fused lect" (Ahearn 2012:133). Instead of viewing language mixing as an inferior means of communicating, it should be considered creative and meaningful acts by capable individuals. Without language education classes in schools or other institutional contexts with planned language learning activities, individuals invent their own solutions and devise their own instructional methods to achieve linguistic competency.

The speech communities I have observed in Koreatown are developing what Auer (1999) believes is a "thorough intermixing of codes, to the point that it is the alternation

between...codes that itself constitutes the ‘language’ of interaction” (Ahearn 2012:133). Auer focuses on the processes by which this intermixing occurs in bilingual communities where bilingual speakers draw from two recognizable language codes for communication. Although the conversation above between Latinos and Koreans demonstrates a speech community where at least three language codes are present in this intermixing process (Spanish, English, Korean), Auer’s analysis of bilingual language mixing is helpful in trying to explain how this process occurs over time. Auer claims that there are range of ways that speakers alternate, mix, and transform language codes, from “code-switching” to “language mixing” and ultimately “fused lects” (Auer 1998:1). He represents the alternation of language codes in a continuum, with “code switching” and “fused lects” on polar extremes, and “language mixing” (1998:1) in between. Code-switching depends on the speakers using the alternation of codes in semantically meaningful ways. That is, speakers who code-switch will do so in order to elicit a “pragmatic effect,” (1998:1) a purposeful introduction of a second language code for a specific discursive function.

The transition from code-switching to language mixing on Auer’s continuum occurs in cases where “the juxtaposition of two languages in which the use of two languages is meaningful (to participants) not in a local but only in a more global sense, i.e. when seen as a recurrent pattern” (1998:1). Frequent alternations may not appear, from the outside, as pragmatic choice or serving a discursive function, thus this more generalized pattern of language mixing needs to be investigated “on the level of how speakers perceive and use the ‘codes’ in question” (ibid).

For example, a Latino may combine an English phrase with a formal Korean word that indicates status according to Korean honorifics (a term to respectfully address an elder or superior). This switch is a purposeful positioning that serves a discursive function, but it may

not be the norm in cases where Korean and Latino interlocutors perceive themselves as sharing more equal status (and use of honorifics is diminished). There may be occasional pragmatic code-switches for these purposes, but the overall norm is a shift toward code mixing that does not necessarily serve a discursive function within any specific utterance. Ahearn (2012) explains,

the shifts in language mixing, according to Auer, do not involve the same sort of indexicality and shifts in footing that are involved in code-switching; indeed, the shifts back and forth between the two codes in language mixing do not seem to have any specific discursive function, except insofar as the mixing of the two codes in and of itself might index a particular social identity or set of meanings. [Ahearn 2012:133]

In some cases, language mixing leads to what Auer (1998) identifies as *fused lects* – stabilized mixed varieties where there is “a reduction of variation and an increase of rule-governed, non-variable structural regularities” (1998:1). The recurrent pattern of language mixing becomes more stabilized in fused lects. Particular types of mixing become recognized as normative, rather than sporadic introduction of new terms for specific pragmatic functions. In the *ensalada de lenguas* of the Korean supermarket conversation, particular types of language mixing have become recognizable to participants, and are repeatedly incorporated into everyday speech in increasingly rule-governed ways. For example, in this community of practice, participants draw from at least 2 languages in each of their utterances throughout the conversation. Thus, the mixing becomes the norm, although the specific introductions of multiple language codes are not necessarily meaningful in each conversational turn. In the above conversation, English is more frequently employed by speakers in instances where only one code is used in a conversational turn.

Ultimately, sense-making is achieved by people in their local environments when they have the opportunity to teach and practice language together, shaping unique ways of speaking. From the outside, no one in the above supermarket conversation appears to be competent in any single language, and the result appears to be a disorderly and ineffective kind of communication. However, as we have seen, these immigrant workers are not incompetent with language. Linguistic competency is not about mastering a single language or multiple languages. This idea of language competency arises from notions of language abilities as cognitive process and function. As such, it ignores the learning and teaching moments involved in communication- in favor of identifiable and legitimate codes and code arrangements. Full mastery of a language is an idealization, and the idea of a “complete” or whole language that can be mastered is a myth. An individual’s language and ways of speaking are never “fully” functional across all settings and scenarios. People are *bricoleurs* (Levi-Strauss 1962) with language, mixing up the pieces they have acquired in different (effective or ineffective) combinations, imbuing their own style, devices, and pronunciations for as long as they are able to participate in the conversation, given the constraints of each situation and context.

Chapter 8: Seoul House

In the following chapter, I demonstrate how Latino and Korean coworkers in Flushing Koreatown work together to organize a law suit, execute food orders in their kitchen, and hang out at a karaoke bar. I show how workers devise strategies to communicate their requests, grievances, and directions, such as organizing meetings with bilingual lawyers and learning to read Korean using restaurant menus. I also demonstrate how smart phone language applications and Korean popular music form part of the work environment, and help Latinos and Koreans make sense of each other in Koreatown. As a result of the linguistic work they do together, employees have developed the ability to sue their boss, efficiently operate a kitchen serving high-priced food items, and form deeper relationships and romances with each other. In the process, immigrants form close social bonds and solidarity both inside and outside the workplace, and incorporate new ways of communicating into their everyday practices.

The first time I met Miguel was at a Mexican restaurant in Queens. I met him through Juan, my principal informant, who shares an apartment with Miguel in the Bronx. Miguel and Juan are both from Veracruz; they connected in New York City after one of Juan's relatives in Mexico put them in contact. Miguel and Juan are two of three informants in my study who have some college education. Miguel wanted to study *pedagogia* (teacher education), but his mother became ill and he decided to leave school in order to work and save money for her medical expenses. He was presented with an opportunity to migrate to the United States and decided to make the journey to New York City. Miguel's uncle was already in New York, and took him to a Korean employment agency in Queens which sent him to work at the Korean restaurant where he presently busses tables and organizes catering events.

Miguel and Juan, both in their mid-twenties, are an enjoyable pair to watch and be around. They are always laughing, play fighting, and teasing each other, and they always have something new to teach me about Koreatown. On one of our first nights hanging out in Flushing, Juan and Miguel gave me a private tour of the neighborhood, pointing out their favorite Korean restaurants while talking to me about the intricacies of dealing with Korean people. These friends have introduced me to many Latino immigrant workers, and provided me with extensive insight into many fascinating facets of Koreatown.

Miguel's restaurant, Seoul House, has about 40 employees, half of which are Korean immigrants, and the other half Latino immigrants. Although the staff is majority male, there are approximately 10 Korean women who work as waitresses, hostesses, and cashier attendants. The Latinos are undocumented immigrants primarily from Mexico, although there are a few Guatemalan, El Salvadoran and Ecuadoran workers as well. There are also several undocumented Korean waiters. Most of the staff is between 20 and 40 years of age. Miguel tells me there is a fast turnover rate for Latino workers, who rarely stay at the restaurant for more than a year or two. He attributes this to his strict and exploitative Korean boss who makes conditions difficult for both Latino and Korean employees.

Miguel is one of about three Latino employees that have been working at the restaurant for several years. The customers are primarily Korean, and Korean can be heard at all hours of the day around the restaurant. Latinos and Koreans cross paths constantly at the restaurant, weaving in and out of the kitchen, fetching food and utensils, cleaning up tables, coordinating catering events, and dealing with client requests together. The Latino busboys dress in black shirts and pants, while the Koreans dress in white button up shirts and black pants. The Korean women dress formally, wearing skirts, blouses, neat hair-dos, makeup, and heels. The Korean

sushi chef wears a traditional Japanese *itamae* outfit consisting of a white hat, coat and apron, and he can be seen filleting fish and preparing sushi during the daytime.

Seoul House is open 24 hours and is most busy during lunch and dinner hours, particularly on weekends. There are approximately twenty tables at the restaurant, and like many Korean restaurants that serve Korean barbecue (usually thinly sliced marinated pork or beef), a few tables also contain a table top grill for cooking meat. Elaborate lighting fixtures and large windows with a view of a small sculpture garden contribute to an elegant atmosphere. The menu is relatively pricey for the area (entrees cost between \$20-30 dollars on average) and displays numerous images of Korean soup, noodle, and rice dishes (some Japanese choices as well), labeled in both Korean and English. Seoul House is also known for its generous *panchaan* side dishes, which customers can refill at no extra cost.

During my first visit to Seoul House, I was surprised when my Korean waiter brought out about 10-15 small plates containing an assortment of seafood and fermented vegetable *panchaan* that barely fit on my table for one. The waiters congregate around the entrance of the kitchen, where they keep an eye on their respective tables, make small talk with each other in Korean, and pass on food orders written in Hangul to Latino cooks in the kitchen. According to Miguel, nearly all of the Korean food at the restaurant is prepared and plated by Latino immigrants. Experienced Latinos teach kitchen newcomers how to make Korean food and comprehend their Korean waiter's requests. Miguel and his Latino coworker Oscar describe the kitchen as a fast-paced, male dominated environment where there is little room for error:

Karen: Casi no hay mujeres que trabajan en restaurantes Coreanos?

Miguel: Pocos

Oscar: Pocos, pero no muchos. No mas en limpieza. Trabajar en cocinas es un trabajo pesado entonces no mas los hombres los hacen

Miguel: Y es mas rápido, mas movido

Oscar: Entonces para una mujer yo creo que eso no, pocas mujeres no mas

Karen: There are almost no [Latina] women who work in Korean restaurants?

Miguel: Few

Oscar: Few, but not a lot. Just in cleaning. Working in kitchens is a heavy job so only men do it

Miguel: And it's faster, more movement [than jobs given to women]

Oscar: So for a woman, I don't think that [would work], just a few women [work in restaurants].

Workers describe the kitchen environment as a “heavy” place where there is a great deal of physical exertion and movement, requiring strength and stamina. Like their Korean employers, they view this work as appropriate only for Latino males, while Latinas are occasionally hired in restaurants to help with cleaning responsibilities. In kitchens, Latino men are always on their feet, moving around and exchanging words and objects with Korean coworkers throughout the day. Adjacent to the main restaurant seating area is a catering hall, where Miguel spends most of his time *haciendo los parties*, (doing parties [organizing catered events]). During one of our initial meetings he proudly showed me a picture of the Seoul House catering hall on his phone and explained, *limpio, ayudo decorar las mesas, y sacar la comida* (I clean, help decorate the tables, and bring out the food). It's not easy work, especially when events run late into the night; *a veces entro a las 8 de la mañana y no salgo hasta las 4 de la mañana* (sometimes I come in at 8 in the morning, and don't leave until 4 in the morning).

Miguel has been in the United States for nearly ten years, and has previously worked as a kitchen assistant in a different Korean restaurant, where he learned to prepare *kimchi*, handle Korean food all day, and practice Korean with coworkers. His previous Korean boss referred to him as *hijo* (son) and let Miguel drive his car, which Miguel believes symbolizes a special bond between the two. His helpful and outgoing personality has earned him many friends at work; he even claims he has more Korean friends than Mexican friends at the restaurant. He enjoys Korean food and popular culture which also makes him a favorite with young Korean ladies. He

has two Korean girlfriends, a waitress at the restaurant and another that works in a Korean coffee shop down the street from his workplace. To communicate with them, he uses a language application on his iPad device to translate text messages in Korean, Spanish, and English. Miguel has also taught his Korean coworkers how to curse in Spanish, which always incites laughter at the workplace. The Korean waiters at his job have helped him learn to identify Korean text on menus and food tickets.

