

TRANSLATION POLICIES AND THE ROLE OF ENGLISH/SPANISH
TRANSLATION IN CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

MARIAM Z. JAMEEL. Translation policies and the role of English/Spanish translation in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. (Under the direction of DR. CONCEPCIÓN B. GODEV)

The following case study assesses the effectiveness of translated documents that are publically available on the Charlotte Mecklenburg School (CMS) website in communicating with non-English speaking parents. Relevance theory is used as the theoretical framework of this research. Communication between CMS and parents is analyzed in light of three different components of Relevance Theory: optimal relevance, schema and text typologies. In addition, this study looks at various local and federal language laws, such as language provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Based on Relevance Theory, conclusions are drawn regarding the extent to which CMS implements these language policies in its effort to communicate with multilingual families.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW I. RELEVANCE THEORY	3
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW II. LANGUAGE LAWS AND TRANSLATION	7
3.1 Translation and International Law	7
3.2 The English – Only Movement	8
3.3 No Child Left Behind Act	10
3.4 North Carolina School Legislation	14
3.5 Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and English Language Learners	17
CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW III. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS	19
4.1 General Parental Involvement Studies	19
4.2 No Child Left Behind Act and Parental Involvement	27
4.3 Summary of Parental Involvement	30
CHAPTER 5: TRANSLATION, RELEVANCE, AND LANGUAGE LAWS IN CMS	32
5.1 Introduction to Study	32
5.2 Purpose	33
5.3 Materials	33
5.4 Research Questions	34
5.5 Analysis	35
5.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research	41
5.7 Summary and Conclusion	42
REFERENCES	45

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LATINO ADULT INTERNET USERS, 2012	48
APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LATINO ADULT COMPUTER OWNERS, 2012	49

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to US Census data, in 2011 there were more than 12.4 million Hispanic¹ students enrolled in US public schools, accounting for approximately 24% of the country's student population (Fry and Lopez 6). As this number continually increases, the potential for a communication gap widens between parents and students on one hand, and schools on the other hand. The language barrier adversely affects the relationship between families and teachers, and more importantly, the success of students at all levels. In order to bridge the communication gap, schools resort to various strategies, including hiring interpreters or using online translation tools. Some strategies are more successful than others, depending on the scale of the school system, the available resources, and the size of the Spanish-speaking population.

Many school systems have not been able to allocate enough resources to keep up with the increasing demand for communication services. Language resources are often dictated by federal and state legislation, as well as state budgets. Thus, school systems with high multilingual populations and limited resources face constant communication challenges. One such system is the Charlotte Mecklenburg School (CMS) system in Charlotte, NC (USA). With 164 schools, CMS is one of the largest growing school

¹ In this study, the term "Hispanic" is a general term used to describe anyone who speaks Spanish. This term is often times used interchangeably with "Latino" in this document.

systems in the nation, as well as one of the most diverse. Out of its population of over 140,000 students, approximately 18% are of Hispanic origin (CMS). Each year, the CMS International Center directly registers about 500 Hispanic students. The families of these children often speak or read little to no English.

This study aims to assess the role of translation² in CMS communication events. Relevance Theory will be used as a theoretical framework to analyze the extent to which CMS implements federal and state laws in its efforts to reach out to parents and students of Hispanic origin.

² For the purposes of this study, translation will refer to any exchange of information, written or verbal, between two entities, a sender and a receiver. The sender is the person or entity initiating the spoken or written communication. The receiver is the person or entity targeted by the sender.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW I. RELEVANCE THEORY

Relevance Theory is an approach to explaining human communication based on human cognitive processes. Sperber and Wilson argue that during communication, humans focus on achieving “the greatest possible cognitive effect for the smallest possible processing effort” (Sperber and Wilson vii). In order to reach this level of communication, an individual will be attentive to what appears to be the most relevant information available to him or her. Thus, the individual will make a series of assumptions within the given context, known as the “inferential notion of communication” (Gutt 1998). Although Sperber and Wilson primarily use Relevance Theory to explain verbal communication and utterance interpretation, its concepts can also be applied to other forms of communication.

Relevance Theory contains several components. Out of these components, the concepts of *optimal relevance*, *schema* and *text typologies* will be often referred to throughout this study.

A text is said to be “optimally relevant” when 1) “it enables the audience to find without unnecessary effort the meaning intended by the communicator,” and 2) when the intended meaning is “worth the audience’s effort,” that is, it benefits the audience (Gutt 43). Optimal relevance aids the receiver (in this case Spanish-speaking parents) in identifying the context of the message given by the sender. The receiver expects that the right contextual information required for the accurate interpretation of the message is

available. Thus, the receiver begins to interpret the information starting with the information that is most readily accessible. Furthermore, the receiver assumes that, with the correct context, the interpretation of the message will be worth their effort (Gutt 44).

In order for successful communication to be achieved, both the sender and the receiver must have a mutual³ similar understanding of the context. In addition, each of the interlocutors has to know that both of them have a similar understanding. The determination of relevance is based on an individual's interpretation of the given context, which is set by the sender of the message (in this case CMS). Thus, in order for the highest level of successful communication to take place, both the sender (CMS) and the receiver (Spanish-speaking parent) must share a certain level of mutual knowledge. Sperber and Wilson refer to this phenomenon as the *mutual knowledge hypothesis*. According to the hypothesis, a *context* is defined as the "set of premises used in interpreting an utterance (apart from the premise that the utterance in question has been produced)" (Sperber and Wilson 15). The context is not limited to information available in the receiver's immediate environment. Instead, a context can include "expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker," which all play a role in the receiver's interpretation of the sender's information (15). In order to understand information processing in a specific context, it is important to combine the processing of new information with a selection of background assumptions. These background assumptions are referred to in Relevance Theory as *schema* (138). An individual's

³ The term "mutual", as used by Sperber and Wilson, refers to any knowledge that is shared by both the sender and receiver in any given communicative act (Sperber and Wilson 18).

context, therefore, is made up of both schema and the given context⁴. Members of the same cultural group share a number of experiences, teachings and views; however, differences in life experiences influence the information that an individual memorizes (16). For the purposes of this study, the schema will refer primarily to cultural norms and practices, although it encompasses an individual's personal life experiences.

Sperber and Wilson identify two different dimensions of language use: descriptive and interpretive:

It [an utterance] can represent some state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs; in this case we will say that the representation is a *description*, or that it is used *descriptively*. Or it can represent some other representation which also has a propositional form – a thought, for instance – in virtue of a resemblance between the two propositional forms; in this case we will say that the first representation is an *interpretation* of the second one, or that it is used *interpretatively* (Sperber and Wilson 229).

