Racist and Raciolinguistic Teacher Ideologies: When Bilingual Education is “Inherently Culturally Relevant” for Latinxs

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Abstract

Many schools attempt to address the needs of “English-language learners,” who usually are Spanish-dominant Latinxs, by offering dual-language (DL) bilingual education. While undertaking a larger ethnographic study of one such secondary-level dual-language program, I examined how dual-language teachers understood the program as equitable for Latinxs. I found that teachers believed DL met Latinxs’ needs by providing Spanish-language/biliteracy schooling, which deemphasized the need for explicitly enhancing youths’ critical consciousness. This teacher ideology of assuming DL is “*inherently culturally relevant*” led to significant issues. For example, teachers believed DL would improve Latinxs’ academic achievement, but when teachers perceived Latinx achievement was not on par with White dual-language students’ outcomes, teachers made sense of Latinxs’ underperformance in DL through racist explanations and did not interrogate the program’s cultural relevance. Specifically, teachers pointed to the program not providing Latinxs the needed Spanish input even though the Latinx students self-identified as bilingual and were the “Spanish-dominant” students, and teachers pointed to Latinxs’ cultural and familial deficits. I argue teachers overlooked critical-racial consciousness as an important component of an equitable education. Implications include for teachers to cultivate their critical-racial consciousness, interrogate raciolinguistic ideologies, and define an equitable DL as centering critical-racial consciousness.

Keywords Bilingual education · Teachers · Racism · Latinos · Hispanics · Critical consciousness · Culturally relevant education

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Introduction

Latinxs—like all racialized people¹—historically have been underserved in U.S. education, a fact leading to the necessity for schools and teachers to provide educational equity that considers the specificity and intersections of Latinxs’ condition and needs. One way some have conceptualized the needs of Latinxs, who make up the majority of those labelled as “English-language learners” (ELs), is through the need for their schooling to offer bilingual education. A popular bilingual-education model in urban schools is *two-way dual-language* (DL). DL teaches academic content in two languages and purposefully mixes students who are classified as either “Spanish-dominant” (i.e., usually Latinx) or “English-dominant” (i.e., often White) to promote academic achievement, bilingualism, and sociocultural competence for all, but especially for Latinx ELs. Despite enthusiasm about DL’s potential, some research highlights concerns about DL’s ability to provide Latinxs and other racialized students an equitable education due to social hierarchies and the unequal distribution of power (e.g., Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). Some of these scholars argue dual-language teachers need to emphasize critical consciousness in order to deliver an equitable education (e.g., Palmer et al., 2019), a stance that aligns with scholarship spanning decades showing the importance of teachers enhancing students’ critical consciousness (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2012; Darder, 1991; Freire, 1973). I have proposed DL should center *critical-racial consciousness*, an extension of critical consciousness that emphasizes race and counters the pervasive race-evasiveness in the U.S. (Chávez-Moreno, in press).

While researchers debate DL’s promises and pitfalls, dual-language teachers also are keenly aware of DL’s tensions (Babino & Stewart, 2018), form ideas about how DL delivers equity, and, just like other teachers, notice racial patterns in student achievement (Lewis, 2011; Pollock, 2001). Given the pressing issue of improving Latinxs’ educational experiences and the importance of the intersection of racialization and language to Latinxs, it is important to understand teachers’ ideologies because these affect their views of students and of how their own work promotes equity for Latinxs. Additionally, their explanations of the persistent disparities they perceive in their classrooms influence their practices and what they view as needed interventions (e.g., Bartolomé & Trueba, 2000; Philip, 2011), for example, how/whether they enhance youths’ critical consciousness, engage in racism that is covert and hidden (Kohli et al., 2017), and/or subvert racist policies affecting language instruction (Lapayese, 2007).

This article explores teachers’ ideologies about equity for Latinxs in DL. The inquiry emerged from hearing dual-language teachers in my research study often describe DL as culturally relevant, leading me to the research question: *According to*

¹ I use “racialized” instead of “people of color” to refer to Asian American, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Muslim/Arab people and those at the intersections. The term “racialized” signals that racialization happens not only through phenotype and other marked “differences,” but also through social processes that use whiteness, language, and other constructions to dehumanize and that result in grave material consequences for the Othered.

the dual-language teachers, how does DL provide Latinx students a culturally relevant and equitable education? Teachers often repeated ideas such as “the research suggests” DL delivers a high-quality bilingual education to all, especially for Latinx ELs (e.g., Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011). Nonetheless, they expressed dismay that their Latinx students, many of whom participated in their urban school’s dual-language option since elementary, were not achieving as well as they expected, that is, the same or better than their White peers in DL. Considering teachers believed the program addressed Latinxs’ needs while teachers voiced dissonance around expected outcomes prompted me to also investigate: *How do teachers understand what they perceive as Latinxs’ underperformance in DL?* In this inquiry, I center ideologies with the rationale that exposing oppressive discourses can lead to challenging these and thus move toward educational justice for Latinxs. How dual-language teachers make sense of DL providing equity and of racial disparities should inform researchers’ debate about how DL can advance justice for Latinxs. Additionally, I define critical-racial consciousness as part of an equitable dual-language education for Latinxs, and I use this to ground my inquiry.

To start, I present the literature and theoretical perspectives guiding this study. I then describe the context and methodology. In the findings, I show how teachers’ understandings of DL as culturally relevant and of seeing Latinxs as needing language together constructed equity as providing Latinxs access to biliteracy and language representation. That is, teachers saw the program’s biliteracy and Spanish language/biliteracy as equitable for Latinxs and what was needed to improve Latinxs’ academic achievement. I theorize teachers believed the dual-language program was “*inherently culturally relevant*,” and I use the term to describe how teachers’ viewed the dual-language program and I put the term in quotes as a critique of the assumption that DL benefits Latinx youth even when DL overlooks critical consciousness. Viewing DL as “*inherently culturally relevant*” led to significant tensions, for example, it precluded teachers from imagining their work in DL as needing to explicitly enhance youths’ critical-racial consciousness in order to provide equity. Additionally, teachers’ raciolinguistic ideologies coupled with their view of the program as “*inherently culturally relevant*” meant that teachers fell back on racist explanations when they perceived Latinxs underperformed. Teachers, for example, believed Latinxs needed more language and literacy, and they pointed to Latinxs’ cultural and familiar deficits. I end by discussing implications for Latinx equity, including highlighting the importance of teachers developing their critical-racial consciousness and recognizing racist ideologies, both of which influence their evaluations of Latinxs.

