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## Language and Literacy Practices of Bilingual Education Preservice Teachers at a Hispanic-Serving College of Education

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Language and Literacy Practices of Bilingual Education Preservice Teachers at a  
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### **Language and Literacy Practices of Bilingual Education Preservice Teachers at a Hispanic-Serving Institution**

In the U.S. today nearly 22% of the population age five and older speak a language other than English at home. Findings from the American Community Survey show that Spanish is the largest non-English language by far, spoken by 13% of the population age five and older (U.S. Census, 2017). As the bilingual population rises, so too does the demand for teachers who can serve this population. In Texas, with over one-third of Texas public school students speaking a language other than English at home, 18.8% are classified as English Learners, 9.73% as bilingual, and 9.01% are serviced by English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (Texas Education Agency, 2018b). Yet recruiting bilingual certified teachers within the state of Texas and beyond is difficult for various reasons including a rigorous certification process and additional workload demands such as translating English curriculum into Spanish (Swaby, 2017). The number of bilingual and/or English Learner students coupled with low numbers of certified bilingual teachers and a difficult recruitment process suggests that colleges of education must be proactive in recruiting, retaining, and supporting bilingual preservice teachers.

The teacher preparation program where we work is in a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) on the U.S./Mexico border in South Texas. We primarily enroll students from the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), a highly Spanish/English bilingual region where most of the population is of Mexican heritage. While the HSI designation means that an institution of higher education has an enrollment of at least 25% Hispanic students, in our college approximately 92% of the students identify as Hispanic. Many are also first-generation college students from immigrant families. While our bilingual education program is the largest elementary certification program in the college, we do not produce

enough bilingual teachers to meet the demand of the local and state public schools. As teacher educators who care deeply about the education of Latinx students and who understand the need to produce more highly qualified and competent Latinx teachers, we believe that a preparation program built upon preservice teachers' cultural, linguistic, and community assets will help us recruit, retain, and graduate teachers who not only possess content and pedagogical knowledge, but who also understand and value their own culture and that of their future students.

As a Hispanic-Serving College of Education (HSCOE) it is imperative that we better understand the assets and needs of our pre-service teachers. Given our context, we have the unique opportunity to access and affirm the rich linguistic and cultural resources of our students. The research presented in this chapter centered on an exploratory study of the language and literacy practices of undergraduate students within our HSCOE. Although all undergraduate students were invited to participate in the survey, here we present only those findings related to the language and literacy practices of bilingual preservice teachers, as they were the largest group of participants. Furthermore, understanding the language and literacy practices of bilingual teacher candidates is an essential step in affirming biculturalism for Latinx students not only within P-12 schooling but also in teacher education. To achieve this goal, HSCOE's must first understand and approach the language and literacy practices of bilingual teacher candidates from an asset-based perspective.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Two theoretical perspectives informed our study: asset-based education and an ecological view of literacy. Historically, the institution of education in the U.S. has

viewed students from marginalized populations, such as the preservice teachers at our college, in negative terms since they diverge from white, middle-class population norms. These divergences are seen as problems, or deficits, that inhibit the academic success of students and communities of color. As Paris and Alim (2014) wrote, deficit approaches view the “languages, literacies and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome” (p. 87). Yosso (2005) stated, “One of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US schools is deficit thinking” (p. 75) as it ignores or devalues the many strengths found in communities of color. Rather than focusing on the so-called deficits of marginalized populations, many educators today believe that culturally sustaining pedagogies in asset-based education are the best way to affirm the language, literacy, and cultural practices of students and access their strengths for academic success. Beginning in the 1990s, asset pedagogies “repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities—specifically poor communities of color—as resources and assets to honor, explore, and extend” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87).

The assets that students of color bring with them include a set of literacy practices that help communities of color navigate personal, professional, and academic worlds. Literacy is far more than the ability to write and comprehend printed text. The ecology of literacy perspective explains that literacy is a set of social practices embedded within specific historical, linguistic, economic, and political contexts (Barton, 2007). This perspective allows for attending to sociocultural aspects of literacy without excluding cognitive dimensions inherent to reading and writing (Hall, Smith & Wicaksono, 2011). This means that what counts as literacy, what types of literacy practices are valued or

devalued, who is given access to literacy and in what ways, are not fixed points in the universe, but instead emerge from socially constructed contexts.

