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## **Stop the deficit: Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Bilingual Students in the United States**

### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the education of bilingual students from an American teacher education perspective. Bilingual students in the United States are often diminished to their student status of “English Language Learner” (ELL). Not only does this ELL designation assume a one-size-fits-all approach to education for and understanding of bilingual children, but the label itself implores a deficit perspective which neither captures nor values bilingual children in the United States. Driven by the goal to model and introduce assets-based pedagogies to our pre-service English as Second Language (ESL) teachers, the main question guiding our work was, *as teacher educators, how can we challenge pre-service teachers to not only acknowledge but act against ingrained deficit perspectives for working with bilingual students?* To address this question we first synthesize relevant approaches in the areas of bilingualism and teacher education, focusing on funds of knowledge, translanguaging, and challenging deficit language. We then present key moments from our own work as teacher educators that illustrate the complexity of pre-service teachers shifting or attempting to shift towards assets-based pedagogical practices. The chapter concludes with recommendations for teachers and teacher educators about how to not only acknowledge but integrate and actively support bilingual students in American public schools.

*“As immigration rises in America thousands of families arrive with inability to communicate their needs and wants. Formal ESL education in schools allows the opportunity for students to expand their minds and receive the tools needed to survive and excel as a US citizen.” - Sarah, 2015*

*“Growing up speaking two languages and having to learn English as a third gave me advantages in my literary and language development, but it was a struggle that I had to go through. I chose ESL because I want to help those who face the same obstacles as me.” - Jenny, 2015*

*“I want to teach ESL because I can see how it changes lives. I get to work with students from all over the world as they come together to make better lives for themselves and their families.” - Molly, 2015*

The quotes above illustrate examples of pre-service teachers’ commitment to advocating for and working with bilingual students. While at surface these quotes may seem inspirational they,

however, also demonstrate the ingrained deficit perspective that many pre-service teachers must work to undo. As teacher educators, we are devoted to supporting pre-service teachers in developing not just the pedagogical tools, but also the critical perspectives necessary to effectively work with bilingual students in the United States. Specifically, we work with pre-service teachers who are preparing to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to bilingual students in urban public schools. Our University is a private, predominantly white institution and the majority of our pre-service teachers are white, middle class females. While there is no question that many of our pre-service teachers feel genuinely committed to supporting bilingual students, their underlying perspectives are often deficit based, which, unintentionally, affects their abilities to best meet the needs and tap the assets of bilingual students.

In this chapter we discuss our own work as teacher educators who prepare pre-service teachers to work with bilingual students. We open with a brief overview of the bilingual student experience in the United States. We then discuss critical frameworks for working with bilingual students using an assets-based approach. Our final section presents suggestions and strategies for teacher education, based on our own work as teacher educators. We conclude by charging teacher educators to continue to challenge our current practices in preparing pre-service teachers to work with bilingual students.

### **The Context: Socio-political Climate on Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Bilingual Students**

There is no question that the cultural and linguistic diversity in the United States has been on the rise with an increasing number of bilingual students and families residing in the United States. There are over 300 reported spoken language (US Census Bureau, 2015) with Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Hmong currently listed as the top 5 spoken languages (Office of

English Language Acquisition; OELA, 2015). While there are millions of bilingual students in the United States (American Community Survey; ACS, 2014), that is students who speak more than one language in the home, only about half of those students are labeled as English Language Learners (ELL) or English Learners (EL), a status designated by performance on state mandated assessments of English Language Development (National Center for Education Statistics; NCES, 2016). It is worth mentioning that only students labeled as ELL/EL are mandated to receive English language development support. In the United States, educational efforts at both policy and pedagogical levels (Shin, 2013) have largely focused on supporting the English language development for bilingual students.

Although no national policy exists in the United States determines the medium of instruction (MOI) in public schools, so-called “English only” policies at the state and local level can and have been implemented for public education contexts, most importantly in California (English Language in Public Schools Statute, Proposition 227), Arizona (English as the Official Language Act, Proposition 103), and Massachusetts (MA English in Public Schools Initiative, Question 2), with the Californian one to be withdrawn in 2017.

