

Journal of Bilingual Education Research & Instruction
2019 Volume 21 (1)



Published under the authority of:



TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION
Affiliate of the National Association for Bilingual Education



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Editorial Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

The *Journal of Bilingual Education Research and Instruction* is committed to the exchange of educational data, studies, ideas, practices and information with researchers, practitioners and policymakers in this public forum. It is published online once or twice a year and can be accessed at the TABE website homepage, TABE.org.

In this issue readers are invited to an in-depth examination of research, best practice, and advocacy topics that frame our work as bilingual educators. In the lead article, *Jugando y Explorando Together: Translanguaging and Guided Play in a Bilingual Kindergarten Classroom in NYC*, Dr. Dina Lopez from the City College of New York presents findings from a study of a bilingual Kindergarten classroom in a dual language school in New York city that prioritized and made time for guided play in their daily schedule. Data analysis sheds light on the emergent bilingual students translanguaged and used their entire linguistic repertoire during their choice time and guided play. Next, Dr. Lori Helman from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, describes a study conducted with native Spanish-speaking Kindergartners and first graders receiving academic instruction in Spanish in a dual immersion program in the upper Midwest in her article *Investigating the Early Language Development in Spanish of Kindergarten and First Grade Emergent Bilingual Students*.

Dr. Pilar Moreno-Recio, from Goose Creek Consolidated ISD shares the results of a qualitative study that indicates a high need for linguistically differentiated instruction for ELS to access the English curriculum in her article, *Empowering English Learners to Self-Advocate, Own, Monitor, and Celebrate their Learning*. In their article, *The Value of Spanglish in the Rio Grande Valley*, authors Drs. Julia Ramirez and Lillian Ramos from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, provide insights into the language of Spanglish/Tex-Mex as it is used in the Rio Grande Valley. They present qualities that validate Spanglish/Tex-Mex as a language. Dr. Daisy Aldaba shares findings from her action research that highlights the positive impact the implementation of cooperative Learning had on her Two-Way Dual Language Classroom in her article *Implementing Cooperative Learning in a First-Grade Two-Way Dual Language Classroom*. The final two articles, *Assessing Simultaneous Bilinguals: Teachers' Perspectives in Dual Language Bilingual Education*, by Drs. Lina M. Martin-Corredor and Kathryn I. Henderson and *Families Matter Communities Matter and Collaboration is Essential: Overview of a Teacher's Education Program Designed to Meet the Needs of Rural Student's Needs* b Claudia Peralta bring two excellent perspectives on assessment and families—two very essential topics in bilingual/ESL/Dual language education.

Special thanks are due to Technical Assistant Jerry Urquiza. In addition, this issue would not be possible without the members of the Editorial Advisory Board (our manuscript reviewers) and the 18 individuals who submitted manuscripts for publication consideration—a 31% acceptance rate for this issue.

Sincerely,

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Journal of Bilingual Education Research & Instruction



**Jugando y Explorando Together: Translanguaging and Guided Play
in a Bilingual Kindergarten Classroom in NYC**

**Dr. Dina Lopez
The City College of New York, CUNY**

Abstract

The importance of play for young children’s learning and development has been well demonstrated in the educational, child development and neuroscience literature (Van Hoorn et al., 2010; Ginsburg, 2007; Hassinger-Das et al., 2017). Though play was a long time staple of the Kindergarten curriculum, the past two decades have witnessed a shift toward more academic instruction and consequently less time for play (Falk, 2012; Miller & Almon, 2009). This manuscript presents findings from a study of a bilingual Kindergarten classroom in a dual language school in New York City that prioritized and made time for guided play in their daily schedule. Data analysis sheds light on the way emergent bilingual students translanguaged and used their entire linguistic repertoire during their hour of ‘Exploraciones/Explorations’—choice time and guided play. With a focus on a bilingual education context, this paper contributes to the scarce but growing research on play and young emergent bilinguals’ learning and language practices (Axelrod, 2014; García et al., 2011; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Riojas-Cortez, 2001).

Keyword: Child’s Play, Kindergarten curriculum, Dual Language Education, Translanguaging

Jugando y Explorando Together: Translanguaging and Guided Play in a Bilingual Kindergarten Classroom in NYC

Introduction

The importance of play for young children's learning and development has been well demonstrated in the educational, child development and neuroscience literature (Van Hoorn et al., 2010; Ginsburg, 2007; Hassinger-Das et al., 2017). It is a well established and research principal that young children learn through play and that it is an essential characteristic of developmentally appropriate practice (NAEYC, 2009). Though play was a long time staple of the Kindergarten curriculum, the past two decades have witnessed a shift toward more academic instruction and consequently less time for play (Falk, 2012; Miller & Almon, 2009). In a study of 268 Kindergarten classrooms in Los Angeles and New York City, researchers found that classic play materials such as blocks and props for dramatic play have largely disappeared, and in many classrooms, there is no playtime at all (Miller & Almon, 2009). Teachers reported not having enough time for play during the day due to their curriculum's focus on literacy and math instruction.

It could be argued that Kindergarten teachers in dual language bilingual education programs have even less time for play given that they are accountable for meeting state standards in not one, but two languages of instruction. This manuscript presents findings from a study of a bilingual Kindergarten classroom in a dual language school in New York City that prioritized and made time for guided play in their daily schedule. Data analysis suggests that the daily sessions of guided and open-ended play during the 'Exploraciones/Explorations' hour provided students with the opportunity to use their entire linguistic repertoire to try out ideas, use their creativity and imaginations, navigate social interactions, and experiment with a variety of materials in both structured and unstructured ways. 'Explorations' became a crucial "translanguaging space" (García & Seltzer, 2016) where children could lead their language interactions, and use language flexibly without regard for the target language (alternating English and Spanish) of the day. I conclude the paper with a discussion of the implications of the study for bilingual classrooms in the early grades as teachers consider the importance of play in supporting bilingualism and biliteracy and affirming the bilingual identities of their students.

Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework presents the theoretical underpinnings of this paper, which is guided by theories of dynamic bilingualism, a language as social practice perspective, and play as an essential characteristic of developmentally appropriate practices with early childhood learners.

Dynamic and Emergent Bilingualism

Recent conceptualizations of bilingualism are challenging the long held views of bilingualism as the possession of two separate linguistic codes and bound systems, and instead place emphasis on how people *use* language (García, 2009). Dynamic views of bilingualism depart from an understanding of bilingualism as simply adding one language to another by taking into

consideration the range and complexity of language practices in bilingual communities (García, 2009). As such, new language practices only emerge in relationship to existing language practices. Within this perspective, children's home language(s) are seen as the foundational starting point for teaching and learning an additional language (Cummins, 2007; García 2009).

Given these shifts, García (2009) has argued for the use of the term emergent bilinguals, rather than the more prevalent label of English Language Learners, or even Limited English Proficient. Rejecting the concept of a "balanced bilingual," García (2009) argues that it is more appropriate to think of bilingualism as "an all-terrain vehicle, which adapts to both the ridges and craters of communication in uneven terrains" (p. 42). As such, the everyday language practices of bilinguals include translanguaging, a concept that refers to the wide range of discursive practices of bilingual people who draw strategically on their linguistic repertoire to communicate effectively across contexts (García, 2009). García emphasizes the "sensemaking" dimension to these practices as bilinguals draw on their various linguistic resources to make meaning and negotiate situations. According to Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015), translanguaging is "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages" (p. 281).

The present study also adopts Gort and Pontier's (2012) definition of *emergent bilingualism* and *biliteracy* as, "the ongoing, dynamic development of concepts and expertise for thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing in two languages,' which include young children's use of their cultural and linguistic experiences to construct meaning with teachers, peers, and others in their environment" (p.2).

Language as Social Practice

The social turn in language and literacy studies highlighted the ways in which language is not something that people "have" or possess, but rather, it is something we do with other people in particular communities of practice (Gee, 1992; Lave and Wenger, 1998; Street, 1984). Scholars argued that in addition to being a system of grammatical rules and structures, language is a social practice—a theoretical move that has important implications for the education of emergent bilinguals. This perspective necessitates an understanding that language learning is not simply developing mastery over vocabulary and grammatical structures, but it is also about the development of language competencies and practices within a range of contexts and discourses. The language as social practice perspective also brings to the fore the idea that each classroom is its own discourse community with particular rules and conventions about how language is used. Students develop language competencies as they participate in language socialization processes that include both explicit and implicit guidance by teachers as well as more proficient peers (Duffy, 2010).

Play and Developmentally Appropriate Practice

This study is also guided by research on developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)—an approach to teaching grounded in child development theories and in the knowledge base regarding educational effectiveness. According to this approach, early childhood teachers must consider three areas of knowledge to guide their instructional decision-making: what is known about child

development and learning, what is known about the child as an individual, and what is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live. The 2009 position statement by the National Association for the Education of Young Children also articulates several principles that can serve to guide early childhood educators in their work with young children, including but not limited to the following:

- All domains of development and learning—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive—are important and interrelated.
- Development and learning proceeds at varying rates from child to child.
- Children learn in a variety of ways and a wide range of teaching strategies are needed to support learning.
- Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers.
- Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
- Play is an important tool for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence.
- Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery, and also when they have many opportunities to practice new skills. (NAEYC, 2009, p. 11-15).
- The study is also undergirded by a sociocultural view of teaching and learning, which supports an understanding of language and literacy as socially situated practices and play as a tool for social development and interaction (Street, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). It is important to note the distinction between free play and guided play. Free play is completely voluntary and child-led play. The children choose the materials with which to play and decide on the rules of the play. Examples of free play include: child organized games of tag during recess, pretend play with sticks and stones in the backyard, playing with blocks or other open-ended toys, or experimenting and creating with art materials such as crayons or play dough. According to Weisberg et al. (2016), guided play “refers to learning experiences that combine the child-directed nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult mentorship”(p.177). Guided play takes place in a purposeful environment that’s been carefully planned and curated to stimulate and support children’s curiosity and creativity. As students interact with one another and the materials, adults (usually teachers) observe, record, confer, and occasionally participate or facilitate. However, the children decide how they will explore and interact with the materials, not the teachers. This paper focuses on a period during the bilingual Kindergarten day blocked off for guided play. In other Kindergarten classrooms, this period of the day may be called “choice time” as children choose to play in a specific centers around the classroom that have been carefully planned and equipped to support play and inquiry. The materials and activities can vary but some examples include: a dramatic play area equipped with kitchen and other props, a blocks center for building, a center for art-making, a water or sand table, or center with games and puzzles.

Research Context and Methodology

Designed as a case study, qualitative data for this research was collected over the course of five months in a Kindergarten classroom at a dual language English-Spanish bilingual school in Northern Manhattan. The school is located in a predominantly Latino and Spanish-English bilingual community. This is reflected in the student body, as 81.2% of students come from Latino and Spanish-speaking households, while smaller percentages of the student population are White (15.9 percent), Asian (1.4 percent), and Black (1.4 percent). Sixty-five percent of the school's students were identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) and 75% received free lunch. The school's dual language program is based on a 50/50 model where all content and instruction is delivered in both English and Spanish. The school alternates English and Spanish days and Fridays are structured as half day Spanish and half day English. According to the school principal, there are four "cornerstones" that guide the school's vision and mission: 1) bilingualism, biliteracy, and multicultural understandings; 2) families as partners; 3) hands-on inquiry and learning; and 4) university partnerships. López and Makar (2017) discuss in another paper, the ways in which a "bilingual ethos" guides the programming, pedagogy, and practices at this school.

The Kindergarten class observed had 22 5-6 year old students most of whom, according to the principal and teacher, were along "the bilingual spectrum" in terms of productive and receptive abilities in English and Spanish. The exceptions were a couple of students who had recently immigrated from the Dominican Republic (and were Spanish dominant) and two White students who were from English-speaking households. The lead teacher of the class was a bilingual Puerto Rican woman in her late twenties. The researcher was a university professor of Guatemalan origin, who was also bilingual in Spanish and English.

Data collection methods included in-depth interviews with the teacher and principal, full day classroom observations, audio-recordings of whole class meeting times at the rug, and the analysis of curriculum and student artifacts. Observational data was collected on a weekly basis during the first 3 months of the academic year. Analysis of data was iterative and ongoing. Field notes, audio-recordings, and interview transcripts were analyzed for recurrent patterns and themes on a continual basis. I sifted through field notes every two weeks and wrote up emic-concept, theme-based, and theoretical memos. Writing memos and coding helped identify threads that could be woven together to tell a story about the bilingual Kindergarten classroom. According to Emerson (1995) "the ultimate goal is to produce a coherent, *focused analysis* of some aspect of the social life that has been observed and recorded, and analysis that is comprehensible to readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world at issue" (p. 142).

Findings

I begin my discussion of findings by first examining the role that the hour of Exploraciones/Explorations played within the daily schedule of the bilingual Kindergarten class. I then move on to discussing the kinds of learning and language

opportunities that were afforded to students during this time as opposed to the rest of their school day.

A Sacred Part of the Day Where Language is Driven by the Kids

As stated in the introduction of this paper, research indicates that time for play in Kindergarten is being eliminated in order to make time for teacher-led academic instruction. In those Kindergarten classrooms that do have it in their schedule, the time for guided play (whether it be called choice time, centers, or other) can often be regarded as an expendable part of the day that can be cut down if more time is “needed” for math or literacy instruction. However, for this particular dual language bilingual school, the hour of Exploraciones/Explorations was considered a “sacred part of the day”:

I do believe that there has to be a time when the language is driven by the kids. The philosophy behind explorations is that there is a sacred part of the day where this happens. Also integrating more of the language and inquiry goals into that time.

That period of time is very much common core skills and it really helped the socio-emotional learning of the kids because they had to figure out how to work together. There was time for them to get to know each other and value each other.
(Interview with Principal)

We see in this interview excerpt how the principal views this time for guided play as a critical component to their Kindergarten program. It was not seen as a separate time from the “real” academic learning of the rest of the day, but rather an important time guided by language and inquiry goals and which provided opportunities for children to develop their social skills and socio-emotional learning. In addition, the principal specifies that what makes this time all the more important is that it is a time in which “language is driven by the kids.” And since all the children at this school are emergent bilingual learners, it is a time in which they are allowed and encouraged to use their language skills in Spanish and English in flexible and dynamic ways.

What this meant at the level of classroom practice was that the teacher NEVER policed the language of the children regardless of the daily language of instruction. Children were not singled out or reprimanded for speaking English on Spanish days or vice versa. The children were free to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to play, make meaning, and negotiate social interactions during Exploraciones. As such, Exploraciones was designed to be a critical “translanguaging space” in which “the teacher and bilingual students [used] their different language practices to teach and learn in deeply creative and critical ways” (García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017, p. 2).

This approach and practice is an ideological departure from the more traditional approach to dual language or two-way immersion programs that emphasize and enforce a rigid separation of languages. This is evident in Torrez-Guzman’s (2007) description of dual language education as follows: “The dual language program design follows consistent and clear linguistic, sociocultural, and educational policies, which includes strict language separation” (As cited in Menken & Avni, 2017, p.187). In a 2010 ethnographic study of

language use in a bilingual Kindergarten classroom, the lead teacher strictly enforced the separation of English and Spanish in her classroom, even during center time (Depalma, 2010). Depalma describes the experiences of Rashid, an African-American boy who had been part of the class for seven months, but still preferred to use English. During the period of guided play on day where the target language was Spanish, he asks the researcher a question in English:

“I respond to his English question with my own, equally transgressive, English question, ‘Why are you speaking to me in English?’ Rashid replies, still whispering, ‘Because I don’t know Spanish’. When I glance (involuntarily) at Sra. Soto, Rashid seems to interpret this as a plan to turn him in. He smiles slyly, coking his head to one side and touching my arm. He says, still in English, ‘No no no. Don’t tell her. I was only tricking you.’ He walks off, looking back at me, and still smiling.” (Depalma, 2010, p. 2)

In this vignette, we see the possible consequences of a strict adherence to language separation in a dual language classroom. Children such as Rashid may feel they are doing something ‘wrong’ by simply using their language of preference, which in turn can affect how they participate in classroom activities.

Other studies such as García et al. (2011) suggest that bilingual Kindergarteners translanguage regardless of the specific language policies of the school or classroom. The use of multiple linguistic resources is a natural consequence of being an emergent bilingual speaker who is trying to make sense and make meaning. However, the extent to which schools and teachers leverage the bilingualism of its students can impact *how* students participate in classroom activities and how they see themselves as bilingual learners. My argument here is that the school under study provided a space for translanguaging and child-led language interactions very thoughtfully and intentionally. In the following pages, I highlight the ways in which students used language to learn and play during their hour of Exploraciones/Explorations.

Translanguaging and Learning through Play

One thing that became evident over the course of my full day observations was that Exploraciones/Explorations was a joyful part of the day. It was held during the last scheduled block of time, and the children always seemed excited and looked forward to it. During one observation as the teacher finished up a math activity, she said “Ok, we will do one more thing together, and then we will get ready for explorations...all the kids say “yay!!!” Teacher: Are you guys ready for explorations? Children in unison: Yesssss!!!” (Field Notes, September 2014). Analysis of observational data suggests that one of the reasons that they were so engaged and excited about Exploraciones was that they were in charge of their own play, learning, and language use during this time. In the following section, I describe how students used their linguistic repertoires flexibly and creatively to negotiate roles and use of materials during play, create imaginary bilingual worlds, and to draw on home experiences and cultural schemas as resources for play.

Negotiating roles and use of play materials

For the most part, during Exploraciones, children were in charge of developing the rules of play with their peers. This involved much negotiation about who would use which play materials and how they would get used during their play. Throughout their play they used language flexibly, sometimes alternating between English and Spanish, sometimes using one language more consistently than the other, sometimes using both in the same utterance, but always through translanguaging and making meaning using their linguistic resources in both English and Spanish. The following two data examples offer concrete glimpses of how the children engaged in these practices at the different centers during Exploraciones.

The first example from my observation data I will describe is taken from field notes recorded at the beginning of the academic year. During this observation, there were three children (one boy and two girls) playing with a wooden dollhouse, small wooden dolls, and dollhouse furniture. As the children played with the dollhouse, they were constantly negotiating the rules of play. They began their play by deciding who would get to be “la Mamá”, “el Papá” and “el baby” (Field Notes, Sept 2014). As they negotiated the various family roles, made decisions about where to place the furniture, and enacted different family scenarios, they engaged in mainly Spanish interactions with occasional use of English:

Student 1: Yo soy la mamá y tu eres el baby... [*I am the mother and you are the baby.*]

Student 2: No, yo quiero ser el papá. [*No, I want to be the father.*]

Student 3: Este es el amigo del baby... (pointing to another doll figurine)...Can I have it? [*This is the baby's friend... Can I have it?*]



The children in this example were Spanish dominant but also had productive and receptive skills in English. Student 1 and Student 3's construction of “el baby” using a Spanish article and English noun was a common way that children translanguaged and drew on their Spanish and English resources (I also heard children say things like “Pásame el block” [*Pass me the block*] and “dame el marker” [*Give me the marker*] during other observations). In this interaction, Student 3 mainly used Spanish but also

peppered her speech with full expressions in English such as the question “Can I have this?” or command “Give me that one” when asking for specific doll figures to play with.

Another example of children negotiating roles and use of play materials comes from an observation in the wooden blocks area. During one observation, two girls were engrossed in playing with the wooden unit blocks and were working on building a tower together. I had made a note in my field notes that this was during Spanish day. “Let’s make it taller!” says one of the girls. “No. Se va a caer, [*No. It’s going to fall.*]” responds the other. “No, watch. It’s not gonna fall” (Field Notes, October 2014). In this interaction, we see an English dominant child playing with a Spanish dominant child and each uses their language of dominance. However, there is far more to unpack here. The girls are working together to solve a problem, they are testing hypotheses (how high can we make our tower before it falls—this connects to their scientific reasoning), they are using their own creativity to build (there are no plans they are working with as these are very open ended materials), and finally they are developing their social-emotional skills by taking turns, working together, and negotiating how to use the blocks. As bilingual speakers, they are using all their linguistic resources to do so.



Fig 2. Girls playing with wooden unit blocks.

Creating imaginary bilingual worlds

Another way in which students used language flexibly and creatively was to create imaginary bilingual worlds together. This often happened in the dramatic play area where they had access to a play kitchen, play food, puppets, dress up clothes, and baby dolls. In these pretend worlds the children imagined themselves as characters who were sometimes like themselves and sometimes very different. Always though, these worlds were bilingual. The following is an example from my field notes:

Two girls are sitting and watching their friend, who is draped in a black cloth, put on a puppet show for them. “I’m so hungry!,” says the first puppet. “Me too I’m hungry!” says the other puppet. The girls laugh, giggle and whisper to each other while they continue to watch the “show”. I step back so that I do not interrupt their play, but they are no longer

within earshot. However, I keep watching and make a note of how engaged the children are in this pretend world they have created. I then see one of the girls stand up and exclaim “Es mi turno!” [*It’s my turn!*] (Field Notes, October 2014)

I remember this play scenario vividly as I was so impressed with how engaged the children were and how much they were using their imaginations to enact different roles and characters in their own worlds. The girls took turns putting on shows for their friends and coming up with new characters and narratives for the puppets. All the while, the puppets spoke English and Spanish and translanguaging was always a part of these pretend worlds.



Fig 3. Puppet show in dramatic play area.

Throughout my observations, I saw that this was a practice that was most frequently seen in the dramatic play area as well as the wooden dollhouse center. In addition to puppets, the dramatic play area featured a wooden play kitchen, play food, dress up clothes, stuffed animals and toys, baby dolls, and a baby doll bed. These materials invited children to engage in make believe play and create imaginary bilingual worlds that featured bilingual characters. Thus, translanguaging was a means by which these worlds were created, as children were not limited in their use of one language versus another. Translanguaging allowed children to take on roles within these worlds and explore different social perspectives. In their imaginary bilingual worlds, the children were fully in charge, providing them with the opportunity to create their own narratives and storylines using the language resources that they deemed necessary. The specific ways in which language was used was not predictable as it depended on the children and on how they interacted with their specific set of peers.

Drawing on home experiences and cultural schemas

Another theme that emerged from my observations of exploraciones is the way in which children drew on their own funds of home and cultural knowledge as important resources for play. Children used linguistic and cultural elements from their home worlds to enact their play scenarios in the classroom. This opportunity allowed children to position themselves as experts of their own experiences and knowledge of the world. Riojas-Cortez (2001) argues that play is

a valuable way in which children can bring in elements linguistic and cultural elements from their home world so that “one can actually observe culture” (p. 35) and the ways in which children use language in their daily lives.

The following data example features a student named Carmen playing at the dramatic play area during the first month of school:

Carmen is playing in the kitchen area and she comes to me and says, “Te voy hacer un sancocho...[*I’m going to make you sancocho*]” “Mmmm,” I say, “que delicioso. Gracias! [*How delicious...thank you!*]” She smiles at me as she pretends to mix soup in a plastic bowl. She turns to another girl who is also pretending to cook as well. “Y tu, quieres sancocho? [*And you, do you want sancocho*]” “No, I want a sandwich!” she responds as she searches through the shelves looking for the materials to make a sandwich (Fieldnotes, September 2014).