### **Review of Literature**

Language and literacy practices shape people's identities and how they exist in the world (Jimenez, 2000; Moll, 2014). Language and literacy development also have an essential role in adult success since reading allows people to access, analyze, synthesize, and use knowledge to understand the world and learn new things (Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012).

Much of the literature related to language and literacy practices at the post-secondary level focuses on academic literacy, especially the particular language of higher education and academia (Maloney, 2003). All undergraduates are expected to enter college with academic literacy skills, yet research suggests that professors and students believe that these skills are underdeveloped. Burrell, Tao, Simpson, and Mendez-Berrueta (1997) found that faculty at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), worried that their students did not enter post-secondary education with the writing, reading, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills needed for success in college. Some students also feel their PK-12 schooling inadequately prepared them for the rigor of higher education. First-generation college students rated themselves lower than their peers on a self-assessment of their oral and written communication (Penrose, 2002), and Latinx students reported difficulty meeting the academic literacy demands of college (Murillo & Schall, 2016). Similarly, African-American college students reported being held to lowered academic expectations by their high school teachers, which resulted in them feeling underprepared for college (Banks, 2005). In addition, the academic literacy demands of

college may be greater for students whose first language is not English (Berman & Cheng, 2001).

Upon entering college many students undergo a process of “reacculturation” (Elmborg, 2006, p. 196) as they learn the literacy conventions of the academy and their respective disciplines. Reacculturation may be painful for students of color, “because the academy is itself so imbued with white western culture...as an outsider to that culture these students [of color] were not even aware that they lacked the requisite literacy they needed for survival in the system” (White, 2005, p. 377). Thus, students of color may feel alienated from the academic community, especially if their cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds are not respected (White).

Yet, despite the potential difficulties of adapting to academic literacy at the post-secondary level, students from marginalized populations are as successful as their peers. Penrose (2002) found no differences between the academic performance of first-generation college students and their peers. Banks (2005) noted that “Despite the frustration of limited high school preparation, once experienced in the college English setting, the students developed a variety of academic and personal strategies to compensate for lack of literacy preparation” (p. 31) while Berman and Cheng (2001) saw that the academic performance, as measured by grade point average, of non-native speakers of English mirrored that of their peers. In fact, research indicates that for bilingual Latinx students, their bilingualism is not a deficit but a positive predictor of academic success (Jang & Brutt-Giffler, 2018; Lutz & Crist, 2009).

The intersection of language and academic preparedness and performance for bilingual Latinx students is particularly noteworthy. First language literacy proficiency of

Latinx students is a positive predictor of four-year college attendance (Jang & Brutt-Giffler, 2018). Arguably, the literacy and cognitive skills of bilingual students are greater than those of their Spanish monolingual and their English monolingual peers (Roosa et al., 2012). Lutz and Crist (2009), for example, found that biliterate Latinx students had a higher high school grade point average (GPA) than their Latinx peers whose Spanish proficiency was limited. García, Woodley, Flores, and Chu (2012) studied New York City public schools with higher than city average populations of Latinx and emergent bilingual students as well as high graduation rates. A chief contributing factor to their students' success was the utilization of translanguaging and bilingualism (García et al., 2012). Translanguaging involves speakers moving fluidly between linguistic codes—such as English and Spanish—in ways that serve a communicative purpose (Allard, Mortimer, Gallo, Link, & Wortham, 2014).

While translanguaging and bilingualism contributes to academic success, bilingual Latinx students pursuing a teaching career often encounter mixed messages regarding their abilities to speak both Spanish and English. On the one hand, there is a dire need for bilingual teachers as the United States school population becomes increasingly racially/ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse. On the other hand, bilingual preservice teachers may have encountered (and internalized) deficit perspectives of their bilingualism not only as PK-12 students but also in their teacher preparation programs.

The U.S. Department of Education (2016) projects that 29% of public school students will be of Hispanic descent by the year 2024. As of 2017-2018, 52.37% of public school students within the state of Texas, where this study occurred, identified as

Hispanic, but only 27.2% of their teachers did (Texas Education Agency, 2018a). The disparity between the racial/ethnic composition of U.S. public school students and teachers is likely to continue since U.S. public school students are projected to become increasingly diverse (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) whereas 68% of education majors identify as white (King, 2019).

