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**“There will only be English in Kindergarten”: The Language Ideologies of the Lead Teacher and of Mexican Mothers in an Arizona Head Start Program serving Spanish-Speaking Latino Children**

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**Author Note**

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**Abstract**

This article examines the language ideologies of the lead teacher and of five Mexican mothers of Spanish-speaking, emergent bilingual children in a Head Start program in Arizona. Data from semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and participant-observation field notes were analyzed using the interrelated concepts of language ideologies and family language policy. The teacher and mothers adhered to ideologies that benefit children’s emergent bilingualism such as expressing pride for the children’s bilingual skills and the view that parents should use Spanish with their children to maintain the children’s bilingualism. However, some of their notions were more in line with ideologies of language separation where linguistic labor and instruction was divided in such a manner that children developed their English skills at school and Spanish abilities at home. The findings highlight the important role of the mothers’ and teacher’s positive and negative lived experiences with language and bilingualism.

*Keywords:* Spanish-speaking, Head Start, language ideologies, mothers, teachers

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Spanish-speaking children make up a rapidly growing segment of the American population (Park, et al., 2018). Nationally more than 20% of preschoolers are exposed to more than one language, and the majority speak Spanish at home (Child Trends, 2018). In Head Start, 28% of children speak a language other than English at home (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016). Of this number, 86% of them live in homes where Spanish is the primary language (Office of Head Start, 2017). These calculations indicate ample growth in the enrollment in early care and education programs of children who are exposed to multiple languages—mainly Spanish and English—throughout the country (Barnett et al., 2016).

Supporting children’s multilingualism in the public school system is difficult, even when educators are bilingual, because states such as Arizona (where this study was conducted) have enacted policies that disallow the use of languages other than English for instruction (Butvilofsky & Gumina, 2020). English-only educational policies bolster “hegemonic discourses that the United States is an English-speaking country therefore, English should be the language of instruction” (Garrity & Guerra, 2015, p. 241). Difficulties with supporting multilingualism exist even in states without overt English-only policies. For example, Oregon allows bilingual instruction in its preschools and offers the Oregon Seal of Biliteracy to its students, but in the 2019-2020 schoolyear it served less than 20% of its population of English learners in bilingual or dual language programs (Oregon Department of Education, 2021). Moreover, 22.7% of the state’s English learners are considered long-term English learners and receive English language instruction, supports, and services for more than seven years (Oregon Department of Education, 2021). This is of concern because, “inequities in educational opportunities and outcomes are especially pronounced among students who remain classified as English learners for an extended period” (Sahakyan & Ryan, 2018, p. 1). Across the nation, most emergent bilinguals receive English-only instruction. Perhaps because of the general lack of bilingual educational services and the propensity of serving emergent bilingual students within English-only programs, some language minority parents accept English-only discourses. For instance, Spanish-speaking parents who otherwise actively support their young children’s emergent bilingual development have shared their belief that “children who struggle academically should be placed in English-only classes” (Lee et al., 2015, p. 512). However, research shows teachers and school leaders can play a pivotal role in mediating the effect of English-only ideologies in their schools and support students’ Spanish-English bilingualism (Kilinc & Alvarado, 2021).

In short, Spanish-speaking children are exposed to language ideologies and language practices at home, school, and in society that might be contradictory to each other. It is therefore important to understand the language ideologies of those closely connected to Spanish-speaking children. The research question for the study is: What are the language ideologies that Latino Spanish-speaking, emergent bilingual<sup>1</sup> children encounter in their home and preschool environments?

### Literature Review

Research on the language practices of families and teachers of emergent bilingual children suggests both home and school contexts contribute to children's overall language development (Song et al., 2022). Families that value their children's emergent bilingualism tend to use their home language with their children, read bilingual books with them, and at times even require their children to only speak the home language with family members (Lee, et al., 2015; Song, et al., 2022). Families of emergent bilingual preschoolers report they would like their children to learn their home language to ensure their children can have promising employment opportunities and to reinforce familial bonding and cultural attachment to remain close and connected (Showstack & Colcher, 2019). Even so, research indicates that at home, preschool children's English experiences with bilingual interlocutors tend to be richer and increase in complexity when compared to their home language experiences (Song, et al., 2022). Furthermore, parents have noted that children as young as preschool age can begin to perceive English as the more valued language in society and therefore believe children can lack motivation to speak their home language (Sawyer, Manz, & Martin, 2017a).