He earns approximately 350-450 dollars per week (depending on tips from catering events) and he sends remittances home monthly to help pay for his mother's medical expenses, build a family house, fund his siblings' education, and provide for expenses like weddings and baptisms. Although he is still attached to Mexico, and often contemplates going back home, he has no immediate plans to return. He enjoys learning about the catering business and has considered starting his own business in Mexico using the knowledge he's learned at work. At his job, he also takes pride in teaching newcomers:

Karen: Has entrenado compañeros nuevos en tu trabajo?

Miguel: Si

Karen: Y que les enseñas?

Miguel: Pues donde estoy, como hacer las cosas, acomodar todo como se debe de hacer, los pasos que hay que hacer en cada cosa...siempre trato que aprenden lo mejor...porque a uno le paso.

Karen: Have you trained new workers at your job?

Miguel: Yes

Karen: How do you teach them?

Miguel: Well, where I work, [I teach them] how to do things, how to arrange everything, how things need to be done, the necessary steps for doing each thing...I always make an effort so that they learn the best way...because it's something I went through myself.

His past experience of struggling to learn as a newcomer in Koreatown serves as motivation for Miguel to take on the role of teacher at his restaurant. Although he was never formally instructed to train new employees, he and other Latinos and Koreans provide each other guidance and support when needed.

A. Romance, Smartphones, and Korean Pop Music in Koreatown

The bond between undocumented Koreans and Latinos at work became especially evident when I discovered Miguel's attraction to Korean women in Koreatown and his experience drinking with Korean coworkers at karaoke bars.

Karen: Hay mujeres Coreanas?

Miguel: Meseras

Karen: Como te llevas con ellas?

Miguel: Súper bien

Karen: Te gusta como son?

Miguel: Si, me han tratado bien

Karen: Mejor que hombres?

Miguel: Con los meseros me llevo muy bien..los meseros son mis amigos. He tenido mas amigos Coreanos que latinos. Es difícil encontrar buena amistad con la gente, ahora en día

Karen: Mejores amigos son Coreanos o una mezcla?

Miguel: Una mezcla. Es bonito de todo...

Karen: Tienes amigos blancos?

Miguel: En otros trabajos si...diferentes...si pero en otros salones.

Karen: Entonces para practicar el Inglés casi no tienes oportunidad?

Miguel: No. Es difícil...ellos hablan mas Coreano...uno siempre es adaptar al idioma que ellos usan. A veces hay oportunidad pero uno siempre trabajando todo el tiempo...

Miguel: a ellos les fascina eso [karaoke]...he acompañado también a las meseras...he estado con ellos ahí...la última vez que yo salí con los asiáticos...solo con el soju...ya me acostumbre.

Karen: Are there Korean women [at your restaurant workplace]?

Miguel: Waitresses

Karen: How do you get along with them?

Miguel: Very well

Karen: Do you like them?

Miguel: Yes, they've treated me very well

Karen: Better than the [Korean] men?

Miguel: I get along very well with the [Korean male] waiters...the waiters are my friends. I've made more Korean friends than Latino friends. It's hard to find good friendships with people nowadays.

Karen: Your closest friends are Koreans or a mix?

Miguel: A mix, it's nice to have variety

Karen: Do you have white friends?

Miguel: In other workplaces, yes...

Karen: So you don't really have the opportunity to practice much English [at work]?

Miguel: No. It's hard...they [Koreans coworkers] speak mostly in Korean, one has to always adapt to the language they use. Sometimes there is opportunity [to practice English] but since we are always working...they [Koreans] are fascinated by karaoke...I've accompanied some of the waitresses [to karaoke bars]...I've spent time with them there...the last time I went out with Asians...we just had soju [Korean liquor]...I'm already used to it.

This excerpt demonstrates how Miguel believes it is necessary to “adapt to Korean’s language” at work. Doing so has helped him build several friendships with Korean waiters, communicate with Korean women, and participate in after-work parties involving Korean music and liquor. One afternoon, I met Miguel at a Korean bakery around the corner from Seoul House and he revealed some interesting details about his romantic life involving Korean women. He confessed he was dating two Korean women, a cashier at Seoul House, and another cashier at a Korean bakery a few blocks away from work. The bakery cashier was born in Korea and lives about 15 minutes away from Seoul House by bus. According to Miguel, she is 22 years old and has told Miguel that she likes him a lot. She speaks some English and Spanish and playfully pokes fun at Miguel when he tries to speak in Korean. During her time off from school, she even entertains Miguel and shows her affection by singing him Korean songs at karaoke bars:

Miguel: Antes salíamos...porque ella va a la escuela, entonces...antes si me ha regalado unas baladas.

Miguel: We used to go out [to karaoke bars]...but she goes to school, so...she used to serenade me with [Korean] love ballads.

When Miguel was sick, she bought him an expensive kit of herbs and medicinal drinks for him to consume, and confessed to Miguel that she prayed for him during church service. She flirts with him by smiling and “sticking her tongue” out whenever he visits her workplace. She occasionally visits Miguel at Seoul House and brings him food for lunch. Miguel’s second Korean girlfriend is a 35 year old coworker who lives in Flushing Koreatown. They have been on

several dates together in Manhattan and Brooklyn. She cooks Korean food for Miguel in her apartment and brings him Korean food to eat for lunch. They have also shared many meals together around Flushing Koreatown. She lives with her 16 year old son in an apartment near Seoul House. Miguel admits he likes her better than his younger girlfriend, and could even see himself marrying a woman like her. He claims his family in Mexico would approve of her too, but he sees their language differences as somewhat of a barrier to their romance.

Miguel uses a translator application on his smartphone, Google Translate, to translate English or Korean text messages from his Korean girlfriends. Miguel has also told me that these Korean girls are interested in learning Spanish too. They communicate mainly through text messaging and use technology to mediate language barriers, learning new words and phrases in the process. However, Miguel says he is not fully satisfied with his Korean girlfriends; he wants a more “face-to-face” relationship and the ability to participate in “deep” conversations. Despite their smartphone strategies, Miguel feels he is limited in his ability to freely communicate his innermost feelings in more elaborate and complex ways during face-to-face interactions. To get around some of these issues, Miguel and other Latinos in my study use smartphone applications designed to teach basic Korean phrases. These apps display the English translation, phonetic spelling, and Hangeul spelling of various Korean words.

These smartphone applications are often available as free downloads and are frequently used by immigrants in my study. There are dozens of language education applications available for installation on smartphones, each with its own design and approach to teaching language. Nearly all of my informants displayed their smartphones to me during interviews and while working. They are well connected through the text and talk functions, and are well aware of various multilingual programs available to smartphone users. They have taught me which

programs are most useful for my own Korean language learning practice, which I have installed on my own smartphone. These smartphone technologies enable workers to communicate and accomplish particular goals in Koreatown involving developing mastery of challenges presented by their work language environments. For Latino and Korean immigrants like Miguel and his girlfriend, technology is vital to overcoming communication challenges as they attempt to deepen their romance.

In addition to language translation and language education applications, smartphones are frequently used by immigrants to listen to music and watch videos. Latino immigrant workers are exposed to Korean music almost every day in Koreatown. In all of the supermarkets and restaurants I visited, “K-Pop” music could be frequently heard through speaker systems. As Juan, Miguel, Pablo and I continue our discussion of Korean women and hanging out with Koreans at karaoke bars, Juan teaches me about his favorite Korean song, and Miguel reveals that he likes to dance to Korean pop music:

Juan: Siempre ponen la música en el trabajo...no se que dice, pero bailan bien...Súper Junior Así se llama el grupo...ese lo descargue porque me estaban molestando...

Miguel: A mi me gusta bailar. El paso de ellos están bonitos...

Juan: Me gusta como bailan...

Miguel: Ahora en el nivel mundial los asiáticos ocupan el primer lugar en ese tipo de...

Juan: Le he preguntado sobre esa canción....

Karen: Como se llama la canción...

Juan: Yo pongo canciones de mi teléfono...y como solo tengo dos, ellos...

Miguel: He ido como dos veces a un building en Lincoln center...un amiga me llevo...me ha acompañado...tocan el violín...me gusta eso...

Juan: La que me gusta mucho es el ‘sorry’

Karen: Sorry?

Juan: Si, así se llama. Tiene unas palabras en Inglés y en Coreano así. Igual...

Juan: They [Koreans] always play music at work...I don't know what they're [Korean pop bands] singing but they dance really well...Super Junior is the name of the group [I like]...that's the one I downloaded because they [Koreans coworkers] kept bothering me [by insisting that he download the song so it could be played on repeat at work through the supermarket speaker system]

Miguel: I like to dance to it [Korean pop music]...their dance steps are nice

Juan: I like how they dance

Miguel: Nowadays, at an international level, Asians are in first place with that kind of [music]

Juan: I've asked them [Koreans] about this song [shows me a Super Junior song "Sorry Sorry" on his smartphone]

Karen: What's the name of this song?

Juan: I play songs [Korean pop music] from my phone...and since I only have two on my phone they... [play the same two songs on repeat at work]

Miguel: I've gone about twice [to Korean pop music shows] in a building at Lincoln center...a friend took me...she went with me...they play the violin...I like that.

Juan: The one I like a lot is the "Sorry" [song]

Karen: Sorry?

Juan: Yes, that's what it's called. It has some lyrics in English and in Korean...just like this [we all watch "Sorry Sorry" by Super Junior on his iPhone]

As Juan and Miguel explain, Korean pop music has grown in popularity in recent decades, and is played throughout Koreatowns at all hours of the day and night. Korean karaoke bars contain binders full of Korean pop music selections, and loudspeakers in Korean establishments consistently blast K-pop. Immigrants working in Korean supermarket aisles and kitchens come to recognize favorite or popular tunes, and ask Korean workers about their names. Latinos also comment on the stylish clothing, appealing physiques, and agile dance skills of Korean pop music groups like Super Junior, which is a favorite among many Korean girls in Koreatown who take their pop music very seriously.

Becoming aware of trends in Korean popular music is also a good excuse to become acquainted with female Korean cashiers. It affords them the opportunity demonstrate knowledge and interest in Korean popular culture while practicing language together, which might eventually result in an invitation to a karaoke bar hang out involving song, liquor, and perhaps even a chance for romance.

B. *La Queja*—the Seoul House Law Suit

The bond between Latino and Korean coworkers at Seoul House became clear when Miguel and his coworker Guillermo explained a law suit they are carrying out against their exploitative Korean boss, the owner of Seoul House. A number of staff members (both Korean and Mexican workers) have teamed up against their Korean boss because he has neglected to pay them for overtime hours. He also exploits both Korean and Latino workers by making them do various types of strenuous errands outside of the restaurant, such as cleaning his house and doing his landscaping.

In the following conversation, Miguel and Guillermo describe how Korean employees approached Mexican workers and asked them to contribute testimonials to support the law suit, filed through the Asian American Legal Defense League. Miguel and Guillermo have agreed to file testimonies together with their Korean coworkers. Miguel feels certain that his boss will either fire them for testifying against him, or offer them money to quietly leave. He believes less experienced Latino newcomers are hesitant to join the law suit for these reasons. Miguel is also tempted to quit before the conflict escalates, but he is unsure if he will obtain suitable employment elsewhere, and believes it is a workers' right to take a stand against labor exploitation.

