Journal of Education, Language, and Ideology
volume 3 | issue 2 | 2025
pp. 213–241

Research Article

From Linguistic Trauma to Bridging: Dual Language Teachers Testimoniando Borderlands Translanguaging Pedagogies

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Received: January 10, 2025
Accepted: September 11, 2025
Published: October 7, 2025
doi: 10.5281/zenodo.17284225

In the Texas-Mexico borderlands, Chicane/x communities have a rich linguistic and cultural knowledge that has shaped the border-crossing community's ways of doing and exemplifying what it means to be bilingual and bicultural. At the same time, this community grapples with the history of language violence that has existed on the borderlands and that continues to persist in bilingual schools. This is a multi-site case study that explores the testimonios (testimonies) of two dual language teachers from the borderlands and their experiences with language. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences with language that two dual language teachers had and how it shaped their translanguaging instruction. We draw on the concepts of bridging and translanguaging to ground our analysis of the teachers' testimonios and the video and audio recorded data from their classroom observations. The findings revealed: (1) the trauma rooted in the teachers' experiences with language on the borderlands, and, (2) how their translanguaging pedagogies were efforts to move away from linguistic trauma by creating bridges that supported their bilingual students. A borderlands translanguaging theory fully embraces translanguaging and creates a space for teachers and students to take action towards deconstructing inequities. The implications include teacher education programs and research in bilingual education regarding the importance of recognizing and addressing the sociocultural and historical contexts in which language and language education (co)exists in order to (re)imagine bilingual pedagogies with and for racialized bilingual students.

Keywords: bilingual education; bilingual teachers; borderlands; testimonios; translanguaging

1. INTRODUCTION

The contours of the Texas-Mexico borderlands are rich in linguistic and cultural knowledge that have shaped the border-crossing community's ways of doing and exemplifying what it means to be bilingual and bicultural. This richness, however, has always existed alongside structural inequities and contested histories. It is important to

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recognize that the Chicane/x[1] border community and their language practices are not devoid of historical marginalization and linguistic violence (Anzaldúa, 1987). In this paper, we view trauma as residue from the linguistic violence that we carry over generations. In fact, the Chicane/x bilingual communities along the Texas-Mexico border and beyond have a tension-filled history with bilingualism serving as a source of pride and also, as a target of the discrimination they face. Surveillance, detention, deportations, raids, racist and anti-immigrant discourses, are just a few of the long list of historical and present-day violence and dehumanization of the Chicane/x community (Nuñez & Urrieta, 2020; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zúñiga et al., 2024).

In schools, teachers play an important role in shaping how language is experienced and approached. According to Freire (2020), teachers' lived experiences with language and language learning, and their beliefs about language inform their enactment of language in the classroom, or in this case, in dual language classrooms. In contexts such as the Texas-Mexico borderlands with a history of language and racial violence (Anzaldúa, 1987), examining the role of lived experiences and beliefs in and around language and language teaching approaches such as translanguaging is critical. Racialized bilingual students need language education that embraces who they are, and creates the space for their dynamic bilingualism. Translanguaging pedagogy, as García (2009) and bilingual education colleagues (García & Li, 2014; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Machado & Gonzales, 2020; Martínez & Martinez, 2019; Menken & Sánchez, 2019; Seltzer et al., 2020) have noted, is a critical approach to language and language education that humanizes students' epistemologies and at the same time delinks from hierarchical views and uses of language.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of bridging (Anzaldúa, 1987) and translanguaging theory (García & Li, 2013; García & Kleyn, 2016; García, et al., 2017) we look towards bilingual teachers testimonios as a bridge to understand how they are constructing notions of translanguaging as theory and practice in their respective dual language classroom settings with their bilingual students. In this paper, we use testimonios as a methodology (Cervantes-Soon & Carillo, 2016; Cervantes-Soon, 2018; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Perez Huber, 2009) to demonstrate how teachers can transform specific experiences of linguistic trauma into empowering language learning opportunities for racialized bilingual students. Our study is grounded in the following research questions: 1) What do the testimonios of two Chicane/x teachers reveal about their lived experiences with translanguaging on the borderlands? 2) How do their testimonios about translanguaging on the borderlands translate into practice in dual language classrooms with their bilingual students?

[1] We use the gender-neutral label, Chicane/x, to promote the concept that identity construction is not static. This article capitalizes Chicane/x to give credence to the struggles of a racialized group that shares cultural, political, and historical experiences.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Border Theory of Bridging

This study is situated in the literal and figurative borderlands. Maritza [2] and Antonio reside, teach and experience the borderlands daily, as do their students. Therefore, we draw on Anzaldúa's (1987) border theory of bridging (Anzaldúa, 2009) to situate language and conceptualize *translanguaging* (García, 2009) within the sociohistorical tensions of the borderlands (e.g., Texas/Mexico border). Anzaldúa describes being a *bridge* when racialized people have to act as a "…mediator between [themselves] and [their] community, and white people, lesbians, feminists, white men." (p. 147). Border dwellers can be powerful agents of change as they challenge and confront oppressive structures, while simultaneously *bridging*–the act of creating metaphorical or figurative bridges–their intersecting realities and identities as they navigate their everyday experiences as teachers of Color working alongside bi/multilingual students of Color. The act of bridging is critical for creating pathways and access to spaces, practices, and ways of knowing that empower other border dwellers or marginalized communities to navigate borders and, more importantly, it enables them to sustain themselves in the face of ongoing oppression and violence against their communities. To build on this concept, we first turn to prior research that explores the linguistic borderlands of bilingual classrooms, examining how students pursue academic achievement while shaping and sustaining their bi/multilingual identities (Auer, 1998).

2.2 Towards A Borderlands Translanguaging Theory

Borderlands theory centers the tension-filled experiences of marginalized communities, which have been delegitimized by existing racial and linguistic hierarchies (Anzaldúa, 2007). Scholars (Kasun, 2016; Degollado, et al., 2021) have argued that the Texas-Mexico border and its impact on the Chicane/x community extends beyond the immediate borderlands geographical location, which makes border theory critical in research related to bilinguals of Chicane/x origin whose experiences are still shaped by the U.S.-Mexico dichotomous relationship. In regards to language, for example, competing constructions of what is legitimate bilingualism exist at and beyond the border. Monolingual, standardized forms of Spanish and English have been recognized as the "appropriate" form of bilingualism (Potowski, 2007). Meanwhile, Spanglish and TexMex and other dynamic linguistic practices that have emerged from the borderlands and played a vital role in bicultural knowledge and border-crossing ways of being, are often positioned as fractured (García-Mateus, 2020; Zentella, 1998). Delegitimizing these non-dominant forms of language reiterates the hegemony of English in the U.S.