Educators' language beliefs and teaching practices around the languages of young emergent bilinguals vary considerably. Teacher perspectives regarding student language acquisition are complex and correlate to educators' demographic, geographic, and experiential variables (Bernstein, et al., 2021; Garrity, et al., 2018). For example, preschool teachers' education level and having studied a language other than English are positive correlates of pro-multilingual beliefs. However, neither general teaching experience nor experience having a home language other than English has been found to be a significant predictor of pro-multilingual beliefs (Bern-

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper the term emergent bilingual is used to highlight children's growing abilities in Spanish and English.

stein, et al., 2021). Kilinc & Alvarado (2021) report that the social justice orientation of preschool teachers in Arizona permitted them to actively attempt to dismantle larger, societal oppressive beliefs related to language and provide a more equitable bilingual education. Furthermore, in a sample of preservice teachers who attended school in California’s English-only context—during the enactment of Proposition 227— Latino preservice teachers were found to have more positive attitudes toward multilingual children than their non-Latino peers. Also, multilingual participants were more likely to consider it necessary to maintain a child’s primary language. The authors noted student beliefs about multilingualism tended to align with the following finding: students’ perspectives specific to the inclusion of the home language in the schooling context, “continues to reflect the hegemony and deficit-thinking” (Garrity, et al., 2018, p. 179) of English-only policies.

The literature suggests that teacher beliefs regarding multilingual learners can be in support of children’s bilingual development or serve to undermine it. Results from a study of 425 educators show that although teachers report supporting students’ home language development, most of them (73%) believe that students should learn English as soon as possible, “even if they lose their ability to speak their native language” (Vázquez-Montilla, et al., 2014, p. 583). Other studies show educators seeking out opportunities to learn their students’ home language and learn information from parents to provide a more optimal education (Sawyer, et al., 2017b). Still, other research has found educators who have discouraged emergent bilingual children from using their home language (Song, 2016).

The literature clearly demonstrates that Spanish-speaking parents value and support their preschool-aged children’s emergent biliteracy. Parents in Spanish-dominant homes believe that children “can learn two languages simultaneously and naturally (Hwang, et al., 2022, p. 1186.) However, even with this belief, which attests to strong affective alignment to the value of multilingualism, Spanish-speaking and other minority families face obstacles when pursuing to raise multilingual children. The obstacles identified by these families are impediments to developing multilingualism, such as the lack of dual language bilingual programs, misinformation about bilingualism, apprehension on the part of mainstream families, and the English monolingual principles that have guided and continue to substantiate practices in early care settings (Jang, 2020; Oliveira, et al., 2020; Showstack & Colcher, 2019). Even in two-way dual language bilingual programs, the lived experiences of Spanish-speaking families are greatly

unknown or misunderstood, and language needs often go unmet (Chaparro, 2020). This study helps to bring what is currently unknown and misunderstood about parent and educator language ideologies into greater understanding and clarity.

The beliefs of teachers and parents around how young children use language and emerge and develop into bilingual and multilingual speakers vary considerably, but both parents' and teachers' perspectives play a role in children's trajectory toward multilingualism or monolingualism. This study adds specific understanding and clarity to the differences mothers and educators of Spanish-speaking preschoolers have regarding children's opportunities to acquire one or more languages in school and out of school. Specifically, the study sheds light on the experiences of the adults in the lives of emergent bilingual children that help explain ideological complexities, tensions, and intentions associated with the language development of young emergent bilingual children. The consequences of not knowing historical language-related events in the lives of teachers and parents can lead to misunderstandings, misinformation, and missed opportunities for teacher-parent collaboration to support children's multilingualism.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theories informing this study are interrelated and include language ideologies (Silverstein, 1979) and family language policy (Fogle & King, 2017). Language ideologies are a set of self-reinforcing beliefs and attitudes about language that justify one's perspective on language acquisition, language socialization, and language use (Silverstein, 1979). Language ideologies are "constructed from the socio-cultural experience of the speakers" (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 496) and can change with an individual's lived experience. Language ideologies, however, go beyond the individual and include larger discourses shaping values at a much larger scale such as national levels (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2002). Throughout the globe, language ideologies are intertwined with issues of power between majority language users and minority language populations (Darder, 2016). Language ideologies "arbitrarily privilege particular linguistic practices while stigmatizing others" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 150), and can negatively affect users of minority languages by breeding discrimination (Andrews, 2013). Language ideologies impact the way people make sense of their language practices and language-based decisions, and in this study, the concept was used to understand the language beliefs and language practices of the teacher in the preschool and of the mothers in the home environment.

