

Methods and Beyond: Learning to Teach Latino Bilingual Learners in Mainstream Secondary³ Classes

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Abstract

This article reports empirical evidence about the influence of a pre-service methods course on preparing aspiring and practicing content teachers to work with adolescent bilingual learners in secondary schools. Qualitative methods were used to analyze the extent to which participants developed abilities to plan instruction and to think complexly about instruction for bilingual learners in mainstream classes. Data sources included surveys, observations, interviews, and student work including an electronic blog. Findings suggest that although participants felt more prepared to teach bilingual learners, their skill in planning instruction for bilingual learners and ability to think complexly about such instruction varied. Secondary content teachers also recognized roles as language teachers and advocates for immigrant and bilingual adolescents. Further research is recommended to follow participants into the classroom, provide site-based coaching, observe continued teacher development, and assess pupil learning.

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Introduction

Throughout the United States, schools are experiencing a dramatic increase in the enrollment of Latino youth who are rapidly immersed in “English-only” classes due to political and financial pressures as well as the accountability mandates of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Pandya, Batalova, & McHugh, 2011). Currently, Latino bilingual learners (BLs)⁴ must learn academic content through English as they develop English proficiency to pass high stakes assessments in English (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Yet the vast majority of teachers have received little to no training to teach culturally and linguistically diverse youth (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Given these factors, it is no surprise that the academic achievement of Latino BLs lags behind native English-speaking peers on virtually all education measures (Seeking Effective Policy for ELLs, 2007). As a matter of social justice, teacher education programs must equip all teachers to work with Latino BLs. Accordingly, in this article we assess the influence of coursework within a teacher education program on preparing secondary teachers to teach BLs in English language arts, history, math, science, and world languages classes.

Teacher education programs with an explicit social justice mission envision a dual role for teachers: they provide quality instruction to all learners in the status quo while working to transform educational systems from within (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Arguably, the most important component of a social justice teaching practice is the ability to teach diverse learners well (McDonald & Zeichner, 2010). Aspiring teachers can learn to implement

3. With our title, we pay tribute to Bartolomé, L. (1994). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64(2), 173-194, whose work influenced our study.

4. We use the asset-based term “bilingual learners” instead of “English language learners” (ELLs) to represent these students in recognition of the fact that another language—Spanish— is spoken at home. Our research focuses on the population of BLs that is still developing academic English proficiency prerequisite to school success.

research-based instructional approaches that have been developed to teach BLs in content classes. For example, the Sheltered Immersion Observation Protocol (SIOP) was designed to guide planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective mainstream instruction for BLs (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2013). With SIOP lessons, content and language objectives are identified, presented, and enacted through a variety of instructional practices (Echevarría, et al., 2013). See Table 1 for six SIOP tenets of effective instruction.⁵

Table 1: *SIOP Tenets of Effective Instruction (adapted from Echevarría, et al., 2013)*

Tenet 1	Activate Prior Knowledge and Build Background
Tenet 2	Provide Comprehensible Input
Tenet 3	Teach Learning Strategies and Strategic Thinking
Tenet 4	Create Varied Opportunities for Student Engagement and Interaction
Tenet 5	Provide Opportunities for Students to Practice and Apply Knowledge Using All Communicative Modes
Tenet 6	Review and Assess Learning Objectives and Provide Feedback to Students

SIOP teachers first activate prior knowledge and build background knowledge, for instance, by teaching key vocabulary. They provide comprehensible input by using extra-linguistic scaffolds such as visuals and graphic organizers, speaking clearly, and using gestures. They model strategic thinking and explicitly teach learning strategies, then create opportunities for students to engage in structured interactions through group/partner activities using all communicative modes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. SIOP teachers assess students' mastery of content and language objectives, provide feedback and review their objectives at the lesson's conclusion. Researchers suggest that SIOP methods engage BLs in rigorous content learning in mainstream settings and improve learning outcomes (Echevarria, et al., 2013; Echevarría, Short & Powers, 2006; Short & Echevarría, 1999).

