Escribiendo para desahogarme: Release and Resistance in a Middle School Bilingual Writing Workshop

Carla Espana
*The Graduate Center, City University of New York*

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ESCRIBIENDO PARA DESAHOGARME:
RELEASE AND RESISTANCE
IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL BILINGUAL WRITING WORKSHOP

by

Carla España

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
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Carla España

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

____________________
Date
Ofelia García
Chair of Examining Committee

____________________
Date
Anthony Picciano
Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Cecilia Espinosa
Nicholas Michelli
Patricia Velasco

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

ESCRIBIENDO PARA DESAHOGARME:
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by

Carla España

Advisor: Dr. Ofelia García

This dissertation examines a teacher’s language ideologies, their impact on curriculum modifications and bilingual Latinx middle schoolers’ storytelling, to understand how a bilingual pedagogy builds on their cultural and linguistic resources. This qualitative study was conducted in a sixth grade writing workshop class in New York City as the focus teacher taught the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Personal Narrative Unit of Study. The first two findings center on the factors that influence a teacher’s stance on language practices and bilingual pedagogy, and how these contributed to curriculum modifications that included using students’ full linguistic and cultural repertoires, integrating culturally relevant texts, modifying pedagogical approaches, and sharing teacher demonstration writing. The third research finding focuses on the role of writing as release and revealing of language practices when a bilingual pedagogy is implemented. The study also found that a bilingual pedagogy revealed the tensions experienced by students as they face pressures, pride, and shame connected to their language practices when negotiating various aspects of their identities. This study has implications for language policy, teacher preparation and professional development, partnerships across institutions to support educators’ and students’ language ideologies and writing journeys, and pedagogy that embraces bilingual students’ identities and stories.
Dedication

To

My tía Marcela who exuded joy through her storytelling and whose presence has been constant in my journey.

To

My parents, Beatriz España and Jose España, for the example that they set in helping others and their support with each of my goals.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................... iv  
Dedication ..................................................................................................................... v  
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... vi  
Figures .......................................................................................................................... xii  
Appendices ................................................................................................................... xiv  

Chapter 1: Introduction  
1.1 *Mi historia/ My Story* ..................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Statement of the Problem ................................................................................... 5  
1.3 The Origins of My Research Project & Research Questions ......................... 10  

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework & Review of the Literature  
2.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................... 12  
2.2 Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................... 12  
2.3 Review of the Literature: Sociocultural Approaches to Literacy ..................... 18  
2.4 Review of the Literature: Bilingualism and Biliteracy .................................. 23  
2.5 Summary .......................................................................................................... 29  

Chapter 3: The Context for the Study  
3.1 Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Curriculum ....................... 30  
3.2 Writing Workshop Pedagogy .......................................................................... 33  
3.3 Modifications to the Curriculum ...................................................................... 37  
3.4 School Site ....................................................................................................... 40  
3.5 Students and their Classroom .......................................................................... 42  
3.6 Teacher ............................................................................................................ 48  

ix
Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction ................................................................. 49
4.2 Data Collection .............................................................. 50
4.3 Data Analysis ............................................................... 56
4.4 Reliability & Validity ...................................................... 58
4.5 Limitations ................................................................. 59
4.6 Generalizability ......................................................... 60
4.7 Overview of the Dissertation ......................................... 60
4.8 Implications for Practice ............................................... 61

Chapter 5: A Classroom Teacher’s Language Ideologies

5.1 Introduction ................................................................. 63
5.2 The Teacher: On a Journey of Language Ideologies .............. 64
5.3 Challenging Language Ideologies ....................................... 69
5.4 Conclusion ................................................................. 79

Chapter 6: Bilingual Matters: Curriculum Modifications

6.1 Introduction ................................................................. 81
6.2 Class Session 1: Mentor Text Analysis through an Interactive Read Aloud .. 85
6.3 Class Session 2: Studying Leads in Mentor Texts .................. 100
6.4 Class Session 3: Internal and External Storytelling ............... 111
6.5 Class Session 4: Editing Transition Phrases ......................... 120
6.6 Class Session 5: Writing Partners Revise Using a Narrative Checklist ....... 125
6.7 Conclusion ................................................................. 138
Chapter 7: The Stories We Tell and How We Tell Them

7.1 Introduction ................................................................. 143
7.2 Oscary's desahogo ......................................................... 144
7.3 Ana's grito ................................................................. 156
7.4 Genesis' emociones y esperanza ..................................... 162
7.5 Emiliano: Teasing and Failing ....................................... 172
7.6 Conclusion ................................................................. 175

Chapter 8: The Politics of Bilingual Practices: Living in the Tensions

8.1 Introduction ................................................................. 178
8.2 Oscary: Shame and Self-Advocacy ................................ 179
8.3 Ana: Pride, Pressures and Shame .................................... 186
8.4 Genesis: Pride in Culture and Pressure to Progress in English .............................................. 190
8.5 Emiliano: Language Separation/Switch .............................. 201
8.6 Conclusion ................................................................. 203

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Research Summary ................................................................. 204
9.2 Policy ................................................................. 205
9.3 Professional Development ...................................................... 206
9.4 Pedagogy ................................................................. 210
9.5 Partnerships ................................................................. 216
9.6 Write, Rite, and Right to Remember ................................ 221
References ........................................................................... 251
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures and Tables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix A:</th>
<th>TCRWP <em>Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories</em></th>
<th>223</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 6 Narrative Unit of Study Sample Classroom Lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B:</td>
<td>Modified Teachers College Reading and Writing Project</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C:</td>
<td>Personal Narrative Mentor Leads Chart: Examples from Texts</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In English and in Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D:</td>
<td>Interview Protocol for Student Participant</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E:</td>
<td>Interview Protocol for Teacher Participant</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F:</td>
<td>TCRWP Personal Narrative Writing Checklist - English</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G:</td>
<td>TCRWP Personal Narrative Writing Checklist - Spanish</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H:</td>
<td>TCRWP Professionally-Written Sixth Grade-Level</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I:</td>
<td>Alejandra's Translation of the TCRWP Professionally Written</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sixth Grade Personal Narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Mi historia / My Story

My research interests in bilinguals’ journeys and narratives shaped by schools, are rooted in my own migration from Valparaiso, Chile to Queens, New York at five years old. Within a week of this transition, I started Kindergarten in a monolingual school setting. Observing my distress with the language and culture shock — as well as coming to terms with their fear that I would perder mi español, lose my Spanish — my parents enrolled me in la Escuela Argentina, a Saturday program that conducted its classes in Spanish, focusing on Argentinean history and culture. Throughout my early years of schooling I lived two opposing experiences: one in monolingual English classrooms feeling as if I was never as good as the rest of the class, always trying to catch up and keeping my participation to a minimum; and the other in classrooms where Spanish was used for instruction and encouraged in student conversations. It was living amongst the tensions between the weekly monolingual experiences and the Saturdays more welcoming setting, where my identities were being shaped. I was a Chilena whispering the requests for translation help from my Puerto Rican best friend and trying to share my stories with my Chinese, Phillipino and Pakistani classmates in my primary years at a linguistically and culturally diverse elementary school in Corona, Queens. I was also designated as an “English Language Learner,” removed from my classroom along with a handful of other students, and taken to a small room where we would be taught the structure of the English language a few times a week.

Yet the reality of my languaging processes and cultural identities in my home life and spaces outside of the classrooms reflected a much more flexible experience compared to the
rigidity of the language and cultural separations of the institutional settings. At home, I would easily flow between Spanish and English, participate in *language brokering* in many contexts with my family as I translated on the phone for banks and parents’ employers (Orellana, 2009), write letters to my family in Chile that reflected the complexity of my language repertoire, and translated songs for the church choirs I belonged to. Throughout my teenage years I participated as the interpreter for Sunday sermons (sometimes in Spanish and at other times in English) most of which were over an hour long!

But there was another aspect of my childhood that continues to impact the way I understand bilingual journeys. My mother and I arrived in New York as undocumented immigrants. The fear and uncertainty were palpable in our lives for years. This reality not only guided our decision-making, but also provided a unique lens through which to view my family’s and my own experiences in this country. My parents’ decision to leave our entire family in Chile was one full of sacrifice, hope, and tension. There was always the narrative of *tenemos que salir adelante* que por alguna razón estamos en este país in our conversations that sometimes served as a reminder of what we left behind and what my parents were doing *para salir adelante*. At other times, I interpreted this as pressure to not only excel in this North American school system and culture but also to never forget *mis raíces*, my South American roots. This was and continues to be a complex experience. Although some people encourage a more bifurcated transition to ease this complexity, relegating some languages and experiences to the private/home sphere and others to the public sphere (Rodriguez, 1983), I was encouraged, through my home and community life, to develop a more fluid approach to my multiple identities. As an adult, I have many more resources at my disposal to process these moments and pressures, compared to my
elementary and middle school self. I have often wondered: how can we support students in processing these kinds of experiences?

It was not until fifth grade that I was able to read a book similar to the ones being read by my classmates and understand it. I still have that copy of C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. Thanks to the creative teaching by Ms. Lo, my high school advanced placement Spanish Language and Literature teacher, I read young adult books in Spanish outside of home and church at the secondary level. Although Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral readings were available at home, along with the many stories my mother masterfully told about her childhood, access to texts about my history, language, and culture was almost nonexistent in my K-12 schooling.

Luis Rivera-Pagán’s “Theological Themes in Latin American Literature” and Anaída Rivera-Pagán’s “Liberating Pedagogies” courses in my graduate experience at Princeton Theological Seminary presented me with some moving classroom moments. I was reading Isabel Allende, Alejo Carpentier, Paulo Freire, and listenting to songs by Violeta Parra, Victor Jara, Mercedes Sosa and others from the Nueva Canción movement. For the past ten years, speaking with pre-service and in-service teachers at Hunter College’s diverse teacher preparation programs, I often hear about how teachers have never read texts by Latin American authors in their schools or heard teachers discuss culturally relevant themes addressing issues of social justice until graduate school. Very few of them even have opportunities to tell their own stories. I will never forget Professor Richard Fenn reading one of my papers for a Religion and Society course and suggesting that I submit it for publication in the campus magazine. First, it was difficult to imagine my own story being valid. Second, I had never felt confident enough to share my writing beyond the confines of a classroom.
At times, there existed a lot of institutional pressures against my identity, and at other
times opportunities came up that contributed to an awareness and validation of my language and
cultural practices. My transition from Chile to the United States with experiences across informal
and formal schooling settings (home, church, Saturday School in Spanish, public schooling in
English) continue contributing to a constant reconceptualizing of who I am as a *Chilena*, a Latinx
immigrant, and a Spanish-English bilingual educator. Reading texts that resonate with me and
writing my stories have been key practices that support my identity negotiation, release of ideas
and processing of a nostalgia that is embedded in my being.

My passion for bilingual instruction had its start with my experience in schools where the
instruction isolated parts of my being, yet it grew exponentially the more I worked with bilingual
students. As a bilingual sixth grade teacher in New York City, I listened to my students’ own
bilingual journeys, observed their struggles with a high-stakes standardized testing culture, and
was amazed as I would read their writing pieces that reflected the ways they *languaged*. Whether
students were in a transitional bilingual education (TBE) program, a dual language bilingual
education (DLBE) program, or an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, students
continued to reveal complex language(s) and thought processing with the freedom to express
these being different across programs. Aileen, one of the sixth-graders in my dual language
bilingual education class, wrote a poem, *Bilingual Matters*, during our poetry as social
commentary writing unit¹. This inspired the rest of the class to write poems about what being
bilingual meant to them, also inspiring me to make this a part of the final poetry anthology
assignment. Aileen’s enthusiastic and humorous poem was performed at Central Park
Summerstage during an arts partnership with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Project, and later

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¹ You can read Aileen’s *Bilingual Matters* poem in chapter nine where it is described along with recommendations
for community and art partnerships.
students in Chicago heard of it and performed it as well. This is one of many instances where my students used their experiences, their voices, and their writing, to take a critical stance and share it with an audience.

My imagination was further expanded and validated in a Multicultural Education course at Hunter College, taught at the time by my now life-long mentor and friend, Dr. Yvonne De Gaetano. Taking a critical approach to issues of injustice, professor De Gaetano encouraged us to tell our stories and create curriculum that allowed students to do the same, to question and to create social action projects. I carried this sense of urgency for social justice matters to my literacy work as a literacy consultant at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). There, I had the opportunity to engage teachers in conversations about bilingual pedagogy as well as observe bilingual students and their writing. I have listened to bilingual students in New York City public schools, the suburbs of New York, public schools in other major cities such as Seattle and San Francisco in the United States and Guadalajara, Mexico. I was also a part of creative curriculum planning and implementation in private international American schools in Bogotá, Colombia, and Santiago, Chile. Although the students’ ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status and documented status varied, they have shown me that their bilingual journeys matter to them, that the spaces for these may be proactively created in some places while shunned in others, that they deal with a lot of pressures to assimilate while being true to who they are, and that they want to share, question, and understand these experiences.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In my roles as a middle school teacher in New York City, literacy consultant for the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) and instructor at Hunter College, City University of New York, I have engaged in conversations with teachers who discuss the
challenges they experience when given mandated curricula and told to implement these without any modifications for their linguistically and culturally diverse learners. For example, one teacher in Flushing, New York was told to teach the sixth grade TCRWP curriculum without any changes, even though her classes included about a third of newcomers (students with less than three years in the country) and a third of recent arrivals (less than three months in the United States from the day they started sixth grade) to the country from a non-English speaking country. Teachers from California met with me and other New York educators working in schools with emergent bilinguals at a TCRWP institute to express their frustration, confusion, and dismay when they were not given the freedom to create writing lessons that considered their students’ experiences, language practices, lack of familiarity with the workshop model and TCRWP curriculum, and other student data.

Teachers — from the east coast to the west coast — noted that the TCRWP curriculum assumed a lot about children’s language and literacy practices. The TCRWP curriculum assumes students process texts and write in a certain way, focusing on English (with 2016 release of classroom charts and writing checklists translations in Spanish). It also assumes that students have had all of the instruction from the curriculum that comes prior to that particular lesson. These assumptions make it challenging for linguistically diverse students. It also puts teachers and students in a difficult position for following the curriculum considering transient populations, immigration and migration patterns, and students with interrupted schooling (i.e. students living in shelters, undocumented students facing separation from families, etc.). In other words, the curriculum, with few exceptions, if implemented with no modifications, centers on the experiences of monolingual, middle class children that have been instructed through the TCRWP curriculum K-8. Most important for the present study, if implemented with no bilingual
modifications, it assumes an assimilatist stance for students’ literacies and negotiations of identities through reading and writing practices.

This does not happen only with the TCRWP curriculum in schools but other curricula as well. In 2013, then New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Chancellor Dennis Walcott announced the Math and English Language Arts (ELA) curricula selected as recommendations for city schools from Kindergarten through eighth grade (NYCDOE, 2013). The TCRWP curriculum was not one of the options. Schools that opted for the *Expeditionary Learning* or *Scholastic Codex* for their ELA instruction (the two middle school curricula selected by the NYCDOE), for the 2013-2014 school year, received support from the NYCDOE for the materials and teacher training. Teachers continued to find it extremely difficult to use these programs with their diverse learners, especially their *emergent bilinguals*, those that are “developing an additional language such as English” (García, 2011, p.5), as the curriculum focused on whole class instruction of texts (same text for all students that is on grade level or above). The “Support for English Language Learners” sections in these curricula include sentence starters or prompts for responses to literature or vocabulary support with ways to show the meaning of words through contextual clues in the text. Teachers know that this is not nearly enough and neither is it a way of teaching that honors bilingual children’s experiences.

This approach frames the bilingual students from a deficit perspective – as lacking academic knowledge or proficiency thus needing vocabulary support and prompts for writing – and does not provide the teacher with ways to modify the instruction considering the students’ linguistic and cultural practices that are not only assets or resources for the classroom community, but also valid and important. This approach also disregards students’ backgrounds and experiences, prescribing a “one size fits all” or a “one text fits all” pedagogy. For middle
school teachers with several emergent bilingual students in their classrooms, these types of curricula are not only a challenge for planning, but once implemented, with no modifications, have immense ramifications for the entire classroom community. For example, some teachers using the TCRWP curriculum hear mandates to “stick to the script,” “teach rigorous curriculum,” and “those kids need to learn English” as if bilingual students taught through culturally relevant teaching and curriculum that was modified with their lives in mind, would not challenge them or develop their entire linguistic practices (Moll, 1986).