Thus, within U.S. public school classrooms there is a plausibility for cultural mismatch. Cultural Mismatch Theory postulates:

U.S. institutions tend to promote mainstream, independent cultural norms, and exclude interdependent cultural norms that are common among underrepresented groups [and] when institutions promote only mainstream norms, they inadvertently fuel inequality by creating barriers to the performance of underrepresented groups (Stephens & Townsend, 2015, p. 1304).

Cultural mismatch in the classroom can lead to students of color being expected to adapt their learning styles and classroom/school behaviors to the cultural norms of their primarily White teachers. Furthermore, cultural mismatch may lead teachers to adopt deficit perspectives of their students, particularly students of color, English Learners, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Milner, 2010).

The need for teachers of color is imperative to the success of students of color since teachers of color are more likely to understand, respect, and advocate for students of color. In addition, teachers of color are more likely to set high expectations and standards and develop strong relationships with students of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As both people of color and speakers of a language in addition to

English, bilingual preservice teachers may have encountered deficit perspectives as PK-12 students. Allard et al. (2014) juxtaposed the approaches of one high school and one elementary school towards immigrant students. At the secondary level, students' Spanish language proficiency was viewed as substandard and problematic. This deficit perspective resulted in lowered expectations, including the adoption of a model akin to special education for emergent bilingual students. In fact, the use of Spanish may be viewed as a hindrance to English language acquisition despite research touting the benefits of bilingualism (Tran, 2010). Such deficit perspectives encountered during schooling can be internalized and can influence bilingual preservice teachers as they prepare to become teachers themselves (Miller, 2017).

A survey of presidents and chancellors at HSIs found that nearly 40% of respondents viewed students at their institutions as underprepared for the academic workload required of undergraduates (de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010). In responding to these findings, Garcia and Ramirez (2018) remarked, "These findings suggest that some HSI leaders make decisions influenced by a deficit-based framework—potentially perpetuating the marginalization of students, rather than working to transform the campus environment into one that empowers students and recognizes their strengths" (p. 359).

A subtractive approach (Valenzuela, 1999)—emphasizing the acquisition of the English language at the cost of Spanish—to bilingual education pervades U.S. public schools and can inhibit the development of academic Spanish (Guerrero & Guerrero, 2017). This potential lack of academic Spanish can result in deficit perspectives of these preservice teachers, even among themselves. As Guerrero and Guerrero stated, "some certified bilingual education teachers enter the classroom unsure of their linguistic

abilities, lacking some abilities, and even questioning the very value of academic Spanish” (p.9).

Monoglossic language ideology, which values only monolingualism and sees language as a decontextualized skill (García and Guevara-Torres, 2010), may persist amongst both teacher educators and preservice teachers through the prevalence, and therefore privileging of, instructional materials produced in English even within bilingual teacher education courses (Musanti & Rodriguez, 2017; Guerrero & Guerrero, 2017). Moreover, bilingual preservice teachers themselves may believe that the language of their homes and communities are unsuitable for academic contexts (Murillo, 2017). However, what happens in K-12 schooling and educator preparation programs can also influence preservice teachers in positive ways. For example, the bilingual preservice teachers who participated in Miller’s (2017) study reported feeling called to teach after having positive experiences with teachers who embraced their culture and languages as assets.

### **Methodology**

This chapter reports on a subsection of results from a larger study that explored language and literacy practices of preservice teachers through an exploratory cross-sectional survey. The question guiding this study was, “What are College of Education & P-16 (CEP) student perceptions regarding the language and literacy practices they use to navigate their personal, work and academic lives?” Sub-questions included: 1) What is the language and literacy knowledge of bilingual preservice teachers? 2) What language and literacy practices do bilingual preservice teachers use to navigate their personal, work, and academic lives? 3) What are the literate identities of bilingual preservice teachers, and how does language and culture impact these literate identities? 4) What role

does the digital literacy of bilingual preservice teachers play in their success, and how do their language and literacy practices play a part in that success? In this chapter we report specifically on results from the preservice teachers in the bilingual education program.