In order to better explain these concepts, Gutt gives an example of each type of dimension:

- a) Melody: 'Fred and Judy have got a divorce'
- b) Melody: 'Harry said, "Fred and Judy have got a divorce"'

The first example is considered a descriptive use of language since it is a direct statement representing the state of affairs (Fred and Judy's divorce). In the second example,

⁴ A "given context" consists of the premises in which the actual communicative action is taking place. For example, in written communication the given context is the document. The individual's schema and individual context, however, affect how he or she understands the document within the "given context." In other words, a given context includes the immediate elements surrounding the communicative act, whether verbal or written.

however, Melody is only stating what Harry said. She is not necessarily claiming that Fred and Judy got a divorce (Gutt 44).

Gutt argues that translation “naturally falls” under the interpretive use of language since the purpose of a translation is to restate in one language what someone said or wrote in another (Gutt 46). Furthermore, Gutt examines the notion of translation and the role of labels for types of texts in the communication process, referred to as *text typologies*.

A text typology is a label used to distinguish between different types of texts and utterances. For example, labeling an item as a “report” would give a receiver a different connotation of the product than “satire” or a “curriculum vitae.” In a school setting, labels such as “progress report” and “report card” are often seen. Depending on the context and label given by the sender, the receiver will have different expectations of what purpose the text will serve. The use of such labels can help the sender of the message guide the receiver in their “search for optimal relevance” (Gutt 46). By setting a typological label, then, the sender sets the context of the message and helps the receiver attain the intended interpretation. Because of this, text typologies help increase the level of relevance of a text for the receiver. Furthermore, the success of a typological label depends on the *mutual knowledge* between the sender and receiver, the level to which they both agree on the intended purpose of a text.

Thus, what an individual identifies as *optimally relevant* to him or her depends on several factors, including the given context, the individual’s schema and, in the case of document translation, the text typologies labeled by the sender.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW II. LANGUAGE LAWS AND TRANSLATION

3.1 Translation and International Law

As global immigration continues to increase, the emergence of multilingual societies has become a common occurrence. The question, then, is to what extent language policies should tailor to these multilingual communities. The debate begins at the international level, as international policies foster domestic laws. Furthermore, the right to translation is rooted in language rights at all levels (Núñez 2).

At the international level, there exist some references to translation and language rights, although the context of translation in these laws is very limited. International regulations concern a variety of different circumstances, such as translation during times of war. For example, article 17 of the 1949 Geneva Convention states that the questioning of prisoners of war should be carried out “in a language which they understand” (Núñez 5). Also, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) affirms an individual’s right to translation in criminal proceedings (9). Other international laws, such as those of the International Labour Organization Convention of 1989, concern translation rights for indigenous peoples (10). These international calls for non-discrimination, however, do not necessarily mean that governments and governmental entities must make an effort to translate for all minorities (5).

3.2 Language Laws in the United States: The English-Only Movement

Although many assume English to be the official language of the United States, English is not esteemed in the Constitution (Daniels viii). Despite this, there exists an ongoing power struggle between those who favor English as an official language and those who do not. This struggle is known as the English-Only movement, which took off in the 80's and 90's. It is important to understand the implications of this movement, as it affects all aspects of American society, especially bilingual education.

English-Only lobbying groups, such as U.S English, argue that new immigrants, mainly Hispanic immigrants, are not assimilating to the culture as the Germans, Swedes, Poles and Italians once did. Instead, Hispanics are accused of refusing to learn English, requesting translations and interpretations of everything in their own language. Hispanics' alleged resistance to learning English has sparked controversy among the American public (Daniels 4). Despite Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin, by 1988 sixteen states had passed some type of "English-Only" legislation. These laws came with many consequences, mainly instances of language discrimination (5). For example, in Colorado, a waiter was fired for translating a menu for a Spanish-speaking customer (EPIC, March/April, 1988 qtd in Daniels 5). Among the many public practices that English-Only seeks to eliminate, such as the use of hospital interpreters and the translation of voting materials, are those that directly affect public education, such as bilingual education programs, interpreters at school conferences, and translated school materials, such as report cards (6). Additionally, organizations like U.S English are in favor of public schools teaching only in English, arguing that this is more important than

obtaining literacy or mastery of a subject matter. Despite this, bilingual education has been proven effective for the education of non-English speakers (7).

Some argue that the root of the English-Only movement is not hatred, but rather ignorance and the fear of the future of the US. The movement has turned into a form of “socially acceptable” discrimination (Davis 11), and has even made its way to the federal level. On April 27th, 1981, a California senator proposed an amendment to the constitution to make English the official language, known as the English Language Amendment, or ELA (Judd 37). Supporters of the ELA argue that English is a national symbol of unity, and that the language has been a source of stability for the US (39). Although there is a very little chance that the ELA will be passed in Congress, the issue is important because it introduces a discriminatory climate with anti-immigrant attitudes in society. Even though the ELA was not passed in Congress, individual states have passed their own versions of the ELA.

The controversy has a major effect on how much school systems choose to integrate translation practices in order to accommodate non-English speaking families. The elimination of bilingual education will have a direct effect on linguistically diverse children, who will be punished for speaking their native language in school (Dueñas Gonzalez 56). There is a high probability that these students will remain in remedial classes due to language barriers. Proponents of the ELA offer ESL classes as a solution. However, this method will put students behind in their education. Without bilingual education, children will make progress at a slower pace (56). For example, in order to learn math or social studies in English, a student must first learn English in another class. This can lengthen the number of years students stay in school, as they must first learn

English before learning in English (Stalker 62). Often times, this opportunity may not be available to students due to factors such as budget constraints or the availability of ESL teachers. The unattainable option to learn English at school not only affects the students, but also their family's involvement in their education.

3.3 Language Laws and US Education Act: No Child Left Behind

In January of 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed. The main goal of NCLB is to guarantee that all students are proficient in “grade-level” performance, which is determined by each individual state. Schools must aim to meet their adequate yearly progress rate (AYP) each year. If a school fails to meet its AYP target after 2 years, it must offer students the option to receive supplemental instruction, such as after-school tutoring. For students who are considered LEP⁵ (limited English proficient), the act offers schools grants through its “English Language Acquisition State Grants Program”. In addition, all schools are required to keep parents up-to-date by providing them with information on school performance, as well as student report cards (“No Child Left Behind – Overview”).

The Act contains ten titles, each with several subsections. This review will focus primarily on the provisions included in Title I – Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged and Title III - Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students.

With regards to the education of non-English speaking students and the involvement of their parents, section 3102 of “Part A – English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act” of Title III states:

⁵ In this document, the term LEP (limited English proficient) and ELL (English language learner) are often used interchangeably.

The purposes of this part are –

- (6) To promote parental and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents and communities of limited English proficient children;

In addition, section 3302, “Parental Notification” states:

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible entity using funds provided under this title to provide a language instruction educational program shall implement an effective means of outreach to parents of limited English proficient children to inform such parents of how they can—

- (A) be involved in the education of their children;
- (B) be active participants in assisting their children— (i) to learn English; (ii) to achieve at high levels in core academic subjects; and (iii) to meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet (NCLB 1733).