Nonetheless, teaching is more than a technical matter or a “politically neutral activity” (Bartolomé, 1994, p.178; Cochran-Smith, 2010); faithful mastery of particular teaching techniques does not guarantee student learning (Bartolomé, 2004). Teachers also must learn to critically examine instructional methods—intended to increase access to academic content—to understand their actual impact on diverse learners. As Richert, Donahue, and Laboskey (2010) noted in regard to teaching students of color, but also applicable to working with Latino BLs:

[T]eachers need to learn . . . pedagogical approaches that have resulted in high achievement for students of color, but not in a rote fashion. If new teachers are to employ these strategies appropriately, they must understand their philosophical, theoretical, and empirical justifications. (p. 645)

In other words, teachers must think critically about instructional methods and the learning needs of BLs within the current accountability culture of U.S. schools (Bartolomé, 1994; Sleeter, 2009). Along these lines, Cochran-Smith (2010) suggests it is not just about “what teachers do” but “how [they] think about their work” (p. 454, emphasis in original). As part of teacher preparation, Bartolomé (2004) further recommends teachers examine the “ideology,” that is, beliefs, values, and assumptions that may unconsciously inform their thoughts and actions when working with linguistic minority students (p. 97). Teachers can learn to think critically about their work during coursework according to Sleeter (2009), who developed a matrix for evaluating complex thinking. (See Table 2.)

5. We borrow usage of the word “tenet” to describe components of SIOP instruction and conceived of this table based on a presentation by Dr. C. Patrick Proctor within a secondary bilingual methods course at Boston College.

Table 2: Matrix for Evaluating the Complexity of Teacher Thinking (adapted from Sleeter, 2009)

	Perspective Taking	Self-reflexivity
Novice	Assumes there is a correct body of knowledge and way to teach.	Strives for certainty.
Developing	Willing to consider multiple ways of knowing and teaching.	Willing to acknowledge uncertainty.
Accomplished	Actively seeks multiple perspectives on knowledge and teaching.	Views uncertainty as a tool for learning.

Two components of complex thinking are *perspective-taking* and *self-reflexivity*. When teachers develop skills in these areas, “they actively seek multiple perspectives” and “view uncertainty as a tool for learning, monitoring, questioning, and evaluating practice and the ethical impact of work on students” (Sleeter, 2009, p. 5). Teachers, who think complexly about the instruction of BLs in mainstream secondary settings, learn to critically examine their role, the role of students, and the power dynamics of historically marginalized groups in schools (Martin & VanGuten, 2002). Similarly, Santoro (2009) quoting Palmer says, “When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are...and when I cannot see them clearly I cannot teach them well” (p. 41). Some researchers claim the ability to think complexly is an aspect of the development of reflective judgment within the larger context of adult maturation (Friedman & Schoen, 2009; Kitchener & King, 1990). Similar to Sleeter (2009), we believe the ability to think complexly about teaching Latino BLs can progress in the context of teacher education coursework.

There is a small body of literature that describes thoughts, attitudes or beliefs of teachers who demonstrate expertise in working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Bartolomé, 2004; Clayton, 2008; see especially Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). As part of a larger framework for preparing teachers to work with linguistically diverse students, Lucas and Villegas (2011) define three related “orientations” that should be integrated into teacher belief systems: “sociolinguistic consciousness, value for linguistic diversity, [and the] inclination to advocate for ELL learners” (see pp. 56-60). First, teachers with sociolinguistic consciousness understand how language, culture, and identity interconnect in the learning process. As Lucas and Villegas (2011) further explain:

Such teachers [reflect on] their assumptions about ELLs and [understand] their perceptions of language, language use, and language learning are shaped by their own and their students’ socio-cultural positioning. (p. 59)

Second, by valuing linguistic diversity: that is, use of home language and/or non-standard forms of English, teachers promote relationships with students that are conducive to learning and increase classroom interaction (Delpit, 2006; Heath, 1996; Nieto, 2000). With the third orientation, developing the inclination to advocate for BLs, teachers assume a role beyond the classroom to address systemic inequities that affect the educational experience of individual students or groups of students (Cochran-Smith, 2010).