[2] All participant names and locations are pseudonyms.

and that of Western ideologies about language (Martínez & Martinez, 2019; Sayer, 2012).

To ground language views and practices on the realities of the borderlands, we turn to translanguaging (García & Li, 2013; García et al., 2017). Translanguaging is entangled with the institutional and historical violence, and the generations of racial and linguistic trauma and resistance of the borderlands (Nuñez, 2021). de los Rios and Seltzer (2017) explain that "to adopt translanguaging means taking linguistic fluidity as the norm and building pedagogy from students' language practice" (p. 58). In doing so, García and colleagues (2012) explain that these types of dynamic language practices and pedagogy challenge the static linguistic boundaries and hierarchies that maintain the dominant use of standardized named languages, such as Spanish and English, in schools. Particularly on the Texas-Mexico borderlands, where translanguaging is necessary for the community's everyday life, this theory and practice offers a way to disrupt the materialization of the physical and metaphorical boundaries that marginalizes the cultural and linguistic epistemologies of students, families, and communities.

As an example of translanguaging on the borderlands, Nuñez (2021) examined the language and literacy practices of transfronterizx students attending U.S. schools on the Texas-Mexico borderlands. They demonstrate how second-grade children were aware of the restrictive language policies (i.e., English-only) and linguistic surveillance in school. Conversely, they were also creative in constructing spaces for their full linguistic selves, where flexible translanguaging was embodied. The children moved in and out of the linguistic surveillance strategically by understanding when to perform language practices that reflected English-only practices, and when to embody dynamic bilingualism without impacting their academic performance. This type of surveillance awareness and strategic embodiment of translanguaging is an example of the critical awareness of borders–which emerges from experiences with cultural and linguistic marginalization, violence, and trauma rooted in borders. Further, we contend, that bridging (Anzaldúa, 1987), as a foundational concept for the development of a borderlands translanguaging pedagogy can further support our understanding of the translanguaging and translanguaging pedagogies that are enacted with and by teachers and students from the borderlands.

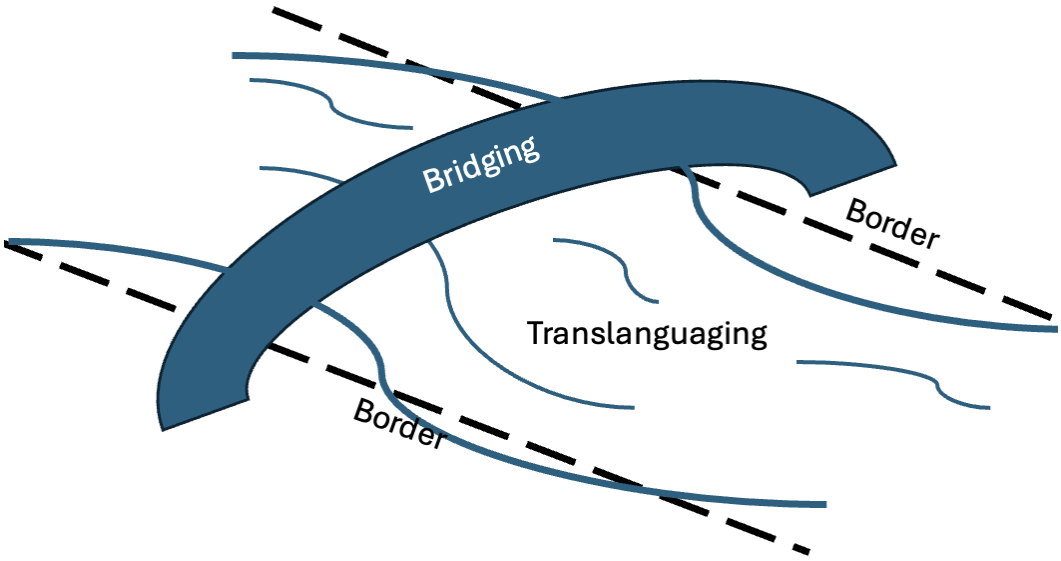
2.3 Translanguaging: From Linguistic Trauma to Bridging

Anzaldúa (2007) describes the borderlands as a complex geopolitical space that extends into psychological, spiritual, and linguistic spaces (and more). Anzaldúa's borderlands are uncomfortable, contradictory, and painful. They are also hopeful spaces in which to traverse multiple identities and activate "dormant areas of consciousness" (p. 20). Consequently, border dwellers must exist, navigate, and survive these contradictions through actions like *bridging*. A *bridge* is both a conscious and unconscious mediator between self, one's community, and the powerful dominant society —whiteness,

patriarchy, heteronormativity, colonization and hegemony. To be a bridge requires both flexibility and the integrity to stand your ground or risk losing oneself in the dualities and complexities of the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2009). The bridging process can be traumatic and draining. Anzaldúa reminds border dwellers that it is important to "draw up the bridge" and seek comfort and refuge within one's community as a way to re-energize and heal (pp. 147-148). This is key to survival.

For the bi/multilingual communities of the borderlands, bridging is a way of life and sobrevivencia, or survival (Anzaldúa, 2009). In the Texas-Mexico borderlands, borders were forcefully institutionalized to divide communities, especially in schools and their English-focused, Eurocentric curriculum (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). This creates tensions for colonized people fighting to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity, while also navigating and surviving the structures of hierarchy put in place by colonizing entities. Bridging in such a context requires speaking non-dominant and dominant forms of language. It also calls for creating their own language when they need to draw up the bridge and re-charge con *los nuestros, our own* (Anzaldúa, 2007).

Figure 1. Relationship of Bridging and Translanguaging



Translanguaging enables bridging[3] (Anzaldúa, 2007), both as action and as a way to create bridges for others, such as students (See Figure 1 above). In moving away from the hierarchical dichotomies of language as part of the larger nation-state identities,

[3] Previous descriptions of bilingual communication as bridging has reified separation of named languages in dual language programing and thus has acted to limit students' and teachers' freedom to translanguage.

border communities are able to create, use, and enact their language practices shaped by their lived experience–some of which includes cultural and linguistic violence. We contend that centering on translanguaging has the potential to not only reveal and challenge the oppressive borders of named languages, but also of releasing and healing bilingual teachers and students of Color from this historical linguistic terrorism through the construction and co-construction of bridges that support one another. These acts of bridging forge new pathways and ways of knowing that border crossers need to sustain themselves in contexts of separation and exclusion through linguistic oppression and trauma.