Finally, throughout several sections of the act, there is mention of language understanding, implying a need for the translation of school materials for parents and guardians. For example:

Section 1116. Supplemental Education Services

(6) NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS.—The State educational agency shall promptly provide to the parents (in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand) of each student enrolled in a school served by a local educational agency identified for improvement, the results of the

review under paragraph (1) and, if the agency is identified for improvement, the reasons for that identification and how parents can participate in upgrading the quality of the local educational agency (NCLB 1488).

Section 1116. Academic Assessment and Local Educational Agency and School Improvement

(2) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES – Each local educational agency subject to this subsection shall –

(A) provide, at a minimum, annual notice to parents (in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand) of —

- (i) the availability of services under this subsection;
- (ii) the identity of approved providers of those services that are within the local educational agency or whose services are reasonably available in neighboring local educational agencies; and
- (iii) a brief description of the services, qualifications, and demonstrated effectiveness of each such provider; (NCLB 1491)

Section 1118. Parental Involvement

(e) BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT – To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, each school and local educational agency assisted under this part –

[...]

(5) shall ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand (NCLB 1504).

Section 5564. Uses of Funds

(a) IN GENERAL – Grant funds received under this subpart shall be used for one or more of the following:

(1) To assist parents in participating effectively in their children’s education and to help their children meet State and local standards, such as assisting parents –
[...]
(C) to communicate effectively with teachers, principals, counselors, administrators, and other school personnel [...]

(3) To help the parents learn and use the technology applied in their children’s education.

(b) PERMISSIVE ACTIVITIES – Grant funds received under this subpart may be used to assist schools with activities including one or more of the following:

(1) Developing and implementing the schools’ plans or activities under sections 1118 and 1119 [...]

(3) Providing information about assessment and individual results to parents in a manner and a language the family can understand (NCLB 1858-1859).

Although NCLB does not directly suggest the translation of documents as an option for schools, it does reference languages that the “parents can understand.” Thus, in order for LEP parents to stay involved in their children’s education, schools must keep parents updated with school documents and forms in their own language, as well as attempting to

hire interpreters for parent-teacher conferences and other school events. This may also result in increasing the parent- teacher relationship.

3.4 North Carolina School Legislation

In general, all states must comply with the provisions of the Federal NCLB Act. However, states that implement or adopt a series of reforms to improve their academic performance are eligible to receive flexibility waivers (“No Child Left Behind – Overview”). According to the North Carolina State Board of Education, in May 2012 the state was granted flexibility waivers under NCLB. These waivers allowed North Carolina to make significant changes, especially in the areas of Adequate Yearly Progress, parent notifications, public school choice and Supplemental Education Services. The Board of Education claims that these waivers will allow the NC public school system better prepare students for college and improve the quality of instruction (State Board of Education).

In a document titled “ESEA Flexibility Request Frequently Asked Questions,” the NC State Board of Education explains the affects of the waiver on parental involvement. In this explanation, the board states:

Under ESEA flexibility, parents will continue to receive information on their children’s progress in meeting State academic achievement standards as well as their school’s success in helping all students meet those standards. Parents will know whether their children’s schools are succeeding, by being identified as reward schools, or falling short, by being identified as priority or focus schools. When schools fall short, parents can be assured that school leaders will adopt strategies focused on school needs and targeted towards the students most at risk.

In addition, it defines parental involvement under the provisions of ESEA (SEC. 9101(23)):

Parental Involvement means: *The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:*

That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; and That parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child (ESEA 1965).

In this section, it is important to note two things. The first is the claim that all parents will continue to receive school report cards, which provide information about the overall success of the school. The second is the definition of parental involvement, which is rooted in a two-way communication process.

In addition, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) published a manual called “Parent and Family Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools.” In it, the NCDPI discusses several “roadblocks” to communication, and offers teachers and school officials “detour” to the issues. Several of the suggested solutions are in reference to parents of students who are ELLs (English language learners) or LEPs (limited English proficient) and how to best communicate with them. For example, one roadblock mentioned is:

Parents without adequate resources often feel overwhelmed. Families suffering from economic stress must address their own needs for food, clothing, and shelter

before they can see clearly how to become more involved in their children's education.

The NCDPI suggests that the teacher ask the parent or guardian about their situation and assign them a "buddy" who understands their situation and language "to help connect the family to the school" ("Parent and Family Involvement" 46).

Another roadblock mentioned is "Parents who don't speak English may not understand newsletters, fliers, or speakers at meetings." The solution offered for this issue suggests that teachers:

Provide printed materials that are sent home and passed out at meetings in all languages spoken by the families in the school. Identify and help secure interpreters and translators for workshops and meetings. Hold group activities and social times in the same room as English-speaking families and then have parents of the same language break off into smaller groups in different rooms for more in-depth discussion. Bring all parents back together at the end of the meeting and have a bilingual reporter for each group share what was discussed ("Parent and Family Involvement" 46).

Although the NCDPI suggests interpreters and translators, it does not refer teachers or schools to any sources. Thus, there is no provision with regards to access to translators and interpreters or how to budget translation services in schools facing budget cuts.

Although the solution may sound simple, the implementation of it is much more complex.

3.5 Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and English Language Learners

There are 169 languages spoken in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. CMS currently enrolls 30,371 language minority students⁶, 14,830 of which are English Language Learners (“English Language Learners”). Thus, CMS is faced with the growing issue of language barriers, not only between students and teachers, but between teachers and administrators and parents or guardians as well. The CMS website, as well as documents like the CMS handbook, give some insight into how the school system handles such issues. Examples from both sources are described below:

The 2014-2015 CMS Parent-Student handbook makes a direct reference to Federal Law, stating:

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), together with the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), is charged with the responsibility of enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin. In *Lau v. Nichols*, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the U.S. Department of Education’s May 25, 1970, memorandum that directed Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to take steps to help English Language Learners overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the educational programs (“Parent-Student Handbook” 19).

In addition, CMS affirms its implementation of NCLB Title III, which states that all Local Language Agencies (LEAs) must ensure that children who are limited English proficient meet the same academic goals and achievement standards as all students (Title

⁶ A language minority student refers to any student whose first language is not English.

III, S3102 qtd. in CMS). Moreover, CMS describes its English as a Second Language (ESL) program, which aids students to learn English (“Parent-Student Handbook” 19).

Despite references to federal language law, CMS does not expand much upon parental involvement of immigrant families. The handbook describes the provisions of NCLB and the state waiver, and says, “principals, teachers, parents and students each have a part to play in ensuring the success of each individual child” (“Parent Student Handbook” 20). However, no information is given about parental involvement in reference to ELLs.