Relevant Literature and Theoretical Perspectives

I drew from critical-racial consciousness and raciolinguistic ideologies.

Critical-Racial Consciousness

As explained in other work (Chávez-Moreno, in press), I conceptualize *critical-racial consciousness* by drawing from Freire's (1973) *critical consciousness*. I insert "racial" because the U.S. normalizes race-evasiveness, necessitating explicit attention to racial ideologies. My conceptualization draws from foundational scholarship, such as Ladson-Billings' (1995) *culturally relevant pedagogy*—the practices of masterful teachers of Black students—which has three components: academic achievement, cultural competency, and critical consciousness. Since 1995, the term "culturally relevant" has become widespread in education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016), helping define an equitable education for ELs (Lee, 2010). While discursively ubiquitous, Ladson-Billings (2014) claims her theorization in practice often results in, for example, adding multicultural celebrations, and in neglecting critical consciousness, that of understanding the structures and ideologies that oppress people and taking action for a more just society.

The three components of a culturally relevant education correspond to DL's goals, which include academic achievement, sociocultural competency, biliteracy/bilingualism (not explicit in culturally relevant education), and a recently added fourth goal of critical consciousness (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2019). Palmer et al., (2019) convincingly argue for making critical consciousness DL's primary goal because its addition "radicalizes the original three goals" (p. 129) by changing how these get enacted. Focusing on critical consciousness engenders, for example, choosing bilingual literature that centers the knowledges of historically Otherized communities and helps youth interrogate power relationships. Furthermore, they maintain that centering critical consciousness in DL is imperative if "students from historically minoritized communities [are to] 'achieve'" (p. 130), effectively highlighting critical consciousness' essential role in providing educational equity to Latinxs and ELs. This claim undergirds my research study.

Despite renewed attention, focusing on critical consciousness in bilingual education is not new. Darder (1991), for example, calls for bilingual education to include critical pedagogy, a founding method for developing critical consciousness. What is new are DL's context, student diversity, ideologies, and goals in comparison to bilingual-education models that only include ELs, and some of which have a remedial stigma and/or subtract other languages to acquire English (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a). These differences matter to how dual-language teachers understand what equity is, critical consciousness' role, and the challenges they face teaching diverse classrooms. For example, the perceived benefits of DL's bilingualism/biliteracy goal has led DL to be popular among middle-class Whites, which at times result in exacerbating inequities affecting racialized people (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). These circumstances merit attention by researchers into dual-language teachers' understanding of critical consciousness and its relationship to equity.

In conceptual articles, bilingual-education scholars have highlighted the need to include critical consciousness in order to challenge hegemonic ideologies and practices (e.g., Alfaro, 2019; Palmer et al., 2019). In a recent study, Heiman (2021) found an elementary-level teacher's pedagogies prioritizing critical consciousness impacted other teaching facets and lead to generative practices. Freire and Valdez

(2017) found that a lack of time, materials, knowledge, and inclination were major obstacles elementary-DL teachers face when implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, especially regarding critical consciousness. My own research examining a secondary-level dual-language program's pedagogy shows few teachers teach to enhance youths' critical-racial consciousness because of their lack of comfort or preparation with teaching about race and racism, or assuming other dual-language teachers do this work (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a).

Raciolinguistic Ideologies

Racist ideologies are societal ideas that claim, incorrectly, people have evolved into distinct biological groups and that associate these distinctions to people's superiority and inferiority. These ideologies mark bodies in order to dehumanize and subjugate people, and thus intertwine with sociohistorical processes such as chattel slavery, colonialism, occupation, theft of Indigenous land, and imperialism (Chávez-Moreno, 2021b, 2021c). Under the umbrella of racist ideologies, raciolinguistic ideologies are oppressive societal ideas that relate to language and racialization. Raciolinguistic ideologies focus on how people use language to racialize others and to shape ideas about race (Flores & Rosa, 2015). One such raciolinguistic ideology is that of seeing Latinxs as a racial group whose boundaries are delineated by the Spanish language, that is, imagines Latinxs as a race tied to Spanish (Chávez-Moreno, 2021b).

To show how raciolinguistic ideologies impact education, Flores and Rosa (2015) identify a raciolinguistic ideology of, for example, a listener negatively evaluating a Latina student's language even when the Latina's speech follows the standards of a White speaker. This raciolinguistic ideology may incline educators, given the evaluative component in teaching, to hear/see Latinxs and other racialized students as in need of remediation, question students' linguistic competence, and even perceive what Rosa (2016) calls "languagelessness," meaning, not using "any language properly" (p. 176).

Scholars have expanded upon raciolinguistic ideologies with studies showing how a raciolinguistic lens illuminates the intersectional significance of racial and language ideologies. For example, Briceño et al., (2018) examined heritage Spanish-speaking teacher candidates' raciolinguistic beliefs and found candidates saw their Spanish abilities as inadequate for becoming bilingual-education teachers. Sung (2018) found that, after a school dismantled its bilingual program, the testing and tracking structures reinforced youths' raciolinguistic ideologies of anti-Blackness that framed Black students as lacking English when compared to non-White students. In a dual-language context, Hernandez (2017) describes ELs were overtested in comparison to the White Spanish learners, revealing a raciolinguistic ideology that contradicted DL's claim of providing equity by seeing all students as "language learners." Chaparro (2019) shows DL's distinctions about who is a Spanish or English speaker together with ideologies about language, race, and class hierarchies at times socialize students to not want to identify with the non-dominant group. These studies show raciolinguistic ideologies influence people's evaluations of others and themselves, and impact their decisions.