To further explore the mothers' language ideologies in the home, this study uses the

complimentary notion of family language policy. Family language policy “offers researchers [a framework] to understand and explore the crux of the problem of language practices and ideologies in the family.” (Haque, 2019, p. 226). It is utilized to understand the multilingual development of children by focusing on the family’s language ideologies, language socialization, and language management practices and how these practices are firmly situated in larger ideological and sociocultural realities (Fogle & King, 2017; Purkarthofer, 2017; Smith-Christmas, 2016). Spolsky (2004) suggests three fundamental considerations per family language policy: (a) What are families’ beliefs about language? (b) What are the language practices in the family context? (c) What are some families’ efforts to modify or influence language practices?

In order to move the field forward, Hua & Wei (2016) recommend that family language policy studies conducted with transnational families should emphasize individual strategies for dealing with the challenges of multilingualism. Per their observations, challenges faced by multilingual families include how to maintain the home language, how to communicate with family members when some family members don’t share a common language, how to develop a new identity in a new host country, and how to fight against prejudices and stereotypes. Furthermore, they note that when working with trans-national families regarding their use of language(s), “it is important to understand their experiences, histories, imaginations, why they feel the way they feel and why they do things the way they do.” (Hua & Wei, 2016; p. 665). Language ideologies and family language policy are conceptually interconnected. These concepts were used to shed light on the ideological complexities and tensions associated with language development of emergent bilingual children at home and in an English-only preschool program located in a low-income, Latino, immigrant community in Arizona.

### **Methods**

This article uses data collected from a larger qualitative study focusing on the perceptions of teachers and mothers regarding emergent literacy in Kidtown (pseudonym) a single Head Start preschool center located in Arizona. Kidtown was the ideal location for the study because it has served a primarily Spanish-speaking, immigrant population for more than ten years and because the first 20 minutes of each day are dedicated to “Family Literacy”. What is also relevant about Head Start is that the program is a federally funded initiative envisioned as part of the effort on the “War on Poverty”. Head Start was not only to attend to inequities stemming from socio-economic differences but also to be culturally responsive to the

communities that the program served (Office of Head Start, 2022). Therefore, the federal regulations governing Head Start programs can be said to conflict with the State of Arizona's English-only educational law. This conflict is a notable power differential between federalism and states' rights that adds another layer of understanding concerning language ideologies and equity. The data in this paper relate to one research question, namely, what are the language ideologies that Latino Spanish-speaking, emergent bilingual children encounter in their home and preschool?

### **Methods of Data Collection**

This paper uses data from audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and field notes from classroom observations that took place twice per week at Kidtown during one school year. The information for this paper comes from the lead teacher and five Mexican-descended, Spanish-speaking mothers of children enrolled in Kidtown.

The semi-structured interviews were composed of descriptive questions from the ethnographic (Spradley, 1979) tradition. Descriptive questions are designed so that participants can do most of the talking while describing their experiences in everyday language. Given Spradley's typology of descriptive questions, I employed typical grand tour, mini tour, and experience questions. In typical grand tour questions, the participants are asked to describe how events, processes, or interactions usually proceed. Mini-tour questions ask about a specific aspect of an experience that was brought up while answering a grand tour question. Example questions are more specific than mini-tour questions in that they ask the participant to describe specific instances of the aspects probed by the mini-tour questions.

During the first semi-structured interview, all participants were asked questions about their life histories, upbringing, daily activities, parenting, and their beliefs on emergent literacy during the preschool year. The second interview focused on obtaining more details and specific instances about their beliefs about emergent literacy and their children's development of English and Spanish. The interviews with the teacher were in English in a conversational tone and took place in the early afternoon at Kidtown after the children were let out. The interviews with the mothers were in Spanish and had a conversational tone. The interviews took place at the children's homes in the evening hours and lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. One of the mothers shared that she was at first nervous about the audio recorder, but she eventually for-



got it was there. The interviews generated a lot of information, perhaps because this mode of data collection requires one-to-one focused attention.