The CMS website makes reference to parental involvement and the importance it has on the success of students. The mission of CMS is to “maximize academic achievement by every student in every school” with the help of parents/guardians (“Core Beliefs”). The website includes a tab called “Parents,” with information for parents about enrollment, school calendars, bell schedules, nutrition services and more. In addition, there is a “Parental Involvement and Student Achievement” page, which has tips on how to help children succeed in school. Thus, CMS acknowledges federal and state language laws, and opportunities for ELLs. It does mention some resources, like the ESL program and the International Center (IC), where “linguistically diverse” students are enrolled (“Parent-Student Handbook” 19). It does not, however, mention specific tactics for teachers and staff to handle communication barriers.

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW III. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

At the core of various education legislation is the idea that parental involvement influences student success. Countless studies have been done to measure the extent to which different types of parental involvement increased student success rates. Some studies found positive correlations between the two, while others found weak correlations. Despite this, parental involvement continues to play a large part in shaping public school legislation. This is true of legislation at all levels. Governments and school systems tend to advertise programs that aim to bridge the communication gap between parents and teachers in hopes of helping their students succeed.

4.1 General Parental Involvement Studies

Over the years, countless studies have investigated the relationship between the involvement of families in schools and student success rates. The level of parental involvement depends on several factors, such as language barriers, family hardships, and socioeconomic status. It is also important to take into account cultural factors, and the ability parents have to assist their children academically under their given circumstances.

Parental involvement consists of a wide variety of resources that parents use to help their children succeed academically, including activities such as: volunteering at school, communicating with teachers, helping students at home, attending school-sponsored events, and participating in Parent Teacher Association meetings (Hill and Taylor 161). Traditionally there have been two major categories of parental involvement:

home-based and school-based. One of the most common frameworks used to study parental involvement is Epstein's framework of six types of involvement (Epstein and Sanders 418). According to this framework, both the parents and the schools have a specific set of obligations that must be fulfilled in order to help students succeed. Despite this, there exist several barriers to both home-based and school-based involvement, such as difficult work schedules, limited English proficiency and literacy, and unfamiliarity with the US education system. Several researchers have found a positive correlation between home-based involvement and student success rates (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, and Pituch, 2010; Eamon, 2005; Valadez, 2002 qtd in Ceballo 117). Although the literature conveys several examples of parental interactions, many of these interactions are not feasible in the Latino context.

Latino parents have been shown to favor home-based involvement in order to limit participation in schools (Seginer 2006 qtd in Ceballo 117). Home-based involvement does not necessarily mean assisting students with assignments, but can include giving students advice and discussing classes (Ceballo 117). According to Ceballo's study (2013), parental involvement is multi-dimensional, and students are affected by a variety of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors. Forms of non-traditional involvement can include finding students a quiet place to work at home and making personal and financial sacrifices. Ceballo's study was done on 223 Latino 9th graders (primarily Dominican) who attended three different schools in the northeastern US. The study found a stronger positive correlation between direct parental involvement and academic success of immigrants versus that of non-immigrants. It is possible that academic support had a greater impact on immigrant students who faced hardships

assimilating to a new culture, instead of US born students. In general, the study found that parental involvement strongly influenced students who came from families that endorsed cultural values (Ceballo 2013). Although the study was limited in that it only took into consideration the opinions of Latino 9th graders, it showed that different types of parental involvement (home-based and school-based) had an effect on the academic achievement of both immigrant and non-immigrant students.

Cervantes's research (2013) was similar in that it focused on the effect of parental involvement on Latino adolescents, mainly middle-school students. The research outlined specific points that every school psychologist should be aware of when handling Latino families. According to Cervantes, cultural factors hinder Latino parents' ability to "navigate the [US] school system," which makes it more difficult for them to get involved in their child's education (Cervantes 11). Latino students have higher dropout rates due to factors such as language barriers, lower expectations of teachers, racism, and difficulties assimilating to a new culture (Marshall, 2006, p.1054 qtd in Cervantes 12). In addition, Latino students are the fastest growing ethnic group in the US public school system (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004 qtd in Cervantes 12). Because of this, educators must be equipped to serve the needs of this population (11).

It is also important to take into account the cultural views and expectations that Latino parents have about education. Often times, parents have specific assumptions about their child's education based on their own experiences, even though those experiences occurred in their country of origin where the education system had a different structure and utilized different learning approaches. First, some research has shown that Latino parents feel intimidated by teachers, and that teachers eventually stop

attempting to communicate with the parents (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001 qtd in Cervantes 16). Shah (2009) reported that in many cases, parents find schools unwelcoming. Invitations to visit the school for events are not seen as a form of participation but rather a time for teachers to criticize their parenting (Shah 218). Second, Latino parents may see their role as supporting their children and instilling in them moral values rather than directly interfering with their schooling. Here, it is also important to note that school systems in Latin American countries are centralized, and that parents do not look at the school curriculum. Parents primarily handle their children's behaviors, not their education (Cervantes 48). Hence, parents have a less personal relationship with teachers, and perceive their child's education as the school's obligation. Participation may be seen as rude in some cases, as parents will be "intruding" on the teacher's professional duties (Martines 2008 p.355 qtd in Cervantes 49). In other words, Hispanic parents perceive a different relationship with teachers than non-Hispanic parents. Despite these perceptions, Hispanic parents living in the US do have high academic expectations of their children, and see their education as a "vehicle" to the American dream. However, some researchers have found that these expectations do not necessarily mean parental involvement in schools, and therefore do not necessarily influence the student's academic performance (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, and Garnier, 2001, qtd in Cervantes 16).

In a focus group study conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, the majority of Latino parents reported that communication activities were "impersonal, infrequent, and without adequate notice" (Zarate 10). Also, Latino parents were found to equate school involvement with providing their children "moral guidance," which would result in "good classroom behavior" (9). In other words, these parents considered the

home a place for life education and not for academic guidance (9). In addition, several of the parents expressed concerns about helping their children with homework, stating that their limited knowledge of English, heavy workload, or education from their home country hindered their abilities to help (9).

Aside from cultural views on education and limited knowledge of English, parents may be unaware of how to help their students succeed academically. If parents are asked to help, they may feel that they are overstepping their boundaries and taking over the role of teachers (Tinkler 2002 qtd in Cervantes 51). At the same time, educators who have a lack of cultural knowledge may make incorrect assumptions about students and their families. As a result, educators may offer inappropriate recommendations to problematic behaviors demonstrated by students, leading to miscommunication between the teachers and parents (Cervantes 41). In other words, cultural understanding becomes an important part of communication between parents and teachers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, “Parental involvement for students in middle and high schools tends to be lower than those in elementary schools” (Parent, 2000 qtd in Wilson 2). Wilson states that parental involvement begins to diminish at the secondary school level (i.e. middle school and high school), as students begin to struggle more academically. Without enough parental involvement, students may eventually fail in school. Prior research has shown that students whose families have more access to their curriculum are more likely to succeed academically (Wilson 5).