If the staff wins the law suit, Miguel will be compensated for several years of retroactive unpaid wages that could result in tens of thousands of dollars. But Miguel is not entirely convinced their case will be successful, since most undocumented workers at the restaurant are too afraid to provide honest testimonials. For this reason, communication among Seoul House workers is crucial; communicating effectively allows law suit organizers to educate newcomers and execute their plans without being noticed by their Korean boss as staging a "mutiny" of sorts. Experienced workers like Miguel and Guillermo can use their knowledge and language

skills to negotiate and plan with Koreans, and help other exploited workers understand their legal rights. The owner of Seoul House uses silencing strategies to prevent workers from voicing their concerns. He also has an advantage over workers who have difficulty communicating due to language differences. Because the turnover rate among employees is high, Korean and Latino newcomers must constantly do extra work to organize, translate, and coordinate with each other. The law suit described by workers below demonstrates how a community of practice (involving undocumented Latino and Korean Seoul House employees and bilingual lawyers at a local Immigrant Rights organization), put various communicative strategies into practice in order to achieve a common goal- to make the Seoul House boss pay dearly for exploiting and threatening his immigrant workers.

Miguel: La queja que hemos puesto

Karen: De quien fue la idea

Miguel: Fue un Coreano, entre ellos pues, es demasiado...el dueño no paga...quiere poner hacer algo, mandar a trabajar en otro lado, lo estoy viendo cada rato, entonces a ellos ya no les parecen

Karen: Dueño o managers?

Miguel: La orden es del dueño, y el que hace todo es el manager. La demanda es contra el dueño

Karen: El dueño no está ahí?

Miguel: Si, yo lo conozco, el siempre pasa ahí. Y tu crees que el no sabe lo que está pasando? Si ya lo imagina, porque ya lo dijo en una reunión con los meseros, y si tengo una demanda, no va a pagar nada. Ya amenazo que no va pagar nada...amenazo los meseros, que les va echar la migración porque ellos son los que no tienen papeles...

Karen: Y la mayoría tienen papeles?

Miguel: No ninguno de los meseros tiene. No tienen papeles. Pero no les da miedo. El dueño los está intimidando. Es como dice la abogada. El dueño siempre no quiere perder. Está buscando la manera de intimidar para no demandar. Pero el juez es que decide. El que decide es el juez. El no está en el derecho de amenazar. El está cometiendo un delito, una infracción, por no pagar a sus trabajadores, hace papeles falsos. El lo reporta pero todo es falso. Nosotros no tenemos una máquina de punchar las horas de trabajo y todo eso. Ellos lo hacen todo de su manera.

Miguel: The law suit we have filed

Karen: Whose idea was it?

Miguel: It was a Korean, among them [Koreans], it's very...the boss doesn't pay...he wants to make you do something, send you to work somewhere else, I see it all the time, so they [Koreans] aren't okay with it

Karen: The boss or managers? [Who give workers orders]

Miguel: The orders are from the owner, and the one who does everything [the owner says] is the manager. The law suit is against the owner.

Karen: And the boss isn't there [around the restaurant]?

Miguel: Yea, I know him, he's always there. And you think he doesn't realize what's happening? He already imagines it [the law suit], because he already told us in a meeting with the waiters that if there is a law suit he won't pay anything. He already threatened that he wasn't going to pay us...he threatened the waiters, that he is going to send immigration [authorities] after them, because they are the ones who don't have papers [legal work or residence documents]

Karen: Does the majority [of workers] have legal documents?

Miguel: No, none of the waiters have...they don't have papers. But they aren't afraid. The boss is just intimidating them. It's like the lawyer [Asian American Defense League Lawyer] says, the owner never wants to lose. He is trying to find a way to intimidate so that workers don't sue him. But it's the judge who decides. The one who decides is the judge. He does not have a right to threaten us. He is committing an offense, an infraction, for not paying his workers. He makes fake papers. He reports [employee schedules and wages] but everything is fake. We don't have a time clock to punch our work hours and everything. They [Korean bosses] do everything their own way.

This conversation demonstrates that Miguel is aware of his rights as a worker, and can identify various strategies employed by his boss to threaten workers and get away with paying employees for only eight hours instead of the 10-14 hours they actually work per day. His coworker Guillermo explains how Latino and Korean workers coordinated with 3 bilingual lawyers from an Immigrant Rights Organization in Flushing, the Asian American Legal Defense League, in order to fully comprehend each other's' concerns and comments and build an effective law suit:

Karen: Los Coreanos lo organizaron primero y les mencionaron a ustedes y se pusieron de acuerdo?

Guillermo: Si, nosotros también queríamos estar en grupo con ellos. Los tres habíamos estado trabajando ahí por mucho tiempo.

Karen: Como se comunican para hablar de estos asuntos, como hacen para entenderse?

Guillermo: Ahí está un abogada Coreana, ósea son...esta una que habla Inglés...esta otra abogada que habla Español...entonces la Coreana habla Inglés y la otra traduce para los que hablan Español, y luego en Inglés, y la que habla en español nos traduce a nosotros.

Miguel: Y la otra habla Chino también. La otra abogada. Son tres mujeres.

Guillermo: Ellos hablan y dicen así son las cosas.

Karen: The Koreans organized it first, and then mentioned it to you, and then you came to an agreement?

Guillermo: Yes we also wanted to be included in their group with them [Koreans]. The three of us [Latino workers involved in the law suit] have been working there for a lot of time.

Karen: How do you communicate to talk about these issues, how do you manage to understand each other?

Guillermo: There is a Korean lawyer there [Asian American Legal Defense League] so they are...there is one [lawyer] that speaks English...the other lawyer speaks Spanish...so the Korean [lawyer] speaks English to the other lawyer, who translates it for the Spanish speakers, and then in English, and then in English, and then the one that speaks Spanish translates for us.

Miguel: And the other [lawyer] speaks Chinese too. The other lawyer. They are three women.

Guillermo: They talk and tell us this is how things are.

Thus Miguel, Guillermo, and other Latino workers are able to communicate with Koreans and coordinate their law suit with three bilingual lawyers who can translate workers' grievances, concerns, and wishes. Through a complex order of language translation involving multiple bilingual participants, workers overcome linguistic barriers together to stand up to the Seoul House owner and defend their rights. Miguel and Guillermo express wanting to feel "part of their [Korean's] group," indicating that they trust and sympathize with their Korean coworkers, who also share undocumented status in Koreatown and are vulnerable to labor exploitation. Having experience working with Koreans, communicating about labor rights, they are able to find ways to accomplish their goals together and defend future Latino and Korean newcomers from exploitation.

During a conversation with Miguel, Juan, and another Seoul House worker, Oscar, they recount a past incident when the department of labor came to visit their workplace and a Korean manager nicknamed "El Perro/El Gordo" (the dog/the fat one) threatened them using hand

gestures. The state officials interviewed workers about how many hours they typically worked a week and whether or not they were being paid overtime wages. El Gordo stood directly behind the labor officials, holding up eight fingers with his hands, instructing them to lie and say they only worked eight hours a day:

Karen: Ellos les han caído a el restaurant de ustedes?

Miguel: Si, ya como 3 veces creo

Oscar: Si, pues cuando estaba el otro pues, el gordito

Miguel: Cual?

Oscar: Se llamaba el perro, el gordo

Miguel: Uh-huh

Oscar: Estábamos trabajando, y luego decía a todos llegaron, entrevistaron a cada uno de los Hispanos, “cuantas horas trabajan?” Y el Coreano nos decían, no mas digan...no mas así en señas...el hacía no mas 8, 8 horas...no...así decían ellos va...decían “Santa María” dicen en Coreano, que ya no mas trabajo, se van, verdad? Son amenazas que uno le hacen. Cada hispano llena un formulario de trabajo verdad...pero mas o menos lo que yo entiendo es que ellos firman por nosotros, que nos hemos presentado ocho horas...Ponen las horas, firman, ellos entregan a donde va todo eso papeles yo todo, entonces digamos el estado de New York ve que si ese restaurante esta cumpleaños con las 8 horas de trabajo...y no, pienso yo que así no debe ser la forma del trabajo...

Karen: Have they [department of labor officials] ever dropped in on your restaurant?

Miguel: Yes, three times now I think.

Oscar: Yes, well when the other [boss] was there, the fat one

Miguel: Which one?

Oscar: His name was “the dog,” the fat one”

Miguel: Uh-huh

Oscar: We were working, and he [the Korean boss] told us [workers] “they’re here,” and they interviewed almost all of the Latinos, asking [us] how many hours we work? And the Korean told us, just say...only in hand signs...he made [the hand sign] for just eight, eight hours...no...that’s what they [Korean bosses] would tell us...they would say “Santa Maria” in Korean, that there [will be] no more work, you’re fired, right? These are ways they threaten you...almost every worker fills out a work sheet [hours worked log] right...but more or less what I understand is that they sign [the sheet] on our behalf, [to document] that we have worked eight hours...They fill in the hours, sign [the sheet], they turn in [the sheets] where they are supposed to go and everything, so let’s just say the state of New York sees that the restaurant has complied with eight hour [rule] for work...and I, I think that that’s not how things should function at work.

It is apparent that Korean employers use various tactics to avoid getting caught and fined by the department of labor for making employees work over eight hours per day without paying overtime wages. Orlando's powerful testimony illustrates the subtle cues and gestures his manager used to threaten and silence workers, so as to avoid being discovered by State officials. El Gordo even resorted to making hand signals behind the State official's back to get workers to communicate the "correct" answers to State official's questions about hours worked per day. He even appropriates a Spanish phrase "Santa Maria," (finished, dead) introduced to Seoul House by Mexican employees, to intimidate Latino workers into complying with his wishes.

Orlando's manager was so desperate to avoid getting caught that he also logged and signed all of the workers' schedule sheets to demonstrate to the department of labor that he was obeying labor laws. This example demonstrates the central role of language and communication in coercing a group of workers to follow orders in a spontaneous government official drop-in. In the above scenario, employers were at risk of losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in retroactive wages owed to workers. The Seoul House manager had to quickly devise communicative strategies to save his employer from being heavily fined or having his reputation and social status as a law-abiding immigrant business owner severely tarnished. In scenarios such as State labor department drop-ins, immigrant newcomers in restaurants and supermarkets may not be aware of their labor rights, and might (unknowingly) expose their bosses. Thus managers and employers must be prepared to provide immediate instructions through subtle cues and gestures. Language barriers must transcended immediately by whatever means necessary, given the constraints of such dire situations.

Korean employers or managers with power have to be ready at any moment to devise verbal and nonverbal communicative strategies to get everyone to tell the same story and lie in

similar ways. Over time, workers simultaneously catch on to these cues, and become familiar with the communicative strategies employers use to threaten and coerce workers. Immigrants share their knowledge of such strategies with each other, and become better prepared to resist future exploitative acts. With experience and awareness of local communicative strategies, workers can form their own opinions about labor in Koreatown (“that’s just not how I think work should function”) resist subordination or exploitation by testifying honestly (and without fear), and organize with other workers to find new solutions to transform their collective work situations for the better. Workers become better at devising such strategies over time, and keeping their plans hidden from suspecting eyes. Seoul House employees have kept their law suit meetings a secret for over a year, and most of their subversive tactics and joint law suit planning activities have gone undetected by Koreans with power.

While law suit negotiations take place discretely, away from the gaze of Seoul House authority figures, Latino and Korean employees must appear as competent and hard workers in front of their managers and employers to avoid suspicion and keep the business running smoothly. To work together, both groups have learned to speak their own hybrid mixture of Spanish, English, and Korean. To varying degrees, Miguel and his Latino coworkers are familiar with writing and reading Korean words using the Hangul alphabet. He explains that Korean waiters write up their food tickets in Korean, so Latinos had to develop a way of reading the tickets so they know what to cook. The kitchen is staffed entirely with Latinos who can cook most of the Korean menu, comprised of five-six pages of extensive food choices. The kitchen cooks have memorized the symbols that correlate with the appropriate dishes, and this minimizes confusion in the kitchen and allows the workers to do their jobs without constantly consulting with the waiters for clarification.