The classroom observations were conducted via participant-observer (Gold, 1958) point-of-view. Participant observers take an active role in the setting they are studying and immerse themselves in the everyday occurrences of the people they study. I was able to take an active role because when I first introduced the project to the lead teacher, she suggested that I volunteer in her program so that I could witness it all for myself. A few weeks before the start of the year, I officially became a classroom volunteer. I volunteered two days each week. I was present at the start of the day, 8:00 AM, and until the end of the day —12:00 PM. Some parents would drop off their kids and leave quickly but several stayed behind for much of the 20 minutes dedicated to family literacy. It was during Family Literacy Time that I had many informal conversations with the participating mothers. My role in the classroom could be described as a “teacher’s aide”. I was “on the floor” with the children and staff at all times. I was there when the children were dropped-off and picked-up. I played with the children indoors and outdoors. I helped with breakfast and lunch routines. I was present at teacher-parent conferences and attended the end-of-year graduation ceremony.

Following the recommendation of Emerson, et al., (2001), I wrote the fieldnotes more-or-less contemporaneously with the events they described. A few times, I wrote some field notes in a back room where the lead teacher had a desk and kept her personal items. I did this so that participants did not feel discomfort with my notetaking. I usually wrote handwritten field notes in a small notebook on the same day the events occurred. Stylistically, the field notes were written as realistic tales, (Van Maanen, 2011) mainly describing the concrete details of daily life and routines as well as capturing exact quotes when possible.

### **Participants**

The participants in the study are five Mexican mothers of the children enrolled in Kidtown and the program’s lead teacher. Of the participating mothers, Carla, Priscilla, Esther and Antonietta (pseudonyms) all speak Spanish as their first language and can read and write in Spanish. Marcela (pseudonym) learned Nahuatl (an indigenous language in Mexico) at home and learned Spanish at school in Mexico, but now she mainly speaks Spanish. Marcela reads and writes in Spanish. Carla finished 12 years of education in Mexico. Esther completed high school in the U.S. Table I, shows other demographic information.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information for Participating Mothers

Pseudonym	Age	Language(s)	Marital Status	Education Attained
Marcela	25	Nahuatl, Spanish	Married	6 <sup>th</sup> grade
Carla	28	Spanish	Married	12 <sup>th</sup> grade
Priscilla	33	Spanish	Married	9 <sup>th</sup> grade
Esther	25	Spanish Eng- lish	Single	High school
Antonietta	34	Spanish	Married	9 <sup>th</sup> grade

Diana (pseudonym) is the lead teacher. She is a 43-year-old, Native American woman with 16 years of teaching experience in the early care and education system. Diana is married to a bilingual, Latino man and they have three children. Though Diana has fond childhood memories of singing songs in Comanche with her grandfather, Diana's children are English monolingual. Diana is partially bilingual in English and Spanish and notes that she has lost all ability to speak Comanche. Her bilingual skills are of note because she possesses the capacity to interact with children in both English and Spanish. She, however, does not feel her Spanish-speaking skills are adequate to have conversations with adults.

### Researcher Positioning

I grew up in California in a predominately Mexican immigrant community during the enactment of Propositions 187 and 227 and this has influenced the conceptualization of this study. California's anti-immigrant climate of the 1990s promoted the linguistic and cultural assimilation of minority students like me. Re-experiencing the English-only political climate in Arizona—but this time as a scholar of language and culture—provided me with the impetus to examine the language-based perspectives, ideologies, plans, and practices that can impact the lives of young, Spanish-speaking, emergent bilinguals.

### Research Setting

Kidtown was chosen as the host research site because of its affiliation with Head Start. Head Start underscores the engagement of families in their children's development. As noted previously, Kidtown was also chosen because it has served almost exclusively Spanish-speaking,

emergent bilingual children in immigrant families for more than a decade. Kidtown is an English-only, part-day program that serves 17 children, of whom 16 were locally born in nearby towns in Arizona and one child born in Mexico. Fourteen of the children speak Spanish at home, two speak both English and Spanish, and one child is English monolingual.

### **Data Analysis**

I transcribed the audio files within 3 weeks of the actual interviews. I digitized the handwritten field notes and saved them as dated word files the same week they were created. Based on the study’s theoretical framework, and the research question, I implemented Huberman & Miles’s (1994) form of data analysis.