This pervasive problem raises several questions. First, how can teachers have a culturally responsive stance on teaching so that students’ entire selves are considered in the curriculum and how can they act on this if a school leader, colleague, professional development staff, or mentor’s racialized philosophy of teaching advocates for restrictive and subtractive processes? In other words, how does a teacher respond to instructions from authority figures or peers that come from a stance that considers the experiences and backgrounds of language minoritized students as less than those who practice the language of wider communication (Alim & Smitherman, 2012)? Second, how can teachers modify curriculum so that the content and pedagogy are culturally relevant, challenging, and transformative? Along with this, how can these modifications be encouraged in a way that teachers’ knowledge of both content and students’ experiences is honored? It is important to consider the content and pedagogy as being informed by teachers’ knowledge of students’ lived experiences. Third, how do the modifications impact the classroom community and the teacher’s own approach to teaching? In this research project, I study one teacher who is aware of her own language ideologies. I analyze her journey of coming to terms with her bilingual stance and her curriculum modifications, how they were developed, implemented, and the impact they had on her classroom.
In addition to the challenges experienced by bilingual teachers, there are the multifaceted struggles faced by bilingual students when literacy instruction is more of a subtractive endeavor than a transformative one, denying them of their knowledge systems and the space needed to process and validate their experiences (Valenzuela, 1999; Moll, 1992). There are many examples of this from different contexts. For example, there are several dual language bilingual programs that adhere to strict language separation, and on English days or weeks, emergent bilinguals that are Spanish-dominant are highly impacted. Participation and engagement are affected when they are not allowed to use all of their language practices.

Another example is with the implementation of curriculum across bilingual and monolingual settings with emergent bilinguals in the classroom. For example, even though the TCRWP curriculum can be implemented seamlessly in several schools where the way the student population speaks, reads, writes, and lives, mirrors that of the content on most pages from the TCRWP curriculum, a problem arises when it does not. For students at the beginning points of the bilingual continuum, modifications are needed in both the curriculum and the pedagogical approach. What modifications would help emergent bilinguals make meaning of the content in the curriculum and the content of their lives? How do these modifications make space for students to tell their stories and be welcomed as participants in the classroom community? More specifically, what kind of impact would a modified curriculum of personal narrative writing have on bilingual students and what would those narratives reveal about their experiences? My research project addresses these questions, taking a closer look at the impact that teaching a modified TCRWP personal narrative unit of study had on bilingual Spanish/English sixth graders. This unit of study is particularly important for the students as they share stories of their lives, reveal their own language ideologies through discussion and writing,
and show how they engaged with the teacher’s pedagogy that welcomed their full linguistic and cultural practices.

1.3 The Origins of My Research Project and Research Questions

Growing up, my mother always reminded me “no se pierde nada con preguntar,” that we do not lose anything by asking. This was a tough lesson to keep in mind and act upon when my elementary school years were fraught with lack of confidence, with the fear of not pronouncing things “right” in English or that I was not “as smart as” the rest of the class because there was so much about the school culture and classes (United States History, spelling tests, texts in English) that I did not understand. My experiences as a bilingual child as part of the New York City public school system, a teacher candidate in a teacher preparation program and a bilingual teacher in the same system, all contributed to my inquiries on bilingual students’ experiences and the teacher’s role in fostering these students’ bilingual learning journeys through an in-depth study of their knowledge of the classroom community and curriculum.

The following research questions guided my study:

1. What are the language ideologies that enable a teacher to enact modifications to an existing personal narrative writing curricular unit so as to take into account the complex linguistic and cultural practices of emergent bilingual middle-schoolers? What are the modifications implemented to the curriculum and the pedagogy?

2. How does that bilingual pedagogy help bilingual sixth graders construct written personal narratives that build on their cultural and linguistic resources, and what are its effects?

My first goal with this project was to study a teacher’s language ideologies and how changes in these influenced her bilingual pedagogy. Along with this, I wanted to understand what were the
modifications in curriculum and pedagogy that the bilingual teacher made to the monolingual TCRWP curriculum in order to teach emergent bilingual students. My second goal was to understand how such modifications impacted the ways students tell stories about their lives, paying attention to the content of their stories as well as the languages in which they tell them (in conversations and in writing). I wanted to learn from both perspectives, the teacher’s and the students’ about the role of storytelling in their lives, as well as the impact that flexible language use and culturally relevant pedagogy have on creating the space for this to happen in the classroom. My hope with this study is that it would contribute to the discussion on teacher preparation, professional development, curriculum design and the journeys of bilingual children who have stories and experiences to contribute to the curriculum and classroom community.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Framework & Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The theories and literature that ground my project provide a counternarrative to the deficit framework that often pervades discussions of bilingual students and pedagogy. They also provide an alternative to the static views of language practices and language learning. Four critical theoretical frameworks described in part one of this chapter situate the language practices, since linguistic practices are a product (and under continuous change) of historical and social conditions (Bourdieu, 1991; Walsh, 1991): Cultural Capital Theory, Critical Race Theory and Latina/o Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Translanguaging Theory. In the second part of this chapter I discuss two areas of research that inform my study. In the first area, Sociocultural Approaches to Literacy, I provide a brief historical context. In the second area of literature, Bilingualism and Biliteracy, I consider the research on bilingual language practices through a discussion on the continua of biliteracy, pedagogy, and translanguaging research. These two areas focus on a review of the literature that starts from an approach to literacy (conceptualization of reading and writing) and moves to the integration of multiple literacies, including considerations of language and culturally responsive teaching.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Cultural capital theory along with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) contributes to the understanding of the research project’s bilingual narratives and revelations shared through writing, class sessions and interviews. Critical Race Theory (Yosso, 2005) challenges the traditional interpretation of Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory and extends it with a new concept: community cultural wealth. Through this framework, I theorize,
examine, uncover, and challenge the ways that different systems of power, through formal schooling (i.e., through race, linguicism, documented status, country of origin, etc.), impact bilingual students’ experiences as exemplified in this study.

Rather than focus on a view of bilingual pedagogy and writing that separates languages and disregards the context within which the narratives occur, this research focuses on analyzing how simultaneous biliteracy (García et.al, 2007, Escamilla, 2014) provides room for “higher standards of thought” (Velasco & García, 2014). This framework helps me examine how a bilingual pedagogy in the classroom engages students in consciousness raising (Freire, 1970) through narrative writing tasks that are developed through a culturally relevant lens.

Translanguaging theory that addresses translanguaging as both a bilingual pedagogy, and what Patricia Velasco and Ofelia García call a *self-regulation tool* for bilingual students (Velasco & García, 2014), both informs and guides this research. Translanguaging theory integrates capital theory (Bourdieu, 1991) (recognizing the cultural capital at play when students language) and critical pedagogy (acknowledging translanguaging for social justice) (Freire, 1970). I use the term social justice in this context to address education that honors the humanity of all people, questioning issues of power and calling attention to oppressive practices.

This more dynamic view of language with social justice at the center also includes the awareness of hybridity (Anzaldúa, 1987) and how this plays out in bilinguals’ experiences for we “continually walk out of one culture and into another,” and as Anzaldúa says “I am in all cultures, at the same time” (p.77). This notion of hybridity helps me recognize moments when bilingual students may feel like they are someone’s *linguistic nightmare* and to name the reasons why this may be the case (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.80).
Bourdieu’s Concepts of Capital and Habitus

Within a few blocks of the research site, at another middle school with a similar student population (mostly newcomers from the Dominican Republic), a principal said of the students “these kids have no culture” and “their parents don’t care,” when she walked me to a classroom after I facilitated a family workshop one morning. Depending on the bilingual model of instruction, school philosophy, and teachers’ approach to implementation of curriculum written for monolingual students but implemented in bilingual classrooms, bilingual children’s cultural and language practices are either welcomed or suppressed in different settings.

French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and habitus allow me to explore linguistic and cultural capital, legitimacies of languages, habitus, and symbolic domination. Bourdieu’s definition of cultural capital includes cultural status, linguistic knowledge and skills (Bourdieu, 1990). For Bourdieu, academic success cannot be attributed to intelligence when there are social and political factors at play related to issues of power that impact people. As opposed to traditional language analysis by Saussure and Chomsky that has focused on language structure and mechanics, Bourdieu’s concepts frame language around its social and political roots and use. Language must then be analyzed not as a noun but as a verb, not as a thing that someone has but a process which someone engages in and is in constant flux. One of the key concepts in Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory that is instrumental to this dissertation project is habitus. Bourdieu describes habitus as a “system of dispositions to a certain practice” and “an objective basis for regular modes of behavior” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 77). Will the bilingual students’ habitus be welcomed, redefined, and/or questioned? How does a bilingual curriculum make space for the redefinition, pushback or processing of the students’ habitus as characterized by their experiences that may differ from those of other students within the bilingual setting or
outside of it in the same school? How does a teacher’s habitus come into question throughout a teacher preparation program, within professional development, and/or lesson planning?

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) extends Bourdieu’s economic, social, and political capital. Chicana/o Studies educator, Tara Yosso, uses critical race theory as a “framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact social structures, practices and discourses” (2005, p.70). Pertinent to this study is the awareness of the many layers of the students’ experience that includes racism and other kinds of systemic discrimination against their identities, including immigration status, gendered expectations, and language, amongst others. This framework will help in understanding not just the product of the narratives but also the process. What are students drawing upon when engaging in flexible language practices? How are they processing their identities as they discuss their texts and the person that they are becoming when transitioning across grades, geographical regions, and perspectives of self? Yosso’s theory will allow the study to move beyond the categories of social, economic, and political capital and into the territories that consider how race impacts other spheres of society. Specific to this study, looking at language through the lens of race, or racialized language, will be important to understand how students make sense of their experiences (Smitherman, 2000; Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Alim, Rickford, and Ball, 2016). Will students seek to assimilate into peer groups or experience pressures elsewhere to conform to standardized language practices? How does the teacher interpret different kinds of Spanish language use with specific regional varieties spoken in the classroom?
**Critical Pedagogy**

Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, outlined the differences between an oppressive education, which he called the banking concept, and a liberating education in the seminal text, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The former is characterized by the teacher holding all of the knowledge, dichotomies that separate people and knowledge (teacher/student, human beings/world), and a system that stifles creativity. Therefore, the banking concept of education is a dehumanizing endeavor. On the other hand, liberating education, which he calls problem-posing, is characterized by critical thinking, mutual humanization, trust, and creative power (Freire, 1970). Critical Pedagogy highlights the reflective practices of literacies, the grassroots nature of these productions and how social transformations are possible when these literacy practices are connected to the historicity/positionality of a community. This framework addresses the research questions above in the way that it considers the ways bilinguals come to understand their experience in a socio-historical moment and how they prepare those ideas through a narrative for a specific audience.

Critical Pedagogy looks at ways of raising consciousness with the learning of economic, social and political contradictions, leading towards action against oppression. This directly relates to the study as it seeks to understand how bilingual pedagogy provides more space for students to engage in dialogue on critical issues through the process of creating bilingual narratives. This study asks: how does writing serve as a way for students to speak back, to release and resist? Also, how do the curriculum modifications from the teacher’s bilingual language ideology influence students’ writing identities? In other words, the project seeks to understand the impact of a bilingual pedagogy on students as they become increasingly aware of the practice of “reading like a writer” (Ray, 1999) in their bilingual writing journey. In this
process of releasing and resisting in the bilingual writing workshop, I also seek to understand how students use their writing to speak about their lives (Bomer & Bomer, 2001).

**Translanguaging**

The celebration of bi or pluri languaging is precisely the celebration of the crack in the global process between local histories and global designs, between ‘mundialización,’ and globalization, from languages to social movements, and a critique of the idea that civilization is linked to the ‘purity’ of colonial and national monolanguaging. (Mignolo, 2000, p.250)

Developed by Welsh educator Cen Williams, *translanguaging* refers to the complex and flexible language practices of bilingual speakers. Educators and linguists have defined the term differently. Some definitions include the use of two languages (Baker, 2001; Lewis, Jones, and Baker, 2012) while others move beyond this language separation and consider features of languages that reveal complexities of histories and situatedness (Garcia & Li Wei, 2014). These definitions that move beyond strict language separation take into consideration issues of language and power as exemplified in our opening quote from semiotician and educator, Walter Mignolo. Translanguaging theories connect with the classroom practices of bilinguals in this research project as they negotiate identities through languages in their narratives.

Translanguaging theory helps us understand the *language ecology* of the classroom in this project, analyzing the “diversity within specific sociopolitical settings in which the processes of language use create, reflect, and challenge particular hierarchies and hegemonies, however transient these might be” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p.104). These theories address the languaging processes as well as identity negotiation in their narratives (Cummins & Early, 2011). It is important to keep in mind Catherine Walsh’s words regarding language and power so
as not to solely take the defeatist and deficit perspective that does not acknowledge the agency and subversive moves employed by bilingual writers:

While colonialism has exercised the power of language to suppress cultural (and national) unity, language, as a dynamic and dialectic force, has also stimulated antagonism and opposition. In order to understand the dialectics of linguistic imposition and linguistic resistance, it is important to situate language in history, in experience, and in the relations of power and struggle that determine, legitimize, and/or constrain particular ways of being. (Walsh, 1991, p.4)

Will students feel that their linguistic practices are suppressed? If so, for what purpose? If not, how does the teacher create the writing space for this linguistic resistance? This study seeks to find out from both the students’ and teacher’s perspective, on how language practices are interpreted in this formal school setting, specifically in a personal narrative writing unit.

2.3 Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review section is to define the concept of literacy, the precursors to sociocultural theory and the move towards critical literacies in the present. A clear understanding of bilingual literacies, identity negotiation, and teachers’ subversive pedagogy that makes space for these critical literacies, must be grounded in this historical conceptualization of literacy. My study on bilingual literacy practices considers these understandings of literacy as well as their application in multilingual contexts. This literature review informs my stance on literacy as one that considers the multiple ways we process and produce information as situated in specific contexts. This also informs my analysis of the TCRWP curriculum, modifications done by the bilingual teacher in my research study, and the bilingual sixth grade writers who
shared moments from their lives through oral storytelling, writing, and responding to narrative texts by published authors.

**Sociocultural Theories and Literacy**

Shirley Brice Heath (1982ab) conducted research that highlighted the situatedness of literacy practices, noting how literacy also happens outside of the formal school setting. Heath discusses the “literacy event” as “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes” (Heath, 1982b, p. 350). Her research in the community of Trackton in the Carolinas revealed different kinds of literacy events. In Trackton, children learned stories not through written texts but the “oral models given by adults and they developed in accordance with praise and varying degrees of enthusiasm for particular story styles from the audience” (Heath, 1982b, p.352). Heath observed these literacy events through work life, daily life chores, and church life. Throughout the church and work experiences, residents showed how quickly they moved from written to spoken use of language. It is with this in mind that Heath notes that “Trackton is a literate community” (Heath, 1982b, p.364). This study contributes to my project, providing a foundation for understanding how communities’ literacies have been developed and interpreted in what is called “formal” and “informal” spaces. This helps me with questions around the literacies of bilingual students and whether the school site and curricula make space for them.

**New Literacy Studies & Critical Pedagogy**

Social anthropologist, Brian Street, conducted a seminal study in Iran observing literacy practices in the 1970s. Brian Street is one of the leading scholars in the New Literacy Studies. His research led him to advocate for a definition of literacy as contextual and he opposed those scholars who had a limited definition of literacy that was skills based (Goody & Watt, 1968;
Ong, 1982). Street considered Heath’s approach in defining literacy and he advocates for the term “literacy practices” over literacy events. Street states that “literacy practices refer to this broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (McCarty, 2005, p.22). Street called for the use of “literacies” and for researchers to note that “culture is a verb” (Street, 1993). He cautions researchers not to equate literacy expertise with a culture/country/nationality.

**Critical Literacies & Identities**

In the early 1900s, John Dewey’s *Education and Democracy* led the way for a progressive education movement that influenced the likes of Herbert Kohl and Jonathan Kozol as they questioned democratic schooling and the rights of dispossessed populations in the United States. Philosopher and critical educator Maxine Greene advocated for a critical role of the arts in education. It is in this scene that Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, espouses his views on a liberating, problem-posing, conscious-raising education. According to Freire (1970), knowledge is never neutral. Instead Darder et. al., note that “critical pedagogy supports the notion that all knowledge is created within a historical context and it is this historical context that gives life and meaning to human experience” (Darder et. al, 2003, p.12). Dialogue and conscious raising are the foundation of critical pedagogy where students are empowered to arrive at an awareness of their social reality.

