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El Instituto: Centering Language, Culture, and Power in Bilingual Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract

Teacher education programs have the obligation to prepare bilingual teachers, new and established, to challenge pervasive deficit and racist ideologies, to cultivate students' identities/knowledges, and to thwart oppressive ideologies through counter-hegemonic discourses. This paper presents a case study of El Instituto, one Hispanic Serving Institution's immersive professional development program for Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers in Los Angeles County. Conducted entirely in Spanish, the program aimed to center teachers' sociocultural realities and community cultural wealth while honoring their linguistic capital, deepening their Spanish-language knowledge, and developing critical consciousness. Findings suggest that utilizing a critical professional development approach to simultaneously study Spanish language and critical pedagogy while centering teachers' community cultural wealth led to deep insights about intersections of languages and culture within larger power structures that cultivate systemic oppression. However, epistemological shifts about fostering more humanizing and critical professional development for bilingual educators are necessary to achieve these goals.

Keywords: bilingual education, professional development, critical pedagogy

Introduction

The passage of Proposition 58 overturned nearly twenty years of English-only K-12 education ordinance and reinvigorated bilingual education in California. While it has been well-documented that dual language education fosters bilingualism and biliteracy (Howard et al., 2018) and is culturally sustaining (Barbian et al., 2017), these programs exist within social

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institutions that mediate larger ideologies and promote dominant (monolingual, monocultural) epistemologies (Huber, 2011). Sedimentary deficit ideologies continue to pervade education policy, curriculum, and pedagogy, resulting in programs that cater to standardization, English dominance (Cameron, 1997) and foster systemic microaggressions against language minoritized students (Huber, 2011). Teacher educators have the obligation to prepare bilingual teachers, new and established, to challenge pervasive deficit and racist ideologies (Fránquiz et al., 2011), to cultivate students' identities/knowledges, and to thwart oppressive ideologies through counter-hegemonic discourses (Darder, 2015).

This paper presents a case study of El Instituto, one Hispanic Serving Institution's (HSI) immersive professional development program for Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers in Los Angeles County. Most professional development for bilingual teachers occurs in English and focuses on improving students' English. Distinctively, El Instituto was conducted entirely in Spanish. The program aimed to center teachers' sociocultural realities and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) while honoring their linguistic capital, deepening their Spanish-language knowledge, and developing critical consciousness. Since 2016, the program was conducted for two weeks each summer on the HSI's campus but was held via zoom in 2020. Through analysis of program structure and participant experience, we address the research questions: How can bilingual professional development center issues of race, language, culture, and power while enhancing teachers' critical pedagogies? And, how does incorporating critical practices, like community circles (círculos) and literature circles, into professional development influence bilingual teachers' praxis? Professors at the HSI have attempted to address this question through the design (and continuous redesign) and implementation of El Instituto.

El Instituto is an immersive, interdisciplinary, and responsive experience. After a broad overview of program design, this case study illustrates how humanizing and generative practices guided implementation, captures participants' experiences, and articulates how this experience cultivated teachers' praxis, their critical reflection on the world in order to change it (Freire, 1972). We emphasize how El Instituto 2020 approached its goals of critical professional development by responding to and centering the new realities of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement for racial justice. Findings suggest that utilizing a sociocultural approach to simultaneously study Spanish language and critical pedagogy while centering teachers' community cultural wealth led to deep insights about intersections of languages and cultures within larger power structures that cultivate systemic oppression. However, at times this form of growth seemed at odds with neoliberal undercurrents of teacher professional development that calls for product-based deliverables to evidence learning and justify economic investments. We reflect on necessary epistemological shifts for professional development for bilingual educators.

Review of Literature

Today's bilingual educators must be prepared to actively undo oppressive harm institutionalized under the monolithic, English-only policies and practices that worked to marginalize multilingual students' identities and delegitimize students' culturally specific ways of knowing and doing (Alfaro, 2018). Doing so requires that bilingual teachers critique the harm and ineffectiveness of English-only pedagogies and develop the ideological fortitude necessary to forge new realities (Alfaro, 2018). Reimagining bilingual education means

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reconfiguring who and what is valued in academic spaces. Thus, professional development spaces must be critical and dialogical (Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz, 2015) in order to support bilingual teachers in navigating these challenging terrains. By conducting the program entirely in Spanish and centering teachers' linguistic capital, "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78), we reconfigured what is valued academic spaces and professional development and modeled this for teachers.