Newcomers must be taught the system for recognizing which symbols mean soup, and which symbols refer to meat dishes, for example. More experienced Latinos who have developed the ability to “read” Korean, transfer this knowledge to new workers who might otherwise be very confused and lost in the kitchen without guidance. While talking with Miguel and Guillermo, a busboy who works closely with the kitchen staff, Guillermo explains how workers distinguish between different kinds of soups on the menu or food order tickets by simply looking at the Hangul *símbolos o letras* (symbols or letters). I showed Guillermo pictures of various kitchen objects and personnel, and he pointed to various Korean dishes, rattling off their Korean names effortlessly. He then explained how he learned to identify Korean by distinguishing different Korean *letras* or letters on the restaurant menu:

Guillermo: este es kimchi...esta orden se llama...bimbimbap. Casi todas las comidas, yo me las se, porque yo paso mas...

Miguel: el sabe mas de sopas

Guillermo: kimchi...(lists Korean soup names) y son las sopas, platos grandes, mixteado con las cosas que ponen (lists numerous kinds of foods on the menu) hay tres clases de...viene con jalapeños picosos, kimchi revuelto, y otro regular...hay kalbi, kalbi regular, hay un bistec grueso,

Karen: Esa comunicación me fascina mucho

Guillermo: Yo todas las ordenes, yo soy casi mesero. Casi así no, porque coloco las ordenes que ellos me dan, en el sushi también., casi toda la comida también. Y pues ahí, mas o menos se todo las ordenes, ya me las se, pero no se escribir.

Karen: Si ves el nombre escrito de una sopa, sabias identificar?

Guillermo: Si

Karen: Por los símbolos diferentes puedes

Guillermo: Si, por los símbolos y las letras, mas o menos

Guillermo: This is kimchi, this food order is called...bibimbap. I know almost all the foods, I know them, because I spend more time...

Miguel: He knows more about soups

Guillermo: Kimchi...(lists Korean soup names) and they are soups, big plates, mixed with things they put inside [lists numerous kinds of food on the menu], there are three kinds of...it comes with hot jalapenos, kimchi mixed in, and another regular [kind]...there is kalbi, regular kalbi, there is a thick steak...

Karen: That communication fascinates me

Guillermo: I know all of the food orders, I'm practically a waiter. But not exactly because I place the orders that they give, the sushi ones too, almost all of the food too. And so there, more or less, I know all of the food orders, and I know them, but I don't know how to write.

Karen: If you see soup names written, would you know how to identify them?

Guillermo: yes

Karen: Through the different symbols?

Guillermo: Yes, through the symbols and letters, more or less.

Despite only finishing elementary school in Uxpanapa, Mexico, and working most of his youth in *el campo* (the country), Guillermo has developed various language skills at his workplace, including speaking Korean and recognizing Korean words and objects at the restaurant. Guillermo is also in charge of translating the details of catering hall reservation requests from Koreans to his Latino coworkers. Other Latinos at the restaurant have noted that Guillermo has learned to speak basic Korean phrases comfortably through interactions with both Korean customers and coworkers.

Immigrant workers like Guillermo have become experts at distinguishing various Korean dishes using the restaurant menus as instructive multimodal texts. Koreatown Menus often incorporate pictures and words (in Korean and sometimes English) that help workers make initial associations with Korean foods. This is important because experienced workers like Miguel and Guillermo may be expected to take care of orders over the phone, which requires the ability to recognize the spoken sounds that accompany the written menu items.

Kitchen workers are expected to be able to "read" Korean handwriting so they can quickly distinguish letters, associate them with food items, and execute customer orders properly and promptly. Miguel explains in more detail how workers at Seoul House differentiate Korean foods through the "letter system:"

Miguel: La mayoría de las ordenes Coreanos, por una letra cambia. Digamos una sopa, tiene una letra para empezar, es diferente. Todo empieza en lo mismo, y por una letra ellos pueden

decir que tipo de sopa es, por que aprenden todo eso. Aprenden la primera letra. Digamos...cada cosa empieza con una palabra nada mas diferente por eso los hispanos pueden ver que tipo de sopa es, por que ellos aprenden como se llama cada sopa. Va la orden y ven como se llama la orden entonces ellos se fijan como se escribe, no mas la primera letra. Así es como pueden sacar las ordenes.

Karen: Solo por ver esa letra pueden saber que sopa es..cuantas sopas son?

Miguel: Muchas. Son como 15, o mas.

Karen: Entonces pueden leer sin poder leer, no?

Miguel: (laughter) Si, todo por esa primer letra.

Miguel: The majority of Korean orders [food dish names] differ by one letter. Let's say soup, it has a letter to begin with, it's different. They all start with the same [letters], and by just one letter they [Latinos] can tell what kind of soup it is, because they learn all of that. They learn the first letter. Let's say...everything begins with one word which is different [depending on the soup] and for this reason, Latinos can see what kind of soup it is, because they learn the names of each of the kinds of soups. They see the order [food ticket written by Koreans in Hangul] and so they notice how it's written, just the first letter. And that's how they are able to put out the orders.

Karen: So just by looking at the letter they [Latino cooks] know what soup it is...how many soups are there?

Miguel: A lot. There are like 15, or more.

Karen: So they can read without reading Korean, no?

Miguel: (laughter) Yes, everything goes by that first letter.

In this case, Miguel describes a language strategy used by Latinos who are confronted with the challenge of understanding Korean's food order ticket system. The symbols for each soup variety differ by a few letters, making it possible for Latinos to quickly identify Korean text on food tickets by distinguishing between these different principle letters. This strategy or "path" for reading Korean makes it possible for Latinos to 1. Find the "control variable" representing a food *base type* (i.e. soup versus noodle dish) and 2. Identify the "independent variable" or *variation on the base type* (i.e. beef, vegetable, seafood, etc.). Consider the differences between kimchi stew and soybean paste stew. The two items share the same "base" or "control variable" – "stew" (찌개) but can be differentiated by the "independent variables" located in front of the control variables- "kimchi" (김치) and "soybean paste" (된장). As Miguel explains, Seoul House staff participates in this reading action for at least a dozen soup types and various other

menu items. The demands of the fast paced kitchen environment led Latinos to adapt this system in order to produce foods in an efficient manner and avoid disruptions or delays in the work flow. This is not unlike many other restaurant settings in Koreatown and beyond where locally intelligible kitchen food orders or “ticket code language” systems must be navigated and learned by newcomers. Being unable to “read” Korean does not impede workers at Seoul House from finding their own way of making sense of Korean symbols to distinguish between different kinds of soups, and teaching their methods to other workers. Much like Pablo’s barcode method, the Korean letter and word method at Seoul House is an effective “reading path” and communicative mechanism that allows workers to be recognized as legitimate participants in workplace communities of practice.

Antonio, a waiter in Koreatown Flushing, also describes the instructive qualities of restaurant menus. He claims that a Mexican manager at his restaurant can’t speak English, although he knows various Korean words by reading the restaurant menu.

Karen: Sabes escribir?

Antonio: Se el menu, todo el menu lo se escribir, todo lo se leer en su idioma. El idioma de ellos es muy difícil. Mas difícil que Inglés, es mas difícil el Chino.

Karen: Los otros trabajadores Hispanos son Mexicanos o de otros países?

Antonio: Mexicanos, unos Ecuatorianos. El jefe ahí es Mexicano...no sabe Inglés, pero entiende un poco de Coreano. Lo sabe leer...el Coreano, por el menú. Los Coreanos le hablan en una mezcla.

Karen: Do you know how to write [Korean?]

Antonio: I know the menu, I can write all of the menu [items in Korean]. Their [Koreans’] language is very difficult. More difficult than English, but Chinese is harder [than Korean]

Karen: The Latino workers [at your restaurant], are Mexican, or from other countries?

Antonio: Mexicans, some Ecuadorans. The boss [Latino staff manager] is Mexican, he doesn’t know English, but he understands a bit of Korean. He knows how to read it, Korean, because of the menu.

Antonio identifies the restaurant menu as an important component in his ability to write Korean. He attributes the fact he can write dozens of different words in Korean to the menu he

handles on an everyday basis at work. The menu is an important component of life as a restaurant worker, especially one who is responsible for relaying orders in a very busy restaurant environment in the heart of downtown Flushing. His familiarity with the menu items extends beyond the ability to simply write the words in Korean; what he does with that language ability is expertly navigate several restaurant communication systems that are multilingual, dynamic, and constantly evolving. His restaurant workplace is situated on the border of Koreatown and Chinatown neighborhoods in Flushing, and various Chinese languages are frequently heard in the restaurant. The owners of the restaurant have also lived in China and speak Mandarin.

Antonio's experience with local Chinese and Korean populations comes across as he describes differences between Chinese and Korean languages. Based on his experience in Flushing, Antonio claims Chinese is a much more difficult language to learn than Korean. He has learned much of what he knows about languages and food from his bosses, whom he considers family because they helped him during a critical time in his life. Antonio explains how he decided to return to Mexico for a few months to spend time with his ailing mother and make funeral arrangements after she passed. He left his restaurant job and his pregnant Korean fiancé, who thought he would never make it back to New York. Antonio recounts his feelings of gratitude toward his Korean *patron* (boss) who gave him money for his passage, allowed him to return to his job, paid for his medicine, and gave him time off from work;

Antonio: El año pasado, falleció mi mamá en México (says a prayer), yo me fui para México, sin tener papeles, deje mi esposa embarazada. Me fui 6 meses, me fui, y pensé que no podría regresar por la situación...mi patrón me dio para el pasaje, y dijo cuándo regreses tienes tu trabajo. Y me fui...mi esposa no quería, pensaba que no iba regresar. Estuve en México y la enterré...3 o 4 días no comí, nada...me detuvieron al segundo paso, por 5 días, y camine 4 días y 5 noches para llegar acá. Sin plata ni comida. 2 latas de maíz y dos de frutas, latas pequeñas para 4 días, 5 noches, y llegue aquí...casi me agarran en Washington DC. Llegue aquí y mi patrón dijo aquí tiene su trabajo, me compro medicina, estaba demasiado flaco, dijo aquí tienes trabajo, da te los días que quieres para ver tu esposa...mis patrones la verdad son buena gente.

Antonio: Last year, my mother passed away (says a prayer in Spanish), I went to Mexico without papers, I left my pregnant wife behind. I went for six months, I left, and I thought I wouldn't be able to get back because of the situation [difficulty of border crossing]...My boss gave me money for my passage, and said, 'when you return, you can have your job back.' So I left...my wife didn't want [me to leave], she thought I wasn't coming back. I was in Mexico and I buried her [Antonio's mother]. [While crossing the border] I didn't eat anything for 3 or 4 days, nothing...they [U.S. border authorities] detained me the second time I crossed, for five days. I walked 4 days and 5 nights, and arrived here...without money or food. Two cans of corn and two cans of fruit, small cans for four days, five nights, and I got here...they [U.S. authorities] almost caught me in Washington DC. I arrived here and my boss said, here's your job, take whatever days you need off to see your wife, my bosses are really good people.

After suffering through starvation and escaping U.S. immigration authorities, Antonio was able to return to New York and resume work at the Korean restaurant where he is still employed today. In addition to help from Mexican family and friends, Antonio's Korean boss served a critical role in the support network that facilitated his passage. She called Antonio while he was in Mexico to inquire about his well-being, and gave him money for his passage across the U.S.-Mexico border. She also gave Antonio time off from work after he returned, and encouraged him to spend time with Ji-Eun, his Korean wife, and their newborn daughter. In return, Antonio has served the restaurant by performing his responsibilities to the best of his ability.