However, limited empirical research explores how teachers develop these attitudes/beliefs to work effectively with bilingual learners. Through case study research, Clayton (2008) found commonalities among exemplary teachers of BLs; they had experienced immersion in another culture and second language learning, understood second language development, and demonstrated kindness, sensitivity, and encouragement toward

students. Similarly, Bartolomé (2004) noted exemplary educators of non-White and linguistic minority students shared “border-crossing experiences” that enabled them to see how certain cultural groups are marginalized, empathize with them, and take action on behalf of students (see pp.109-112). Through surveys, researchers also have found experiencing another culture, learning a second language, and working with BLs results in more positive attitudes (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). However, O’Brien (2009) found that Florida history teachers who experienced 60 mandated hours of in-service training to work with BLs demonstrated negative attitudes toward BLs, which were perhaps “rooted in the teachers inability to effectively modify instruction” (p. 36). In this qualitative study, we built on prior research to examine whether teachers develop skill in particular instructional methods and the ability to think complexly about such teaching in the context of teacher education coursework, so they might work effectively with Latino bilingual learners within the current system while also working toward transforming it.

Research Design

Our practitioner research study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) took place within a secondary BL methods course in a teacher education program at a Jesuit university in a city in the northeastern United States. We explored the following two-part research question adapted from Sleeter (2009):

What is the influence of a methods course on a) teacher development of instructional strategies to teach BLs in mainstream settings and b) to think critically about their role as educators?

To understand the influence of the methods course on participants, we drew on the following data sources: observations, surveys, and assignments. The second author observed while the first author taught the fall 2011 course section. Overall, however, surveys and class assignments were used most extensively in our analysis. Surveys were administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. The pre-survey elicited basic demographic information from students and information about their “border-crossing” experiences. It also consisted of open response questions, prompting participants to consider what they hoped to learn (see Appendix A). Mid-term and post surveys asked participants what they had learned and still hoped to learn regarding teaching Latino BLs. Assignments included pre and post course reflections on how their beliefs, values, and assumptions would affect their teaching practice with BLs (see Appendix B), electronic blogs in which students responded to readings and one another, and a culminating assignment in which students wrote a complete SLOP lesson plan in narrative format (see Echevarría, et al., 2013, pp. 297-302 for sample SLOP lesson templates). (See Table 3.)

Table 3: *Research Methods*

Data Source	Participants	Frequency	Data Totals
Reflections	4 Students	6 times over the course of the semester: pre- reflection, 4 reading responses, and post-reflection	24 completed reflections
Surveys	All 54 Students	Pre, Mid- and End of Semester	162 surveys
Class Assignments	4 Students	Evaluation of SLOP lesson plan. (4 students)	4 completed SLOPs
Class Observations	33 Students 1 Instructor	Four times over the course of the semester	4 sets of field notes
Interviews	3 instructors	Once prior to teaching the course	3 Interview responses

We analyzed surveys from students in two sections of the bilingual methods course: one taught by the first author in the fall of 2011 and the other, by the second author in the summer of 2011. Students completed more assignments than those listed in Table 3. Since a choice was offered among several inquiry projects, including a school ethnography or interview with a BL, for consistency, we do not include them as data sources.

Four students were selected for in-depth study (see below) whose reflections and SIOP lesson plans are presented in more detail. In sum, we looked comprehensively at the influence of the course on all students via the surveys but more closely examined selected students' development in specific areas through their course assignments: namely, the abilities to develop targeted instructional strategies (see Table 1) and also to think complexly about their teaching (see Table 2).

Bilingual Secondary Methods Course

The bilingual secondary methods course is designed to promote awareness of methods that help BLs develop academic language and content concurrently in mainstream classes. Further, participants explore contextual factors that influence how BLs negotiate the secondary school experience including educational policy and issues of language and culture. Each session consists of an interactive PowerPoint presentation, practice with SIOP components, and discussion. The first class, students form content-based interest groups to provide structured peer interactions in which to explore discipline-specific readings and language demands, and to, ideally, develop more complexity in their thinking. Throughout the semester, students write reflections in which they consider their role, the role of students, and their responsibilities as teachers of linguistically diverse adolescents in the current accountability culture in U.S. schools.