A common argument of administrators and policymakers is that exclusive immersion into the English language will enhance language acquisition and produce better student outcomes of standardized tests, a claim that has not been substantiated by reliable research (Auerbach, 1993). Rather, there is convincing evidence for the harmfulness of English only policies (August, Goldenberg, & Rueda, 2011). Especially in combination with a scarcity of resources and punitive accountability systems<sup>1</sup>, such policies have led to students failing, underperforming, or being

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<sup>1</sup> Punitive accountability systems emerged as a consequence of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, Bush Administration, 2002), which reduced state authority and prescribed learning goals for each student in reading and math (Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP) at the federal level. Failure to meet AYP could result in staff being laid off and schools closing. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, Obama Administration, 2015), carves out more spaces

forced out of school (Gándara & Hopkins, 2011; Menken, 2008). In contrast, students in bilingual programs have shown to outperform their peers in English immersion programs, especially in reading (Valentino & Reardon, 2015). The harmfulness of English only policies and their underlying ideologies extends beyond school environments, causing difficulties in (former) students' workplaces, colleges, and families (Wright, 2004). In addition, not only have assumed-to-be-objective tests and assessments been shown to be unreliable, for example when they misidentify bilingual students as qualifying for special education services (Macswan & Rolstad, 2005), and discriminatory due to their linguistic complexity, which persists across subject areas and despite accommodations (Menken, 2008), restrictive language education policies, for example in Massachusetts, have also been found guilty of perpetuating racism and linguisticism as they, among other things, fail to provide mechanisms that challenge deeply ingrained structural racism at the state level, look at bilingual students from a deficit perspective, and overfocus on learning English at the expense of using and developing all languages on bilingual students' repertoire (Viesca, 2013).

In addition to discriminatory policies, the detrimental effect of teachers' deficit perspectives on their students has been well documented. Students from minoritized backgrounds who are ethnically or racially different from their teachers are often associated with lower academic achievement and behavioral problems. For example, in a Texas-based study with 65 African-American and 65 white elementary school teachers, a significant number of participants lowered their behavioral expectations and gave lower scores to students with African American first names compared to those with white ones (Anderson-Clark, Green & Henley, 2008). Such

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for decision making on the state level and encourages schools to limit the amount of testing to a minimum. It promotes evaluations of schools that are not exclusively based on students' reading and math scores (as under NCLB) but include college readiness, school climate, and English proficiency scores. Importantly, underperforming schools are not met with federal penalties but receive financial support as well as assistance in designing and implementing an improvement plan (Understood, n.d.).

discriminatory dynamics also affect teachers' referral decisions in gifted and talented programs (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheik, & Holloway, 2005), may extend well into secondary school and beyond college graduation (Brown & Lively, 2012) and, although they can be alleviated through diversification of teaching staff, have been found to persist even when students of color are taught and evaluated by teachers of color (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013).

Negative teacher perceptions are not only triggered by racial stereotypes and ideologies, but also by linguistic ones. For instance, in contexts where educational policies are permeated by monolingual norms, like Flanders in Belgium, a study with 775 secondary school teachers found that teachers with a stronger adherence to monolingualism were more likely to have lower expectations of linguistically and ethnically minoritized/non-dominant students (Pulinx, Van Avermaet, Agirdag, 2015). Relatedly, research from the same context has shown that teacher practices that tolerate multilingualism can mitigate the damage of restrictive (in this case Dutch-only) policies and increase students' sense of inclusion in a school community (Van Der Wildt, Van Avermaet, & Van Houtte; 2015).

As this body of literature powerfully shows, teacher perceptions play a critical role for the success of culturally and linguistically minoritized students, or, as McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos, and D'Emilio (2005) put it, "[t]he challenge for non-English speaking students ... is not only to overcome linguistic barriers, but also overcoming low expectations and low academic achievement" (p. 1). We contend that this is not merely the students' challenge but, as their teachers and their teachers' educators, also ours. One part of our response to this challenge is the work we present here of educating pre-service teachers within and towards asset-based approaches of language teaching.

Kommentoinut [1]: good job with adding this!

## **Moving Toward an Asset-Based Approach: Frameworks for Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Bilingual Students**

Given the monolingual and racist hegemonies and ideologies that persist in our society, we as language teacher educators read academic literature through the lens of its potential to affect social change. Specifically, we ask how existing research and theories can help our teacher candidates advocate for the bilingual students and youth in their classrooms and schools. In recent years, we have found changing deficit language, tapping funds of knowledge, and promoting translanguaging to be especially powerful tools for this work.