Aside from raciolinguistic analyses, research on dual-language teachers' ideologies and attitudes toward Latinxs suggests some mixed results. For example, Pimentel (2011) shows that the different ideologies undergirding language programs influence how teachers evaluate students. Pimentel shares that teachers in a remedial bilingual program racially stigmatized a Latino student because of his Spanish, while teachers in a dual-language program he was moved to framed him as gifted because of his bilingualism. However, research also has found DL teachers can still internalize linguistic discrimination that abets negative evaluations of heritage students' Spanish (Román et al., 2019). The variance and consequence of dual-language teachers' ideologies—especially given DL is promoted as for Latinx equity—highlight the importance of exploring the racist and raciolinguistic ideologies affecting teachers' perceptions and comparisons of Latinxs, but that are often obscured with euphemisms like “language, ethnicity, and culture.”

Of note is that I do not examine students' language or achievement in order to judge whether teachers' perceptions of underperformance were warranted. Rather, I draw from a raciolinguistic lens (1) to uncover ideologies undergirding how teachers understood Latinxs' underperformance and negatively racialize Latinx students, and (2) to theorize about teachers' explanations of what equity in DL meant in light of the raciolinguistic ideology of Latinxs lacking adequate language/literacy. I see the two frameworks, critical-racial consciousness and raciolinguistic ideologies, as linked because through developing the former, teachers can identify and interrupt the latter. This present article's contribution to the literature stems from its focus on teachers' ideologies of how DL provides Latinxs an equitable and culturally relevant education, and the salience/absence of critical-racial consciousness in their beliefs, all while considering the significance of the intersection of racialization and language.

Context and Methodology

This inquiry grew from a larger critical ethnography where I investigated how white supremacy operated in the policies of a secondary-level dual-language program (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a), and where I examined teachers' culturally relevant pedagogy and found teachers' practices rarely aimed at developing youths' critical-racial consciousness (Chávez-Moreno, in press), the latter being of consequence to the present study. The larger critical ethnography was guided by critical theory in its attention to power, racialization, and society's oppressive structures (Carspecken, 1996). From the ethnography's beginning and because secondary-level DL is less researched than elementary-level DL (Chávez-Moreno, 2019), I designed the study as an exploratory ethnography to follow interesting leads based on the data collected, one of which is this article's inquiry. This means that during my ethnographic data collection, I added research questions informed by my field experiences/analyses, and subsequently collected focused data to answer those new inquiries.

The study took place in a Midwestern urban-public-school district that instituted DL because community advocates demanded bilingual education for its growing Latinx EL population. In community meetings with teachers and parents, I heard

some Latinx community leaders express that DL was “guaranteed” to solve the achievement gap of Latinxs and ELs by developing bilingualism/biliteracy and sociocultural competence. The two school sites, Amlie High School (AHS; all names of people and locations are pseudonyms) and its feeder Borane Middle School (BMS), both have DL within the school. The dual-language program’s classrooms purposefully have a Spanish-dominant half (made up of Latinxs) and an English-dominant half (mostly White students). My involvement with the community helped me gain research access to the schools and teachers.

Data Collection and Participants

I started recruitment and data collection in February 2016, and most of the data collection took place in 15 months (April 2016–June 2017). For this study, I relied on interview data from 13 dual-language teacher participants, who represented all grades and dual-language subjects (Spanish language arts, social studies/history in Spanish, science in Spanish [only in BMS], English language arts, and math in English). All teachers but one (math) identified as bilingual in English and Spanish. To honor anonymity, besides providing the teacher’s self-identified gender and racialization, I do not disclose identifying information like teaching years and subject/grades taught. Teachers were invited to two individual 60-min interviews, and three teachers were unavailable for a second interview. Interviews totaled 21.5 h, and all were transcribed. I also had informal discussions with the teachers after classroom observations (180 observation hours) that I documented in fieldnotes and used for triangulation. I employed prolonged engagement, triangulating, and member checking to work toward trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

Extending the project to almost 26 months, I used a recursive analysis described by LeCompte and Schensul (2013) that consists of a three-stage analytic process where analysis is done (1) in the field while involved in the data collection process, (2) away from the field soon after completing data collection, and (3) after work in the field is completed and with time away from the data collection. This process allowed me to study all the data, scrutinize my codes, and raise new questions than the ones guiding the initial inquiry. The recursive process with different coding (inductive and deductive) fit well with my conception of this ethnography as exploratory by design because it allowed me to identify interesting leads from my initial observations in the field that I then could follow. As aforementioned, this study emerges from one of those leads, specifically from hearing teachers’ disappointment with the achievement of the Latinx youth in DL.

In my first stage of coding, I used sentence-by-sentence inductive “in Vivo” coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91) to maintain participants’ phrases (e.g., “we’re not well trained”) and then identified and converted recurring data and relevant discrepancies into inductive gerund codes to denote action, interaction, and consequences (“process coding,” Saldaña, 2013, p. 96). These stage-one codes helped me condense

data and make initial comparisons across data. For stage two, I formed deductive themes based on my research questions and a literature review I conducted. I organized the stage-one process codes and discrepancies into one or more of the themes and further sorted the codes based on their scope (e.g., ideologies). Stage two helped me focus on data germane to the interesting leads and form research questions. The third stage used theoretical deductive coding, which, for this study, focused on critical-racial consciousness and raciolinguistic ideologies. I looked through codes from the interview data and from stage two's ideologies sorting to find teachers displaying or mentioning critical-racial consciousness and its connection to equity, and their claims regarding Latinxs' language, performance, and education needs. I was attentive that teachers at times may refer to Latinxs' culture, ethnicity, and language-identity as euphemisms for racial identity. Using both recurring patterns and discrepancies, the findings present teachers' understandings of critical-racial consciousness and equity, and of why Latinxs underperformed.