Participants

Fifty-four of the 73 students enrolled in two sections of the course consented to participate in our study. Six were undergraduates and 48 were graduate students representing varied content areas: 21 English language arts (ELA), 12 history, 7 math, 6 world languages, 4 science, 2 math/science, 1 special educator, and 1 focused on ESL.

The four graduate students selected for further study were chosen to represent core content areas and a range of backgrounds but shared one common characteristic: they each appeared highly engaged in the course, so we felt we could learn the most from them (Sleeter, 2009). Table 4 provides basic information on each focus student.

Table 4: *Focus students*

Name	Content Area	Demographics	Age
Evelina	Math	White, female, monolingual from northeastern United States	24
Becky	Science	White, female, monolingual from southern United States	26
Victoria	History	White, bilingual (French-English) female from southeastern United States	23
Gabriel	ELA	Male of African ancestry who immigrated as a child from a Latin American country	30

Focal students ranged in age from 23 to 30 years of age. Three were white females and one, a man of color, reflecting a typical racial and gender balance in the female-dominated, predominantly white U.S. teaching force (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). They also ranged in language-learning experience; Victoria is bilingual; Becky and Gabriel first spoke non-standard dialects of English, while Evelina is monolingual.

Data Analysis

We collected and analyzed data in an iterative fashion using inductive and deductive reasoning. Ryan and Bernard (2000) note, “researchers start with some general themes derived from reading the literature and add more themes and sub-themes as they go” (p. 781). Based on our review of the literature, we pre-established two themes connected to our research question: the development of targeted instructional strategies and the ability to think critically about such instruction. We evaluated participants’ ability to plan instruction in SIOP lesson plans (Echevarria et al., 2013). We also rated the complexity of participants’ thinking in reflections and electronic blogs using Sleeter’s (2009) rubric. We coded surveys and participant reflections using constructivist grounded theory to identify additional themes (Charmaz, 2000). As Lather (1986) noted: Data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured. (p. 266) In sum, we started with two broad themes based on extant literature and added sub-themes during the research process (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Multiple data sources: survey and class assignments (including reflections, electronic blogs, and lesson plans) were triangulated to identify and substantiate research themes. Further, the validity of findings was enhanced by a consensual approach to data analysis (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997). As such, the two authors agreed on themes and ratings for each of the focal students and student surveys. This iterative process of reviewing literature, data collection, coding (Charmaz, 2003; Strauss, 1987), and consensual data analysis allowed us to attend to the nuances of students’ experiences in the methods course.

Results

Overall, we sought to ascertain the influence of the methods course on the development of targeted instructional strategies to teach Latino BLs in mainstream settings and to think complexly about such instruction. Analyses of participant reflections, blog postings, surveys, and SIOP lesson plans revealed three additional themes: content teachers as language teachers, the importance of getting to know students, and teachers as change agents. Accordingly, this section is divided into five parts: the development of instructional strategies; content teachers as language teachers; thinking complexly about instruction; getting to know students; and teachers as change agents.

The development of instructional strategies

On pre-surveys, the vast majority of participants reported wanting to learn effective methods to teach BLs. Fewer than half had worked with BLs previously, and only one third had prior teaching experience. On post-surveys, most students seemed to feel more prepared. One participant explained the importance of activating prior knowledge and making content comprehensible: key SIOP components:

I must ... be mindful day in and day out of how the material is . . . presented.... It is essential to value ... students’ backgrounds and ... prior knowledge, and... to make the curriculum . . . relevant to every student.

