Critical Need for Bilingual Education Teachers: The Potentiality of *Normalistas* and Paraprofessionals

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Abstract

Case study methodology was employed to explore the potentiality of *normalistas* and paraprofessionals as prospective bilingual education teachers. The evidence of this study suggests that both *normalistas* and paraprofessionals offer fertile ground for bilingual teachers. The evidence further suggests that careful selection of the potential candidates is crucial. Moreover, the teacher preparation program must creatively examine and implement a program of study that meets the needs of the target group.

The findings also reveal that as the participants move through teacher preparation courses, members of both cohorts are willing to challenge old notions formerly held. The *normalistas* are recognizing that the U.S. system differs significantly from the Mexican educational system. While drawing on the richness and merits of the Mexican system, these immigrants are open to seeing merit in U.S. educational methods. Conversely, the paraprofessionals are beginning to question the deficit model pervasive in many of the schools in which they have worked and to take a different stance toward authority figures.

Introduction

Creating an equitable learning environment for language minority children depends on meeting the need for quality bilingual teachers. Bilingual education teachers are key factors in the education of language minority students (Darder, 1997). The role and status of the minority language within the bilingual classroom depend on bilingual education teachers that can create an environment in which the minority language is viewed as having equal or majority status. This type of equitable language environment sets the stage not only for ethnic self-determination, but also for linguistic self-determination as described by Ricento and Hornberger (1996). Therefore, the preparation of teachers who can recognize and create an equitable language environment within the bilingual classroom is vital.

Unfortunately, the inadequate supply of bilingual education teachers jeopardizes the educational equity for language minority children. The relatively low number of minority teachers currently in the teaching profession suggests that traditional recruitment efforts have not met the demand for bilingual teachers (Macias, 1989; Reyna, 1993; Texas Education Agency [TEA], 1993, 1994, & 1998). Professional teacher educators recognize that effective recruiting programs must be unique and must provide support structures to begin to address the need for well-prepared bilingual education teachers (Díaz-Rico, Lynne, & Smith, 1994; Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Torres-Karna & Krustchinksy, 1998). Over the last 10 years, a variety of recruitment methods have been used as alternatives to traditional recruiting plans. This article discusses these alternative recruitment routes and reports on an asset-based, innovative, binational collaborative effort.

The intent of this research was to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine if a specifically designed teacher preparation program assisted both foreign-trained *normalistas* and currently employed paraprofessionals in developing knowledge and skills to effectively teach language minority children. Specifically, the guiding premise was to determine whether members of these two cohorts were attuned to the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs of language minority children, and, thus, would be prepared to provide equitable learning environments.

Theoretical Framework

Meeting the Demand for Bilingual Education Teacher Candidates: Human and Cultural Capital

The rush to solve the demand for bilingual teachers often complicates the issues of language, language policy, and power. The interrelationship among cultural, linguistic, and human capital is not adequately addressed. Schools may find individuals who are willing and determined to become bilingual educators; conversely, these individuals may lack the required academic language proficiency. One of the criticisms of bilingual education teacher preparation programs is the lack of opportunities for the candidates' development of academic language proficiency in the target language. Without adequate academic language proficiency, the teacher further complicates the issues of equity within the bilingual classroom (Guerrero, 1997, 1998, & 1999). As reported by Rueda and García (1996), bilingual education teachers may not develop sufficient proficiency and competencies to exhibit favorable attitudes toward bilingualism. Educators have long recognized that this situation limits the quality of pre-K–12 bilingual education programs and relegates the communities' native language to a minority power status (Escamilla, 1994; Pease-Álvarez & Winsler, 1994). However, for the most part, many individuals who pursue bilingual education with inadequate

academic and linguistic skills were themselves denied opportunity to develop their academic language proficiency in their ancestral language (Flores, 1999). Thus, the loss of potential cultural and linguistic capital in the form of bilingualism has led to the loss of human capital and potential bilingual education teachers. Disregarding the human capital in the minority community relegates the community to minority power status and denies their ability to self-determine their future course of action.

Tapping Into Community Resources
"Grow-your-own"

Tapping into community resources is a viable way to recruit bilingual education teacher candidates; for example, 38% of the educational aides who advanced to teaching positions in Texas were Hispanic (TEA, 1993). One-third of the classroom aides in the United States are Hispanic (Haselkorn & Fideler, 1996) and, thus, offer a potential source of bilingual teacher candidates. Several visionary university and school district partnerships across the country have initiated and maintained a "grow-your-own" plan to assist their paraprofessional staff to become bilingual teachers (Calvillo-Craig, 1989; Díaz-Rico et al., 1994; Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Genzuk, Lavadenz, & Krashen, 1994; Hewlett-Gómez, López, Waits, & Ruiz, 1994; Lavandenz, 1994; Leighton, Hightower, & Wrigley, 1995; Milk, 1993, 1998; Schnailberg, 1994b, 1994c; Smith, 1994; Worthington, 1992; Torres-Karna & Krustchinksy, 1998).