Building on critical pedagogy and its advocacy for dialogic experiences, literacy scholar Kris Gutierrez (2008) discusses how sociocritical literacy takes the students’ lived experiences, historicizes them and provides space for these to be engaged with in the classroom. This approach views the classroom space as “having multiple, layered, and conflicting activity systems with various interconnections” and where “scripts” and “counterscripts” create an
interaction that changes traditional ways in which schooling has been conceptualized (Gutierrez, 2008, p.152). Gutierrez describes the UCLA Migrant Student Institute where students told their stories and in the process of telling their stories, or “testimonios”, they situated their experiences within the larger historical context. The institute implemented strategic text selection with readings that addressed the theme of oppression throughout different parts of history and in different contexts. Hope was integrated to balance the analysis of oppressive practice so that students could “write their way into the university as consciously historicized individuals” (Gutierrez, 2008, p.155).

All of this work equipped students with a toolkit that helped them confront oppression in society. First, students had to understand oppression and its manifestations. Then they were to understand how best to respond to these conditions. Education in this sense is active, participatory, and collaborative. All of this happens in a way that extends the traditional ways in which Lev Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development (ZPD) have been interpreted. Gutierrez begins with the understanding that ZPD is a space where play and the imaginary situation matters to growth, along with the relationship between the individual and the environment. This is a departure from the traditional understanding of ZPD, a space focused on an adult facilitating or providing support, so that it is highly adult-centered. Instead, Gutierrez places the exchange, the dialogue, the revisiting of narratives in a historicized manner, at the center.

My research study on bilingual literacy highlights the language practices of students in the Third Space from Gutierrez’s study. For example, Gutierrez states “I had noted a preponderance of code switching and use of metaphor and, subsequently, documented code switching events and metaphors used instructionally” (Gutierrez, 2008, p. 157). In this part on the grammar of Third Spaces, Gutierrez notes the role that many factors played in helping the
students learn. Besides having high-level texts in Spanish and in English, the students were given questions to support comprehension of these texts, and their writing was connected to social action. This has great implications for teacher preparation. How can educators engage in strategic text selection? How do they learn how to create this kind of space that values historicizing literacy? This is one area that my research expands upon with the analysis of the class sessions and the interview with the classroom teacher.

Findings of research done with students at the secondary level also inform my research study. Ernest Morrell anchored his work with high school youth in the need for critical literacy. He observed that multiculturalists (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1992) “have argued that traditional academic instruction can alienate and exclude members of culturally marginalized groups” (Morrell, 2008, p.3). Another reason why critical literacy matters is because the focus has been on a deficit framework blaming students for what they “lack” as opposed to reforming curriculum and pedagogy. Morrell’s research at three research sites between 1993-2004 in California consisted of two high schools in Los Angeles and a summer seminar. The summer seminar asked participants to question what students in California deserve, the inequalities experienced by the students, the causes of inequalities, and the possible responses informed by research. During this summer seminar, students became researchers and implemented a plan of action for their communities arising from issues that they shared at the start of the seminar.

Jim Cummins’ work around “identity texts” (Cummins et. al. 2015) and his collaboration with Margaret Early and the Multiliteracies Project (2011) is an instrumental endeavor that has provided hundreds of educators with examples of bilingual writing. One student who was a part of the bilingual narrative writing project, Kanta, said “I could actually show the world that I am something instead of just coloring” (Cummins and Early, 2011, p. 52). The text includes samples
of student writing along with narratives on how students interpreted their experiences working on different kinds of texts (performances, narrative writing, videos). The Multiliteracies Project revealed how multicultiliteracies pedagogy honored children’s language and cultural practices by building on them and welcoming them in classroom spaces. Cummins and Early’s 2015 *Big ideas for expanding minds: Teaching English language learners across the curriculum* addresses the changes that need to happen in all content areas to extend bilingual students’ content knowledge, communication, and thought processes. For example, in the chapter on the language demands of science, they state:

> As students engage with these ideas and develop greater understanding of their own lives and the wider world, their sense of accomplishment grows…this kind of project enables them to emerge from the identity cocoon that defines them by what they lack (knowledge of English) into an identity defined by confidence, competence, and accomplishment.
>
> (Cummins & Early, 2015, p. 96)

### 2.4 Bilingualism and Biliteracy

*Deslenguadas. Somos los del español deficiente.*

We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*, the subject of your burla. Because we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified.

Racially, culturally and linguistically *somos huerfanos* – speak an orphan tongue.

(Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 80)

*Continua of Biliteracy*

The following discussion addresses both studies and bilingual classroom strategies that address bilingual narrative writing. Gloria Anzaldúa’s words at the start of this section remind us
of how certain languages are perceived, how speakers of minoritized languages respond, and the different ways bilingual speakers negotiate identities in such contested space.

Nancy Hornberger, in *Continua of Biliteracy* defines biliteracy as “the use of two or more languages in and around writing” (Hornberger, 2005, p. xii). Hornberger’s definition builds upon Heath’s definition, discussed in the first area of research on sociocultural approaches to literacy, because it moves beyond the “literacy event” and into including “biliterate actors, interactions, practices, activities, programs, situations, societies, sites, worlds, etc. (Heath, 1982a, 1982b). To address the limitations of language teaching that views language as moving from one level to another (Fu, 2003, 2009; Celic, 2009), Hornberger establishes the notion of continuum in order to “convey that, although one can identify (and name) points on the continuum, those points are not finite, static, or discrete” (Hornberger, 2005, p. xiv). Hornberger’s continua of biliteracy consists of 12 continua that integrate characteristics around development, contexts, content, and media of biliteracy.

Besides the concern around biliteracy and social context, another concern that arises with research on biliteracy is the claim that there is language interference. Research shows that there is no language interference with second language when the first language is used in the instruction (Edelsky 1982, 1986; Samway, 2006; Zentella, 1997). Moll and Diaz (1985) found that fourth graders’ reading proficiencies in English improved when their reading in Spanish was addressed. Hornberger cautions educators to consider the transference as a holistic one as opposed to a point by point or strategy by strategy. Hornberger recommends educators in dual language immersion programs consider Valdés’ research (1983, 1997) findings which included a need for language planning that is aware of the micro-macro power relations. Valdés found that societal views on the students’ home language that was not English negatively impacted the way
the school programmed the language instruction. Another finding was that given the power structure that placed more value on progress in the English language, instruction on the primary language was seen as a way to counteract these views but it was so regimented that it affected the students’ progress in English. Hornberger’s research (Hornberger, 1991) in Philadelphia school confirms Valdés’ research where the micro-macro issues came into play with regards to student placement. Students were assumed to be either English dominant or Spanish dominant (according to placement test). Hornberger cautions educators to consider the myriad of ways this community uses both languages.

Hornberger’s research in two bilingual schools in Philadelphia confirms the research of others (Zentella, 1981; Valdés, 1983) that calls for the validation of the different varieties of Spanish and English spoken as well as advocating for what Valdés calls, the “lingüistas comprometidos” with a “focus on the written language and not on eradicating the students’ home dialect” (Valdés, 1983). Hornberger found that given migration patterns in Philadelphia’s Puerto Rican community, the traditional two-way bilingual model of assigning students to what the school called “English-dominant” and “Spanish-dominant” classrooms did not work (Hornberger, 2005, p.162). Hornberger discusses a study done in second and third grade two-way Spanish immersion classroom in Los Angeles by Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejada (1999). The authors found that “hybrid language practices allow for reorganizing the activity and incorporating local knowledge” (Hornberger, 2005, p.164). These studies, all done in elementary schools, analyzing the spaces created by schooling practices, some liberating and some restrictive, are key to understanding this research project. Does the research site restrict community language practices with strict language separation or do we see a more fluid language
practice? What factors affect the students’ language practices and the teacher’s approach to curriculum modification and implementation?

**Pedagogy of Biliteracy**

Most of the literature available to teachers for supporting bilingual students, focus on a sequential view of biliteracy where the end goal is English acquisition (Cappellini, 2005; Celic, 2009). This literature provides scaffolds to support academic vocabulary and comprehension of the English language. In *Biliteracy from the Start: Literacy Squared in Action*, Escamilla et. al. (2014) developed an alternative tool for professional development of teachers of bilingual students. The authors’ longitudinal research across grade levels (primary to upper grades) and contexts (Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Texas) has developed key instructional components to support simultaneous biliteracy: paired literacy, oracy, metalanguage, cross-language connections. Literacy squared has also developed strategies to support biliteracy: lotta lara (a text is visited three times a week), the dictado, asi se dice (meaningful text translation), whole group instruction, and direct and explicit teaching. In *Literacy Squared*, Spanish is considered a resource and its use in the classroom alongside English, in both instruction and assessment, provides for more learning opportunities.

Escamilla’s research (2000) addresses a major misconception in the teaching of bilingual students: the use of English language methods to teach literacy in Spanish. Escamilla’s research across different grades found that this was not effective. Students in both first and fifth grade showed the same issues with the v and b confusion in their writing. This was never taught directly nor assessed accurately. Teachers would look at the student work folders in Spanish with a deficit schema as opposed to seeing that the use of two languages was used “as support not confusion” (2000, p.105). To support her idea that English and Spanish literacy needs to be
taught differently, Escamilla notes that the research showed that for Spanish-speaking children, the vowels were learned before consonants in writing.

Carole Edelsky’s (1982) study of writing in a bilingual program also revealed similar findings to Escamilla’s research. Edelsky studied first through third graders in a bilingual program to investigate what was applied when students wrote in both Spanish and English. In contrast to Escamilla’s simultaneous biliteracy, the bilingual program implemented a sequential biliteracy approach with the first language literacy through second grade when the second language was introduced. Students wrote one to three hours a day on different topics and content was emphasized over form. The program allowed “children to take in an event (by reading or watching various media) in one language and write about it in another” (Edelsky, 1982, p.212). In other words, students were participating in translanguaging practices but Edelsky does not use this term. Edelsky found that there needed to be more interaction with a variety of published texts in Spanish, more read alouds in Spanish were needed, and the print environment in Spanish also needed to be developed to balance the English support. Over four hundred writing pieces in Spanish were collected and forty-nine in English. Edelsky prefers using the term “application” as opposed to “transfer” to describe what students do when they are learning a second language. She says: “application is meant to convey an active process of modifying adapting, assessing etc. what is already known to fit the demands of a new situation” (Edelsky, 1982, p.213). Edelsky also found that general strategies and higher level knowledge of text genre and structure were applied across the languages.

Translanguaging

The history of biliteracy has been dominated by sequential biliteracy theories (Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 1988, Thomas and Collier, 2003). These studies advocate for language learners
to focus on literacy in home language and then make the move to a second language. Cummins work with identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011) shows a more flexible approach as students work in heterogeneous partnerships or triads to create multilingual texts. Yet there have been studies that have shown how bilingual students navigate multiple languages simultaneously (Cummins, 1979; Edelsky, 1982; Fishman 1980). The term *translanguaging* was coined in Welsh by Welsh educator Cen Williams and refers to flexible language use with input in one language and output in another language. As reflecting the “discursive norm in bilingual families and communities” (García & Li Wei, 2014, p.23), translanguaging theory provides the space for a discussion on bilingual practices. In the forward to the CUNY-NYSEIB Translanguaging Guide, García states that “translanguaging challenges monolingual assumptions,” “refers to pedagogical practices that use bilingualism as resource,” “goes beyond traditional notions of bilingualism,” and “describes the practices of all students and educators who use bilingualism as a resource” (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, p.1). In moving beyond language separation and instead viewing the use of different linguistic features within a linguistic repertoire, translanguaging supports bilingual text production, discussions, critical thinking and literacy practices that support social justice. Translanguaging is thus resistance to parallel monolingualism.

Patricia Velasco and Ofelia García (2014) looked at five writing samples and found translanguaging to be more than a pedagogical strategy, it served as a way for elementary students to self-regulate their linguistic repertoire and it helped them engage in critical thinking. The students used translanguaging throughout the writing process. Velasco and García state that “translanguaging becomes the framework for conceptualizing the education for bilinguals as a democratic endeavor for social justice” (p.7). When translanguaging is affirmed and used as a pedagogical strategy, bilinguals’ ways of being and languaging are validated. Velasco and García
found that “the translanguaging strategies that these elementary school children enact in writing reveal for them the dynamics of their own language practices as bilingual” (p.21).

Yet translanguaging is not just evident and transformative at the elementary school level. It is also a way to engage students in the “democratic endeavor for social justice (Velasco and García, 2014, p.7) at the high school level. Ofelia García and Camila Leiva uncover how translanguaging theory and practice were evident in Leiva’s ninth and tenth grade English Language Arts classes (García & Leiva, 2014). The students in the 9th grade class viewed music videos in Spanish and in English and the ensuing discussion also flowed between Spanish and English. Translanguaging allowed for higher levels of participation, elaboration of ideas, and the raising of questions that would have otherwise not been shared. This study shows the reality of the complexity of translanguaging in a classroom and how beyond a pedagogical tool, it allows space for students to be empowered, and to resist dominant language practices.

2.5 Summary

This literature review discussed sociocultural approaches to literacy, critical literacies, and biliteracy. My research project puts the voices of students and their teacher at the center of the bilingual debate. Educators, policy makers, families, and community members need to be aware of the ways students are processing their multiple identities. Bilingual students may view language, race, gender, documented status, etc. at the center of their identity and this decision will influence the way they envision their place in this world. We also need to understand how these identities intersect and influence the ways in which bilinguals write their stories. The relevance of this study is centered around the acknowledgment of the humanity of middle school bilingual writers and the bilingual stance of their classroom teacher.
Chapter 3
The Context for the Study

3.1 Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Curriculum

The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) curriculum used by the research project teacher for the five weeks of instruction was the *Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories* Grade 6 Narrative Unit of Study written by Lucy Calkins, Stacey Fell and Alexandra Marron (2014). The purpose of this unit of study is to teach students to write one or more significant moments from their lives using literary devices that develop the major themes of that life moment. As opposed to a memoir that might introduce a life lesson, end with a reflection, or weave in a pattern of reflection from different moments, this personal narrative unit teaches students to reveal what is important through the details of the moment shared. The authors state the following in the overview to the unit of study:

In an effort to help students write stories that carry significance and that are shaped like true stories, not like chronicles, you’ll teach some new strategies for generating personal narrative writing as well as reminding students of the strategies they already know. For example, you may teach your students that published writers sometimes think of a place that matters to them and sketch a quick map of that place, jotting all the powerful Small Moment story ideas that come from that place. Or you might teach your writers that it can help to think about a moment when you learned something important about yourself and other people. (Calkins, Fell, Marron, 2014, p. vii)

The teacher from this research study began this writing unit with assigning an “on demand” writing piece as recommended by the TCRWP curriculum. This is when students are given an assessment with a writing prompt and a recommended checklist at the start of a unit of
study to provide the teacher with baseline data. Although the prompt is provided in English in the curriculum, the classroom teacher provided it in both English and Spanish, giving students options to use any or all of their language practices to share a moment from their lives with her through their writing. At this point, the teacher has not taught any lessons to support the students with this writing and neither does she give feedback during this initial writing as it is an assessment that is to inform her teaching. The recommended writing prompt (in English) for the personal narrative from the TCRWP curriculum (2014, p.viii) is as follows:

I’m really eager to understand what you can do as writers of narratives, of stories, so today will you please write the best personal narrative, the best true story, that you can write? Make this be the story of one time in your life. You might focus on just a scene or two. You’ll have only forty-five minutes to write this true story, so you’ll need to plan, draft, revise, and edit in one sitting. Write in a way that allows you to show off all you know about narrative writing. In your writing, make sure you:

- Write a beginning for your story
- Use transition words to tell what happened in order
- Elaborate to help readers picture your story
- Show what your story is really about
- Write an ending for your story

The unit ended twenty-nine school days later with the classroom teacher having them do another “on demand” writing piece, writing about another moment of their lives using all that they learned and within one classroom period. This assessment was done after the students “published” one writing piece. The “published” piece was one that they had taken through the writing process and across the writing unit from drafting to revising and editing. The lessons
described below follow this writing process, supporting students’ writing from brainstorming moments, writing short writing entries, selecting one to draft quickly in one sitting (called a “flash draft”), and then taking that moment through a revision and editing process. The curriculum takes the students through this process twice. The first time for the first narrative piece takes most of the instructional time and lessons. The second narrative piece that is published goes through a much quicker revision and editing process.