Here, bridging and translanguaging are not simple metaphors for cross linguistic connections or a simple practice that connects one language to another. On the contrary, it is deeply rooted and constructed by the linguistic agency of communities who have been marginalized through and with language. It builds on translanguaging–the fluid and dynamic flow of language–and, the bridging, makes visible the pathways that transform and heal communities by providing access to spaces, practices, and ways of knowing that help them navigate and cross borders they face socially and systemically.

2.4 Translanguaging as Borderlands Pedagogies

Previous scholarship (Degollado et al., 2021; García & Li, 2014; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; García & Ibarra, 2025*;* Nuñez, 2020) has described translanguaging pedagogy as teachers leveraging their own and students' full linguistic repertoire for teaching and learning.

Translanguaging pedagogy also opens up opportunities for complex bilingual sensibilities and practices such as metalinguistic awareness, cross-linguistic connections, and problem-solving strategies (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Fitts, 2006; Gort & Pontier, 2013; Lee, et al., 2008; Martin-Beltran, 2010). For example, Martínez-Roldan and Sayer (2006) examine how a Tejana teacher created spaces for children to use Spanglish to navigate linguistic borderlands and support reading comprehension. In a different study, de la Piedra and colleagues (2018) document how transfronterizx students draw on their border-crossing experiences and translanguaging for literacy learning, meaning making, and academic activities in the classroom (e.g., writing, drawing, poetry, songs). Similarly, de los Rios (2018) also highlights the translanguaging practices and borderlands epistemologies in the creation of corridos by transfronterizx youth. These practices created the space for youth to build community and affirm their border-crossing knowledge and identities in school spaces. Further, de los Rios makes the case that border-crossing knowledge and practices like translanguaging are necessary to support borderlands students' sense of belonging in the U.S. curriculum.

To embrace a translanguaging pedagogy in bilingual classrooms, studies have called attention to the tension that bilingual teachers often experience between language ideology and policies that can either support or oppose the use of translanguaging for teaching and learning (Martínez, et al., 2015; Zúñiga, 2016; Zúñiga, et al., 2018). The experiences of teachers in both the one-way and the two-way immersion models have examined the impact of the strict separation of language (Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011; Palmer, et al., 2014; Sayer, 2012). The duality present within the various dual language models has demonstrated that English continues to be preferred and protected, instead of dynamic bilingualism. As a result, scholars (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Heiman & Yanes, 2018; Palmer, et al., 2019; Pimentel, et al., 2008) have also raised the question of who these dual language programs are actually benefiting.

To move away from reductionist policies and practices, pedagogy needs to center the bilingual ways of being of students and within the communities they serve. Teachers need to exert agency to (re)imagine what language learning and education looks like for their students (Palmer & García-Mateus, 2022; Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022). As such, it is imperative that opportunities for teachers serving bilingual communities, such as those on the Texas-Mexico borderlands to reflect on their beliefs and experiences with language. In doing so, teachers can expose the linguistic harm and violence as well as the joy they have experienced with language, and make more conscious decisions as to the type of pedagogy they will embrace with their bilingual students. As such, we argue that before Chicane/x teachers and students can lovingly and proudly embody translanguaging or translanguaging pedagogy in their classrooms, they must first name and untangle the trauma of languaging in and on the borderlands as racialized bilinguals themselves. To this end, we focus on the testimonios and practices that reveal the trauma and tensions of two Chicane/x teachers from the borderlands in enacting translanguaging pedagogy in their respective dual language classrooms.

3. METHOD OF INQUIRY

This is a multi-site case study (Merriam, 1998) focused on exploring the *testimonios* (Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Perez Huber, 2009) and pedagogical approaches of two bilingual dual language teachers from the borderlands. We selected these teachers' accounts because they are representative of Chicane/x teachers' borderland experiences (Cervantes-Soon, 2018) and why lived experiences (i.e., surveillance, undocumented immigration, stigmatization of language practices) matter when working with Chicane/x students in both the one-way or two-way immersion DLBE model (see Nuñez, 2023). In other words, while the one-way and two-way DLBE program models are different, the Chicane/x bilingual teachers and students who are needed for these programs to function come from similar backgrounds and experiences.

We selected the two teachers, Maritza and Antonio, to unpack the concept of bridging and to demonstrate how Chicane/x teachers grapple with linguistic trauma and use bridging strategies, like translanguaging, in two different school contexts (i.e., one-way and two-way classrooms). What makes this analysis unique is that we are juxtaposing a teacher, Antonio, who taught in a one-way immersion classroom and another teacher, Maritza, who taught in a two-way immersion classroom. We hope to illustrate how despite student demographic differences between the one-way model, consisting of mostly heritage speakers of a minoritized language, and the two-way model, typically consisting of half the students being heritage speakers of a minoritized language, both DLBE models should aim to center the experiences of students who come from a racialized and low SES background. This examination of how two Chicane/x teachers' testimonios of their linguistic trauma can act as a bridge with and for racialized bilingual students adds to the existing literature about translanguaging and bilingual education. Employing a multi-site case study allowed us to gain more insights into how teachers who self-identify as being from the borderlands take their own bilingual experiences into the classroom even when the physical and social location extends well beyond the geopolitical borderlands.

We focus on pedagogical practices and *testimonios* to frame and understand the borderland experiences teachers draw from to inform their teaching. In the last decade the number of dual language education models have increased, especially in gentrified cities, what remains the same are the ways in which racialized bilingual students, who have the designated English Learner label, experience schooling even in additive bilingual education programs like the one-way and two-way immersion models (Palmer & García-Mateus, 2022; Chaparro, 2021; Flores, et al., 2021; Valdez, et al., 2016).

3.1 School Contexts and Demographics

The study took place in two elementary school sites in Texas within the same school district: (1) Hillside Elementary and (2) Fresno Elementary. In 2010, the local school district began shifting from the transitional bilingual education (TBE) model to the dual language bilingual education (DLBE) model. Initially, this shift began with 10 schools and Hillside Elementary was one of those schools. The school district implemented both the one-way and two-way immersion models. This decision depended on various factors including: school location, student demographics and whether the school had a history of having a wall-to-wall (or pre-kindergarten through 5th grade) transitional bilingual education program. By studying two teachers, Antonio in a one-way, and Maritza, in a two-way model, we are illustrating for readers complementary perspectives on the same research questions.