Carmen had recently immigrated from the DR and during English days, she would sometimes express a bit of frustration during literacy or math instruction. Exploraciones seemed to be an important time for her to process a lot of the learning that happened throughout the day, but also to have the freedom to create, explore, and play using all of her linguistic and cultural resources. In this data example, Carmen draws on her home cultural resources such as the knowledge of a traditional Dominican soup called sancocho. She exudes confidence in her ability to “make” the soup for me, and I find it important to note that she does not ask but simply informs me that she is making it for me. Again, this is significant for Carmen, who often needed support in understanding tasks during English days. She uses her language of dominance but is also able to understand her peers when they respond in English. Again, these translanguaging practices are typical of the self-directed play seen in this bilingual Kindergarten classroom.



Fig 4. “Making” meals in play kitchen area.

Another example of an instance where students draw on their home experiences and cultural schemas through play was captured in an audio-recording of the end of day debrief after Exploraciones. The teacher and children were gathered at the rug for end of day debrief (During Spanish Day) and wrap up, and the teacher had asked the students to reflect on what they did during Explorations.

Teacher: Quién hizo algo muy divertido en exploraciones hoy? Quién hizo algo...Aurelia, que hizo usted en exploraciones? [*Who did something really fun during explorations today? Aurelia what did you do during explorations?*]

Aurelia: Hice un dibujo...[*I made a drawing...*]

Teacher: A quién le hiciste un dibujo? [*Who did you make the drawing for?*]

Aurelia: A mi hermana [*For my sister*]

Teacher: A tu hermana, excelente. Chicos, la hermana de Aurelia está en nuestra escuela también. Está en primer grado. [*For your sister, excellent. Friends, Aurelia's sister is in our school too. She is in first grade.*]

Teacher: William, y usted...que hiciste durante exploraciones? [*William, and you...what did you do during explorations?*]

William: I made a city of Minecraft...

Teacher: Uh huh si...Yo vi que los niños que estaban en los bloques...Hicieron una torre muy alta. Una torre muy grande de minecraft. [*Uh huh...yes. I saw that the children who were playing in the blocks area...made a very tall tower.*]

Angelina: Yo vi una torre de Minecraft cuando iba de camino...y tenía un punto largo largo...[*I saw a Minecraft tower when I was walking...and it had a long long point.*]

Alex: I made a Minecraft boat...with William...(Audio-recording, October 2014)

The end of day debrief was provided as an opportunity for students to reflect on and deepen their thinking about what they played and worked on during Exploraciones. Thus, children's activities during Exploraciones were not seen as trivial playtime, but rather as incredibly meaningful and integral to their learning and development. In this example, the teacher asks students in Spanish to share something fun they did during Exploraciones. However, throughout the ensuing conversation, the students and teacher engage in translanguaging. One student (Aurelia) responds in Spanish and shares that she made a drawing for her sister who is also a first grader at the school. The teacher then directs her attention to a specific student (William) and asks him to share what he did during Exploraciones. William responds in English and shares that he built "a city of Minecraft". Minecraft is a popular children's videogame where the object of the game is to build and explore worlds with three-dimensional cubes. This home gaming experience was a resource for William during Exploraciones, as he extended his learning about building and worked with others to construct a tall tower as part of this Minecraft city. Angelina (who speaks in Spanish) also connected this conversation back to her own experience of seeing a "Minecraft tower" while walking outside of school.

As the data demonstrates, Exploraciones afforded students important opportunities to draw on their home experiences and cultural schemas during guided and open-ended play. Translanguaging was an integral language practice that facilitated this process as students played and created together. As experts of their own experiences, children were

able to position themselves as capable and knowledgeable, even when they might not feel as comfortable expressing themselves in the target language for the day.

Conclusion and Implications

Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood. — Fred Rogers

This paper brings into focus the experiences of early childhood emergent bilinguals and attempts to bridge the fields of early childhood development and bilingual education. Currently, the literature on the importance of play in the development of young children is well represented in the fields of developmental psychology, child development, early childhood education, and increasingly in the field of neuroscience. However, the majority of the studies on play do not consider the unique social and linguistic contexts, strengths, and needs of emergent bilingual children. Similarly, there has been less attention paid in the literature on bilingual education to the unique context of the early childhood and lower elementary grades and, specifically, the focus on the role of play in the bilingual education classroom. The findings of this study help address these gaps in the empirical research and add to the understanding of how young emergent bilinguals use language during guided play in a dual language bilingual classroom setting. The paper also considers the role of choice time/guided play in the Kindergarten classroom that aims to promote biliteracy and bilingualism in contrast to English monolingual settings.

Data analysis of observations of “Explorations” suggest that these opportunities provide authentic settings for language development, as students are engaged in inquiry-based open-ended play in which they must draw on their bilingual linguistic repertoires, home experiences, and cultural schemas to negotiate language and social relationships. These findings build on the work of Long et al. (2007) who described how through play “children drew from multiple schemas as they co-constructed new spaces and practice for teaching and learning about language, literacy and cultural roles and routines” (p. 239)

In addition, the findings of this study illustrate how translanguaging affirms bilingual students’ identities and fosters their socio-emotional development by enabling all emergent bilinguals to participate actively and meaningfully in classroom life regardless of abilities vis-à-vis the target language(s) of instruction. The practice of translanguaging allows for “students to see themselves and their linguistic practices as valuable, rather than as lacking” (García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017, p. 14).

The analysis presented has several implications for bilingual educators and school leaders. Firstly, schools and teachers must make time in their daily schedules for child led language and play. This means allowing for flexible and dynamic use of language and affirming the emerging bilingual identities of students. It also means understanding play as critical to the development and education of early childhood bilinguals. Thus, play should be seen as a right and not as a privilege—as it is matter of equity for linguistically and culturally minoritized children who have historically been denied access to play (Souto-Manning, 2017). Finally, the research presented here encourages bilingual educators to think beyond

the development of skills and content knowledge in two languages and focus instead on the education of the *whole bilingual child*.

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**Investigating the Early Language Development in Spanish of Kindergarten and First
Grade Emergent Bilingual Students**

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Abstract

This paper describes a study conducted with native Spanish-speaking kindergarteners and first graders receiving academic instruction in Spanish in a dual language immersion program in the upper Midwest. The goal of the study was to provide teachers with information about the Spanish language strengths of their students and, through these data, help teachers identify and support students who are not developing Spanish oral language skills at a similar rate as their peers. A sentence repetition measure was used with students to measure their competence using semantic and morphosyntactic structures in their home language, and to highlight developmental changes in language overall across the population studied. The measure did show a progression of language learning across the two grade levels and individual data proved helpful to educators who came to understand their students' Spanish language development in greater depth.

Investigating the Early Language Development in Spanish of Kindergarten and First Grade Emergent Bilingual Students

For early primary grade students, understanding and using oral language intimately intertwines with learning the curricula at school. For this reason, it is essential for teachers to have an in-depth understanding of their students' levels of language use so they can better design instruction that supports their students' literacy and content learning in the classroom. In this paper, we describe a study conducted with native Spanish-speaking kindergarteners and first graders receiving academic instruction in Spanish in a dual language immersion program in the United States. The goal of the study was to provide teachers with information about the Spanish language strengths of their students and, through these data, help teachers identify and support students who are not developing Spanish oral language skills at a similar rate as their peers. The assessment tool we used to collect data on students' Spanish oral language development was the Spanish Sentence Repetition Test (SSRT; Helman & Hernández, 2013), described in depth below. We ask the question: *What can teachers learn about students' oral language from the SSRT that could guide them in scaffolding language interactions with students?*

Background

Spanish-speaking students make up the largest category of multilingual students in the U.S. composing 76.6% of students identified as English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Two-way bilingual literacy programs in which Spanish-speaking students learn to read in Spanish before transitioning into English literacy instruction have been found to be most effective in promoting strong literacy skills in both languages later on (de Jong, 2002; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Many studies have focused on the importance of early oral language as an important precursor to later literacy achievement (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Some have extended these findings to include students learning English as a second language in school (see Geva & Genesee, 2006 for a review). Some studies have even included measures of Spanish oral language in addition to English when investigating the predictive power of oral language on later reading ability. For example, Kieffer (2012) found that both Spanish and English oral language function as predictors of later English reading ability, but that only English oral language is a unique predictor. However, we could find very few studies that investigated the role of early Spanish oral language as a predictor of later Spanish reading ability. In one such study, Hammer, Lawrence, and Miccio (2007) concluded that growth in Spanish oral language skills during two years of Head Start preschool predicted early Spanish letter and word identification skills at the end of kindergarten. Results of another study indicated that Spanish oral narrative retell abilities significantly predicted Spanish reading comprehension in grades K-3; however, this study was not longitudinal (Miller et al., 2006).

In the current era of globalization where bilingualism and biliteracy are becoming increasingly necessary skills in many job markets, ensuring that native Spanish speakers receive high-quality instruction in native language literacy skills is imperative. A research agenda that focuses solely on academic achievement in English to the detriment of native language literacy skills not only fails to tap one of our country's richest resources- the next bilingual generation- but also continues to marginalize a large percentage of public school students by failing to identify and acknowledge their linguistic skills. Understanding the role that Spanish oral language development plays in literacy acquisition in Spanish is therefore a much needed research focus.

There is evidence to suggest that many Spanish speaking students are not receiving adequate support in developing strong native language (L1) oral language skills in school. Lindsey, Manis, and Bailey (2003) administered several oral language and early reading assessment measures over the course of Latinx students' kindergarten and first grade years in order to understand the effects of cross-linguistic transfer. Results indicated that, while students' Spanish word identification and reading comprehension scores improved significantly over the course of the study, the Spanish sentence memory scores were lower than national averages when the students entered kindergarten and did not show significant improvement at the end of the kindergarten year, despite literacy instruction in Spanish. Collins (2014) also measured the oral language abilities (including sentence memory) in English and Spanish of incoming low income Latinx kindergarten students and found that a large percentage entered school with low proficiencies in both languages; however in this study the students enrolled in dual language instructional settings reached age-appropriate levels in both languages by second grade.

Lucero (2018) measured growth in bilingual oral story retelling in Spanish-English bilingual children as they progressed from kindergarten to second grade in a dual language program and discovered that students improved their vocabulary scores significantly in this time period in both languages but that their grammar did not improve significantly in either language, as measured by mean length of utterance (MLU) and grammatical complexity (subordination index). Moreover, by second grade the students performed better in overall narrative coherence and detail in English than Spanish, despite enrollment in a dual language instructional program. Although this study did not include observation of literacy instruction, Lucero offers the possible explanation that the Spanish literacy block may not have included enough complex oral language input. While the sample size in this study was small, other studies have shown that Spanish language development is sometimes waylaid by English speakers in dual language environments (e.g. Palmer, 2009; Valdés, 1997). Given that speaking and listening are of key importance to literacy development (McLean, Prinsloo, Rowsell, & Bulfin, 2018), this finding is of concern relating to the development of biliteracy.

Kindergarten and first grade teachers of Spanish-speaking students usually do not possess user-friendly, valid, and reliable assessments that allow them to quickly and accurately gain information about their students' native oral language skills. Without this information, teachers may erroneously assume that their native Spanish speakers are able to comprehend and process complex sentences in Spanish when in fact variation in language skills excludes them from some percentage of the native language instruction in the classroom. Teachers working in contexts where

Spanish is the language of instruction can profit from efficient measures of the depth of students' oral language skills and use what they learn to provide tailored instruction and support accordingly.

Sentence Repetition Measures

Slobin and Welch (1973) found sentence repetition (sentence recall, elicited imitation) measures to be effective in measuring linguistic competence. In order to measure language processing at the semantic, morphological, and syntactic levels, sentence repetition measures are included as core subtests of widely used language assessment batteries such as the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Fifth Edition (CELF-5; Wiig, Semel, & Secord, 2013) and the Grammar and Phonology Screening (GAPS; Gardner, Froud, McLeeland, & Van Der Lely, 2006). Bilingual language assessments such as the Bilingual English-Spanish Assessment (BESA; Peña, Gutiérrez-Clellen, Iglesias, Goldstein, & Bedore, 2014) also use sentence repetition measures. The general rationale behind the use of such measures for language assessment is that if subjects are able to repeat a sentence that is longer in length than the number of random words they can repeat, they must be accessing deeper language processing mechanisms in order to achieve correct recall (Clay, 1971; Slobin & Welch, 1973). In fact, during a sentence repetition task participants must draw on several cognitive processes, including storing phonological information in short-term memory and accessing long-term memory of simple or complex phrases and their meanings as they reconstruct the sentence (Potter & Lombardi, 1990), and then reproducing the sentence using expressive phonology (Riches, Loucas, Baird, Charman, & Simonoff, 2010). This makes sentence repetition a multifaceted and complex assessment, used by researchers to investigate diverse systems such as long-term morphological, semantic, and syntactic linguistic representation, short-term phonological memory, and word memory in both typically developing and language-impaired populations (Riches et al., 2010).

Speech and language specialists most often use sentence recall measures as part of larger assessment batteries used to diagnose language difficulties. Poor sentence recall has been identified as one of the most reliable clinical markers of children with specific language impairment (SLI; Archibald & Joanisse, 2009; Conti-Ramsden, Botting, & Faragher, 2001; Petruccelli, Bavin, & Bretherton, 2012), and sentence repetition measures are effective in identifying children with SLI in languages other than English as well, such as French (Thordardottir et al., 2011). However, sentence recall measures can also provide insight into developmental progress in language in normally developing children (Devescovi & Caselli, 2007). For example, Vender, Borgia, Cumer Bruno, Freo, and Cardini (1981; as cited in Devescovi & Caselli, 2007) used a sentence repetition measure with typically developing Italian children and concluded that the measure was sensitive to developmental differences. Moreover, the measure was most sensitive for the 3-6 year old age group. This finding was confirmed by Devescovi and Caselli (2007) in their reliability study.

Sentence repetition measures can also be used to identify particular areas of language difficulty by qualitatively analyzing the different types of errors made by subjects during the

assessment: the number of substitutions, omissions, and insertions of words or phonemes, changes in syntax, and so on (Riches et al., 2010). For example, Alloway and Gathercole (2005) concluded that children with more constrained short-term phonological memory were more likely to omit and insert words and confuse word order in a sentence recall task than those with strong phonological memory skills who made more word substitution errors. Marshall and Nation (2003) ascertained that children who had reading comprehension difficulties made more semantic substitutions during sentence recall than language-matched peers. Moreover, Devescovi and Caselli (2007) noted that errors made during sentence recall tasks were similar to the types of errors child participants made during everyday speech, making subsequent qualitative error analysis an important aspect of sentence repetition assessment for practitioners.

It is important to consider the differences among children in the level of these language processing skills. The ability to recall spoken sentences of increasing complexity in meaning and structure is necessary for academic tasks such as following directions, taking notes, learning vocabulary, and understanding subject content (Marshall & Nation, 2003; Wiig, Semel, & Secord, 2013), skills that must develop early in order for children to benefit from their schooling experience. Unfortunately, primary grade classroom teachers currently possess few resources that enable them to quickly and easily assess their students' language processing skills.

While some students may be in need of specialized services from a speech and language specialist, most are not. Only about 8% of children aged 3-17 qualify for such services; however, children aged 3-6 are more likely than any other age group to have a communication disorder. In addition, non-Hispanic white children with communication disorders are more likely to receive intervention services than their non-white Hispanic peers (Black, Vahratian, & Hoffman, 2015). Many (if not all) students benefit from classroom activities designed to increase and enhance language development at a young age, and some may benefit from instruction that begins in a more syntactically simple style and increases over time. If teachers are aware of their students' language strengths and challenges, they may modify their own language accordingly and design classroom activities that scaffold students' current knowledge to scholastic benchmarks. A native language sentence repetition measure can provide a quick screening that may enable early identification of children who could benefit from speech and language services, while an error analysis can also help teachers support language and early literacy development of typically developing students in classrooms where language and literacy are taught in Spanish.

The Current Study

In this paper, we describe a collaborative research project that involved university researchers, leaders in a district multilingual department, and dual-immersion kindergarten and first grade teachers. The goal of the investigation was to use a researcher-developed sentence repetition measure to learn more about the Spanish-language strengths of young students enrolled in classrooms taught in Spanish. Teachers hoped that the information gathered would add to

regularly administered early literacy classroom assessment data and present a deeper profile of their students' bilingualism and biliteracy.

Participants

Study participants were 108 native Spanish speakers enrolled in kindergarten and first grade at an urban dual immersion elementary school in the upper Midwest. Fifty-nine percent of the students were classified Limited English Proficient (LEP) and 79% received free or reduced lunch in the 2012-13 academic year.

Measure

Students' proficiency in repeating sentences in their native language was measured using the ST. The assessment sought to measure students' competence using semantic (Potter & Lombardi, 1990) and morphosyntactic structures (Clay, 1971; Radloff, 1991; Slobin & Welch, 1973) in addition to being sensitive to developmental changes in language (Devescovi & Caselli, 2007). Specifically, it measures students' skill in expressing and understanding both simple and complex sentences. The measure contains 15 sentences (3 blocks of 5 sentences), with each block increasing in difficulty, based on length, number of clauses, and grammatical complexity. A student receives a score of two, one, or zero points on each sentence, for a total possible score of 30 points. A score of two results only if the sentence is repeated exactly as it was given. A one is scored if the student makes only one error, and zero is scored if more than one error is made.

The syntactic structure of the first five sentences of the SSRT corresponds to canonical order in Spanish syntax- subject + verb + object (SVO), for example, *La sopa es muy sabrosa* (The soup is very tasty). Subjects are simple, constructed of a nominal phrase (NP). Verbs are copulative (linking verbs) or transitive. Predicates are formed by a NP or an adjectival phrase (AdjP). The syntactical structure of these sentences reflects the syntactic knowledge of young speakers of Spanish between ages 5 and 6 as reported by language acquisition research with Mexican children (Mora & Madrid, 2003).

The syntactical structure of the second block of sentences is SVO or object + verb + subject (OVS), for example, *Aquella casa la pintó mi papá* (That house was painted [by] my dad). Alternation of the order added structural complexity from one sentence to another. Complexity was also increased within a subject's syntactic structure by using a NP plus adjective (e.g., *el gatito negro*/ the black cat) or NP plus Prep P (prepositional phrase; e.g., *la señora con lentes*/ the woman with glasses). Verbs are transitive or intransitive. Therefore, predicate structures are a direct object (NP) or a circumstantial complement (PrepP). Changing the syntactical order of sentences, using transitive or intransitive verbs, and using different predicates test linguistic cognitive skills of young speakers to predict their reading skills in their native language (Helman, 2005).

The third block of sentences presents complex subjects and predicates and introduces subordinate sentences into the syntactical structure: SVO + Os (subordinate sentence) or SOsVO, for example, *La profesora que enseña inglés vive cerca de mi casa* (The professor who teaches English lives near my house). Subjects are formed by NP + NP or NP + AdjP (e.g., *Los trenes y los barcos...*/ The trains and the ships...). Subordination in the subject is a relative clause. Its function is as a nominal phrase. In the predicates, subordinate sentences function as an adverbial phrase (AdvP) or adjective phrase (AdjP; e.g., *...el señor que está subiendo la escalera/...the man who is going up the stairs*). Research has demonstrated that 6-year-old native speakers of Spanish use relative clauses in their speech (Barriga, 1985; 2002). The syntactic structure of sentences in the third block assess students' management and understanding of more complex syntactic structures that they are learning as they receive formal education in their native language (Barriga, 2002). The advancing complexity of syntactic structure also points to students' pragmatic use of the Spanish language.

Upon receiving IRB approval, the SSRT was administered individually to students by the researchers during the regular classroom day. The test was administered orally and took approximately five minutes.

In addition to the SSRT administration by the researchers, participants' classroom teachers were asked to rank-order their students' strengths in Spanish oral language. Once ranked, teachers divided their students into three groups: those they consider who exhibit oral proficiency in Spanish (for their age), those who possess basic oral skills, and those whose oral language skills are of concern.

Analyses

This study employed a mixed-method design with quantitative analysis focusing on a general overview of the students' performance on the SSRT, and qualitative analysis zooming in to provide an in-depth error analysis of six cases representing kindergarten and first grade students at distinct language performance levels. Using the results from the SSRT, students were divided into three bands: high, mid, and low-scoring. These groups were compared in grade-level bands in kindergarten and first grade in an effort to notice developmental trends. The researchers chose one case from each group in each grade level that we felt was representative of the general performance of that group. We used these cases for qualitative error analysis, with the goal of describing example profiles of students in each performance group and grade. In addition, the teachers' perceptions of their students' language strengths in Spanish were then compared to the students' actual performance on the SSRT.

Results

In the following section, we describe results of the SSRT first through the quantitative data and then by highlighting particular linguistic examples from the representative cases. We conclude this section by sharing data from the teachers' ranking of their students' oral language strengths and how those data corresponded to SSRT results.

Quantitative results. Students' scores on the SSRT demonstrated substantially higher performance overall in first grade than kindergarten. Sixteen percent of kindergarteners scored 0-9 points on the assessment whereas only 6% of first graders scored within this range. Over half the kindergarteners landed in the middle group (54%), whereas less than a third of first graders scored in this group (29%). The highest scoring group (those earning 20-30 points) encompassed 30% of kindergarten participants and 65% of first grade students. This distribution shows a clear developmental progression of language knowledge across the two grade levels (see Figure 1).

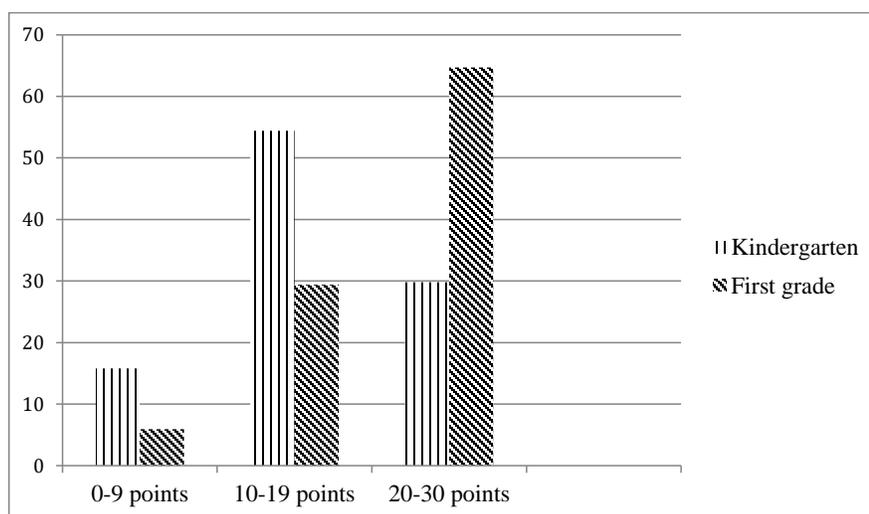


Figure 1. Percentage of students scoring in the bottom, middle, and top third of possible points on the Spanish Sentence Repetition Test (SSRT) by grade.

Qualitative error analysis. An examination of the errors for the six representative case students revealed a number of ways in which they miscued on sentence repetition.

Kindergarten. In kindergarten, the high-scoring student primarily made errors by leaving out words or phrases in longer and more syntactically complex sentences. For example, in one of the most complex items, the high-scoring kindergartener omitted the words in box parentheses in the following sentence: *El niño travieso se cayó en [el] charco [de agua] sucia.* (The mischievous boy fell in [the] dirty puddle [of water].)

The middle-scoring student had these types of omission errors as well. In addition, his errors often involved the substitution of a word similar in meaning such as “*un*” for “*su*” (“one” for “her”), “*malo*” for “*travieso*” (“bad” for “mischievous”), or “*pastelero*” for “*panadero*” (“baker” for “bread maker”). The middle-scoring kindergartener also showed evidence of a developmentally emergent knowledge of some syntax and vocabulary such as the use of “*juegar*” for “*jugar*.”