The data were first analyzed through multiple readings of the digitized files and by applying a set of initial codes. The initial codes were a priori categories based on the academic literature and theoretical framework. As I re-read the electronic files, I became more familiar with the data set and began to add inductive categories that came about from the data itself. Both types of codes were applied to the data repeatedly so patterns amongst the codes became more evident. Lastly, I used triangulation to verify that the codes did indeed present across the entire body of data by cross-referencing themes that emerged from the field notes and the interviews.

### **Findings**

This study examines the language ideologies of one educator and five mothers of Latino, Spanish-speaking, emergent bilinguals in an English-only preschool in Arizona. The findings bring forth new understanding that clarifies and specifies how internal conflict in attitudes, feelings, and behaviors presents among the mothers and teacher regarding children’s bilingualism. What follows are data showing that the participants hold simultaneously, ideologies that sustain the preschooler’s bilingualism, but also share beliefs and practices that promote the separation of the young children’s languages. The findings feature participants’ language-based experiences that contribute to the understanding of complex language ideologies.

### **Ideologies Promoting Bilingualism**

The mothers in the study and Diana valued the children’s emergent bilingualism. Mothers in the study demonstrated pride in their children’s abilities to acquire both languages, maintained practices for developing their children’s knowledge and use of their home languages, and considered their children’s development of English as important. Diana contributed to the chil-

dren's emergent bilingualism as well.

In the following field note, it is evident that Esther is pleased about her children's bilingualism:

When a mom not participating in the study comments to Esther, "Su hija bien que habla inglés, ¿verdad?" [Your daughter speaks English well, doesn't she?] Esther replied with a smile, "Sí, ella habla los dos idiomas. Mis dos hijos hablan los dos idiomas." [Yes, she speaks both languages. Both of my children speak both languages.]"

During the second interview, I asked Esther about the comment she received regarding her child's English development, and she explained,

Yo valoro que ella y su hermano sean bilingües, pero eso no quiere decir que no me importe el español. Para mí es importante que ella hable español. Pues, nosotros somos de México, y pues no se nos puede olvidar.

[I value for her and her brother to be bilingual, but that does not mean that I do not care about Spanish. For me, it is important that she speaks Spanish. Well, we are from Mexico, and, well, we cannot forget that.]

From Esther's explanation, one can surmise she finds her children's bilingualism commendable. However, Esther appears to be conflicted by the compliment that her child speaks English well and consequently highlights her fear her children could forget their Mexican identity if they forget to speak Spanish.

Marcela also indicated her support for her children's bilingualism by talking about her own childhood speaking Nahuatl at home, learning Spanish at school, and by describing her attempts to teach her children Nahuatl vocabulary words:

Yo aprendí español en la primaria en México. Lo aprendí rápido. En mi casa mis hermanas y yo crecimos con Nahuatl... Cuando yo les hablo a las niñas en Nahuatl, les enseño a decir "perro," "casa" o "tortilla," cositas así para que aprendan quienes son. Cuando hablo con mis hermanas [por teléfono a México] hablo en español. Cuando hablo con mi mamá [por teléfono a México] le hablo en Nahuatl, y ellas (refiriéndose a sus hijas) me escuchan y dicen 'mi mama está hablando a México.'

[I learned Spanish in elementary school in Mexico. I learned it quick. In my house my sisters and I grew up speaking Nahuatl... When I talk to the girls in Nahuatl, I

teach them how to say "dog," "house" or "tortilla," things of that sort so they can learn who they are. When I talk to my sisters [on the phone in Mexico] I talk in Spanish. When I talk to my mom [on the phone in Mexico] I talk in Nahuatl, and they (referring to her daughters) hear me and they say, 'mom is calling Mexico.']

On a different occasion, Marcela described Spanish as the main language of her home and communicated sadness at the thought that her child might forget how to speak Spanish:

Aquí en la casa nosotras hablamos en español, escuchamos la radio en español y vemos la tele en español y todo. Para mí, sería muy triste si a ella (refiriéndose a su hija) se le olvidara su idioma. No me puedo imaginar eso. Sería muy feo.

[Here at home, we talk in Spanish, listen to the radio in Spanish, and watch tv in Spanish, and everything. For me, it would be very sad if she (meaning her daughter) forgot her language. I cannot imagine that. It would be awful.]