Hillside adopted the two-way immersion model because it had a strand of the transitional bilingual education model and included a student body that was predominantly Chicane/x and/or racialized students (i.e., Asian-American, South

American) from English-speaking backgrounds. Hillside was also at risk of closing due to low student enrollment. One way the Hillside community decided to try and save their school from closure was by advocating for the two-way immersion model in order to draw families to the school. The demographics for Hillside at the time of the study included 70% of the students coming from a Chicane/x background, 70% from a low SES background and 26% coming from a white background. Students from racialized and English backgrounds made up both low SES and upper middle-class. In other words, the demographic of students is never straightforward and has complexities that can be difficult to capture.

Fresno Elementary adopted the one-way immersion model because it had a long history with the TBE model, the majority of the students carried the "English learner" label and came from Spanish-speaking homes. While historically the school had catered to a mostly multi-generational Mexican American community, changing demographics and redistricting policies meant an increasingly immigrant population (including the U.S.-born children of immigrants) from Mexico and Central America were bussed to the school from other neighborhoods. The demographics for Fresno at the time of the study included over 90% from a Chicane/x background, over 95% from a low SES background and about 65% identified as English Language Learners.

Interesting to note is that both schools had a large number of students from a Chicane/x background who spoke Spanish as a heritage language or for whom Spanish was spoken in their families. In other words, many students who may have been considered English monolinguals in the school system in fact lived in homes where Spanish was spoken and had some knowledge of Spanish as a heritage language, even if they did not use it actively in school. The decisions about which model to implement were complicated and beyond the scope of this study.

3.2 Participants

Antonio taught a first-grade, one-way immersion (OWI) classroom at Fresno Elementary. His students were Chicane/x with most of them being Spanish-dominant immigrants or the U.S.-born children of Chicane/x immigrants; a very small subset tended to use more English to communicate. Antonio was bilingual and special education certified, had ten years of experience as an elementary bilingual teacher, and had worked mostly within the TBE model. For him, a bilingual education was important to fostering pride in a bilingual identity for his students. He was committed to developing students' full linguistic repertoire in both named languages (e.g., Spanish and English) and combating the hegemony of English that often made children embarrassed of using Spanish, noting that, "they worry too much about what other people think, and I guess it's part of growing up. But I do harp on that, as far as the kids that I work with, 'Take pride in that!"

Maritza taught in a 3rd grade, 50/50 two-way immersion (TWI) classroom, which included students from language-minoritized and language-majority backgrounds. She was a social worker before becoming a teacher and this was her first year as a full-time classroom teacher. Her two children were also part of the two-way immersion program at Hillside Elementary. When describing her relationship with students in her 3rd grade class she said, “On a personal level. I definitely identify more with the Latino students and their background and the circumstances with their families. It’s much closer to my experiences.” She completed her teacher internship at Hillside prior to the TWI program being implemented and observed the demographic changes the school and neighborhood were experiencing.

3.3 Researcher Positionality

The authors were raised in the U.S borderlands of Texas and California where translanguaging and transnationalism are part of everyday life, and credit their families and communities with fostering their bilingual/biliterate identities. Suzanne was raised in the Texas and California borderlands and in a home and community where translanguaging was the norm. Christian was raised a simultaneous bilingual on the Texas border. Idalia identifies as transfronteriza who grew up on the Texas-Tamaulipas border area. All authors were former bilingual elementary teachers – two-way immersion and/or transitional - and are now researchers and bilingual teacher educators. Due to their personal and professional experiences, they are committed to advocating for equitable learning opportunities with and for marginalized communities in schools.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Drawing from qualitative methods, this paper includes multi-site case studies where Suzanne collected data for 8 weeks during Fall 2013 and Christian collected weekly data for 9 weeks in Spring 2014 as participant-observers. As a participant-observer, Suzanne study was part of a larger ethnographic research project about district-wide implementation of the dual language bilingual education model (see Palmer & García-Mateus, 2022), whereas Christian collected data as part of a smaller multi-site case study working with three teachers as participants. Both data sets came from IRB approved studies which consisted of video and audio recordings of classroom interactions, field notes, and informal and formal interviews. The data for this research primarily consisted of oral discourse drawn from video and audio recordings.

We independently conducted both informal and formal interviews of the teachers which were analyzed using the concept of *testimonios*. We analyzed our own teacher data and then switched teacher data (i.e., interviews) with one another. *Testimonios* are individual accounts, such as teachers, sharing about their language practices (i.e., orally,

written, or digital) and connecting them to oppressive experiences. Our initial analysis of the data highlighted broad themes such as the inequities in language learning and the co-construction of identity. Both teachers, Maritza and Antonio, recognized the inequities racialized bilingual students experienced in their classrooms compared to more vocal peers. After sharing about the social inequities they observed in their own classrooms they connected them with their own schooling experiences. We honed in on the analysis and identified emerging themes about how each teacher actually drew from their borderlands experiences and translanguaging practices to teach in a one-way or a two-way immersion classroom. We chose to hone in on moments that exemplified what we observed in the larger picture of the two classrooms. In the subsequent section, we weave the testimonios of the two Chicane/x teachers to present the two findings: 1) untangling language histories and trauma in the borderlands and 2) translanguaging pedagogy as a way to move away from linguistic trauma by creating bridges that support bilingual students.

4. UNTANGLING LANGUAGE HISTORIES AND TRAUMA

Bilingualism on the Texas-Mexico borderlands, as characterized by the testimonios from Maritza and Antonio, revealed the discourses rooted in their language experiences and named the tensions they encountered in implementing translanguaging as a language practice and/or translanguaging as pedagogy. To demonstrate this, we first share Antonio's experiences by incorporating excerpts of his testimonio, and we follow with Martiza's testimonio.

4.1 Testimonio de Antonio

As with many border families, Antonio's languaging experiences were often dichotomized between Spanish/English and home/school. Antonio was raised in a Spanish-dominant home to a working-class family. His family experiences and memories stemmed from experiencing life on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border– a border-crosser. As a young child, his father commuted daily to the U.S. side for work until the family was able to make the move to the United States. With Spanish-dominant speaking parents and older siblings who had been born and raised in Mexico, translanguaging at home included standardized varieties of Spanish from Mexico. Antonio recalled growing up with his parents' music—trios and rancheras in Spanish from Mexican artists (e.g., Vicente Fernandez and Antonio Aguilar). Physical border crossings to the Mexican side were frequent and part of his norm. Antonio shared that this was a time to play with cousins and visit extended family.