### ***Deficit language***

Deficit perspectives are ingrained in education. When we introduce the concept of deficit based language to pre-service teachers we do so by explicitly talking about how deficit perspectives often manifest in the default language that educators use to describe students. For example, students who read below grade level are often described as students that “can’t” do a particular literacy skill and bilingual students are often referred as “not having vocabulary”. Similarly, we label students as “struggling readers” and “English language learners”. By focusing on what bilingual students *can’t* do, we cannot truly capture student ability and, consequently, fail to support bilingual students. In this section, we make the case that these labels are rooted in implicit biases and perpetual use of this language upholds a deficit perspective of bilingual students. While we believe language practices in education as a whole need to move toward a more asset-based approach, given our particular interest in bilingual and immigrant students, for this chapter we focus specifically on the use of the “English language learner” and “English learner” labels in American public schools.

In the United States, federal law has required states to identify and support English language learners (Linquanti, 2001). English language learners (ELLs) are bilingual students who have been designated by their state and district as having “sufficient difficulty” succeeding in the classroom due to emerging English proficiency. While identifying and supporting students labeled as ELLs is not new, the labels we use keep changing. Although the ELL label is still widely used, the US Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) has more recently adopted and encouraged the use of English learner (EL), rather than English language learner (OELA, 2015). While we agree that EL (and ELL) is less deficit focused than its historical predecessors (e.g., students with LEP - limited English proficiency), we argue for labels which promote students’ full linguistic repertoire. In line with the work of Ofelia Garcia (2010) and Mileidis Gort (2008) we support the use of “emergent bilinguals” and “emergent biliterates” (for a comprehensive overview on the use of “emergent bilinguals” we recommend Garcia, Kleifgen, and Falchi, 2008). The use of bilingual and biliterate holistically not only recognizes students’ full linguistic repertoire - we use it synonymously with “multilingual” -, it also avoids a problematic emphasis on or prioritizing of the English language. The use of “emergent” recognizes that language development is a process and, especially for younger bilinguals, takes into account that students develop several language simultaneously (Gort, 2008). Like all terms, “emergent bilingual” and “multilingual” are far from perfect. For example, the terms do not differentiate between second and foreign language learners, and, if we understand language learning as a lifelong process, could be extended to all human beings, thus erasing the specific characteristics, needs, and assets of culturally minoritized learners. In addition, Motha (2014), in reference to Matsuda & Duran (2013), has pointed out that “[e]very time we use the word ‘multilingual’ as a proxy for the term *nonnative*, we contribute to a social imaginary of monolingual American

identity and support consequent policies and practices” (pp. 53-54). While we acknowledge these important critiques, we believe that, at this point, emergent bilinguals is the best available label.

### *Funds of knowledge*

When we introduce pre-service teachers to the concept of “funds of knowledge” and its underlying theories in our language teacher education classes, we do so with the goal of supporting pre-service teachers in better understanding their students’ life realities and serving them more effectively, a goal we share with Luis Moll. Moll and his research team conducted extensive interviews with members of Arizona’s Mexican-American working-class communities in Tucson of the 1990s. This groundbreaking work was the first systematic attempt to abandon a deficit model of educating bilingual low-income students by tapping their community resources or “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1992). This new focus on “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133) has laid the foundation of an assets-based approach to education, in which teachers build on the prior knowledge and skills that their students bring to the classroom. The funds of knowledge approach has since been further developed and applied across many disciplines, content areas, and contexts. For example, it has served as theoretical foundation for studies in literacy (e.g., Carter, 2015; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004) and cultural studies (e.g., González, 2005) and contributed to the field of STEM (teacher) education (González, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001; Mejia & Wilson, 2015; Turner & Drake, 2016). It has been applied to contexts ranging from early childhood (e.g., Clift, Acevedo, Short, & Clift, 2015; Hedges, 2015) to college education (Cooper, 2016) and continues to promote work with marginalized and underserved communities, such as African American students (Freeman, 2016). The funds of knowledge approach has further

been developed to include “dark knowledge” (Zipin, 2009) and “politicized knowledge” (Gallo & Link, 2015), which speaks to the importance of integrating sensitive and taboo topics into these days’ curriculum and instruction.