The low scoring student showed evidence of all of these types of errors, but at times substituted unrelated or nonsense words into his repetitions such as “*pesosa*” for “*sabrosa*” or “*dome*” for “*me dió*.” Table 1 shows the responses of the three kindergarten students on the most difficult sentence in the battery.

Table 1

Repetitions of a Difficult Sentence by Representative Case Students in Kindergarten

<u>Student Group and Grade/ Total points earned on SSRT</u>	<u>Student’s repetition of the sentence: <i>Nuestro vecino es el señor que está subiendo la escalera.</i>*</u>
High-scoring K/ 22 points	“ <i>Nuestro señor que está subiendo la escalera.</i> ”
Middle-scoring K/ 16 points	“ <i>El vecino está subiendo las escaleras.</i> ”
Low-scoring K/ 5 points	“ <i>Es una persona que sube la escalera.</i> ”

* English translation: Our neighbor is the man who is going up the stairs.

First grade. In first grade, the student from the high-scoring band received at least one point for each sentence, meaning that she had no more than one error for any item. Her errors retained grammaticality and meaning, although in one case she substituted “*mamá*” for “*papá*” (“mom” for “dad”).

The student from the middle-scoring level also maintained the gist of the meaning of the sentences but at times inserted, substituted, or omitted words, for example “*ese*” for “*nuestro*” (“this” for “our”). This student repeated 8/15 of the sentences completely correctly, three sentences with one error, and had two or more errors on four sentences.

The first grade student in the lowest band was only able to repeat the first (and simplest) sentence correctly. In total, this student repeated seven sentences with only one error, and seven sentences with two or more errors. Also noted was that the student had some articulation difficulties, although incorrect pronunciation was not counted as an error. An examination of the sentences produced by this student show more substantial omissions (omitted phrases rather than individual words), and difficulty holding onto meaning in longer and more syntactically complex sentences. Several word substitutions affected sentence meaning, for example “*llega*” for “*vive*” (“arrive” for “live”). Possible implications of such errors are explored more in depth in the discussion section. Table 1 shows the responses of the three first grade students on the most difficult sentence in the ST battery.

Table 2

Repetitions of a Difficult Sentence by Representative Case Students in First Grade

Student Group and Grade/ Total points earned on SSRT	Student's repetition of the sentence: <i>Nuestro vecino es el señor que está subiendo la escalera.</i> *
High-scoring 1 st / 26 points	"Nuestro vecino es el que está subiendo la escalera."
Middle-scoring 1 st / 19 points	"Ese vecino está subiendo las escaleras."
Low-scoring 1 st / 9 points	"Nuestro vecino está subiendo la escalera."

* English translation: Our neighbor is the man who is going up the stairs.

Teacher perceptions of student language strengths. During a get-together to discuss the results of the SSRT, the three kindergarten and three first grade teachers whose students participated in the study were asked to rank-order their students by the strength of their Spanish oral language abilities before knowing the results of the SSRT. They were asked to categorize their students into three sections: *proficient*, *basic*, or *below basic/concerned about their language*. Teachers also noted on their ranking lists which students currently received speech and language services at the school.

The six teachers' responses to this task varied, with some identifying a majority of their students as *proficient*, and others creating *proficient* and *basic* groups that were approximately equal in size. Most teachers identified two or three students in their class for whom they saw language development in Spanish as a concern. The research team reviewed student SSRT data alongside teacher perception data to see how well the two sources aligned. While some teacher rankings of students' oral language strengths corresponded well with students' performance on the SSRT, there were also many surprises. Teachers did not consistently rate students into similar categories as the SSRT data would suggest. For the most part, students who scored in the lowest-scoring band prompted a "concerned" rating by their teachers. Nonetheless, in four cases low-scoring students were not identified as such by their teachers, and in one case a low-scoring student was rated at the highest level. Similarly, in three cases students in the highest-scoring band received a "concerned" rating by the teacher. Overall, there was great variability in how teachers under- or over-estimated students' language skills in relation to the SSRT.

Discussion

This study documents the initial implementation and possible uses of the SSRT. The SSRT was found to be a useful tool for measuring students' receptive oral language skills in Spanish and may also help identify growth in oral language development in the early grades of elementary

school. Such a tool is useful to teachers and presents an opportunity to study Spanish language development and its relation to academic achievement.

Results from the SSRT provide information that is not necessarily apparent to teachers. A thoughtful conversation occurred in the group after teachers completed their rankings and shared with each other how they made decisions about language proficiency and how behaviors that prompted concerns about oral language development manifested themselves in classroom activities. Based on our reflective conversation with teachers regarding the SSRT data of their students, it seems that the teachers might have believed that children who speak frequently during class are those who possess high-level language skills, which is not necessarily the case. When teachers had the opportunity to participate in professional conversation centered around data of student performance such as from the SSRT, their professional knowledge about language learning, their experiences with individual students, and the new data sparked not only insights about students' strengths and the support they might need, but also led them to envision how they might adapt the way they present material and give directions in class so that students can best understand them.

The SSRT is a potential resource for providing a more comprehensive evaluation of the language skills of all students- even those who speak less frequently in class- to help teachers better understand their young students' developing language. In turn, having information on the length and syntactic complexity of sentences that students are able to accurately repeat might be very helpful for teachers as they work with students to progress from more basic levels of oral language use to higher proficiency levels. Teachers in the current study appreciated the quantitative and qualitative information provided by the SSRT and felt that the results gave them guidance on which students needed extra language scaffolding. Moving forward, teachers hoped to monitor their own language use in the classroom, especially in relation to procedural language, to ensure that all students were able to take full advantage of instructional activities.

The lowest score in our sample of first graders was nine points. However, of particular concern would be first graders scoring below this. We believe that a screening assessment such as the SSRT could help teachers identify students in need of additional language assessment and support, and further work will attempt to identify the level at which such intervention is needed. Continuing research will also identify age-specific norms for performance on the SSRT and investigate correlations between performance and achievement levels in various early literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, word recognition, and vocabulary.

A note of caution is warranted as bilingual children are disproportionately represented in special education. Restrepo and Silverman (2001) discovered that the Spanish version of the Preschool Language Scale (Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 1993) actually over-identified Spanish-English bilingual children as having SLI. Therefore, it is extremely important that teachers engage in multiple and formative assessments, as well as provide language support in the classroom before recommending special education. Dynamic assessments, in which children demonstrate learning in process as well as what they already know, can be especially useful with bilingual populations (Kapantzoglou, Restrepo, & Thompson, 2012).

The quantitative score a student receives on the SSRT might be used as an efficient screener to identify who may need extra support or further formal or informal assessment in language. In addition, qualitative error analysis could lead to better understanding individual students' phonological and morphosyntactic processing skills. For example, the first grade case student from the lowest-scoring band in this study changed a word or idea, or left out a chunk of the sentence in all but the first sentence. Errors reflected an incomplete or incorrect understanding of the meaning of the sentences, and his challenges with tasks that call upon phonological and morphosyntactic memory are likely to affect his opportunities to learn within the classroom. Teachers working together to examine the types of errors their students make on the sentence repetition prompts would be a worthy use of collaboration time in grade-level professional learning settings. In addition to identifying the range of students' language processing in the classroom, teachers working together could also brainstorm specific classroom practices for differentiating language support that they could apply to improve learning opportunities for all students in their classrooms.

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**Empowering English Learners to Self-Advocate, Own, Monitor,
and Celebrate Their Learning**

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Abstract

In this qualitative study the author examined: a) the evidence of lesson content and language objectives and the level of understanding of 342 English Learners' (ELs) in 114 Kinder through twelfth grade bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) classrooms; b) the influence of ELs and researcher face-to-face talks on ELs' language status, reclassification criteria, goal setting, and monitoring; and c) the perceptions of 313 secondary ELs on help they need from their teachers to understand core area instruction and to achieve goals. Results indicate a high need for linguistically differentiated instruction for English learners to access the English curriculum and reach goals; the need for heroic leadership; and collective efficacy to increase ELs' self-efficacy and social capital.

Key Words: bilingual and ESL education, EL goal setting, EL monitoring, EL self-advocacy, shared learning goals, criteria for success, feedback, EL empowerment, language assessments, language standards

Empowering English Learners to Self-Advocate, Own, Monitor, and Celebrate Their Learning

Introduction

The planet is in the middle of record human migration. In 2013, the number of international migrants reached the record of 232 million. If the current pace of migration continues, by the year 2050, the number of international migrants could reach 405 million (Lee, Guadagno, Wagner, Cho, & Takehana, 2015; United Nations News Centre, 2013). The United States (US) ranks as number one country with the largest migrant population that includes 40 million foreign-born people. In addition, the United States and Mexico have the biggest international migration in the world (Lee et al., 2015; Vavrus, 2015).

The large and growing number of ELs born in the US calls for language assistance programs to ensure they attain English proficiency and mastery of all academic content and achievement standards that all students are expected to master. In Texas, Chapter 74.4 of the Texas Administrator Code (Texas Education Agency, 2007) provides guidance on the type of English language instruction that ELs shall receive. In order to master the Texas essential knowledge and skills (TEKS) or core area standards, every school district shall ensure the implementation of English language development instruction through the cross-curricular ELPS to learn both language and content. Despite the amount of years that an EL needs to master English as their second language (Thomas & Collier, 1997), ELs are held to the same academic standards as their English-fluent peers (Costa, 2015). In the state of Texas, TELPAS is the tool used to measure the implementation of the ELPS. The TELPAS measures the English learners' proficiency on the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and measures the implementation of the ELPS (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2017).

Studies have been conducted on the importance of posting, reviewing, and stating the language objectives in the classrooms (Echevarria, Vogst, & Short 2008) with a focus on the teacher and administrators. The principal helps create community partnerships and oversees monitoring of the program implementation and program evaluation, along with student performance on tests (Collier & Thomas, 2004). As the English language learner (ELs) population continues to grow across rural, urban, and suburban schools in the United States (US), many school leaders are not equipped to deal with the challenges that EL students present with regard to a culturally and linguistically relevant education (Baecher, Knoll, & Patti, 2013). Teachers and administrators may receive training to support ELs, but training needs to be followed and coached to be effective (Calderon & Slakk, 2016). If instructional goals are not consistently monitored, then these goals become bulleted items emphasized only in a few meetings, reports or classroom boards (Marzano & Waters, 2009). The district may provide training, but administrators need to monitor at the campus level to ensure all teachers understand that the goals are implemented. Conversely, teachers need to make sure students are also understanding the learning goals of the lessons, both for content and language for ELs to be active participants of their learning process so that they can reach their language and academic goals.

Purpose

The research questions of the study were:

- To what extent do the presence or lack of content and language objectives in k-12th bilingual and ESL classrooms inform ELs understanding of the what and the why of the learning under study?
- What are the junior school ELs' perceptions regarding help they need from their teachers to understand the lessons and to reach their language goals?
- What is the influence, if any, of the EL and researcher talks regarding their EL status, state criteria to be reclassified, TELPAS goal setting, and monitoring of TELPAS goals on the junior schools annual and holistic 2017 TELPAS composite growth scores? And on their annual and holistic and online 2019 TELPAS composite growth scores?
-

Theoretical Model

The theoretical framework of the study drew from the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1993, 1997) and the social capital theory (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990). According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy allows students to apply what one learns to new situations and challenges (Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017). For Coleman (1990), social capital consists of any social-structural resources or features that are useful to individuals for specific actions. He stresses social capital as public good. This study looked at ELs' feedback to educators, their language goals setting, and monitoring of goals as additives that help build the students' self-efficacy and social capital. When students know what is expected of them, there is more ownership. English learners are then investing on themselves as a public good.

Methods, Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

In this qualitative study a sample of bilingual/ESL classrooms was drawn from a large school district in Texas. To answer research question number one regarding evidence of content and language objectives in bilingual and ESL classrooms, 114 bilingual and ESL K-12th grade classroom observations took place using the researcher self-created *Instructional Collaboration Form (ICF)*. See Figure 1 below. To record the evidence of content and language objectives in lesson delivery, the ICF included a scale score of 0 (no evident), 0.5 (somehow evident, but needs refinement or is not discussed with or reviewed by students), 1 (evident, written and discussed with students). Observations of evidence of content and language objectives in classrooms were recorded, tallied, and converted into percentages. In addition, three students randomly selected in each PK-12th classroom or a total of 342 students, answered the questions a) *What are you doing?* b) *What are you learning today?*, and c) *Why are you learning that?/Why is it important to learn that?* Students' answers to these questions were written, analyzed and converted to percentages according to the amount and quality of students' responses.

Campus:		Date:	
Teacher:		Content Area:	
SHARED OBJECTIVES			
CO:			
LO:			
	What are you doing?	What are you learning?	Why are you learning it?
St #1			
St #2			
St #3			
St #4			
St #5			
Total #s-%			
Observations:			
Teachers		Students	

Figure 1. Instructional collaboration form.

To answer research question number two, 313 junior school ESL students participated in semi-structured interviews. The students answered the questions included on the *EL Goal Setting* form created by the researcher. See figure 2 below.

My Goals

Name _____ Grade _____

Writing TEPAS goal _____ Reading TEPAS goal _____

(write Intermediate, Advanced or Advanced High)

To reach my goal I will do the following:

I would like help from my teachers in the form of

I will know I am reaching my goal when

My teachers: _____

My Goals

Name: _____ Grade 7th

Writing TEPAS goal AH Reading TEPAS goal A

(write Intermediate, Advanced or Advanced High)

To reach my goal I will do the following:

Try Harder in every subject

pay attention more

read more books

write more in English

not to give up

study more often

I would like help from my teachers in the form of

Dictionary and get extra time

and to stop rushing me

I will know I am reaching my goal when

I have A and B in my report card

My teachers: Stears, Maiked, Cogdell, Hammer

Carza

Figure 2. EL goal setting form.

The students also completed journals to provide written responses and reflections about what they learned in class or read at home. This journal helped students write across core areas and reflect on those areas. See figure 3 below.

Writing Log 

Date	Subject (Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies)	Summary Today I learned about...
9/13/17	Reading	We read <i>A Memory String</i> by Eve Bunting. I learned that characters actions and feelings change in a story. Laura changed when her step-mother helped her find the missing button...

Figure 3. Journal

To answer research question number three, the researcher analyzed historical TELPAS yearly composite growth data from 2015-2019 to determine the influence of the EL Talks on the junior school TELPAS composite scores.

Results and/or Substantiated Conclusions

Research Question Number One

Results of classroom visits to the schools in the three district feeder patterns indicated that a) content objectives were overall much more evident than language objectives in bilingual and ESL classrooms in both elementary and secondary, b) students were able to articulate or indicate at a higher level *what* they were doing or learning than why they were learning it. Percentages dropped when students had to respond to *what* they were learning it. Percentages decreased much more when students were asked *why* they were learning it. See Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1
Elementary Content and Language Objectives and Students' Understanding of Learning

<i>Elementary Classroom Observation Focus</i>	<i>Feeder 1 (Classrooms n 23 Students n 69)</i>	<i>Feeder 2 (Classrooms n 13 Students n 39)</i>	<i>Feeder 3 (Classrooms n 17 Students n 51)</i>
Content Objectives	39%	88%	73%
Language Objectives	37%	81%	50%
Q1: What are you doing?	81%	98%	99%
Q2: What are you learning?	65%	76%	82%
Q3: Why are you learning it?	46%	45%	60%

Table 2
Secondary Content and Language Objectives and Students' Understanding of Learning

Secondary Classroom Observation Focus	Feeder 1 (Classrooms n 13)	Feeder 2 (Classrooms n 22)	Feeder 3 (Classrooms n 16)
Content Objectives	85%	100%	87%
Language Objectives	58%	57%	62%
Q1: What are you doing?	92%	71%	65%
Q2: What are you learning	54%	39%	40%
Q3: Why are you learning it?	44%	21%	33%

Research Question Number Two

Results from the researcher's face-to-face interviews with ELs indicated that across all four junior schools the top five most shared responses were for the teacher to a) explain again or repeat more, b) give students more time to complete assignments, c) more time to practice reading/writing in class, d) give me books to read e) tell me I am doing a good job. See tables 3-6 below.

Table 3
ELs Responses on Help They Need from Teachers from Junior School Number 1

Junior school Number 1 I would like help from my teacher in the form of:	Total Number of Students' Responses	Responses %
	77	
*Time to practice writing in other classes	26	34%
Allow me to take books or other things to read home	17	22%
*Explain again or repeat	63	82%
Shorten the reading passage	1	1%
Give more homework	1	1%
Say it in Native Language (translate)	2	2%
*Give more time	46	60%
*Allow a dictionary	26	34%
Show examples of what we should be doing	4	5%
Teach in a way that is fun	2	2%
Tell me what I did wrong and how to do it right	11	14%

Attend tutorials	18	23%
Make me write sentences	1	1%
Write vocabulary words and the definition and make me study them	2	2%
*Tell me I am doing a good job	21	27%
Show me how to pronounce words I do not know in the story	3	4%
Highlight notes for me	5	6%

Table 4
ELs' Responses on Help They Need from Their Teachers from Junior School Number 2

I would like help from my teachers in the form of:	Total # of Students' Responses 69	Percentages
Explain More	60	87%
Wait time, time to think	13	19%
Ask Questions	25	36%
Provide More Tutorials before/after school	26	38%
Talk to me	1	1%
Provide examples	17	25%
Repeating	22	9%
Address me one on one instead of in front of the class	3	32%
Give me notes	1	4%
Read the test to me aloud	20	1%
Small groups	20	29%
Help with homework	3	4%
Provide strategies to understand better	4	6%
Rules to stop everyone from talking so that I can understand what the teacher is teaching	1	1%
Make class more interesting and fun	3	4%
Put forth more effort	1	1%
More hands-on work	1	1%

Table 5
 ELs' Responses on Help They Need from Their Teachers from Junior School
 Number 3

I would like help from my teacher in the form of:	Total # of Students' Responses 70	Responses %
Allow more time for Reading and Writing in class	12	17%
Give more examples and visuals	1	6%
Give me books to read	7	10%
Offer tutoring	5	7%
Read to/with me	2	3%
Slow down	2	3%
Stop and ask if I understand	2	3%
Making me write more	3	4%
Reread with me	1	6%
Take my thoughts and feelings into consideration	1	6%
Dictionary	4	6%
Explain things more clearly	18	26%
Give homework	5	7%
Make me read at home	3	4%
Use examples of texts that we like (animals and stuff)	1	6%
Extra time on tests	3	4%
More practice	2	3%
Help me say the words	1	6%

Table 6
 ELs' Responses on Help They Need from Their Teachers from Junior School Number 4

I would like help from my teacher in the form of:	Total # of students	%
	63	
Allow more time for Reading and Writing in class	10	16%
Give more examples and visuals	4	6%
Give me books to read	1	1.5%
Offer tutoring	4	6%
Read to/with me	2	3%
Stop yelling	2	3%
Translation	1	1.5%
	(new arrival student)	
Slow down	5	8%
Making me write more	3	4.7%
Dictionary	2	3%
Explain things more clearly	14	22%
More chance for talk and participation	1	1.5%
Explain in steps	2	3%
Explain in different ways	10	16%
Give homework	2	3%
Make me read at home	3	4.7%
Help me with vocabulary and definitions	4	6%
Use examples of texts that we like (animals and stuff)	1	1.5%
Extra time on tests	5	8%
Teaching me	7	11%
Teach me as a normal kid	1	1.5%
More practice	2	3%
Ask me if I understand	1	1.5%
Allow time for me to ask questions	2	3%
Teach the way Ms. ____ does	1	1.5%

Research Question Number Three

Results of the 2017 TELPAS state assessment for the junior schools engaged in EL talks, setting of goals, and monitoring of those goals by students indicated yearly growth in all four junior schools. No junior schools showed any regressions when compared with historical data from

previous years. See table 7 and 8 below. Junior school 4 experienced the highest growth with 34% points growth from 2016 to 2017. What set apart junior school 4 from the rest of the schools is the fact that the campus personnel continued to sustain efforts and the process of the EL talks. This school continued to monitor, and to remind students of their goals after researcher was gone from campus. Junior school number 1 obtained the least growth. However, the overall TELPAS composite scores in junior school number 1 were the highest. This school started implementing the EL talks with students in 2016.

Table 7
School Percentage Growth from 2016-2017 TELPAS Composite Scores

Junior Schools Percentage Growth from 2016-2017	
Junior School 1	2%
Junior School 2	10%
Junior School 3	13%
Junior School 4	34%

Table 8
2017 Percentages of School TELPAS Composite Growth

Junior Schools Percentage of TELPAS Annual Composite Scores			
	2015	2016	*2017
Junior School Number 1	26%	*52%	54%
Junior School Number 2	44%	38%	46%
Junior School Number 3	35%	35%	50%
Junior School Number 4	36%	26%	48%

* Denotes the year the EL talks were implemented.

Even though results show regressions in all four junior schools with the new online TELPAS test, junior school number 1 maintained the highest growth in the TELPAS composite scores. Junior school number 1 continued with the EL talks in 2018 and in 2019 after the state went online with TELPAS. The other junior schools did not sustain efforts with the EL talks. Regressions are more significant in junior schools 2-4 as seen in tables 8 above and 9 below.

Table 9
2019 Online TELPAS Composite Scores on the Junior Schools

2019 Online TELPAS Composite Scores	
Junior School Number 1	49%
Junior School Number 2	28%
Junior School Number 3	35%
Junior School Number 4	34%

Arguments, Points of View, and Recommendations

As per research (Echevarria et al., 2008) stating, posting and reviewing language and content objectives is key to ensure students know the goal of the lesson. Students need to know what and why they are learning. If educators want classrooms full of self-regulated, empowered, engaged and motivated learners then, we need to stop withholding the information that would empower learners. This can be accomplished with shared learning targets (Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011). Students need to be allowed to demonstrate their reading levels and skills, and practice prior to the real administration of the online tests (Moreno-Hewitt, 2015). In addition, the leaders' answers align with the need to prepare students prior to an online test to achieve more success (Portolese et al., 2016). Also, when students are exposed to the criteria for success (John Hattie, 2017), they can be mindful of what success looks like as they use the rubric and quality samples as strategy to guide their learning. One element that benefited the junior schools was the explicit goal setting and feedback for language Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001). Goals have a self-energizing effect if they are appropriately challenging for the student (Hattie, 2009).

School and district administrators must ensure teachers have the resources, training, and ongoing support to help students succeed (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Both district and campus staff could engage in ongoing instructional rounds (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009) where the ELPS are intentionally addressed. Instructional rounds are used by administrators, teachers, supervisors, and instructional coaches "to focus on a common problem of practice that cut across all levels of the system" (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009, p. 5). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) indicated that collective efficacy, or the belief about the ability of leader's colleagues to perform or achieve a task, along with leader's self-efficacy are related to district leadership and other organizational conditions. School leader's sense of collective efficacy have a positive impact on student achievement and a strong, positive relationship with practices found to be effective in leadership. District focus on student learning and the quality of instruction seem to influence both types of leadership, leader's self and collective efficacy (Hattie, 2017). Previous research has indicated that principals who are knowledgeable about second language acquisition research are more successful (Hakuta, Haertel, et al., 2007). Gurr (2015) discussed the idea of heroic leadership when effective leaders collaborate and align efforts from all for the success of all students. He points out those successful leaders have a strong ethic of care and empathy for others.