Analysis of lessons from focal students, however, revealed a range in abilities to plan SIOP instruction. Becky’s 21-page, single-spaced science lesson reflected painstaking attention to detail. An introductory section explained the class context and included a color-coded system of worksheets for BLs at different proficiency levels. Vocabulary was sub-divided into sections including “brick” terms, “mortar” terms (see Zwiers, 2008), primary, and secondary words. Similarly, in math and history lessons, respectively, Evelina and Victoria incorporated key SIOP elements: precise language and content objectives, vocabulary instruction, and opportunities for interactive and presentational communication in speaking and writing. Though less detailed than Becky, these two students also mastered how to plan a SIOP lesson. In contrast, Gabriel’s ELA lesson featured some SIOP elements, such as a graphic organizer and group and pair discussions, but lacked sufficient detail to convey how various activities were connected. Even though he identified a content objective, “Students will demonstrate . . . they can use textual evidence to answer a posed question and justify an interpretation of a text,” it was unclear how this objective would be implemented. He also called for students to share rituals related to their cultures, but there was no corresponding activity. Although Gabriel showed the ability to think complexly about issues of teaching

and learning, he struggled with lesson planning. While students felt better prepared to teach BLs having been exposed to SLOP, their ability to create SLOP lessons varied. Further, we recognized participants would need additional support for this preparation to translate to effective teaching practice.

Content teachers as language teachers

On post-surveys, many content teachers expressed awareness of the need to teach language—a key theme of the course. As one math teacher noted, “. . . I learned . . . every teacher, no matter their content area, is a language teacher.” Similarly, Evelina acknowledged a shift in her language awareness: “I’ve . . . developed a deeper appreciation for providing students with the opportunity to produce language in a mathematics classroom.” She sought to move beyond traditional math instruction characterized by “the teacher explaining information and the students listening, reading and taking notes, and then solving calculations-based problems.” Instead, she aimed to “increase language production” by “explicitly encouraging . . . students to engage in mathematical conversations with each other.” Evelina also recognized “specific [linguistic features] of mathematics (e.g. long, complex noun phrases; passive voice),” noting, “I now feel better prepared to address these challenges in the classroom.” These results are encouraging; for BLs to succeed in grasping relevant content knowledge and develop proficiency in content language, content teachers must embrace their role as language teachers (de Jong & Harper, 2005) and provide students with abundant opportunities to interact (Verplaetse, 2008).

Thinking complexly about instruction

As mentioned, we used Sleeter’s (2009) matrix to evaluate the complexity of students’ thinking (see Table 2). Most participants began as novices “assum[ing] there is a body of ‘correct’ knowledge or attitudes to teach” and “striv[ing] for certainty.” Over the semester, however, many shifted towards a developing stance, characterized as being “willing to consider multiple . . . definitions of what is most worth knowing, ask what is most worth teaching, and why” and “able to acknowledge how one’s . . . identity shapes perspective [and] uncertainty” (Sleeter, 2009, p. 5). Some even stretched towards the “accomplished” category particularly in the area of self-reflexivity, described as “Consistently monitors, questions, and evaluates practical and ethical impacts of one’s work on students. Questions how one’s own positionality, experiences, and point of view affect one’s work but can move forward while doing so” (Sleeter, 2009, p. 5). Overall, most participants articulated increasing complexity in their attitudes toward students and their role as teachers.

For instance, in an electronic post, Victoria emphasized the importance of thinking critically about her practice:

The danger in studying research is to accept it as a panacea—when, in fact, as strong critical thinkers (which we must be in order to be effective teachers), we should rage against the blind acceptance of any **one** theory. . . We need to read these documents together and against each other in order to extract meaning relevant to our own practice.

[Emphasis in the original]

This comment not only reflects the complexity of Victoria’s thinking but also further demonstrates her tendency to emphasize the importance of practice. Victoria asked deep questions such as, “Where do our responsibilities begin and end as educators if our students lives do not begin and end in our classrooms?” She also critiqued the methods focus in one reading:

The list of methods was useful insofar as it gets the discussion rolling, but without an explicit connection to students as individuals, I find myself growing frustrated with the onslaught of ‘method...method...method...’ Where is the human element?

To Victoria, teaching is about more than good strategies. Similarly, a critical thread runs throughout Gabriel’s electronic posts.

Teachers do need to realize that, with . . . schools, they are working within and against a system that reproduces what . . . society values and sees as norms. A teacher’s ability to work outside [a] mentality that they themselves . . . have been brought up in and, maybe even held at one point, is

fundamental to their success with the current needs of our [students].