### ***Translanguaging***

Although the origin of the term is usually traced back to Cen William, who used “translanguaging” to describe the practice of English-Welsh bilingual students to read in one language and write in the other, the translanguaging terminology and framework has been applied and further developed across a wide range of contexts (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011a, 2011b; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). One of its key scholars and advocates, Ofelia García, defined translanguaging as the “act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize their communicative potential” (García, 2009, p. 140). Thus, translanguaging underlines the purpose of language use to make meaning and communicate, which determines bilingual students’ use of linguistic resources beyond what is traditionally perceived as “a language”. In other words, translanguaging encompasses all types of linguistic exchanges in which linguistic resources are used flexibly and across traditional language boundaries for the purpose of making meaning.

Not unlike funds of knowledge, the concept of translanguaging was created with the intention of providing a framework that views and describes bilingual students from an assets-based perspective. This important feature of the translanguaging approach, which García and Leiva have describes as “its potential in liberating the voices of language minoritized students” (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200), is what makes it attractive to us as language teacher educators. In contexts where bilingual students have traditionally been evaluated through monolingual norms, a

translanguaging framework can rectify the situation by abandoning the notion of languages as stable units that are (connected yet) separate and instead recognizing the flexible use of various linguistic resources (e.g., lexicon, grammar, but also styles and identities) as normal and valuable language practice of bilingual students. In order to do this, translanguaging has far transgressed the theoretical and descriptive realms of scholarship. It is not merely a theoretical framework or a descriptive tool, it is also a pedagogical approach that increases bilingual students' chances for academic achievement by recognizing the value of all their linguistic resources and leveraging them for further language and content learning (García, 2012). In their "guide for educators", Celic & Seltzer (2012) offer a plethora of strategies to teachers of bilingual students that activate the students' linguistic resources and leverage them to access and develop academic language and content.

For any assets-based approach to be effective, it is vital that schools and teachers not only learn about their students' linguistic, cultural, and familial backgrounds, but also tap the existing funds of knowledge and all their existing and emerging linguistic resources to design their curriculum and instruction. In educational contexts that are dominated by white middle-class teachers and students, such an endeavor usually implies a paradigm shift. In this sense, moving from a deficit perspective towards an assets-approach is far more challenging, contested, but also more impactful than pre-service teachers or teacher educators, like us, sometimes realize.

### **Teacher Education: Suggestions and Strategies from the Field on Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Bilingual Students**

As language teachers educators, we have become increasingly aware of the complexity of paradigm shifts, especially when ideologies and attitudes about linguistic practices and education

are involved. To help us and our pre-service teachers move towards an assets-based approach of educating emergent bilinguals, we have developed a number of strategies, including (a) strategies to recognize deficit perspectives, (b) strategies to challenge deficit perspectives (e.g. in conversations and teaching materials), (c) strategies to learn about students' lives, and (d) strategies to design student-centered, culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) instruction.

When pre-service teachers first start to critically question the deficit perspectives they have encountered or assumed throughout their educational trajectories, they are often struck with disbelief or disappointment about their own experiences and assumptions. To avoid defensiveness, we openly talk about our realizations of our own deficit perspectives and encourage our pre-service teachers - and ourselves - to ask questions about (their assumptions about) their students ("What makes you think that he is not motivated to do homework?") rather than provide answers ("He probably does not care about his grades."). One helpful activity in our teacher education classes has been to make a list of "silent assumptions" we collectively have, especially in situations of conflict or frustration. Simple acts such as choosing a book for students to read, assigning homework, or correcting errors may be based on an array of assumptions teachers have about their students' family life, socioeconomic status, cultural and racial affiliations and feelings of belonging, life experience, interests, opportunities, and beliefs. For instance, assumptions we collected in our teacher education classrooms regarding homework included "He is not interested in the topic.", "My students have next to no support from their parents.", and "They don't care about school." Making such assumptions explicit, has helped us and our pre-service teachers to recognize our own biases and instead begin to gather the information we needed in order to understand why students did not complete their homework. As a result of our discussions in class, some of our pre-service teachers initiated conversations with their students about their perceptions

of homework assignments and found that some of them considered them optional, while others simply did not have the time and space to work outside of school. These findings triggered them to modify their instruction or provide additional resources to their students, for example extended library access or supervised homework time before class. Overall, we learned that noticing, recognizing, and actively interrupting our biases is the first step towards making our classrooms more inclusive.