Marcela lives with the internal conflict of wishing that her children will continue to choose to speak Spanish—their first language—as they get older, while at the same time, she herself, mainly speaks her second language (Spanish). The mothers in the study consistently mentioned fear when explaining why they wanted to maintain their home languages. They feared that if their children didn't speak Spanish, they would miss out on knowing an important part of themselves, such as their heritage or their Mexican identity. The mothers often imagined that if their children lost the ability to communicate in Spanish, it would cause them to feel sadness and disappointment.

The next excerpt comes from a field note regarding what Priscilla shared with me about the conversation she had with Diana at her 15-minute appointment during her parent-teacher conference.

Estoy muy contenta porque dice la maestra que en inglés va muy bien. Yo me siento muy contenta porque pues yo lo que quiero es que hable los dos (refiriéndose a inglés y español).” (I'm very happy because the teacher said that his English is going well. I feel very happy because I want him to speak both (referring to Spanish and English).

Although Diana was explicitly only speaking about the English development of Priscilla's child, it is important to note that Priscilla equated it to feelings of happiness about her desire for her child's bilingualism. This also happened when Esther responded with pride about her

children's bilingualism to another mother's comment that only concerned her child's English development. This highlights situations where when mothers are given information about only one of their children's languages, they think about their children's language development in terms of bilingualism.

Esther, Carla, and Marcella shared additional personal, sociocultural experiences related to bilingualism. Esther, the only parent who was English speaking and who graduated high school in the U.S. stated,

En el trabajo me toca traducirles a mis compañeros. Yo les digo lo que dice la supervisora. A mi hasta me pagan más porque ayudo a traducir. Yo creo que es muy importante. Así ellos (refiriéndose a sus hijos) también pueden tener un mejor trabajo.

[At work I get to translate for my coworkers. I tell them what the supervisor says. I even get paid more because I help to translate. I think it's very important. That way, they (referring to her children) can also have a better job.]

Carla shared, "Yo siempre estoy agradecida cuando voy al doctor y hay quien me ayude con el idioma. Ahorita estoy embarazada y voy mucho al doctor. Me gustaría que mi niño ayude a la comunidad cuando sea grande. [I am always thankful when I'm at the doctor and there is someone to help me with the language. Right now, I'm pregnant and I go to the doctor a lot. I would like for my boy to help the community when he is grown.] Marcella recalled the bilingual support she received when enrolling her child at Kidtown:

Yo tuve ayuda cuando inscribí a la niña en la escuela. No sabía cómo llenar la aplicación y toda la información que necesitaba. Ellas me ayudaron a llenar todo en inglés y a recopilar los documentos. Cuando uno no habla el idioma es difícil. Uno no quiere eso para ellos.

[I had help when I enrolled her in school. I didn't know how to fill out the application, and all the information that I would need. They helped me to fill out the forms in English and to collect the necessary paperwork. When we don't speak the language [referring to English] it's difficult. I don't want that for them]

In multiple instances, the mothers mentioned helpful bilingual professionals that guided them and helped them navigate various social systems such as healthcare, education, and immigration. The mothers drew on their positive histories with bilingual doctors, nurses, teachers,

and lawyers, and those experiences help to explain why they hoped their children become bilingual.

Diana looked for ways to contribute to the children’s emergent bilingualism. During our first interview, Diana said to me, “I am: a full-blooded Native American, a military baby, a Head Start baby, a preschool teacher, a wife, and a mother of three.” She said it with a tone of voice that conveyed to me this was not the first time she described herself in that way, and with the body posture and a smile that communicated pride. Later in the same conversation, Diana said with a sad look in her eye, “It’s unfortunate that I was not raised to learn either of my parents’ languages.” I believe that Diana searched for ways to contribute to her students’ emergent bilingualism in part because she felt conflicted that her students could potentially live through the painful experience—she, herself went through—of not having learned her ancestral languages.

One way in which Diana supported the children’s emergent bilingualism was by encouraging the parents in Kidtown to continue to use Spanish at home with their children. For instance, when describing her plans for the next time she would see the parents, Diana said the following:

For the next parent meeting, I’m going to bring it up. They (parents) need to count with their children in Spanish at home, otherwise, they (children) are going to lose their language. I could do it here, and I do sometimes, but at school, we teach them all their academics in English, so they are ready for kindergarten... Kindergarten is going to be all in English.