Scientific or Scholarly Significance of the Study or Work

Students' ownership of their own learning, setting, and monitoring of learning goals leads to their individual linguistic success and that of their schools and communities. In this sense, students contribute to enhancing their self-efficacies and social capital. The findings along with the implications and recommendations provided in this study contributes to the ongoing district and campus efforts to select *heroic* administrators (Gurr, 2015), and teachers in support of students with special language, social, and academic needs. The study recommendations can be viewed as a catalyst for improving collective efficacy (Hattie, 2017; Leitwood & Jentzi, 2008) and overall student achievement.

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The Value of Spanglish in the Rio Grande Valley

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Abstract

We naturally learn to speak from the language of those around us. In Texas, there exists a border region known as the Rio Grande Valley, which utilizes a mix of English and Spanish language. Valley natives use a combination of the English and Spanish languages to create a new language known as Spanglish. This study is intended to provide an insight into the language of Spanglish / Tex-Mex as it is used in the Rio Grande Valley. This study provides examples, photographs, and *testimonios* of those living in El Valle. The purpose of this study is to present qualities that validate Spanglish / Tex-Mex as a language.

Keywords: Spanglish, Tex-Mex, language, Rio Grande Valley

The Value of Spanglish in the Rio Grande Valley

“The U.S.- Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms, it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country-- a border culture.” -

Gloria Anzaldua

(Borderland- La Frontera)

The Rio Grande Valley is an area in the southern tip of Texas comprised of four counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr. The Valley, or *El Valle*, as it is commonly known, is a borderland area that separates Texas from Mexico by the notorious Rio Grande River. According to U.S. Census Bureau conducted in 2008, “86 percent of Cameron County, 90 percent of Hidalgo County, 97 percent of Starr County, and 86 percent of Willacy County are Hispanic” (UTHealth Rio Grande Valley. (n.d.)). The Valley is home of the great writer, Gloria Anzaldua, astronaut Mike Fossum, actor Valente Rodriguez, comedian Cristela Alonzo, and *el Rey de la accordion*, Ramon Ayala, to name a few. *El Valle* is a world of its own in so many ways with its distinct ability to exist within the United States as a completely different culture. All that separates the two countries is a river that sometimes is so shallow; one can simply swim or even walk across it.

Valley residents struggle between two separate but beloved worlds. We live as Americans but continue to have our Mexican culture burning within us. There is a scene in the movie Selena describing the difficulties of being in between these two worlds. “Japanese Americans, Italian Americans, German Americans: their homeland is on the other side of the ocean. Ours is right next door, right over there and we have to prove to the Mexicans how Mexican we are, we got to prove to the Americans how American we are. We got to be more Mexican than the Mexicans and more American than the Americans. Both at the same time!” (Esparza & Nava, 1997, 00:59:05). Because of the mixing of these two worlds, our language of Spanglish/Tex-Mex was born. Although much of the population is assimilated and predominantly Americanized, we still hold firm to our Mexican values while living in the United States and utilizing English and Spanish to communicate. This study will focus on how *Tex-Mex*, *Spanglish*, *Chicano Spanish*, *Pocho*, or *Mocho* have become a language for the Valley, as well as a form of identity in this alternate universe. For the purposes of this paper, we will utilize this list of words, interchangeably.

Therefore, the following research questions guided this mixed-methods study:

1. What is Spanglish / Tex-Mex?
2. How is Tex-Mex / Spanglish utilized among the Rio Grande Valley?
3. Is Tex - Mex / Spanish a valid language?

Literature Review

Spanglish is the ability to successfully communicate thoughts and ideas using a combination of Spanish and English (Martinez, 2010). Both languages are observed as equals. This ability to code-switch, "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Martinez, 2010) from one language to another within the same sentence is not inherent just to the Valley. It is a common practice among other border areas. What is unique the signature of *El Valle* is how it is articulated, and the effectiveness it conveys to its speakers. When Mexican nationals come to visit their families in the Valley, they call them *pochos*. *Pochos* is a derogatory term used to demean and delegitimize the language. Such individuals use the term *pochos* to signify their resentment of Latinos/as who have become Americanized and who speak a nonstandard dialect of Spanish, often called "Tex-Mex" (Richardson, 2017, p.231). *Un pocho* is a person that cannot speak either language exclusively. They code-switch and hence, are seen as less cultured because they use the crutch of another language to communicate. Spanish speaking individuals ridicule the limited vocabulary of *un pocho*. *Mochos*, in the same manner, is a person that speaks either English or Spanish in incomplete phrases and with an identifiable accent. *Mochos* are also an insult to the Castilian language and an aberration to culture. Outsiders describe our Valley language as *Tex-Mex*, *Spanglish*, *pochos* or *mochos*. For example, a parking lot is not referred to as *estacionamiento* in Spanish; instead, in the Valley, you will hear most people call it a *parkiadero*. This is because parking is just spoken phonetically in Spanish. *Pochos* speak Spanish that includes many Anglicized words such as *parquear* for "to park" and *troca* for "truck" (Richardson, 2017, p.231).

The fusion that is Spanglish takes three primary forms: borrowing words, switching from one language to another between or even within sentences and mixing the grammar of one language with the words of another (Sayer, 2008, p.97). These three qualities of Spanglish / Tex-Mex are seen and heard daily in the Rio Grande Valley. We will start a sentence in English and end in Spanish or mix both languages within one sentence. This mixing has been controversial among educators and both the general Hispanic and non-Hispanic public (Casielles-Suarez, 2017, p.149). Though it may be called by different names, Spanglish, Tex-Mex, Chicano Spanish, these words all have the same core definition; the mixing of both English and Spanish to create one new language. It is a way of communication *aquí en El Valle*. It is our own form of communication amongst our own people.

However, there are those that think otherwise. Chicano Spanish is considered by the purists and by most Latinos deficient— a mutilation of Spanish (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77). Monolingual speakers of Spanish from other Spanish-speaking countries like Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Spain often criticize Latinos for not speaking so-called "pure" Spanish but speaking Spanglish, a mixing of Spanish and English (Casielles-Suarez, 2017, p.149). It is an art to be able to speak so fluidly in both languages. Chicano Spanish is not incorrect; it is a living language (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77). We create it as we go. It is always evolving. For example, some of this change is evident with the word Google; Spanglish has taken that word and created *Googlealo*. Spanglish creates words as needed. Even our people, other Spanish speakers *nos quieren poner candados en la boca* (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 76). Spanglish is a language of beauty. It is the welding of two parts, both equal in value. It is necessary for people that speak it, to be proud of using it. In addition to face-to-face conversations, Spanglish appears in literary works, films, TV series and commercials, radio programs, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, song lyrics, websites, e-mails, blogs,

Facebook, chats and text messages (Casielles-Suarez, 2017, p.157). Spanglish is everywhere in the Rio Grande Valley.

Speaking Spanglish / Tex-Mex is prevalent in the Rio Grande Valley. It is a commonality most that live here share. Because *El Valle* is so close to the Mexican border, it was instinct for the two languages to mix. Chicano Spanish is a border tongue, which developed naturally (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77). Research supports the validity of Spanglish as a legitimate form of communication. The literature reviewed for this study is of argumentative nature that uses ethnographic and qualitative studies to promote the understanding of code-switching within a community.

Ramon Martinez 2010, conducted a qualitative study in Los Angeles, California between 2007 and 2008 to understand how students employed Spanglish in the classroom. He first sought to amplify the Spanglish used amongst students was not necessarily what most researchers understood as a lack of dominance in a language, but instead, "Spanglish is a dynamic and creative language practice that has tremendous untapped potential as a tool for literacy teaching and learning" (p.125). Martinez joined a middle school classroom where he worked and observed twenty-nine students during an entire academic school year. All of the students were Chicano/Chicana bilingual students, except for one emergent Filipino student. They were all at different levels in their English learning journey. Martinez's 2010, main argument was students code-switched for six various reasons: "(1) Clarify and/or reiterate utterances; (2) quote and report speech; (3) joke and/ or tease; (4) index solidarity and intimacy; (5) shift voices for different audiences; and (6) communicate subtle nuances of meaning" (Martinez, 2010, p.131). However, the focus of his study is centered around the last two.

The use of Spanglish in the Rio Grande Valley falls under any of these six reasons Martinez, 2010 explains. In his study, he concluded that it was not a deficit of language comprehension or dominance, but instead a "Creative, skillful, and intelligent ways to make meaning in social interaction" (p. 125). He urges educators and students to see the implications of using Spanglish in the classroom as a positive change for literacy because it can, "Have a transformative impact on their academic literacy learning" (Martinez, 2010, p.146).

In another study conducted by John A. Sutterby, Javier Ayala, and Sandra Murillo 2005, the authors explore the Spanish language proficiency of novel bilingual teachers. They investigate individual routes preservice teachers must take to become bilingual teachers in a borderland community. The study reveals these Spanish-speaking teachers negotiate their identities between these two languages. Sutterby et al., 2005 acknowledges that "Along the U.S. Mexico border, there exists a language environment where both English and Spanish have existed together in a complicated interplay of culture and power for almost two centuries" (p.440). This research studies the Spanglish phenomena of the Rio Grande Valley and concludes more must be done to develop the Spanish language at the university and home level. But perhaps one of the most central discoveries is how the authors can explain the culture and identity of the Spanglish speaker in the Rio Grande Valley (Sutterby et al., 2005). In doing this, they validate Spanglish as a language and phenomena that will be difficult to eradicate.

Testimonio as a Methodology

Testimonio is both a product and a process (Delgado, Burciaga, & Flores, 2012). It allows those that may have not otherwise had a voice, to share their stories, experiences, and ideas with others. This type of *testimonio* scholarship places the Chicana/Latina scholar as the "outside" ally and activist who brings attention to the conditions of a particular group of Latinas/os (Deglado et al., 2012). It gives people a chance to make their experiences valid. Fiction and literature ask for a suspension of beliefs, while *testimonio* asks a reader to position herself as a listener and witness (Cruz, 2012, p. 461). A *testimonio* allows for an in-depth look into a person's experience. What *testimonio* does best is, offer an opportunity to "travel," positioning a listener or an audience for self-reflection (Cruz, 2012, p. 461).

Participants – Two doctoral students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley shared their *testimonios*. One grew up between Mexico and Weslaco, Tx. Her thirteen years of teaching have been in various districts across the Rio Grande Valley, as well as Houston, Texas. The other participant was born and raised in Edinburg, Tx. She has been an elementary school teacher for thirteen years with a local district in the Rio Grande Valley. Growing up in the Valley has impacted the participants' respective lives. Both of them experienced Spanglish in very distinct manners, and they merge both perspectives to aid in the understanding of this phenomenon.

***Testimonio 1* - Julia**

I was born in a border town in Mexico and grew up in a family of business owners. Their business was in the border town of Nuevo Progreso, Mexico, and they sold almost everything you can imagine to "Winter Texans." These Winter Texans were not from Texas, but instead retired Northern Anglos coming to live in the Rio Grande Valley during the brutal winter months of the from their living situations around the United States. To escape their hometowns where blizzards and snowstorms were a headache to deal with, they would migrate to the tropical, humid climate of the Rio Grande Valley. For those reasons is where their nickname, Winter Texan, was created. It is a term of endearment here in the Rio Grande Valley for our summer visitors.

My first language is Spanish, and I was only made to go to the American schools across the border because my grandmother saw that as an opportunity for us to learn the language to help turn the business into a more profitable one. Our ability to translate for the Winter Texans was a golden opportunity to expand commerce. My Spanish is a well-spoken one and a refined one, according to my grandmother. I learned English with some ease and never lost the mother tongue, as we were immersed in both cultures for the same amount of time daily. I remember my mother always correcting our grammar and tenses when we were little. It was a family thing, language appreciation. As time passed, we grew older, my sisters and I began to seek work in the United States, in the Rio Grande Valley. We were escaping the fifteen-hour shifts we had to work in the family store. The struggle to accept Spanglish as a language for me began here when we truly began to participate with Valley residents.

One day my sister Sandy came home from work and could not stop laughing. She was trying to tell my grandmother and aunts what had happened at her job. She worked at the time for a farmer that picked sorghum and other crops, and as the office secretary, she often overheard most of the telephone conversations around the office. On that particular day she heard her boss on the phone and here is a snippet of the conversation:

Nieves (Manager): "Hello, *tas tirada*, Rose?" (Pause)

Nieves: "*Es que yo lo truje, lo trujiste o no, a ta Ueno*". Bye.

He was asking his wife if she was sleeping, and if she had brought something because he had brought something as well. We could not stop laughing at the words, *tirada*, *truje*, and *trujiste*. We had never heard those words. They were fabricated words! For weeks we were puzzled as to how it made sense for them to speak in the manner in which they did. We would go on to collect many of these words like *caike* and *vejigas* (cake and balloons) into our Spanglish vocabulary. But at that time, for me, it was an insult to the language. I laughed at the horror. For many years I could not understand why this abuse of tongues was so rampant in the Valley. I read Neruda, Gabo, Paz, Lorca at a young age, and could not accept the disrespect to the language that spoke of love in such beautiful forms. I could not understand how if I grew up essentially in both countries and had the ability to keep both languages intact and separate, how others around me could not follow suit.

But I learned to make peace with Spanglish, as I understood the history behind the mixing of tongues. In a *Stolen Education*, I saw how I was not the only one that was affected by English-Only Laws that changed the bilingual laws of Texas. In the documentary, we see the racist, abusive, denigrating actions taken against the underprivileged Mexican-American children in American schools. Many Mexicans who are critical of *pochos* Spanish are unaware of the English-Only period of Texas education, so they fail to comprehend that much of the loss of Spanish language was imposed upon previous generations of Mexican Americans (Richardson, 2017, p.232). Spanish was not lost not by choice but by tough force.

I finally understood at thirty-four years old my fellow Chicano and Chicanas spoke Spanglish and *mocho* because of the effects of these atrocious laws.

Testimonio 2 – Lillian

I am a first-generation Latina. Both my parents were born in Mexico and came to the United States as children. They both came from migrant working families. My father and mother were high school sweethearts, it was where they met, and both received their high school diplomas. They married and both continued in the workforce after graduating high school, therefore; they did not attend higher education. My entire family lives in Texas, the majority here in the Rio Grande Valley. I live in Edinburg, Tx, and have enjoyed living here my entire life. It is my home; my heart is here. This small town comprised of only thirty-seven miles is a union of U.S. and Mexican culture. Walking down the streets, seeing the *colonias*, *charlando con los* neighbors, the mixing of American and Mexican cultures is evident. The fluidity of English and Spanish is a dance between two well-suited partners. Having Spanish as my first language, I did not learn English until I entered kindergarten at five years old. Once I began school, my Spanish language deteriorated, and English became the only language I spoke. Large numbers of second-generation immigrants - and even some first-generation immigrants who arrived in this country at a young age - adopted English as their dominant, and sometimes their only, language (Crawford, 2004, p.6). English became my prevailing language. Spanish was tossed aside. My Spanish was slowly disappearing until it was non-existent. I no longer spoke my native language because I was placed in an all English classroom by my mother. She thought learning English at school would be better for me. She did not see any value in speaking Spanish in America. I found myself submerged in a

“sink-or-swim” all English classroom (Crawford, 2004). My teachers took an all-Spanish speaking child and turned her into an all-English speaker. They were following the laws of the time. For them, the best course would be to forget their “little” language, with the hope that one day they will be able to relearn it in a more acceptable form in school (Ruiz, 1984, p.27). I became a product of the oppressive, anti-bilingual education chosen for me.

I did not speak Spanish again until I entered college. I was taking my undergraduate courses at the University of Texas Pan-American at the college of education. I was sitting in the course, History of Bilingual Education. My professor described how parents would enroll their Spanish speaking children into all English classes as a way to improve their child's education. It was at this moment in class; my repressed memories came flooding back to me *como un huracán*. This was the reason I no longer spoke Spanish. So I had to learn Spanish, again, as an adult.

As I began to speak Spanish in my adulthood, I found myself having to switch back and forth between my two languages within the same conversation. As I was practicing my Spanish, if I could not think of the correct word, I would substitute an English term. No one ever minded. It was natural. It is just part of everyday life here en *el Valle de Tejas*; to have our own words such as *troca* replaces *camioneta*, *billes* replaces *cuentas*, *principal* replaces *director(a)*, *la yarda* for the yard, *te watcho* for be seeing you, we even say *googlealo*, which means to utilize Google to find your answer. Using Tex-Mex is so prevalent in my family; we sound odd when we use “proper” Spanish. In the rare occurrence, when we speak entirely in one language without mixing, it sounds out of place to us. We get told, “*Oye! ¿Por qué tan propio, por qué hablas tan fancy?*” Speaking Tex-Mex is so common, it does not faze us when we speak it. What seems odd is when we do not. For those who speak supposedly proper Spanish, it is a form of cultural capital (Richardson, 2017, p. 231). Speaking the “proper” Spanish is seen as someone of high society and wealth. Speaking “improper” Spanish is seen as the working class. Those who speak this low-class Spanish are likely also to be branded as “*nacos*” (Richardson, 2017, p.232). However, to us Valley natives that embrace our Spanglish, it is our language, it is what makes us, us.

Data Collection



Along
with

providing our *testimonios*, we gathered data from the Rio Grande Valley community. We drove to various locations around the Rio Grande Valley to identify any mixing of English and Spanish displayed publicly within our community. We took photos of businesses,

Figure 1. Spanglish displayed on the school district webpage, webpage, July 3, 2019.

advertisements, and media. It was interesting to see how proudly Spanglish is displayed around the entire Valley. It demonstrated the awareness business owners had on their demographic market of local Valley residents. The advertisements are eye-catching because of the utilization of the Tex-Mex language. Below are our findings of a variety of different environmental print, advertisements, websites, and signs displayed in local shops, businesses, and billboards. We drove around *El Valle* for about a week hunting for evidence of Spanglish. Below are the different photographs, where they are displayed, and their purpose.

In Figure 1, a school district located in the Valley displays on their webpage the Spanglish word, *googlealo*. This is used as advertising and promotion of their school district as well as their technology department.



Figure 2. [Personal photograph taken in McAllen, Texas]. (2019, July 1).

In the photo above a billboard located on a busy street advertises a restaurant with the phrases, Viva Breakfast, Viva lunch, and Viva dinner! It is a mixture of both languages as a way to draw attention to their local business and invite potential customers.



Figure 3. [Personal photograph taken in McAllen, Texas]. (2019, July 2).

A local flower shop in Rio Grande Valley displays its name in Spanglish. Instead of calling their shop Dream Flower Shop or *Florería Sueño*, they mixed the languages to create their business named *Florería Dream*.



Figure 4. [Personal photograph taken in Edinburg, Texas]. (2019, July 3).

The sign in figure 4 is an advertisement for a warehouse business having a sale on different building materials. It combines the English words "mega sale" along with the Spanish "y mucho mas".



Figure 5. [Personal photograph taken in McAllen, Texas]. (2019, July 2).

In figure 5, there are shirts for sale in the window of a small business shop. The shirts display pictures of the Mexican bingo game, *Lotería*. That is a big part of Mexican culture to gather all family members for a night of *lotería*, *música* and *comida*.

Our testimonios and the photographs present how common Spanglish is around the Rio Grande Valley. In order to appreciate the unique business names and slogans, one has to know the culture that makes the valley so unique. To an outsider, the mixing of English and Spanish may seem out of place, but to us, it is a part of everyday life.

Data Analysis

In the data of our *testimonios*, the photographs from the community, review of literature it is evident Spanglish is a valid form of communication in the Rio Grande Valley. In order to comprehend some of the print media and understand the jokes on the billboards one must be bilingual. It is a form of unity among the Rio Grande Valley community. Within our research we discovered three common themes when utilizing the Tex-Mex language in the Rio Grande Valley: Spanglish is a language, Spanglish is a culture, and Spanglish is an identity.

Theme 1 – Spanglish as a language

It is evident from our research Spanglish is an influential language in this region. We communicate with it; we utilize it daily, we embrace it. It is our language; we have created this for ourselves.

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language: for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77).

Billboards, television commercials, radio, webpages, and the people *en El Valle*, all use Spanglish as a language. Sutterby's et al., 2005 study in the Rio Grande Valley notes this struggle between the Mexican nationals and the Valley residents. "Mexican's who visit the area call local Hispanics *pochos*, an unflattering reference to their inability to speak standard Spanish" (Sutterby et al., 2005, p. 440). This animosity between these two groups is a constant struggle, which ends up being taken over by the *Pocho*. The Mexican national that comes to find work in the Valley understands that they will have to interact with the *Pocho* at work and that *Pocho* will be his or her boss. They have to make internal amends as their new *Pocho* boss is the key to their economic stability (Sutterby et al., 2005).

This language assimilation is a complicated play of culture and power. The wide range of statements proposed as language rights is explained in part by the pervasive nature of language itself; since language rights cannot confine itself to merely linguistic considerations (Ruiz, 1984, p.22) Another example of this struggle is when the native Mexicans push their dominant language in the Valley by bringing over schools from Mexico that have a full Spanish curriculum. Sutterby et al., 2005 found along the border, children in private schools are offered additional private classes in Spanish (p. 438). However, what these parents fail to see is their children will inevitably speak Spanglish. The intent for English-Only was to assimilate immigrant children rapidly by substituting an all-English environment for bilingual instruction (Blanton, 2004, p.74). But as much as these laws and attempts to instruct in just one language have tried to eliminate the mother tongue (either the Spanish or English), they have not succeeded in eradicating either one completely. Furthermore, Sutterby et al., 2005 explains that language shift will account for the tendency of languages to be lost across generations. (p.37). In this case, Sutterby et al., 2005 is correct about the Spanish loss within our community, but as far as Spanglish goes, it continues to hold strength within our community.

Theme 2 – Spanglish as a culture

The second thematic element that added to the Spanglish phenomena in the Valley is culture. There is a culture in the Rio Grande Valley, unlike anywhere else. Valley culture is a unique world. Martinez, 2010 states, "A word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living interaction of social forces" (p.138). These words and utterances made in Spanglish, *pocho*, or *mocho* are those defining interactions of the culture in the Rio Grande Valley.

One common struggle for Valley natives is we are not American enough for mainstream America, and not Mexican enough for our Mexican families living on the other side of the border. This inability to completely be identified into one of these groups is what makes its residents so singular and alike. We are neither from here nor there; we are from the Valley. Critics may argue code switching is due to the lack of knowledge in any one language and a crutch. Outsiders see the mixing of languages as a deficiency and a way to delegitimize a culture and way of life.

A predominant number of residents can code-switch and decipher in meaningful ways the conversations. Whether we ask for Tabasco sauce with our eggs at IHOP or excuse ourselves in both languages to seek attention; the reality is a majority of these conversations and exchanges are done in Spanglish. Spanglish fits into the Valley because it is part of how we interact to make sense of our society. Sutterby et al., 2005 explains, " The ability to use the language is governed by community variables, school, family, and individual differences that shape their acquisition of both languages" (p.437). For example, Edcouch Elsa High School has a *corrido* dedicated to its football team that is played at the beginning of every home game in the stadium, and all the fans

sing along to "*La Maquina Amarilla*." In La Joya ISD, the liberal arts department has incorporated and recognized *conjuntos* as part of their extracurricular classes. Most of the high schools in the Rio Grande Valley have a school mariachi and folclórico dance program. The recognition of these Spanish/Spanglish traditions makes the Valley culture unique. Valley Cartoonist Ramon Ramirez captures this Spanglish culture in his work. Whether he depicts how we get *ojo*, how our grandmothers smack us with the *chancla*, or how we want to cure a sick child with Vicks and *barrida de hierbabuena*, any Valley resident can relate to this. The two cultures, American and Mexican, intersect to create this unique Valley culture.