Like Victoria, he seemed to consistently “question how one’s own positionality, experiences, and point of view affect one’s work” (Sleeter, 2009, p. 5). In contrast, Evelina, largely summarized course readings. Becky’s postings showed the least complexity. She believed federal mandates would benefit BLs if teachers taught well, as expressed in the following: “In order for initiatives like NCLB to actually work, it is paramount that as a country we provide a more consistent curriculum to ELL students. Not only do these students all deserve to have qualified teachers, they also deserve to have a standard by which they are taught.” Still, Becky recognized “there is no ‘one size fits all’ strategy for teaching BLs”. She commented, “Each teacher has to discover what works best for them and for their class.” Though the depth of participants’ responses varied, electronic blogs seemed to provide a forum for students to explore their thinking about complex issues.

Course readings seemed to influence students’ ability to locate themselves as learners and educators. One student whose family emigrated from Africa wrote, “Through selected reading assignments . . . I saw reflections of myself—many of my experiences were mirrored by those of children who were subjects of case studies...” In the closing lines of his post-survey, Gabriel described the impact of the course on his perceptions of BLs:

I have served in various positions such as a counselor, a child care worker, a psychiatric attendant, youth advisor, case manager, student intervention specialist, and . . . as a teacher. . . . Yet, I have never served in a position that would have granted me such insight into the needs of ELLs the way . . . this course has.

Class readings, discussions, and assignments seemed to deepen the complexity of many students’ thinking about teaching and the needs of their students.

Beyond methods: Getting to know students

Indeed, participants recognized teaching as more than learning methods. For example, “[T]his class . . . put faces on a too often intellectual issue. I learned specific methods for teaching BLs, but I also got into the heads of BLs.” Many highlighted that getting to know students was of paramount importance: “. . . I’ve learned that the first step is . . . getting to know how [my] students learn, the knowledge they bring to the table, and allowing students to tell their stories within an environment that is comfortable and respectful.” Similarly, Victoria commented, “We can read all the books we want, but unless we speak to students in real practice, this all means nothing.” Evelina also expressed a commitment to getting to know her students, “. . . [T]eachers should get to know all of their students individually and must be careful not to make assumptions about individuals based on trends observed in the larger group.” She continued, “It is important to strike a relatively even balance between adopting strategic methods of teaching and thinking complexly about individual student needs. Ideally, a teacher will get to know his/her students and use that knowledge to determine what methods, if any, are appropriate.” She further noted, “it is dangerous to rely too heavily on teaching methods as a ‘one size fits all’ approach to educationAs a teacher I will work hard to get to know my students and provide multiple modes of representation so . . . all students can access the material.” Evelina concluded, “ I would like to have one-on-one conversations with BLs to learn what works for them . . . which teaching methods they prefer, whether they like to work in groups or independently and any other concerns they have about the class.” Generally, participants became aware of the need “to teach the students, not the course,” a mantra that we emphasized throughout the course, but we continued to wonder to what extent some students were able to think complexly about their own roles within the larger institution of schools.

Teachers as Change Agents

In post-surveys, a few students expressed interest in acting as change agents. One remarked, “Now I see that with more training, I can be that teacher, the one who advocates for them . . . I wish to be an agent of change for all students, not just the ones who are most easily taught.” Another participant demonstrated awareness of her position in relation to students:

I believe that I have a responsibility to . . . become the learner and allow [my students] to teach me about their lives, histories, and ideas—while also passing on to them my familiarity with the culture of power

in the U.S.

Yet another teacher thought more deeply about the high drop-out rate among Latino males in her school and what she might do about it: “Since January, I have lost three sophomore males, all Hispanic . . . I can’t let go of the fact that these boys are 15 years old and out in the world with barely a tenth-grade education.” She committed to identifying at-risk students earlier and contacting parents. Drawing from his own experiences as an immigrant, in his first reflection Gabriel noted:

Because of my background I feel that it is my responsibility to convey to my English Language Learners that they can succeed in an environment that . . . might . . . at first be foreign to them. Understanding . . . what they . . . go through and being able to empathize with others, . . . it is my responsibility to encourage and support them while finding the most effective way to reach and teach them.

That some participants reflected on their own positionality and aimed to advocate for students is encouraging. Connections with supportive teachers can play a pivotal role in Latino BLs’ academic success (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008).