The TCRWP curriculum has seventeen writing workshop lessons organized into three categories or “bends.” Bend one, “Launching Independent Writing Lives and Generating Personal Narratives” walks the students from collecting ideas about moments from their lives to analyzing mentor texts and setting goals using a checklist that describes end of fifth grade and end of sixth grade narrative writing expectations on structure, development and conventions. This checklist is described in chapter six as one of the lessons studied includes students’ use of this tool. Bend two, “Moving through the Writing Process and Toward Our Goals,” has six lessons that take students from trying out leads to their stories, to drafting one story idea, and revision work focused on meaning-making and elaboration. The final category of lessons, bend three, “Writing a Second Personal Narrative with New Independence,” focus on quick revisions and editing moves that culminate in a publishing celebration. This Common Core State Standards-aligned curriculum “expects that sixth-graders come to writing workshop with years’ worth of strategies” (Calkins, Fell, Marron, pg. vi). See Appendix A for four lessons across the first two bends with description of the structure, content, and pedagogy.

According to the authors, the goal of the Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories unit of study, following the aforementioned writing workshop structure, is for students to do the work required by the Common Core State Standards, focusing on narrative craft moves
that include the use of dialogue, revealing actions, setting details, and inner thinking, in addition to developing characters and meaning. The authors of the curriculum note the following in the overview of this unit:

When you launch the unit, your most important job is to get all of your students inspired, feeling that their lives are worth writing about, that they can learn to write with honesty and precision, and that they are part of a community of writers who will hold them throughout that process. (Calkins, Fell, Marron, p. vii)

It is important to keep this in mind, as this research project examines how the classroom teacher considers both the expectations of this grade-level curriculum and this call to inspire, encourage and create a writing community. My hope with this aspect of the study is to first understand what goes into that decision-making when a teacher plans lessons for this particular student population and the implications that the modifications of the curriculum have for other educators using this curriculum with bilingual students.

3.2 Writing Workshop Pedagogy

The research project classroom implements a Writing Workshop pedagogy in the writing classes that is also reflected in the way the lessons in the curriculum are structured. The Writing Workshop philosophy has been developed by key educators in the field such as Nancy Atwell, Lucy Calkins, and Donald Graves. In “Children Can Write Authentically If We Can Help Them,” Graves states:

In the past, I argued that you can’t ask children to write on topics they know nothing about, that children learn to write when they are well informed on a subject and have a passion for the truth of things. Further, I insited that children need to have a sense of ownership about their writing, to feel in control of their subjects, not to write in response
to topics I give them. I said all this to counter decades of teaching that required children
to write about the teacher’s pet topics which had little to do with engaging the child.
(1993, p. 2)

These educators advocate for student choice in topic selection to encourage ownership. One of
the differences comes with the approach to teacher demonstration writing as mentor texts.
Graves states:

The best thing we can do, it seems to me, is to begin with our own literacy. Children need
to hang around a teacher who is asking bigger questions of herself than she is asking of
them. They take their cue for learning from the teacher’s own literate life. (1993, p. 4)

Although mentorship with writing models, shared writing experiences, following the writing
process from collecting ideas to publishing one or more pieces of writing, and teacher and
classmate feedback (in writing “partnerships”) across the writing process, are all foundational to
Writing Workshop, the TCRWP curriculum and implementation through professional
development mostly does not align with Graves’ philosophy of a teacher sharing their own
writing samples. On the contrary, the TCRWP units of study have professionally written samples
for narrative, argument, and information writing, and the curriculum clearly recommends
teachers to use those instead of their own to demonstrate the writing process. It is important to
note this key difference at the start of this section on writing workshop pedagogy as it helps with
the upcoming analysis of the research study teacher that was more of an example of what Graves
calls for in the writing classroom, “children sense that the teacher who writes provides a much
wider safety net to support the risk taking that goes with exploration. ‘My teacher has been
there,’ a child senses” (Graves, 1993, p. 5).
This instructional approach of writing workshop considers an “I do, we do, you do” method to writing instruction, where the teacher teaches a strategy with a quick application by students in partnerships, groups or on their own during a whole-class brief lesson (called the mini-lesson), followed by the independent writing time where students continue working on writing pieces following the writing process (collecting ideas, selecting an idea to draft, revising, editing, publishing) and the teacher meets with students in small groups or for individual writing conferences where immediate feedback on a piece is shared. Writing Workshop pedagogy groups writing lessons across types of writing (i.e. narrative, informational, argumentative) and within these types, considers issues of craft and conventions (Calkins, 1986). Nancy Atwell notes that minilessons can cover three kinds of content: Writing Workshop procedures, author’s craft and conventions (1998). Each of the components of the writing workshop are described below.

Each workshop begins with a minilesson on a writing strategy that is taught using one of the following methods: demonstration, guided practice, guided inquiry, or explaining an example. In the demonstration method, the teacher shows how one strategy can be done, usually trying this out in front of the students with her own writing. The guided practice method is used when the strategy involves multiple steps and the teacher wants to have the students try each of these out with her after she shows each step. The guided inquiry method begins with a question and the minilesson time is spent on the class, along with the teacher, interactively trying to answer the question so that by the end of the minilesson there exists a co-created chart with the response. The explain an example pedagogical practice involves the teacher showing a piece of writing (teacher-written, published piece used in reading workshop to make the connection, student-written sample, professionally-written sample from the curriculum) and identifying the work that the author did so that students can later try it in their writing.
Each mini-lesson follows a predictable structure: *connection, teach, active engagement*, and *link*. With the *connection*, the teacher sets up the work by anchoring it in the unit, in real-world situations, or with a personal anecdote that has a metaphorical connection to the strategy of the minilesson. This can be done with the teacher speaking to the students, students having conversations to share ideas about a prompt or question given, or using digital media to engage the class with the topic. The second and third step in each minilesson— the teach and the active engagement — may be separate or done interactively. If the minilesson is taught using the demonstration or the explain an example method, then the teacher does the work first, followed by the students practicing quickly with a partner before they leave the meeting area or before the whole-class minilesson ends and they begin their independent writing work.

The guided practice and guided inquiry teaching methods include students actively participating in the process. This means that for these two methods that are guided, the *teach* and the *active engagement* are interactive (“I do, we do, I do, we do, I do, we do”). The student application or transfer of a strategy that happens in the *active engagement* part of the minilesson often occurs in writing partnerships. These writing partnerships are set up by the classroom teacher with information from the students’ baseline assessment or “on demand” writing, described in detail in the following section on the TCRWP curriculum. Writing partners share their writing progress, give one another feedback using strategies and tools taught in the classroom, and read their work to one another. All of these interactions can be planned for the *active engagement* during the minilesson, the *mid-workshop interruption* half-way through the independent work time, *small group lessons* during the independent writing when the teacher pulls a group to teach a strategy, or the *share* time at the end of the writing workshop.
The mini-lesson is then wrapped up with a “link” which is the way the teacher connects the work from the mini-lesson to the larger work of the unit, reminding students of what they know about writing. Some teachers do this by pointing to charts with strategies that they have reviewed, while others prefer having students identify these with their writing partner and jotting down their goal(s) for the independent writing time that follows the mini-lesson. You can see the difference between the different teaching methods for mini-lesson and how the steps or components in each are either separate or more interactive in the next two sections of this chapter where I describe the curriculum and modifications with charts to show the differences.

During the independent writing time, the teacher meets with students either through personal writing conferences or in small groups to have them try out a writing strategy. Half-way through this independent work time, the teacher interrupts the class with a reminder or calling their attention to something else they can try in their writing. This interruption is based on data that the teacher has gathered prior to the lesson, during the conferences or small group work.

The workshop ends with time for the teacher and/or the students to share. The share time can consist of the teacher highlighting student work from the workshop or giving a preview of a lesson that is coming up soon, students working in partnerships or small groups to share, or students sharing out their work with the whole class.

### 3.3 Modifications to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Curriculum

The classroom teacher made several modifications to the writing workshop pedagogy and the use of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project *Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories* Grade 6 Narrative Unit of Study described above. Although the findings related to the modifications are described in detail in chapter six, this brief introduction to the modifications provides a context for the way the writing workshop lessons studied in this
research project compared to the curriculum. The four modifications to the curriculum seen across the lessons were:

1. using the students’ full language and cultural repertoires,
2. integrating culturally relevant mentor texts for author’s craft analysis,
3. using more guided lessons for teaching as opposed to demonstration lessons to maximize partner and group experiences instead of independent writing experiences
4. sharing teacher demonstration writing.

As noted in the previous section, the teacher also decided to focus on bends one and two from the curriculum, with students working to publish one personal narrative piece as opposed to two pieces as described in the TCRWP curriculum with the second piece supported with lessons throughout bend three.

The classroom teacher decided to leverage the students’ cultural practices and histories. They would discuss culturally relevant topics that would arise from the readings, their experiences, and their narrative writing. In addition, the classroom teacher created space for her own flexible language practices as well as the students’ translanguaging. Throughout the lessons, she used Spanish and English in the lessons and welcomed students’ participation using their full language repertoire. The teacher’s integration of several mentor texts allowed students to analyze the craft of several mentor authors in both English and in Spanish, something that is not done in their reading workshop class that is taught only in English. This modification is crucial to understand, as Jennifer O’Day’s longitudinal research across nine elementary schools shows how a balanced literacy approach impacts English and non-English learners differently (2009).

The guided practice and guided inquiry methods of teaching were more interactive than the demonstration lessons in the curriculum, therefore allowing for repeated practice of strategies
with teacher facilitation. This was important considering the student population that did not have
the experience with writing workshop pedagogy or the TCRWP curriculum that is assumed by
the curriculum if students have done this work since kindergarten.

Another important modification was minimized independent writing time, as opposed to
the TCRWP curriculum which maximizes it. Lucinda Soltero-González et.al. (2016) have shown
how teacher’s lessons need to maximize time for interactions (whole class, small group, and in
writing partnerships where students were paired with another writer in class). Soltero-González
et al., state the following regarding the paired literacy, or literacy in Spanish and in English at the
third grade level:

The majority of time spent within each language environment is whole group, as
instruction is planned to help students achieve grade level standards. Collaborative and
small group instruction is intended to reinforce skills and strategies taught via whole
group instruction. (2016, p. 86)

Finally, the teacher’s decision to share her own writing samples in addition to published
authors’ works helped create an environment of trust, risk-taking, focus on the writing process
and not product, and comfort with feedback. Students listened and watched the teacher try out
the strategies from mentor texts and were a part of her drafting, revising, and editing process. See
Appendix B for charts detailing each of the five lessons the teacher taught — four were modified
from the TCRWP curriculum, the fifth created to address students’ writing and not in the
curriculum — along with the linguistic and cultural practices integrated, modified teaching
methods, culturally relevant mentor texts, and teacher demonstration writing shared.
3.4 School Site

The Sonia Sotomayor Middle School\(^2\) in Manhattan, New York, has 200 students. Although several students come from a nearby school’s Kindergarten - fifth grade dual language bilingual program, this middle school does not have a dual language bilingual education program (DLBE) or a transitional bilingual education (TBE) program. According to their 2015-2016 School Quality Review Report, 20% of the students are labeled as English Language Learners, with 97% of the entire student population identified as Hispanic. Considering parent/guardian program selection, the school places sixth grade newcomers (students with less than three years in the country) and other sixth graders who score at the entering, emerging, transitioning, and expanding levels in the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) in the Freestanding English as a New Language (ENL) writing class, where they receive English as a Second Language (ESL) support from a certified ESL/Bilingual teacher. The school has several partnerships with community-based organizations including arts and technology partners that engage with the students on a weekly basis.

The school participated in the City University of New York - New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals (CUNY-NYSIEB) receiving support at the school site to build a multilingual ecology at the school and to use bilingualism as a resource. The school was also on the list of Renewal Schools, identified by low standardized test scores. As a part of the renewal schools program, Sonia Sotomayor middle school has extended learning time (an hour added to the end of the school day), receives additional materials, and has visits from Renewal personnel to support administration and school staff. A new principal also joined the school for the 2015-2016 academic year and worked heavily with the Renewal personnel. The designation as a Renewal School and the emphasis on assessments directly impacted the professional

\(^2\) The school name is a pseudonym.
development activities, the teachers’ instructional planning, as well as the students’ time for reading and writing.

The school also participated with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). As a result, teachers received professional development from literacy consultants in their classrooms and through workshops facilitated at Teachers College, Columbia University. At the time of the study, the school had been a “Project School” for over four years. This meant that literacy consultants would meet with both literacy and content area teachers to study student work, plan curriculum, and implement it, across the school year. As a Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Literacy Consultant, I was assigned to this school from 2012 through the 2015-2016 academic year of the study. For the 2015-2016 academic year in which the study took place, I and another colleague “shared” the school, each with ten days of consultant visits to support their literacy work. For the duration of the study, my list of in-classroom visits and planning sessions with teachers did not include the research-site classroom teacher in order to protect the integrity of the study.

It was there when in 2012 I met the teacher at the start of our teacher planning journey. We shared common immigration stories and struggles and questions about how best to teach her bilingual sixth grade class that was made up of some students who had recently arrived in the country that summer before the start of the sixth grade and others who had been in the New York City public school system since Kindergarten. Her students reminded me of my own from my previous sixth and seventh grade teaching years. Her passion for an equitable education also resonated with my own concerns for this student population. I was also curious as to how this teacher would process the professional development sessions using the TCRWP curriculum as
we looked at it along with her student data (writing pieces, reading notebooks, student conversations, and assessments).

From 2012 through spring of 2015, the teacher in whose classroom I conducted the study was one of two sixth grade English Language Arts teachers. In the fall of 2015, a teacher returned from maternity leave and it was decided that the returning teacher would focus on reading workshop, whereas the teacher with whom I conducted the study would focus on the writing workshop. This study was conducted in her English as a New Language (ENL formerly known as English as a Second Language) class.

According to the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), their freestanding ENL program was to deliver all the content in English and the students’ native language was only to be used as a resource, with the beginning of the year writing allowed in Spanish but by the end of the year all of their writing should be in English. It is imperative to consider how the ENL class is described in official school plans and documents to later compare with how the teaching is conducted and the learning that takes place in this classroom.

3.5 Students and their Classroom

The students in the sixth grade classroom of this study have been placed in the ENL classroom based on the results from standardized exams, recency of their arrival, and parent/guardian selection of program. According to the Language Allocation Policy (LAP) in the school’s CEP, new students’ parent/guardians fill out the Home Language Identification Survey (HLIS) and are interviewed. The ENL school staff and principal determine whether the student should take the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL). If students do not pass the NYSITELL then the student takes the Spanish LAB. The results from these exams determine whether the student is identified as English Language Learners (ELL).
The next step is for parent/guardians to be informed of their program choices. The school has ongoing Parent Orientation Meetings, facilitated by the ENL coordinator. The parents watch the Parent Choice Video from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) that outlines the different bilingual programs available in the NYC DOE. The parent/guardians are then sent Program Selection letters that present the different options. Parent/guardians are also informed of the steps to take if the program they select is not offered at the school. At the time of the study, the school only offered ENL and not dual language bilingual education program or transitional bilingual education program.

According to the NYSITELL results, from the twenty students in this sixth grade ENL class, about half were newcomers with seven labeled as “entering” and two as “emerging” (that is the two lowest categories) and the other eleven students were labeled as “expanding,”. Figure 3.1 below, found in the school’s CEP, shows the different categories of students, as well as the difference between the expected home language usage and support across different programs.

![Home Language Usage and Supports](chart.png)

**Figure 3.1**

**Home Language Usage and Supports from School’s Comprehensive Educational Plan**

Now imagine the following classroom layout. Two large wooden doors with a rectangular small window lead the way to a room that fits five round tables. There is one table at each corner and one in the middle in front an interactive smartboard. Six students sit at table one
on the front left corner, six at the table on the front right corner, four in the back left corner, and four at the back right corner. The students are in homogeneous groups with classmates at or near their proficiency level in English as determined by the NYSITELL. No one sits in the middle table as it holds the materials for the lesson and it is where the teacher might hold writing conferences. There are shelves with books on every wall in the room telling you that this used to be the school library. There is no librarian now. Teachers and staff use this space some mornings for faculty meetings before the students begin their day, and an assistant principal has her office in a separate room that connects to this space in the back. The classroom teacher uses this space for this sixth grade ENL writing class in the morning and an eighth grade class in the afternoon. As a shared space, a Social Studies teacher arrives after her on some days to teach the same group of students. There is some space for charts on the right side of the room on shelves, with examples of author’s craft moves and procedures in writing workshops. The windows on the front and left side of the room give students a peek at life outside the school building in their urban neighborhood.