Wilson's study (2009) aimed to assess the influence of parental involvement on student achievement at all academic levels within several participating Missouri public school districts (6). For the purposes of the study, parental involvement was defined as

the direct contact parents have with teachers during parent-teacher conferences. The dependent variables were student GPA's and Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test scores, a standardized test that meets the requirements of the NCLB Act (Wilson 8, 12). The study correlated school-based parental involvement with these variables (14).

According to Wilson, communication between home and school has always been a roadblock and the gap is increasing. Parental involvement is at an all-time low while teacher accountability is at an all-time high (Wilson 15). In the 1970's and 1980's organizations such as the Parent Teacher Association Foundation were widespread, and created a strong bond between home and school (17). Also, in 2003 the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that 80 percent of parents attended at least one conference. Sixty percent of these parents also attended a school function outside of the regular school day. However, these statistics are quickly declining (18).

Before discussing his findings, Wilson reviews literature dealing with parental involvement. He discusses legislation, the roles of teachers and parents, and communication. He starts by reiterating the role of legislation in parental involvement. He states that in order for schools to receive federal funds for Title I, districts must prove that at least one percent of funds are going to programs that support parental involvement in schools. Also, it is significant to note that academic legislation is based on theories that parental involvement will influence a child's academic success (Baker 2000 qtd in Wilson 2009).

Wilson draws from research done by Garry Hornby (2000), which outlines different expectations that parents and teachers have of each other. According to Hornby, teachers want parents to be open about their children's special needs and health issues. In

addition, they would like parents to cooperate in "reinforcing school discipline" by supervising their homework, and teach their children what is expected of them at school. Finally, they want parents to regularly attend meetings and read progress reports and letters that are sent home. Parents, on the other hand, want teachers to consult them more frequently about their child's progress, have an approachable attitude, and come to them with any issues regarding their child (Hornby 2000 qtd in Wilson 2009). These points are general and may or may not apply to immigrant parents, especially those of Latino origin.

Although organizations such as the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) or PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) play an important role in school districts, they may not be enough to meet the needs of parents (Wilson 37). Thus, school achievement will not increase if educators simply replace family resources with school resources. Although schools can provide rewards and opportunities for children, the families must provide the "building blocks" such as "attitude, effort, and conception of self," which together make learning possible (79). In addition, in order to facilitate the "partnership" approach⁷ of parent-teacher relationships, communication between them must improve.

Communication is the "foundation of effective partnership" and teachers should learn to better communicate with parents. The "significance of parents' active involvement" is "unquestionable and beneficial" and parents should take a "holistic" approach to literacy in their home (83).

With regards to language and cultural barriers, Wilson quotes Funkhouser (1997), who states:

⁷ Wilson discusses different parent-teacher relationship models, including the "protective model," "expert model," "transmission model," "curriculum enrichment model," "consumer model," and the "partnership model." The partnership model is of high importance since it enables "mutual support between teacher and parents" (Wilson 34).

Every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children. When parents hold high expectations of their children and encourage them to work hard, they support student success in school. However, language and cultural differences can make communication and family participation in school activities difficult. For instance, US Department of Education survey data show parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate in school-based activities and more likely to participate in fewer activities over the course of the school year. However, many schools with innovative leadership and a creative and hardworking staff have found ways to bridge the differences while cultivating meaningful school-family partnerships” (Funkhouser 1997 qtd in Wilson 2009).

Funkhouser’s conclusions can be applied to non-English speakers of any culture. However, his statement that parents who do not speak English are less likely to participate in school activities is in line with the previously discussed research done by Cervantes on the involvement of Hispanic families in the school system. Wilson notes that families are different in their "skills, knowledge, resources, and time available to promote student engagement and learning at school" (Wilson 78). However, schools are generally “not oriented toward collaboration with families and communities” and are usually not “open to the families’ language and culture” (McCaleb 1995, Preface, qtd in Wilson 2009). In other words, schools may not be aware of Latino events and traditions. At the same time, Latinos may not feel welcome or attracted to school events.

Wilson’s study tested several hypotheses. In some tests, a weak linear correlation was identified, while in others, a stronger positive correlation was determined. For

example, one out of Wilson's eight conclusions stated: "Data illustrated that students with parental involvement achieved higher GPA by nearly two points on an eleven point scale" (Wilson 130). Wilson recommends that schools actively seek "any edge in increasing student achievement." The "status quo" is no longer acceptable since legislation, such as No Child Left Behind, demands an increase in student achievement (124).

Although Wilson's study was not specific to the Hispanic population, it did show that in some cases there is a positive correlation between school-based parental involvement and student achievement. The study was limited in that it did not take into consideration factors such as student motivation. However, Wilson made it clear that it is the families that must provide the "building blocks" to make learning possible (79).

4.2 No Child Left Behind Act and Parental Involvement

In 2009 a study called "An Examination of the Influence of No Child Left Behind on Parental Involvement Policies, Practices and Programs in Oklahoma Public Schools: A Mixed Methods Study" was conducted. This study is significant in that it analyses the extent to which parental involvement, as defined by NCLB, is implemented in public schools. According to Morris (2009) federal legislation defined parental involvement, but different guidelines were used in various school districts when implementing parental involvement programs. Morris's study analyzed the perceptions of school superintendents in light of NCLB to understand parental involvement through the lens of "Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement" (Morris, abstract).

Morris argues that, although research on parental involvement has been correlated with an increase in student academic success, not enough is known about parental

involvement in order to effectively implement it. This "lack of clarity" has been a challenge for researchers, who have been looking for a way to measure levels of parental involvement (Jordan, Orozco, and Averett, 2002, qtd in Morris 2009). This is clearly seen in the studies mentioned in this literature review, as each researcher began by defining parental involvement, or by stating the definition of another researcher.

Varying definitions of parental involvement include different activities, such as joining the PTA or helping students with homework. With the passing of NCLB, a new definition was introduced (Morris 1). Parental involvement is one part of NCLB, and schools must adhere to it in order to receive Federal funding (2).

Morris identifies the problem of the implementation of parental involvement, stating that it can be an important factor in improving schools and student success; "however, despite promising models and growing evidence of benefits of parental involvement, policymakers, state education agencies, school districts and school sites are still not demonstrating maximum support for parental involvement practices (Furger, 2005; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002 qtd in Morris, 8, 2009). In addition, there is a lack of consistency in agreement on what parental involvement entails (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002 qtd in Morris 2009). Morris states that very few schools have gone beyond the minimum requirements of parental involvement set by NCLB (Furger, 2005 qtd in Morris 2009).