In order to get to know their students, we sometimes encourage our pre-service teachers to carry out interviews with their students and their family members. If this is too time-consuming, we co-design lesson and unit plans with our pre-service teachers that are likely to elicit important information from students. Such lessons may, for example, include the production of multilingual, multimodal texts like collages of themselves, photo essays of their home or community, or social media texts (e.g. buzz feeds) about their schooling experience and linguistic preferences. These texts allow even emergent multilingual students to communicate complex issues and can provide important information about students' life realities, prior schooling, and linguistic repertoires.

### *Teaching and learning about the deficit language*

At present, unfortunately, the federal label used to refer to bilingual students remains “English Learner”, which consequently millions of teachers and education stakeholders continue to use. Teacher educators, however, can and should, explicitly address the issues associated with this label. We present the issue and offer suggestions on how teachers and teacher educators can take action. Perpetual use of “English Learner” positions teachers to view students as deficient. As noted above, the focus on *English Learner*, implicitly prioritizes English as students' language, giving no attention to additional language(s) that a child may already speak (or still be developing). Second, the focus on *English Learner* explicitly others students carrying the EL label,

suggesting that students are not capable of engaging in what is considered “mainstream” academic work due to the fact that they are still developing English. Relatedly, “English Learner” positions students to see themselves as deficient. Contrary to the “English Learner” label, English is not the only thing students are learning and/or know. Many ELs are developing not one, but two (or more) languages (Gort, 2008) and older ELs may not only speak, but also be literate in another language(s). Further, the very use of *English* equates ability to process and demonstrate knowledge to ability to process and demonstrate knowledge *in English*. Given these (sometimes unintentionally) deficit based effects of the EL label, we are concerned with the ongoing use of the EL label. We believe the use of EL positions teachers to view their students as incapable and positions bilingual students to view themselves as deficient.

In our own work as teacher educators, we have taken small steps to work toward breaking this cycle with the next generation of teachers. First, we explicitly dialogue about the problematic use of the EL and ELL labels. Pre-service teachers are learning the language of education, thus, rather than teaching and using labels that we do not believe in, we suggest intentional appreciation and use of more asset based language and labels. Further, when dialoguing with our pre-service teachers, we call them out on their language use (e.g., “why are you referring to your student at not having English?”), and vice versa, and ask them to reflect and explain why perpetual use of these deficit labels are detrimental to both teaching and student learning (e.g., “if you keep referring to them as the *lowest student* how might that affect your instruction or their learning?”).

Cathy (all names are pseudonyms), for example, during a lesson plan workshop was discussing how she was struggling to “make the lesson easier for my lower ELL students” (Cathy, 2016). This became a conversation on the assumptions and unintended consequences when language such as “lower” and “ELL”. Students were able to unpack how using ELL put so much

emphasis on *English* that Cathy was unable to focus on knowledge that her students may already possess. Further, Cathy was able to understand how in her use of “lower” it was assumed that students earlier along in their English language development were not as capable as other students and she was unintentionally teaching these students less. Dialogue is important, but more importantly, we move forward with action. We have adopted Garcia’s (2010) recommendation of “emergent bilinguals”, not only for ourselves, but we also clearly articulate our expectations to our pre-service teachers to do the same. We have not only observed pre-service teachers work their way through this in class (“My ELL, I mean emerging bilingual student”), but have also had pre-service teachers share their own experiences of how intentionally changing their own language practices has initiated critical dialogue with others (“He asked me why I used emerging bilingual and I was able to explain the implicit biases and deficit perspectives associated with ELL”).

### *Teaching and learning about funds of knowledge*

In our work with pre-service teachers, a concern that has continuously surfaced is a tension they felt between their professional responsibilities, in particular their task to assess students, and an assets-based approach that is focused on their students’ existing skills and knowledges. For example, one pre-service teacher remarked in class, during a somewhat heated discussion around uncovering deficit assumptions, that “I am a teacher, isn’t it part of my job also to say what my students can’t do? I feel like it’s not really honest to only talk about their assets because, then, what is the point of even going to school?” (Ashley, March 2015). Other comments included “I am not judging, just assessing.” and “I have to identify their gaps. They are not st-, it’s not a secret, they know why they are in my class” (both: Kathleen, March 2015). Several pre-service teachers

have made similar remarks, often linking their need to talk about students' "areas for improvement" to assessment and learning theories as well as their role as (ESL) teachers.