Positionality

My background prompted me to follow the interesting leads that inform this study. I experienced U.S. schooling as a Mexican immigrant student who attended English-only schools in a small, low-resourced, Sonora/Arizona border town. This, along with my current intersectional identities as a bilingual Chicana, influenced my development and analysis of the inquiry. For example, I have vivid memories of White teachers looking down on me, with pity or disgust, and of some being at times surprised by my academic motivation or abilities. As an urban-public-high-school teacher of Spanish, I was conscious of developing my own and my students' critical consciousness about racism, language, and other issues. These and other experiences contribute to my attentiveness to teachers' own critical-racial consciousness and racist/raciolinguistic ideologies. Being a previous teacher, cisgendered Latina, and bilingual advocate facilitated my researcher access to the schools.

Findings

Below I answer the study's research questions by presenting two sections each corresponding to a question. The first section shows that teachers understood DL as offering Latinxs a culturally relevant and equitable education because DL provided Latinxs with language/biliteracy instruction and linguistic/cultural representation. Additionally, teachers' raciolinguistic ideology of seeing Latinxs as needing language/biliteracy contributed to viewing DL as culturally relevant. Further, teachers did not imagine that their work needed to explicitly enhance youths' critical-racial consciousness. In the second section, I show teachers made sense of perceived Latinx underperformance through racist and raciolinguistic explanations. The findings unveil the teachers' need for developing their own critical-racial consciousness. Although each section answers a research question, the section's ideas overlap, thus, in the second section, I continue to point out silences of critical-racial consciousness.

Seeing DL as “Culturally Relevant” for Latinxs Because DL Provides Language/Biliteracy

Teachers expressed faith in research about DL, for example, Mr. Mayer (White) stated in an interview that he learned in his teacher-preparation program, “the research says [DL] is the best for serving our English-language learners.” All teachers thought that DL was the best bilingual program for their Latinxs and ELs. Ms. Schloss (White), shared:

In all my understanding in the research I’ve done about [DL] is that the ideas and the goals of it is obviously to create bilingual and bicultural students, but [also] as a tool for justice specifically for students who are traditionally underserved. I guess the most obvious group to whom that applies are Latino students or students for whom Spanish is their first language.

These teachers’ quotes show educators referred to research as imparting credibility to dual-language programs and saw DL’s purpose as improving the education of Latinxs and ELs. When I inquired into how this was so, teachers described that the program was “culturally relevant,” “culturally responsive,” and “linguistically responsive.”

As I probed into teachers’ ideas of how the program was culturally relevant, advanced equity, and improved Latinxs’ education, I found teachers’ ideas centered language and literacy. All teachers first cited the program’s goal of developing academic biliteracy. For example, Mr. Clarke (White) described his expected outcomes of the dual-language program in stating, “we want our kids to be bilingual, have a high level of literacy in both languages.” Another teacher, Mr. Estrada (Latino), asserted, “the goal’s getting that Seal of Biliteracy on their diploma.” Similarly, another stated the aim: “When students graduate, they are bilingual, biliterate students who can function equally or close to equally well in both languages.”

Most teachers expressed that they did not know about the program having a specific social justice mission, apart from improving student achievement and providing access to biliteracy. For example, Mr. Estrada shared that the program’s social justice goal was “to help students maintain their language.” Teachers explained that the program was “culturally relevant” because it meant to improve students’ biliteracy, and this addressed equity.

Whereas biliteracy was the expressed primary *goal* of the program, attaining biliteracy was also considered the *means* for improving academic performance and achieving equity. Teachers mentioned that providing biliteracy and “bridging from their home language [...] helps the students achieve” and “close the achievement gap” for Latinxs. According to the teachers, because DL provided a biliterate education, and thereby equal access to the content, Latinx academic performance in classroom and standardized evaluations would improve. For example, Ms. Lucas (White) shared that the program “work[ed] toward a common goal of bilingualism and providing kids to equal access with languages.” Exemplifying this understanding, another teacher shared that the program “help[s] some of these students who speak Spanish at home improve their English skills, and get more on an equal

playing field, because their classes are being taught in Spanish, so they're not going to be linguistically disadvantaged."

Along with her colleagues, Ms. Nader (person of color) also had faith that DL was culturally relevant and would ameliorate disparities. She asserted:

We know that native-Spanish speakers will achieve higher literacy in both languages if they're learning in both languages, so we know that it not only benefits them in terms of maintaining their native language and culture but also will help them give them benefits for English acquisition and literacy. And so that all together their tests scores, their academic achievements should go up with that foundation in Spanish literacy. And that's sort of not to mention the benefits to just sense of self and personal identity and culture to be able to speak native languages and talk about cultural [*sic*] or have culturally relevant education.

According to Ms. Nader, because DL provides Latinxs a "foundation in Spanish literacy" other measures like their English literacy and their achievement should benefit. Of note is that Ms. Nader and a few other teachers also mentioned that DL promoted cultural competence through fostering self-esteem and sustaining students' home language. In these cases, as Ms. Nader's quote illustrates, "culturally relevant" was equated with cultural pride and competency.

To a lesser extent, teachers also opined that by offering Spanish the "languages are elevated to a similar standard," thus the school provides language representation and an equitable education to Latinxs. When I asked Mr. Estrada to speak about how the program worked toward equity for Latinxs and having students understand and act to challenge injustices, his ideas exemplified those of the other teachers:

I think just by virtue of the fact that we do privilege Spanish, we privilege Spanish speakers, I think that in and of itself is a very powerful message to kids; that Brown people matter, that Spanish matters, that some people know a lot more than you, even if they don't look like your family. I think there's a very powerful message about justice and equity just in that.

I pressed him on how the program addresses issues of justice, and Mr. Estrada replied, "even more important to me is that Spanish speakers see, 'Oh, my language matters. My parent's language matters. My family's experiences count for something.' I think that's important." As the quotes illustrate, Mr. Estrada understood the program as culturally relevant and its social justice goal mainly from it valuing and teaching Spanish in an English-dominant society.