On a different occasion, Diana spoke to me about the emotional effects that English-only laws have on parents. She reported that English-only laws frustrate parents and to that she would say,

Yes, we know your child should not lose their language

As long as you continue it at home, your child is never going to lose it... Give them some more. Here in the school, we can teach them in English how to read and stuff in English and all these things like pronunciation and spelling. You can do that in Spanish. Teach them how to say things, how to pronounce things better, and the writing of it.

Diana knew that many of the parents in the program were relatively new to the U.S. and she was knowledgeable about the families’ frustration with larger, state-wide, hegemonic

English-only ideologies. Diana demonstrated an orientation toward linguistic justice by supporting the parents in resisting discriminatory, monolingual perspectives and encouraging the preservation of Spanish use and Spanish literacy in the home. Diana's use of the word "lose" to refer to the possibility that the children might stop developing their home language is likely influenced by her own sense of loss regarding the discriminatory experiences in her own family history and having not been raised to learn her ancestral languages.

Diana considered both English and Spanish when conceptualizing language and literacy development at Kidtown. When discussing that topic with me she stated, "I try to discover how many words they know. I don't care what language (meaning English or Spanish). I want to know how many words they can use in a sentence. Is it a two-, three-word sentence? Or can [they] tell an elaborate story that uses more and more words to describe details?" This quote, and many others, where Diana comments that the actual language the children use at Kidtown did not matter, suggests that like the mothers in the study, Diana also demonstrates an ideology that equates the children's language development with their emergent bilingualism.

### **Ideologies Promoting Language Separation**

While the mothers in the study and Diana value the children's bilingualism, some of their beliefs and practices regarding the children's emergent bilingualism reflected ideologies of language separation (Martínez, et al., 2015). For example, Carla recalled, "El otro día, él (refiriéndose a su hijo) estaba hablando en inglés enfrente de familiares que llegaron de México. Y que lo regaño... Yo me encargo del español aquí, y él que aprenda inglés en la escuela". [The other day, he (referring to her son) was speaking in English in front of family members that traveled from Mexico. And I scolded him... I take care of the Spanish here and he will learn English at school.]

Similarly, during the first interview with Antonietta, where we conversed about her life in the United States, she explained that together, with her husband, she decided that Spanish would be the only language spoken in their home so that their children "no se les olvidara" [would not forget] their language. Antonietta proudly mentioned that in her house they have been able to maintain their "regla del español" [Spanish rule] for many years, even after the older children have learned English. Antonietta has firm ideas about the mixing of English and Spanish: "A mí no me gusta que los combinen (referente al español y al inglés). Eso no está bien". [I don't like it when they combine [referring to Spanish and English]. That's not right.]



Moreover, Antonietta shared an anecdote she experienced with her English-dominant nephew that further suggests she believes Spanish should be developed in the home:

Fui a la casa de mi hermana, y mi sobrino estaba en el sillón y me di cuenta de que apenas si habla español. Yo trate de hacerle la plática, pero la verdad no me supo contestar. No pudimos hablar. No quiero que les pase eso a mis hijos. Yo pensé que pena que no hablen español en la casa.

[I visited my sister, and my nephew was sitting on the couch, and I realized he barely speaks Spanish. I tried to have a conversation with him, but he didn't how to respond. We couldn't talk. I don't want that to happen to my children. I thought what a shame that they don't speak Spanish at home.]

Priscilla's family made decisions that would support her children's Spanish language development. They decided to send the children to Mexico for a few weeks during the summer break for the children to stay with their cousins and further develop their Spanish-speaking skills. The mothers concentrated their efforts on developing Spanish at home without expressing that the school also help with that effort.

From a family language policy perspective, Antonietta's, Carla's and Priscilla's language practices were deliberate and purposeful. By organizing their language-based routines and activities, including child vacations and at home language rules, these mothers managed the language usage in their homes and positively influenced their children's ability to maintain their Spanish-speaking abilities. Research shows U.S. based Latino families who want to support their children's capacity to speak two languages often have a language separation stance where they take full responsibility for teaching their children the home language (Rodriguez, 2015, p. 177). This division of linguistic labor is related to the mothers' language resources and priorities. The mothers concentrated on developing their children's abilities to speak Spanish at home because Spanish is the language that the mothers know best. It was helpful that Diana also encouraged the use of Spanish at home. Furthermore, the mothers had a vested interest in their children's ability to maintain relationships with family members who only speak Spanish.