As these pre-service teachers expressed frustration about a conflict they felt between moving towards an assets-based approach to (language) teaching and having to address students' areas for growth, it was important to us to discuss some of the underlying ideologies of this conflict. In some cases, we were able to enter a productive conversation, during which we collaboratively phrased questions about the tension the pre-service teachers were feeling, including "What are 'gaps' and 'areas for growth'?", "Who decides what they are?", "How is this decision made?", "How can we know for sure what a bilingual student can (not) do?", "How do we communicate those areas for growth to the student?", and "How do we make sure we both support our students but also challenge them to grow?" We used this conversation as a springboard into reflecting and learning about culturally and linguistically fair assessments, which helped pre-service teachers become aware of the inadequacy of many traditional assessments and tests which do not capture their students' funds of knowledge. In one class, our pre-service teachers were struck by a Hailey's example of her 18-year-old student from Mexico, who had escaped socio-economic hardship and deprivation and built a life in the US, but barely received passing grades in his high school classes. Hailey commented how his knowledge about migrating, dealing with authorities, finding housing, building networks, and knowing who to trust was "worth nothing" (Hailey, April 2015) at school. This comment made us aware that we needed to carve out more spaces for pre-service teachers to translate their students' "politicized funds of knowledge" (Gallo & Link, 2015) into instruction and assessment. For instance, Hailey's student's funds of knowledge could be leveraged for instructional goals and activities such as synthesizing information from various resources, crafting arguments, and writing narratives that fulfill high-

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school level ELA (English Language Arts) as well as WIDA standards (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment, the ESL standards for Massachusetts).

In the course of the discussion, the pre-service teachers tried to disentangle their own deficit biases from state-mandated or national standards and tests that define student success and failure. Although we identified several ways to address students' areas for growth adequately in our classrooms by building on their funds of knowledge, we also noticed a need for addressing tensions between national/state policies and assets-based (or other humanizing) pedagogies more explicitly in our teacher education program. For example, we plan on integrating more explicit analyses of local and national standards based on existing literature (e.g. Viesca, 2013), and model instructional design that both meets and challenges these standards.

In sum, dialoguing with our pre-service teachers about their students' funds of knowledge has opened up important spaces of professional and personal development for all of us, but also challenged us to improve our teacher education program to include more, more explicit, and more scaffolded opportunities for increasing the academic performance of minoritized/underserved students.

### ***Teaching and learning about translanguaging***

In the discussions about translanguaging, what has surfaced repeatedly is the pre-service teachers' concern about violating principles of language teaching that revolve around challenging students linguistically and helping them to stay in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD; Vygotsky 1978), where second language acquisition has been shown to happen (e.g. Ohta, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994). More generally speaking, as students come to understand the concept and approach of translanguaging, they sometimes see it to be in conflict with traditional second language acquisition theories they have previously studied. As one of our pre-service teachers,

Chelsea, put it: “What if translanguaging is the easy way out? Out of the ZPD, I mean, you know, when they are forced to use English [...] and didn’t you say we need to push them, push output?” (Chelsea, March 2015). In a similar vein, some of our pre-service teachers recognized the value of their students’ home languages for the acquisition and development of English, but did not see them as valuable beyond that. For instance, we kept noticing activities in their lesson plans that invited their students to use all their available languages, or at least their L1s, in order to ensure comprehension of English expressions (“Turn and talk in your L1: What do these words mean?”, lesson plan Amy, November 2016), but rarely was translanguaging permitted as a means of communication in its own right.

Although not always as explicitly, many of our students seemed to share Chelsea’s concerned question about how translanguaging, the recognition and use of bilingual students’ linguistic resources, could be reconciled with the idea of challenging students, especially by encouraging output in the target language with the goal of acquiring that language. The underlying argument here is one that has been used frequently by opponents of bilingual education: Maximum exposure to and use of the target language are helpful, if not necessary, for language development. Translanguaging is seen as an interruption of this premise. There are several strategies we have found useful at this point in a discussion: a) reviewing the concepts that are being used (here ZPD, pushed output, translanguaging) to see if they are necessarily in conflict with each other or can be reconciled, b) examining the history of the argument, e.g. its use by the anti-bilingual education initiative English for the students of Massachusetts, as well as the ideologies that undergird it, for instance the notion of what Heller (1999) has termed “parallel monolingualism”, i.e. the separate acquisition of more than one language, c) reading and interpreting classroom data that provide examples of how translanguaging supports language development by enabling students to produce