Discussion

In this study, we sought to determine the influence of one methods course on participants’ development of instructional strategies to teach BLs in mainstream settings and to think critically about their role as educators. In sum, our participants generally felt an increased sense of preparedness though their actual skill in creating SIOp lesson plans varied. Some embraced their roles as teachers of language and content and showed increasing ability to think complexly about their teaching. Most understood the importance of “teaching the students not the course,” a promising development for secondary educators. Some even claimed expanded roles as advocates for students, which is significant since teaching practice aimed at promoting social justice presumes that teachers take on multiple roles within the school community as learners, teachers, researchers, and advocates (Cochan-Smith, 2010; Lucas & Villegas, 2011). In fact, mainstream content teachers who advocate for adolescent ELs can improve students’ life chances (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008).

Analysis of varied data sources allowed us to understand in a more nuanced fashion that teaching is a complex profession, requiring a host of skills. The ability to think complexly does not necessarily translate into being an effective lesson planner and vice versa. Becky, for example, mastered SIOp lesson planning but we wonder if her attention to painstaking detail and desire to “get it right” precluded complex thinking. She assumed there was a “right way” to lesson plan and was determined to master it, which is compatible with Sleeter’s characterization of “novice” in perspective taking, in that students see “...a body of ‘correct’ knowledge or attitudes to teach” and “strive for certainty” (Sleeter, 2009, p. 5). Evelina also developed strong SIOp planning skills but thinking complexly for her was more about differentiating instruction for individual students as a form of “best” practice. Gabriel thought complexly and demonstrated sociolinguistic consciousness (Lucas & Villegas, 2011), but struggled with lesson planning. His case, in particular, shows that teaching requires foundational knowledge and a repertoire of learned skills, fundamental among them the ability to plan and implement lessons. Of this small, focal group, only Victoria demonstrated attitudes/beliefs of effective teachers of BLs (Clayton, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2011), and the abilities to develop a comprehensive SIOp lesson plan and to think complexly as she questioned the readings, her classmates, and her own presumptions throughout the course. We wonder whether people develop different propensities at different times influenced both by life experiences and adult maturation (Friedman & Schoen, 2009; Kitchener & King, 1990). Even if aspiring teachers demonstrate that they can plan effective SIOp lessons, this learning needs to be situated in a developmental perspective. We believe pre-service preparation is a key interval in learning how to teach for social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Nonetheless, to ascertain whether pre-service preparation translates into effective teaching practice, it would be necessary to follow our participants into their teaching sites, observe them teach, and study the impact on pupil learning,

We also recognize the limitations of using a construct like a rubric to examine the complexity of participant thinking. Sleeter’s (2009) matrix provides a heuristic to evaluate learning in particular categories,

namely perspective-taking and self-reflexivity, which we believe are integral to effective teaching practice. Still, we wonder whether mastery of lesson planning, thinking complexly, and the development of attitudes/beliefs consistent with effective instruction of Latino BLs progress along a continuum based on experiences in particular contexts and whether a foundational skill like lesson planning should take precedence in methods course instruction and novice teacher practice. Ideally, lesson implementation eventually could become a data source for subsequent lesson planning and further inquiry so that teaching and thinking complexly about one's practice become recursive, integrated, and habitual (McQuillan, Welch, & Barnatt, 2012).

Still, we noted a desire even at the graduate level for participants to be compliant students. During one observed class session, some students thought that because certain readings were included in the syllabus, we as instructors must agree with them. We clarified that readings were selected and juxtaposed because they presented opposing viewpoints. Like Becky, some students desired to find the right answer, which represents a novice way of thinking (Sleeter, 2009). Our hope is that students realize teaching is a fluid process; there is no "one right way." Rather, there are many ways to tackle certain lessons and decisions can be informed by taking an inquiry approach to one's practice, namely reflecting on the needs of one's students.

