Title of Project
Latina/o Bilingual Teacher Candidates’ Negotiation of Raciolinguistic Ideologies

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Motivation for the Research

Bilingualism and bilingual education have historically been highly contentious in the United States. Particularly for Latinx bilinguals, cultivating their heritage language has been an ongoing challenge in the face of language policies that uphold English monolingualism and language ideologies that frame their language practices in deficit-oriented ways (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Institutionally, Latinx bilinguals in the United States are frequently framed as speakers of deviant approximations of ‘standardized English’ (Flores, 2019) and as speakers of broken Spanish (Ek et al., 2013). What is more, Latinx’s bilingual skills are construed as deficient regardless of their actual language proficiency; thereby revealing the practice of evaluating their proficiency based on racial logics or what Rosa and Flores (2017) call raciolinguistic ideologies. These raciolinguistic ideologies oftentimes become institutionalized and transformed into a ubiquitous, pervasive lens through which Latinx bilinguals’ language practices become supervised, evaluated, and managed within and beyond schools (Rosa, 2019).

Aware of the deleterious effects of language ideologies, scholars have examined Latinx bilingual teachers’ grappling with language ideologies (e.g., Martínez et al., 2015; Palmer et al., 2014). They have also scrutinized the effects these ideological orientations may have for Latinx bilingual students in U.S. public schools (e.g., Allard et al., 2014; Morren, 2012). Seeking to address institutionalized ideologies from another entry point, other scholars have pointed to bilingual teacher preparation programs as critical political spaces. For instance, scholars have explored the ways their lived experiences with language ideologies shapes Latinx teacher candidates’ (TCs) language orientations (e.g., Banes et al., 2016; Nuñez & Espinoza, 2017) and their overall sense of self-efficacy regarding their language proficiency (e.g., Briceño et al., 2018; Szwed, & González-Carriedo, 2019). These scholars agree that encouraging TCs to
interrogate the ideological orientations they hold is important because they frequently walk into their preparation programs without ever having questioned their own ideological orientations and how these may reproduce the very structures that marginalize them (Ek et al., 2013).

Research Questions
Motivated by this call to critically examine the ways language ideologies inform TCs’ ideological orientations, I conducted a year-long critical ethnography on the lived experiences of 17 Latinx bilingual TCs completing a bilingual teacher education program at Metropolitan University (pseudonym); a public Hispanic-serving university located in the city of San Antonio. The institution offers a B.A. in bilingual education and, therefore, plays an important role in preparing the bilingual educators that will serve generations of emergent bilingual learners. My study was guided by the following research question: How do Latinx bilingual TCs negotiate circulating raciolinguistic ideologies?

To answer these questions, I employed three main theoretical concepts. To examine the oppressive power relations TCs navigate, I drew on Rosa and Flores’s (2017) raciolinguistic ideologies perspective, which studies the conflation of racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency (i.e., the linking of forms of talk with social stereotypes or figures of personhood). To capture the crystallization of raciolinguistic ideologies in everyday life, I drew on Rymes’ concept of metacommentary, which she defines as spontaneous, implicit or explicit, verbal or nonverbal comments that draw attention to linguistic and nonlinguistic features of speakers’ communicative repertoires. I pushed the concept of metacommentary a bit further by making two changes. First, I added that these metacommentary are often addressed to racialized individuals. Second, I connected them to the broader context by specifying that these ideological comments not only signal linguistic difference but also index stereotypical images of speakers and reinscribe existing ideologies and/ethnoracial hierarchies. I termed this kind of ideological commentary raciolinguistic metacommentary. Finally, with an eye to TCs’ resistance to raciolinguistic ideologies, I drew on Stroud and Kerfoot’s (2020) conceptualization of linguistic citizenship (LC), which they define as “acts of language, […] performed outside of the institutional status quo, that engage with voices on the margins to create conditions for transformative agency” (p. 10).

Research Methodology
I framed my study as a critical ethnography (Madison, 2020) because I entered the study with the assumption that unequal power relationships exist between Latinx bilinguals and white monolinguals. Also, I highlighted the role of ideologies in the perpetuation of existing inequalities and engaged in ideological critique while examining the dialectic relations between power structures (institutionalized raciolinguistic ideologies) and individuals’ agency (participating TCs’ resistance to these ideologies).