Theme 3- Spanglish as an identity

The third thematic element present in the Spanglish of the Valley is identity. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity -- I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 59). Rio Grande Valley residents have their own identity tied to the culture and language. Language is an important aspect of self-expression and self-identification (Ruiz, 1984, p.17). The ability to merge two cultures, two histories, two nations, and form a new one, define the new identity of the Valley resident. Sutterby et al., 2005 explains "These identities can be reflected through code-switching or translations depending on the situation or context" (p. 439). This ability to code-switch among different audiences, and with either more or less Tex-Mex, is what identifies the person. This innate ability to express themselves by having to form this third language that derives from two mighty ones is ever-present in daily interactions. In all this, it is essential to remember that the Spanglish spoken here cannot be easily explained and the freedom to practice it is always threatened by the native speakers of English or Spanish. Anzaldua (1987) states the following:

Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate (p.81).

However, *El Valle* residents will not let that claim of illegitimacy define them. Anzaldua wrote Spanglish is, "*Un lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir* (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 77). So, in the Valley, this fight has been won. Residents have ignored the claims that say we are uncultured, *nacos*, *nopaleros*, inadequate. We take pride in our Spanglish. It is our signature.

Discussion and Implications

In our study, we found three predominant themes explaining the Spanglish phenomena in our borderland. Our findings strengthen the validity of our Spanglish. It is a form of communication in the Valley. It is a blending of two cultures. It is difficult to extract one from the other because together they make new language. These words: *pore*, *caike*, *taxas*, *biles*, *carpeta*, *mapiar*, *escusado* (toilet), *youtu* (youtube), *el lincon* (income tax), *refilear* (refill), *the mercadome* (the flea market), *confleis* (cereal), *shitroc* (dry wall), *trilliado(a)* (thrilled), *la luz* (semaforo), *aguitate*...we utilize this vocabulary because they make us Valley residents, who we are.

Critics and outsiders seek to delegitimize our society, rather than embrace and understand it. Mexicans also often fail to see that Tex-Mex has become a form of cultural identity for those who see themselves as neither entirely Mexican nor American (Richardson, 2017, p.232) What is not understood by them, is that every time our Spanglish, *Pocho*, *Mocho* language is attacked, it

is an attack on our soul and our identity. We must, as a society, not be ashamed of our form of communication. When those values are threatened, we have to educate ourselves to change this. This language does not make us any less competent than any person living in the affluent part of Martha's Vineyard, or the upscale areas of Guadalajara. We teach, work, love, and live just the same as they do. We have succeeded. Today, *El Valle* is one of the fastest-growing regions in the United States. According to a study conducted by the NAI Rio Grande Valley "In 2013 the RGV Ports of Entry handled over \$38.2 billion in cross border trade placing it sixth nationally" (Blum, n.d.). In 2016, the Rio Grande Valley, according to a study conducted by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, grossed \$26.1 billion in sales (Blum, n.d.). This region is growing and earning money at an exponential rate. Our language interactions will undoubtedly come into play when these expansions take place. Not only is the economic aspect of our mocho language powerful, but Martinez, 2010 states that classrooms that use hybrid languages promote learning. Perhaps the best approach would be to encourage the compilation of a strong literature with an emphasis on language as a resource; this could create an atmosphere where language planning is seen as important in social planning (Ruiz, 1984, p.28).The overall benefits that Spanglish has in the Rio Grande Valley outweigh the negative factors. It is time to recognize and legitimize once and for all our Spanglish language as legitimate form of identity. There is value in our Spanglish.

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Implementing Cooperative Learning in a First-Grade Two-Way Dual Language Classroom

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Abstract

This study examines the benefits of the implementation of cooperative learning in a Two-Way Dual Language first grade classroom. Fifteen first graders participated in this six-week project. During the study, students participated in cooperative learning structures including Timed-Pair-Share, Rally Coach, and Talking Chips. These cooperative learning structures helped the first-grade students communicate their ideas, learn social skills, and practice their non-native language throughout the day. Data sources included pre- and post- student attitude surveys, daily participation tally sheets, anecdotal notes, video-recordings, and audio-recordings. The pre- and post- attitude surveys indicated that the students' attitudes towards working with their classmates increased over time. The daily participation tally sheets indicated that student participation increased during instruction and classroom discussions. The video-recordings and anecdotal notes revealed that students started taking initiative to help their classmates during cooperative learning structures. Additionally, video-recordings revealed that students developed non-native language proficiencies over time.

Key Words: Dual language, cooperative learning, cooperative learning structures

Language of Instruction (Bilingual & English-Only) & Its Effects on 5th Grade English Language Learners' Reading Comprehension Proficiency

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of students who are learning English as their second language. These students are identified as English Language Learners (ELL students). There are approximately 1.41 million ELL students in California's public schools (California Department of Education, 2014). Of these ELL students, a vast majority are native Spanish speakers (84.24%) (CDE, 2014). After 18 years, California voters finally revoked the ban on bilingual education through the passage of Proposition 58 (2016), also known as the California Non-English Languages Allowed in Public Education Act. Proposition 58 makes it legal for schools to both offer bilingual education and incorporate ELL students' native language(s) within the classroom. Proposition 58 reflects current attitudinal changes towards bilingualism and thus, plays a major role in the current study.

Research has found that bilingual education is more effective than English-only instruction in improving ELL students' academic achievement (Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2010; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). Thus, it would be ideal for all ELL students to be placed in bilingual classrooms. Realistically, however, even after Proposition 58, the majority of ELL students will continue to be placed in English-only classrooms for the foreseeable future because of the shortage of bilingual teachers (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; Mongeau, 2016). The high enrollment of ELL students in English-only classrooms and the limited availability of bilingual education makes it imperative to analyze these students' academic performance in their respective language program.

Language of Instruction and its Impacts on ELL students

In regards to the pedagogical options for ELL students, the most common choices are bilingual and English-only programs. While bilingual programs incorporate, English-only programs primarily exclude, a student's native language from the curriculum. Much of the literature regarding the educational curricula of ELL students tends to focus on comparing the impacts that bilingual and English-only language programs have on ELL students' English attainment. While some studies (Conger, 2010; Rossell & Baker, 1996) report that English-only methods of instruction are more effective than bilingual instruction in increasing ELL students' English proficiency, others (Francis et al., 2006; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2010; Rolstad et al., 2005) report that bilingual programs are more effective than English-only. Given the conflicting studies, it is imperative to conduct more specific comparisons of language programs.

In an attempt to contribute to the current aforementioned studies, this study will measure the effects that these two language programs specifically have on ELL students' reading comprehension proficiency, a subset of "reading." Even though most studies (Conger, 2010; Francis et al., 2006; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2010; Rolstad et al., 2005; Rossell & Baker, 1996) provide data on students' "reading" performance, they do not specify whether this performance is associated to students' reading comprehension, reading fluency, mastery of vocabulary words, or other reading skills. Furthermore, there are studies (Gottardo & Mueller, 2009; Proctor, August, Carlo, Snow, 2006) that deviate from the comparison of language programs and instead, compare

whether Spanish or English decoding and oral language skills are predictors of ELL students' English reading comprehension. Similar to other studies (Conger, 2010; Francis et al., 2006; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2003; Rolstad et al., 2005; Rossell & Baker, 1996), Gottardo & Mueller (2009) and Proctor et al. (2006) also solely used standardized test scores to measure ELL students' academic performance. According to research, standardized test scores may not be an accurate measure of ELL students' academic proficiency (Bailey & Butler, 2003; Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, Callahan, 2003). The current research study expands upon these previous studies by measuring ELL students' reading comprehension proficiency through a mixed-methods research.

The Effectiveness of Bilingual and English-Only Language Programs

Studies Supporting English-only Programs

Research has revealed that English-only instructional programs, such as English-as-a-second language (ESL) and structured immersion (SI), are more effective than native language instructional programs, such as transitional bilingual education (TBE), in developing ELL students' English proficiency. In an attempt to find which language program proved more effective for ELL students, Rossell and Baker (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of 72 previous studies to compare the effectiveness of two separate language programs: TBE and structured immersion. While TBE incorporates both native language and English, SI programs predominantly operate in English, sometimes incorporating a student's native language solely as a scaffold. Based on the 72 studies, Rossell and Baker (1996) observed that, in regards to ELL students' reading standardized test scores, "83% of the studies showed TBE to be worse than structured immersion" (p. 21). In other words, Rossell and Baker (1996) found that English-only instructional programs, such as ESL and structured immersion, are more effective than bilingual programs in improving ELL students' English acquisition. A limitation to Rossell and Baker's (1996) study, which Greene (1997) addresses, is that the majority of the 72 studies are not methodologically acceptable. The inconsistency of the methods used in the 72 studies, thus, challenges the validity of Rossell and Baker's findings.

Studies Supporting Bilingual Programs

Although some research (Conger, 2010; Rossell & Baker, 1996) promotes English-only programs, there is a growing consensus that native language programs are more beneficial than English-only instructional approaches in improving ELL students' academic performance. Through a meta-analysis of 17 studies, Rolstad et al. (2005) found that the use of native language had a positive impact on ELL students' standardized reading and math test scores. From these analyses, they reported that native language programs are more effective than those classified as English-only.

No Evidence to Support the Superiority of One Language Program Over Another

Although most studies (Conger, 2010; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2010; Rolstad et al., 2005; Rossell & Baker, 1996) have reported that one language program, either bilingual or English-only, is more effective than another, others (Linguanti et al., 2006) have reported that there is no difference between the effectiveness of these programs. Through an analysis of standardized test scores, school personnel interviews, and classroom observations of 66 schools and five districts in California, Linguanti et al. reported that there is not sufficient evidence to prove that one

instructional program is more effective than another. In other words, Linquanti et al. found that bilingual programs are not superior to English-only programs, and vice versa. Even if bilingual and English-only programs are equal for teaching English, both programs differently impact students' educational careers. It is worth noting that bilingual programs may be seen as superior overall because they equip ELL students with proficiency in two languages (i.e., Spanish and English) rather than one. Within their study, they particularly focused on schools in which ELL students were academically proficient. They suggest that these students may have a higher academic achievement because the teachers focused more on implementing efficient learning strategies rather than strictly employing a bilingual or English-only language program. Rather than being guided by such language programs, the teachers in this study altered their method of instruction so that it addressed the needs of their particular population of ELL students. Thus, these teachers had a positive impact on these high-achieving students' reading comprehension proficiency. The implementation of teaching strategies is more flexible in that it allows for shifts in the curriculum so that it meets ELL students' linguistic needs.

Transfer of Language Skills from Spanish [L1] to English [L2]

One of the findings that provides support for bilingual education is that there is an interrelationship between ELL students' native language and English language skills. Studies have shown that ELL students' native language cognitive and language skills not only transfer, but have a positive effect on their attainment of English language skills. The amount of transfer that occurs between language and the types of phonological abilities that transfer depend on ELL students' native language (Bailey, Osipova, & Kelly, 2015). Although native languages contribute different phonological skills to ELL students' English language skills, Bailey et al., in a review of this literature, report that phonological awareness in Spanish-speaking ELL students' native language is a good predictor of their English phonological awareness, which contributes to their reading capacities. In accordance with Yopp and Stapleton (2008), Bailey and colleagues (2015) also report studies showing that ELL students' phonological awareness in their native language transfers to and positively contributes to their reading abilities in English. Other scholars (Yopp & Stapleton, 2008) found that the native language skills of ELL students transfer and positively contribute to their English language skills. Based on this aforementioned effective transfer of skills between languages, it is imperative to develop ELL students' native language skills alongside their English language skills.

Cummins' Interdependence Theory

Not only is there empirical, but also theoretical evidence to support the effectiveness of bilingual education. Jim Cummins (2007), a prominent scholar, reveals the benefits of bilingual education through his Interdependence Theory. His theory maintains that "although the surface aspects (e.g. pronunciation, fluency, etc.) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages" (p. 232). This underlying proficiency allows for the transfer of "cognitive/academic proficiency" between languages. Although this theory has encountered disapprobation from those who oppose bilingual education, there are studies that corroborate its validity (Proctor et al., 2006). For example, various scholars have found that ELL students' phonological awareness in their native language contributes to their English reading abilities (Bailey et al., 2015; Yopp & Stapleton, 2008). Cummins' theory also promotes that "students' L1 [native language] is not the enemy in promoting high levels of L2 [English] proficiency; rather, when students' L1 is invoked as a cognitive and

linguistic resource through bilingual instructional strategies, it can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in L2” (p. 238). Overall, Cummins’ theory proposes that language skills transfer from one language to the other. In other words, ELL students’ native language skills transfer and contribute to their acquisition of English. Overall, his theory has found support among the advocates of bilingual education.

Closing the Literature Gap

Although studies have already measured the impacts that bilingual and English-only instruction have on ELL students’ academic performance, they have limitations. One of the overarching limitations is that most of the aforementioned studies solely use standardized test scores to measure ELL students’ academic performance (Conger, 2010; Francis et al., 2006; Gottardo and Mueller, 2009; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2003; Proctor et al., 2006; Rolstad et al., 2005; Rossell & Baker, 1996). Regardless of the test, there are limitations in interpreting ELL students’ test scores because the exams are conducted in English, a language which ELL students have not yet fully grasped (Gandara et al., 2003). The validity of standardized test scores is questioned by Bailey and Butler (2003), who maintain that it is unclear whether ELL students’ exam scores, particularly in “content-area assessments,” depict a student’s English “language abilities or their content knowledge” (p. 3). These scholars indicate that standardized test scores may not be an accurate measure of ELL students’ academic performance. The current study contributes to this body of literature by evaluating the impacts that bilingual and English-only instruction have on Spanish-speaking ELL students’ English reading comprehension proficiency through quantitative and qualitative measures, not solely relying on standardized test scores. The quantitative data consisted of participants’ reading domain score in the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). The CELDT reading domain is a measure of ELL students’ overall attainment of English, including their ability to identify phonemes, use decoding skills, and comprehend reading passages. The qualitative data consisted of the participants’ verbal summaries of a fifth-grade passage.

Current Study

The current study contributes to the gaps in the literature by using a mixed-methods approach, having less emphasis on standardized test scores, and focusing on a particular grade level [fifth grade], native language [Spanish], and reading component [reading comprehension]. This study addresses the following question: What impacts does bilingual and English-only instruction have on fifth grade Spanish-speaking ELL students’ reading comprehension proficiency? A verbal summary of a fifth-grade reading passage was used to measure ELL students’ English proficiency through the following reading comprehension features: main ideas, characters, and setting.

Based on previous research (Francis et al., 2006; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2010; Rolstad et al., 2005), it is evident that using a student’s native language can assist with the acquisition of English. The current study contributes to this existing research base by evaluating the relationship between native language instruction and ELL students’ English reading comprehension proficiency. The current research project evaluates the impacts that bilingual and English-only instruction have on fifth grade Spanish-speaking ELL students’ reading comprehension proficiency. It is important to conduct research on Spanish-speaking ELL students because they constitute the majority (84.24%) of the ELL population in California’s public schools (CDE, 2014). The fifth-grade population is also of special interest because during this school year, ELL

students either remain classified as an ELL or are re-designated as fluent English proficient (R-FEP). This classification is significant because it impacts the courses that these students are allowed to take during middle school. For instance, if an individual is still classified as an ELL in fifth grade, he/she will continue to be placed in English Language Development (ELD) classes in middle school, which may limit his/her access to the core curriculum. ELL students are pulled out of their core curriculum classes to receive additional assistance in mastering the English language. The challenges that arise from being classified as an ELL student for a long time puts students at risk for school dropout and failure, negatively affecting their preparedness for and access to higher education.

There is a need for research that particularly focuses on reading proficiency because of the pervasive achievement gap between ELL and native-English speaking students. A nation-wide assessment, which measures reading performance, has consistently reported that in 4th and 8th grade, the reading scores of ELL students were lower than the scores of non-ELL students (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2016). In fourth grade, non-ELL students' average reading scores were 37 points higher than that of ELL students (NAEP, 2016). This reading performance gap is particularly evident in reading comprehension. At the fifth grade level, ELL students have been found to be two full years behind their native English-speaking classmates in reading comprehension (Butler et al., 2003). Studies have also found that ELL students are not receiving sufficient instruction in reading comprehension (Anderson & Roit, 1996). Although other studies have measured ELL students' "reading" performance, they have not specified whether "reading" measures reading fluency, reading comprehension, mastery of vocabulary words, or other reading components. This study will contribute to these studies by specifically measuring ELL students' reading comprehension. With such a level of specificity, this study's findings can inform administrators, teachers, and policy makers about the weaknesses and strengths of ELL students' reading comprehension skills. This knowledge on ELL students' reading comprehension strengths and weaknesses can be a call to action for transforming the elementary school curricula so that they better address the linguistic needs of ELL students.

Method

Participants

The current study was conducted at Bilingual Elementary School (a pseudonym) in a Los Angeles-area school district. This study examined the English reading comprehension proficiency of 40 fifth grade Spanish-speaking ELL students. Of the 40 participants, 20 came from a classroom that equally integrates both Spanish and English within its language-arts curriculum [Group A] and 20 from an English-only classroom [Group B]. This study was conducted at the beginning of ELL students' fifth grade school year. In an attempt to measure the impacts of both methods of instruction with more accuracy, participants who have been part of their specific language program (bilingual or English-only) for at least one academic school year were recruited. After receiving UCLA IRB approval for the study, each participant received an assent and consent form for their parents to sign. It is worth noting that although these abovementioned variables may slightly differ among students, all of the participants have a similar linguistic background in that English is not their first language, rather they were all native Spanish speakers.

Procedures

Before data collection, students were provided with an assent form. The consent form was sent to the parents, requesting access to their child's fourth grade California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores for the reading domain and permission to audio-record their child.

As for the qualitative method, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted. Students' English reading proficiency was measured based on the following reading comprehension features: main ideas/content, characters, and setting. Within these in-person interviews, a short two-minute Spanish language screening before the verbal summary task (see Appendix A) was conducted. The purpose of this Spanish screening is to gain a sense of ELL students' Spanish language proficiency. It is significant to understand how much exposure students have to Spanish at home or within their community because their Spanish language skills may transfer and positively impact their English reading comprehension proficiency (Cummins, 2007; Proctor et al., 2006; Yopp & Stapleton, 2008). Then, the verbal summary task was explained to the participants in English. Each participant was given as much time as they needed to read the fifth grade reading passage (see Appendix A). The verbal summary was prompted from each participant through reading comprehension questions (see Appendix A). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis Plan

Scoring Method—Verbal Summary Responses

Each participant's response was scored using the point-scale system similar to the one used by Bailey and Heritage (2014) in their "Dynamic Language Learning Progressions" research project (see Appendix B). Students were given a score between zero and three on the following three reading comprehension features: main ideas, characters, and setting. The *Main ideas/content* feature measures students' ability to identify and give a synopsis of the most important or central thoughts of the passage. For the *Characters* feature, the student is expected to identify and characterize the characters in the short story. Lastly, the *Setting* feature measured students' ability to identify and describe the location in which the short story took place.

For each reading comprehension feature, a score of zero indicates that the feature is *Not evident* in the student's verbal summary. Consequently, a score of one reveals that the feature is *Emergent*, a score of two demonstrates that the feature is *Developing*, and a score of three indicates that the feature is *Controlled* (see Appendix B). Rather than evaluating their English reading proficiency solely through a standardized test score as other scholars have done (Conger, 2010; Francis et al., 2006; Gottardo & Mueller, 2009; Greene, 1997; Haubrich, 2003; Proctor et al., 2006; Rolstad et al., 2005; Rossell & Baker, 1996), the current study provided different scores on these three reading comprehension features (Bailey & Heritage, 2014) and in doing so, identified the particular reading comprehension strengths and weaknesses of the ELL participants in this study.

Like many other studies, this study compared the impacts that bilingual and English-only instructional programs have on ELL students' reading comprehension proficiency. The current study contributes to the existing studies by providing a new type of assessment, which may influence the instructional practices so that teachers focus more on identifying and targeting

students' specific linguistic needs, rather than solely implementing a language program. Independent t-tests and chi-square tests were conducted to determine if ELL students' reading comprehension scores in the bilingual classroom was statistically different or similar to those in the English-only classroom. Additionally, correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between students' performance on this study and their CELDT reading scores.

Descriptive Characteristics of Population

ELL Students in Bilingual Classrooms

Of the 20 ELL students in this research study, 9 of them were in intervention, or receiving extra academic support outside of the classroom because of their low academic achievement. From these 20 students, 8 had been re-classified as fluent English proficient (R-FEP), 10 remained classified as English Learners (EL), and 2 were native-English speakers who were learning Spanish as their second language. Similar to this study's sample, the majority (58%) of 5th grade students in bilingual classrooms remained classified as EL students, while 42% are R-FEP. From the ELL students in bilingual classrooms, the majority (65%) demonstrated a preference for speaking Spanish-only or a mixture of both Spanish and English at home, while 35% of these students preferred speaking predominantly English.

ELL Students in English-Only Classrooms

In this study's sample of ELL students in English-only classrooms, 4 students were in intervention, or receiving extra academic support outside of the classroom because of their low academic achievement. Of the 20 ELL participants in English-only classrooms, 7 were R-FEP, while 13 remained classified as EL. Although the majority of students in this study remained classified as EL, the majority (54%) of ELL students in English-only classrooms are R-FEP, while 42% remained classified as EL. Similar to the ELL students receiving bilingual instruction, the majority (75%) of ELL students in English-only classrooms demonstrated a preference for speaking Spanish-only or a mixture of both Spanish and English at home, while 25% preferred speaking more English.

Descriptive Findings

Main Ideas

For the *Main Ideas* feature, none of the students receiving either bilingual or English-only instruction received a score of a 0. In other words, this feature was evident, to varying degrees, within each students' verbal summary. The feature is *emergent* or *developing* for the majority of students (80%) in both groups. Only 20% of students within each group had a *controlled* grasp of the main ideas of the reading passage. Within the *Main Ideas* feature, it is evident that the ELL students receiving bilingual instruction are performing at a similar level as those receiving English-only instruction.

Table 1

Main Ideas

Group-Language of Instruction	Rating	Frequency	Percent
Bilingual	0	0	0%
	1	7	35%
	2	9	45%
	3	4	20%
English-Only	0	0	0%
	1	9	45%
	2	7	35%
	3	4	20%

Characters

The majority of students' (70-75%) ability to characterize the characters are *emergent* or *developing*. On the other hand, only a small amount of students (15-20%) have the *Characters'* feature *controlled*.

Table 2

Characters

Group Language of Instruction	Rating	Frequency	Percent
Bilingual	0	2	10%
	1	8	40%
	2	6	30%
	3	4	20%
English-Only	0	0	0%
	1	9	45%
	2	8	40%
	3	3	15%

Setting

When describing the setting, 70% of ELL students in the bilingual classroom and 75% of ELL students in the English-only classroom had performances that indicated that this feature is either *emergent* or *developing*. It is rare for ELL students in either groups to have their *Setting* feature *controlled*. It is imperative to note that, similar to the *Main Ideas* and *Characters* features, the *Settings* feature also demonstrates an overlap between the performances of ELL students in both groups.