Some "grow-your-own" programs begin with high school and college students placed in schools as teacher assistants; other projects tap into paraprofessionals already working in the schools. Most "grow-your-own" plans are a collaborative effort by both the teacher preparation program and school districts to assure the successful completion of a degree and certification program. The teacher trainees receive academic, financial, and psycho-social support from both the local district and the institution of higher education. Both the local school district and the institution of higher education recognize and attend to the needs of the teacher trainee. Thus, "grow-your-own" initiatives support the training, recruitment, and retention of bilingual teacher trainees who have high potential for being quality teachers.

Whereas several "grow-your-own" bilingual teacher projects have been initiated and proven to be successful in California and Texas (Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Hewlett-Gómez et al., 1994; Torres-Karna & Krustchinksy, 1998), these projects have made a modest contribution to the continuing shortage of bilingual teachers. In 1993, only 1,122 of Texas' newly employed teachers had previously been educational aides; this represents less than 1% of the state's total teaching force; moreover, a much smaller percentage of these were bilingual (TEA, 1993).

The "grow-your-own" approach is a feasible, asset-based alternative to districts' desperate attempts to recruit and retain bilingual teachers. Rather than districts across the country competing for the same few bilingual teachers,

tapping into community resources may assure that these individuals have a greater commitment and recognition of the needs of the community (Calderón & Díaz, 1993; Genzuk, 1997). Furthermore, these types of recruitment efforts recognize the resources of the community and provide stability in the workforce of the school district.

Alternative certification programs

Another means of addressing the bilingual teacher shortage for some states, including Texas, Arizona, and California, has been through alternative certification programs. At present, approximately 44% of all new Texas bilingual education teachers are products of alternative certification programs (State Board of Education, 2000), and the state sees these programs as a major means of increasing the diversity pool (Petrovic, Orozco, Gonzáles, & Díaz de Cossio, 1999). Hidalgo and Huling-Austin (1993), however, cite several cautionary factors to consider about alternative certification programs, such as datedness of degree and candidates' preconceived notions of teaching. They conclude that the alternative certification program in Texas has had disastrous results because of these factors.

Foreign-trained teachers

Other school district recruitment efforts have included the hiring of bilingual teachers from other countries. However, caution in this effort must also be taken. According to Schnailberg (1994a), one large Texas school district's recruitment of Mexican teachers resulted in candidates who did not qualify for the state teacher certification and created a local scandal. Valadez, Etxeberría, Pescador, and Ambisca (2000) have also studied exchange teachers recruited from Mexico and Spain and have found that they are not necessarily linguistic or cultural matches for the California language minority children with whom they work. The researchers observed that these foreign-trained teachers often viewed language minority children from a deficit perspective, specifically in relation to their ethnic language and culture. Therefore, the researchers advocate the need for vigilance in the recruitment of foreign-trained teachers.

Nevertheless, with careful attention to bridging cultural and linguistic borders, Varisco de García and García (1996) describe the exchange of Mexican teachers (*normalistas*) as a practical effort to meet the growing demands of U.S.-born language minority students and Spanish-speaking immigrants. Hewlett-Gómez and Solis (1995) also report that along the border states, *normalista profesoras* have been successfully teamed with certified content area teachers to provide dual language instruction for recently immigrated, Spanish-speaking secondary students. However, most of these *normalista profesoras* do not meet the state certification requirements. This initiative can be considered as a step in the right direction for both language minority students and *normalistas*. Nevertheless, this team approach does not fully address many of the skills needed for *normalistas* to become quality bilingual education teachers, especially at the elementary level.

Toward a Community Asset Based Model: Collaborative and Innovative Partnerships

Currently, two bilingual education teacher projects are being implemented at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) that tap into the community resources of South Texas. The first is a federally funded Title VII Escala "grow-your-own" project that recruits and prepares paraprofessionals to become bilingual education teachers. Similar to other "grow-your-own" projects, Escala is a collaborative effort between the university and five local school districts. Due to the number of language minority students in the area, these districts are continuously struggling to meet the demand for bilingual education teachers. As a collaborative partner, each district nominates potential candidates from its existing paraprofessional workforce. Thereby, each district can build its potential bilingual education teacher workforce.

The second is Project Alianza, an innovative asset-based effort that is Kellogg funded as a multi-site, multi-state endeavor (Petrovic et al., 1999; Cantu, 1999; Supik, 1999).[1] Rather than recruiting or exchanging Mexican-trained teachers from across the border, Project Alianza recruits legally residing *normalistas* from the community into a university bilingual teacher education program. Although the project recognizes that the candidates have been well-prepared to teach in their native country (Petrovic et al., 1999), the intent of the project is to retool these *normalistas* as bilingual education teachers who can meet educational needs of, and provide an equitable environment for language minority students within the United States. Project Alianza will also provide an innovative model for meeting the demand for bilingual education teachers. Moreover, unlike their counterparts used along the border states, as described by Hewlett-Gómez and Solis (1995), when the Project Alianza *normalistas* finish their teacher education program, they will have all the rights and privileges afforded to any state certified teacher.