The study surveyed superintendents in 540 different Oklahoma school districts using a mixed-methods model. This review will focus on the third part of Morris's findings: interviews of rural, suburban and urban superintendents.

Morris's research was conducted in light of Epstein's framework (2002) of parental involvement, which includes the concepts of *communication*, *volunteering*, *parenting*, *learning at home*, *community collaboration*, and *decision-making* (Morris 11).

In addition, Morris posed several important research questions, including the following:

1. According to superintendents or designees, do rural, urban, and suburban Oklahoma school district parental involvement policies and programs meet NCLB guidelines?
2. Do Oklahoma school districts have written parent involvement policies, programs, and staff training?
3. Do Oklahoma school districts allocate Title I funds for parental involvement programs?
4. Do Oklahoma school districts provide annual student performance report cards detailing the performance of the school district and individual schools?
5. Do Oklahoma school districts notify parents if Title I schools fall into the *needs improvement*, *corrective action*, or *restructured categories*?

Morris found that the *communication* aspect of Epstein's framework was used in all three school districts. More specifically, the urban and suburban school districts communicated with parents through PTA organizations, school newsletters, emails, and school websites. Communication with diverse families was not as prevalent in the rural district as the urban and suburban. Translators were used in all three districts, but the percentage varied (Morris 138). For example, "suburban respondents suggested that in 63% of the districts, English was the only language available to parents" (Morris 113). This is not in line with NCLB, which requires all school districts to communicate with parents in a language that

they understand (113). Morris also noted that cultural differences affected communication, as educators assumed the “dominant” role, which was particularly offensive to traditional Hispanic, Native American and Asian families (114).

Despite the limited communication with foreign languages in suburban and rural schools, Morris’s findings showed that translators were used in 70% of all parent-teacher conferences and Title I meetings. Eighty-three percent of schools provided translators for parents upon request (Morris 115). In an interview conducted by Morris, the superintendent of the suburban school district stated that:

The district receives about a 1.3 million dollar budget from Title I funding with 1% specifically dedicated to parent involvement...Our district also publishes student and parent handbooks in both English and Spanish to better communicate with non-English speaking families. We use interpreters when needed (Interview, 2007 qtd in Morris 2009)

Thus, results from this study show that federal funds are being used to increase parental involvement and communication with non-English speaking parents in the state of Oklahoma. The majority of the school districts did employ interpreters and translators when needed. However, school districts did not completely abide by the definition of “parental involvement” set by NCLB. Further research is needed to compare these results with other states, including North Carolina.

4.3 Summary of Parental Involvement

Although there exist limitations and exceptions, the studies above, as well as previous studies referenced by these researchers, have shown a positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. Studies have been done under a

variety of different circumstances, such as Cervantes's study on middle school students and Wilson's study on the correlation between GPA's, MAP scores and parent-teacher conferences. However, despite the circumstances, the correlation remained positive in the majority of the cases. Therefore, an increase in communication between parents and teachers can have a positive impact on the academic achievement of students.

CHAPTER 5: TRANSLATION, RELEVANCE, AND LANGUAGE LAWS IN CMS

Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory is based on the idea that during communication, humans try to achieve "the greatest possible cognitive effect for the smallest possible processing effort" (Sperber and Wilson vii). Gutt (1998) applied this theory to translation, saying that translation "naturally falls" under the interpretive use of language since its purpose is to restate in one language what someone said or wrote in another (Gutt 46). Gutt's argument can be used to assess the effectiveness of language laws in regulating translation and helping receivers of the message achieve their communicative goal: high levels of understanding with low effort.

5.1 Introduction to Study

Communication and parental involvement are two important aspects of the students' and schools' success in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). CMS is very diverse and, as indicated earlier, has a population of more than 12.4 million Hispanic students (Fry and Lopez 6). As this number continues to increase, meaningful and successful communication between parents, teachers and students becomes increasingly important. By examining the literature publically available on the CMS website, this study aims to analyze the extent to which communication is relevant to non-native English speakers, and how well it conforms to federal and local legislation. The analysis will be carried out by using the provisions included in the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the theoretical framework provided by Relevance Theory.

5.2 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to assess the communication strategies used by CMS in light of Relevance Theory, and analyze the extent to which they conform to language laws. In doing so, insight will be gained on the effectiveness of communication between Spanish-speaking parents, students with limited English, and teachers and administrators in CMS. More specifically, the focus of communication will be on the use of translated documents. The primary means of communication between parents and schools will be identified and possible factors of successful or unsuccessful communication will be examined. The role of translation in the communicative process will be assessed, and conclusions will be drawn on the extent to which language policies are implemented. The available documents will not be analyzed on an individual basis. Instead, the goal is to review the system as a whole, analyzing how translation is used, how much it conforms to language policies, and its effectiveness as a communication tool.

5.3 Materials

The corpus of materials used for this study include the CMS website, its webpage links, and all translated documents and attachments. In total, there are 13 attached forms on the website, including the following:

1. Student Code of Conduct
2. Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Forms
3. Student Forms and Notices Handbook
4. Asthma Action Plan – Medication authorization
5. Authorization for Self-Medication by CMS Students

6. CMS Student Textbook Accountability
7. Diet Order form
8. Medication Authorization for CMS Students
9. Musical Instrument Disclaimer
10. Parent Revocation of Student Internet Access
11. Photo and Video Release
12. Student Locker Assignment
13. Parent Student Handbook

Aside from these documents, no other forms are available in Spanish at this stage. The majority of the website includes links in English only. In addition, internal links on CMS website (i.e., tabs, external links, attachments) and un-translated documents are used for analysis.

5.4 Research Questions

In regards to Relevance Theory, the following research questions are posed:

1. Are the translations easy to locate?
2. How much effort does locating the documents require of the audience?
3. To what extent are these translations useful to the target audience?
4. How are the documents identified and labeled? Do the titles make sense to the audience?
5. To what extent does the audience's background (schema) affect the usefulness of the translated documents?
6. Are both sides able to successfully communicate using translations? (i.e. is optimal relevance achieved?)

These are the questions that will guide the findings regarding CMS's implementation of language policies.

5.5 Analysis

At first glance, the CMS website (www.cms.k12.nc.us) appears to be well organized. The homepage includes nine tabs: Parents, Student Placement, Get Involved, Schools, Careers, Board of Education, Departments, About CMS, and Contact Us. While scrolling down, the user can see news updates about CMS, as well as District Events. There is also a section titled "Quicklinks," with links to important information such as graduation schedules and bell schedules.

