Deficit Language Ideologies of Pre-Service Bilingual Education Teachers

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Objectives

Research grounded in raciolinguistic perspectives has demonstrated that deficit ideologies surrounding bilingualism are not simply beliefs about language proficiency, but are closely tied to broader systems that racialize bilingual speakers and position their language practices as deficient. Although this body of scholarship has documented how these ideologies operate within schools and classrooms, less attention has been paid to the experiences of individuals who have themselves navigated these systems and are now preparing to become bilingual educators. This study seeks to better understand how Spanish-speaking pre-service teachers make sense of their own linguistic experiences and how these experiences shape their understandings of language, identity, and teaching.

Specifically, it asks: (1) How have Spanish-speaking pre-service teachers maintained their Spanish over time? and (2) How do they make sense of their language practices in relation to dominant language ideologies?

Methodology

Guided by a raciolinguistic perspective, this qualitative study explores the experiences of Spanish-speaking pre-service teachers enrolled in a bilingual teacher preparation program at a midsize university located in a large metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States. Through in-depth interviews, participants reflect on their language histories, the ways they have maintained Spanish over time, and their experiences with dominant language ideologies throughout their schooling. Particular attention is given to how participants describe moments of linguistic policing, language maintenance, and the ways they have negotiated, resisted, or internalized deficit perspectives.

Results

Preliminary findings suggest that participants experienced persistent pressures to conform to monolingual norms while simultaneously drawing on family, community, and cultural resources to sustain their Spanish. Participants describe developing increasingly critical understandings of bilingualism as they reflect on their own educational experiences and prepare to become teachers. Their narratives illustrate the complex ways raciolinguistic ideologies continue to shape both linguistic identity and professional development.

Discussion

By centering the voices of Spanish-speaking pre-service teachers, this study extends current discussions of raciolinguistic ideologies beyond K–12 students and classroom practice to consider the experiences of future bilingual educators. Ultimately, the study argues that understanding how pre-service teachers have navigated deficit ideologies provides important insight into bilingual teacher preparation and highlights the need for programs that create opportunities for future educators to critically examine language, identity, and equity.