Every day, Antonio also translates English, Korean, Spanish, and Mandarin for the staff at work, trains workers, and is observant of particular rules and norms that are interwoven with food practices at work. For example, Antonio takes pride in knowing how to properly serve food and liquor to a table of Korean elders or preferred customers. He observes their age, shows deference according to age differences, and holds bottles with both hands while serving. He is also responsible for relaying food orders to both Korean and Latino kitchen staff. They have worked out a system where Antonio's communicative expertise crosses multiple communities of practice every day. He interacts with customers, waiters, owners, kitchen, and cleaning staff in

ways that benefit the restaurant. He is so highly valued in his restaurant that he admits, in a boastful and satisfied tone,

Antonio: La verdad estoy en ese restaurant porque yo gano un buen dinero ahí. Si yo guardaba todo mi dinero sería millonario todavía. Estoy ganando mucho. Demasiado...

Antonio: the truth is that I'm at this restaurant because I make a lot of money there. If I saved all of my money I would be a millionaire. I'm earning a lot [of money]. Too much...

Whether or not Antonio is being truthful that he would “be a millionaire” if only he did a better job of saving money, the fact remains that he is content in his environment, where he feels needed and valued. He was so driven to master the language communities of his workplace that he purchased a five hundred page language encyclopedia book containing elaborate pictures of thousands of items with their English, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, German, and French translations. He and his Korean wife, Ji-Eun, showed me their “hard-to-find” massive encyclopedia during one of my Korean lessons at their apartment in Flushing. They encouraged me to take it home on the bus (it was extremely heavy to carry home). The couple was highly enthusiastic about its usefulness for their language education (they asked for it back within a week of me letting me borrow it). The couple explained that they use it whenever there is a gap in their Korean language conversation.

Antonio and Ji-Eun are constantly working toward making sense of each other, both at work and at home. Ji-Eun encourages him to do well at work and take care of their daughter's needs as well as possible; she is stern yet soft in her speech with her husband. During lessons, Antonio speaks with me in Spanish; Ji-Eun speaks to me in English, and they speak to each other in Korean. Ji-Eun speaks to their one year old daughter in Korean, and Antonio speaks to his daughter in Spanish. Ji-Eun plays Korean dramas in the background, and Antonio plays Mexican *banda* music in the bedroom next door. Ji-Eun has a college degree from a Korean University,

where she received a Bachelor's Degree in Chinese literature. She has many Chinese books and enjoys reading Chinese poetry on her spare time. She also entertains and educates me with her knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist poetry. She conveys a mastery of language through her serious teaching disposition, insistence on rules and conventions of Korean honorifics, effortless explanations of Korean grammar and syntax, and commentary on differences in language trends between Korean youth and elders.

Ji-Eun learned English while working as a waitress in the Korean restaurant where Antonio works. Over the past 10 years living in Flushing, she says her English has improved. She is learning Spanish through interacting with Antonio's Mexican family and their friends in Queens and Manhattan. She keeps in touch with her Korean friends and family using Twitter, and acts as a community organizer for an online group on Korean politics. Like Antonio, Ji-Eun is also an undocumented immigrant who has expertly adjusted to new language environments by participating in multiple communities of practice. In these various multilingual communities of practice, they have opportunities to exchange valued language and communication skills as their experience and status as well –respected members of those communities grows.

During language lessons (see Appendix G) their daughter sits in her play space, pokes her mother's Android tablet, or rests quietly in Ji-Eun's arms. Other days, Antonio brings her into his room and sings songs in Spanish to put her to sleep. During one particular language lesson, Ji-Eun took out a drawing pad to practice Korean writing together. She opened up to a page containing Korean handwriting belonging to Antonio. She smiled and told me that Antonio has secretly been practicing his Korean handwriting. She remarked on the progress he's made by reading their daughter's Korean story and picture-word books. This family uses various language resources and communicative strategies to get along and fulfill family obligations. They work

together to establish secure financial conditions for their beloved daughter and other kin in Korea, Mexico, and the United States. Although Antonio and Ji-Eun treasure their encyclopedia and Korean language books at home, Antonio still attributes his knowledge of Korean words to the restaurant menu he uses at work.

The reading and writing paths taken by Latino immigrants like Guillermo, Miguel, Antonio resemble the strategies used by Joséph Jacotot's Flemish speaking students who developed their own strategies for reading French without being taught how to do so (Rancière 1991). In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière describes how Jacotot, a French teacher, assigned his students the task of learning the French text contained in *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1794), a French novel by Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, with the help of a Flemish translation of the same book. Even though Jacotot had not explained anything about French spelling or grammar, his students were still able to read the text and produce French "sentences whose spelling and grammar became more and more exact as they progressed through the book." His students figured out how to read, write, and speak French without the "aid of explication" from a master explicator (Rancière 1991:9). Without a formally appointed Korean language teacher to provide lessons in Korean grammar or spelling, these workers learned to read Korean by "observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done" (1991:10).

Just as Rancière's students used *Telemaque*, workers referred to accessible and commonly used material resources- such as barcodes, menus, and children's picture-word books- as reference tools to aid their translation of Korean text for work activities. In the process, they have learned something they did not know before about a new language, and their ability to

participate as fuller members of their various communities of practice has increased. Koreans became “emancipator masters” by providing Latinos with the task of reading Korean without teaching them how to do so. Perhaps paradoxically, challenging new language environments in the immigrant labor system has the potential to exploit and educate at the same time (Gundaker 2007).

Rancière describes Jacotot’s emancipatory role: “his mastery lay in the command that had enclosed the students in a closed circle from which they alone could break out...by leaving his intelligence out of the picture, he had allowed their intelligence to grapple with that of the book” (1991:13). Koreans waiters leave it up to Latinos to figure out their system and come up with their own locally legitimate strategies. Latino’s “ignorance” about Korean produces a sense of urgency and necessity to understand. In leaving it up to Pablo, Miguel, and Guillermo to figure it out (managing Korean inventory, cooking Korean food, reading and writing Korean, translating multiple languages on the job), Koreans are also demonstrating that they have faith in Latino workers’ abilities and competencies. An experienced Latino immigrant worker in Koreatown can be considered an emancipator master as well. Experienced Latino immigrant workers also play important emancipatory roles by teaching newcomers “that which they do not know.” Experienced workers pass on their strategies for reading Korean even though have never been formally taught Korean spelling, grammar, or punctuation. They encourage newcomers to believe in their own abilities, using “all possible means to convince the ignorant one of his power” (1991:101). And over time, Latino immigrants find that they are more capable and competent, developing greater sense of ease and mastery of different languages practices involved in everyday activities.

The problem, as Rancière states, is “not to create scholars” but to “raise up those who believe themselves inferior in intelligence...” (1991:101). Even those immigrants who consider their language skills as inferior or incomplete are able to use language in legitimate and valid ways. The point is that Latino immigrants do not need to become proficient in Korean, English, or Spanish according to measures of language competency defined by outside institutions such as schools and government bodies. They don’t need language instruction experts to teach them language skills to navigate their new linguistic environments. Immigrants are capable of teaching each other the knowledge they need to know to survive in their environments, for their own purposes. The constraints they encounter as newcomers to distinct environments are not always predictable.

I understood this as a newcomer myself, when Latinos had to instruct me on proper ways of eating Korean food and using Korean honorifics with elders. As an ignorant fieldworker, I didn’t know what problems would present themselves until I was actually in situations where details about language and communication mattered. And immigrants design their own ways of learning and teaching, they also change their environments by introducing new interactional orders through which they incorporate their unique ways with language in home and work environments.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

In the United States, immigrants from Latin America and Asia have grown and spread significantly over the past several decades, and continue to expand across the United States. There are more immigrants from diverse countries employed in the U.S. workforce than ever before. As they transition into the United States, they encounter new languages and cultures, help other immigrant newcomers adapt to difficult situations, and simultaneously transform themselves and their communities in the process.

This dissertation has shown how immigrants engage in educative practices with each other in various settings outside of school classrooms. As immigrants adapt to new workplace environments in the United States, they encounter more experienced immigrants from a variety of ethno-linguistic backgrounds, who distribute their knowledge to newcomers. Immigrants teach each other the rules, expectations, and norms for becoming competent members of their diverse multilingual workplace “communities of practice,” using various language resources and communicative strategies. In the process, they transform and produce locally intelligible language varieties and adapt to new social positions through increased participation and cooperation with each other. Immigrants become increasingly skilled with language in the scenarios and moments that matter most to them. Their labor contributions and communicative competencies are acknowledged as they perform roles as coworkers, employers, friends, and family members.

However, in the U.S. today, particular language, education, and work skills are valued more highly and considered more legitimate than others. Too often, immigrants’ abilities are discounted, ignored, and categorized as inferior to the skills acquired through schooling, formal

language instruction, or workplace training programs. Research on immigrant education has focused on whether or not immigrants assimilate or conform to pre-established standards of language or work competency. Other times, their creative collaboration strategies are subsumed and overshadowed by dominant discourses centered on labor migration and capitalism, racial and ethnic identity politics, or theorizations about individual subjectivities and shared beliefs. As a result, the observable and ordinary details of immigrants' informal educative activities and communication strategies are not given adequate attention. For this reason, the goal of this dissertation is to show examples of the education immigrants provide each other outside of schools, in spaces and ways that often escape the gaze of educators, policymakers, and social scientists.

The examples discussed in this dissertation demonstrate how immigrants successfully meet the challenges and problems they encounter using available resources in their environments. They also develop complex ways of describing their language and education practices, and are profoundly aware of the constraints and opportunities presented by their surroundings. Their experiences demonstrate that immigrants are neither trapped nor lost as a result of their legal status, exploitative labor conditions, or inexperience with classroom settings or the Standard English dialect. Without appointed instructors or education experts, productive cooperation is possible even in settings where speakers come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and education backgrounds. Immigrants are competent members of society who have valuable insights and experiences worth exploring in detail.

The language practices of Koreatown workplaces are examples of how global processes of migration bring people and their language resources together, resulting in new mobile repertoires and language varieties. Recent research in the sociolinguistics of globalization and

(Blommaert 2010) reveals that language resources are highly mobile, albeit unevenly distributed. Within the sphere of global relations that have produced the conditions for Latinos and Koreans to work together in Koreatown neighborhoods, some communicative practices are valued more highly than others, resulting in particular hierarchies and social divisions visible in workplace contexts. However, it is only by paying attention to specific interactions, situated in particular contexts (such as the workplace), that it is possible to see how individuals contest, redefine, reevaluate, and remake values regarding language and social relationships.

Although the focus of this dissertation is the production of local orders of interaction (through the use of multiple communicative strategies and resources), set in particular observable language environments, these interactions are all connected to broader political and economic processes that shape immigrants' movements and forms of labor participation. In Koreatown, communities of practice are not tied to a single language or ethnic group, but form around particular activities, materials, and workplace spaces embedded in larger power-relations and economic systems. This dissertation demonstrates connections between local and global processes by showing how immigrants engage in joint activities together involving the movement of languages, materials, foods, and technologies, money, among others (i.e. multilingual speech varieties, barcode technologies, Korean music and popular culture, smartphone devices, etc.) across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. Through these multiple, ongoing communicative practices that span various borders, new communities of practice emerge, along with new ways of making sense of and dominating the resources involved in these practices.

