

Chapter 2

The Terrorized Experiences of Latina Bilingual Preservice Teachers With Language and Race

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ABSTRACT

The United States is a multilingual country, yet there continues to be a deficit view of languages spoken in classrooms other than English. The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of Latina bilingual preservice teachers in relationship to language and race. Specifically, the authors consider how linguistic terrorism and racism influence future career decision-making for these students. This qualitative study considers the lived experiences of eight bilingual preservice teachers in California and Texas. Utilizing narrative inquiry from a grounded theory perspective, the study examines the experiences surrounding their use of Spanish and how they are treated as racialized beings. Findings demonstrate how the participants turned these negative experiences into motivation and fuel to become bilingual classroom teachers. Conclusions suggest the need to restructure educator preparation programs addressing the challenges faced by future teachers as they navigate raciolinguistic spaces in their educational journeys. Implications for research, policy, and practice are presented.

The Terrorized Experiences of Latina Bilingual Preservice Teachers

“So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 81).

INTRODUCTION

The United States is a multilingual country, yet despite numerous languages represented in rural and urban areas, there continues to be a deficit view of languages other than English spoken in classrooms. As the country becomes more diverse, the demand for Spanish bilingual teachers has steadily increased. However, subtractive schooling policies and practices (Valenzuela, 1999) and second language misconceptions have negatively influenced the way language learning is viewed which has led many Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals to lose their language. In fact, often once emergent bilinguals start school, they “learn to develop negative views of themselves and their linguistic dexterity as racialized individuals” (Fallas-Escobar, 2023, p. 3). One outcome of the systemic disruptive view of language has resulted in bilingual teacher shortages (Horn et al., 2021).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the lived experiences of Latina bilingual preservice teachers from California and Texas and how their educational trajectories are shaped by language and race. Building from Anzaldúa’s (1999) work, we operationalize linguistic terrorism to disentangle problematic experiences around the Spanish language. As the opening quote reminds us, language is inextricably linked to race. We define linguistic terrorism as actions that produce feelings of intimidation, shame, and fear for individuals that speak a “minority” language, which creates a hierarchy of power dictating what is acceptable behavior and what is not (Anzaldúa, 1999). The conceptual frameworks are presented next followed by a review of literature.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This study is informed by a raciolinguistic framework and Latinx Critical Race Theory.

Raciolinguistic Framework

The first framework focuses on the co-naturalization of race and language and the intersectionality of other categories, such as class, gender, and sexuality (Alim, 2016). Raciolinguistics contends that historical and structural processes that maintain institutionalized hierarchies which continue to subordinate minoritized races and languages need to be interrogated, decolonized, and eradicated to achieve authentic diversity discourse (Rosa & Flores, 2017). In education, Flores and Rosa (2015) point out that additive approaches to bilingual education subscribe to a discourse of “appropriateness,” (p. 150) which they argue is rooted in the standardization of language practices that result in the conceptualization and acceptance of “academic English” or what Flores and Rosa refer to as “Standard English” (p.151) and for this context “academic Spanish.” This standardization of language is an ideological practice adopted and practiced in schools today that maintains the conflation of racialized bodies and attributed linguistic deficiency. In other words, when observing the rich linguistic repertoires of diverse youth in school,

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