We learned there might be a dynamic tension between mastering particular lesson planning skills and being able to think complexly about instruction. There is discipline to getting SIOP right, demonstrated by Becky's extraordinary efforts, which can be situated in a complex framework (Sleeter, 2009), a developmental perspective, or the SIOP rubric itself. Certainly, evaluation of teaching skill and teacher thinking remains a controversial topic. Moreover, we question how successfully one course can balance learning how to teach with learning how to critically view the roles of teachers and Latino BLs in mainstream public school settings. Learning to teach and to think complexly about teaching linguistically diverse youth may only develop over time in a multifaceted, coherent teacher education program and with significant, supported classroom experience. As Evelina wrote:

In terms of my own progress, I feel . . . [graduate] coursework has been doing a good job preparing me to think critically about the nature and context of education. However, I realize ... such issues are continuous and dynamic. Hence, there will always be room for progress in this regard.

As evidenced in Evelina's comments, learning to teach is an ongoing process, which must be reinforced in multiple contexts.

Implications

Our inquiry provides evidence about the influence of a methods course on aspiring and novice teachers of adolescent Latino BLs. Pre-service and practicing secondary content teachers exhibited increased confidence in their ability to plan instruction for BLs in mainstream content classes as demonstrated in SIOP lesson plans, embraced roles as language teachers, and developed complexity in their thinking about their role as teachers in varying degrees (Sleeter, 2009). We recommend further research to follow participants into early teaching experiences, provide site-based coaching/support, and assess continued teacher development and pupil learning.

Developing an inquiry stance toward teaching, learning, and getting to know students is a process rather than an outcome. Since teachers serve at the "front lines" and as "the bottom line" for the instruction of Latino BLs, (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005), improvements to how teacher education programs prepare teachers to work with BLs in mainstream content classes can be developed by listening to the teaching candidates, themselves (Friedman, 2002). We engage in inquiry to better meet the learning needs of our students with the hope that they will better meet the needs of their own Latino bilingual students in an ever-changing society.

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Appendix A

A QUICK SURVEY

1. What is your status (circle 1)? Masters Senior
2. Have you been a classroom teacher before? ___ Yes ___ No If Yes, for how long? _____
3. What content area(s) are you teaching, or interested in teaching?
- _____
- _____
4. What is your place of birth? _____
5. What is your first language? _____
6. What is your second language (if applicable)? _____
7. What is your third language (if applicable)? _____
8. Have you ever lived outside the US? ___ Yes ___ No
- If yes, where and how long? _____
9. Have you ever worked with bilingual students? ___ Yes ___ No
- What do you think is the most challenging aspect of working with bilingual students?
- _____
- _____
- _____
10. What do you hope to get out of this class?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Appendix B

ED 346 Teaching Bilingual Students

Required Course Assignment: Self-Study: Reflections on Beliefs⁶

Teachers' beliefs affect their practice. This course requires participants to reflect on their beliefs twice during the semester. The purpose of these reflections is to engage participants in critical reflection on their beliefs in order to raise awareness of these beliefs and their impact on their current or future practice. Grading of reflections will be based on timely submission and depth of reflection; actual beliefs and assumptions are not graded.

Self-Study and Beliefs Reflection 1

Due by date indicated on syllabus.

The overarching question for this self-study is: How do you see yourself in relation to your bilingual learners or ELLs (or your *future* bilingual learners or ELLs)? How do you see your role and responsibility?

Of critical importance to this question is thoughtful reflection on the following:

- a. How do you think your own culture, language, ethnic background, socio-economic status, personal family history, place of birth and education affect your assumptions about yourself?
- b. How do you think your culture, language, ethnic background, socio-economic status, personal family history, place of birth and education affect your assumptions about your bilingual learners or ELLs (or your future bilingual learners or ELLs)?
- c. How do your assumptions about yourself and your learners affect your perception of your relationship to them and your roles and responsibility within that relationship?

Two pages.

Self-Study and Beliefs Reflection 2

Due by date indicated on syllabus.

Re-read your first self-study and beliefs reflection. Record your reaction to your earlier statement and note any changes and the rationale for the changes. Two pages.

[Or four pages if you actually comment on the same document (in bold, for example)].

6. Dr. Anne Homza, who teaches the bilingual methods course for elementary teachers at Boston College, shared this assignment with us.