Teachers saw the solution for eradicating Latinxs' achievement gap as schools affirming Spanish and developing Latinxs' academic Spanish literacy. This informed and/or complemented teachers' raciolinguistic ideologies about Latinxs needing language/biliteracy in order to improve school achievement and have an equitable education. There was a noticeable absence of considering critical-racial consciousness as part of a culturally relevant education, and of considering a more expansive idea of literacy as also encompassing, for example, racial literacy (Chávez-Moreno, *in press*). Thus, teachers' emphasis on language/biliteracy overshadowed any

understandings of an equitable, culturally relevant dual-language education being one that works toward enhancing students' critical-racial consciousness.

Despite teachers believing that the program was culturally relevant, teachers expressed concern that underachievement endured in state and teacher assessments for some Latinxs when compared to their White peers in DL. Below I show how thinking of DL as "inherently culturally relevant" influenced how teachers made sense of their perceived underperformance of Latinxs, which exposes teachers' need to develop their own critical-racial consciousness.

Racist and Raciolinguistic Explanations for Latinx Underperformance

While research usually compares Latinx EL achievement in DL to those in English mainstream classrooms (e.g., Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011), these were not the dual-language teachers' immediate comparison group. Rather, teachers compared their Latinx students to the other English-dominant White middle-class students *in their* classrooms, and perceived Latinxs as those with the lowest achievement. That is, teachers employed raciolinguistic comparisons about Latinxs' language/literacy to those of White youth in DL, and teachers were troubled by the differences in outcomes they noticed.

Considering teachers' raciolinguistic ideologies of Latinxs needing language/biliteracy and their view that DL fulfilled this need, it was incongruent for teachers that Latinxs were still not achieving as expected. Most teachers felt "disheartened," "concerned," and "disappointed" about not seeing the program improve Latinx achievement. This was especially highlighted considering these were secondary-level students who had participated in DL since kindergarten and self-identified as bilingual. Teachers mentioned that the district has good intentions, but they recognized that, in fact, Latinxs were not doing as well as the other dual-language students. One teacher, Ms. West (White), shared:

We're not meeting our equity and education in my opinion, and the district numbers show that. The whole reason we switched to bilingual education was because the national studies show that kids end up performing above their peers, and our students are not.

Ms. West, like other teachers, believed DL would help Latinxs perform at the same level or above their White middle-class students. Besides the district's standardized exam scores mentioned by the teacher, several other measures also pointed to unrelenting disparities. For example, all the dual-language students in remedial math were Latinxs, and the remedial dual-language summer-school courses had only Latinxs. White students comprised the majority who met the requirements and obtained the Seal of Biliteracy on their high school diploma.

To the discontent of many, teachers shared that while some Latinx students excelled in DL, many did not do well, and in fact performed worse than their White counterparts, including in Spanish literacy. Ms. Nader shared:

We had this idea that the program was really supposed to raise literacy of native Spanish speakers, [it's] supposed to benefit native-Spanish speakers. It

doesn't seem like literacy of the Latino students is reaching that level of the Latino native-English speakers.

Like Ms. Nader, teachers were bothered by the disparities they observed in their classrooms and that the dual-language program failed to provide the promised results of improving all Latinxs' achievement.

While research touting DL usually compares ELs in different language programs (not with White middle-class students), teachers experienced dissonance from expecting the program to uplift Latinxs and not seeing it deliver this goal. In response to Latinx underachievement, teachers hypothesized about the factors impacting program quality and student outcomes, such as, teacher capacity and resources. However, some also drew from racist and raciolinguistic ideologies to explain disparities. Below, I organize the teachers' explanations based on three areas: youth and families, teacher training and competence, and program's language input.

Youth and Families

When speaking about Latinx dual-language students not achieving as expected, some teachers shared meritocratic understandings that individualize outcomes. For example, Mr. Estrada opined, "There are some students that are showing really good growth. It's the ones that don't really act like students and don't really do school." Latinx students who failed to improve in the program were the ones who "struggle[d] to stay on task" and were seen as not applying themselves. In effect, this discourse blames individuals for their performance, reasoning that hard-working students do well in school.

Some teachers drew explanations from deficit ideologies about students and their families. For example, Mr. Clarke shared that parents' lack of intelligence caused differences in achievement, "I don't know if IQ and intelligence and that sort of thing is got a genetic factor where maybe the parents themselves, and I'm not saying it's all IQ or not, but maybe they themselves." The teacher elaborated on this idea and compared Latinx and White families by stating Latinx parents come from (I have abridged because of length):

A pretty low educational background. Are [youth] getting a message at home like [...] "You can work for me, you don't need [school]." It's kind of a complacent attitude, [...] I don't think the parents themselves really even have parenting theory [...] We need to do more parent outreach and kind of teaching of the parents about how to be parents. This is a contrast between some of the really overachieving type of White families.

Here, this teacher explained Latinxs' underachievement as stemming from a lack of intelligence to parents being unambitious, not valuing education, and not knowing how to parent. Most teachers did not voice this type of racist, deficit opinion so explicitly.

However, even three teachers whom shared being motivated by social justice and whom I observed teaching lessons to foster critical-racial consciousness resorted at

times to raciolinguistic comparisons that looked at the students' culture and families and need for language in order to make sense of differences in achievement. For example, when talking about why Latinxs were not doing well, Ms. West shared, "Our kids just need more culturally, they need the instruction scaffolded to them. They have to see the print on the wall, they need to still have the sentence starters, they need to see things like that." When explaining that White students had a higher writing level than their Latinx peers, another of these three teachers, Ms. Lucas, shared:

We get kids, and it's almost always Latino children, and they'll write at a whole different level than the White kids and I don't understand why that happens. I think part of it might just even be home culture, if you're always reading and if you come from a home and parents can help you with your work and your parents aren't at work, and you aren't having to take care of your siblings that's a huge advantage.