The paraprofessionals and *normalistas* form two cohorts that are combined into a class of bilingual education trainees. The advantages of combining the two cohorts initially appeared obvious. One advantage was maximizing language skills. Although both groups are bilingual along a wide biliteracy continuum (Hornberger, 1989), paraprofessionals are more likely to be English dominant and *normalistas* are more likely to be Spanish dominant. In addition, both groups are enrolled in core courses including English composition and all other courses required for bilingual education certification. As part of the bilingual teacher preparation program, each is required to attend and present language seminars in their respective second language. Thus, each group serves as a language role model for the other.

Another advantage is the sharing of classroom practices. Although both groups may have experience in the classroom, the experience of *normalistas* in most cases is limited to the Mexican school classroom while the paraprofessional brings U.S. school classroom experience. Thus, each group can inform the other regarding practices.

Still another advantage is the uniqueness of each cohort's schooling experiences. While *normalistas* were raised and educated in an environment that gave status and power to their language and culture, most of the paraprofessionals were educated in a U.S. environment that more than likely saw their native language and culture from a deficit prospective. Accordingly, each group can share their schooling experiences and develop an understanding of status and power dimensions at play within differing sociolinguistic contexts. Moreover, since the project participants often interact with traditional university students enrolled in bilingual education trainees, this collaborative project also assists these traditional students in their development as bilingual teachers.

The goals of this asset-based collaborative effort are to prepare highly qualified bilingual educators who (a) serve as role models in the community and specifically for the language minority student, (b) have a high commitment to the community they serve, (c) have a high degree of academic language proficiency in both languages, and (d) are attuned to the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs of language minority children.

As a preliminary investigation, our intent was to focus on three guiding questions:

1. What experiences and abilities make *normalistas* and paraprofessionals good bilingual teacher prospects?
2. Is the bilingual teacher preparation program assisting these preservice teachers (*normalistas* and paraprofessionals) in their development as teachers of language minority children?
3. Are these preservice teachers attuned to the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs of the language minority children in their current field placement?

Methodology

Qualitative case study methods were employed to explore the research questions (Stake, 1994). To provide a wide, representative variety of the program participants, three individuals from each group were selected along with an additional *normalista* who is also a paraprofessional. In total, seven individuals from a potential pool of 32 were selected for case studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Researchers employed triangulation and team debriefing to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Coding assisted in maintaining confidentiality and anonymity; all tapes were erased once the study was completed (Rubin & Rubin, 1994). Interviewees signed and were offered a copy of the consent form (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Sources

Data for the seven participants, four *normalistas* and three paraprofessionals, in both English and Spanish, were collected from multiple sources. Archival data were collected from the interview process for entry

into the program and from the Bilingual Prochievement Test (González-Pino, 1991). Other data included (a) personal narrative writing, (b) reflective writing from a course in literacy education, (c) field-site observations, and (d) field experience reflections. Descriptions for each of these data are presented in the subsequent paragraphs.

Interview process

Interested individuals are required to apply and meet the selective criteria for the respective program. For example, the qualified pool of paraprofessional applicants had met the following prerequisite criteria: (a) a minimum of grade point average of 2.5, and (b) nomination by the cooperating school district. In addition to these criteria, the top candidates were identified as those individuals who had passed all or portions of the state-mandated test for entry into teacher education (Texas Assessment of Skills Proficiency), and had completed a minimum of 30 hours of college course work. Some *normalista* applicants who had attended community college were selected using the same standards as the paraprofessional pool. The other *normalista* applicants were screened based on the course work completed in the normal school. Preference was given to *normalista* applicants with a high grade point average and who had completed a *licenciatura* (licensure equivalent to bachelor's degree). As part of the screening process, both groups submitted written responses to questions. The most qualified applicants were invited for a final screening that consisted of a two-part, 30-minute oral interview.

The first part of the interview was conducted in the non-dominant language; applicants were interviewed and assigned an individual score in their non-dominant language. Then interviewees were asked a number of questions in their native language based on their prior experiences, such as their philosophy of teaching and bilingual education, their view of the native language and a description of their approaches to teaching mathematics and reading. Following the interview, each committee member rated the interviewee's responses and each interviewee was given an overall global score, which assisted in the final selection process. The non-dominant language score assisted in providing an informal indicator of developmental needs in that target language. These scores were verified with a formal assessment in the target language; in the case of the paraprofessionals, the Bilingual Prochievement Test (González-Pino, 1991) was used as the formal assessment. The Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (1977) was used as a formal measure of the *normalistas'* English. The findings guided the advisement process and course development for each cohort.