The CMS website is simple and easy to navigate for an English speaker who is familiar with using the Internet. The website, however, does not have any links to a "Spanish" section. According to data collected by the Pew Hispanic Research Center, there exists a "digital divide" between "English-dominant" Hispanics and "Spanish-dominant" Hispanics (Pew Research). Statistics on Internet use depend on a variety of factors, including primary language, age, income, number of dependent children, marital status, and annual family income (Appendix A). It is important to note that of the Latinos who are aged 30 – 49, 34% are non-Internet users. In addition, of the 48% of Latinos who have dependent children under the age of 18 living in their household, 35% are non-Internet users. Latinos who fall under these demographics (age and parent or guardian status) are likely to have children enrolled in the public school system. Although the statistic may vary depending on the state, the national numbers indicate a large "digital divide." In addition, it is important to examine computer ownership statistics (Appendix

B). Thirty-six percent of Latinos with dependant children under the age of 18 living in their household do not own a computer. This further limits Internet access.

In light of Relevance Theory, the lack of proper communication tools hinders communication from the side of the receiver. According to the theory, humans try to reach “the greatest possible cognitive effect for the smallest possible processing effort” (Sperber and Wilson, viii). In this case, Latinos who do not have access to a computer or the Internet must input more processing effort to reach the cognitive effect desired by the sender, CMS. The questions, then, are: who is more responsible for successful communication under these circumstances? and what is the role of each party in successful communication?

In examining the role of the sender (in this case the CMS website), the text is not made relevant to the Spanish-speaking receivers. This makes it more difficult to navigate the website in order to get to the documents that *are* translated into Spanish. CMS’s purpose for having translated documents on the website is to help non-English speaking parents understand school policies and have access to common school forms. Because the context is difficult for the receiver to navigate, the text is said to not be optimally relevant.

According to the mutual knowledge hypothesis, both CMS and the Spanish-speaking parents or guardians must share a certain level of mutual knowledge in order for successful communication to occur. Mutual knowledge is a broad subject, and can be based on a variety of factors. In terms of schema, it is important to take into consideration the culture and background knowledge of an individual. As previously mentioned, the relationship that Hispanic parents perceive to have with their child’s public school is less

involved than that of non-Hispanic parents. Hispanic parents do not want to “intrude” on the school’s agenda. Thus, their ideas about parental involvement differ. Because of their schema, parents may not perceive translated documents to be worthy of high amounts of “processing effort”. In addition, Relevance Theory states that successful communication is more than just a process of encoding and decoding, but involves inference and assumption (Gutt 41).

Because of their schema, Hispanic parents make different assumptions when communicating with the schools. The same can be said about CMS. Perhaps the reasoning for limited translations on the CMS website is CMS’s assumption that Hispanic parents can easily access the documents. The opposite may also be true: perhaps CMS assumes the difficulties parents will have accessing the website and, because of this, made limited efforts to create a Spanish website. The idea is that, despite what the assumption is, both Hispanic parents and CMS do not share enough mutual knowledge to successfully communicate through the website. The success of communication can depend on whether the audience uses the “right, speaker-intended context” (Gutt 42). When both sides do not agree on the same context, mutual knowledge is not shared and successful communication becomes unattainable.

Assumptions and mutual knowledge are only two parts to reaching and understanding the speaker-intended context. Once context is reached, the audience must also be able to understand the sender’s message. The sender can attempt to reach the receiver by making optimal relevance easier to attain. In this case, the concern is with the parents’ ability to navigate the website and to understand the purpose of the forms. The documents listed in the materials section are found on the “Parents” tab under

“Handbooks, forms and notices” (CMS). It may be difficult for a non-English speaker to get to this section of the website since the terminology may not have a similar Spanish cognate. For example, phrases such as “Get Involved” and terminology like “Board of Education” vary greatly from their Spanish counterpart. Other tabs, however, are more similar in nature. For example, parents of Hispanic background may easily be able to access the “Parents” or “Careers” tabs. Thus, labels do play a role in setting context. In Relevance Theory, this is known as the use of *text typologies*. The way these text typologies are implemented in a particular context can have an effect on the outcome of communication between the sender and receiver. The text typologies used by CMS, such as the names of the tabs or the descriptions of the various school forms, may not all be relevant to a non-English speaker, which will hinder communication. The use of labels is very important in written communication since it helps guide the receiver in their “search for optimal relevance” (Gutt 46). Labels can help increase relevance depending on how well they are used by the communicator (47).

The success of a typological label depends on the mutual knowledge between the sender and receiver. In the case of a Hispanic parent navigating the CMS website, mutual knowledge may not exist unless the individual has some knowledge of English. For individuals who have access to the website but read little to no English, mutual knowledge is not attained since no link to a Spanish translation exists on the homepage. However, once the user arrives at the “Handbooks, forms and notices” page, more mutual knowledge is available because the documents are translated into Spanish. Nevertheless, the fact that the document *titles* are not translated into Spanish makes the context disorienting. The documents that are translated have a label in parenthesis that says

‘(Spanish)’ but the name of the document itself is not translated. In the first section, the document names are as follows: 2014-2015 Code of Conduct (English), 2014-2015 Code of Conduct (Spanish), 2014 – 2015 Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Forms (English and Spanish). If a Spanish-speaking parent is trying to find the “Code of Conduct” but is not familiar with this specific typology, attaining optimal relevance will be more difficult under this context. This is true of all thirteen translations included on the CMS website under the “Parents” tab. Therefore, the context set by CMS is not easily accessible by the non-English speaker.

The elements of Relevance Theory (mutual knowledge, schema, text typologies, context) can be used to assess CMS’s communication in light of language policies. In order to do this, it is important to highlight two points. The first is CMS’s definition of involving parents who are non-English speakers. On the website, CMS states that its mission is to “maximize academic achievement by every student in every school” with the help of parents/guardians (“Core Beliefs”). CMS has also “Parental Involvement and Student Achievement” page with tips on how to help students succeed in school. The second point includes the provisions set by NCLB (2002), which make multiple mentions of communication occurring “in a language the parents can understand” (NCLB 2002). More specifically, section 3302, “Parental Notification” states: “Each eligible entity using funds provided under this title to provide a language instruction educational program shall implement an effective means of outreach to parents of limited English proficient children [...]” (NCLB 3302).

In analyzing the first point, it is important to mention that the “Parental Involvement and Student Achievement” tab is not translated into Spanish. However, it

represents CMS's acknowledgement of federal and state language laws since it discusses resources like the ESL program and the International Center. Second, several factors must be taken into consideration in analyzing the implementation of NCLB (2002). For example, it can be said that section 3302 part B is not properly implemented because parents are unable to help their children learn English, or achieve high levels in core academic subjects. This may be attributed to low levels of literacy among the Latino population. According to a 2011 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, approximately 61% of Latino adults in the U.S said they could carry on a conversation in English "very well" or "pretty well", and 60% said they could read a newspaper or book in English "pretty well". Among the foreign born Latino adults, only 38% said they could carry on a conversation in English and 37% said they could read a book or newspaper (Pew Research). Because of low literacy levels, parents may not be able to help their students reach high academic levels as stated in Section 3302.