In this section, we review the literature about critical professional development and bilingual teacher preparation to frame how El Instituto sought to foster bilingual teachers' critical praxis. Most of our participants identified as Mexican, Salvadorean, or Guatemalan; however, this section synthesizes broader literature in which scholars use the gender-encompassing term Latinx. We want to acknowledge that the term "Latinx", while prevalent in the literature, is a social construct that privileges Eurocentric colonialism and erases the indigenous and other aspects of folks' cultural identities. In El Instituto, we push back against this construct and reference our participants by their preferred identity marker.

Critical and Humanizing Professional Development for Bilingual Teachers

Rita Kohli and colleagues (2015) seek a definition of critical professional development. They define traditional professional development as antidialogical: it uses a banking model, frames teachers as empty vessels, and teaches technical skills (Kohli et al., 2015). The idea is that teachers will transactionally replicate skills learned with students. While teaching techniques might be useful, this approach "does not prepare educators to disrupt structural inequity because it often ignores broader historical or institutional injustices" (Kohli et al., 2015, p. 10). Critical professional development (CPD), on the other hand, is dialogical: participating teachers and the professional development facilitator are both seen as creating knowledge and coming together in reflection and action- praxis - toward liberatory transformation. CPD must "provoke cooperative dialogue, build unity, provide shared leadership, and meet the critical needs of educators" (Kohli, et al., 2015, p. 11).

Much emphasis in professional development for teaching multilingual students has focused on English acquisition and contributed to the "cultural and linguistic eradication" of minoritized populations (Bartolomé, 1994, p. 176). In addition to being antidialogical, professional development largely focused on techniques that support multilingual students acquiring English as quickly as possible, as measured by standardized tests, and at the expense of their home language (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Identifying these practices as "best" or "effective" furthered the institutionalization of reducing students' complex social identities to categorizing labels and justification for deficit approaches to schooling (Reyes III, 2016; Salazar, 2013). This process largely dehumanized students, creating automated systems that do not center students' experiential knowledge and cultural capital (Yosso, 2005).

CPD for bilingual teachers must work to undo deficit approaches to teaching multilingual students of color and pursue critical consciousness (Freire, 1972). Professional development leaders, then, must foster an environment in which participants dialogically explore their cultural and political selves as situated in broader realms of oppression and participate in critical self-reflection (Andrews et al., 2019). Emphasizing language in this space is essential so as to model how language facilitates critical pedagogy and how language is taught and developed through critical pedagogy. Thus, teacher preparation must not only

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reflect students' cultural and linguistic capitals and experiential knowledge, it must sustain them (Alim & Paris, 2017). For example, encouraging translanguaging values language skills and amplifies participants' identities while modeling how teachers may do so in their own classrooms (Bucholtz et al., 2017; García, Ibarra, & Seltzer, 2016; García & Kleyn, 2016). In these spaces, educators deepen their knowledge of critical pedagogy and develop a kinship of solidarity (Martinez et al., 2016).

Supporting Bilingual Teachers Toward Ideological Clarity

Supporting bilingual educators in embracing critical practices requires an ideological shift within teachers and across multilingual policy, programming, and practices (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). Calling for the professional development of critically conscious dual language educators, Alfaro and Hernández (2016) assert that dual language teacher preparation/development must take intentional steps in supporting bilingual teachers on their path toward ideological clarity by addressing four tenets: Ideology, Pedagogy, Access, and Equity (IPAE). In this framework, teachers enter an iterative reflective process of naming hegemonic ideologies and practicing self-questioning and dialogue to "arrive at the realization that it is their ideology that "announces or denounces" teaching for equity and social justice" (Alfaro & Hernández, 2016, p. 9). By better understanding if, when, and how their belief systems either reflect those of the dominant society or transform oppressive practices (Darder, 2015), teachers continuously develop critical consciousness (Alfaro, 2019).

While limited, research using the IPAE and critical framework for bilingual teacher professional development suggests that privileging the iterative, reflexive process in a sustained and supported manner helps shift teachers' pedagogy. García and Lang (2018) illustrated how bilingual teachers' understanding and use of formative assessments led to more dialogic relations with students in Spanish Language Arts. Similarly, Alfaro and Quezada (2010) found that professional development on biliteracy in Mexico supported authentic, culturally relevant curricula and developed political and ideological clarity. Valdez and Omerbašić (2015) invoked a critical approach by first centering bilingual teachers' authorship of their identities and worlds through multimodal counter-stories, after which teachers eagerly extended it to their classrooms. Navarro (2019) illustrates how critically conscious bilingual science teachers designed and implemented content using the IPAE framework.