**Data Collection.** A primary purpose for collecting data via a survey is to obtain new data that is otherwise not readily available (Calder, 1998). Thus, to learn more about the literacy practices of preservice teachers at an HSI, we constructed a survey informed by a systematic review of extant literature (Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia, 2003). The survey instrument was designed to be anonymous, self-administered, web-based, and cross-sectional. A cross-sectional survey facilitates descriptive research with the intent of “examin[ing] a situation by describing important factors associated with that situation, such as demographic, socio-economic, and health characteristics, events, behaviors, attitudes, experiences, and knowledge” (Kelley, et al., 2003, p. 261).

The survey was divided into four sections including the following: demographic information, language and literacy, digital literacies, and literacy identities. The survey consisted of 54 questions and took between 9-12 minutes to complete. Questions were formatted as single choice, multiple choice, text entry, Likert single answer, Likert drop down list, and rank order. In order to validate the survey, we sent it to two literacy experts in the field of teacher education at other institutions of higher education for review, then pre-tested it with five undergraduate students pursuing elementary-level teacher certification (Ruel, Wagoner, & Gillespie, 2016). Based on feedback acquired during the pre-testing process, we altered the survey for clarification (e.g., first-generation college student), merged two categories into one regarding language usage

(i.e., “Spanglish/Tex-Mex”), and added an “as needed” option for several questions regarding usage of various types of texts.

**Participants.** After this validation process, we invited 2053 declared education majors from our HSCOE to participate in our electronic survey, obtaining an overall response rate of 16.37% (n= 336). From this sample, the majority of respondents, 48.7% (n = 162), were bilingual education preservice teachers, followed by 23.4% (n=78) EC-6 early childhood, 8.71% (n=29) high school education majors, and considerably lower numbers of students enrolled in special education, middle school, all-level, and ESL teacher preparation programs. We analyze and discuss data from the bilingual education preservice teacher subgroup given they made up almost half of the participants in the survey and it is the largest subgroup in our teacher preparation program.

The bilingual education program is an elementary teacher preparation program that prepares students to work in English/Spanish bilingual classrooms. During the program, the preservice teachers take five education courses, taught in Spanish or bilingually, related to bilingual education content. They also take two courses from the Modern Languages department which are taught in Spanish. One hundred percent of the bilingual education respondents described themselves as ‘Hispanic or **Latino**,’ and all but one were female. Table 1 provides for basic descriptive demographics of this subgroup.

-Insert Table 1-

### **Data Analysis**

Our research questions and sampling procedures were designed to gain insight into language and literacy practices of bilingual education preservice teachers at an HSI. Given that the survey was designed to generate hypotheses and learning, we analyzed

survey data through thematic analysis (Gerber, Abrams, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2017; Saldaña, 2013). We read through the results of the survey together, generated initial codes, analyzed the codes through reflective discussion, and generated three themes that are discussed below.

### **Results and Findings**

Findings are reported by three themes: *Contextualized Linguistic Flexibility*, *Reflecting a Shift in Literacy*, and *Mixed Perceptions and Attitudes*. Contextualized Linguistic Flexibility refers to our bilingual education preservice teachers' abilities to fully utilize their linguistic resources as well as engage in translanguaging. Reflecting a Shift in Literacy denotes increased usage of multimodal texts and multiliteracies. Mixed Perceptions and Attitudes refers to our bilingual education preservice teachers' self-perceptions of their linguistic and literacy abilities.

#### **Contextualized Linguistic Flexibility**

The bilingual education preservice teachers used multiple linguistic codes and engaged in translanguaging in various aspects of their lives. All respondents reported English and Spanish bilingualism. In fact, many reported linguistic abilities in three languages: English, Spanish, and Tex-Mex/Spanglish. The preservice teachers used different languages with different audiences and for different purposes (see Table 2).

-Insert Table 2-

Given that the research took place in a highly bilingual region, it was not surprising to see large percentages of respondents reporting the use of Spanish across audiences and contexts. Over half (55.97%) of the bilingual education preservice teachers noted that their parents spoke only Spanish, while 43.40% reported that their parents

spoke both English and Spanish and only one respondent (0.63%) reported that her parents only spoke English. It makes sense, then, that Spanish is deeply embedded within family contexts, with half of the respondents reporting that they speak only Spanish with their parents and another 33.13% sometimes speaking in Spanish and other times in English. However, even in the family context we see respondents using more English with their siblings than their parents and 20% of the respondents who were parents reported that they used only English to communicate with their children.