For the *normalistas* applying to Project Alianza, an additional formal one-hour interview was conducted in Spanish. A Spanish-speaking graduate student administered and recorded the structured questionnaire (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The transcribed data also assisted in the triangulation of the findings.

Bilingual prochievement test

All of the participants' level of proficiency in Spanish was measured through the Bilingual Prochievement Test (González-Pino, 1991). This test measures the four language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Spanish. Employing the scale of the American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages and the Educational Testing Services, each language domain is rated from novice to superior and an overall score is also given. The data gathered from this placement test assists with course advisement for the project and acts as a predicator of future performance on the state-mandated Texas Oral Proficiency Test (TOPT).

Written assignments

Five samples of written work, including a personal narrative and reflections on university course work, were also collected. The written work was part of the requirements for an introductory course in reading methodology. This course dealt with the pedagogy of English literacy instruction.

Field observations and reflections

Despite the fact that both groups have had experiences within school settings, as preservice bilingual education teachers, the participants are required to complete 24 hours of field experience every semester in a transitional bilingual classroom. Observational data were collected when the participants were engaged in small group instruction. Since the participants were guests at each school, they were responsible for notifying the cooperating teacher and principal, if necessary, when they would be observed. Several schools sent notes home to the parents to notify them that an observer would be coming to their children's classroom to record the observation. Each participant was observed for 20 minutes on two or three separate occasions. Prior to beginning the study, the participants were told that they could choose the observed lesson in conjunction with the cooperating teacher and that they could choose the language in which the lesson would be taught.

At the completion of the observations, each participant was asked to reflect on the following five questions: (a) How did you select what was to be taught in the lesson(s)? (b) How did you determine which language to use for the demonstration lesson(s)? (c) What would you change about the lesson(s)? (d) What is working for you? (Talk about what you are doing with children in the classroom that is "working.") (e) What have you learned from your field experience?

Field site description

The type of bilingual education program determines school sites selections; some sites have dual language programs, while other sites have a transitional bilingual education program. The following minimal criteria guide the selection of the bilingual classrooms: (a) There must be Spanish spoken at least 60% to

70% of the time, and (b) cooperating teachers must be fully certified in bilingual education. The school principal nominates cooperating teachers, who then supervise and mentor the preservice bilingual teacher. An effort is made by the project coordinator to provide a variety of field experiences for each participant across grade levels and in different types of bilingual settings.

Throughout the study, the seven participants were assigned to five different schools in three of the five collaborating school districts: Edgewood Independent School District (ISD), Harlandale Independent School District, and San Antonio Independent School District. Each of these districts has a relatively large number of language minority children whose first language is Spanish and who are Mexican-American. Approximately one-third of these districts' population is identified as being limited English proficient.

Fry Elementary and Coronado/Escobar Elementary, two participating Edgewood ISD schools, are located in the economically underdeveloped westside of the city. Edgewood ISD is known as one of the poorest districts in the state of Texas. The majority of the children live in low-income single-family dwellings. Two other participating schools are located in San Antonio ISD, one of the largest districts in the city. Herff Elementary is located near the historic downtown area and is predominately low income; the majority of the children live in single-family homes. J. T. Brackenridge Elementary is located in the economically depressed central westside of the city; approximately half of the families live in single family homes and the other half in a public housing project. The fifth site, Wright Elementary, is located in the city's southside in Harlandale ISD, an area recognized for its rich cultural historical contributions; some families can trace their lineage back to the original Spanish land grants. Most families living in this area are classified as being low to low-moderate income.

Limitations of Study

Pre and post data were not available for the seven subjects at the completion of the study. A focused qualitative case study rather than a longitudinal comparison of the two groups was conducted. The seven subjects were at different points in their program of study and will be followed for a future longitudinal study. Nevertheless, the findings contribute to the field of bilingual teacher preparation.

Data Analysis

To analyze the multiple written language samples, a rubric was developed after initially examining existing rubric models in both the English as a Second Language literature and in the writing research literature. Analysis of the written text employed the four-category rubric that included: (a) literacy in context for cultural referents, (b) functional communication of genre, (c) syntactic text structures, and (d) the influence of first language forms and vocabulary on the second language. A five-point scale was used to evaluate each category. (See Appendix A for scoring rubric.)

Inter-rater reliability was established by jointly scoring the written samples. After establishing a 90% inter-rater reliability, each rater independently scored the written language samples of participants. Those scores were later compared and no score differed by more than one point. All scores were negotiated to 100% agreement.

The team followed similar procedures to process the data as recommended by qualitative researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). To construct a case study profile of each participant, data analysis process included (a) transcribing the interviews and observations, (b) coding the transcriptions, and (c) creating a descriptive narrative. All data sources were triangulated with the rubric categories. In addition, all data assisted in weaving a cohesive profile of each participant. Team debriefing assisted in the construction of the case studies and the discussion. The subsequent case studies are a profile for each of the *normalistas* and paraprofessionals in this study. These profiles assisted the researchers in answering the three guiding questions.