Conversely, schooling experiences were mostly characterized as using standardized English. Antonio entered the U.S. school system in early elementary, which he described

as a "sink-or-swim" situation. Yet, he felt that exposure to English as a young child had offered him an advantage over those he knew that had come to the U.S. as older children or adolescents. He shared:

> That was my experience as far as learning. A little bit easier, being relatively young. Plus at the same time, challenging cause you're right there, like they say, a nadar (Start swimming)! [...] Sometimes I feel like I'm still trying not to sink.

Antonio navigated the tension of surviving this approach and reaping what he believes to be the benefits of early exposure to English. The sink-or-swim approach, as Flores and Murillo (2001) note, has been a common language education model in U.S. schools that has produced harm and trauma for generations of bilingual border communities. Such a trauma instills the message that within the border's Spanish-English dichotomy, English is what matters most for academic and financial success, as well as mobility, in the U.S. (Portes & Rivas, 2011). This chasm between English-only ideology and the linguistic reality of the borderlands can lead to shame and language loss (Smith, 2002).

As an adolescent, Antonio shared that Spanish took a backseat in value and it was in young adulthood that he began to appreciate Spanish and work to reclaim it.

> You go through these stages, especially [in] middle school where you know the Spanish and you still communicate [in] Spanish with your parents, [...] but it really was only in the house that you spoke it, and much later you find out, as you mature and grow, the benefits of the two languages. [...]It was probably just a stage. You're so self-conscious of how you dress, how you look, or how you sound.

Antonio's words embodied the tensions that exist for Chicane/x communities on the border. Home became one of the few spaces in which Spanish was affirmed through its use. This was not the case for school. These dichotomies (school vs home and English vs Spanish) reproduce the cultural and linguistic hierarchies that have historically and ideologically shaped the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2007). For minoritized families whose home-based cultural and linguistic practices are often viewed as deficient, this has led to generational home language loss (Montrul, 2007), which can have a detrimental impact on Chicane/x communities in the U.S., by distancing them from their families, histories, and cultural identities (Farrugio, 2010; Surrain, 2021).

As an adult, Antonio had to be proactive about re-building a bilingual identity and move beyond his self-perceived limitations in Spanish:

> I know when I talk Spanish I might butcher a word, but there's so many resources that I'm not going to make that mistake again. Or I could go and find out, 'Okay, what is the right pronunciation?' Or maybe, 'that's not a cognate'. Understanding that not all the words translate. But yeah, I do value [bilingualism].

In the duality of English-Spanish bilingualism, bilinguals are not only dealing with the hegemony of English. They are also hyper-aware of the tensions between standardized and other varieties of Spanish that can materialize when interacting with other Spanish speakers. Hundreds of years of colonialism have reinforced the idea that the

borderlands are not the standard for "good Spanish" (Anzaldúa, 2007; Mignolo, 2000), so borderland bilinguals are constantly in a state of progressing towards "knowing" Spanish. Antonio described bilingual development as an on-going process that required individuals to take pride in but also keep working on.

When talking about his use of English and Spanish in the classroom, especially around content areas, Antonio states: "*me defiendo"* (I know enough to get by). He grappled with this tension, despite having grown up bilingual in a bilingual community, and having a decade's worth of experience as a certified bilingual teacher (Zúñiga & Colegrove, in press). The trauma of border dwellers is in the feeling of never being enough. There is a constant, never ending state of continuing to build a bilingual identity that satisfies the standardized norms of two languages. Yet, Antonio worked as a bridge for his students. He believed that his students' bilingual abilities were an asset to their understanding of academic content in English and in nurturing strong bilingual identities.

4.2 Testimonio de Maritza

Maritza was born alongside the U.S./Mexico border and moved away to the Midwest after her parent's divorce when she was in kindergarten. She spoke mostly English in the Midwest and remembers speaking mostly Spanish when visiting her mother during the summers in Central Texas. Crossing the international U.S.-Mexico border was part of a normal experience for her as she went to Mexico to visit family. In the quote below, Maritza describes what translanguaging was like for her both at home and in the community.

> So my parents are immigrants, I'm the first generation, born in Mexico and Spanish was my first language. At home for, I don't know, I guess until maybe like [until] I started school I used Spanish all the time at home with my mom, absolutely with my mom. My mom only spoke Spanish until way, way later. A lot of my time, in my youth, I remember having to translate for my mom in public settings, restaurants and whatnot.

Part of Martiza's translanguaging practices during her childhood included serving as a language broker (Orellana, 2001) for her mother. Language brokering involves translating between different named languages and for Maritza this meant between English and Spanish and in different contexts (e.g., doctor visits, bank, school, etc.). In the quote below, Martiza shares about her schooling experiences in kindergarten and describes it as a place that felt very disconnected from her identity:

> I couldn't relate to the songs that children were singing, even though that was in kindergarten. It stayed with me enough to this [day]...that feeling of - I didn't want children to come to school and not have a sense of belonging because something was distinguishing them... part of my upbringing was never having school as a place to see myself. I wanted to be a teacher that created spaces where children could see themselves. So this population of students was even more challenging because of what I had planned ...my intention as a teacher wasn't a reflection of these [new] children.

> [The] books that I had picked didn't speak to them. All of these ideas that I thought were important for us to be discussing weren't important for that. So it was almost like my pedagogy didn't align with them... there were less and less brown kids in my classroom and more and more white kids... or white presenting kids."

Maritza's testimonio offers an explanation of how she was *untangling her trauma*, not just as a child, but as a teacher. The trauma she experienced shaped her pedagogy by creating opportunities for students to see themselves in the curriculum and cultivating a sense of belonging in the classroom. By connecting her experiences in the borderlands, Maritza explains how Chicane/x children should not only be able to feel a sense of belonging at school, but also be able to "see themselves" in the curriculum and in their teacher. In the quote below, Martiza explained how her pedagogy did not speak to, or align with, the needs and interests of the new and mostly white students, but rather created critical bridges for the Chicane/x children.