Respondents were more likely to use Spanish in family and personal contexts, but English was more common in academic and work contexts. Yet, even in academic and work contexts the use of Spanish was reported often, no doubt influenced by the bilingual curriculum in the teacher preparation program and the bilingual nature of the RGV.

Respondents reported relatively low usage of Tex-Mex/Spanglish, which does not seem congruent with our daily experiences living in the RGV. One possible explanation is that speaking in Tex-Mex or Spanglish may be more reflective of academics' view of language. While students may speak in this regional dialect, they may not be familiar or regularly use these descriptors. This is an area we intend to probe in follow up focus groups.

### **Reflecting a Shift in Literacy**

The large variety in types of texts that respondents reported reading and writing are reflective of a shift away from traditional long-form print texts (e.g., essays, novels, nonfiction books) to texts reflecting multiliteracies. While over half (51.53%) reported that they often read novels for personal use, 60.74% read magazines, and 30.67% read

nonfiction books, online texts dominated, with 87.73% reporting that they often read social media, 85.28% reporting that they often read text messages, and 52.15% reporting that they often read apps. Besides these short, digital texts, respondents reported reading other forms of text: 40.49% often read recipes or cookbooks, 29.45% read religious texts such as the Bible, and 59.50% often read song lyrics or sheet music.

Respondents reported less writing for personal use, but here, too, digital forms dominated with 90.18% often writing text messages, 76.69% often writing posts on social media, and 72.39% often writing emails. Other forms of writing were less popular, but 41.10% of respondents did report often writing a diary or journal and 36.20% reported writing letters. Respondents also produced other texts: 20.86% often wrote prayers or religious texts, 15.34% wrote songs or song lyrics, 15.34% wrote stories, and 11.04% wrote poetry.

### **Mixed Perceptions and Attitudes**

Overall, the bilingual education preservice teachers considered themselves good readers and writers who generally enjoyed reading and writing, yet there were significant numbers who did not have positive attitudes or self-perceptions about their literacy skills. We asked respondents to rate their attitudes towards reading and writing in both print and digital forms. Table 3 below presents the results from this question.

-Insert Table 3-

Respondents had more positive responses toward reading than writing, though reading enjoyment dropped from childhood to present day. This is possibly because much

of their current day reading is related to school, and their self-perceptions of their academic reading lags behind perceptions of reading for enjoyment.

While all respondents were bilingual, they rated their Spanish language proficiency differently across four domains of literacy. Most respondents rated their ability to understand Spanish from *very well*, 31.34% (n=50) to *extremely well*, 63.52% (n=101). The ability to speak Spanish was slightly lower, though still high overall. Forty-three percent (n = 70) of the bilingual education preservice teachers rated their ability to speak Spanish as *extremely well* whereas 37.50% (n = 60) rated their ability as *very well*.

The preservice teachers were less confident in their abilities to read Spanish. The percentages of respondents who reported reading Spanish *extremely well* decreased to 46.88% (n=75), *very well* to 34.38% (n=55), and *moderately well* to 18.13% (n = 29). Perceptions of Spanish language proficiency declined even further regarding their writing abilities. Overall, 30.82% (n = 49) stated they wrote *extremely well*; 30.82% (n = 49) wrote *very well*; 29.56% (n = 47) *moderately well*; and 8.18% (n = 13) wrote in Spanish *slightly well*.

Respondents also had mixed perceptions of their readiness for college. Of our bilingual education preservice teachers, only 27.63% (n = 42) strongly agreed that their K-12 schooling had prepared them for college while 45.39% (n = 69) somewhat agreed, 13.16% (n = 20) neither agreed nor disagreed, 10.53% (n = 15) somewhat disagreed, and 3.29% (n = 5) strongly disagreed.

## Discussion

Through this survey, bilingual education preservice teachers reported on their literacy and language practices. While people holding deficit views would see the culture and language of these preservice teachers, as well as their status as first-generation college students from immigrant families, as a problem for the teacher preparation program, instead we view these characteristics as potential assets for our program and for their development as successful adults.