The personal narrative curriculum was planned and implemented in the sixth grade classroom made up of the emergent bilinguals who had the lowest performance on the NYSITELL. Although observations were conducted with the entire class of students, four focus students were selected—Oscary, Ana, Genesis and Emiliano. Below I describe the four focal students and also share the nature of the writing that I examine later, as well as some observations that emerged from the interviews.

Oscary arrived in the United States two years ago with her sister, Ana (also a part of the study), her stepmother, and aunt. According to the NYSITELL, she is an “entering ELL” (beginning). Their father was already in New York City and he and the stepmother’s brother-in-

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3 All of the names of participants (students and teacher) are pseudonyms.
law picked them up from the airport the day they arrived. The “on demand” narrative piece written at the beginning of the unit in this class was not focused on a specific moment but discussed the entire day Oscary spent visiting her aunt. Her published narrative piece was about Oscary’s arrival at the airport when she arrived from the Dominican Republic. The end of unit “on demand” was about the day she learned how to read with her mother in the Dominican Republic. All of Oscary’s pieces were written in Spanish.

Oscary also spoke entirely in Spanish in the interview with the one exception of using the word “partner” when discussing the rubric as a helpful tool. She shared with me how in fifth grade, prior to starting at Sonia Sotomayor Middle School, her narrative piece was about the bullying she experienced because she did not know English like the other fifth graders. Although Oscary was hesitant when reading her writing pieces because she was highly critical of herself, she spoke about knowing much more now than when she began. She discussed how she continues to speak in Spanish and some English with her family. Oscary’s mother is taking English classes in the Dominican Republic and her father wants to become a citizen. Oscary discusses these as opportunities for her to help both parents with their English.

Ana, Oscary’s sister, for the “on demand” piece at the start of the unit, wrote about her purchase of a “For Girls Only” journal. Her published personal narrative piece was on the moment she left her mother in the Dominican Republic to come to the United States. Ana describes this moment as the “worst day of my life because I was separated from my mother” (Interview [translation], Ana, June 3, 2016). Ana’s “on demand” personal narrative from the end of the unit was about the moment a family friend taught her how to use the computer. Ana also wrote in Spanish and she is an “entering ELL” (beginning) according to the NYSITELL.

In the interview, Ana, like Oscary spoke in Spanish. She describes several characteristics
from her writing class that helped her, from being able to use both English and Spanish, as well as having a writing partner’s feedback through google documents. For Ana, it is important that she feel a part of the classroom, as opposed to the moments she had in another school when she first arrived from the Dominican Republic and was placed on computers for most of the day on English language programs. Ana wrote her narratives in Spanish, and spoke in Spanish in the interview. Ana considers it important to have pride for cultural practices from the Dominican Republic as well as learning English. This matters to her because she would like to use these skills to help others.

*Genesis*, like Oscary and Ana, is from the Dominican Republic and has been in the United States for two years. Unlike Oscary and Ana, Genesis wrote her first personal narrative draft in Spanish and then translated further drafts into English. Genesis wrote about the last time she saw her best friend in the Dominican Republic before her friend moved to another neighborhood, as both her on demand writing piece at the start of the unit and the one she developed as her published piece.

Genesis spoke in Spanish during the interview and advocated for Spanish use at home and English at school. Yet she was concerned with the ease with which her classmates forget their Spanish because they focus so much on English. For Genesis, her favorite part of the entire writing unit was the moment they quickly drafted their stories, called the “flash draft.” Genesis describes it the following way: “Puedes poner las palabras que tú desees en español o en inglés porque entonces así tú puedes cómo expresarte mejor” [“You can put the words you desire in Spanish or in English because then you can, like, express yourself better”] (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016). Genesis’ writing, her participation in class sessions, and her words shared in the interview, all express a complex relationship with her language practices and identity that
continues to be shaped by her Dominican culture and transition to living in New York City. According to the NYSITELL, she is an “emerging ELL” (low intermediate).

**Emiliano** was born in the United States and his parents are from Mexico. “I was born here but my parents were from Mexico, and they came here and I was born. That's why I'm half and half” is the way Emiliano describes himself (Interview, Emiliano, June 3, 2016). He has been going to school in the United States all of his life. He was left back in elementary school because of the results of standardized exams. In the NYSITELL he was classified as an “emerging ELL” (low intermediate).

All of Emiliano’s writing is in English and in the interview he spoke in English. He speaks Spanish with his family at home and prefers to speak English in school. Emiliano points to the role of his writing partnership and how that helps him with his writing and language practices. In the interview, Emiliano shared that he has a lot of imagination, and that he likes fantasy, creepy, and romantic stories. In contrast to the “on demand writing” from the start of the unit from Oscary, Ana, and Genesis, Emiliano’s was a realistic fiction narrative and not a personal narrative. This aligns with Emiliano’s love of fictional narrative genres. His published personal narrative piece was about his first day at the Sonia Sotomayor School. One of his “flash drafts” that he wrote to consider for publication was about a day he got a stomachache at school and had to go home. His “on demand” piece from the end of the narrative unit was about a moment he spent time with his mom when he arrived late to a “bicycle challenge” and he realized the importance of time with his mom.
3.6 Classroom Teacher

The classroom teacher, Alejandra Medina, was born in Peru and completed all of her K-12 schooling there at a bilingual Spanish/English school. She came to the United States as a college student, going to Hostos Community College and Hunter College for her Bachelors degree and New York University for her Masters degree. During the 2015-2016 academic year that the project was taking place, Alejandra was completing her Masters in Educational Leadership at Fordham University. Alejandra mentions specific moments in the interview at these institutions that have shaped her pedagogy and identity as a bilingual educator. Although Alejandra’s transition to the United States was as a young adult, her experience with language and cultural practices resonates with those of the children in her classroom. “I had to leave my country and my culture in a way,” Alejandra says, further problematizing what has changed and what she holds on to in her personal and professional life (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016).

Alejandra encourages on-going reflection on her own bilingual identity and that of her students. She acknowledges how her own language ideologies have shifted as she has progressed in her formal education journey, and participated with CUNY-NYSIEB and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Alejandra is an advocate of flexible language use. As a parent of two young children in the New York City public school system and a partner to a monolingual English speaker, Alejandra is adamant about speaking in Spanish to her children at home because she wants them to “own” this language (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016). Alejandra’s personal and professional journeys influence her approach to teaching the personal narrative writing unit to a class of bilingual Spanish/English Latinx sixth graders in an ENL program.
Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this qualitative ethnographic research project, I studied the experience of bilingual sixth graders and their teacher during a modified personal narrative writing unit of instruction in their English as a New Language (ENL) writing class at Sonia Sotomayor Middle School in Manhattan, New York. The writing teacher taught the personal narrative writing unit across five weeks during the 2015-2016 school year. She used the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Unit of Study for Sixth Grade titled *Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories*, her knowledge of the students, and her support from diverse professional development to plan the unit and to modify it.

In the following data collection section, I describe the five moments or class sessions that I observed across the writing unit. Each class moment or session lasted for about forty-five minutes and included teacher instruction along with student practice using the writing workshop model. Students worked on one personal narrative piece across the unit, but wrote one in the beginning in one sitting with no formal instruction (“on demand” writing), giving the teacher data on how students told stories about their lives, and another “on demand” piece in one sitting at the end of the unit. These writing pieces were also considered part of my data collection.

Besides the class sessions and writing pieces, I conducted semi-structured interviews with four students and the classroom teacher after the students completed the narrative writing unit and other kinds of writing. The interview with the teacher provided data on her background, the factors that influenced her curriculum planning and modifications, and her understanding of the cultural and linguistic practices from her experience as well as those of the students in her
classroom. The interviews allowed the students to explain their writing pieces, language use, and experiences in and out of the school.

### 4.2 Data Collection

The project consisted of studying the bilingual teacher’s pedagogical approach to a personal narrative unit and emergent bilingual students’ storytelling through conversations and writing. For these reasons, it was important to collect data through a variety of methods. The following table summarizes the data collection and methods of analysis as they relate to each research question.

**Table 1. Research Design Matrix**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Types of Data &amp; Modes of Collection</th>
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| What are the language ideologies that enable a teacher to enact modifications to an existing personal writing curricular unit so as to take into account the complex linguistic and cultural practices of emergent bilingual middle-schoolers? What are the modifications implemented to the curriculum and the pedagogy? | • Participant observation in the classroom across the 5-week personal narrative writing unit  
• Teacher interview                                                                   |
| How does that bilingual pedagogy help bilingual sixth graders construct written personal narratives that build on their cultural and linguistic resources, and what are its effects? | • Participant observation in the classroom across the 5-week personal narrative writing unit  
• Student interviews                                                                  
• Personal narrative writing                                                              
• Teacher interview                                                                    |

**Data Analysis**

1. Thematic analysis of interviews, writing pieces, and observation field notes from class sessions.
2. Triangulation of teacher interview, interviews of students, personal narrative writing pieces, and observation field notes.
Field Notes through Participant Observation of Class Sessions

The personal narrative writing unit that was taught in the 2015-2016 academic school year had a duration of five weeks. Across those five weeks I conducted participant observation of the class sessions. Each class session consisted of the teacher setting up the class to try out one or more writing strategy. All of the sessions were anchored in at least one text. Four of the five sessions I analyze in chapter six used published authors’ texts (excerpts from books or entire illustrated books). One of them used the students’ pieces as the texts of analysis. The teacher's own writing was also used as a demonstration piece in four of the five sessions. What follows is a list identifying the work of each class session, first by identifying the skill the writers worked on, and second, noting the strategy the teacher taught in order for them to achieve that goal. In addition, I have added a brief summary of each of the lessons.

1. Class Session 1: Mentor text analysis by looking at a text through the lens of dialogue.

The teacher started the lesson by asking, “How does the writer use dialogue to reveal the characters?” and guided students throughout the lesson in answering this question while stopping her reading out loud of the chapter “Inside Out” from Francisco Jimenez’s memoir The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child / Cajas de carton: Relatos de la vida peregrina de un niño campesino. The teacher alternated her reading of the text in Spanish and in English after reading different excerpts. For the third part of the class session, students participated in reading the text out loud. Although the teacher had stopping points throughout the reading planned to help the students notice the author’s use of dialogue (meeting the objective of the lesson), the teacher also paused to discuss (with her examples and giving space for students to share their own reactions) moments from the text that resonated with moments from the students’ lives.
2. **Class Session 2:** Rehearsing leads by reading three mentor texts’ leads and trying those in our writing. For this lesson, the teacher began with the question “How do writers write memorable leads?” and read the leads, or starting scenes, from three texts: Ellen Levine’s *I Hate English*, Jacqueline Woodson’s *Each Kindness*, and Francisco Jimenez’s “Inside Out” from *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*. Each lead was read in Spanish and in English. Students discussed each lead, watched the teacher try these with her own writing, and compared them before they were told to pick their favorite type of lead to try in their writing. In addition to observing how the teacher met the objective of the lesson through this inquiry, it is important to note that the texts selected by the teacher all dealt with issues that students could relate to in their lives (learning another language, being new in a school, poverty, making friends, relationships, moving).

3. **Class Session 3:** Internal and external storytelling using both a published mentor text (*The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson) and students’ drafts. Following the TCRWP curriculum, the teacher taught students how to analyze the internal thinking and the actions in a text. She started by reading the text in English and in Spanish (her own translation of it). She paused in the beginning to show students how she noted the actions on the graphic organizer and then had students practice for the internal thinking. The reading was purposefully planned to pause for three other kinds of work: to notice how the author uses repetition to develop a symbol, to note translations with cognates, and for students to work in partnerships to complete the internal and external storytelling graphic organizer for that text. They ended the class with a whole class share on what the partnerships believed was a theme developed in the text.
4. **Class Session 4: Editing transition phrases using a mentor text, The Color of My Words, to modify a second draft.** The students were reading *The Color of My Words* in their reading class with another teacher. The writing teacher took a chapter the students had just finished reading recently, reminded them of their figurative language revision work the previous week, and guided them through an analysis of how the author uses transition phrases in that particular chapter. After two pages of analysis, they co-created a classroom chart listing the different kinds of transition phrases. They then took these examples and applied them to their writing. For the fifteen minutes that the class worked on their second drafts, the teacher met with a group of six students to help them sequence and elaborate their scenes. These were all students that needed more practice with both the writing (personal narrative) and the workshop model. They all had been in the United States for less than two years.

5. **Class Session 5: Revising with Partners Using a Checklist.** Prior to this session, the class learned how to use a sixth grade-level checklist in Spanish and in English from the TCRWP curriculum with a professionally-written sixth grade-level text from the same curriculum. The teacher had translated the mentor piece of writing to Spanish and the class used the checklist with that text, understanding what each category (structure, development, conventions) meant. For this lesson, the teacher made the connection to that work, reminded the class of the importance of having a list of specific goals, and set up the partnerships for the revision work. Students then took turns in partnerships to read their text out loud to one another and give feedback using the checklist. After the feedback was given, students selected one or two of the goals discussed in their partnership from the checklist and revised their writing. During this partnership revision
work (in conversation and in writing), the teacher walked around to check-in with the writing partners, listening to the feedback given and supporting their use of the checklist.

Although these five sessions were the only interactions analyzed in my role as researcher for this study, I had many other interactions with the students throughout their school life through my role as the TCRWP literacy consultant. I sat in their reading class several times to listen to them read *El color de mis palabras / The Color of My Words* by Lynn Joseph, their narrative mentor text. In their partner reading sessions I would listen to how they would read in both English and Spanish and have conversations about the text. There was one reading workshop that I facilitated to demonstrate teaching students how to use a reading progression tool to develop their interpretations. This tool had several columns listing the characteristics of reading moves across character interpretation and theme analysis at different grade levels. The reading workshop teacher observed and we discussed the reading progression tool, the students’ progress with it, the challenges, and heard from students who gave us their feedback at the end of the lesson. These interactions allowed me to further build rapport with the students and continue getting to know them as both readers and writers. The reading workshop teacher was a monolingual English speaker and although the class was taught in English, the texts were available in both English and Spanish. I was able to notice students’ participation and confidence levels across the classes, getting to know their preference and progress as bilingual students.

*Interviews*

“We can learn also, through interviewing, about people’s interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the
experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition.”

(Weiss, p.1)

The semi-structured interviews with the focal students were conducted at the end of the 2015-2016 school year, after the participants had completed not only their personal narrative pieces but several other kinds of writing pieces following the TCRWP curriculum (research-based informational writing, argument writing, and fantasy narratives). Each focal student was interviewed once during a classroom period (about thirty minutes).

Through semi-structured interviews I first asked students to read their published personal narrative writing before they went on to tell me about their background, their experience with schooling and the writing unit, as well as any recommendations they might have for other students (see Appendix D). These interviews provided me the context needed to understand the writing pieces and the complicated ways the participants experience language. At the start of the interview I asked the student to reread the published narrative piece and then tell me about the moment, what it meant to them, why they wrote about it, and how it compares to other writing that they did. Starting the interviews this way allowed the conversation to be anchored in both the student writing craft and their experiences. As the students described their personal narrative writing craft and the meaning the moment had as a turning point in their lives, I moved to asking them the questions in the interview protocol about their background including linguistic and cultural practices.

The teacher interview (about fifty minutes) was conducted when the teacher was also planning another narrative unit, had knowledge of how the students’ writing was impacted by the instruction, and had access to all of their writing in their end of unit portfolio. This interview provided me with information on the teacher’s language ideologies and curriculum
modifications. Analyzing the interviews alongside the other data in this study allowed me to further understand the thinking behind the teacher’s modifications to the curriculum to encourage the bilingual students’ personal narratives, as well as the complex tensions that the students expressed about their identities and bilingual practices.