This dissertation draws on concepts in ethnomethodology Garfinkel (1968) and sociolinguistics Hymes (1996, 1986, 1972, 1962) that were developed several decades ago, but

which have been revived in more recent sociolinguistic work (Blommaert 2013, 2010, 2009). Although language and culture studies have changed and evolved tremendously in the past several decades, in this dissertation I revisit concepts developed by early ethnomethodologists and sociolinguists to make sense of Koreatown workplaces. As Blommaert argues (2009) “Dell Hymes’s oeuvre was explicitly political” (2009:257) and much of Hymes work can be considered a “critical discourse analysis long before anyone laid claim to that term” (2009:273). I focus on Hymes’ insistence that “the fundamental vantage point must be what means of speech are available to a group and what meanings they find in them and give them” (Hymes 1996:83). This dissertation documents the voices of immigrants who are often ignored or undervalued; as such, it is rooted in a critical sociolinguistics that “offers us a way into the concrete linguistic shape of sociocultural inequality in societies” (Blommaert 2009:272). Demonstrating the patterning and order of speech events through ethnography can “enhance respect for an appreciation of the voices of others,” (Hymes 1996:219) such as the voices of immigrants in the U.S. that are sometimes silenced or considered inferior to others. Because the languages that result from super-diverse contemporary workplaces are not often recognized as legitimate languages, it is necessary to carefully explore the details of linguistic diversity and variation in such contexts.

This ethnographic approach, rooted in the history of sociolinguistics, is thus an instrument with “critical potential and emancipatory value” (Blommaert 2009:272) where the notion of social context is not static or neutral, but a “lived environment full of inequalities and constraints” (2009:273). Also, by using my own ignorance about language and social relations as a primary method of investigation in Koreatown, I was able to gain first-hand experience of inequalities and constraints produced in Koreatown environments. In this dissertation I

demonstrate how I was positioned as a newcomer and linguistic outsider in the process of establishing relationships in Koreatown. Immigrants with experience instructed me on how to understand the languages of Koreatown, and how to navigate communication with Koreans and Latinos in different workplaces. As a result, this dissertation demonstrates that ignorance can be instructive, and that immigrants are skilled teachers and expert navigators of local languages and the complex nuances of social relationships in Koreatown. As an anthropologist, learning the language of the field through “formal instruction,” (i.e. classroom language instruction) before beginning fieldwork, is not necessarily essential. Languages (and social rules for using language) learned informally through these kinds of educative practices may prove more useful than formal language education in schools, for example. By consulting local knowledge of community experts, anthropologists can learn what they need to know in order to survive and build meaningful relationships in their field environments. The more we allow ourselves to be educated by those who are often categorized or stereotyped as “uneducated,” the more we can value this emic knowledge and make it known to larger audiences through ethnography.

Table 6: 16 Key Communicative Strategies and Patterns of Multimodal, Multilingual Workplace

Communication Strategies

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Repetition | The act of restating an utterance (sound, word, phrase, sentence) |
| Imitation | The act of pronouncing an utterance or gesture in the style of an interlocutor’s previous utterance |
| Verification | The act of checking the extent to which an interlocutor has successfully understood the intended lesson |
| Positive Feedback | Agreement for the sake of continuing conversation |
| Association Game | Referencing mutually recognizable objects or events which is already known in order to explicate |
| Applying a | The act of expanding a word’s meaning in order to use or adapt it to more |

| | |
|--|--|
| word or phrase to multiple situations | situations increase is utility |
| Use of multimodal objects and resources | Using multiple technologies as medium to achieve one's intended goal of analysis; these include multiple language codes, pen and paper, pictures or signs (menus), gestures, smartphone technology, food objects, kitchen technology (machines for making noodles, refrigerator) |
| Code-Switching | Deliberately shifting into a new language code in a purposeful way during a single speech event |
| Pre-Pidginization/ Language Modification | Drawing from two or more language codes to form one new expression; the combination of two or more languages to form a new expression which is understood in the local speech group. |
| Gesture | Non-verbal communication |
| Play | Engaging in humor, jesting, or teasing, or other comedic act for recreation and diversion purposes. |
| Silence | A long pause in verbal interaction |
| Utilizing or Referencing 3 rd party knowledge | The act of bringing in a new (unfamiliar/outsider) participant and their resources into the conversation |
| Story-telling | the act of referencing or narrating a past moment or event |
| Assessment | Verification and judgment of learning processes |
| Positioning/ Honorifics | The act of using language (verbal and non-verbal communication) in order to indicate position or status in the local speech group or speech event. |

The cases presented in Chapter 4 illustrate the ways immigrants describe the challenges of transitioning into Koreatown and navigating new languages and communities of practice. Latinos like Juan and Miguel discuss feeling initially overwhelmed by the strangeness of their workplace environments or “company societies.” Supermarket, restaurant, and deli workers like Juan, Miguel, Jaime, José, Ricardo, and Lorenzo, describe how they adjust and make sense of their surroundings over time. They experience a “necessity to understand” the languages and rules of communication in their environment, in order to keep up with work expectations and avoid being punished or viewed as incompetent. Immigrants also learn the value of language and

communication skills for establishing their rights as workers. Supermarket and restaurant workers claim that workers are more vulnerable to exploitation if they do not learn how to stand up for themselves and defend themselves against exploitative practices.

This chapter also demonstrates how immigrant newcomers are usually expected to fulfill work responsibilities involving foreign languages and materials, without any formal job training. When they aren't given explicit instructions, they rely on each other's knowledge and their own resources to figure out how to do their jobs. I demonstrate how immigrants consistently work toward earning the trust and respect of their coworkers, managers, and employers in Koreatown. If they are viewed as inadequate workers, immigrants may be moved to more peripheral jobs at work. They feel most competent and secure at work when there is productive collaboration, communication, and language exchange. They employ various strategies to accomplish this, such as asking questions, reading contextualization cues, mixing languages and exchanging linguistic knowledge, and discussing their observations about language, food, and working in Koreatown with each other. In José's case, this involves reading contextualization cues and making sense of ambiguous language by referencing knowledge about socially acceptable behaviors. This chapter also demonstrates that workers encounter a range of linguistic and material resources every day through diverse multilingual communities of practice.

In Chapter 5, I discuss how Korean employers use silencing strategies to structure their workplaces and worker interactions. Immigrants like Fernando and his coworkers at Grandma's restaurant understand the importance of observing rules about working in silence, in order to communicate obedience and competence. Carmen and Antonio show how immigrants actively participate in Korean communities of practice even when they appear to be passively silent. They carefully listen to conversations in their environment and chime in their conversations

using laughter at appropriate moments. Workers thus use their knowledge of Korean to make sense of conversations in their surroundings, and use laughter and joking as a communication strategy. I also recount my own experiences visiting Korean employment agencies in Queens and being instructed by Ricardo on the importance of silence for gaining entry into the Koreatown labor market. Ricardo, an experienced and successful Koreatown worker, explains the rules for communicating effectively with Korean employment agency workers. He enjoys using different languages to talk to coworkers, create new menus and signs for customers, train immigrant newcomers, and party with Koreans after work. These are joint activities that improve the skills, confidence, and status of immigrants in Koreatown.

In chapter 6, I demonstrate that workers have many rich ways of explaining their own language practices and language environments at work. Juan describes his communication at work as a “language salad” while other workers like Ricardo and Orlando use descriptors like “mixed” and “scrambled” to explain how people weave multiple language varieties together at work. In this chapter, workers also describe how language and work activities are deeply interconnected. Orlando discusses the role of language in carrying out his job as a kitchen assistant at a Korean restaurant. Like many Latino immigrants in Koreatown, he has learned the importance of Korean for understanding the names of different Korean dishes, food ingredients, and flavors presented at work. In this chapter I also document various Korean words and phrases commonly used by Latinos in their supermarket and restaurant jobs. I provide workers’ glossaries or vocabulary lists of Korean words, written using the Latin alphabet and Spanish pronunciation. I explore how this linguistic knowledge is tied to the social context of the workplace. I argue that Latinos glossaries demonstrate they are aware of social status systems

and develop complex, constantly evolving relationships with objects, people, and language at work over time.

In Chapter 7, I focus on a multilingual supermarket conversation involving three Latino workers and their Korean coworker. I demonstrate how these workers incorporate Spanish, Korean, English, and a locally intelligible, improvised language variety to communicate and plan a dinner party together. They use various communicative strategies, such as teasing and humor, questioning and repetition, debate and argument, referencing peripheral participants, compromise and negotiation, testing and challenging each other, among others, to appear generous and avoid paying for the dinner bill. Workers use these strategies to be seen as experts and leaders in their group, and to build friendships with each other while being mindful and respectful of each other's finances. They establish norms and expectations for proper dinner party planning and eating etiquette, which is learned through increased participation in communicative events about dinner. To receive a dinner party invitation and avoid ridicule, members in this community of practice have to understand the locally defined social boundaries for appropriate talk. Newcomers must show awareness of rules about generosity, reciprocity, cheapness or "chandoryness," and language play.

In Chapter 8, I describe the importance of language for organizing a law suit against an exploitative Korean restaurant boss. I describe the case of Seoul House, where undocumented Korean and Latino employees teamed up to coordinate with bilingual lawyers, discuss their labor concerns, and plan their law suit to receive unpaid wages. Their case demonstrates how some Korean managers and bosses have developed various communicative techniques to warn, threaten, harass, silence, and coerce workers into lying. Workers describe the urgency of communication during random State Department of Labor drop-ins, where workers are subjected

to questioning. In these situations, jobs, social status, reputation, and large sums of money are at risk. Immigrant newcomers must be keenly aware of language cues, gestures, and social expectations for how to behave and speak appropriately in front of Koreans and government officials with authority. In this chapter, I also describe how romances between Latino and Korean immigrants are facilitated with smartphone translation applications and language education applications. Latino men and Korean women communicate by translating each other's text messages and discussing trends in Korean popular culture.

Workers like Juan and Miguel become familiar with Korean pop music and lyrics, dance moves, and fashion styles. Latinos make small talk with Korean girls about popular songs and also download music videos to share with coworkers. Other workers like Antonio and Guillermo practice their Korean language skills with Korean text found in restaurant menus, children's books, and encyclopedias. I also demonstrate how kitchen in Koreatown teach each other and themselves how to distinguish variations in Korean writing based on their menu knowledge and experience with local orders of interaction.

There are forms of learning outside the classroom that need to be valued and examined more carefully because we live in a system that values institution-based learning more than "informal" learning. The above cases demonstrate that valuable education takes place in non-school settings, where language and communication occurs in many ways. Learning happens in groups with increasing experience and participation in goal oriented and linguistically mediated activities through communities of practice. All of these examples also demonstrate that immigrants are competent language users who educate themselves and each other in order to accomplish their duties and build relationships with each other.

Differences in language do not restrict individuals from learning and working together; newcomers and language outsiders come up with many unique strategies to feel and be seen as competent workers. In Koreatown, some people use language to flirt or serenade each other, while others use strategies like linguistic silencing to control or abuse people. Thus language education at work is critical to preventing exploitation and establishing rules and expectations about appropriate and acceptable behavior. This dissertation contributes to knowledge about language phenomena in multilingual immigrant workplaces of New York City. These observations may be helpful for understanding the experiences of immigrants in other culturally and linguistically diverse settings in the U.S. My own method of using ignorance to understand process of how workers are educated about their surroundings is also a unique contribution. My success in forming relationships and understanding the communication strategies used in different workplaces is evidence that ignorance can be productive, and that being a language outsider is not a fixed barrier to becoming a skilled participant in many communities of practice. Below, I summarize some of the main themes that run throughout the cases presented.