Findings and Discussion

Case Studies: Paraprofessionals
Diana

Diana's parents were born in Mexico, but Diana grew up in San Antonio. She spoke Spanish with the family at home and learned to speak English with her friends at school. As a result, Diana had good oral command of both languages. A homemaker for the first 17 years of married life, middle-aged Diana decided to go to college ("the hardest thing I've ever done," she wrote). She began at the local community college, where, after nine years she earned an associate's degree. During those years, Diana also worked as a teacher's aide in bilingual classrooms in an inner-city school district. She continues to work as a paraprofessional while she studies for her bachelor's degree.

Her writing included generous amounts of personal history and school-related experiences. Her written work in both languages was not as coherent as her oral language, and the tone of her writing was informal, almost colloquial. There were occasional instances of her first language (Spanish) affecting the second, as in this example of a double negative: "They're all lower case letters. We don't have no capital letters."

Transcripts of Diana's interactions with students in the bilingual classroom revealed that she spoke in English and sprinkled such speech with expressions from Spanish, as shown in this excerpt:

Teacher: You already heard the whole story about the watermelon, *¿mi hijo?*
Child: Yes, I know about the waterlemon.
Teacher: No, not water lemon, mamá, watermelon.

In one-on-one conferences with her professor, Diana expressed a lack of confidence in her abilities as a university student. She particularly struggled with written compositions. Although university course work in pedagogy had taught Diana better modes of instruction, she was reluctant to take initiative in her fieldwork to do things her own way. She continued to try to please the teacher and to look to the teacher for directives. Nevertheless, Diana was beginning to take issue with the teacher, as one comment indicated: "The children were dying to color their booklets, but the teacher says there's no time for coloring. I think they need that."

Her comments, as seen in the sample below, revealed that she was looking more and more at the children she was serving, and, as a result, was changing her instruction. She stated, "I've learned that every day you learn from the children—not stuff in a book—and I need to try different things with them."

Karina

Karina is a third-generation Mexican-American. Although Spanish is spoken in large familial gatherings, English was Karina's dominant language. Upon entering the bilingual teacher education preparation program, Karina scored a 3 (of 5) on her oral Spanish interview, indicating adequate knowledge, but not mastery of Spanish. Karina was eager, however, to improve her Spanish, and she was practicing with the *normalistas* in her classes. Conversely, during computer technology class, the *normalistas* sought assistance from Karina. In actual conversations with bilingual children, Karina often interjected Spanish language terms. In fact, she practiced on-going code switching and language alternation (see Zentella, 1997), as illustrated in this excerpt from a math game lesson:

Teacher: Four *y* [and] four bears is *ocho* [eight].

Child: *Cinco y cinco son diez.* [Five and five are ten.]

Teacher: *¡Ándale!* [Great!]

Child: *¡Yo estoy ganando!* [I'm winning!]

Teacher: All right. *¡Muy bien!* [Very good!]

Karina proved to be an excellent student and was very confident in academic settings. Her writing style was more formal than that of her peers. Nevertheless, she included numerous cultural and personal references in her writing. Because she worked for two years as an AmeriCorps volunteer, Karina was knowledgeable about pedagogy. She approached teaching with great confidence. She expressed a desire to be a "change agent" in schools, and she was passionate about the need for quality educational programs in Mexican-American inner-city schools. Karina was beginning to challenge the traditional school practices and authority: "These children need love and attention . . . and they need to be respected. Without respect, they will not respect you."

Although some of her comments reflected remnants of a deficit model perspective, Karina recognized and valued the children's abilities: "I have learned that the children are eager to learn if you make the lesson fun and interesting. If they can relate it to their lives, then they will understand it."

She challenged the traditional attitude of limitations and articulated her determination to bring about change:

> The children I work with are very poor and many come from broken homes so I try to stress to them that school is very important. They know that I am serious because they know that I go to school myself. Through my example, I try to show them that they can overcome any obstacle.

Teresa

Teresa was educated in a bilingual community in a town on the Texas border. Although she spoke English at school, Spanish was the dominant language at home. After graduation from high school, Teresa moved to San Antonio where she began working in the public schools as a bilingual teacher's aide in an inner-city school district that was 99% Latino. She had worked as a paraprofessional with elementary school children for five years. She scored 4 of 5 on her Spanish language interview, and her written Spanish scored 4 of 5 on function and 3 of 5 on syntax, with some evidence of English influence in her written Spanish. Teresa remains bilingual in English and Spanish.

Her spoken English was accented, and her speech was very colloquial. Her written English was functionally strong (4.6 of 5), and her command of English syntax scored 3.9 of 5. Interestingly, there was some influence of the Spanish language in her written English (2.8 of 5).

In a final reflection from the reading methodology class, Teresa stated: "As I reflex [reflect] on past experiences especially of those at working at an elementary school there are a great many things that now have meaning for me." Her writings scored 4.2 of 5 on personal contextual references.