Despite high levels of bilingualism within the region, the English language is often privileged within academic settings. English-only curricula is heavily favored by schools within the region (Murillo & Schall, 2016). Therefore, native Spanish speakers are typically identified as English Learners, receive Spanish instruction only within the primary grades, and are speedily transitioned to English-only instruction (Musanti & Rodriguez, 2017). Within academic contexts, the value of the Spanish language is usually limited to its use as a tool for transitioning students to English-only instruction (Murillo & Schall, 2016).

Thus, it is unsurprising that even within a highly bilingual community and amidst expectations that they complete coursework taught in Spanish, that the bilingual education preservice teachers who participated in our study reported higher levels of English use within academic contexts. Scanlan, Frattura, Schneider, Capper, and Capper (2012) argued that the term *English Learner* devalues the linguistic assets of bilingual students and contributes to a deficit perspective. According to Elmborg (2006), “school literacies” (p. 195) are a prerequisite for social and economic success although society, and thereby school literacies, often do not value and/or reflect every community and/or culture. Thus, preservice teachers may internalize messages related to “what it means to

be a NNEST [i.e., non-native speaking English teacher] or a speaker of lower-prestige forms of English, or to be racially coded as one” (Motha, Jain, & Teclé, 2012, p. 15). The bilingual elementary students who participated in Allard et al.’s (2014) study, for example, conceived that “English was the language of power and talked in a way that mirrored tacit school policies in which English was for schooling and Spanish was for home” (p. 349). Thus, Miller (2017) argued that bilingual preservice teachers may readily accept English as the language of schooling. Nevertheless, the primary use of English for academically related purposes is particularly noteworthy as the university’s strategic plan is to become a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate institution.

We also see powerful monoglossic language ideologies in the generational shift towards English as respondents reported using more English with siblings or friends as opposed to parents. Even less Spanish was seen in respondents’ communication with their children. Previous research conducted by Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean (2006) found that amongst third generation Mexican Americans, only 17% still spoke fluent Spanish and 96% preferred speaking English at home. Nevertheless, our bilingual education preservice teachers successfully navigate the cultural and linguistic resources associated with both the English and Spanish languages.

The language and literacy practices of our bilingual education preservice teachers indicate that many engage in translanguaging. These findings align with those of Tran (2010) whose analysis of data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey revealed that the English and Spanish language proficiencies of second generation Latinx individuals simultaneously increase. Tran (2010) therefore asserted that second language acquisition does not impede retention of one’s first language. Instead, Tran recommended

frequent use of a language in order to both promote and retain it. For our bilingual preservice teachers, this suggests that they should continue to translanguage in order to maintain their Spanish and English language proficiencies. Secondly, instead of approaching bilingual education preservice teachers from the perspective of monoglossic language ideology, teacher preparation programs must adopt a heteroglossic language ideology. Allard et al. (2014) describe the heteroglossic approach as “view[ing] bilinguals’ languages as interdependent and complementary” (p. 337).

The respondents read and write multiple forms of text for multiple purposes. However, what it means to be literate has clearly changed; multiple literacies and digital forms of text are deeply embedded in the lives of our bilingual education preservice teachers. The continuous evolution of technology has changed learning through its influence on how we communicate and acquire information (Elmborg, 2006). New literacies are beneficial in that they help individuals to identify, synthesize, and critically evaluate important information to solve problems and/or answer questions (Leu, Leu, & Coiro, 2006).

Our bilingual education preservice teachers rated their Spanish language proficiencies highly, particularly in terms of their abilities to comprehend and speak Spanish. The self-reported Spanish language proficiencies of our bilingual preservice teachers juxtaposes the call from some bilingual education teacher educators to improve their students’ Spanish language skills (Guerrero & Guerrero, 2017). These assertions seem to echo those of Burrell et al. (1997) who found that professors rated their students’ academic literacy skills as low. Notably, the Burrell et al. (1997) study was conducted at a Predominately White Institution with presumably an English-only student speaking

population. Nevertheless, Aquino-Sterling (2016) recommended that bilingual education teacher educators recognize, validate, and nurture the linguistic strengths of bilingual preservice teachers while seeking to expand their linguistic repertoires.