Teachers connected student needs and outcomes to family resources. Given that schools are structured to favor those with resources (e.g., parents having time and knowledge to help with homework), teachers saw Latinx families lack of these resources as affecting students into not having adequate literacy at home. Teachers compared Latinxs' writing with the White students, and did not consider whether their own evaluations of writing are influenced by society's raciolinguistic ideologies.

As shown above, while some teachers pointed to the lack of resources the Latinx families had, others resorted to the long accepted form of racism in U.S. discourse of blaming their culture (e.g., Morales et al., 2019): Latinxs have a culture that causes a difference between the achievement of Latinx and other students (i.e., Whites) and that causes Latinxs' continued underperformance in the dual-language program.

Teacher Training and Competence

Centering language, teachers also pointed to teacher training and competence playing a role in student outcomes. To start, the district had trouble hiring for the dual-language program. Ms. West, who was working toward bilingual certification, shared that teachers' non-bilingual-education training was an issue:

I just don't see [the district] getting a huge influx of bilingually trained teachers in the next five years. They're going to keep hiring people who either speak Spanish and have a teaching degree, or people trained as Spanish teachers who didn't get a job in Spanish.

Teachers reasoned that the shortage of teachers trained in bilingual education and the lack of professional development affected Latinx underperformance.

With the caveat that "everyone is trying their best," other teachers connected teacher training with competencies and/or identities, which were often times linked to language ability. When speaking about Latinx underachievement, Ms. Thomson

(White), who had foreign-language training, mentioned teachers' language ability and racial identity:

I think teachers are an issue, teacher training. The teachers that are teaching, again myself included, we're not well trained, we're not usually native speakers. [...] I will definitely say that I feel like I have a long way to go with my Spanish proficiency and I'm kind of like a minimum of what should be acceptable, but they're, I know the level that some of the teachers have is way, way less than mine. I think that partly is the problem. [...] The more Latino teachers that we can get the better so that students can see themselves reflected in their teachers.

Ms. Thomson highlighted bilingual-education teachers' language ability and evaluated her own as "minimum of what should be acceptable." She also was attuned to ideas about Latinx students needing Latinx teachers who were "native speakers" and whom students could identify with. Yet, Ms. Thomson did not mention the equally important aspect of teachers having critical-racial consciousness and being competent in teaching with such a stance, instead she focused on language competency and racial-identity representation.

In an exception of not centering language competency in discussions about teacher training, Ms. Lucas mentioned teachers' expectations. She believed that Latinx underperformance resulted from teachers not doing their job well, "Teachers [are] not doing their work because the students are just slid by because of them being so cute and not having behavior issues. It's really heartbreaking." In other words, some teachers do not have adequate training so neglect providing Latinxs rigorous instruction because well-behaved Latinxs do not demand attention. Similar to the idea of Wortham et al., (2009) about Mexican students, Latinx ELs were seen as "model minorities" in terms of civic behavior, but not with respect to intellect. Ms. Lucas noticed that this "model minority status" facilitated some teachers' low standards, consequently affecting Latinxs' achievement, an issue she believed could be alleviated with improved training. While she did not use this language, one could argue her concern approached the idea of teachers' absence of critical-racial consciousness.

Along with lack of qualified or proficient personnel, teachers felt the district provided little professional development to the dual-language teachers, especially secondary-level DL, and left them to fend for themselves. Ms. West shared:

The district has teacher coaches, but none that are DL. So, the kids going through with mediocre instruction, not the fault of the teacher, just the fault of lack of training, and all the training you get from the district are just like information shoved at you. Like no follow-through or samples, on the DL side that's what's happening I should say. When I've gone to English language arts trainings, they'll have a teacher teach a sample lesson in front of us, and then it clicks.

The teachers found this neglect for dual-language training especially troublesome given that even when they looked to outside sources for materials and support,

secondary-level dual-language resources and models of exemplary instruction were difficult to find.

I highlight here that while teachers rightly believed training and proficiency regarding language and teaching ability mattered, besides Ms. Lucas' exception about teacher expectations, no one mentioned training and teachers' competency in regard to enhancing their own or the youths' critical-racial consciousness. The raciolinguistic ideology of Latinxs' needs being defined by language/literacy mostly foreclosed other considerations.

Not Enough Spanish Input

Teachers were confident in DL as a model that was research-based, culturally relevant, and that benefited any student, but especially Latinxs and ELs. However, there was a caveat: DL worked, they said, when implemented with fidelity, meaning the program needed to have enough Spanish input. Teachers perceived an overrepresentation of English would benefit the English-dominant (White) students and curtail the Spanish-speaking Latinx students' opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge (i.e., use Spanish). Accordingly, teachers thought Latinxs underperformed because the program needed to provide more Spanish input—even though Latinxs were classified as the DL's Spanish-dominant models. Below I show how this logic—together with Latinxs being seen as the “English learners” (i.e., not having adequate English)—maps onto the raciolinguistic ideology of Latinx languagelessness that is, Latinxs not dominating any language.

This racist and raciolinguistic ideology indirectly appeared in several conversations with teachers when discussing the program's insufficient Spanish input as one reason why DL was not improving Latinx achievement. In BMS, teachers knew of their colleagues' practices because of their classrooms' proximity and program cohesion, and they critiqued colleagues with lower Spanish input. For example, when discussing Latinx performance in Spanish literacy, a BMS teacher shared: “[teachers] don't stick to the language. We're here to teach biliteracy, but kids can't do it if they don't have enough time with Spanish in their instruction.” The teacher's comment of the “kids can't do it” referred to Latinxs becoming literate in Spanish, even though the kids were the Spanish-dominant Latinx EL students.

Another BMS teacher also mentioned the amount of language used in the classrooms, “sometimes with certain teachers I've seen that there's a laxness, in let's say sticking with the language of instruction.” My interview and observation data pointed to all teachers (except two, one in each school) adhered to Spanish during Spanish time because they believed in meeting the allocated language input. However, even if the above teachers' claims were so, this justification does not hold up to scrutiny once we consider that White students' Spanish achievement was not comparably affected by teachers not “sticking with Spanish as the language of instruction.”