El Instituto was designed in the image of critical professional development (Kohli et al., 2015) as a way to guide teachers in exploring the degree to which their praxis upheld the IPAE model (Alfaro & Hernández, 2016). While problem-posing, humanizing practices were modeled, the goal was for teachers to participate in authentic dialogue and hands-on experiences that would lead to internal reflection and, ultimately, change their praxis.

Theoretical Framework

The participants (and the leaders) of El Instituto live nuanced experiences that intersect in messy and beautiful ways as we come to understand ourselves and others through lens that include our innate ancestral knowledge and also social constructs: gender, class, immigration, migration, generational status, language, Catholicism, and phenotype (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Johnson, 1998; Montoya, 1994; Pérez Huber, 2010; Trucios-Haynes, 2000). LatCrit offers a framework that embraces such complexities, connections, and contradictions. CRT evolved into several sub-disciplines that examine specific communities of color; these subdisciplines

disrupt the Black-White paradigm that dominated earlier CRT scholarship and suggest nuanced ways communities of color experience intersections of race, gender, and class. These sub-disciplines act as "cousins" within the CRT family (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 200), including: TribalCrit, AsianCrit, LatCrit, FemCrit, FlipCrit (Curammeng, Buenavista, and Cariaga, 2017), and WhiteCrit (Yosso, 2005). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) offer an explanation of LatCrit as:

> concerned with a progressive sense of a coalitional Latina/Latino panethnicity and addresses issues often ignored by critical race theorists such as language, immigration, ethnicity, identity, phenotype, and sexuality…[LatCrit] is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos' multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (p. 311 - 312).

Key to the tenets of LatCrit are a commitment to anti-subordination and anti-essentialism (LatCrit Inc., 2001), which is significant when understanding the complex lived experiences of people of the Americas whose experiences do not fit neatly within a particular cultural checkbox. LatCrit and CRT provide frameworks that couch the simultaneous ways that El Instituto can operate, "in contradictory ways with [its] potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with [its] potential to emancipate and empower" (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Within LatCrit, experiential knowledge is valued and honored – people's stories and experiences hold power. Scholars have developed critical race methodologies in education where research is grounded within the stories, experiences, and knowledge of communities of color; these highlight the role that experiential knowledge and stories play as theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tools to challenge systems of oppression while working towards a better future (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Malagon, et. al, 2009). Delgado Bernal (2002) argues for a CRT, LatCrit, Feminist framework in order to validate students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. In this framework, naturalized concepts like meritocracy and white privilege are critiqued and suggests counter-stories, dichos, kitchen talk, and the like as asset models of educational research.

Drawing from CRT and LatCrit, Yosso (2005) critiques canonical notions of cultural capital that center dominant, White, middle class values and ignores "…Outsider, mestiza, transgressive knowledges" (p. 70). Instead, Yosso offers a definition of community cultural wealth (CCW) rooted in the experiential knowledge of people of color: "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). She points to at least six forms of CCW, aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital, and explains that these forms of capital are "dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth accumulated assets and resources in the histories and lives of Communities of Color" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). In order to truly enact transformative and critical professional development, El Instituto authentically centered bilingual teachers' CCW, highlighted linguistic capital or "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78), and centered the dynamic interplay between all forms of CCW within the learning experience. Creating a critical and dialogical space which centered linguistic capital meant that the program in El Instituto also valued participants' CCW in its entirety.

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Methodology

We utilized a qualitative case study design (Stake, 1995) to study El Instituto over five summers. El Instituto can be understood as a bounded case of a unique approach to professional development for bilingual educators that centers CCWwhile immersing participants in critical pedagogy and the target language (Spanish). Stake (1995) explains that a case can be intrinsic or instrumental (p.2). An intrinsic case seeks to shed light on the case itself, considered a unique situation, while an instrumental case is used to understand a broader issue (Stake, 1995). We understand the case of El Instituto to be intrinsic in that it highlights a unique approach to teacher professional development and instrumental in understanding changes needed to support bilingual teachers in critical practices enacting social change.