> There was a parent who donated lots of money, did lots of things for the school. Their child didn't want to be in the dual language class, and didn't want to attempt to learn Spanish. My mentality of it was that it was already hard for me to accept that I had to teach [white, upper middle class] children which wasn't my intention as a teacher, but then also to try to share with them something very personal, which was language with them when they were actively disrespectful to the language and to the culture. There was a day that I had parents come for coffee in the classroom and there was, I don't know, maybe about seven parents in the room. And the father of this child said, 'You know, my son just doesn't want to come to your class. He's scared of coming to your class. It's just gotten so bad. It's gotten to the point where we just refer to your class as Miss Moctezuma's revenge.' And I was like, 'What the [expletive]?' [He said this] in front of everyone. And I just was like, 'Well, I'm sorry to hear that, and you're welcome to stay after and have a conversation with me.' That's the only thing that I could muster myself to say.

In the interaction above, Maritza acted as a bridge between herself and her classroom community. She describes how in a moment of panic she was able to collect her composure and respond with a positive solution to the parent's inappropriate comment about his son's experience in her class. Maritza also acted as a bridge between herself and a white man. She was able to mediate an altercation between herself and a parent in a public space in a way that was humanizing for herself as a teacher of Color. We see the act of bridging as a pivotal part of the development of a borderlands translanguaging pedagogy and will explain further in the next section.

5. BORDERLANDS TRANSLANGUAGING PEDAGOGY: CREATING BRIDGES

In this second finding, we use examples from classroom observations and the teachers' testimonios to show how they were creating bridges for their students. Here we considered these creative and strategic pedagogical bridges as a result of their borderlands translanguaging pedagogy and as a way to resist the perpetuation of

linguistic violence and trauma in Chicane/x bilingual communities and in children. Drawing from our model (see Figure 1), these bridges were purposeful in using translanguaging to create spaces for students' bilingual bicultural identities and knowledge, build connections between home and academic language and learning, cultural connections, and to create a sense of community.

5.1 Translanguaging to Bridge Bicultural Identities

Maritza embraced translanguaging in her pedagogy in a way that also created a bridge for her racialized students' bicultural identities. Here, the act of *bridging* demonstrated that it can be both a conscious and unconscious mediator between self, community, colonization and hegemony. We use the term bicultural identities to refer to student's border-crossing lived experiences and language practices. In this case, centering on students' border-crossing identities through materials, content, and pedagogy created a space for students to connect, see their identities in the curriculum, and address issues of social justice.

For instance, Maritza used multilingual children's books in her classroom. One book she used was titled, *My Name is Jorge on Both Sides of the River* by Jane Medina (1999) which sheds light on common experiences Chicane/x students experience in the U.S. upon immigrating. The book is a collection of bilingual poems written from the perspective of a young student, Jorge, who recently immigrated to a new and English-speaking country, the U.S.A. The poem, My Name is Jorge, stressed the importance of saying names in Spanish and not changing them altogether. During the read aloud, Maritza connected what was happening to Jorge when a teacher and other students changed his name to "George", to how students in her class feel when their name is mispronounced or misspelled. Maritza said,

> Tal cómo a Lila le molesta mucho cuando le ponen doble /L/ , o cuando a Mimí no le ponen acento en la /i/, o cuando yo era niña y me decían Marítza sin pronunciar la /r/ bien en mi nombre, o me llamaban "Mary." Mi nombre no es "Mary." Mi nombre no es Maritzzuh. Mi nombre no es Ms. Moh-rah-lez (for Ms. Morales). La calle no es Guadaloop, es Guada-LUPE. La calle no es San Jahsintoh, es San Jacinto. Tenemos que honrar el lenguaje sea español, sea inglés. Tienes que honrar y respetar el idioma. Como no más cambiarlo como tú quieras. Tu no tienes ese derecho. // Like how it bothers Lili very much when they put 2 L's in her name or like when they forget the accent over the "i" in Mimí' name, or when they would call me Marítza without rolling the "r" well in my name, or they would call me Mary. My name is not Mary. My name is not Mah-ritz-ah. My name is not Ms. Moh-rah-lez. The street is not Guad-a-loop, it's Guadalupe. The street is not San Jug-sin-toh, it's San Jacinto. We have to honor the language whether it is English or Spanish. You have to honor and respect the language. You can't just change it however you like. You don't have that right.

Maritza's decision to purposefully select relevant and critical children's literature acted as a bridge that helped her navigate her role as a teacher of Chiane/x students in a

gentrified school. The book of poems reflected the identities of Chicane/x students and provided a sense of belonging because it highlighted a common experience—the mispronunciation of Spanish names. In the quote above, Maritza was referring to the names of children in her class and local streets in the community in which the school was located. Maritza used the book of poems in order to honor students' cultural and linguistic heritage. When Maritza expresses "honoring and respecting the language", in this case Spanish, she is speaking to students who come from a mostly privileged background and whose families have played a significant role in gentrifying the dual language program at Hillside Elementary.

In other words, while she is expressing what seems to be a form of linguistic purism, the impact of her words would be strikingly different if the entire class came from a Chicane/x and a lower socio-economic background. She also modeled her Chicane/x name and how she has experienced this personally in order to model how she corrects the mispronunciation of her name. This explicit modeling demonstrates what agency looks and sounds like by providing the words for the Chicane/x students in her class to say something like, "No, that is not the correct pronunciation, and *this* is how to say my name."

At the same time, while the poem was an experience *all* students could relate to, the mispronunciation of names, rather than use the names of students in her class that were considered heritage speakers, Maritza selected the names of students from privileged backgrounds, such as Lila and Mimi. However, in this instance it served as a bridge to support the white, privileged students in understanding the importance of this experience and of pronouncing their Chicane/x peers' names correctly. This critical instructional approach was also reflective of Maritza's experience straddling two cultural worlds, within a TWI program that served two communities, and worked within those constraints.

5.2 Translanguaging to Bridge Bilingual Identities

As a bilingual teacher, Antonio brought to his role the experience and trauma of divesting from his home language as an adolescent, learning to value his home language, and now growing his confidence as a Spanish speaker. He described his bilingual abilities as more confident in social conversations than academic ones: "I feel I can carry a conversation both in English and Spanish. Obviously a social conversation. When you start talking [about] specialty areas, they are languages in [them]selves" (Zúñiga & Colegrove, 2025). Consequently, his translanguaging pedagogy aimed to build his students' value for bilingualism by building their confidence in navigating discipline-specific terminology and reinforcing the importance of taking pride in one's bilingualism and background. He recognized that students' messages were often more important than how they said it or in what language.