**Personal Narrative Writing Pieces**

Each student wrote two “on demand” pieces, one at the beginning of the unit prior to instruction and the second one at the end of the unit after they had worked for weeks on publishing a piece. Students “published” one personal narrative piece in the personal narrative writing unit of study. This piece began as an idea of a moment jotted quickly in students’ writing notebooks, then drafted quickly through a “flash draft” and then taken through the revision and editing process with writing partner and teacher feedback. In addition to this writing, students collected their ideas in written form in their writing notebooks, in written form for draft one on loose leaf, and in typed form for revised drafts and published pieces using google documents. Writing partners gave each other feedback on their drafts using comments in the google documents. See Appendix F for the TCRWP Personal Narrative Writing Checklist in English and Appendix G for the Spanish translation of the same checklist. The use of checklists with the personal narrative pieces is discussed in chapter six with class session five when writing partners revised their narratives using these checklists.

4.3 **Data Analysis**

A cultural analysis of the discourse of the interviews, and the writing pieces was conducted. This latter method of analysis, begins with the assumption that people in a given group share, to a greater or lesser extent, understandings of the world that have been learned and internalized in the
course of their shared experience, and that individuals rely heavily on these shared understandings to comprehend and organize experience, including their own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and actions, and the actions of other people. (Quinn, 238)

Given that the narrative unit of study was a personal one, it was imperative to have a method of analysis that considered the cultural aspect. Quinn also notes that “language, power, ideology, gender, class, interpersonal interaction, and other dimensions of social life cannot be disentangled from culture or language, and thus none of these is entirely absent from any cultural analysis of discourse” (Quinn, 241). This study therefore considers both the words shared by participants through writing, interviews, and classroom sessions, as well as the socio-cultural aspects of identity formation that shape this discourse and is shaped by it.

Each interview was transcribed and coded with “organizational,” “substantive,” and “theoretical” categories (Maxwell, 2013). Organizational categories allowed me to consider general topics such as “writing process,” “curriculum,” “background,” “Language Use,” amongst others. The substantive categories allow me to unpack these, noting what the participants said about these specific topics. For example, “Language Flexibility as Release” was one substantive category that explained more about the “Language Use” organizational category. The theoretical categories were more abstract and allowed me to connect to the theories. For example, the categories “Translanguaging,” "Language and Power" and “Social Capital” addressed theoretical connections in the data.

The “published” piece in the unit was analyzed following the same thematic analysis as the interviews. This analysis allowed me to consider the themes mentioned in the interviews and in the writing pieces, along with those that came up during my ethnographic study of the classroom sessions. This approach allowed me to understand the content of the stories, how they
were told (structure, elaboration, and language repertoire use), and the influence of the classroom instruction.

The student writing pieces were also analyzed through a grounded theory approach that considered themes that emerged. By following this type of analysis I theorized student narratives as both a research strategy and data (Weiss, 59). In Jen Weiss’ research on student poetry and how it revealed experiences with school surveillance, we see how writing was “an essential source of data collection and theorizing” (Weiss, 66). Just like the student poetry in Weiss’ research revealed a “collective experience,” by studying the writing of these students I will also be able to learn from their collective experiences of their bilingual journeys.

4.4 Reliability & Validity

To address the validity threats of researcher bias and reactivity, I implemented a long-term involvement and a triangulation in my research design. Maxwell notes that the “sustained presence of the researcher in the setting studied, can help rule out spurious associations and premature theories” (Maxwell, 2013, p.126). Instead of interviewing the students at the start of the personal narrative unit or during the duration of the unit (within the five weeks of the unit), it helped for students to see me as a part of the school life (as described above) over a longer period of time and have them share their stories with me later on in their 2015-2016 academic year.

In order to address the reliability of my study, I wrote researcher memos after listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and class sessions. When I returned a second time to listen to these audio recordings for transcription, I reread my memos and made sure these matched. Upon the third time returning to the recordings of the class sessions, I created charts that detailed each part of the lesson with the duration for each component and the role that the teacher and the
students played across the lesson. These charts can be found in Appendix A for the lessons from the TCRWP curriculum and Appendix B for the lessons the way they were implemented by the research study teacher.

4.5 Limitations

There were several limitations with this study. First, the sample size was small. Although I observed the class of about twenty students, only four were interviewed and their personal narrative pieces analyzed. A second limitation is the duration of the study. I conducted a study on one narrative writing unit that was taught across five weeks in the school year and focused my observations on five sessions that highlighted different aspects of this unit. To get more information on the kinds of stories students tell, their language use through them, and the teacher’s planning and implementation of curriculum, more than one narrative unit could have been studied. In other words, adding a second or third narrative unit (historical fiction writing, fantasy writing, poetry) for analysis would have provided more data. Another option would have been to analyze the topics addressed across narrative, informational, and argument writing.

An additional limitation was that of the trust between the participants and myself (Villenas, 2010). Not only did the short length of the writing unit provide limited amount of data, but the short duration made it difficult for me to establish trust with students. However, I had been a part of the school community for three years, and so I was familiar with some of their programs, and I knew key people in the building. At the same time, I was not one of the school staff. And yet, since I was coming from a university setting this could have been intimidating or foreign to some. I hoped that by seeing me in different contexts, including the classrooms of their content-area teachers and reading teacher, across the school year, then it was easier for students to trust me when interviews were conducted later in the study.
4.6 Generalizability

Although this study had a small sample size (a classroom of about twenty students and four focal students with one classroom teacher), the writing and language practices process, along with the curriculum planning and implementation processes, are generalizable. Maxwell discusses the generalizability of qualitative studies noting that it:

is usually based not on explicit sampling of some defined population to which the results can be extended, but on the development of a theory of the processes operating in the case studied, ones that may well operate in other cases, but that may produce different outcomes in different circumstances. (Maxwell, 2013, p.138)

In this study, there were several processes that could have been considered for application in other settings. From the writing process that includes lessons of collecting ideas to drafting, revising, and editing, to the processes described by students in translating texts for academic and social use, there are several instances of what can be called transferability (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). In this case, the findings from this study related to the ways a teacher modifies curriculum with her knowledge of standards and student resources, the stories children tell, the way they tell them using their cultural and linguistic practices, and the politics of bilingual practices, can be considered in different situations other than the study.

4.7 Overview of the dissertation

In chapter two of this dissertation I describe the four theories that form the theoretical framework for this study: cultural capital theory, critical race theory & Latina/o Critical Race theory, critical pedagogy, and translanguaging theory. Chapter three provides the context of the study with information on writing workshop pedagogy, the TCRWP curriculum, modifications, school site, students, and the classroom teacher. Chapters five through eight address the findings
from the study. Chapter five discusses the findings around the classroom teacher’s language ideologies and the factors that helped her shape those ideologies and produce the curricular modifications that are described in chapter six. Chapter six then provides an analysis of five classroom sessions with the modifications implemented by the classroom teacher and their impact. Chapter seven provides an analysis of the focal students’ storytelling and language practices. In chapter eight I consider the social and political dimensions of the focal students’ bilingual practices. Chapter nine outlines my recommendations for policy, professional development, pedagogy, and partnerships.

4.8 Implications for Practice

I believe this research is significant because it allows us to hear from middle school bilingual students through their writing, interviews, and classroom discussions. This research is also significant because it addresses the complexity of language practices with a population that is rarely discussed (middle school bilinguals at a variety of points on the bilingual continuum in an English as a New Language classroom). Bilingual pedagogy is also analyzed in this research, thus providing alternatives to the popular methods of teaching bilingual students that separates languages, disregarding students’ knowledge systems and resources, and/or racializes certain languages so students do not find validation or support for using Spanish in the classroom. The classroom teacher’s voice and experiences are also considered as she theorizes these with regards to immigration, pressures for assimilation, challenges with teacher preparation programs, and continued professional development to provide culturally relevant pedagogy.

The implications of this study are vast. First, we must question how teacher preparation programs consider flexible language practices and students’ positioning of their complex bilingual identities, especially in programs that prepare Bilingual and Teachers of English as a
Second Official Language (TESOL) candidates. What is the philosophy of language learning at diverse institutions? Does their philosophy acknowledge the resources that teacher candidates bring from their respective experiences? Do the clinical experiences provide learning environments that allow the teacher and students to use their full language repertoire? Do teacher candidates engage in continuous reflective practices at the schools of education to check their biases and question the root of their assumptions about language practices, storytelling, writing, and curriculum modifications? Are there spaces for teachers to engage in these discussions on language ideologies with administration and other school staff?

Second, this study has great implications for the continued professional development of teachers who teach students who know a language other than English. Does the professional development acknowledge the languages as resources and use them in the curriculum planning, in student work analysis, and work celebrations? Are curricula translated without consideration to the nuances of cultural practices and translations? In terms of curriculum design, are teachers supported with time, mentorship, and resources to plan with students’ voices at the center?

Third, this study emphasizes the experiences of bilingual children and the role that these should have in the formation of school life. This means centering their experiences through culturally responsive teaching, texts, and policies. Taking away instructional time for high-stakes standardized testing mock exams, test preparation lessons, and exam days, all contribute to another philosophy of teaching that is void of allowing bilingual students the opportunities to flourish.
Chapter 5

A Classroom Teacher’s Language Ideologies

Everything that goes on in a classroom reflects the teacher’s approach toward education. This is true whether we intend it to be so or not. Teaching is never neutral. We express our attitudes in the language we use, in the gestures and movements, in the way we maintain discipline, in our pacing of instruction, in the subject matter we cover, in the books or stories we choose to present, in the amount of time we speak and allow the students to speak, in the kinds of questions we ask, in the extent to which we involve parents and community. (Alma Flor Ada, 1990, quoted in Valenzuela, 2016, p.39)

5.1 Introduction

The findings in this chapter address the following research question:

*What are the language ideologies that enable a teacher to enact modifications to an existing personal writing curricular unit so as to take into account the complex linguistic and cultural practices of emergent bilingual middle-schoolers?*

In her interview, and throughout the interactions I had with Alejandra, she shares her teacher preparation journey and the ongoing professional development moments, all fraught with tension and changes as she has had to come to terms with her assumptions about language practices and how best to teach her bilingual students. Alejandra theorizes her stance on language practices — which I describe as language ideologies in this study — with her knowledge of her personal journey, bilingual education research, and her knowledge of the students. This chapter is organized into two sections. The first, addresses how Alejandra’s language ideologies have shaped her through intense experiences where racialized ideas of language and teaching are the
forefront. The second, analyzes how Alejandra has challenged restrictive language ideologies, policies, and classroom practices.

5.2 The Teacher: On a Journey of Language Ideologies

Alejandra discusses how the personal narrative writing unit provided the students with opportunities to share stories when they encountered difficult times in their lives. Alejandra feels that it is important to allow students to write using their full linguistic repertoire in order to fully express themselves. She found it crucial to allow students the freedom to speak, read, and write using both Spanish and English. She explained her rationale in the interview:

I also learned the importance of letting students choose the language that they feel most comfortable when they are writing this on demand piece because when they feel comfortable to complete a task in the language that they feel the strongest, you can really see what they already know and how to move them forward. They are acquiring English, however, they already have and possess certain skills that they can rely on to continue building on to their second language. So, the on demand is very important to me because I see where they are, they can see where they are starting, and when they finish their piece they can see their growth through their process. (Interview, Alejandra, September, 1, 2016)

Alejandra’s language ideology is centered on having student use their full language repertoire and also an awareness that bilingual students are bringing something to the table. She believes that these emergent bilingual students know something about storytelling, if only you allow them to speak and write using Spanish and English in whichever combination. She combines her knowledge of the students and knowledge of the curriculum to help build a classroom environment that welcomes the sharing of personal narratives. In addition to a belief in storytelling through flexible language practices, Alejandra’s use of the phrases “acquiring
English” and “building on to their second language” reveal a specific view of bilingual language processing in this English as a New Language (ENL) classroom. Although Alejandra acknowledges that bilingual students are knowledgeable, she points out that this is useful for “acquiring English.” It seems then that bilingual practices are interpreted as a resource, a tool for making progress in English. The question then becomes: does this also result in students continuing to build on to their Spanish?

Alejandra explains the importance of her children developing their Spanish at home. She describes her reasons for speaking in Spanish at home:

With my children I speak to them in Spanish because I want them to speak Spanish the way I speak Spanish and to be able to own a second language since their first language really is English. They have been exposed to English since they were born. They both go to a monolingual school and their father speaks English. However, they speak Spanish too because I speak to them in Spanish. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Alejandra says that she wants her children to “own” speaking in Spanish. She is aware that they are exposed to much more English at school and with their father. Her children’s “first” and “second” languages are neither Spanish nor English, since their home and school language practices are much more fluid. Whether it is with Alejandra’s description of language practices at home or the words shared by the students in this study, it remains clear that for bilingual students growing up in this context, there is no strict language separation.

Alejandra is aware that labeling languages as “first” and “second” languages is problematic. When I asked her to tell me about the way the drafting stage of the writing unit proceeded, she shared:
So, we draft one part. We drafted the whole story. Some students had problems writing, even in their native language. Remember, we did the post-its? One, two, three, four, five. And then they were writing, we had to even scaffold that more so they can finish their first draft or their first piece after looking at the mentor text and learning more about what do we see in a narrative text. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Here, Alejandra uses the term “native language” and describes how she facilitated the drafting process by breaking down the sequencing with sticky notes. One of the focal student’s, Genesis, complicates the “first,” “second,” and “native” language terms in her writing process. Genesis used the sticky notes for her sequencing of events (written in Spanish), translated them (all to English), and acknowledged that this was her favorite part of the writing process because “you can express yourself better” (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016).

What has led Alejandra to take this approach in the classroom? In the interview, Alejandra talks about her transition from Peru to the United States and what she thought about the way people spoke Spanish here:

At the beginning when I first came to the country, I did not like people using code switching. I felt that they were disrespecting the language, my language, and their language. So, I remember saying to myself, when I went to work at my first school at Sonia Sotomayor School, because I heard that a lot, I said, no, either I'm going to speak English or Spanish, just one, I even spoke to my principal in English only and she was Puerto Rican. [laughing] I felt like I had to do that. In fact, you know what, it's something funny because, for a year, well my first year, I was told not to use Spanish in the classroom because I couldn't use it. So, I was worried. I like to follow rules so I was worried that my principal was going to get upset. So, I, for a year, I did not use Spanish.
My students did not know that I spoke Spanish. Later on though, as I grew as an educator, I learned that it was ok. And actually from the state they started embracing, right, the use of translanguaging, and how to use translanguaging as a support and I learned how to use language really as a support, rather than having collegial conversations with students maybe, right, for social, just talks, and then I will select when I will use Spanish or English. With teachers who speak English I speak English. With teachers who speak Spanish I code switch now. Sometimes we speak in English and then we throw things in Spanish or vice versa. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Alejandra went from interpreting translanguaging practices as “disrespectful” to a full embrace of the ways bilinguals communicate. Alejandra, feels that she can be her full self when there is room for using their entire language repertoire that includes Spanish. This is a pattern across several of the student interviews as well. For Alejandra, a sense of worry crept in during her first year of teaching when told not to use Spanish. She felt the pressure to be in compliance even though this went against her own and her students’ identity formations, journeys, and day-to-day existence as bilingual beings. Alejandra mentions two systems of authority in this excerpt and the power and pressures that they have for enacting and promoting language ideologies: the principal and state education governing bodies. It is crucial to consider the ramifications that education policy and pressures have on the teachers’ experiences.

“Translanguaging as support” is another way Alejandra conceptualizes language practices and purposes. Taking this phrase with the opening quote on the purpose for storytelling, we see Alejandra thinking about the ways students can tell their stories and not feel inhibited, as she did during her first year of teaching.
I asked Alejandra what were some key people, experiences, or readings that influenced that change and perspective from fixed and separate language use to more flexibility with language practices. Alejandra acknowledged the influence that the partnership with CUNY-NYSIEB had on her understanding of bilingualism and pedagogy. Following is an excerpt from the interview where she identifies the impact of that partnership (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016).

Alejandra: Yes, I was part [of it]. Ofelia García came to our school and then Luis and then Tatyana also came to the school. So, I read the Translanguaging Guide that Ofelia García wrote. I was engaging in conversations with both Luis and Tatyana and learning from them. I also used, I read Pauline Gibbons' book. I also read about Aída Walqui, her articles.

Carla: Did you notice any change with the students when you started doing that? Like year two or three. What was different?