The NCLB (2002) section 5564 discusses the role of funding in schools. It states that grant funds should be used to "help parents learn and use the technology applied in their children's education" (NCLB 1858). A communication gap exists due to factors such as low literacy levels as well as the digital divide mentioned earlier in this section. In this case, the English language is considered the mutual knowledge needed for effective communication to take place.

If CMS is only communicating with non-English speaking parents by means of Internet, optimal relevance may not be obtained and language laws not followed. Successful communication occurs only when the two parties have mutual knowledge and can agree on the same context. In this case, however, mutual knowledge is not obtained

due to a gap in literacy and a lack of translation. Parents have difficulty accessing the sender-intended context. A lack of translation results in the inability for CMS to help parents help their students. The communication barrier, however, does not fall completely on the school system, as the parents must input enough processing effort to reach the desired outcome by CMS. If the parents do not see the outcome being worth their effort, effective communication will not take place. Thus, the adequate implementation of these laws becomes more difficult.

5.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study was limited in that it only assessed communication in CMS based on the CMS website and the availability of documents on its “Parents” webpage.

Assumptions about the effectiveness of communication and implementation of language laws were drawn solely from these resources. Face-to-face communication was not taken into consideration. In addition, documents translated at individual schools were not used for the analysis.

The present study can be expanded by incorporating interviews with parents and teachers, and analyzing face-to-face communication that takes place at various school events. In addition, an assessment of the use of translation at schools with a high population of Hispanic students can be done. CMS has several schools enrolling a high percentage of Hispanic students, some with Hispanic populations of over 70% (National Center for Education Statistics). These schools may incorporate different means of communication in order to increase parental involvement with non-English speaking parents. For example, despite a lack of resources, schools may resort to volunteer interpreters, free-lance translators, bilingual receptionists or teachers, Hispanic students,

or bilingual parents when needed. An assessment of the CMS website provides a global representation of communication in CMS schools; an assessment of individual schools, however, would give insight into face-to-face communication with non-English speaking parents.

Aside from assessing face-to-face interaction and communication methods adopted by schools, it would be of interest to analyze the documents used by teachers to communicate directly with parents. Materials for this analysis may include report cards, progress reports, class agendas, parent-teacher newsletters, teacher notes, and invitations to parents about school events. The documents may or may not be translated in a language the parents can understand. Thus, expanding the scope of the research would make for a more comprehensive analysis of NCLB provisions mentioning parental involvement at schools. For example, section 1118 of NCLB states that "...each school and local educational agency...shall ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand" (NCLB 1504). Assumptions cannot be drawn about the implementation of this specific NCLB provision without including more detailed materials in the research. By analyzing face-to-face communication and documents translated by individual schools, the study can be expanded to include a more detailed analysis of language policies.

5.7 Summary and Conclusion

This study gave an overview of written communication in CMS based solely on the information publically available on its website and webpage links. An examination of CMS's use of translations showed the context created by CMS for the receivers of the

message, Spanish-speaking parents with limited or no English proficiency. In light of Relevance Theory, optimal relevance can only be reached by both CMS and the parents if both parties have mutual knowledge. Due to a variety of factors, such as limited Internet or computer access and cultural schema, parents may not see the need to put in processing effort to reach the communication outcome desired by CMS. Thus, both parties are responsible for the success or failure of communication. CMS must ensure that the context it sets is easily accessible by non-English speakers. This can be done by adding an option for "Español" on the website, or including a translation of the major headings in Spanish. Such additions will enhance the context so that Spanish readers can navigate the website more efficiently. Non-English speakers, on the other hand, must input enough processing effort in order to understand what is being communicated. Processing effort is crucial in attaining optimal relevance, and can include making an effort to access the website, learning new terminology, and gaining a full understanding of different text typologies used by the sender. Once this level of mutual knowledge exists between the two entities, optimal relevance will be attained and communication will be more successful.

In terms of language policies, CMS may be considered primarily "English Only" due to the lack of translations on its website. However, the study is limited in that conclusions are drawn solely from the information publicly available by CMS. As stated in section 3.6 of this study, forms of verbal communication should be taken into consideration in order to gain a more thorough understanding of communication between the school system and non-English speakers.

In general, a determination of relevance depends on factors from both the sender and receiver. Successful communication can only occur if both sides obtain mutual knowledge. This also affects the extent to which language laws are implemented since the successful implementation of laws occurs only when optimal relevance is obtained. Therefore, language laws are said to be properly implemented if successful communication occurs: the school system must work to create an accessible context, non-English speakers must see that communication is worth their processing effort, and both parties must reach a point of mutual knowledge.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LATINO ADULT INTERNET USERS, 2012

(%)

	All Latinos	Among Latinos	
		Internet users	Non-Internet users
Nativity			
Native born	44	50	21
Foreign born	56	50	79
Primary language			
English dominant	27	31	13
Bilingual	38	41	29
Spanish dominant	35	28	58
Gender			
Male	50	51	47
Female	50	49	53
Age group			
18 to 29	29	35	9
30 to 49	41	44	34
50 to 64	17	15	25
65 or older	8	4	26
Marital status			
Married	47	49	38
Unmarried	52	50	60
Dependent children under 18 living in the household			
Yes	48	52	35
No	52	48	65
Educational attainment			
Less than high school	33	25	62
High school diploma	30	33	20
Some college or more	36	42	15
Annual Family income			
Less than \$30,000	50	46	64
\$30,000 to \$49,999	16	19	5
\$50,000 or more	21	25	5

Note: "Don't know" and "Refused" answers not shown. Internet users are those who say they either use the internet OR send or receive emails at least occasionally. Those with high school diplomas include persons who have attained its equivalent, such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012 National Survey of Latinos

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APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LATINO ADULT COMPUTER OWNERS, 2012

(% saying they own a desktop or laptop computer)

	All Latinos	Among Latinos	
		Computer owners	Non-computer owners
Nativity			
Native born	44	50	27
Foreign born	56	50	73
Primary language			
English dominant	27	30	17
Bilingual	38	41	31
Spanish dominant	35	28	52
Gender			
Male	50	51	48
Female	50	49	52
Age group			
18 to 29	29	34	17
30 to 49	41	43	37
50 to 64	17	16	21
65 or older	8	4	20
Marital status			
Married	47	51	35
Unmarried	52	48	63
Dependent children under 18 living in the household			
Yes	48	52	36
No	52	47	63
Educational attainment			
Less than high school	33	23	58
High school diploma	30	32	26
Some college or more	36	44	14
Annual Family income			
Less than \$30,000	50	44	67
\$30,000 to \$49,999	16	19	7
\$50,000 or more	21	27	4

Note: "Don't know" and "Refused" answers not shown. Those with high school diplomas include persons who have attained its equivalent, such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012 National Survey of Latinos

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