> I let them know that you don't have to answer in English. […] I think that's where I have been more successful cause I find myself, [having] to say that less and less. Where they know that they have got that save. A lot of times I don't know if you've heard me say, "Well that's fine how you [are] say[ing] [it] because we are…?" And they finish up, 'We're bilingual!'

Antonio honed in on the idea that bilingualism was a resource that gave one options to communicate and express oneself. In this regard, the duality of English and Spanish was present but there was no hierarchical order assigned to these languages (Mignolo, 2000). The ability to move fluidly between languages as part of a larger meaning-making process is an actional tool for bridging and children's understanding of their linguistic identity to embrace: "We're bilingual!"

In his teaching approach, Antonio bridged the duality of the English/Spanish paradigm but aimed to explore that dichotomy as opposed to assigning it a status (Mignolo, 2000). He recognized that his students' success was contingent on their ability to navigate both languages confidently and value their bilingual identities. Likewise, Antonio's approach offered a *bridge* that aimed to erase the home/school dichotomy that Antonio was forced to experience in his childhood. He understood that bilingualism requires a flexibility of language, while still standing one's ground for who one is and where they come from (Anzaldúa, 2009).

5.3 Translanguaging to Bridge Language Learning

One of the biggest dualities in bilingual education is the academic vs. social language paradigm (Cummins, 2008). MacSwan (2020) argues that "academic" English has been adopted into a standardized language ideology that privileges the language use of a socially and economically more powerful class. Consequently, teachers and administrators can often understand "academic language" as fatalistic—children either have academic language, based on their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, or they do not, which can have negative consequences for the quality of instruction that culturally and linguistically diverse students receive (Adair & Colegrove, 2021). We recognize that content areas, like math and science, have discipline-specific terminology and discourse structures that need to be directly taught to emergent bilinguals in both named languages (Aquino-Sterling & Rodríguez-Valls, 2016; Ramírez & Celedón-Pattichis, 2012; Rodríguez & Musanti, 2014). However, a translanguaging pedagogy has the potential to support academic language learning by embracing students' full linguistic repertoire as they navigate multiple literacies across content areas (García & Kleifgen, 2020).

In Antonio's class, for example, math lessons were in English and consequently this required students to draw on their full linguistic repertoire as they navigated math content and terminology. In the interaction below, the class goes on a tangent during a lesson about money.

> Hernan: Wait! What are taxes?
>
> Antonio: Oh, taxes. Taxes, you know when we go buy something sometimes you say…
>
> Hernan: One dollar.
>
> Antonio: One dollar (writes on board)
>
> Hernan: 1.99
>
> Antonio: 1.99 (writes on board), right.
>
> Student 1: So…that means that 1 dollar and 99 cents.
>
> Student 2: Or 25 cents.
>
> Karla: Pero no es un dólar. [But it 's not a dollar.]
>
> Antonio: We use this word, Karla (writes on board) “taxes”
>
> Hernan: Lo que yo pienso es cuando…[What I think is that…]
>
> Antonio: Wait, wait. This is very important. I love this conversation, but we need to be good listeners. What do you think, Karla?
>
> Karla: That taxes means that maybe they higher the price.
>
> Antonio: ¡Excelente! So, you’ve seen where it says 1.99 plus tax (writes on board).
>
> Karla: I think you give more. You need to give more.

Here we see Antonio and his students use their experiences, translanguaging and, by extension, their bilingual identities to engage in this spontaneous conversation. This is especially apparent for Karla, who initially expresses herself in Spanish, but is able to grasp the concept of “taxes”, despite it being discussed in English. She is then able to demonstrate and explain her understanding in English, albeit with a few syntactic errors. In other words, Antonio used the translanguaging pedagogy, which Karla was able to leverage, for English language learning.

> Basically, for communication to continue… [it’s] the language you feel the most safe in. Knowing that there’s social language and also academic language, I think, is very important for them to be able to express themselves.

For Antonio, his students’ ability to express themselves fearlessly was key to building their confidence as bilingual learners. While Antonio names the existence of both “social” and “academic” language, we view his use of translanguaging pedagogy as the process that bridges “academic” and “social” language for communication to take place. This reality, then, makes the binary obsolete.

In untangling his own language history, Antonio dichotomized his use of English and Spanish between home and school. Furthermore, he drew on survival metaphors to describe his experiences as a young emergent bilingual. By drawing on a

translanguaging pedagogy, he aims to help his students do more than "survive" or "get by". He invites them to fully embrace their bilingual identities and abilities as a resource to navigate unfamiliar terms and concepts and thereby build their confidence as learners (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Zúñiga & Colegrove, 2025). This is key to seeking to maintain a bilingual identity and seeing oneself as part of a larger bilingual and Latinx/e community.

5.4 Translanguaging to Bridge Self and Community

Bridging is when an individual mediates between *self* and their *community* as an attempt to negotiate one's identity and as a way to stand their ground or risk losing oneself in the dualities and complexities of the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2009). Meaning, when identities or identity markers of minoritized communities are weaponized by questioning/challenging an individual's identity. These micro-discourses are reflective of larger systemic discourses that position their ways of being as deviant from the norm and that marginalize the communities affiliated to these identity or identity markers.

In the following transcript, the class had transitioned from a small group discussion to a whole group discussion about which words rhyme in a poem. The discussion between Maritza and Tessa (a white, middle-class, bilingual) shifted from several students offering their opinions to a debate solely between Tessa, speaking in English, and Maritza, speaking in Spanish.

> Maritza: Alright. cinco, cuatro, tres, dos, uno. La rima no puede estar en el mismo verso. Cuando es una rima, va a estar en un verso al otro. Hasta puede ser así (pointing to screen), o así, y éstos o éstos. O estas dos. O estas dos. Pero rimas no van a existir en el mismo verso. Okay? Okay. Vamos a comenzar con la pregunta, que tienen todos. Rima ¿Hablar y llorar? / The rhyme cannot be in the same verse. When there is a rhyme, it will be in one verse or another. It can even be like this (pointing to screen), or like this, like these and these. Or these two. Or these two. Rhymes will not exist in the same verse. Okay? Okay. Let's begin with the question everyone has. Do they rhyme? Talk and cry?
>
> Class: Síií. / Yesss.
>
> Martiza: No rima [pointing to hablar and llorar]. / They don't rhyme
>
> Tessa [stands up and walks up to the projector]: Yeah, it does! Because it ends with the same letters (pointing to screen) and it sounds the same.
>
> Martiza: Pero en esta…. calle, nadie. Abuelo, buñuelo. Abuela, ciruela. Tía, sandía. Primo, pepino. Hermana, manzana. / But in this one…street, no one. Grandpa, pastry. Grandma, plum. Aunt, watermelon. Cousin, cucumber. Sister, apple. [all words that rhyme in Spanish]
>
> Tessa: Well, that's clearly a rhyme.