In multilingual communities of practice language exchange and instruction in multiple languages happens spontaneously throughout the day, and is directly tied to objectives and activities of the workplace, but is not restricted to work demands. Members in the workplace community of practice use multimodal resources to communicate, such as menus, smartphone language applications, food packages and labels, and music videos. They incorporate these practices into their daily activities to do many things including: praising or reprimanding each other, sharing personal stories, learning new things about satisfying curiosity about each other, for flirtation or expressing romantic interest, and seeking advice or help about a variety of matters.

Language interaction between immigrants from two or more different places (Koreans and Ecuadorans, for example) is not simply about two separate, bounded cultural and linguistic systems coming together and overlapping. Cooperative sense-making and the construction of mutual intelligibility is an ongoing process that builds new interactional orders based on awareness of social roles and expectations. This ongoing, collaborative construction is instructional and transformative. Constructing mutual intelligibility doesn't mean people understand everything that is communicated. When faced with uncertainty, people can often "pass" as understanding, which is important for avoiding communication difficulties and being seen as a competent worker.

The workplace context is an educative space that entails new problems and opportunities for workers every day. In Koreatown restaurants and supermarkets, learning at work is not measured according to standard language assessments or skill evaluations. Immigrant workers are not passive learners, and workplace education is more than a "unidirectional" transfer of information and knowledge. Ways of speaking and knowing are co-constructed by multiple active communities of practice comprising individuals with a range of abilities and linguistic styles. Language is tied to work activities and relationships, changing status, participation, positions at the workplace and beyond. Latinos and Korean immigrants are not uneducated, ignorant, or unskilled; they are highly resourceful and are constantly engaging in instruction, translation, teaching, and learning activities using language abilities learned at work.

Diverse language varieties and local ways of communicating evolve over time, in ways that make sense in different social contexts. Historically, populations have been mingling, mixing, developing, and exchanging their languages, styles of speech, and communicative techniques for a long time, creating local contact varieties. In Koreatown, the Korean and

Spanish speaking populations have been interacting and sharing neighborhood spaces for several decades. This has created new and dynamic conditions for the emergence of hybridized speech patterns. Sometimes, words and utterances produced do not correspond with just one language code. While preference for one language or another may exist in the workplace, improvised words and innovative strategies for communication are almost always likely to occur.

B. For Future Research

I believe these observations and research methods can be applied to many communities beyond Koreatown. Knowledge about diverse, multilingual communities in workplaces and other out-of-school settings could provide a more holistic picture of demographic and linguistic changes occurring in cities and towns across America. I believe future researchers would benefit from a grounded approach to understanding the details of what people actually do every day and how they cooperate to accomplish these activities together in different ways. I suggest that future researchers collaborate in multilingual research teams involving anthropologists, language, and education scholars. Scholars can learn from each other's language resources and strategies to create new ways of talking and writing about education. Also, more efforts should be directed to understanding how immigrants organize their own education and ways of learning and communicating. Derogatory and discriminatory practices against immigrants and their language and labor skills can be combated through careful observation and documentation of their creative and resilient strategies for participating in society. Additionally, future research on learning in settings like workplaces, parks, houses of worship, and many others may inform how we approach education and literacy in school settings. This research would also illuminate the

processes by which values and norms about language competence and work skill are constructed over time. Anthropologists of education are especially positioned to highlight peoples' accomplishments in ordinary educational moments happening all around us.

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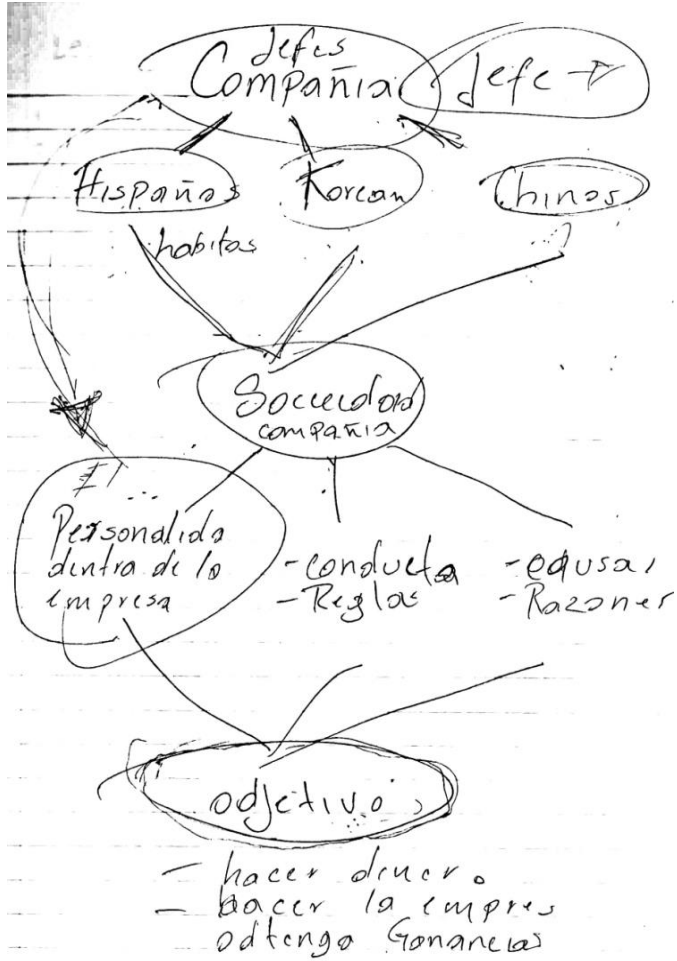
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Appendices

A. Organization of Juan's Supermarket



B. Juan's Glossary Lists

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Korean | Spanish |
| Maandro | - Rebelde - Malo |
| egui | - niño |
| oxoō | - no hay |
| naogo | - come |
| Mora guoyoo | - Perdon, ¿quedó? |
| Yoon paa | - Cebolla |
| Sanchu | - Lechuga roja |
| chíncha | - Enserio, Seguro |
| yogui hoo | - aquí por favor |
| Juogui | - Carne |
| cholban | - Mitad |
| Michosōō | - Loco |
| Iroque | - así |
| año | - Hola |

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| torcon | - Spanish |
| telly | - Gordo |
| Quenzhana | - Estabien |
| tokate | - igual |
| chondory | - Codo |
| muia igo | - Que es esto? |
| chocōn | - Poco o poquito |
| Pioa | - Queda, o todia Queda |
| pioa iseho | - Queda todavia |
| mashisoo | - Sabroso |
| araa | - Sabes, conoces |
| araa araayoo | - usted sabe, conoce |
| keraan | - Huevo |
| Ponchaan | - Los aperitivos |
| Pioa Busheuo | - Necesito el resto de la orden |
| Kalbi | - Hana Busheou |
| igoo | - este |

Palabras Mixtas (improvisadas)

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Ma | |
| Malandro | - Rebelde, Malo |
| Comuro | - comer |
| Helpo | - ayuda |
| odo | - orden |
| Liton | - Regreso |
| Freeo | - Gratis, con respeto |
| tomachu | - mucho |
| Gabichi | - Basura |
| Hajlpo | - Mitad |

C. Rafael's Glossary List

| Koreano | | ESPAÑOL |
|--------------|---|--------------|
| Quenchana | - | Esta bien |
| chonchoni | - | suabe |
| Soran | - | Amor |
| Agachi | - | Señorita |
| Achina | - | Muchacha |
| Ocni | - | Joven |
| Chancoma | - | permiso |
| Itaga | - | Alludame |
| Vichoso | - | Loco |
| Ocso | - | Noai |
| ISO | - | Hai |
| Anquen-chana | - | No esta bien |
| Ande | - | No |
| Añanseo | - | Hola |
| pali | - | Rapido |
| chiru | - | No me gusta |
| Une otoseyo | - | Como esta |
| Tocate | - | No problema |
| Solo nayo | - | Tiene sueño |
| Eron brya | - | Como selluma |
| Chochime | - | Tencuidado |
| Odigaso | - | Onde vas |
| Ayuma | - | Señora |

D. Rafael's Coworker's Glossary List

| Koreano | Español |
|------------|------------|
| hipo - | Bonita |
| Sarangeo - | te quiero |
| Añagaseo - | saludo. |
| Mañi - | Mucho. |
| gansamida. | Gracias |
| Chancamaño | Compermiso |
| Mula. | No se. |
| yarabulli | Abuelito. |
| Ajuma: | Señora. |
| Choco | poquita. |
| mañi. | Mucho |

E. Santos's Glossary List

Charcamanio Jalmoai permiso abuelita

Jarabuyi Abuelito

agaChi señorita

ipo boniato

tun tun gordo

ayuma señora

Saga manzana

Podó uva

talgui - fresa

Suva Sandia

Camilla Papa

Sarageo te quiero

F. Ricardo's Glossary List

- Algunas palabras que he
Aprendido con la gente de
Korea son:
Por ejemplo.

Anaseo - botiqueo -
Machquetuseo. Borayo.
Jachhe manäl - ayo -
Anä / Pa - Igeran - yanpa.
de - cha. bete. choqui
Yoti - agashi. - Saran.
Cenamali mü, iseo
arazo, Tedi,
jano - Tugé, Soge,
Tasogue ishikul.

H: Supermarket Dinner Party Conversation

| # | Time | Speaker | Transcript with Korean Romanization and Hangul Script *Spanish in Italics, Improvised Words Underlined | Translation |
|----|------|----------|---|---|
| 1 | 0:01 | Juan: | You pay? Ernesto. | You pay? Ernesto. |
| 2 | 0:05 | Chino: | Ernesto...you <i>paga</i> xxx me hana 하나 | Ernesto...you pay xxx me one (Ernesto...you pay, I already paid once) |
| 3 | 0:10 | Juan: | Mango hana <u>comero</u> 하나 | Mango one eat (I ate a mango) |
| 4 | 0.15 | Chino: | Ernesto...oooh | Ernesto...oooh |
| 5 | 0.16 | Juan: | Too much <i>come</i> , bagel hana <u>comero</u> 하나 | Too much eat, bagel one eat (I ate too much, I had a bagel) |
| 6 | 0.17 | Chino: | Later me Ernesto igo large hana 이거 하나 suwjo ara? 사줘 아라? | Later me Ernesto here buy me a large one? |
| 7 | 0.21 | Juan: | Too much <u>chandory</u> , you too much <u>chandory</u> | Too much cheap, you too much cheap |
| 8 | 0.25 | Chino: | Ernesto <u>chandory</u> , me <i>come</i> | Ernesto cheap, me eat |
| 9 | 0.29 | Juan: | Jorge tocate 똑같이 | Jorge with us (Jorge should come with us) |
| 10 | 0.32 | Chino: | Aigo mwoya. Ara? 이거 뭐야 아라? | Oh goodness, what's this. Understand? |
| 11 | 0.36 | Juan: | Ernesto, Ernesto | Ernesto, Ernesto |
| 12 | 0.37 | Chino | No <u>chandory</u> , me later go xxx kenchana 괜찮아 | No cheap, me later go xxx okay (I'm not cheap, I'll go later okay) |
| 13 | 0.41 | Ernesto: | Okay tomorrow tomorrow me pay. | Okay tomorrow tomorrow me pay |

| | | | | |
|----|------|----------|--|---|
| 14 | 0.44 | Jorge: | Wae jigeum? 왜 지금 | Why not? |
| 15 | 0.49 | Ernesto: | Too much. I pay later. | Too much. I pay later. |
| 16 | 0.49 | Chino: | Large, large kenchana...small 팬찮아 mashiso. 맛있어 | Large, large is good...small delicious (Large is good, small is delicious) |
| 17 | 0.53 | Jorge: | Okay, okay small kenchana 팬찮아 | Okay, okay small is good |
| 18 | 0.55 | Juan: | Small, small kenchana 팬찮아 | Small, small is good |
| 19 | 0.58 | Ernesto: | Jorge <u>tomachi chandory</u> | Jorge too cheap |
| 20 | 1.03 | Chino | (laughter) | |
| 21 | 1.10 | Juan: | Kenchana, no problem? Jorge, 팬찮아 kenchana? No <u>chandory</u> ? Ahh 팬찮아 | It's good, no problem? Jorge, it's good? No cheap? Ahh |
| 22 | 1.18 | Chino | Next Friday, next Friday | Next Friday, next Friday |
| 23 | 1.19 | Juan | Next Friday, okay? Xxx kenchana 팬찮아 | Next Friday, okay? Xxx it's good. |
| 24 | 1:2 | Chino: | You <i>habla</i> , you...you phone no where ara? 아라? | You talk, you...you phone no where you know? (You talk, do you know where your phone is?) |
| 25 | 1.28 | Jorge | Me phone opso ara? 없어 아라 | Me phone don't have you know? (I don't have a phone) |
| 26 | 1.30 | Chino: | Michoso, wae eobseo you michoso 미쳤어 왜 없어 미쳤어 | You're crazy, why do you have no phone? You're crazy |
| 27 | 1.33 | Juan | No pay, chinchá! Mucho <u>chandory</u> 진짜! | No pay, seriously! Very cheap. |