The university experience seemed to help our respondents develop a greater sense of self; 64.47% (n = 98) of our respondents strongly agreed that since beginning their undergraduate careers, they developed a stronger sense of themselves. Our findings suggest that, in part, the university experience helped our respondents to embrace their bilingualism. On our survey, only about one-third of respondents identified themselves as bilingual students during their PK-12 schooling. However, more than half of our respondents identified themselves as bilingual undergraduates. Perhaps this relates to our institution's strategic initiative to be a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate institution. In their study of secondary schools who demonstrated success with bilingual Latinx students, García et al. (2012) found that these schools *were* committed to *transculturación*, or “affirm[ing] students’ abilities to straddle cultures and to perform features of what might be considered different ‘national cultures’ as their very own in interaction with each other” (p. 812).

### **Implications for a Hispanic Serving College of Education**

The results of our survey suggest that the bilingual education preservice teachers in our program are a heterogeneous group with varied experiences and perspectives. They bring with them linguistic and literate strengths which we are beginning to understand through research such as this. Because the Latinx population is highly diverse and complex (Pertuz, 2018; Torres, 2004) and HSIs themselves are diverse in mission and student characteristics (Nuñez, Crisp & Elizondo, 2016), it is essential that HSCOEs

develop processes that help them understand their unique demographics and the lived realities of their students' lives, which will vary across HSCOEs. A better understanding of bilingual education preservice teachers will help HSCOEs adapt programs, policies, and curricula to capitalize on their assets as opposed to approaching these students from a deficit perspective. This is an essential step in preparing future teachers to likewise view Latinx students from an asset-based perspective that affirms bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural identities.

Assets include the rich linguistic knowledge that the bilingual education preservice teachers bring into the teacher preparation program. Our survey findings revealed that even within our bilingual teacher preparation program which contains seven courses taught bilingually or in Spanish, the English language continues to be privileged. Our bilingual education preservice teachers reported primarily utilizing Spanish to communicate with their parents; however, they translanguage when communicating orally with their siblings, their children, and when using digital tools. Notably, our respondents rated their own Spanish language proficiencies highly and seemed to embrace bilingualism as university students. In order to build on this strength, HSCOEs must deliberately and explicitly consider the role of language within teacher preparation programs. How does a college develop a culture built upon heteroglossic language ideologies? How will translanguaging be integrated into the teacher preparation program as a pedagogical and learning tool? How do we help faculty, staff, and students deconstruct and push back against monoglossic language ideologies? Should we expect some level of Spanish language proficiency from faculty and staff? Do we have a responsibility beyond the bilingual education preparation program to help students

develop some level of Spanish language proficiency if they don't already have it? These and many other questions deserve careful consideration.

Our bilingual education preservice teachers reported rich experiences with literacy, including high degrees of comfort with and utilization of information communication technologies in several languages and deep involvement in multiple literacies. These illustrate the changing nature of literacy; HSCOEs must explicitly consider and address this change to take advantage of the strengths and contextualized literacy knowledge that Latinx students have developed through their prior in-school and out-of-school literacy experiences. In addition, the bilingual education preservice teachers will soon be teachers of children who are growing up in this new world of literacy. There are any number of actions HSCOEs might take to address this. For example, they might need to revise their curriculum to incorporate educational technology throughout the program and help preservice teachers be critical consumers and producers of digital texts. HSCOEs should consider other questions as well. How do we help students understand the importance of out-of-school and community forms of literacy (e.g., oral storytelling, religious literacies, and song lyrics) that are traditionally devalued by schools? What professional development do faculty need so that they can use technological and digital resources to transform their teaching in order to better meet the needs of today's students? What role do HSCOEs have in supporting students' English and Spanish language writing skills?

The linguistic, literacy, and cultural strengths of our Latinx students in the bilingual education teacher preparation program provide a strong foundation for a desire and commitment to serve their communities through becoming outstanding teachers. As

an HSCOE, that same desire and commitment must be the foundation of everything we do. By building preparation programs upon our preservice teachers' linguistic, literacy and cultural assets we will be able welcome more potential teachers into our college and strengthen retention and graduation rates. These teachers will not only possess content and pedagogical knowledge, but will also understand and affirm their own culture and that of their future students. Given the dire need for bilingual teachers to educate an increasing Latinx student population, HSCOE's must be at the forefront of preparing teacher candidates to meet this need. However, simply being bilingual is not enough. HSCOE's must be intentional in helping their teacher candidates to affirm their own language and literacy practices as assets so that they too can celebrate and develop the bilingual and biliterate identities of their P-12 students.

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