El Instituto was led by an interdisciplinary team of faculty from the College of Education and Modern Language (Spanish) which included the authors. We are bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English and have come to bilingualism and bilingual education through various trajectories. Jen Stacy identifies as a white, cisgender woman who learned Spanish first academically in Ohio and then by living in México. She worked as an English teacher in bilingual schools in Monterrey, México and has supported formal and informal multilingual education endeavors throughout her career. Yesenia Fernández identifies as a Mexicana/ Chicana cisgender woman who had a transnational upbringing. She learned Spanish at home, in Michoacán, México and in Los Angeles, California and negotiates spaces as a bilingual, biliterate Mexican/Chicana woman who often translanguages. She spent many years as an English teacher teaching English learners and as an administrator transforming schools to ensure equity in part by opening up access to honors and Advanced Placement for English Learners. Elexia Reyes McGovern the current Bilingual Coordinator at our HSI, identifies as a Tejana-Chicana with Mexican and Irish heritage, cisgender mama. She learned Spanish in her grandparent's home in El Paso, Texas, stopped speaking Spanish as a child, and now is a translanguager of English and Spanish varieties in Los Ángeles, California. Elexia taught as a high school teacher in Boston, Massachusetts and Los Ángeles and works actively to integrate a critical, ethnic studies approach to bilingual education.

Participants included novice and veteran teachers and school leaders who work in myriad models of bilingual education that represent the current state of language learning in California: 50/50 dual language, maintenance and transitional bilingual, and English language development programs (which include supporting students in their first language), and current and formal teacher education students. El Instituto has served approximately 150 bilingual teachers working at schools across Los Angeles County, with a significant increase in participants during the online 2020 format. All participating teachers were invited to join the study and only those who gave consent (n=78) were included in observations and invited for interviews. All participants spoke Spanish: most were native or heritage speakers of Spanish and had various speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Some identified as immigrants and migrants from México and Central America to the United States while others were 1.5, second, or third generation. Participants are referred to by pseudonyms throughout.

Qualitative data collection included observations of the sessions, both in person and online, daily participant feedback, and formal and informal interviews. Observations were conducted by the researchers during each session and were documented by written

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fieldnotes, including virtual sessions (Emerson et al., 2011). We did not record virtual sessions because we wanted to ensure that we maintained a brave – and vulnerable - space and only included participants who gave consent (Landerman, 2013). Artifacts were collected to document program design and participant learning. Participants were invited to participate in formal interviews that utilized Spradley's (1979) interview methods. Data were collected in whichever language(s) they were produced, mostly in Spanish but some in English or a mix of both. All data were coded and analyzed thematically (Emerson, et al., 2011; Spradley, 1979), triangulated, and interpreted through a Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) theoretical lens (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Three qualitative themes emerged: learning critical pedagogy through critical pedagogy, sociocultural language learning, and developing praxis. Most participants pointed to two program components, círculos and literature circles, as influential in their development.

Findings: The Case of El Instituto

El Instituto was an interdisciplinary effort to develop and sustain bilingual teacher preparation throughout Los Angeles County. One concern from all stakeholders, including school districts, was the need for practicing teachers to learn about and practice Spanish and to further develop teachers' competency across language domains. However, the committee recognized that language instruction must reflect participants' linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005), provide authentic opportunities to practice the target language, and include designed scaffolding (Gibbons, 2009) towards specific language goals. El Instituto welcomed all varieties of Spanish while sustaining critical dialogue that situated language learning within broader sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts. We intended to model critical, responsive teaching practices while also supporting participants' development of these skills. The result was an open-ended, guiding framework that focused on a theme (e.g. language, culture, and power) and followed a general schedule that included círculo, language instruction, modeling of critical pedagogy, and application. By centering bilingual teachers' "raced-gendered epistemologies that offer unique ways of knowing" in the program design, we hoped to promote "understanding the world based on the various raced and gendered experiences of people of color" (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 107) which would help participants decenter dominant ideologies and suggest new pedagogical frameworks.

In summer 2020, the committee reoriented El Instituto to be responsive to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter. The theme was humanizing pedagogies and goals included studying Pedagogía del Oprimido [Pedagogy of the Oppressed] by Paulo Freire (1972) in Spanish, understanding current realities through this lens, and considering bilingual education as space to address these issues. We felt that bilingual teachers, who were majority people of color, were experiencing the context of summer 2020 in complex, multilayered ways. On one hand, they were navigating the stressors of a pandemic that disproportionately affected people of color (Kantamneni, 2020). As teachers, they had abruptly shifted to distance learning and, as majority women, they assumed much of the responsibility for their own children's home-schooling. Additionally, protests against the police killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Abery, and Breonna Taylor brought thousands of people to the streets to assert that Black Lives Matter and demand racial justice. It also brought up the complexity of race, blackness, anti-blackness, and identity in Latinx

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communities. Pedagogía del Oprimido offered a theoretical foundation from which to understand the situation and a lens through which to develop critical praxis.