Teresa's critical reflection about her teaching following her field experiences indicated her growth as a bilingual teacher:

> At times I felt like I was like a parrot just saying or singing and copying what other people do. The sad part is that the teachers never took the time of explaining what the hidden purposes of teaching in that way was. Now I know that I should always ask why things are done in the manner that they are.

Teresa was reticent to speak out in her university classes. She readily deferred group decision-making to the more assertive, older *normalistas*. To secure the professor's attention, Teresa repeatedly used "Miss," and she responded to professor's comments with "Yes, Miss."

Likewise, in the classroom, Teresa followed the teacher's lead: "She has me choose from several lessons, and I'm comfortable with that." However, Teresa was very aware that she adds an important component to the classroom:

The teacher speaks English. But I repeat the lesson in Spanish for those who did not understand, to make it easier for them. If a child says, *'No entiendo,'* [I don't understand] I use Spanish because usually the language is the difficulty.

Additionally, there was evidence in Teresa's comments that she is becoming more confident, as well as growing in awareness of children's diverse needs:

More than anything, I feel the kids feel that they can talk with me. They feel free to admit when they don't understand so I can go back and explain and help them with examples. I've learned how to communicate with the children, and I'm more aware of other factors that affect a child's performance. It may be language, or shyness, or the child may feel too pressured. . . . A lot of time we assume they just don't know something. We need to find out what they are missing or why they aren't performing.

Case Studies: *Normalistas*
Laura

Laura, a vivacious 40-year-old, immigrated from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, to San Antonio, Texas, with her husband and three daughters just two years ago. While in Monterrey, Laura helped her mother run a private *escuela infantil* (early childhood school). Laura was passionate about her Mexican heritage, and she had organized cultural celebrations both at the university and at her children's schools. Cultural and personal references infused Laura's writing.

Laura had the drive, and she wanted to excel in her studies. She made every effort to get all A's in her university course work. Her confidence allowed her to ask questions in class, even when her English was halting. Both her spoken and written English showed a great deal of influence of her dominant Spanish language, as the following samples reflect:

I would like they always live in love and supporting mutually [taken from a narrative about her daughters] . . . I can compare this work because when I had my class [in Mexico] and I wanted to motivate to my students with the subject that I needed to teach, one of my strategies always was that I full my class with different kinds of materials and resources and to presented to the children on a attractive way the knowledge [reflecting about literacy instruction].

Observations of her work with children and transcripts of her lessons revealed that Laura did all her instruction in Spanish. Her animation and liveliness engaged her young students, as evidenced by the children's laughter and high degree of participation. Laura stressed the importance of creating a socioemotional climate in the classroom in which children feel comfortable: "Affect is very important. You need to win children over, to earn their confidence."

She further analyzed the structure of U.S. schools as an impediment to this. She lamented the rushed pace of instruction that, she felt, stressed her students. She reflected on the highly academic structure of the U.S. school as compared to her first-grade experience in Mexico: "In Mexico children could be children. Here everything focuses on the academic. In Mexico everything was more relaxed, and as a result the children were more relaxed too."

Yolanda

Yolanda was 25 years old. She graduated from a normal school in Mexico, but she taught only a year before immigrating to Texas. At the time of this study, she did fieldwork in bilingual classrooms and pursued courses at the university to secure a teaching credential from the state of Texas. Yolanda's writings showed her bicultural contexts and her transition between the two cultures, as evidenced here with "we" used in the same paragraph to refer to Mexico and to refer to Texas:

> But the focus of literacy is different because in my country [Mexico] when you read a book in kindergarten is more like to relax activity. . . . Usually in my country [Mexico] we begin the strong emphasis of literacy in first grade. . . . Here [Texas] we have a lot of good books that use for prediction, for teach colors and numbers [reflecting on emergent literacy].

Yolanda was not yet confident in her use of English. All lessons observed were conducted in Spanish. Even when a student asked her a question in English, she responded in Spanish.

> Child: That's a toy?
> Yolanda*: Es un juguete, sí.*

Her English showed considerable influence of her native Spanish, and her control of English syntax was not yet secure, as reflected in this written excerpt of a narrative about her dog: "People tell me that perhaps she is going to live about three years more. I am scared because I love her very much. I wishes that she stays with us all the life." Yolanda recognized that teaching must be engaging and interesting, saying, "I try to make things fun, like a game. That way, the children are more relaxed and they don't even realize how much they are learning."

She also compared classrooms in Mexico and in the United States, seeing the merits of each system:

> Aquí a los niños en kinder y pre-kinder les dan más cosas académicas, como contar o reconocer letras. Es más académico, más elevado el nivel. En México no les apresuramos a los chiquillos tanto. Era más relajado. Pero en México les enseñaba a todos a las vez. Aquí un grupo de niños pasa and viene otro. Así aprenden mejor y se puede ver quien necesita ayuda.