AHS teachers also mentioned the lack of Spanish input for their school's dual-language students, which they believed led to Latinx underachievement. In an informal conversation, Mr. Ochoa (White Latino), mentioned that AHS's program really is not an immersion program because the students did not even get 50% of their day in Spanish. Because AHS has a four-course block schedule and students select

their own courses, some dual-language students took only one course (or none) in Spanish a semester. Mr. Ochoa and other teachers embraced the importance of the DL model's technical 50/50 measure as to whether the program provided enough language input. That is, when the required amount of Spanish was not reached, program ineffectiveness followed, and this compromised Latinxs' performance (but, again, not the Spanish achievement of the White dual-language students). An overrepresentation of English in the AHS dual-language program would negatively affect Spanish-dominant EL students demonstrate their knowledge using the Spanish language. However, many of these Latinx high-schoolers (even those officially labeled ELs) identified as bilingual and stronger in English (not Spanish-dominant). Considering Latinxs' self-identification, the logic that the program needed to provide Latinx EL students with Spanish-language instruction in order to improve their performance hints toward a raciolinguistic ideology that Latinx students' Spanish language and/or literacy were deficient.

In terms of more Spanish-language instruction, teachers felt unable to provide Latinxs with adequate Spanish input due to the diversity in student biliteracy levels in a classroom that led teachers to want more differentiated courses. Ms. Thomson, for example, saw the many Spanish ability levels as prohibitive to addressing Latinxs' needs and differentiating instruction, and because she saw DL as an equity strategy, thought DL should "refocus on our Latino students." She elaborated on what refocusing meant:

It would also be really useful to have maybe like a different stream or different course that would be more things that they could use as a job, like maybe doing, I don't know, like interpreting, working, instead of reading fancy literature and looking at the news.

Ms. Thomson reasoned that because teachers were unable to differentiate, the program should be made practical for underachieving Latinxs by putting them in applied courses (seen as the low track) that "might lead them to jobs after graduation for the students that aren't going to go to college." This is problematic given that her solution to underperformance was providing students with lower standards and taking them off the college track. Her ideas betrayed deficit understandings and showed she overlooked that refocusing on Latinxs should include developing critical-racial consciousness, including that of the teachers in order to teach with this goal.

While several teachers pointed to the lack-of-Spanish-input reason for Latinx underperformance, one framed the program's sole focus on language as problematic. In speaking about the dual-language program achieving its goal of improving the education of Latinxs, Mr. Ochoa asserted that "We have framed DL as simply offering classes in Spanish" (I translated because of space constraints). He explained why having a program as a vehicle for learning Spanish was troublesome, "When your class, your content, your institution, has not incorporated the culture and identity, the people of that culture identity are not necessarily benefiting as much as they could." Mr. Ochoa was the only teacher to frame the program's lack of a cultural identity as one of the reasons why it was not more successful in educating Latinx youth. Because of the program's failure to adopt Latinx culture, he almost questioned the assumption that the program was culturally relevant, yet, when I asked

him directly, he said the dual-language teachers were culturally relevant, focusing on language/biliteracy examples. Although Mr. Ochoa took a more critical stance on the program's centering of language, he did not link his concern to enhancing critical-racial consciousness.

In the conclusion below, I further discuss my theorizations and present implications from the study's findings.

Racist and Raciolinguistic Ideologies and their Significance to Latinx Equity

This study sought to uncover teachers' understandings of how DL is equitable and culturally relevant for Latinxs and of why Latinxs underachieved. I theorize that teachers' raciolinguistic ideology of seeing Latinxs as needing language/biliteracy coupled with teachers' view of DL as "inherently culturally relevant," meant that DL was by default "culturally relevant" for Latinxs by providing access to biliteracy and Spanish, and tended to overlook critical-racial consciousness' importance. Given the program was seen as "inherently culturally relevant," teachers made sense of Latinx underperformance in DL with already pervasive racist and raciolinguistic ideologies about Latinxs. For example, DL teachers placed faith in "technocratic linguistic" explanations (Grinberg & Saavedra, 2000, p. 420), such as how much language input is offered, which echo cognitive arguments for bilingual education with its subtractive origins and overtones (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Teachers then understood Latinxs' underperformance as stemming from a need to provide them more Spanish, a logic that emerges from or exposes raciolinguistic ideologies of language deficit (Rosa & Flores, 2017), inadequate academic language (Flores & Rosa, 2015) and even languagelessness (Rosa, 2016).

Considering the raciolinguistic ideology of associating Latinxs "with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 150), my study offers empirical evidence showing that bilingual-education teachers seemed unaware that their evaluations are subjective and influenced by how they see/hear students, and that teachers held ideologies that prompted them to evaluate Latinxs' based on deficits. Teachers pointed to a lack of Spanish instruction as a reason for Latinxs' underperformance even though these adolescents self-identified as bilingual and were classified as the Spanish-dominant models for the other students, thus implying the Latinx youth did not dominate any language. This also betrays a raciolinguistic comparison of Latinxs being affected by inadequate Spanish input but not applying this logic to the White dual-language students, who would also see their performance drop in Spanish yet were mostly excelling in Spanish literacy. These raciolinguistic ideologies work in tandem with, facilitate, and/or justify already present racist ideologies and depictions of Latinxs and ELs (for examples, see Bondy, 2011; Morales et al., 2019). Additionally, the raciolinguistic ideology of narrowly defining Latinxs' "equity problem" or "race issue" as mainly about language/literacy disregards the fact that Latinxs benefit from enhancing their critical-racial consciousness in order to face issues related to other intersecting identities and concerns (Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013).

These findings lead me to make two claims. First, I contend the combination of teachers viewing DL as “inherently culturally relevant” and of teachers’ racist/raciolinguistic ideologies precluded imagining critical-racial consciousness as part of how DL delivers an equitable education to Latinxs. While one can only speculate about whether teachers’ having and teaching with critical-racial consciousness in mind would improve Latinxs’ achievement in this particular program, regardless of whether it would do so, critical-racial consciousness is an essential component of an equitable and culturally relevant education and should be centered in DL (Palmer et al., 2019).