> Maritza: Sí. Pero, ésta, como que no se oye mucho, quizás yo estoy equivocada. Voy a consultar... / Yes. But, this one, I can't really hear it, maybe I'm wrong. I am going to consult...
>
> Tessa: ... with a Spanish expert.

The translanguaging discussion between Maritza and Tessa is an example of *bridging* between self and community. Maritza's use and understanding of Spanish was being challenged by a white, middle-class student named Tessa. Tessa is correct in pointing out that hablar/llorar rhyme in Spanish which is grounded in the rules covered by Maritza. However, the way in which she challenges Maritza's knowledge of the Spanish language conventions by walking in front of her peers which included students of Color who spoke Spanish as their home language, and the teacher is contentious. Tessa's approach in a way contributes to the trauma of linguistic policing and violence against heritage Spanish speakers from the borderlands, like Maritza. In turn, this positioned Maritza as not knowing enough or the "proper" Spanish conventions, forcing her to seek a "Spanish expert". As Anzaldúa (1987) notes this linguistic violence has historically been applied to communities from the borderlands and this example demonstrates how this continues to happen.

Further, Anzaldúa (2009) describes bridging as an act of survival. In this situation, Maritza could have simply accepted Tessa's explanation and positioned her as a white student and as an expert of Spanish, the language of her students of Color. However, rather than giving into this racialized power dynamic, she stood her ground and instead said that she would seek a Spanish expert, which was a person of Color who spoke Spanish. Maritza stood her ground in order to sustain her linguistic identity, as a self-identified Chicana from the borderlands, when she said that she will have to consult a Spanish expert rather than agreeing with Tessa. By doing so, Maritza also allowed the rest of her students of Color who spoke Spanish as their home or heritage language to see themselves represented in the Spanish expert, rather than delegitimizing them by positioning Tessa as an expert of Spanish. Another interpretation of this exchange is the linguistic trauma Maritza was subjected to by the white families who had enrolled their students in Hillside's TWI program (see pg. 8 white parent's "Monteczuma's revenge" comment) . In her own way, Maritza was able to use bridging to navigate the continued linguistic trauma for herself and her students of Color. This act was a demonstration of her bridging herself in this contentious situation, and her community being her students of Color or Chicane/x backgrounds.

6. DISCUSSION

A *borderlands translanguaging theory* urges Chicane/x educators to reflect on past experiences and the importance in untangling trauma in order to fully embrace a translanguaging pedagogy that creates a space for teachers and students to take action towards deconstructing inequities. While the data in this paper are from over 10 years

ago, the themes and tensions revealed persist and are still very relevant, based on recent scholarship in this area and the political climate in the U.S. that continues to impose English-only policies that exclude the bi/multilingual identities of border crossers. We see the role of testimonios as a critical tool that can help teachers reveal and name the oppressions they have lived through. Cervantes-Soon and Carillo (2018) described testimonios as "the ability to critically historicize the body, mind, spirit and experiences to connect them to larger social structures and thus serve as a point of departure in the articulation and exchange of theory in the flesh, and border" (p. 291). In this case, testimonios can serve as an entry point to dismantle linguistic borders, and embrace translanguaging pedagogy.

A borderlands translanguaging pedagogy is also about opening up spaces in the classroom where children can draw from their full linguistic repertoire and deliberately imagining and engaging in acts of bridging for students who also experience marginalization. In this study, both Antonio and Maritza used their linguistic histories and trauma to reimagine bilingualism for their students using a translanguaging pedagogical lens. They bridged their students' bilingual identities, their home languages, and knowledge in order to overcome and begin to heal the harm and trauma produced by the dichotomies and hierarchies reproduced in dual language approaches.

The dual language classrooms discussed in this article exist in the geopolitical borderlands of Texas where the value of bi/multilingualism has been tenuous for Chicane/x communities. We argue alongside other scholars (Rosa & Flores, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2023), that these classrooms are borderlands where teachers and students are able to transform the experiences of linguistic trauma to inform how they choose to implement a borderlands translanguaging pedagogy to make meaning and have fortuitous learning outcomes. However, like the border, these are also tension-filled spaces. Both Antonio and Maritza, enacted bridging when they drew from a critical teaching practice to support students' learning while also modeling powerful ways to counteract social inequities such as the mispronunciation of a name or to sustain a student's bilingual identity. Through the critical combination of translanguaging and bridging, these teachers powerfully forge new pathways of agency and crossing for their bi/multilingual students.

7. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

These findings impact teacher education and dual language programs. Both Maritza and Antonio came from bilingual and bicultural backgrounds that positioned them to recognize social and structural inequities in their dual language classrooms. Yet, they each navigated the larger tensions of their professional goals by helping students navigate academic structures while also fostering strong bilingual identities. This suggests that teacher education programs must strive to critically engage teacher candidates in and through dialogue around issues of language inequities and holistic

understandings of bilingualism as important to learning theory and application (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). This includes re-building the confidence of Chicane/x teacher candidates to work in English-Spanish programs as they explore their own bilingual identities and trauma (Zúñiga, 2019; Zúñiga, et al., 2024).

As the popularity of DLBE programs expands, we cannot forget the sociocultural contexts in which they exist, particularly within the current administration that is imposing exclusionary language policies and deportations through dehumanizing policing and raids. Dual language programs should be a safe place that offer hope against English-only policies and deportations. Some of the inequities that arise include, but are not limited to, whose voice gets heard during academic and language learning (Pimental, et al., 2008). If we are truly dedicated to valuing bilingualism, then we must acknowledge the contradictory experiences that exist in the borderlands, especially now more than ever. These experiences include oppressive ideologies about what it means to be a racialized bi/multilingual in the borderlands, but also culturally affirming experiences in Chicane/x communities. Schools must recognize and embrace the power of borderlands as a space for learning, meaning making, and exercising the fundamental human right to learning through and with the experiences of translanguaging in our communities.

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