[Here (in the United States), prekinder and kinder children are given more academics, like counting or recognizing letters. It is much more academic, a higher level. In Mexico, we don't pressure the children as much. It is much more relaxed. In Mexico, I would teach a whole group. Here, a group of children moves on and here comes another group. In this way, they learn better and you can see who will need help.]

Irene

An upper elementary math teacher with eight years teaching experience in Mexico, Irene approached her academic course work in the United States with determination. She was outspoken and a leader for the group of *normalista* students and often acted as liaison in assuring that the paraprofessionals' point of view was heard by all. She was confident enough to ask questions during university class time, but she asked in Spanish. Transcripts of Irene's teaching and committee interview revealed that she spoke Spanish at an educated level, using formal constructions (To one young student she stated, *"Pásale a localizarme una 'b' en la lección"* [Come and find the "b" in the lesson.]) and specific vocabulary (*"Suenan parecidos porque tienen la misma terminación. Mire esta parte que esta aquí. Observen este pedacito i-d-o ido y ido es la misma terminación."* [They sound the same because they end the same. Look at the part here, and observe this part, "i-d-o" "ido" and "ido." It is the same ending.]). Examination of transcripts of verbal interactions with bilingual students showed extensive use of praise (liberal use of "*muy bien*" [very good]) and diminutives ("*mijo*" [son]). Irene also sprinkled her interactions with traditional *rimas* [rhymes] for taking turns, for example:

Tin Marín de Don pingüe
Cúcara mácara títere fue
Yo no fui; fue Tete
Pégale, pégale con el pie
Que esta mero fue.

Irene's interview in English scored 3.5 of 5. Her written English scored 3.7 of 5 on function, and 3.1 of 5 on syntax. Evidence of influence of her dominant Spanish language on her English writing was considerable (3.8 out of 5). Additionally, Irene's writing revealed numerous, cultural, and personal references (4.6 out of 5), such as when she reflected on her personal acquisition of literacy:

I can't remember if my parents ever read me a book before I was going to school but they used to tell me stories. When I was three or four years old, my aunt used to tell me stories about her early years and short stories about the animals in the farm before going to bed. In the small town where I lived there was not a single library or bookstore

in at that time. The only book available were the books from the Secretary of Public Education.

Through her university course work and field experience, Irene began to reflect on her evolving practices as a future bilingual practitioner:

I have learned so much [by] observing my excellent teacher model. Now my philosophy is "*un poquito de todo*" [a little bit of everything]. There are times when direct instruction is good; there are times for cooperative groups. Sometimes whole language strategies are appropriate, and there needs to be active learning too. I want to incorporate the best of all approaches.

Martha

Of the *normalista* group, Martha scored lowest on degree of personal and cultural references (3.7 of 5). Her English function scored 3.5 of 5 and her syntactic abilities scored 3.0. Her written English showed influence from her dominant Spanish language (3.5 of 5). However, Martha scored 5 of 5 ("native-like") on the committee interview in English. The influence of L1 on spoken L2 was the lowest score among the *normalistas* (2 of 5). Nevertheless, its influence could be found, for example, in her earliest memories of reading:

When I began to go to kindergarten in Mexico at the age of three, things got better, because not only was I being read to, but I was introduced into the learning of songs, rhymes, dances, and to academic learning.

She herself expressed her struggles with English, stating, "A very different experience has been now that I am coming to UTSA. You might ask yourself why? And the answer is, because everything is in English. Teaching English is a huge challenge for me."

However, of the *normalistas*, Martha was the most bilingual. Her written Spanish scored 4 of 5 for function and 3.5 for syntax. In the bilingual classroom, Martha worked comfortably in both languages. In her university classes, Martha was very professional in her demeanor. She asked questions in English, and she was formal in her dealings with professors and peers. She valued and respected the experiences of the paraprofessionals.

Martha's experiences as both a *normalista* and a paraprofessional enhanced her development as an incipient teacher. Her comments refered to specific strategies for teaching effectiveness:

With my MR [mentally retarded] student, I was able to use drawings as a way for her to communicate personal feelings and her comprehension of stories. With my special education students in writing, I was able to use graphic organizers. These organizers helped the students who needed a path to follow when writing stories.

Because of her background experiences, Martha also had the perspective to question the effectiveness of the traditional paraprofessional role:

Being prepared ahead of time makes a big difference in the quality of the lesson you present to the students. Often I do not know beforehand what I'm supposed to do. The teacher decides what she wants me to do according to her plan for that day. It is easier to implement an activity and to present the concept to children if I have prepared a lesson based on my own objectives.

Conclusion

The asset-based collaborative approach is maximizes the linguistic and cultural resources of the community by identifying *normalistas* and paraprofessionals and preparing them in ways that will meet the goal of increasing the numbers of highly qualified bilingual educators. The case study evidence presented in this study suggests that both *normalistas* and paraprofessionals offer fertile ground for bilingual teachers. As they moved through their teacher preparation courses, members of both groups were challenging some notions that they held beforehand. Moreover, they questioning the traditional practices of the teacher preparation program as well as the school practices they encountered in their fieldwork.