Specifically, during 2021 spring semester, I joined an undergraduate class offered to bilingual education TCs—Language Development in Bilinguals—in my capacity as doctoral researcher. During this time, I engaged in participant observation of their zoom class meetings (17 observations of 1.5-hour lessons), conducted 1.5-hours individual interviews (N=14), and collected a series of classroom artefacts. Artefacts consisted of 17 final reflection papers TCs wrote about their experiences as bilingual speakers, 17 language portraits TCs created about their linguistic repertoires, and 187 discussion posts TCs wrote in reaction to assigned class readings.
During the 2021 summer and fall semesters, I conducted follow-up interviews (n=9) and group member-checking sessions (n=2) with focal participants.

To analyze these data, I employed Saldaña’s (2015) 2-cycle coding scheme, using NVivo 12. Open coding resulted in over 50 recurring topics, which I categorized via the constructs comprising my theoretical framework. These codes pointed to the raciolinguistic metacommentary that TCs were subject to across spaces. Having identified the raciolinguistic metacommentary TCs experienced, I conducted further analysis of discourse segments containing/surrounding accounts of such ideological comments, which I did by employing critical discourse analysis as proposed by Fairclough (2015).

**Summary of Findings**

My analysis demonstrated that TCs have encountered raciolinguistic metacommentary across social and institutional spaces. Within the home, they have encountered raciolinguistic metacommentary that outlaws English and Spanglish (“Aquí se habla español!”), circulates notions of standardized Spanish as proper and more legitimate than U.S. Spanish (“No lo dices así!”), and construes English and Spanglish as incompatible with Latinx authenticity (“Ay, ahora te estás haciendo gringa?”). Within educational institutions, they have been subject to raciolinguistic metacommentary that upholds native speakerism and frames it as evidence of academic readiness and success (“Repeat after me!”). Likewise, they have experienced metacommentary that frames Spanish is a foreign language and construes double monolingualism as an indispensable skill bilingual teacher candidate should be able to demonstrate (“You're going for bilingual, and you don't know how to say this?”).

At work, they have found raciolinguistic metacommentary that conflates racialized bodies with rigid notions of language and identity, reinforcing the idea that standard Spanish is superior to US Spanish (“No se así. Se dice: ‘aquí lo vamos a guardar’”). These metacommentary TCs have encountered also advance the idea that Spanish and English should not be mixed or combined (“Stupid gringa!) and that linguistic dexterity is an extraordinary feature of Latinxs. In social and public spaces, they have found raciolinguistic metacommentary that reinforces the notion that English is the language of the United States (“Speak English, you’re in America!”) and that Latinxs are under the obligation of showing allegiance to the United States via English (“She’s a US resident, she needs to learn it [English].”).

My analysis also demonstrated that raciolinguistic metacommentary not only indexes linguistic difference but also mobilizes indexical images of Latinx bilinguals while reinscribing existing hegemonic language ideologies and ethnoracial hierarchies. For instance, the metacommentary TCs reported experiencing reproduce problematic notions of language such as (1) Spanish as language to be confined to the home and excluded from U.S. institutions, (2) Spanglish as disease or bad habit to be avoided, and (3) English as the language of professionalism and success. Raciolinguistic metacommentary also advances marginalizing social stereotypes or figures of personhood such as (1) pochas/os and gringas/os or Latinxs who can’t speak Spanish properly, (2) fresas or upper-middle class snobs who mix English and Spanish, and (3) academically unprepared and unintelligent English language learners/Spanish speakers. These notions of language and figures of personhood have shaped TCs’ ethnolinguistic subjectivities, or how they embody language and who they can imagine themselves to be linguistically and ethnically. TCs report that exposure to these metacommentary has resulted in experiences of: (1) linguistic insecurity/shame, (2) gradual language shift and loss, and (3) hyper vigilance on their own and others’ linguistic appropriateness and correctness.
Finally, despite the barrage of raciolinguistic metacommentary they have encountered, TCs have leveraged what they have learned from their teacher preparation program and from members of the Latinx community to challenge the sociolinguistic status quo. For instance, they have started to embrace their linguistic hybridity and to use language fluidly and dynamically across spaces. In addition, they have managed to formulate alternative notions of language such as (1) bilingualism as fingerprint, (2) bilingualism por y para la familia, and (3) bilingualism to help others. These alternative notions of language foreground the dynamic and fluid nature of their bilingualism, thereby challenging notions of Spanish as contained and Spanglish as disease. They also challenge neoliberal reasons for language learning by foregrounding the values of family, service, and collectivity. TCs have also managed to envision alternative subject positions such as (2) Tejano or linguistic and cultural hybrids, (2) empowered pochas Chicanas, and (3) fluid bilinguals. These alternative subject positions problematize the linguistic/ethnic boundaries that the stereotypes of pocha/o, gringa/o, fresas, and English language learner bring about.