and comprehend more complex language and content. Beneath the concern about conflicting theories seems to be a question about how to acknowledge and tap students' existing resources, especially those of language minoritized students, without perpetuating either the students' disadvantage or ideologies of language purity/separation or parallel monolingualism. This is when the integration of different concepts and theories has been helpful to us as teacher educators. While promoting a translanguaging approach to language education, we also remind future teachers to challenge their students, warn them against over-scaffolding or lingering scaffolding, and show them how the use of translanguaging makes new and complex language, content, and identities accessible and useable to (emergent) bilinguals, as several scholars before us have done (e.g., Collins & Cioè-Peña, 2016; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011a; Makalela, 2015).

Another notion we plan to revisit more thoroughly in our classes is the one of the dichotomy of academic versus non-academic languages. Flores (2016) aptly problematizes these concepts as follows:

White middle class children are positioned as coming from homes where they are socialized into academic language while language-minoritized children are positioned as coming from homes where they are socialized into non-academic language. This often leads to self-fulfilling prophecies where teachers overdetermine language-minoritized students to be linguistically deficient and unable to meet the demands of the Common Core Standards (Flores, 2016, para 2).

In response to such deficit positionings and in order to tap and legitimize bilingual students' language resources, Flores provides a standards-based bilingual Spanish-English reading lesson plan which he designed with his colleagues Allard and Link (available at <https://educationallinguist.wordpress.com>). Such examples can serve as excellent models for our pre-service teachers to interrupt deficit discourses and debunk racist and linguistic assumptions that denigrate bilingual students' language practices.

Although, as we do this work, we realize that we are limited by a lack of research and theory on how to teach, assess, and develop translanguaging skills (Canagarajah, 2011b), some of our pre-service teachers have developed excellent lesson plans that integrate translanguaging practices with high expectations for bilingual students. We are optimistic that resources, such as the recently published volume *Translanguaging with multilingual students* (García & Kleyn, 2016), will be valuable resources for real-life classroom examples of students who used translanguaging to enhance comprehension as well as production of complex spoken and written texts while at the same time making translanguaging a legitimate classroom practice that is not merely subject to the acquisition of the target language.

#### **Paradigm Shift: Questions on Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Bilingual Students**

As teacher educators, we are committed to challenging pre-service teachers to not only recognize ingrained deficit perspectives, but actively work to undo deficit thinking. In our work we have found that methods classes must begin by explicitly discussing how pre-service teachers, while well intentioned, often start with a default deficit perspective. Recognizing and acknowledging these perspectives, however, is only a first step. Critically discussing and unpacking these beliefs and practices must be integrated throughout pre-service teachers' educational experience. Finally, as teacher educators, we must actively call out our students and challenge them to move away from linguist, racist, and deficit-oriented practices; thus, modeling for pre-service teachers that we must "practice what we preach".

We recognize that our suggestions for teaching education are only a small piece of the work necessary in preparing pre-service teachers to work with bilingual students. We also want to

recognize and appreciate the scholars who have inspired us to move toward a more critical approach to teacher education. Finally, we recognize that there is still much more work to be done, perspectives to be challenged, and questions to be addressed. Thus, we conclude our chapter with a series of questions that we hope teacher educators, like ourselves, hold at the forefront of their work in preparing pre-service teachers to work with bilingual students.

- How do we teach pre-service teachers to balance between supporting and challenging their students (linguistically but also in terms of content, identities, aspirations, etc.)?
- How can we charge pre-service teachers to actively challenge the deficit perspectives that are so ingrained in education, both within their own practices and among their colleagues?
- How can we encourage pre-service teachers to engage in ongoing development and reflection once they enter the classroom, particularly given that many teacher education programs consist of a one year graduate program?
- In recognizing that a paradigm shift in teacher education, particularly within in language education, is a developmental and ongoing process, what support can we provide, and how can we follow up with, pre-service teachers upon graduating from their teacher education program?
- What do we, as teacher educators, do for ourselves as we also go through these paradigm shifts?

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