Second, I claim that teachers’ explanations for Latinx underachievement disclosed teachers’ own lack of critical-racial consciousness. Relatedly, teachers overlooked that educational equity for Latinxs requires teachers’ *own* development of critical-racial consciousness. This exposes a circular trap because teachers need critical-racial consciousness in order to interrupt racist/raciolinguistic ideologies and to design instruction to enhance youths’ critical-racial consciousness.

These claims imply a need to redefine an equitable and “culturally relevant DL” as one that explicitly strives toward enhancing youths’ critical-racial consciousness. They also point to the need to develop teachers’ critical-racial consciousness so they can recognize the tendency toward racist/raciolinguistic evaluations of Latinx students’ language/literacy, combat racist and raciolinguistic ideologies, and teach to foster youths’ critical-racial consciousness. To end, I share some implications for working toward these goals.

Challenging Racist and Raciolinguistic Ideologies

My study supports other researchers’ calls for current and prospective teachers to recognize and debunk racist and raciolinguistic ideologies (e.g., Briceño et al., 2018; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018). I add that acknowledging these ideologies would help educators both to challenge implicitly thinking of Latinx students as languageless and to enhance teachers’ ability to develop students’ critical-racial consciousness. In order for educators to notice harmful discourses and to understand DL’s challenges in a racially stratified society and education system, professional development and teacher education can expose teachers to critical studies on DL like this one and others (e.g., Freire & Valdez, 2017). For example, research by Seltzer and de los Ríos (2018) documented how two English teachers’ identity and translanguaging practices helped them learn and incorporate into their pedagogy that raciolinguistic ideologies shape listening practices. In learning about such research, dual-language teachers may benefit from seeing that all teachers learn but can work to challenge society’s raciolinguistic ideologies. Teachers can learn that enhancing youths’ critical-racial consciousness requires dedicated attention (just as other skills such as biliteracy) and that doing so can enhance multiliteracies (Chávez-Moreno, in press; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018) and achievement (Cabrera et al., 2012).

My study adds to these calls the need to develop teachers’ critical-racial consciousness *and* expand definitions of culturally relevant to include critical-racial consciousness. Teachers need to unsettle their own racist and raciolinguistic

ideologies, unveil how these potentially created inequities, plan to enhance students' critical-racial consciousness, and interrogate how and when they talk about and notice achievement in racial terms (Pollock, 2001). Being more self-reflective about their associations of racialization and achievement, teachers could work with others to not blame but consider student achievement as *communal productions* that require *communal responsibility* (Pollock, 2001). Reframing toward communal responsibility may help educators to attend to the discourses and ideologies that circulate about and in these programs.

Centering Critical-Racial Consciousness

Teachers, even those motivated by social justice and who include lessons to develop students' critical-racial consciousness, may experience cognitive dissonance when facing racial education disparities that stem from racist legacies, and thus resort to raciolinguistic ideologies to explain such outcomes. Because ideologies influence and limit the imagined solutions to disparities, teacher education and development could help dual-language teachers envisage their critical-racial consciousness development as a way to detect dehumanizing ideologies, improve outcomes, and/or provide educational equity to Latinxs. Teachers could seek critical professional development and education movements that aim to develop critical-racial consciousness, and there connect with justice-minded colleagues. This networking could help teachers access justice-oriented resources, obtain ideas for how to improve their programs, engage in teacher action research, as well as assuage potential dismay through learning others also struggle with similar issues.

Having stated the need for teachers to use their agency in developing instruction that enhances critical-racial consciousness, teachers should have school/district structural supports to combat racist and raciolinguistic ideologies. Because teachers are not uninfluenced by the ideologies undergirding programs, policies, and structures (Pimentel, 2011), dual-language programs need to explicitly include critical-racial consciousness as a social justice goal, and be *designed* to enable and promote the instruction of critical-racial consciousness, otherwise, a “new racism” emerges that does not deal with structural issues causing racist outcomes (Kohli et al., 2017). Practitioners and researchers could consider whether DL's design model of language instruction and of classifying students as English- or Spanish-dominant may foment and/or exacerbate teachers' raciolinguistic ideologies of Latinxs as inadequate.

Another structural change would be for programs to reconsider their evaluations given teachers' raciolinguistic comparisons disadvantage Latinxs. Even though teachers also drew from classroom-based and formative assessment to help them perceive of Latinx underperformance, standardized testing and evaluating student achievement cause schools and teachers great concern and help construct “the problem” of Latinx underperformance and “languagelessness.” Standardized exams and language acquisition should not be the sole measure for evaluating whether a bilingual-education program is successful. To center critical-racial consciousness as a major goal, educators could point to evidence that suggests that enhancing youths' critical-racial consciousness improves student outcomes (Aronson &

Laughter, 2016), including academic achievement on tests (Cabrera et al., 2012). DL should offer counterhegemonic objectives and indicators of success while asserting that schooling that sustains languages and develops critical-racial consciousness—regardless of standardized exams scores or other dominant measures—provides for students’ well-being (Sánchez-Carmen et al., 2015) and moves toward equity for Latinxs, especially considering the mainstream alternatives (e.g., ESL; Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012; Mitchell, 2013; Pérez Huber, 2011).

As dual-language programs expand and continue into urban secondary schools, this study of a secondary-level dual-language bilingual-education program is significant because it helps scholars and practitioners understand the challenges faced in delivering a truly culturally relevant and equitable education for Latinxs and ELs. While DL’s potential may garner enthusiasm, if dual-language teachers narrowly define their teaching and their Latinx youths’ needs as about language/literacy, the language of instruction will be of little significance given that ideologies of deficit and pathology will contribute to reproducing inequities. The study alerts against viewing dual-language programs as culturally relevant without taking seriously developing teachers’ critical-racial consciousness, an important part of teachers combating racist and raciolinguistic ideologies.

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