Implications

These findings have implications for bilingual teacher education and research. First, instances of raciolinguistic metacommentary can be easily overlooked because they are usually provided jokingly, spontaneously, implicitly, and in passing. While these appear harmless, raciolinguistic metacommentary reinscribes notions of language and figures of personhood that create linguistic, ethnorracial, and identity borders. Participating TCs described their own and others’ language practices in ways that revealed their holding notions of Spanish as language to be confined, Spanglish as disease, and English as professionalism/success. These are problematic notions of language that—if left unaddressed in teacher education programs—TCs may carry over to their classrooms once they start serving as bilingual teachers. Furthermore, TCs reported shaping their language practices in particular ways (e.g., by avoiding Spanish, avoiding using English and Spanish fluidly, and prioritizing English)—both in the past and presently—to escape being framed as pochas/os, gringas/os, fresas/nacos, and English language learners/Spanish speakers. It is clear that these figures of personhood have influenced who TCs can be and imagine themselves to be linguistically and ethnically, and therefore, can shape their own future pedagogical choices and ideological stances to how Latinx emergent bilingual learners embody their own linguistic repertoires. This finding suggests that more attention should be given to the ‘innocent’ raciolinguistic metacommentary that TCs encounter in their everyday lives.

Second, I also documented the subtle and overt ways that TCs challenged raciolinguistic ideologies. All throughout TCs’ accounts, it was clear that despite recurring experiences of linguistic oppression, they are able to articulate nurturing notions of language, which can be leveraged within teacher education program, to interrogate concepts such as balanced bilingualism, sequential bilingualism, (non)native speaker, and social/academic language that still exist in the literature and are frequently used in U.S. institutions to classify racialized bilinguals. The same critical work should be done with TC’s alternative subject positions of Tejanos/as, Chicanos/as, and fluid bilinguals. TC educators can encourage Latinx TCs to critically juxtapose them to circulating figures of personhood that oppress them. Yet, in hindsight, I was able to examine TC’s resistance because I drew on the concept of linguistic citizenship. Otherwise, it would have been easy to lose sight of TCs’ countering efforts. Research that does not center and magnify these agentive stances may miss a rich opportunity to build upon such base and draw on it toward envisioning collective agency. Part of dismantling larger structures of inequity implies learning from how marginalized individuals learn to thrive within and despite them and how they resist them in their everyday life.
Third, TCs’ encounters with raciolinguistic metacommentary have taken an emotional toll. In this study, I do a survey of the damages that TCs experienced as a result of repeated exposure to raciolinguistic metacommentary. It is crucial that TCs’ experiences of linguistic insecurity and shame, language shift/loss, and hypervigilance on linguistic correctness and propriety be explicitly addressed within the bilingual teacher education programs. As was evident in their accounts, language shift/loss and being in constant hypervigilance for linguistic correctness bring about anxiety, apprehension, and stress for TCs. These are emotions with which they mostly grapple alone while they are being prepared to become culturally and linguistically responsive bilingual educators. However, current bilingual teacher education models do not explicitly include work on the affective/emotion domain. Instead, current models emphasize criticality, ideological/political clarity, and critical consciousness. TCs are preparing to become effective bilingual teachers while still grappling with shame on their Spanish dialects and insecurity about their bilingual proficiency. An affective component to bilingual teacher education should consider that emotion is a critical aspect in the process of negotiating teacher identity, which is constructed via teachers’ cognitive and emotional responses to the contexts they occupy/navigate and their embedded ideologies.
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