Alejandra: Some students liked that I would use translanguaging in the class. Some others did not like it. Students who, eh, shared that they preferred English and that they were not Spanish speakers, were furious. I can count them with one hand but they even brought their parents to the school to talk to me why they were in a classroom where there were English Language Learners since they were not English Language Learners. Um, one student will refuse to speak Spanish and whenever we would have partnership work, I partner them with mentor and mentee, she would not.

Alejandra’s journey through many language ideologies has several implications for teacher preparation and professional development. The ongoing support for teachers and
research-based practices to teach bilingual students were transformative in this ENL classroom. It also impacted this teacher’s confidence in teaching using translanguage as pedagogy and acknowledging the language practices of her students.

5.3 The Teacher: Challenging Language Ideologies

Alejandra’s on-going professional support through the CUNY-NYSIEB project helped her rethink her approach to her classroom and further enhanced her knowledge of her bilingual students. But this kind of support and philosophy of acknowledging students’ language practices was not always present in Alejandra’s life. Alejandra reflects on the ideas shared with her about language through her teacher preparation program and the larger societal pressures with her transition from Peru to New York. In the following excerpts from the interview, we get to know how Alejandra processes her insecurities and pride with her language practices. Although her approach has changed along the way, as we saw earlier with her embrace of translanguage practices, Alejandra continues to feel “less than” when it comes to her speaking in English:

Alejandra: In that context, I remember that, and I still am the same way. My audience, when I present, affects me in a way. I feel like when I know that I have an audience that is ready to learn from me and that eh, knows that I will give them something valuable, it makes me speak English better. But when I'm nervous, I tend to get insecure! And then I make mistakes, grammatical mistakes when I'm speaking and I am thinking "why did I say that, it's not like that, it's like this" and I want to do the recasting of myself all of the time...People around me when I speak English, it affects me and still I think.

Carla: What do you think are some of the factors that contribute to that?
Alejandra: Thinking that because English is my second language, I know less than them. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Even after all of these years since her arrival here for undergraduate work, Alejandra still feels insecure because English is her “second language,” as she describes it. She says “thinking because English is my second language I know less than them.” This thinking also makes Alejandra empathize with her students and contributes to her flexible language use in this class. Her use of mentor texts in both Spanish and English, writing the teaching point in English while reading it in Spanish, using writing tools like checklists and rubrics in Spanish and in English, and having students share using their full language repertoire, all are connected to her own experience with language processing and discrimination. What is fascinating is that when Alejandra speaks about the students and to them in class, she acknowledges that their bilingualism is a resource that can be used in the academic setting. Yet when it comes to her own experience as a bilingual person using English in an academic or professional setting, she doubts her expertise. This doubt is something that she would encourage students to reject. This is the power that negative experiences, expectations and language ideologies have on bilingual beings.

This trauma has been a part of Alejandra's formation as a teacher since her student teaching experience. In the following excerpt from the interview, Alejandra describes the challenges she faced with the classroom teacher:

However, I did have one experience when I went to do my student teaching in High School. It was in the City High School and the teacher with whom I worked, was very challenging because she would have me in the back of the room, reading the lesson out loud, to make sure that my voice level was adequate for the classroom and to make sure that students could understand my accent [laughing]. So, I remember that I cried a lot
when I was student teaching with her. At the same time though, she gave me total control of the classroom. So, I knew that if she was giving me the control in the classroom was because she believed in my capabilities of running the classroom, of being a teacher. It's interesting because she's Mexican-American from Kansas and she would tell me that I had to practice on losing my accent and that it was very important to me to lose it because I was teaching English Language Learners. Um, so that challenging experience pushed me to pursue my dreams because I did not stop. I continued. It was hard but I survived and I showed her that I could do the work. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Earlier, we read how Alejandra’s first principal, a Puerto Rican woman, told her not to speak Spanish in her classroom. Here, we read about how the classroom teacher, a Mexican-American woman, during the student teaching experience, believed that Alejandra had to lose her accent in order to teach “English Language Learners.” In both examples we see how people in leadership positions and of Latinx backgrounds, have certain language ideologies that harm the teacher and the students. Alejandra’s laughter in this interview is of the nervous, confused and perplexed kind as she processes the shock of this moment. Why this focus on accents? Why would a fellow Latinx educator think that it was important to “lose” the accent? Most important, and telling of the classroom pedagogy, is the fact that Alejandra did not heed those words from her cooperating teacher. Instead, she embraced her accent and encourages students to do the same:

Alejandra: Even though I learned English in Peru, it is also completely different when you come to study in a college because we all have accents and we all need to get used to the accents, right? So, I remember having trouble understanding some of the teachers because I was not used to being in a classroom and listening to teachers that had different
accents. So the diversity was challenging, however it was rewarding because at the end, now, I, how can I say this, I've learned to embrace accents, even mine. When I first came I was annoyed that people would make comments about my accent. Even if they said "cute" I was like, I don't hear my accent and I don't hear, I don't think about that all of the time so it made me insecure sometimes to speak because some people would pretend that they don't understand and that made me upset so I learned.

Carla: How did you - when you said "I learned to embrace accents even my own" - what were some key people or experiences that were part of that journey for you of acceptance?

Alejandra: I think people around me, professors, um, that acknowledged that everybody had accents, and that no matter where you're from, even if you're a native speaker of English, you're going to have an accent from where you're from, and that made me connect it to Spanish because I was like, oh, I do have an accent in Spanish because I don't speak the same way that other people from other countries speak. We love it, we love to hear that, we love accents, so that helped me become more secure and take risks and don't care. I don't care about accents and I am not working to not have an accent. I like it. I know people that look at themselves in the mirror to try to lose their accent. I am not like that. I like having an accent. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)
The tension that exists with Alejandra’s bilingual identity continues to be shaped by forces within school and outside of school. Even though Alejandra says that her experiences and instruction from professors have helped her “become more secure” we still saw earlier, how she feels nervous and “less than” in spaces that are not welcoming to her bilingualism. Here, Alejandra describes several feelings around accents: from feeling annoyed, insecure, upset, and finally, to pride.

Alejandra has had several transitions from painful, humiliating moments in her teacher formation, to affirming moments that reinvigorate her passion in teaching and pride in being bilingual. In the following, Alejandra describes an experience during her last semester in her teacher preparation program and how even though it was a negative one, she took it to as motivation for her teaching career:

I had writing class and the writing teacher said that if you were not an English speaker, native English speaker, you could not teach ESL and I remember that at the beginning it hurt me and then I didn't care. And I really don't care. I think that by being who I am, I can inspire our students to become what they want to become. I always remind them. Whatever you love to do and you have the passion to do, you have to go and do it because there is nothing better than doing something that you love to do. It makes you want to become the best and always work hard. Um, I had, I actually also had good experiences. Those were like the two ones that I'm never gonna forget. I remember having classmates and the supportive environment around me also helped me a lot because at [institution] they created a collaborative environment where we had to work in groups all of the time where you had English native speakers who were learning Spanish or other languages so we shared that commonality of being bilingual and it was great.
This experience, along with the other ones mentioned in this chapter, raise a concern for teacher preparation programs and the narrative around teaching in general. There is this idea of resilience in the face of obstacles, where teachers, whether through fast-track teacher preparation programs, such as Teach for America or New York City Teaching Fellows, are pressured to make it and to beat the odds, no matter what. The narrative is centered on ideas of perseverance, similar to the popular movement of “grit” in urban schools now. First, as family members, administration, colleagues, and friends, we may be thankful for these teachers that inspire children to “become what they want to become,” as these teachers live their full, genuine selves in their presence (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016). In addition to this admiration and gratitude is a deep concern for the toll that it takes on teachers, in this case bilingual teachers of color, as they face multiple moments of discrimination. Some might call these microaggressions while others might argue that there is nothing “micro” about these moments where language discrimination is racialized. In each of the instances described by Alejandra, we see how this teacher’s language practices are deemed “less than” and she turns this around by believing in her worth, her identity, and her pedagogy. She takes those communal experiences, and the “commonality of being bilingual” from these communities, and in turn, implements that in her ENL classroom. But what about those who have internalized those racialized language ideologies and in their positions of leadership, at the classroom, school, and higher education levels (as seen with the cooperating teacher in Alejandra’s student experience, the principal, and the professor in her teacher preparation program, respectively), have promoted them? This has massive ramifications not only for the teachers in teacher preparation programs but also for the students who might be the
recipients of such restrictive language policies if they do not have critical, thoughtful, and empathetic teachers like Alejandra.

What does Alejandra have pride in and how does she share it? In the interview, Alejandra theorizes her pride in being bilingual in the classroom (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016):

Throughout the year I shared my pride of being bilingual and of speaking two languages and I shared with them my culture. So, I will share the things that people eat in Peru and I will make them teach me about their culture so when we had that cultural exchange, we created this community in where they liked the fact that we were using Spanish as well so much that whenever I went on speaking in English all of the time, students felt comfortable by raising their hand and saying "can you say it in Spanish now?" So, and that means a lot because you're opening the door for students to not feel the fear of using their language because they want to learn.

Alejandra’s language practices are not only defined by flexibility but also pride. This pride is connected to cultural practices that are mediated through her bilingualism. Sharing this helps build community and trust in her classroom. According to Alejandra, this helps raise student participation.

This bilingual pedagogical practice has transformative implications for linguistically diverse classroom communities elsewhere. First, community-building is discussed here as opposed to classroom management. There is no need to discuss management techniques or strategies when the priority in this teacher’s approach to the classroom is building relationships and a bilingual identity. As a bilingual person herself that lives the struggles of insecurity, judgment, pressures, and pride, Alejandra is able to empathize with the students. Alejandra describes the ways she and the class co-construct this community. Language and other cultural
practices are shared by the teacher and in turn, she has the students teach her about their cultural practices as well. In this sense, both students and teachers are learners, and their Latinx identities are interpreted as valid and multifaceted. Assumptions are not made that they are all the same.

Sharing cultural practices, and the pride and joy these bring, is not an easy feat for Alejandra. She shares the complexities of her identity formation when leaving one country to come to another: “Coming here to live here was a completely different experience than coming here as a vacation trip because I had to move and I had to leave my country and my culture in a way, right?” (Interview, September 1, 2016).

In the following excerpt from the interview, I ask Alejandra to explain what she meant by that phrase:

Carla: It's interesting that you said that you had this cultural exchange when you shared your pride and your culture with them cuz earlier you had used the words that you had to leave your country when you left Peru and you said "I had to leave my country and my culture in a way." So, explain to me a little bit, unpack that sentence for me, what did you mean having to leave your culture in a way?

Alejandra: Because even when I spoke Spanish to people, the way I speak Spanish is not the same way people, most of the people where I was living, spoke Spanish. So, then it became like a game. That's not how you say this, we say it like this. And I had a conversation with Luis from CUNY and he taught me or reminded me about how language is arbitrary, that things are not called by one thing, they don't have only one thing. They have multiple names and that is ok. If you say
"tajador" in Peru and sacapuntas in the Dominican Republic, it's fine. You just learn a new word. Right? So, um, after I learned that, whenever I used translanguaging and I will say or use a word that we use in Peru, um, they, the students, the students will say "Oh in the Dominican Republic we say it like this" and I say "great, now when you go to Peru and someone says this you already know what it is." So we learn more about language and so that's why. That's why I said that. In the beginning it was "ugh not even the way I speak Spanish is right here." What is right? (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Alejandra theorizes two things here about language. First, that language is at the center of cultural expression. Second, with guidance from CUNY-NYSIEB staff, that language is arbitrary. Both understandings about language are at the center of Alejandra’s pedagogy and success with the personal narrative writing unit. In the introduction to Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages, Pennycook and Makoni discuss the performativity and inventions of language. They note that “all languages are social constructions” (Pennycook and Makoni, 2007, p.1). These languages are constructed through social processes that include a historical perspective that considers colonial and nationalist ideologies.

If, to this day, Alejandra would continue to believe “ugh not even the way I speak Spanish is right here,” that there is one “right” way of speaking, then her students would not feel as comfortable and confident in expressing themselves. If, to this day, Alejandra would believe that you had to completely “leave” your country and culture, then this would be detrimental to bilingual students’ identity formation and freedom needed to tell their stories.
Alejandra explains her overall goals for her class in the final words in the interview. She describes four goals for her students: to own their “first language,” make progress in English, become professionals, and to know that being bilingual is a strength and not a weakness:

So, my, my goal was for them to learn that they were just learning to read, write, and speak a second language and that they own their first language which is powerful and that they know that they can rely on their first language, all the knowledge they have in order to build on their second language acquisition, right? Eh, my goal is also having new students who do not speak, read, or write English, speak, read, and write English by the end of the year. Not maybe at the sixth grade level but at a fourth grade level. I know that it takes a lot of work and I need to be realistic and I know that some students are going to be able to do it and I also know that some students need more time and that is ok, as long as they are working towards a goal. And then, I think my ultimate goal is for them to become professionals, to do whatever they want in their lives and to use both of their languages. If they're going to write, to write in English and Spanish, knowing that they will reach both populations, right? If they are doctors, knowing that having only two languages and being able to read, write, something for someone else that is gonna help them, will also help them and help people. And even if they don't become doctors and they become, I don't know, they want to work in mechanics with cars, also knowing that that right there is also a job that requires these skills. So, knowing that language is important and that they can succeed in life being bilingual and knowing that it's a strength, not a weakness, that is my goal. And to continue being role models for other people, so we continue having bilinguals in our world. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)
These goals reflect Alejandra’s language ideologies that inform her pedagogy, professional practice outside of the classroom, and personal life. Her journey from Peru to the United States, along with her teacher preparation journey (formally through her programs), were complex realities where she has had to negotiate her language and other cultural practices. Most importantly, she has had to come to terms with the kind of educator she wanted to be in honoring the full humanity of bilingual beings, as she herself experienced difficult circumstances.

Alejandra’s processing of the words and actions of those in authority promoting restrictive language/being practices contributes to her teaching philosophy that goes against the deficit framework. She wants students to see bilingualism as a “strength not a weakness.” The classroom implications are many and complex. In this section we saw how Alejandra welcomed students as co-teachers and fellow bilingual storytellers. We also saw Alejandra’s goal of ensuring the students’ English language “acquisition,” along with the goal of “owning” their Spanish.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine the factors that contributed to the classroom’s teacher bilingual pedagogy. Alejandra co-creates the community with the students so that stories are developed that integrate students’ lived experiences. For Alejandra, the personal narrative writing was a liberating practice through the way this unit was designed for this group of bilingual students. Alejandra says the following about this personal narrative unit:

We all have a story and that I think this unit is powerful because they learn the importance of sharing their personal experiences with other people because we go through same situations and sometimes we need to learn and understand that we're not the only ones, that other people go through the same situations and we can take this work,
our work, as work that is going to help others in challenging times. (Interview, Alejandra, September, 1, 2016)

In the next chapter we see how Alejandra modified the TCRWP curriculum by engaging with bilingual pedagogical moves that encouraged the students’ sharing of personal experiences.

Alejandra’s experience challenging restrictive language ideologies and her knowledge of the students’ full language and cultural repertoires allowed her to not only develop a bilingual pedagogy but to continue on this reflective journey of her own bilingual identity and advocacy as a bilingual educator. In this study I found that Alejandra’s language ideology was informed by her own bilingual experience coming from another country, her teacher preparation program, school administration, and partnerships with CUNY-NYSIEB and TCRWP. As this study found, a teacher’s language ideology is shaped by many factors and has great implications for the experience of bilingual students. In chapter nine I discuss recommendations related to this finding, specifically focusing on teacher preparation programs, partnerships, and necessary conversations across these and schools.
Chapter 6

Bilingual Matters: Curriculum Modifications

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze five class sessions across the five weeks that the classroom teacher, Alejandra Medina, taught Personal Narrative Writing, and their modifications. These modifications were those that she created with the support from her work with CUNY-NYSIEB and TCRWP partnerships, and had implemented in different ways across her years as a bilingual teacher. Alejandra would revisit these modifications during CUNY-NYSIEB meetings and her curriculum planning with her staff developer from TCRWP for three years prior to this study.