The *normalistas* recognized that the U.S. public schools differed significantly from the Mexican schools. While drawing on the richness and merits of the Mexican system, often these immigrants open-mindedly compared, evaluated, and noticed merit in U.S. educational methods. Conversely, the paraprofessionals began to question the deficit model pervasive in many of the schools in which they had worked, and were taking a different stance toward schooling and authority figures. Having the *normalistas* and the paraprofessionals participating in the same classes had also challenged them to examine their perceptions of each other, their attitude towards their university professors, and their expectations for children. This was most obvious in the case of Teresa, a paraprofessional, who began by deferring to the *normalistas* in class and became more confident as the training progressed. Karina also saw the *normalistas* as an asset and sought them out to practice and improve her Spanish. Martha, a *normalista* who also had paraprofessional experience, helped bridge the groups, and valued the knowledge gained from being a paraprofessional.

All reflected upon their practice. There was ample evidence that the program was developing teachers of reflection, who would integrate prior experiences with developing knowledge and new practices. Our findings, similar to those of Jiménez, Gertsen, and Rivera (1996), demonstrate that our participants were integrating a variety of instructional approaches to address bilingual students' needs. Some participants, including both *normalistas* and paraprofessionals, were even moving on to challenge the status quo of the school culture.

Additionally, all were using language appropriate for the children. All made rich cultural references in their teaching. Moreover, all stressed the need to ensure that all children are successful. All were concerned about the affective needs of the students, reflecting a "deep understanding of . . . students' families and their cultural backgrounds" (Jiménez et al., 1996, p. 333). Many expressed concern regarding emphasis on academic development over affective development; nevertheless, they *were* concerned about cognitive issues. Both groups recognized that a strong cognitive foundation is critical. There were many references to the need for effective instruction to meet individual student's learning needs.

Subsequent to our study, four of the participants, two *normalistas* and two paraprofessionals, have completed their respective programs and passed all state-mandated teacher exams. According to their principals, they each have demonstrated competence during this first year of teaching and are on their way to being successful bilingual education teachers.

Thus, a program designed to recruit and support legally residing *normalistas* and bilingual classroom paraprofessionals offers promise in preparing effective credentialed teachers. Such programs can make a significant contribution to meeting the need for qualified, committed bilingual educators.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

University bilingual teacher preparation programs can help to alleviate the shortage of bilingual teachers by identifying the human capital within the communities they serve. Community members who have the linguistic and cultural skills needed in bilingual classrooms can be a rich source for "grow-your-own" bilingual teacher preparation programs. Success can be ensured through careful selection of participants and modifications of the university's bilingual teacher preparation programs. Especially, programs should pay attention to identifying professors who are aware and prepared to challenge the socioeconomic and sociopolitical biases and perspectives of the diverse group members. Through the careful building of a sense of community, specifically within the bilingual teacher preparation program and the fieldwork placements, a safe zone is created where sociopolitical perspectives as well as educational theory and practice can be examined and critiqued.

Although this program builds on various prior programs that have used a "grow-your-own" concept, this study suggests that there are unique advantages to creating synergies by building cohorts that combine members of two different groups, each with very high skills in particular areas, as is the case with paraprofessionals' knowledge of local culture and schooling and the *normalistas'* knowledge of Spanish. In such a program, all participants benefit and help each other challenge the pervasive attitudes of bilingual educators, or what Ada (1995) describes as a lack of "critiques of the educational system" on the part of bilingual educators.

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Endnotes

[1] Project Alianza is funded by the W. R. Kellogg Foundation and is a collaboration of Intercultural and Developmental Research Association and the Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation. The views presented here are presented here are those of the authors and not of these organizations.

Appendix

Analysis of Language Usage

Subject name_____   Language used_____

Rater_____   Form _____

(interview, written reflection, narrative, classroom interaction, etc.)

_____ 1. Literacy in context (references within content)
    (5 = high evidence of culture, etc.; 1 = no evidence)
        _____ cultural
        _____ personal historical
        _____ social
        _____ school related

_____ 2. High function / Low function (how functional in terms of
    communicating, purpose of genre, and global content)
    (5 = high function; 1 = low function)

_____ 3. Syntactic analysis of text structures
    (5 = high; 1 = low)
        _____ cohesiveness (logical development, paragraph flow)
        _____ coherence/ clarity (complete thoughts conveyed?)
        _____ complexity within/between sentences (variety)
        _____ lexical loading (richness/precision of language)

_____ 4. L 1 and L 2
    (5 = much influence of L1 on L2; 1 = no influence of L1 on L2)
        _____ evidence of code switching
        _____ syntactic elements
        _____ discourse styles