For Diana, her personal involvement in helping the children develop their English skills was a top priority. For instance, this is what she said about conducting home visits during the summer:

First, I want to know how much English they have from home. I want to see how

much they are getting from home. I get a good idea at the home visits that we do in the summer. [That's] when we meet all the children and whoever lives with them, you know Mom, Dad, Grandma, siblings.

Diana focused her attention on getting to know the children's family members and collecting information about the children's exposure to English. Her focus on the children's English development appeared to be impacted by the enactment of English-only policies:

Here in Arizona, I don't know the logistics, but the children only get English schooling. You know, we have to prepare them here because there will only be English in Kindergarten... In the past, I used to give them a little more time, but now by the middle of the year, I really have to push them to talk to me in English. I want to hear that English. I want them to try to talk to me in English.

Diana's explanation about how she has to "push them to talk in English" indicates that she feels pressed for time, and that somehow, she was hoping to speed up the children's English development. Her sense of stress and the more focused attention to the children's English development is related to supporting and preparing the children for the English-only environment they would face in kindergarten during the following year.

### **Discussion**

The findings in this study support the idea and understanding that sociocultural and experiential variables play a key role in the development of complex language ideologies people espouse and promote (Kroskrity, 2004). What this study adds and extends to this understanding is how people come to adopt their language ideologies is also of great importance. Specifically, this study provides more clarity on how social conditions (e.g., English-only policies) and personal experiences with language (e.g., being paid a higher hourly wage for being bilingual) can create internal conflicts (which must be resolved) that impact people's language ideologies and practices, which ultimately affect children's language learning.

The study data show that Diana works in social conditions constrained by ideological conflicts that must somehow be resolved. For instance, Diana works in a Spanish-dominant community, speaks some Spanish, values bilingualism, and looks to support the development of the children's home language and English. However, Diana teaches under Arizona's English-only educational policy, though in a program that is federally funded that seeks to serve families in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner. Furthermore, Diana's personal experiences as a

woman of Native American heritage who regrets not knowing her ancestral languages also impact her language ideologies. In the end, Diana complies with the English-only requirements by focusing primarily on teaching the children English in the program. However, her lived experiences with linguistic discrimination inspire her to recognize and understand the mothers’ indignation and mothers’ fear that the children might lose their home language. Diana supports families in resisting the English-only educational policy in Arizona by encouraging them to speak and write with their children in Spanish.

Given their lived experiences and the racially and linguistically discriminatory social milieu of Arizona, the mothers in the study also experienced internal conflict regarding their children’s bilingualism. For example, the mothers in the study hope their children would develop bilingual skills, emphasized some of the benefits of bilingualism, and highlighted their personally positive experiences with helpful bilingual professionals. However, the xenophobic, anti-Latino climate of the state of Arizona, and the English-only educational policy, along with the rigorous focus on teaching the children English in the program, likely undermined the mothers’ excitement about their children’s English development and bilingual development. This can be seen in the hesitation and fear the mothers expressed that their children would not be inclined to continue to learn and use their home language. Given this complicated and contradicting set of circumstances, the mothers in the study mainly focused on developing their children’s Spanish-speaking abilities in their home through a variety of family language policy practices and decisions. Future research should include data collection in the home, as this would provide a more comprehensive perspective.

An important proposition to put forth from the findings of this study is that educators and parents are highly constrained when implementing their language ideologies and plans. This requires the need for educators and parents to have open conversations about the children’s language and cultural development that explicitly cover topics such as contradictions in language beliefs, language planning, language and identity, and how to deal with language discrimination. Not having these types of conversations could mean that families don’t know that their children’s teacher is a language ally and looks to support their children’s multilingualism.

### **Conclusion**

This article contributes to the knowledge base on language ideologies of mothers and educators of Spanish-speaking, emergent bilingual preschoolers. It demonstrates that in order

to support children's bilingualism in English-only settings, teachers and parents tend to divide the linguistic labor and therefore children learn English at school and Spanish at home. This division of labor requires the efforts of educators who may have had personal experiences that give rise to a sense of linguistic social justice as well as the commitment of family members to find ways to implement daily language routines and practices to support the likelihood that their children will become bilingual. The article highlights the ideologies and practices of a teacher and mothers who actively, consistently, and courageously confront and navigate English-only, monolingual ideologies in educational settings to sustain children's home language and their English development.

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