Table 3

Setting

Group Language of Instruction	Rating	Frequency	Percent
Bilingual	0	4	20%
	1	10	50%
	2	4	20%
	3	2	10%
English-Only	0	2	10%
	1	9	45%
	2	6	30%
	3	3	15%

Findings: Data Analysis

Chi-square tests¹ were conducted for each of the reading comprehension features: *Main ideas*, *Characters*, and *Setting*. Results from the chi-square test were non-significant, which means that the bilingual group is not doing worse than the English-only group. In regards to reading comprehension skills, ELL students receiving bilingual instruction are on par with children who receive instruction solely in English. It is significant to note that while both groups are on par in English reading comprehension skills, bilingual ELL students are simultaneously developing their Spanish reading comprehension skills.

CELDT Scores

When analyzing participants' CELDT scores, it is imperative to note that 50% of those in the bilingual classroom and 35% of those in the English-only classroom did not have CELDT scores because they had already been re-classified as fluent English proficient speakers (R-FEP). In order for students to be classified as R-FEP, they must receive a score of a 5 ("Advanced") in the majority of the subject areas. For the purpose of this study, a score of 5 was given to those

¹ Conducted independent t-tests and found that the means were not significantly different.

participants who lacked CELDT scores. In order to compare participants' performance in the verbal summary with their performance on the CELDT, Spearman's rho nonparametric correlations were conducted. These analyses indicated that there was no correlation between students' verbal summary scores and their CELDT reading scores. The lack of correlation could have resulted from the fact that the CELDT measures features that differ from the discourse-level set of features that the verbal summary measures. The CELDT particularly focuses on word analysis, fluency, and vocabulary. Additionally, although the CELDT measures reading comprehension, it does so through a multiple-choice activity, not through a verbal summary.

Table 4
California English Language Development Test (CELDT) Scores

	Bilingual Group	English-Only Group
Beginner	0	1
Early Intermediate	3	1
Intermediate	6	9
Early Advanced	1	1
Advanced	10	8
Re-classified as Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP)	10*	7*

*Students who were R-FEP received an **Advanced** in the reading domain.

Discussion/ Conclusion

For all the reading comprehension features (i.e., *main ideas, characters, and setting*), the ELL students in the bilingual classroom performed on par with ELL students receiving English-only instruction. It is imperative to note that in addition to language of instruction, there are other factors that may have impacted ELL students' reading comprehension proficiencies. A salient factor is language spoken at home. Despite the fact that ELL students were in different language programs, the majority of students in both the English-only (75%) and bilingual (65%) classrooms predominantly spoke Spanish, or a mixture of Spanish and English, at home. Regardless of the language of instruction they were receiving, their native language skills could have transferred over to their English language skills (Bailey et al., 2015; Yopp & Stapleton, 2008).

The current research study is particularly significant because it seeks to narrow the overarching literature gaps addressed within the literature review. Most studies that have analyzed the impact that native language instruction has on ELL students' academic achievement are predominantly quantitative (Greene, 1997; Francis et al., 2006; Haubrich, 2010; Rolstad et al., 2005). Thus, mixed-methods research approach, such as the current study, contributes to the existing literature. Additionally, though several studies (Greene, 1997; Francis et al., 2006; Haubrich, 2010) analyze ELL students' academic achievement in reading, they fail to address students' proficiency in specific aspects within this subject. Some specific aspects are reading comprehension, reading fluency, and mastery of vocabulary words. By analyzing ELL students'

performance in reading comprehension, this study provides a better understanding of the aspects of reading in which students are either excelling or struggling with.

Lastly, the majority of studies were conducted before the year 2000 (i.e., Greene, 1997). Not only was the debate of native language instruction different, but so was the generation of ELL students, who were faced with the initial impacts of Proposition 227. It is imperative to note that while the data was collected for this study, Proposition 58, which makes bilingual education legal, had not yet passed. Thus, the effects of Proposition 227 were still in effect at the time of data collection.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the current research study. The findings are based on a small population of Spanish speaking ELL students. Due to time limits, these students' reading proficiency were analyzed only during fifth grade. Thus, this study's conclusions address the effects that the inclusion and exclusion of ELL students' native language has on 5th grade ELL students.

Future Directions

In the future, it is important to expand the analytical sample by conducting research on Spanish-speaking ELL students in different grade-levels, not just in fifth grade. By broadening the grade level range, the developmental stages that ELL students undergo while learning English will be analyzed. It is also imperative to analyze different teaching methods (not solely language of instruction) and factors that may impact ELL students' performance in schools. The location, school resources, teachers, and community are factors that also impact students' English proficiency. The diversity of participants will also broaden by incorporating more than one school into the study. ELL students whose first language is neither Spanish nor English (i.e., Vietnamese, Korean, Pilipino, etc) will also be included. Lastly, future studies should expand on the current study by measuring different aspects of English proficiency, not solely reading comprehension.

Implications for Education Policies and School Curriculum

The results of this study, which showed that English-only and bilingual instruction had similar effects on fifth grade Spanish-speaking ELL students, may be used to change the negative conceptions of bilingual instruction in educational practices. Although Proposition 227 was repealed by Proposition 58 (2016), which allows that native language(s) be used in the classrooms, the availability of bilingual education in CA public schools continues to be limited (Mongeau, 2016). The current study is a call to action, informing and encouraging individuals to re-conceptualize their thoughts regarding the effectiveness of bilingual education. These results may also serve as a trigger for politicians and researchers to move away from comparing the effectiveness of language of instruction to analyzing different learning methods and other factors (i.e., language used at home) that contribute to ELL students' academic performance. While a comparison of language programs (i.e., bilingual and English-only) is important, it is also significant to study the impact that different teaching methods (i.e., hands-on, culturally-relevant curriculum, etc.) and factors (language used at home, students' Spanish competence, etc.) have on ELL students' academic proficiencies. This study may be influential in transforming the manner in which ELL students are taught. Through this transformation towards a more effective approach

in teaching ELL students, the achievement gap may become narrower and in the long-run, ELL students may have access to a more equitable education.

Appendix A-Methodological Tools:

Spanish Language Screening Questions [in Spanish]:

- (1) How are you?; (2) Is Spanish spoken in your house? If so, by who and how often? (3) When you're at home, do you speak more English or Spanish? Why?

5th Grade Reading Passage: A Family of Artists

"I think we should paint a mural," suggested Beth. "What's a mural?" Sam asked. "A mural is a huge picture that is painted on a wall," Grandma said. "It's something that is sure to attract more customers to our store." For the last two weeks Beth, Sam, and Tim had been busy redecorating the shoe store their grandparents owned on Main Street. They had finished painting the inside of the store and were pleased with how it looked all fresh and clean. Now, they needed to focus on the outside of the building. At first their grandparents were not sure how to improve the outside; there was just a large, plain wall that faced the street. They asked their grandchildren if they had any ideas how to grab the attention of people who passed the store. Beth suggested a mural.

Grandpa had been a little wary of painting on the wall, but everyone else in the family agreed that a mural was a great idea, even Sam. He was not as enthusiastic as his brother and sister, but he had helped paint the walls inside and had found it to be fun. The outside of the building was different though; it required creativity, and he was not sure he would be a great help.

It wasn't that Sam didn't like painting. It was just that when he attempted to transfer the images from his mind onto a piece of paper, things never looked quite like he wanted them to.

On the other hand, Tim, Sam's older brother, made painting seem easy. Many of Tim's paintings could be found throughout their grandparents' apartment on the second floor of the shoe store. Tim could study an object and his painting would look exactly like the real thing. Beth, their sister, did not like to use color, but she was a terrific sketch artist. She liked drawing people and buildings. Grandpa called down the hall, "Sam, come on. We need to go help the others soon." "Okay, Grandpa," replied Sam. "I'll meet you downstairs in a minute." Beth, Tim, and Grandpa had gone outside to the store earlier in the morning to complete some tasks before beginning to paint. Beth began to sketch the design on the wall while Tim walked to the hardware store across the street to buy different colors of paint. Beth sketched people trying on shoes. She created rows of shoes just like the ones inside the store. Across the top of the wall Grandma wrote, "Simmons Shoe Sales" in large letters. Tim returned with the paint, ready to begin painting. Sam was not sure what his role would be. He wanted to help but did not think there would be anything for him to do. By the time Sam and Grandpa came outside, Tim was opening the cans of paint.

Grandpa and Grandma went inside the store to finish some paperwork, and Tim started painting. Sam sat on the ground and watched him. "Sam, you can't just sit there. We need your help to complete this project," Tim said. "You work on painting the bottom sections of the picture while I work on the top." "I'm not sure," Sam said. "I don't want to ruin any of your ideas." Tim reached down and handed Sam a paintbrush and said, "Be creative with the colors, and just paint the objects Beth drew." Sam grabbed the paintbrush and began to paint. Sam was having so much fun that he was surprised to see that he had finished the bottom of the wall. "Great job, Sam," Grandpa said as he came out to check on their progress. "Maybe, just maybe, I am an artist after all," thought Sam.

Verbal Summary Questions [in English]:

(1) What happens in the short story? (2) Can you describe the characters?; (3) Where did the short story take place?

Appendix B-Description of Scores:

Not Evident	Emergent	Developing	Controlled
0	1	2	3

Main Ideas:

Not Evident 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student doesn't remember any of the main ideas; he/she can't provide a summary without looking back at the passage • Summary is very brief • Solely reads from the passage <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 0.</i></p>
Emergent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary consists of minor details, such as the interactions between the characters (grandma said, etc). • Identifies the main idea (painting) • Most of the summary [that is in their own words] is inaccurate • Student's summary primarily consists of in-text citations (student reads off of the passage; not in their own words) <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 0.8.</i></p>
Developing 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the main idea (painting) • Some of their details are inaccurate or missing • Identifies either the purpose for building a mural or Sam's transition <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 1.8.</i></p>
Controlled 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details are accurate • Students does not look back at the passage for help • Identifies the purpose for building a mural (to attract more customers, or to make the building more attractive/creative) • Identifies Sam's transition from lacking confidence to believing he is actually an artist

	<i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 2.8.</i>
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Characters:

Not Evident 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student does not remember any of the characters' names <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 0.</i></p>
Emergent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student names some (2-3) characters (Sam, Tim, Beth, Grandma, and Grandpa) • Describes only one character • Predominantly reads from the passage <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 0.8.</i></p>
Developing 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student names most (4-5) characters (Sam, Tim, Beth, Grandma, and Grandpa) • Describes more than one character <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 1.8.</i></p>
Controlled 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student names all (5) characters (Sam, Tim, Beth, Grandma, and Grandpa) • Describes most characters (3-5) • Draws comparisons between characters <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 2.8.</i></p>

Setting:

Not Evident 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not remember the setting or provides an inaccurate setting <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 0.</i></p>
Emergent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the setting as a "store" or a "shoe store" <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 0.8.</i></p>
Developing 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the setting as a "store" or a "shoe store" • Expands upon the setting by revealing one other aspect of the setting, either its ownership (owned by the grandparents) or location (on Main Street)

	<i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 1.8.</i>
Controlled 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the setting as a “store” or a “shoe store” • Reveals two other aspects of the setting, including its ownership (owned by the grandparents) and location (on Main Street) <p><i>Note: If the student requires assistance from the Principal Investigator, their summary will be coded as a 2.8.</i></p>

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Assessing Simultaneous Bilinguals: Teachers' Perspectives in Dual Language Bilingual Education

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Abstract

This article explores teacher perspectives on the language of assessment for simultaneous or balanced Spanish-English bilingual students. All teachers were implementing a dual language bilingual education program in Texas, a state in which standardized testing can be conducted in Spanish or English. Findings revealed twelve distinct responses for how the teacher would decide student language of assessment including seven explanations based on student background and five explanations based on language policy. Additional analyses revealed the critical role of language ideologies and degree of agency in teacher perspectives for decision-making. Implications for bilingual assessment and DLBE are discussed.

Key words: Dual language bilingual education (DLBE), simultaneous bilinguals, assessment, standardized test, agency, language ideology.

Assessing Simultaneous Bilinguals: Teachers' Perspectives in Dual Language Bilingual Education

Emphasis on standardized tests and the constant growth of the emergent bilingual² population are features of contemporary education settings in the United States (Duong, Badaly, Liu, Schwartz, & McCarty, 2016; Wright, 2002). Since the introduction of massive IQ testing in schools, the role of teachers has been crucial for the decisions and implementation of assessments. In the early 20th century, when parents were objecting to the form in which their children were being tested and classified through intelligence tests, test advocates designated teachers the task of convincing parents; they seemly were “more willing to comply” when teachers made recommendations (Tyack, 1974, p. 207). Nowadays, a typical student of an urban public school takes an average of 112.3 tests between pre-Kinder and 12th grade, eight standardized tests per year (e.g., two NCLB tests —reading and math— and three formative exams in two subjects) (Hart, Casserly, Uzzell, Palacios, Corcoran & Spurgeon, 2015). This overvaluation increases the importance and impact of teacher perspectives in relation to standardized testing.

Testing linguistically diverse students has raised concerns among scholars about equitability and social justice. By the 1940s, testers had already identified fairness issues that tests presented for students from non-dominant cultural and language backgrounds. Given that students shared distinct experiences in common, there was a need for developing tests that took into consideration all socioeconomic and cultural groups (McLean, 1995). In 1985, the American Education Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Council on Measurements created the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, in which researchers claimed that “tests developed without accounting for language differences have limited validity” (McLean, 1995, p. 4). Despite these research-based recommendations, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act mandated that both monolinguals and emergent bilinguals attending public schools take the same state academic assessments (only emergent bilinguals who have been in the U.S. for *less than one year* were exempt).

The more recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) still requires emergent bilinguals to be assessed with the same tests after one year in the U.S., but increases flexibility for states to make their own assessment policies including the use of alternative assessments. Schools are required to incorporate emergent bilinguals' test scores in their accountability school scores as any other student after their first or third year in the U.S. regardless of the language of assessment. One option that became available in 2011 was for these students to take the standardized test in their native language for up to five years—if available—. Given the new increased flexibility in national language policy regarding assessment, and the ability for states to provide assessment in

² These students are also known as English Language Learners (ELLs)

languages other than English, how local educators understand and implement assessment policy becomes even more important.

One group of educators particularly impacted by issues of assessment with linguistically and culturally diverse students are dual language bilingual education (DLBE) teachers. In juxtaposition with the subtractive bilingual approaches including English submersion and transitional bilingual education, DLBE programs are known for their distinctness in dealing with linguistic, psychological, social, and cognitive developmental issues that intend additive bilingualism and multiculturalism (Lambert, 1975; Torres-Guzmán, 2007). Many scholars have recognized the substantial benefits of learning through more than one language (Fritz, 2016; Callahan & Gandara, 2014; Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1991; Wong-Fillmore & Valadez, 1986), and DLBE programs, in particular, are associated with higher academic achievement (Christian, 1996; Smith & Arnot-Hopffer, 1998; Thomas & Collier, 2002). That said, educators in DLBE programs are still tasked with preparing students for monolingual assessments, which can function as de facto language policy (Menken, 2008), and have negative consequences on the implementation of DLBE policy (Palmer, Henderson, Wall, Zuñiga & Berthelsen, 2015; Palmer & Lynch, 2008).

In response to the multiple issues surrounding the assessment of emergent bilingual students and DLBE programs, the purpose of this paper is to explore how DLBE teachers make sense of testing policies and decide language of assessment for simultaneous bilingual students. In this paper, we categorize these diverse teacher perspectives and then examine the language ideologies and the degrees of agency reflected in their decisions. In this way, this article adds to the existing literature examining issues of equity in DLBE implementation and assessing emerging bilingual students. The central guiding research questions for this paper were:

- (a) In what language does a group of DLBE teachers believe bilingual students should be tested?
- (b) How do teachers make decisions about simultaneous bilingual students' assessment?

Literature Review

Emergent Bilinguals and Language of Testing

Researchers posit that the core of the problem of standardized testing and emergent bilinguals is that the criteria with which they are being measured are invalid and unreliable (Bedore & Pena, 2008; Brown, 2005; Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981). Most standardized tests are in English, and they are designed and field-tested for native English speakers, which implies an unfair disadvantage for emergent bilingual students (Abedi, 2004; Sanchez, Rodriguez, Soto-Huerta, Villarreal, Guerra & Flores, 2013; Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014). Tests should be normed by people with the same or similar characteristics to the students to be assessed.

Evaluating bilingual students on a monolingual norm causes an overestimation of emergent bilinguals as qualifying for learning disability programs (Sanchez et al., 2013; Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014). Hopewell and Escamilla (2014) explored two different interpretation methods for assessing bilingual students' reading levels, and found that evaluating emergent bilinguals with English monolingual normed tests can give rise to confusion in assessing whether they need intervention in reading, intervention in English, or no intervention. Classification and

judgment based on these results are problematic. Bilingual students use both languages as a resource as they interact and cognitively process with both languages (Escamilla, 2000; Shohamy, 2011). Consequently, various researchers have claimed the necessity of a new *bilingual* approach to assess linguistically diverse students that yield more accurate interpretations for their academic achievement (McLean, 1995; Puckett & Black, 1994; Sanchez, et. al, 2013; Escamilla, 2000; Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014).

In the absence of state sanctioned bilingual assessments, one option available for some students in some states is to take the test in their native language. In Texas, the context of this study, the general rule is that emergent bilingual students are required to take the general English-version of standardized assessments in the grades 3-8. However, the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) allows emergent bilingual students to take a Spanish version of the test from grade 3-5 if this accommodation provides “the most appropriate measure of the student’s academic progress” (TAC, Title 19, Part 2, Chapter 101, Subchapter AA, Division 1, Rule §101.1005). Also, according to the same TAC provision, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) may determine that emergent bilingual students from grade 3 or higher, or students in bilingual language programs (grade not specified) take a Spanish version of a test in mathematics, science or social studies unless it does not exist or the LPAC considers that this version “is not the most appropriate measure” of student’s academic progress (TAC, Title 19, Part 2, Chapter 101, Subchapter AA, Division 1, Rule §101.1005). At the kindergarten, first and second grade levels, students’ literacy and developmental skills are assessed using the recommendations and the reading instrument list set out by the commissioner or the district-level committee (TEC §28.006 [b and c]) although no accommodations are specified. Ultimately, the interpretation and implementation of testing policy is negotiated at the local level.

Determining whether or not a student should take the standardized test in English is another decision that affects the test results’ validity (Kopriva, Emick, Hipolito-Delgado & Cameron, 2007). In particular, language accommodations may function in detriment to students’ academic testing results, depending on students’ readiness to take a test in a specific subject as well as the characteristics of the test. According to the Education Law Center (2002), “fitting the accommodations to the student and the test is a crucial part of the process” (p.17). This important decision-making process, as stipulated by law, is allocated to the LPAC, where teachers are participants. In relation to teachers’ participation in student assessment accommodations, research suggests that in many cases they are the ones who make the ultimate decisions (Fuchs, Fuchs, Eaton, Hamlett, Binkley & Crouch, 2000; Helwig & Tindal, 2003; Kopriva, Emick, Hipolito-Delgado & Cameron, 2007). For this reason, teachers are an essential element of students’ assessment, provided their expertise in relation to students’ particular academic needs.

Implications of Standardized Testing for Teachers

Standardized test scores have severe implications for teachers, raising the stakes for teachers’ decision-making in relation to students’ language of assessment. Teachers’ salaries and job-performance decisions are increasingly tied to students’ performance in standardized tests. As a consequence, teachers’ job security and reputation are at constant risk, which are factors that increase accountability pressure. Assessment places further pressure on teachers because of its connection to students’ academic future. The consequences for students who do not pass

standardized tests involve student labeling, grade retention, and failure to attain a high school diploma. Standardized tests are commonly used for transferring emergent bilingual students to special instructional services or for reclassifying students from their student status (Hopstock, Bucaro, Fleischman, Zehler & Eu, 1993). These labels constitute a tremendous value on students if we consider that labels have an effect not only on how others perceive them (e.g., their teachers) (Author, 2016; Soland, 2013), but also on how students perform and use this information to make decisions about their professional and academic futures (Papay, Murname & Willet, 2011).

Furthermore, high stakes testing has deeply pervaded in teachers' work environment, negatively influencing teachers' pedagogies, their relationships with their students, and their sense of well-being (Valli & Buese, 2007). For instance, teachers are exposed to pre-test pressures related to teaching a test-centered curriculum at a fast rate (Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor & Leander, 2010; Palmer & Lynch, 2008). Also, excessive control in educators teaching practices and decisions causes a clash of interests among members of the school community (Upadhyay, 2009; Flores & Clark, 2003). Additionally, other studies have suggested that high-stake working conditions place teachers in the position of acting against their values and principles regarding education (Assaf, 2006; Byrd-Blake et al., 2010), and renegotiating their identities (Upadhyay, 2009). Consequently, research findings have reported two results regarding teachers' assessment policy implementation. On the one hand, some studies indicate that despite adverse bilingual policies, teachers find ways to promote what they believe to be authentic learning and quality pedagogical practices that attend to emergent bilingual students' linguistic needs (Palmer & Snodgrass Rangel, 2011). On the other hand, some scholars have also found teachers powerless and unable to resist policy mandated change and assessment pressure (Palmer & Henderson, 2016; Palmer & Lynch, 2008; Valli & Buese, 2007). Teachers often struggle given that they find themselves negotiating between students' advocacy and policy implementation (Upadhyay, 2008; Palmer & Snodgrass Rangel, 2010). The present study provides an additional lens into the complexity and challenge teachers face determining the most effective way to assess emergent bilingual students.

Theoretical Framework

In order to explore teachers' perspectives of simultaneous bilinguals' assessment in DLBE education, this research study was theoretically informed by the constructs of language ideology and assessment, as well as the typology of agency proposed by Hewson (2010). In this section, we expand on scholars who have contributed to the theory of these two constructs.

Language Ideology and Assessment

This study adheres to Silverstein's (1979) conceptualization of language ideology defined as "a set of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (p. 202). This definition fits the purpose of this study to examine how teachers articulate their perspectives on assessment of simultaneous bilingual students. There is an inevitable link between the notions of language policy and language ideology. As Sayer (2012) asserts, any attempt to "explain how people use, learn or teach language puts forth (directly or implied) a theory of language ideology" (p. 131). Accordingly, this article, situated in the context of teachers' implementation of current language assessment policies in the U.S., implicates the promotion of particular linguistic ideologies. Substantial

research reinforces the intimate and meaningful theoretical relationship between language policy and ideology (e.g., De-Jong, 2013; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Ruiz, 1984). For instance, Shohamy (2011) described the ideologies behind the use of monolingual standardized tests as devices to exclude minoritized groups and reinforce ideas of national identities that promote correctness, purity, and the standardization of the hegemonic language. By oppressing other languages and obligating minoritized populations to comply with tests demands, political agendas promote a one-nation one-language ideology (Weber & Horner, 2012).

Teacher Agency

In the present study, we adopt an ecological view of agency in which individuals' perspectives and decisions are multifaceted, dynamic, and influenced by a number of factors. Our ecological approach to agency is defined by Priestley, Edwards, Priestley and Miller (2012) as the ability "to be reflexive and creative, acting counter to societal constraints, but also how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments" (p. 12). Agency, instead of a possession, is achieved as a result of a particular reciprocal interaction between the actor(s) and their context (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). In other words, agency is a phenomenon that involves agents acting *by-means-of-an environment*, not merely *in* an environment. In the particular case of teachers, they participate in the interplay of forces where instructors are constrained by hegemonic policies, but also freely choose the ways to interpret and respond to those policies (Menken & García, 2010; Newcomer & Collier, 2015).