- 28 1.36 Jorge: Me too much chandory, me no pay igo, 이거
charla, Santa Maria, AT&T mobile, AT&T chat
 Me too much cheap, me no pay here, talk, Santa Maria, AT&T mobile, AT&T chat (**I'm too cheap, I didn't pay, AT&T phone service is dead, I only have AT&T chat**)
- 29 1.40 Chino AT&T neun xxx kenchana. Igeo beonho 는 팬찮아 이거 번호
 isseo. Eobseoiss-eo kenchana. 없어요있어 팬찮아
 AT&T is okay. This has phone number. You don't have a phone it's okay
- 30 1.51 Juan: Next Friday, next Friday, ok? Maybe today, yogi 여기
 Maybe today here
- 31 1.55 Chino: Ara ara. 아라아라
 I understand, I understand.
- 32 1.56 Juan: Ara? 아라?
 Understand
- 33 1.57 Chino: Ara ara. 아라아라
 I understand, I understand.
- 34 1.58 Juan: Mexican, Korea, China?
 Mexican, Korea, China?
- 35 1.59 Chino: Juan mwomeog-eo Juan? 뭐먹어 호세
 What are you having, Juan?
- 36 2.00 José: Chique? (laughter) Hoy chique
 Chicken (laughter) Today chicken.
- 37 2.06 Chino: You *habla* igo kenchana toomach-i-so 이거팬찮아 있어
 igo 이거
 You talk, here is good, this has a lot. (**You arrange it with the others, here in Koreatown there are a lot of restaurants**)
- 38 2.10 Juan: Hoy chique kenchana only hana duge 팬찮아 하나두개
 bill, okay
 Today chicken is good only one, two bill, okay
- 39 2.14 Chino: Ohhh
 Ohhh

- 40 2.15 Juan: Only hana dulce
하나 두개 Only one, two
- 41 2.16 Ernesto *Vamos a comer hoy mismo, guey* Let's go eat today, dude
- 42 2.17 Juan: What time, what time *come*, what time
come? What time, what time, what
time eat?
- 43 2.22 Chino: Now. Okay, okay, what time *come*? One
hour? Now. Okay, okay, what time
eat? One hour?
- 44 2.26 Juan: Seven, seven, seven Seven, seven, seven
- 45 2.28 Chino: Seven? Seven?
- 46 2.29 Juan: Yeah...choco, choco, *come* now. Okay. Yeah...little, little, eat now.
Next Friday Mexican restaurant, China or Okay. Next Friday Mexican
Korea? restaurant, China, or Korea?
- 47 2.36 Chino: China China
- 48 2.37 Juan: Chinha?
진짜? Seriously?
- 49 2.37 Jorge: China mashiso?
진짜 맛있어? China is delicious? (**Chinese
food is delicious?**)
- 50 2.38 Chino Machisoooo
맛있어 Deliciousssss
- 51 2.42 Jorge: No Korea? No Korea?
- 52 2.43 Juan: No comero? Kenchana! Me comero!
팬찮아 No eat? That's okay! I'll eat!
(**You won't eat? That's okay!
I'll eat**)
- 53 2.44 Jorge: Opso, opso yogi?
없어, 없어여기? There aren't any here? **There
aren't any Korean
restaurants?**
- 54 2.47 Chino: Hana china-iso. You *casa* China, me pay
하나 있어 There is a Chinese restaurant.
kenchana You home China, me pay it's
팬찮아 okay (**There is a Chinese
restaurant. You're at home in
China, I'll pay it's okay**)

| | | | | |
|----|------|--------|--|---|
| 55 | 2.49 | Juan | Oh shit | Oh shit |
| 56 | 2.50 | Chino | Juan. Later, Ara? 아라? | Juan. Later, understand? |
| 57 | 2.53 | Juan: | Chincha you pay? Kenchana. Oh shit. 진짜 팬찮아 Yogi, yogi, China <i>habla</i> 여기 여기 | Seriously you pay? That's good. Oh shit. Here, here, China talk (You're seriously paying? That's good. Oh shit. Let's go to a restaurant here, China you call) |
| 58 | 3.02 | Chino: | Chincha agashi me pay kenchana. Me pay, 진짜 아저씨 팬찮아 twenty eighteen, kenchana 팬찮아 | Seriously man me pay its okay. Me pay twenty, eighteen it's okay. (It's okay I will pay the bill. twenty, eighteen dollars per person is okay) |
| 59 | 3.06 | Juan: | Okay | Okay |
| 60 | 3.07 | Chino: | <i>Todos come?</i> Ara, <u>beef-o</u> ara? 아라? | Everyone eat? Understand, beef, understand? (Will everyone be eating? We're eating beef, understand?) |
| 61 | 3.08 | Jorge: | Yeah | Yeah |
| 62 | 3.09 | Chino: | Too much dollar dollar <i>come</i> | Too much dollar dollar eat (it's a lot of money to eat) |
| 63 | 3.13 | Juan | (laughter) | (laughter) |
| 64 | 3.15 | Chino: | Chincha! Beef 진짜! | Seriously! beef |
| 65 | 3.16 | Juan: | Beef?! | Beef?! |
| 66 | 3.17 | Chino: | <u>Beef-o</u> ara?! 아라?! | Beef, understand?! |
| 67 | 3.18 | Jorge: | Beef! Beef, <u>speack-a</u> <i>del</i> beef! | Beef! Beef! Speaking of beef! (Chino is speaking about beef) |
| 68 | 3.19 | Juan: | Pork, pork large? | Pork, pork large? |

- 69 3.21 Chino: Hana kenchana chandory. Later
jallameo geo kenchana
잘라먹어 팬참아
Only one is okay, cheap. Later cut to eat is okay (**If we choose only one it will be cheap. Later we can cut the meat and share the pieces, it's okay**)
- 70 3.30 Jorge: Okay, me, Juan, me kenchana. Juan, later
팬참아
China, Chino ara?
아라?
Okay, me, Felix, me it's okay. Felix, later China, Chino understand? (**I'm okay with going together with Juan. Juan, we'll go to the Chinese restaurant later. Chino, do you understand?**)
- 71 3.34 Chino: Kenchana
팬참아
Okay
- 72 3.34 Jorge: You pay everything, kenchana?
팬참아?
You pay everything, okay?
- 73 3.35 Chino: Oh, I pay everything kenchana
팬참아
Oh, I pay everything it's okay
- 74 3.37 Juan: Oh, shit chincha? Chincha joha
진짜? 진짜 좋아
Oh shit, seriously? I really like it/you
- 75 3.42 Chino: One week, no one year, no (laughter)
One week, no one year, no (laughter) (**I'll pay this week, don't expect me to pay for a year**)
- 76 3.43 Juan: Chamkanmanyo?
잠깐만요?
Wait? (**Should we hold off on dinner?**)
- 77 3.46 Chino: One week kenchana, one week.
팬참아
Tomorrow, toomachi money, you molla
몰라
maybe two thousand.
One week is good, one week. Tomorrow too much money, you I don't know maybe two thousand. (**I'm okay with paying one week, tomorrow its too much money, I don't know, you might bring up the bill to 2,000 dollars**)
- 78 3.52 Juan: Ahh, you toomachi money
Ahh, you too much money (**Ahh, you make a lot of money**)

| | | | | |
|----|------|--------|--|---|
| 79 | 3.53 | Chino: | Two thousand dollar, one <i>come</i> , then maybe xxx | Two thousand dollar, one eats, then maybe xxx (If it's two thousand for just one person to eat, then maybe [more people will bring up the bill]) |
| 80 | 3.59 | Juan: | Okay, kenchana next Friday only three 팬찮아 people | Okay it's okay next Friday only three people |
| 81 | 4.03 | Chino: | One year, no good | One year, no good |
| 82 | 4.03 | Jorge: | Agashi 아저씨 | Mister |
| 83 | 4.04 | Chino: | No money | No money |
| 84 | 4.05 | Jorge: | Agashi 아저씨 | Mister |
| 85 | 4.05 | Chino: | Mhmm | Mhmm |
| 86 | 4.06 | Jorge: | Next Friday, only three people? No Gabriel? No Alfredo? | Next Friday, only three people? No Gabriel? No Alfredo? |
| 87 | 4.07 | Chino: | Kenchana 팬찮아 | It's good |
| 88 | 4.08 | Jorge | <i>Yo habla, yo habla</i> , no problem | I talk, I talk, no problem (I'll speak to others and make plans, no problem) |
| 89 | 4.10 | Chino: | <i>Yo hablo</i> kenchana, kenchana, dul 팬찮아 팬찮아 들이 kenchana. Gabriel <u>toomachi</u> Come 팬찮아 | I'll talk it's okay, it's okay, two is okay. Gabriel too much eats (I'll talk, its okay, just two of us is okay. Gabriel eats too much) |
| 90 | 4.18 | Juan: | <u>Toomachi</u> pay (laughter) | Too much pay (laughter) (If Gabriel comes, we'll pay too much [laughter]) |

- 91 4.22 Chino: Gabriel gaseo maybe five hundred
가서
dollars nawa
나와 Gabriel goes out maybe five
hundred dollars **(If Gabriel
goes out with us the bill may
be five hundred dollars)**
- 92 4.25 Juan/
Jorge: (laughter) (laughter)
- 93 4.30 Juan: Okay kenchana, only three people
괜찮아
okay? Jorge, Jorge, kenchana?
괜찮아 Okay it's okay, only three
people, okay? Jorge, Jorge,
kenchana?
- 94 4.38 Chino: xxx ara?
아라? xxx understand?
- 95 4.40 Juan: Okay Okay
- 96 4.41 Chino: Gabriel xxx maybe five hundred
Gabriel xxx maybe five
hundred **(If Gabriel comes,
the bill might be five
hundred dollars)**
- 97 4.42 Juan: Last time we pay okay? Kenchana you
괜찮아
toomachi chandory. Kenchana no pay!
괜찮아
(laughter) okay, okay Last time we pay okay? It's
okay you too much cheap. It's
okay no pay! (laughter) okay,
okay **(We paid last time,
okay? It's' okay, you're too
cheap, It's okay don't pay!
Okay okay)**