To some extent, we mirrored the experience of in-person learning and continued our efforts for Spanish-language immersion online. Participants were provided with open-access copies of Pedagogía del Oprimido (Freire, 1972) in Spanish and English along with reading guides. Leaders began each session with a Land Acknowledgement and centering exercise. After short mini-lessons that included focused language instruction, participants joined small-group virtual círculos. University leaders served as facilitators, listening intently to the ideas that emerged, asking open-ended questions, and supporting connections to lived realities. Participants kept journals during and after the sessions. While all conversations took place in Spanish, participants were encouraged to translanguage, or draw on their full linguistic repertoire (Otheguy et al., 2015), and support each other in deepening language skills. Each session closed with a presentation by leaders or community members.

Three themes consistently emerged from the bound case of El Instituto: learning critical pedagogy through critical pedagogy, sociocultural language learning, and developing praxis. In this section, we illustrate these themes and how they illuminate a unique approach to bilingual teacher professional development.

Learning Critical Pedagogy Through Critical Pedagogy

Círculo opened the session with grounding and centering and set the tone for participant-guided learning. Stemming from indigenous restorative practices, círculo physically brought participants together, honored indigenous epistemologies, mitigated power differentials, and built "trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors" (Costello et al., 2010 in Mirsky, 2014, p. 52). Círculo was a space for participants to learn about each other, to see each other, and acknowledge their humanity. It evolved throughout the week to include reflection about their trajectories in oppressive educational spaces as well as critical discussions regarding race, language, culture, identity, and power.

In all iterations of El Instituto, program leaders facilitated círculo. They reviewed, modeled, and held participants accountable to agreements, even online:

- Respeta la pieza de hablar. [Respect the talking piece.]
- Habla desde el corazón. [Speak from the heart.]
- Escucha desde el corazón. [Listen from the heart.]
- Habla con respeto. [Speak with respect.]
- Escucha con respeto. [Listen with respect.]
- Diga lo suficiente. [Say just enough.]
- Honra la privacidad. [Honor each other's privacy.]
- Sé lo mejor que puede ser. [Be the best that you can be.]

The teachers came with various experiences regarding círculos. Some participated in círculos elsewhere while others were very new to this practice and took a couple of days to feel comfortable. A few resisted at first, marked by leaving or side conversations. As leaders, we maintained the routine while simultaneously articulating our pedagogical reasoning. Topics that emerged during other sections of the program were integrated into círculo, making it clear how learning stemmed from participants' lives and how these experiences were central to professional development. In turn, teachers learned about círculo through experience, embodying its benefits. Including círculo each day fostered a personal and

professional community (Martinez et al., 2016). Participants began to learn more about each other's nuanced cultural identities and practices, to feel more comfortable speaking in Spanish, and to vulnerably reflect on their teaching practices. Overall, this strengthened community and support throughout the program.

Ada, a veteran teacher, described how the structure of círculo generated knowledge, "El aceptar las opiniones de todos sin corregir...aunque quizás alguna de las veces no hayan estado de acuerdo con las opiniones de nosotros, o lo que sea, pero escuchar, el escuchar- el escuchar es empodera." [Accepting others' opinions without correcting them...although sometimes you do not agree with our opinions, or whatever, but listening - listening is empowering.] She described how listening deepened her learning. "Como decimos en español, "Con lo que le acomoda"... Las ideas se van cambiando poco a poco reflexionando y reflexionando las ideas de otros." [Like we say in Spanish "with what suits you" - the ideas begin changing little by little as you reflect and reflect on others' ideas.] Ada captures the discursive and generative nature of the círculo and beginning elements of praxis. Particularly, she points to how listening to others' ideas leads to learning, an empowering process and a path to critical consciousness.

Hefty topics arose in círculo and teachers had the opportunity to spend quality time reflecting, digesting, and reforming their opinions. During one session, participants had been learning about varieties of Spanish and their embedded power differentials. Several teachers spoke about the named and unnamed power that Castilian Spanish held in bilingual schools. They reflected on the difficulties of determining how to teach "correct" Spanish. The teachers recognized the colonial and imperial roots of Castilian Spanish and resisted this variety as the standard to which they and their students should be held. Several veteran teachers spoke about how they teach students to differentiate between Castilian and "their language", referencing Mexican varieties. A few teachers wondered if their Spanish was "good enough" to be able to do this effectively and discussed negative messages they had received.