Given the diverse influences on teachers' agency, in this study we chose to make use of Hewson's agency typology, divided into proxy agency and individual agency (Hewson, 2010). *Proxy agency* is characterized by individuals who act on behalf of others (Hewson, 2010). In a specific education setting, the teacher acts because of the policy or on behalf of the school or administration. As a way of illustration, Ray (2009) reported on the case of four teachers whose "teacher agency [was] manifested in purposive actions that support[ed] the [Dual Language] program" (p. 131). Through their agentic practices (e.g., voluntary tutoring), these teachers were helping students to achieve high performance on state tests. Meanwhile, *individual agency* refers to the act of exercising personal power in order to control the particular situation he or she is facing (Hewson, 2010). More explicitly, this occurs when a person makes the decision to act based on his or her own interests and ideologies. For example, Newcomer and Collier (2015) reported on two case studies that illustrate how teachers often draw on their beliefs to negotiate policies with which they disagree by using alternative ways of instruction to look after students' best interests.

In the present study, we will illustrate cases of both *proxy* and *individual* agency, yet we also found teachers who expressed feeling little to no agency to make testing decisions based on their own beliefs. As such, we felt it was important to address a third type of agency, which we view as a subcategory of individual agency. Thus, *minimal agency* is when a teacher decides to follow certain policy even though he or she disagrees. We found an example of minimal agency in Acker-Hocevar and Touchton's (2011) study. They examined the agency of six teachers of the year in Florida in 1996 and 1997, while educational reform was taking place. Their results showed that teachers' leadership was limited to the interrelation of existing structures, cultures and power relations as they experienced a decline of their role in school decision-making.

As reviewed above, the manifestation of proxy agency, individual agency and minimal agency is a product of the current educational assessment environment in which restrictive and assimilationist language ideologies have been established. The significance that this socio-political context represents for 4.4 million emergent bilingual students' futures (Snyder & Dillow, 2015) has urged us to explore the role of DLBE teachers as replicators and/or contesters of these ideologies as well as the extent of agentic power demonstrated in their discourse. In sum, in this study we analyze teachers' responses to the situation in which they have to decide on and rationalize the language of assessment of a balanced bilingual student when taking a standardized test. Hereafter we present the methodology of this inquiry.

Methods

This study draws on data from a larger qualitative research project examining DLBE implementation, language ideologies and local language policy. While not a central aim of the original study, the impetus of this investigation was the observation that teacher perspectives on language of assessment for bilingual students varied tremendously, and that these perspectives appeared connected to larger structural and ideological issues. As described above, given the educational climate placing much emphasis on standardized testing, these testing decisions have real consequences on students schooling experiences and even school trajectories.

Data Collection and Participants

The data used for this study was from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers implementing DLBE in a Texas urban district. The teachers were originally randomly selected for participation in a survey ($n = 323$). The interviews were conducted with teachers that were both willing to participate in the extension of the study, and currently teaching in the DLBE program. During the interview teachers were asked multiple questions about their implementation of DLBE including, "In what language would you test a relatively balanced bilingual?" The anticipated outcome was an answer of either Spanish or English. As we will reveal in our findings section below, there were 12 distinct responses to this question. Table 1 below provides details about the participating teachers:

Table 1
Participants

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Grade-Level</u>	<u>Years</u>			
		<u>Teaching</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>
Maria	Pre-K	9	English	Female	34
Irene	Pre-K	5	Bilingual	Female	52
Berta	Pre-K	12	Bilingual	Female	56
Marisol	Pre-K	8	Bilingual	Female	39
Sandra	Pre-K	5	Bilingual	Female	49
Jill	Pre-K	15	English	Female	59

Edward	K	20	Bilingual	Male	42
Susana	K	11	Bilingual	Female	52
Lucia	K	4	Bilingual	Female	27
Cathy	K	5	English	Female	33
Daniel	1st	1	Bilingual	Male	25
Gustavo	1st	N/A	Bilingual	Male	41
Chrissy	2nd	8	Bilingual	Female	48
Deina	2nd	3	Bilingual	Female	27
Samantha	2nd	15	English	Female	56
Mariana	3rd	9	Bilingual	Female	N/A
Tamy	3rd	17	English	Female	44
Michael	3rd	13	Bilingual	Male	37
Ramón	4th	6	Bilingual	Male	34
Uriel	Administrator	N/A	Bilingual	Male	54

Data Analysis

After one-on-one interviews, we began our data analysis process at the interpretation and representational level with the transcription of interviews (Bucholtz, 2000). To answer RQ1, we examined the interview data using an inductive analysis of themes (Saldaña, 2015). This thematic coding process consisted of multiple phases of independent coding and peer debriefing. We used TAMS analyzer to facilitate multiple coders and data management. Our analytic process was highly iterative “not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a deeply reflexive process, is key to sparking insight and developing meaning” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). Our peer debriefing sessions were central to exercise critical inquiry about our themes, ideas and biases, as well as to discuss coding disagreements, enrich our data records, and finalize the coding scheme. Intercoder agreement for the first half of the data was 84.5%; discrepancies were discussed and resolved for coding the second half of the data.

Our analysis to answer RQ2, “How do teachers make these decisions?” began alongside our thematic analysis of RQ1 in which we noted patterns in teachers’ discourse connected to ideology and agency. We completed an additional round of analysis drawing on tools from critical discourse analysis to connect the teachers’ discourses with larger societal processes (Gee, 2014), specifically language ideologies drawing on prior literature (Author, 2016; de Jong, 2013; Ruiz, 1984). We drew on Hewson’s typology as an analytic framework for agency (Mills et al., 2010). Each researcher independently analyzed all interview responses using the typology. We then compared analyses and discussed all discrepancies to add depth to our analysis. In this study, we do not intend to provide a comprehensive picture of all the different teacher perspectives on

language of assessment. By focusing in-depth on the perspectives of twenty teachers, we aim to unearth the complexity of perspectives, and how teacher views were connected to language ideologies and issues of agency.

Findings

In this section, we describe the DLBE teachers’ perspectives on the assessment of simultaneous bilinguals. We first present and explain a chart showing teachers’ responses regarding the language in which these students should be tested. Then, we demonstrate the language ideologies that the teachers drew on to determine which language should be used for testing. Finally, we report the types of agency that these teachers displayed in their responses.

RQ1: Language of testing

When eliciting teachers to identify the language of testing for simultaneous bilingual students, twelve distinct responses were provided. We categorized these responses in two different groups: seven responses were related to students’ background, and five responses connected to language policy. Two teachers also expressed that they were uncertain of what to do, which did not fit in either category, and was not included in the tables below. In several teacher interviews, multiple answers were given. As such, the numbers of instances do not total the number of participants. Table 2 below presents the first set of responses connected to students’ backgrounds:

Table 2
Teachers’ Responses on Language of Testing Related to Students’ background

Response	Definition	# of instances	Example from data
Spanish	Teacher comments that she or he would have the student take the test in Spanish.	1	“Que lo tome en español porque es más fácil después hacer la transición en inglés” [<i>They should take it in Spanish because it is easier to make the transition in English</i>] –Michael, 3 rd grade.
English	Teacher comments that she or he would have the student take the test in English.	10	“...empujarlos más en inglés para que puedan hacer esa transición correcta.” [Push them to English so that they can make the right transition] – Ramón, 4th grade.

Spanish & English	Teacher comments that she or he would have the student take the test in both languages Spanish and English	3	“Les daría inglés para ver como salieron en ese examen y también en español” [<i>I would give it to them in English to see how they do, and also in Spanish</i>]. –Mariana, 3 rd grade.
Home language	Teacher comments that s/he would have the student take the test based on their home language. Teacher believes that the language spoken at home should be the language for academic assessment.	5	“Dependiendo del idioma de los padres, escogería el que se habla en casa” [<i>Depending on the parents’ language, I would choose the language that is spoken at home</i>] –Edward, Kinder.
Strong language	Teacher comments that s/he would have the student take the test based on which language the student uses on a daily basis or the teacher’s perceives to be the students “strong” language based on daily use. (e.g., student chooses to speak in English)	5	“En tercer grado yo sé que el niño dominaba más el español y le dije que quería que lo tomara en español” [<i>In third grade I know the boy dominated more Spanish, and I told him that I wanted him to take it in Spanish</i>] –Marisol, Pre-Kinder.
Mother’s language	Teacher comments that she or he would have the student take the test based on the mother’s language.	1	“Generalmente el niño habla más inglés si la mamá habla más inglés” [<i>Generally, the child speaks more English if his/her mom speaks more English</i>]. –Irene, Pre-Kinder.
Student Choice	Teacher comments that the students should have a voice in the choice of test; Teacher considers the language with which students feel more comfortable.	5	“If they’re were really totally balanced, if it was me, I pull the kids aside, that’s what I would do. What do they feel more comfortable? What do they want?” –Chrissy, 2 nd grade.

Despite the diversity in responses, the replies in table 2 above showed that these teachers based their decision on the students’ backgrounds. Strong language, mother’s language, student’s choice, home-language, language(s) spoken were all seen here as connected to students’ background given that they all make part of students’ characteristics, past experiences and social environments. Teachers’ perceived knowing students’ weaknesses and strengths, their abilities,

their family and, in general, all their background information as a key part of the process of assessing students' learning. While several teachers' choices were driven to maximize student test scores, this was not always the case. For example, Michael and Ramon's explanations were related to future testing experiences, rather than the students' current testing performance. Furthermore, despite variation in responses, teachers choosing to provide the test in English had the highest number of instances. These issues are discussed in depth in the section below analyzing *how* teachers made testing decisions.

Rather than student background, several of the teachers of this study suggested that the language of testing should be determined by education policies. Table 3 below provides five such teacher perspectives:

Table 3
Teachers' Responses on Language of Testing Related to Policy

<u>Response</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u># of instances</u>	<u>Example from data</u>
Higher score	If results show a higher performance on a test in one language, that is the language that should be chosen.	7	"They'll probably go with the one that they score higher in." –Deina, 2 nd grade.
Student status or model placement	Teacher comments that s/he would have the student take the test based on their student status or where they are placed in the model	1	"Depending on whether they are still considered ELLs or not like I have or what, I guess what side of the model they're in." –Daniel, 1 st grade.
Test policy	Teacher comments that s/he would have the student take the test based on the language that the policy mandates even if the tests will take place in the future. The teacher wants to comply with rules.	11	"Aquí el niño de preescolar no tiene opción, tiene que tomar exámenes que son en inglés y exámenes que son en español" [<i>Here pre-school children do not have an option, there are exams in English and there are exams in Spanish</i>] –Berta, Pre-K.
Language of instruction	Teacher comments that she or he would have the student take the test in the language of instruction or the language in which the students learn the content area.	5	"I would base it on language of instruction" –Maria, Pre-K.

Collaborative
(LPAC)

Teacher states that she would make a decision in collaboration with others (e.g., teachers, parents, specialists).

1

“You know, the conversation with my teammate, with the student, with the parents and just trying to come to a decision amongst the group as of what would be best with the child.”
–Tamy, 3rd grade.

By basing their decision on emergent bilingual students’ status and complying with the test policy, these teachers let the rules (official, unofficial or de facto) dictate in what language test students. Moreover, those teachers who chose to use the higher score, appeared to be influenced by the accountability pressure caused by high stake testing. Finally, it was surprising that there was only one teacher and one instance reporting that the decision should be made collaboratively. The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) is the state-mandated group that is supposed to determine language of assessment with standardized testing. In other words, teachers in designated testing grades should work in conjunction with a committee to make decisions for emergent bilingual students’ assessment and accommodations.

RQ2: How do teachers make testing decisions?

Language ideologies. The language ideologies teachers drew on in their responses were categorized into two groups: a) ideologies of English hegemony; and b) counter-hegemonic ideologies. There were seventeen instances in which teachers displayed, indexed or acknowledged English hegemony, which was reflected in their decision-making about language of assessment. The rationales directly or indirectly referenced the following associated language ideologies: English as the language with higher status, English as the more important language, and English as the “correct” language. On the other hand, there were also teachers that based their decisions on counter-hegemonic ideologies including language as representing ethnic identity and multiple languages as an asset. This section explores these two sets of ideologies.

Ideologies of English hegemony. Several participants acknowledged English hegemony in their responses. The following are two illustrative participant explanations:

“Lo que tratamos es empujarlos más en inglés para que puedan hacer esa transición correcta.” [*What we try to do is to push them more to English, so that they can do that right transition.*] –Ramón, 4.th

“En Estados Unidos el de inglés. Si el contexto fuera México o España en donde el idioma oficial es español, lo tomaría en español” [*In the United States, English. If the context were Mexico or Spain where the official language is Spanish, I would take it in Spanish.*] –Sandra, Pre-Kinder.

In Ramón’s response, he agreed with the idea that transitioning to speaking English was the “right” choice, and that was the reason why they “push” them to learning English. Also, the

expression “right transition” implied the belief that it was correct that students move from their heritage language to using English. In this way, this response reflected a subtractive view in which the heritage language is replaced by the “better” standard language (Lambert, 1975). Sandra’s perspective represented the one-nation one-language ideology indexing the belief that one language is important for social harmony and national unity. The participant implied that if students learn the national language, in this case English, students would have more opportunities to progress in the U.S. society.

Several participants also acknowledged the structural constraints imposed by English hegemony in their schools. (This theme refers to the event when the social structure imposes an ideology that attributes more prestige to English on someone that may not be in agreement. In the data, we found three instances in which the teachers of this study showed an English hegemony view that was shaped by the school structure.):

“The thing is that this school, they’re totally pushing English. They want me to go ahead and teach everybody in my class English for the rest of the year.” –Chrissy, 2nd

“Yo trataría de que lo tomaran en inglés porque si están en tercero o quinto van a continuar con los exámenes en inglés.” –Berta, Pre-Kinder.

Chrissy’s statement highlighted the importance given to teaching English in her context. Although this was officially a DLBE school where both languages were supposed to be promoted, this teacher explained that she had to comply and act as mandated by the school. Another example was found in Berta’s interview who expressed feeling constrained by the English dominance in assessments of third and fifth graders at her school. Because of Berta’s good intentions to prepare students for future tests, she reinforced the larger English hegemonic ideology in the school culture.

The most prevalent statements connected to English hegemony were associated with testing and accountability pressure. The power and influence of the test was articulated by several teachers including the following two illustrative examples:

“I think a lot of people will like it if we were truly doing what we needed for these kids, but it doesn’t happen and it never will because the test wins, period.” –Samantha, 2nd grade.

“[It] really makes me feel worried because of a lot of my Spanish speakers’ tests scores.”
–Daniel, 1st grade.

In the first excerpt, Samantha, who responded that she would test the student in English, confessed that she would like to do things differently referring to testing children in English. She said that “these kids” (bilingual children) have different learning needs from the kind of instruction she provided. When she admitted that changing this situation “doesn’t happen, and it never will,” her deception with the school system was evident. She felt accountability pressure and the need to comply with the test policy: “the test wins, period”. Likewise, Daniel reluctantly acknowledged that his students would be give the test in English because of English hegemonic forces. This unsettled him and he described feeling “worried” about his Spanish-speaking test scores. This section demonstrated the way some teachers ascribed to ideologies of English hegemony, while

others acted in ways that reflected monolingual or monoglossic ideologies despite their personal beliefs based on the school climate or accountability pressure.

Counter-hegemonic Ideologies. While hegemonic ideologies of English dominance and the relative greater importance of English were prevalent throughout the data, data analysis also revealed three instances of teachers making language assessment decisions based on counter-hegemonic ideologies. For example 3rd grade teacher, Michael, drew on the connection between language and ethnic identity to explain why he would have his students assessed in Spanish and said, “(...) porque estamos en Estados Unidos y estos niños llegan, y dentro de un año todos quieren olvidarse de sus raíces porque lo “cool” está en inglés, entonces yo quiero que mantengan esa raíces” [*because we are in the United States, and these children come and within one year they all want to forget their roots because what is “cool” is in English, so I want that they maintain those roots.*] Michael displayed strong feelings in support to students’ heritage language and against accepting the idea of English dominance and superiority. Michael viewed language as part of an identity and advocated for “las raíces” [*“the roots”*] or students’ heritage as playing an important role in their community and in society.

Additional participants articulated counter-hegemonic ideologies in their responses by emphasizing the importance of bilingualism from an additive, rather than a subtractive perspective. For example, Chrissy said,

“So, the policy at this school is pushing them to English as fast as you can. Which I think, research says that’s not good and they’ll end up not graduating from high school, but. I don’t know. You know if they were really totally balanced. If it was me, I’d pull the kids aside, that’s what I would do. What do they feel more comfortable? What do they want?” –Chrissy, 2nd grade.

Chrissy’s response illustrated her counter hegemonic perspective drawing on research that it’s “not good” that English had the privileged position in her school. Chrissy disapproved of subtracting students’ heritage language and forcing students to speak English. She articulated a pluralistic ideology by valuing students’ different interests and desires no matter their language background. Despite Chrissy’s counter-hegemonic stance on the language of assessment for students, it was unclear if she felt empowered to act on her beliefs with the statement, “if it was me,” which simultaneously indexed that it could not be her decision. We consider the role of teacher agency in the next section.

Teacher Agency

Teachers’ perceptions on which language a student should be tested in were also connected to agency including their perceived level of agency. Drawing on Hewson’s (2010) framework, we identified support for all three types of agency in teachers’ interview responses: individual agency, proxy agency and no agency.

Individual agency. In this study, we located individual agency –the individual acting in concordance to their beliefs- in nine instances of the interview data. For example, when answering what language of assessment simultaneous bilinguals should be tested in, Marisol said, “Dependería de la edad y el grado. Por ejemplo, en tercer grado yo sé que el niño dominaba más

el español y le dije que quería que lo tomara en español” *[It would depend on the age and grade. For example, in third grade I know that the boy is more fluent in Spanish, and I told him that I wanted him to take it (the test) in Spanish]*. In this response, Marisol explained her perspective that the language of assessment should be determined by students’ strong language, and therefore, she asked her student to take the test in the language in which she believed this student was more fluent. As seen in this case, Marisol negotiated assessment policies drawing on what she believed was in the best interest of students. In other words, her action of telling the student indicated a degree of individual agency to act on her ideologies.

Proxy agency. We identified seven instances in which teachers reported acting on behalf of the school when choosing the language of students’ assessment. Ramón well illustrated the enactment of proxy agency in relation to standardized testing when he said that he would make the student “tomarlo en inglés...porque cuando llegan a quinto grado ellos tienen que tomar el examen de ciencias en inglés” *[to take it in English... because when they get to fifth grade, they have to take the science test in English]*. For Ramón, it did not matter what he thought was better for a bilingual students’ learning, rather he was following the school language policy norms. According to state policy, students can take the fifth-grade science test in Spanish, therefore Ramón was responding to the school language policy. Ramón’s perspective calls into question the contributions (or lack of) that proxy agency makes to respond to bilingual students’ learning needs as well as to the preservation of students’ cultural identity and heritage languages.

Minimal Agency. Teachers expressed having minimal agency in the decision regarding the language of assessment in five instances. For example, Daniel said, “I thought we were told what language (chuckles) they have to be tested in.” Likewise, Chrissy provided another clear example of minimal agency when she stated, “it’s never up to me.” These responses suggest that these teachers’ opinions were not considered at all in the process of assessing their students. They were “told” what to do, and their knowledge as educated professionals and as part of students learning and development was not valued. This lack of teacher agency in the implementation of high stakes testing policies is problematic for the educational experiences of simultaneous bilingual students.

Discussion

Our findings showed the multifaceted character of bilingual assessment, as well as the multiplicity of factors that influence teachers’ decisions in the implementation of language policy. These two findings are supported by previous research. For instance, Shohamy (2011), drawing from multiple research studies, argued that all languages play important roles when multilingual students carry out cognitive processes, as they use bilingual and monolingual processing strategies differently in each domain, and transferring within languages occurs. Teachers based their decisions about the language of assessment of bilingual students on students’ backgrounds, language policies, or both. Those teachers who chose the language of assessment guided by students’ backgrounds took into consideration either bilingual students’ first language (i.e., Spanish), second language (e.g., English), both languages, home language, strong language, mother’s language or students’ choice of language. Participants also selected students’ language of assessment according to issues connected to language policy such as the higher score, emergent bilingual students’ status or model placement, test policy, language of instruction, and collaborative committees (i.e., LPAC).

The variety of responses to the first research question ultimately indicated a lack of consensus on what guidelines need to be followed when identifying emergent bilinguals' language of assessment. Incorrectly estimating emerging bilingual students' academic and language proficiencies have serious consequences for this population such as their underrepresentation and overrepresentation in learning disability programs (Sanchez et al., 2013; Vasquez III, Lopez, Straub, Powell, McKinney, Walker & Bedesem, 2011; Limbos & Geva, 2001). Underrepresentation denies students access to the assistance they need. Meanwhile, overrepresentation holds students in intervention programs where instruction is slow, repetitive and more superficial, depriving students of appropriate education and opportunities to excel, and misusing resources needed for other students (Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014).

This study also presented key findings related to bilingual assessment, showing that DBLE teachers' ideologies and agencies shape their decisions related to assessment policies. According to Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002), policy implementation is an influx of existing cognitive structures such as beliefs, the agent's situation, and their policy expectations. In our study, a continuum of ideologies and agencies were at play in assessment policy implementation. Teachers' perspectives, structural constraints, and accountability pressure all contributed to the prevalence of English hegemony. Conversely, other DBLE teacher-participants appealed to emergent bilinguals' assessment as a means to resist the prevalence of English hegemony, arguing implicitly the need for promoting students' ethnic identity and additive/pluralist discourses.

Our DBLE teacher participants' interview analysis revealed that the current high stakes testing context has caused teachers' agency to be either minimal or proxy (i.e., having to act on behalf of an institution). Nonetheless, a positive discovery was teachers who acted in accordance to their beliefs and what they thought was best for students. These findings are consistent with previous research that have highlighted the complexities and uncertainties that teachers confront when responding to test-based systems of accountability, as teachers do not make policy implementation decisions in "predictable, mechanistic or unidimensional ways" (Sloan, 2006, p. 145). The above discussion has several implications for bilingual assessment. In what follows, we detail some ways in which the process of emergent bilingual students' assessment can be improved.

Implications

Redefining Bilingual Assessment Instruments

The diverse responses that we obtained from DBLE teachers when asked to identify students' language of assessment call for re-examination of bilingual assessment policies that account for bilingual students' needs and characteristics. Consequently, language testing policy should be designed based on research that has demonstrated: a) bilingual students do not learn both languages at the same pace and form as monolinguals and bilingual tests should be normed by bilingual people (Abedi, 2004; Bedore & Pena, 2008); and b) bilingual students use both languages as a resource of mutual support in cognitive processes and *bilingual* tests are needed in order to determine the actual competence of bilingual students (Escamilla, 2000; Shohamy, 2011). To yield more accurate interpretations of bilingual students' knowledge and abilities, the incorporation of a multidimensional assessment approach into policy is necessary (Gort, 2008;

Sanchez et al., 2013). In the absence of an ideal model for assessing bilinguals, more research needs to be done and implemented in policy-making in order to design more valid and adequate bilingual assessment instruments from a holistic framework.

Revising Current Bilingual Assessment Policies and Empowering Teachers

Assessment should be used as one way to inform instruction, rather than to limit classroom instruction. Our study demonstrated that teachers often made assessment decisions under tremendous pressure resulting in teachers making language assessment choices based on factors other than what was best for the student. Policy needs to detach test scores in evaluating teachers' performance. It is also imperative that policy makers start valuing teachers' expertise and contributions to curriculum and policy in order to advocate for emergent bilingual students' instruction and assessment.