When Celia, a novice bilingual third grade teacher, was given the talking piece, she lowered her eyes. She expressed agreement with the sentiment that Castilian Spanish was colonial and oppressive and began to talk about how much of one's identity is conveyed through a language variety. Celia reminded the group that she was from El Salvador and explained that privileging one variety over another is more than just teaching the distinct grammatical characteristics. She shared a story about a time in elementary when her class participated in a traditional Mexican folkloric dance for a school-wide Cinco de Mayo celebration. When she told her teacher that she wasn't Mexican, the teacher told her, "No importa. Ponte el vestido y baila - you'll be fine." [It doesn't matter. Put on the dress and dance - you'll be fine.] Celia explained that it was not just that her Salvadoran Spanish was not taught in school, the school culture strongly privileged Mexican language and culture in ways that overpowered her identity.

A somber hush fell over the circle. The next teacher expressed empathy for Celia and lamented how Cinco de Mayo has been tokenized as an important Mexican holiday when, in reality, it was not. Examples of the essentialization of culture in schools were shared until another participant reiterated what Celia had said about language, culture, and power. This teacher told the group how she had both Mexican and Salvadoran heritage but that she mostly uses Mexican Spanish to fit in. She noted the connection to the Spanish session about the varying status of different varieties and how, as Spanish speakers, they had internalized

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and perpetuated these hegemonic beliefs. At that moment, the leader asked the group to reflect on a time when they had either been affected by or had perpetuated language bias and to free write in their writer's notebook.

Through Celia's example, we see how círculo became a brave space to discuss Spanish language varieties in ways that enveloped lived experiences in systems of oppression. Celia's experience pointed to a common practice of Central Americans in Los Angeles to become "visibly hidden" as they feel pressure to adopt the Mexican variety of Spanish and accompanying cultural practices in order to be accepted in Latinx communities (Lavadenz, 2014). Sharing her experience was an act of naming the oppression that she had experienced within a multilingual space - a space that had been framed as one that was culturally responsive. Lavadenz (2014) explains how Central Americans living in Los Angeles learn to hablar en silencio, to hide their language variety and cultural practices, and adapt the Mexican variety. Celia's ability to voice injustices spoke to the power of círculo, to her learning, to her Spanish knowledge and skills, and to her understanding of critical praxis.

The more teachers interacted with the content and the more comfortable they became in círculo, the more nuanced their exploration of topics like language, race, and oppression became. One teacher described this as a "horizontal approach" and intended to replicate the "restorative justice practices to develop a community of learners". Participants were reflected as knowledge holders and creators (Delgado Bernal, 2002): círculo allowed them to bring up generative themes (Freire, 1972) specific to their lives. This fostered trust and solidarity that supported their learning.

Sociocultural Language Learning

Program leaders wanted to cultivate a space where participants were immersed in Spanish, could practice the language, and would learn more about the interrelatedness of language and culture. They wished for teachers to better understand how the Spanish language itself was embedded in hegemonic social structures and how teaching Spanish involved grappling with these ideological undercurrents. It was imperative to recognize that Spanish was connected to heritage/identity through the act of colonization. As Elexia succinctly stated, "Let's be clear: we are promoting the tongue of the colonizer." This perplexity of bilingual education in the United States points to the need for a critical approach to language learning.

While Spanish is a minoritized language and Spanish speakers have long been targets of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment (Chavez, 2013), it is also the language of the oppressor. Furthermore, many Latinx people in Southern California are indigenous and speak indigenous languages like Zapotec, Mixtec, K'iche' and Q'anjob'al. Understanding historical, cultural, and political underpinnings of Spanish, the complexities in Southern California, and how this manifests in linguistic characteristics is necessary for teachers to challenge deficit and racist ideologies (Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011), to cultivate students' identities/knowledges, and to enact counter-hegemonic discourses (Darder, 2015). Teachers participated in sessions that addressed topics like Spanish as a colonizing tool, the varieties of Spanish, hegemonic language ideologies and language statuses, and language contact. We were intentional in articulating that sessions were aimed at developing participants' Spanish language knowledge and skills, not on improving their language.

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While participants attended few traditional presentations on these topics, a critical approach was used for reflecting, discussing, and applying the concepts through literature circles and writers-workshop. For example, participants shared dichos, sayings with nuance cultural meaning, from their lives and analyzed them to learn about how linguistic attributes and cultural meaning were interrelated. Writers-workshop activities were generated from teacher's lives, like creating narrative stories from family photos. Andrea summarized how she understood her language abilities after attending the program: "I think that accepting that, that's our reality and the way that we grew up and the education that we had makes me more comfortable in saying, "You know what, my English is this and this is my Spanish. That's part of who I am."

In 2020, a presentation on the colonizing roots of Spanish, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter movement set the context for how participants digested Pedagogía del Oprimido in literature circles. Concepts like oppressor/oppressed and acts of dehumanization were poignantly clear. Teachers dialogued about how their lives had been uprooted by job loss and financial instability. Many worried about family members, both local and abroad, and their inability to visit or support financially. Literature circle became a space to process what was happening with deep connections to identities, languages, and their embedded social, political, and historical complexities. For example, one bilingual teacher shared how she felt continuous pressure from her family to speak "good" Spanish as a Mexican-American and that her awareness of her Spanish skills heightened once classes were moved online and into students' homes. While she did not completely feel like caregivers were judging the quality of her Spanish, she felt a broader, societal sense of pressure to "speak well" and teach standard Spanish.

These círculos were humanizing. In one discussion, teachers were digging deep into the topic of problem-posing education, in which teachers and students enter into dialogue to generate learning from topics generated from students' worlds (Freire, 1972). Teachers shared quotes and many referenced their actions against protest police brutality that summer. While some had joined large demonstrations, others worked to communicate to their family members "que las vidas negras importan." Ana was a quiet but intent participant who attended the sessions with her newborn in arms. She explained her struggle to articulate to her family why she supported Black Lives Matter. One teacher suggested talking about the Black and Brown struggle as a continuum and another offered the word también [also] as helpful to the conversation: las vidas negras importan también. Abruptly, Ana turned off her camera and was absent for several minutes, which was not uncommon given her newborn. However, when she returned on camera, she was wiping away tears and smiling broadly. Before someone could inquire, she explained, in Spanish and English, that she had recently been exposed to COVID-19 and had just received a call confirming that her test was negative. The group erupted in elation and few shared Ana's tears. In that moment, the humanity in the dialogue became clear: the hardship and the hope, the identity and the language, were intertwined.

The process of praxis, reflection on the world in order to change it (Freire, 1972), supported teachers in seeing how bilingual education was a social, cultural, political, and, if intentional, humanizing practice. One teacher made a commitment: to "focus on the problem-posing way of education by using dialogue, trust and love through the use of praxis." These conversations fostered teacher's development of ideological clarity (Alfaro &

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Hernández, 2016) and commitment to figuring out how to enact a more humanizing practice in their bilingual classrooms.

Praxis: Theory into Practice

Bilingual teachers articulated commitment to trying critical practices, integrating home knowledges, and an amplified understanding of language use and language-learning pedagogies in their final reflections, surveys, and interviews. Celia implemented círculo in her third-grade classroom. Maribel reflected on a role-playing lesson that she did about race and power during the U.S. colonies with a follow-up community circle. She articulated that students need to further develop language in Spanish to talk about issues of race: "When we talk about race in our community circles, I make sure that we alternate the languages. I do notice that students are a lot more comfortable with the English. They have a hard time remembering the Spanish terms." She recognized that students, like her, needed time to become comfortable with critical practices and encouragement to use Spanish.

In fact, time was a major theme that came out of participants' experiences. They wanted more time in El Instituto and more time to digest content and grapple with new understandings of language. The participants valued the processes of practicing Spanish, experiencing critical pedagogy, and brainstorming how they could apply these in their classrooms. Indeed, they were experiencing praxis: reflecting on theory and practice and planning for action in order to change their teaching (Freire, 1972, p.51). Maribel went on to explain, "I no longer wanna say I teach my students, I want to say I teach and learn with my students."

We valued teachers' experience of praxis as professional development. This is distinct from antidialogical professional development expectations where participants complete trainings, are given materials, and create "deliverables" as evidence of learning. If we wanted bilingual teachers to question common practices, we had to recognize that the timeline for shifts in pedagogy must be aligned with teachers' "clocks" and permit for a (perhaps) slow but necessary ideological shift that can only happen if teachers see themselves as agents of change (Noble & Smith, 1999). If we wanted bilingual teachers to enact a critical pedagogy, then we needed to privilege the time necessary to process and reframe ideologies. Andrea, a bilingual kindergarten teacher, shared her praxis around culturally sustaining language teaching during distance learning. She was in the midst of teaching the syllable que (in Spanish) when the pandemic hit, and schooling went online. She explained,

> "So I came up with quesadilla. Then I had students go home and tell me how they like their quesadillas and draw how they like it or if they call it something else. Then I said on Seesaw, "Cook a quesadilla." So then they recorded themselves making a quesadilla with their parents and then they had to write up the word and then when we reviewed la sílaba que."