As demonstrated by our findings, in spite of the additive nature of DBLE programs, English hegemonic ideologies permeate school walls; thus, it is necessary to align DBLE programs –and all bilingual programs- with assessment methodologies that equitably promote both languages. Teachers need to be empowered to employ their expertise about students' teaching and learning, and have the agency to implement more equitable

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**Families Matter, Communities Matter and Collaboration is Essential:
Overview of a Teacher's Education Program Designed to Meet Rural Students' Needs**

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Abstract

Nearly nine million students attend rural schools. Unfortunately, rural schools typically receive the fewest resources while they serve large populations of economically disadvantaged children and multilingual students. Teachers in rural communities often operate in isolation, and often lack educational opportunities due to geographical isolation. This paper describes a federally funded program development, theoretical foundations and vision design to prepare K-12 Idaho teachers to work with rural multilingual learners and their families. Specifically, this paper also reports on the effort that took to translate this vision into practice. To gain a deeper understanding of the program impact, a mixed method design was used to analyze narratives, written reflections, along pre- and post- surveys collected from the twenty-eight first year participants. The total years of teaching experience ranged from less than one to 17. Nine were novice teachers who entered the program with two or fewer years of teaching experience.

Key words: Emergent multilinguals, rural education, teaching is a political act, equitable education, social justice, liberatory education, critical education, teacher education.

Introduction

"Rural schools and students often seem invisible because many leaders never encounter these communities directly or lack a full understanding of rural America's challenges" (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson & Klein, 2019, p. 1).

This quote speaks to the core purpose of the program: making visible the educational experiences of emergent multilingual students³ (EMs) and families who live in rural communities, and better preparing educators who work (and often live) in these communities. Idaho is a state larger than New England, covering 83,570 square miles with 123 school districts.

According to the 2018 Idaho at a Glance: English Learner Students report, there are 16,177 EM students in Idaho. Over 150 different languages and dialects are native to Idaho students (Idaho State Department of Education, 2019). The State top five languages spoken by EMs are Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, Somali, and Chinese. Spanish is the most predominant language, representing 80% of emergent multilinguals (Idaho State Department of Education, 2019). Idaho ranks among the states that resettle the highest number of refugees on a per capita basis. Since 2012, Boise has accepted more Syrian refugees than New York City and Los Angeles combined. (Radford & Connor, 2016). The top five countries of origin for refugees in 2014 were: Congo, Bhutan, Burma and Somalia.

More than 9.3 million U.S. students attended a rural school in 2019 (Blad, 2019). Four in ten of Idaho's public schools are located in rural communities and almost one in four students attend a school located in a rural district (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson & Klein, 2019). According to the *Why Rural Matters 2018-2019* report, the school population in Idaho rural districts is 'a mixed bag' in terms of diversity. The rural communities tend to be poor, and a considerable number of their families are in residential transition, but "relatively few students qualify for specialized educational instruction." (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson, & Klein, 2019, p. 105). Per pupil spending has decreased by \$200 while increasing by \$300 across the rest of the nation. The Report shows that Idaho is in an urgent situation in terms of educational outcome, ranking among the lowest ten states on the following three of the five indicators: student and family diversity, educational policy context and educational outcomes (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson & Klein, 2019).⁴ Moreover, nearly one in six students do not graduate in these rural districts, even though a large number of them earn college credits before graduating from high school. (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson & Klein, 2019).

³ Emergent multilinguals are students who report a primary home language or languages other than English.

⁴ Importance, Student and Family Diversity, Educational Policy Context, Educational Outcomes and College Readiness are the five gauges used in the *Why Rural Education Matters 2018-2019* Report to describe the condition of rural education in the 50 states.

The Historically Unaccounted Rural Population

Agriculture was one of the state's largest economy during most of the twentieth century, and even though farmworkers of Mexican descent played a crucial role in the agricultural field of the state, their contribution has often been ignored. People of Mexican descent have lived in Idaho since 1860s, and Mexican workers have been recruited in significant numbers since World War I, as a consequence of the political situation in Mexico during the Porfirio Diaz authoritarian regime (1876-1910). As the U.S. government facilitated the construction of irrigation projects, the farms in Idaho flourished and more jobs were available that the local population could fill. Wartime further increased the need for workers, and the exemption of Mexicans working in railroad, mining and industrial sectors in the Act of 1917⁵, promoted immigrants to travel north (Jones, & Hodges, 2005).

The State of Rural Education

The academic performance gap between students in poverty and their peers is well documented. Idaho is listed as one of the states with the largest rural poverty gap, meaning students from lower-income rural homes perform the worst relative to other rural students in their state (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson & Klein, 2019). Nationally, just under one in nine rural students has changed residence in the past 12 months, ranging from a low of 6.6% in Connecticut to a high of 18.7% in Nevada. Western states rank highest on this indicator, with Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Colorado, and Idaho making up the top five states. The National average for teaching and learning per rural students is \$6,367, a figure closer to the lower end of the range. Idaho's average spending is \$4,118. To gauge the importance of rural education to the overall educational system in each state, state were ranked on the five indicators outlined in the Why Rural Matters 2018-2019 report. Idaho rural education ranked 'very important,' meaning than in order to have a healthy overall educational system, the condition of the rural education needs to be 'fixed.' The educational outcomes associated with rural schools was also gauged and two areas of concerns were highlighted: lack of math improvement in the middle grades, and the rural poverty gap and the rural-non-rural gap.

Multilingual Learners

There are 16,177 (Dearien, 2018) emergent multilingual students in Idaho. Interestingly enough, all seven districts with high percentages of emergent multilinguals are rural districts, as defined by Idaho Code §33-319. The report maintains emergent multilinguals grade level reading skills at 34% compared with 61% of other students (based on the Idaho Reading Indicator).⁶ Moreover, it reports that MEs are less likely to reach proficiency or advanced scores in the Idaho's Standards Achievement Test⁷, which measures proficiency in science, language arts and math. It

⁵ The Immigration Act of 1917 added a literacy test to the list of reasons why an individual could be excluded from entry in the United States. Moreover, the Asiatic Barred Zone (much of the continent of Asia excluding Japan and Eastern China and adjacent islands) was created for total exclusion from immigration.

⁶ Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) is literacy skills assessment administered bi-annually in K-3 grade.

⁷ Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is administered annually in grades 3, 8 & 10.

is important to note that ten school districts, some rural and some urban, would have lost enrollment if not for the Latino growth (Dearien, 2018).

Teachers of Multilingual Learners

Teacher quality, teacher retention and recruitment are ongoing issues in the state of Idaho, specifically in rural and remote⁸ school districts. It is important to note that 37.8% of teachers and 45.9% of administrators work in rural areas and adjusted teacher salaries are nearly \$13,000 below the U.S. average (Showalter, Hartman, Johnson & Klein, 2019). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), requires states to have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, and to ensure that “economically disadvantaged and minority students⁹ are not taught in higher rates than other students by inexperience¹⁰, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers” (Idaho State Department of Education, 2015). Unfortunately, less experienced and not properly certified teachers make up the increasing share of K-12 teaching force working with EMs. Data collected by the Idaho State Department of Education (2019) shows that the ratio of emergent multilingual student to certified teacher is 38:1 compared to 9:1 ratio in low-poverty schools (Dearien, 2018). Forty percent of schools with at least one emergent multilingual do not have an English language development (ELD) certified teacher, and 20% of schools with at least 20 emergent bilinguals lack a teacher certified in ELD. Idaho recognizes English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education as content areas of specialization but doesn’t require teachers to be specialized in these areas, even though teacher certification requires two content areas of specialization. Flexibility in selecting areas of specialization has created a shortage of teachers prepared to work with EMs. Sadly, most teachers exit the certification program with only six units of coursework on general language acquisition and literacy development¹¹, courses that do not specifically address the unique needs of EMs (<http://sde.idaho.gov/cert-psc/cert/>).

The Project

The overarching goal of the program is to provide equitable education to emergent multilinguals and their families by improving their learning opportunities and educational outcomes. The program was designed with four components in mind:

⁸ Idaho Code §33-319: Rural School Districts and Public Charter Schools Defined. (1) A school district shall be considered a rural school district if it meets one of the following two criteria: (a) There are fewer than twenty (20) enrolled students per square mile within the area encompassed by the school district’s boundaries; or (b) The county in which a plurality of the school district’s market value for assessment purposes is located contains less than twenty-five thousand (25,000) residents, based on the most recent decennial United States census.

⁹ Identified as members of a minority race or ethnicity as defined by Idaho State Department of Education (2019).

¹⁰ Inexperienced is defined as a teacher in his/her first year of practice.

¹¹ In addition to coursework, teacher candidates for initial certification must pass state examinations that assess teacher knowledge and skills, but are not necessarily specific for the population of EMs.

- a) engage educators working in the underserved rural communities
- b) increase the State-Wide Pool of highly qualified culturally responsive teachers by preparing 120 educators to receive educational opportunities and receiving an English as a New Language (as defined by ISDE) or a bilingual endorsement
- c) develop families, school and community partnerships
- d) impart educators with high technological skills through the online delivery of courses

A unique feature of the project is recruiting teachers instead of working directly with districts. Differently from other models, principals were not asked to nominate educators to participate, rather teachers committed and invested in understanding the theory and methodology of working with EMs were given the opportunity to participate. Advertising through County Offices of Education, school mail system, university's advertising systems, Department website and conducting information meetings at school sites were ways used to recruit educators.

Strong Theory

For many years, teachers have been educated in a way that has prepared them to acquiesce to the mandates of authority figures, consume information uncritically, and feel no obligation to question or act. A domesticating education rarely inspires them to stop to ask themselves how their lives or the lives of their students have been restricted by the cultural, social, and political contexts of their teaching. A domesticating education would not be an issue if the world in which we live provided equal opportunities for all its citizens. Since this is not the case, education should be liberating rather than domesticating.

Liberatory education (Freire, 2004) proposes that we question the inequities perpetuated in schools, disempowering students whose race, income, language, nationality, sexuality, or learning disability are not the norm. Because the majority of the teaching force is white and middle class, their values, experiences, and beliefs may be very different from those of our increasingly diverse student population. The decisions, values, and perceptions of teachers have a tremendous effect on the education of the emergent multilingual population, and lack of understanding of their experiences negatively impacts those students' education (Katz, 1999; Rodriguez, 1993). Creating opportunities to unfold oppression and explore life experiences are challenging acts. Consequently, in order to understand children's experiences, one must begin with personal experiences. It is critical that teachers identify both their own experiences and the experiences of others to understand their students and families.

Teaching is a political and ethical act: every decision a teacher makes will affect each student differently, and schools deny or afford opportunities to students that may affect their future negatively or positively. For example, emergent multilingual students are often pulled out of the main classroom and sent to remedial classes to help them learn English, casting a deficit view that these students must be "fixed" in order to measure up to their counterparts. Unfortunately, the labels given often stay with them throughout their schooling experiences, shaping how they see themselves, how others view them and their role in the world.

Curriculum is also a part of what has been called a selective tradition (Sleeter et al., 2005). That is, from all of the vast knowledge that could be taught, only some knowledge is considered to be the "official" knowledge (Apple, 2000). What and how a teacher decides to teach confirms particular types of knowledge, practices, or experiences as worth knowing. For example, if

students of color never read the works of authors who look like the students themselves, they may not see themselves as potential authors. Teaching is a political and ethical act. Helping teachers understand schools are social institutions that mirror society's beliefs, values, and norms is key to helping them understand how their decisions will affect students. Teachers should have opportunities to explore the social context that produces inequalities and to understand how opportunities, or lack of opportunities, get played out at school. Appreciating the cultural circumstances within which students develop and learn is an important component of understanding students' success or failure. Unless school support the values held by families, tension between the home and school may affect performance and interest (Valenzuela, 1999). In order to improve the education of emergent multilingual students, teachers must understand the relationship between children's home culture and their school learning. Adjustment to a new language, school culture and way of life can be overwhelming for children. Teachers need to recognize the importance of incorporating into the curriculum the wealth of knowledge, interests, and experiences students bring into the classroom (Freire 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McCaleb, 1997; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 2005). Effective teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse communities requires exposure to the lives and points of views of children (Kailin, 1994; Veléz-Ibañez-Greenberg, 1992). Exposure should include a deep understanding of teaching practices in children's homes and communities. Teachers should engage in dialogues with family members to understand their educational vision for the child, and how their visions can be supported when working together as a team.

Critical pedagogy insist that all members of the community be present. This involvement cannot be demanded but must be demonstrated through nurturing ways and genuinely valuing everyone's presence (hooks, 1994). The dynamic of the classroom must include a true recognition that all members of the community must be given opportunities to engage in valued activities and to be viewed as resources.

The curriculum is built around interdisciplinary learning that is cross-cultural, technologically sophisticated, and academically challenging (Sleeter et al., 2005). The program's curriculum is designed around four core learning outcomes listed in Table 1. These learning outcomes guided the development of the curriculum, coursework and the completion of the program exit requirements.

Table 1: Program's Learning Outcomes

Critical Questioner	<p>Students will express a critical, questioning perspective about diverse theories about teaching, learning and working with underrepresented and marginalized groups.</p> <p>Students will demonstrate their knowledge and ability to use the most appropriate culturally response practices that support complex and challenging learning.</p>
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Commented [Office1]: She spells both her first and last name with lower cases.

Educator	Students will critically read, analyze and use educational research.
Scholar	Students will work with families, communities, schools and colleagues on behalf of social justice.
Social Justice Collaborator	

Eight courses are offered in the program. Courses build on each other, creating a spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960). The initiation phase of the program requires teachers to participate in a four-day summer orientation. Teachers and trainers spend time building trust by acknowledging that participants bring a wealth of teaching experiences. Program directors recognize that participants choose to participate because they want to bring change in their own classroom or school. Teaching is a moral and political act, and educators play a key role in facilitating social change (Darling-Hammond, French, & García-Lopez, 2002). Teachers are challenged to think, create, reflect and examine their own philosophical ideas and teaching experiences in pursuit of pedagogical practices that empower the diverse children they work with. Thus, we engage in critical conversations on the marginalization of our EMs and their families, and discuss how transformation is not only difficult, but necessary if any difference is to be made. These discussions encourage them to listen and respect each other, ultimately building and enforcing trust, a necessary ingredient to succeed in the program.

Applied Theoretical Foundations of Bilingual Education/ENL¹² and Multiculturalism, is the first course students are required to take. The next two courses are, Applied Linguistics: From Theory to Practice, and Culturally Diverse Learners. In Spring, students enrolled in Advanced Assessment of Learners in the Bilingual/ENL Classroom, and Methods of Teaching English as a New Language and also participate in a practicum experience. The first course questions the historical, social, political, legal and economic tenants impacting the education of EMs. Teachers are asked to engage as scholars, reading, analyzing and using the current debates on bilingualism, biliteracy and multiculturalism in order to explore the impact on families and communities at the national and state level. Afterwards, they are asked to critically analyze the programs offered at their schools to support the current demographics, questioning if what is offered is sufficient. As

¹² English as a New Language (ENL) is the title of the endorsement awarded at the metropolitan university in Idaho. This term is used in lieu of English as a Second Language (ESL) used by Idaho State Department of Education.

social justice collaborators they communicate what should change by developing an Action Plan for their school.

The Applied Linguistics course best enable educators to understand how first language may influence the production of a new language. In the Culturally Diverse Learners course a Child and Community Context study is the signature assignment. The project starts with the “Community/Cultural Observation” phase. Teachers are asked to pay attention to the sights and sounds that surround them (such as the kinds of stores, children play spaces, and other aspects of life in the community). The “Community Assets” phase asks teachers to interview people who live and work in the community and learn the main assets, goals and needs. In the “Focus Children Observations” phase, teachers are encouraged to be mindful while observing students interactions in the classroom context and outside the classroom. They are urged to pay close attention to the language used by the learners to communicate and socialize with teachers, peers, and others. Next, educators engage in conversations with the learners. Finally, the “Home Visit” brings teachers into the homes of the children providing the opportunity to hear the view of the parents and family members on education, and their relationship with the schools. In summary, the study invites teachers to engage in actions forming relationships and enacting interviews. The information gathered in this event informs their practice, often resulting in changes in the curriculum impacting the learning experiences of students.

Since the curriculum explicitly focuses on transforming education, especially for multilingual children in rural communities, the content and readings for all courses are based on research and theory produced by scholars who examine education through the multicultural social justice lens. For example, the two courses offered in the second semester Advanced Assessment of Learners in the Bilingual/ENL Classroom and Methods of Teaching English as a New Language teach the “backward design” curriculum planning process (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), but with extensive attention to teacher ideology (Macedo, 1994), selection and use of transformative knowledge to design and plan a unit, that augments strong content and language learning for multilingual students and assesses linguistic and academic achievement in an equitable manner (Garcia, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). The Field experience in the ENL/Bilingual Classroom course engages educators in concrete actions to create and sustain informed, hopeful and respectful environments where learning for parents and students can flourish when collaborating with colleagues within their schools or across districts.

The Impact of the Program on Participants

To gain a deeper understanding of first year participants, a mixed method design was used to analyze narratives collected from their written reflections, along with pre- and post- surveys. Twenty-eight teachers were part of cohort 1. This cohort was predominantly female (93%) and white (79%). The total years of teaching experience ranged from less than one to 17. Nine were novice teachers who entered the program with two or fewer years of teaching experience. The number of students taught among the elementary teachers ranged from 26-78.

What did cohort 1 teachers say about their experiences in the program?

I have become a much better teacher as a result of this program. I am reaching ALL students--not just some. I am so grateful for this opportunity. I always had the best of intentions when it came to teaching my EL students. The problem was that I didn't have the tools I needed to provide the instruction they needed. Now that I know better, I am able to do better. All my students are benefiting from my newfound knowledge. I am also enjoying the confidence that comes from success. (Elementary teacher, final reflection, 2017)

Participants were in near-universal agreement that the program was effective in preparing them to serve EM students, and that it increased their knowledge and skills related to engaging parents, families, and the community (97% agreed or strongly agreed)¹³. Approximately 90 percent reported a sense of community in the online classes and that they shared what they learned with colleagues at their school. As noted earlier, the program aims to develop educators, social justice collaborators, critical questioners, and scholars. The course and curriculum challenge educators to critically examine their work, collaborate with colleagues and develop an understanding of teaching strategies, theory and research. The impact of these goals was clearly shared by one of the participants:

We (as educators) need to stimulate the intellectual development of the students, and, in this era, it's not enough to operate on the axis of color-blindness. To truly engage children, we must reach out to them in ways that are culturally and linguistically responsive and appropriate. We also must examine the cultural assumptions and stereotypes we bring into the classroom that may impede interconnectedness. (Elementary teacher, final reflection, 2017)

Eighty-six to 100 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they: are effective educators of culturally and linguistically diverse students (100%). Work for social justice for immigrants and refugees in their community (86%). Critically examine how political, social, and economic issues impact educational contexts (86%) and seek out relevant research and scholarship to better serve culturally and linguistically diverse students (93%).

After completing the program, more participants reported that they used culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices. The greatest increase was in encouraging students to use their home language in the classroom. At baseline, less than a third of teachers (29%) said they "often" or "always" encourage use of the home language, which increased to 86 percent by the end of the program.

To what extent did teachers develop confidence and skill in engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse families?

¹³ Teachers surveys were rated on a four point scale: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly agree.

The program provides professional development to improve parent, family, and community engagement. To this end, each participant creates and delivers family literacy workshops and conducts home visits with culturally and linguistically diverse families. However, when participants were pushed to step out into the unofficial school spaces and engage in home visits with culturally and linguistically diverse families, they were very hesitant as shown by this comment: “When I first heard that we were going to be doing home visits, I was filled with a sense of dread. I was intimidated and felt like I would be bothering the families...” (Elementary teacher, final reflection, 2017). Afterwards, the outlook changed: “I am glad that I pushed past my fears and went through the home visits. I will never forget them, and I will make a point of doing more of them in the future...” (Elementary teacher, final reflection, 2017). Even though teachers often feel hesitant and fearful regarding their in-depth conversation with a parent, their written reflections, after the fact, reveal the richness of the experience: “...we left with knowledge about our students that we would never have been able to learn had we not ventured beyond the walls of our school and into the living rooms of our students.” (Elementary teacher, final reflection, 2017)

At the end of the program, 97 percent of teachers affirmed that the program was effective in developing their knowledge and skills related to family, and community engagement. At baseline, teachers expressed the least confidence in conducting home visits with culturally and linguistically diverse families, with 64 percent saying they were “not at all confident” in this area. After completing the program, most teachers said they were now “confident” (29%) or “very confident” (39%) with home visits.

How confident are participants in their roles as teachers and advocates?

Teachers in cohort 1 were asked to rate their confidence in several aspects of their role as teachers and advocates for culturally and linguistically diverse students, using a scale of not at all confident, somewhat confident, confident, or very confident. Compared to their level of confidence before entering the program, after completing the program substantially greater percentages of teachers reported being confident or very confident in:

- Advocating for culturally and linguistically diverse students to be assessed for gifted and talented program
- Creating a caring, supportive, and warm learning environment for culturally and linguistically diverse students
- Promoting bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism in the classroom
- Explaining how court rulings impact culturally and linguistically diverse students
- Incorporating research on culturally and linguistically diverse students into teaching

One of the program’s participants summarizes her growth by sharing:

My role has evolved to one of social/cultural/linguistic advocate for my students. I better understand the legal and political issues that impact the educational context of many CLD students. Armed with this new knowledge, I will be able to advocate more effectively for these students and their families. (Elementary teacher, final reflection, 2017)

Nourishing the Vision

I realized the need to create a program like this one several years ago, when I was assigned to teach courses in a graduate program at a remote site. I was commuting on a weekly basis to rural locations to meet with teachers who were also part of a National Professional Grant pursuing a Master's degree. Driving during the cold snowy winter days was taxing and exhausting but working with the teachers was incredibly rewarding. I was new to the community, but I remember vividly been impressed by the questions asked, the discussions held and the commitment to their students, families and the profession. Most of the teachers had grown up in rural areas and had returned to the schools they attended as youngsters to "help the Latino students who are now facing many of the challenges I did." During those late evening class meetings, we shared our stories and our dreams as educators. We all wanted to make a lasting change in the educational system, and today some of them are living proof of their accomplishments. Looking back, I remember wondering how as a new professor in the area could impact their professional isolation.

They taught in small rural communities and were often the only advocates for the underrepresented and underprivileged students. Many of the teachers felt marginalized and alienated in their struggle and wanted to find a safe community where their voices would be heard. This project honors their vision by offering an online program that provides teachers equitable access to high-quality instruction which translates in more equitable educational outcomes for students. At the heart of this project is the shared value that families matter, communities matter and collaboration is essential to examine issues from multiple perspectives and meet the needs of all rural students.

Results from the study on its first year of implementation showed that teachers develop confidence and skill in engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse families, felt better prepared to work as advocates for these families and develop an understanding of teaching strategies, theory and research. However, an important factor to consider is how do we make sure that teachers continue to feel supported in their work as advocates? How can we sustain their efforts? One hundred applications for thirty scholarships were received in the first year of the program implementation. This demonstrates educators' desire to become better prepared in order to work with emergent multilinguals and their families. Even though the program is designed to continue after the five years funding, we must recognize that funding is the main problem faced by educators. We must unite and work jointly to make funding rural communities a national a national priority if we are serious about providing equitable the educational resources and opportunities these communities deserve.

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