To compare and contrast the difference between the sounds que and gu, Andrea's next assignment was:

> "Go out in your backyard. Encontrar un gusano [find a worm]...We did all this stuff with gusanos...Everyone was seeing each other's gusanos posts and quesadilla posts and I just thought, 'This is pretty cool. I'm onto something here.'"

What was important to Andrea's pedagogical decision making was not an artifact that she took home or a file of resources to be dropped into her classroom. Instead, ideological

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clarity guided her praxis as she began to better integrate and sustain students' community cultural wealth. Professional development can make obvious the structure and benefits of praxis and foster teachers' development of critical pedagogy. When the teacher is respected as a knowing, intellectual being in dialogue with session leaders, professional development is a powerful space for change.

Toward Epistemological Shifts in Bilingual Teacher Professional Development

Underlying language ideologies pervade school life, expanding beyond language and discipline learning and intertwining deeply with social, cultural, and political matters embedded in education. The shift toward bilingual education in California indicates a shift in values and language ideologies: communities are recognizing the benefits of multilingualism and its essential role in culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). However, this shift does not mean that deficit ideologies, ingrained in institutional structures, have been eradicated (Alfaro & Hernández, 2016). Today's bilingual teachers are positioned to challenge such pervasive, deficit ideologies (Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011) but doing so requires much more than completion of certification: it requires intentional and deliberate critical professional development. Supporting bilingual educators in their efforts to enact humanizing praxis that thwarts oppressive ideologies and instead centers students' community cultural wealth through critical and culturally sustaining pedagogies requires ideologically clarity in bilingual professional development design.

El Instituto teaches valuable lessons about the direction of bilingual teacher professional development. Critical professional development that supports teachers in their development of critical praxis takes time and flexibility. CPD is not transactional: it values process over product and recognizes that the pursuit of critical consciousness is career-long and life-long. Cultural synthesis, a dialogical action which entails "people critically analyz[ing] and tak[ing] action on their reality" is a key component of CPD (Kohli et al., 2015, p. 19). Importantly, this action is "guided by the struggles of the people and decided with the people": it is not in response to a district or university expert imposing their own view, prescription, or toolkit on to teachers (Kohli et al., 2015, p. 19). Professional development for bilingual teachers must begin and end with participants' identities, CCW, goals, and needs while situating these realities within broader power structures.

District administrators, teachers, and university leaders articulate the underlying pressure to "teach" teachers how to do critical practice and to "give" them resources in order to do so, what Freire (1972) calls banking methodology. We hear these concerns and understand the desire and urgency behind them. Much effort went into problematizing how leaders modeled theory into practice throughout El Instituto. Interestingly, at the end, the bilingual teachers did not point to our strategies: they pointed to their growth and to their developing ideological clarity (Alfaro & Hernández, 2016). They wanted more time and more immersion in critical pedagogy: their epistemological understanding of professional development also shifted.

El Instituto is only one case and is intrinsic (Stake, 1995), in many ways. Geographically, the program is situated in a community that has a deep history of multilingualism and is supported through a Hispanic Serving Institution. Local school leaders, at least rhetorically, are supportive of multilingual education. Bilingual teachers of color serve local communities of color and the "grow our own" initiative is prevalent. The findings of this

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small case study, however, can be instrumental (Stake, 1995) for illuminating broader, epistemic shifts needed in bilingual professional development. If bilingual education is to undo the oppressive harm of the English-only regime, teachers need immersive experiences with open-ended, teacher-directed critical pedagogies that center their development of ideological clarity and, ultimately, their process of becoming (Andrews et al., 2019). This process is essential for undoing the infrastructure that upholds hegemonic monolingual/monocultural practices and creating generative approaches to bilingual education. Our next steps are to extend El Instituto to be understood as professional development through teacher activism (Valdez et al., 2018) and to include ongoing sessions that sustain solidarity and growth in critical, bilingual education work.

Praxis cannot be taught through antidialogical professional development. Instead, bilingual teachers must be positioned as knowledgeable beings whose lived cultural and linguistic realities drive generative learning in professional development. Teachers' process of "becoming" more fully human is ongoing and never finished (Andrews et al., 2019). Thus, critical professional development must also be understood as "becoming", following teachers' leads and generatively responding to their realities. Such an immersive experience offers a new lens on the notion of professional development "takeaways": perhaps what teachers are taking away is a rejuvenated praxis.

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