This chapter addresses planning, implementation, and student feedback in order to respond to the following research question on bilingual pedagogy:

*What are the modifications made to the existing curriculum for a personal narrative writing unit that a teacher makes in order to take into account the complex linguistic and cultural practices of emergent bilingual middle-schoolers?*

Alejandra used several resources to plan her instruction. First, she had students’ narrative writing that she had them do at the beginning of the unit, called an “on demand” piece, without instruction, in order to see how they told stories about their lives. Second, Alejandra had the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) *Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories* Narrative curriculum unit of study book by Lucy Calkins, Stacey Fell, and Alexandra Marron as well as support from years of partnering with TCRWP literacy consultants. The curriculum includes an overview of the unit, student sample writing, professionally written narrative writing, checklists, rubrics, writing progression, and lessons across the writing process to help the classroom teacher launch narrative writing, assist students in collecting ideas,
drafting, revising, and editing, and in writing a second narrative. Third, Alejandra had her
experience of teaching this unit and the reading workshop counterpart for over five years. Fourth,
Alejandra was aware of the Common Core Learning Standards for sixth grade narrative writing.
Fifth, Alejandra had knowledge of the students’ language practices, where they were coming
from (previous school, neighborhood, country), and their interests based on activities they had
conducted to build classroom community prior to the start of the writing unit. Finally, Alejandra
had continued her professional growth through the CUNY-NYSIEB partnership from a prior year
and her participation in local New York City Department of Education professional development
sessions often titled "Supporting English Language Learners."

The TCRWP *Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories* curriculum for this unit
has seventeen lessons. As described in chapter three on the context for the study, these lessons
are categorized by *bends* or groups of lessons that take students across the writing process. The
first class session analyzed in this chapter is from *bend one*, session five, titled *Reading Closely
to Learn from other Authors* in the curriculum (Calkins, Fell, Marron, pp. 42-50). Class sessions
two, three, and five analyzed in this chapter are from *bend two*, sessions seven, ten, and twelve,
respectively. These lessons take students from rehearsing their story leads to noticing the heart of
their story, and revising using a checklist. Class session four analyzed in this chapter is not from
the TCRWP curriculum, but one created by Alejandra after she read students’ drafts and planned
a way to support their writing while making her feedback accessible using examples from a text
the students were reading in their reading workshop class, *El color de mis palabras/ The Color of
My Words* by Lynn Joseph.

For Alejandra, it was imperative that her bilingual planning consider what she knew
about the students, from their storytelling practices, to their work in reading workshop, and the
topics that would come up frequently in discussions from their life experiences. This meant that Alejandra took very seriously the role of allowing students the option to write in the language of their choice for their on demand writing pieces at the beginning of the unit. This also meant that Alejandra carried over the reading work, or reading like a writer/ author’s craft analysis, into the writing lessons. Even though the students had a separate reading class, Alejandra was aware that the students needed more practice analyzing texts with the lens of author’s crafts to notice techniques, to be a part of reading texts out loud, and to be immersed in many different kinds of stories. This took on an even bigger significance across the unit as students shared the challenges they had in their reading class where the instruction was only in English, unlike their bilingual writing class. Although students had access to texts in Spanish in the reading class and were in partnerships and small groups with classmates who could translate, the monolingual teacher could not support the students in the way that Alejandra did.

Alejandra explained her modifications of the standard TCRWP curriculum the following way:

So the first change was using students' native language as a resource and translating mentor texts to make learning accessible to all students so they can be engaged and they can continue learning. The second change, major, major change that happened and this actually was a change that I did in collaboration with my staff developer, is that when you read one lesson that the book has on it, it is really five lessons in there for our students, so we will select what is the most important that needs to be taught in order to start the unit. For example, you need to have students writing a flash draft. They have to sit down and do it and it's written in the curriculum but students need more time to do it. Sometimes it cannot be done just in one day. They need to sit down two days to finish
everything in the class because they ask questions and because the minilesson says all of this needs to be done in one day I don't do it. I don't follow that. I mean, they ask me a question, I stop, and then I continue. The third change that I, that also happens is, using, did I mention using language as a resource while teaching? (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

There are four modifications that Alejandra implements across the personal narrative writing unit that are identified in the lessons below:

1. using the students’ full language and cultural repertoires,
2. including integrating culturally relevant mentor texts for author’s craft analysis,
3. using more guided lessons for teaching as opposed to demonstration lessons to maximize partner and group experiences over independent writing
4. sharing teacher demonstration writing.

Each of these, when evident in the lesson, are discussed with examples and compared with the way the TCRWP curriculum had the lesson written. These modifications are also detailed in the charts that outline each of the lessons with the writing workshop components, pacing, teacher moves, and student moves in Appendix B.

The mentor texts used by Alejandra included:

- one excerpt from a memoir (“De dentro hacia afuera”/ Inside Out” in Cajas de cartón: Relatos de la vida de un niño campesino/ The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child by Francisco Jiménez),
- three picture books (I Hate English by Ellen Levine, The Other Side and Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson)
• one excerpt from a realistic fiction text students were reading in their reading workshop class (El color de mis palabras/ The Color of My Words by Lynn Joseph).

In “De adentro hacia afuera” the reader learns about Jiménez’s struggles both in a school that does not welcome his language practices and outside of school through his work in the fields as a migrant child. The picture books all revealed challenges that some children have when moving to a new place, making friends, and starting at a new school. All of these texts that did not have Spanish translations available were translated to Spanish by the teacher for use in the classroom. El color de mis palabras/ The Color of My Words was a familiar text to the students and for many, a familiar setting, as it took place in the Dominican Republic, addressing the topics of family relationships, government oppression, resistance, power of writing, and transformation.

The findings revealed in the study show Alejandra’s purposeful use of her student data, curriculum, and experience to create the modifications. None of these modifications are mutually exclusive as using full language and cultural repertoires meant the translation of texts, the use of Spanish and English in discussions, and the opportunities for students to participate throughout the process. It is here where we begin our journey into the classroom and how modifications to the existing curriculum were made through enacting a bilingual pedagogy that takes into account the complex linguistic and cultural practices of emergent bilingual middle-schoolers.

6.2 Class Session One: Mentor Text Analysis through an Interactive Read Aloud

For this lesson, Alejandra took the goals of session five of the TCRWP personal narrative unit and her knowledge of the students to plan a lesson that would help them as writers to tell their stories. The first major difference in teaching this lesson compared to the TCRWP
curriculum is the Alejandra’s use of the students’ full linguistic and cultural repertoire throughout class discussions. Alejandra also modified several other specific characteristics of the curriculum. The pedagogy was changed (from a mini-lesson using demonstration to an interactive read aloud focusing on author’s craft and culturally relevant connections). Also, a different mentor text was used (James Howe’s “Everything Will Be Okay” was not used so that the students could instead analyze “Inside Out” by Francisco Jimenez in his memoir, The Circuit). Appendix A details the steps, pacing, and actions according to the TCRWP Personal Narrative Writing Unit of Study curriculum and Appendix B the way the teacher implemented the lesson.

**Using the Students’ Full Linguistic and Cultural Repertoire**

In this first class session, Alejandra read the first half of “Inside Out” by Francisco Jimenez as mentor text to analyze how dialogue is being used to reveal details about the characters. The content of the text addresses the pressures the students themselves experience as they learn English and try to exist in new schooling environments that do not embrace their entire being and language practices. Alejandra began reading the text in Spanish and throughout the reading she alternates the readings to have both Spanish and English heard. The class participates in the reading and the analysis with her. Although this is a writing class, Alejandra led the lesson following an interactive read aloud structure to focus on author’s craft. This meant that Alejandra purposefully selected parts of the text to pause and show students how the author, Francisco Jimenez, used dialogue to reveal details about the characters. She also selected moments to have students practice this analysis. Besides places to analyze the author’s craft, in this case dialogue use for character development, Alejandra also paused to interpret content from
the text that spoke to the reality of the students’ experiences. Students had copies of the text in both Spanish and English available at their tables.

The following is an excerpt from the interactive read aloud portion as the teacher started alternating her reading of the text to discuss Francisco Jimenez’s use of dialogue along with recalling story elements (a review of a previous lesson) and challenging the text as students delve into the issues the text raises for them. Alejandra has given students the text in both English and Spanish. She reads first from the Spanish:

Recuerdo que me pegaron en las manos con una regla de doce pulgadas porque no entendía las instrucciones de la clase, me dijo Roberto, mi hermano mayor cuando le pregunté sobre su primer año en la escuela. Pero ¿cómo iba a obedecer si la maestra las daba en inglés?

Alejandra: Now we are going to go to the other one. I want you to notice something. Look at the one in English.

I remember being hit on the wrists with a twelve-inch ruler because I did not follow directions in class, Roberto answered in a mildly angry tone when I asked him about his first year of school. But how could I? He continued. The teacher gave them in English.

Alejandra: So as a writer right now I’m noticing something important. The story. La historia comienza ¿en qué? [The story begins with what?]

Students: Diálogo.

Alejandra: Diálogo. No solamente eso, comienza inmediatamente. Si yo escucho en la manera en que el niño está hablando, me doy cuenta que lo dijo en un

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4 Excerpts from the mentor text, “Inside Out” by Francisco Jiménez are italicized here to show the teacher’s reading of it out loud.
tono…? [Not only that, immediately it begins, if I listen to the way in which the child is speaking, I notice that he said that in a tone …?]

Student: Molesto.

Alejandra: Molesto [angry]. Why? I see that after, after the quotations, he says "Roberto answered in a mildly angry tone when I asked him about his first year of school.” It's already setting up the story. ¿Cómo le fue al hermano Roberto en el colegio cuando recién entró al colegio? ¿Le fue? [How did it go for Roberto in school when he first started? It was?]

Genesis: Mal [bad].

Alejandra: ¿Por qué le fue mal? [Why did it go bad?]

Student: Porque no podía entender y la profesora le pegaba.

Alejandra: Exacto. So is that? What part of the story element is that? It's already telling us the exposition. It's giving us the background knowledge of what happened to Francisco's brother. It was not a nice experience. Let's continue.

¿Y que hacías? Le pregunté, mirándome las manos. [And what did you do? I asked him, looking at my hands]

Alejandra: Again I'm going to stop right there because who is talking? Francisco is talking. What is he doing? He says, ¿y qué hacías?

Student: Looking at his hands cuz probably.

Alejandra: Why?

Student: Probably because he.

Alejandra: They hit who on his hands?
Student: Francisco. [another student] No. Roberto.

Alejandra: Roberto. Why would Francisco be looking at his hands when he asked him?

Student: He's red. I guess.

Alejandra: Is his hand red right now?

Student: No.

Alejandra: Call on someone else.

Student: Probably remembering the moment and that he's feeling.

Alejandra: He's feeling what? Did they hit him? Did they hit Francisco? Who did they hit?

Student: Robert.

Alejandra: Roberto. So why is Francisco asking him, "what did you do"? And why is he looking at his own hands? Why?

Student: Maybe he's ...

Student (Emiliano): Because he's thinking that the teacher is probably going to hit him too with the ruler.

Alejandra: Why? Why would the teacher hit him too?

Student: because they don't know English.

Alejandra: Why? Why was Roberto being hit on his hands?

Student: Cuz he didn't understand English, so he knew Spanish.

Alejandra: And what do you know about Francisco. What do you think is going to happen to him? Call on someone else.
Student: What I think is the same thing happens to Francisco cuz he doesn't understand English.

Alejandra: Yeah. So you already. So are we learning kind of like the problem in this story? What is going to be the problem? What's gonna be the problem? What's the problem right now?

Student: The teachers are hitting students.

Alejandra: The teachers what?

Student: The teachers are hitting students.

Alejandra: Why?

Student: Because they don't understand English.

Alejandra: Because they don't understand English.

Student: I think Francisco wants to learn English before he gets to college.

Alejandra: Yeah maybe you think he has an urgency. You see how you are building all of these theories? That's exactly. Based on what? [student asks to share] Yes?

Student: Why are teachers hitting the student?

Alejandra: You're challenging the text. Why are they hitting students just because they don't speak English? Is this a reality? [students discuss]

Genesis: Eso se llama racismo. Eso se llama ser racista. [That is called racism. That is called being racist.]

In this part of the text analysis, Alejandra guides the students as they understand the use of dialogue in the text, identify story elements, connect problems with the ways characters respond in order to develop theories that can be tracked across the text, and question the
characters’ actions in the text. In the first part, Alejandra pauses immediately after reading the beginning of the text and facilitates a discussion on the use of dialogue. This is interactive with two students participating to identify the dialogue. It is a short part of the discussion as Alejandra quickly moves to question the problem revealed in the text at this point and connects this work to a prior lesson on story elements.

Prior to this mentor text analysis lesson, the students were taught different story elements that they can include in their writing. They created a booklet that explained story elements with examples. Alejandra finally took them to the theme level of analysis without naming it, by addressing how characters respond to problems. She called this “building theories” about characters and universal life lessons. The last student, Genesis, interprets the teacher’s actions in the text, hitting Roberto for not speaking in English, as racism. The interactive discussion, flexible language use, and connections to prior lessons allow for plenty of student participation and a range of interpretive work with a text that is engaging for the students.

Not only are language practices a theme that is addressed through the text and in the students’ lives, but the teacher also makes note of other relevant matters from their shared experiences. The following is an excerpt from another part of the reading and discussion of the Francisco Jiménez text. The teacher read an excerpt in Spanish and paused to make a connection to their community.

Roberto y yo nos levantamos temprano el lunes por la mañana para ir a la escuela. Me puse un overol, que no me gustaba porque tenía tirantes, y una camisa de franela a cuadros que Mamá había comprado en una tienda de segunda mano.
Roberto and I got up early on Monday morning to go to school. I dressed in a pair of overalls, which I hated because they had suspenders, and a flannel checkered shirt, which Mamá had bought at the Goodwill store.

Alejandra: Una tienda de segunda mano. Eso es lo que es Goodwill.

[A second-hand store. That is what is Goodwill.]

Student: I saw it.

Alejandra: There is one Goodwill around our neighborhood. You're right. Las personas van a esa tienda que se llama Goodwill a hacer donaciones, a dar las cosas que ya no utilizan y la gente puede ir a comprar la ropa de segunda mano.

[The people go to that store that is called Goodwill to make donations, to give things that they no longer use and people can go and buy the second-hand clothes.]

Student: Oh I get it.

Alejandra: ¿Cuesta mucho?

[Does it cost a lot?]

Student: No.

Alejandra: Cuesta mucho menos.

[It costs a lot less.]

Student: I read a book about that.

Although this pause is brief, it is important because it allows students to not only understand what is happening in the text (getting a glimpse into the economic situation of the main character's family) to visualize it and interpret key problems, but also to connect it with their own
experiences. This is one of many instances throughout this lesson and several others where Alejandra validates the students' lived experiences through these purposeful pauses when looking at published writing. The main goal might be to address author's craft so that they too as writers can use dialogue, develop setting and write a lead, that in some way emulates the craft moves of a published writer. Yet another main goal with these moves is a powerful pedagogical stance to be culturally relevant. Alejandra achieves this by using the students' full linguistic and cultural repertoire throughout the lesson.

Another example of this full language and cultural responsive teaching is seen after Alejandra paused when reading the excerpt from the text that described the way Francisco felt when he was on his way to school and kids on the bus were speaking in English. Alejandra read the following excerpt from the mentor text:

*Cuando el camión de la escuela llegó, Roberto y yo nos subimos y nos sentamos juntos. Me senté junto a la ventanilla, por donde veía los interminables surcos de lechugas y coliflores que pasaban zumbando. Las orillas de los surcos que llegaban a la carretera de doble sentido parecían dos gigantescas piernas que nos acompañaban a lo largo del camino. El camión hacía varias paradas para recoger a otros niños y, con cada parada, el ruido que hacían los niños se volvía cada vez más fuerte. Yo no entendía nada porque todos hablaban inglés. Me comenzó a doler la cabeza. Roberto tenía los ojos cerrados y fruncía el ceño. Pensé que también le dolía la cabeza.*

*When the school bus arrived, Roberto and I climbed in and sat together. I took the window seat and, on the way, watched endless rows of lettuce and cauliflower whiz by. The furrows that came up to the two lane road looked like giant legs running alongside us. The bus made several stops to pick up kids and, with each stop, the noise inside got*
Some kids were yelling at the top of their lungs. I did not know what they were saying. I was getting a headache. Roberto had his eyes closed and was frowning. I did not disturb him. I figured he was getting a headache too.

Immediately, once she finished this paragraph in Spanish, Alejandra and the students engaged in the following discussion:

Alejandra: Wow. Have you ever felt like that? ¿Alguien se ha sentido así alguna vez cuando otra persona habla otro idioma? … Turn and Talk real quick. Come on, come on. [Students discuss in partnerships at their tables]

Alejandra: I overheard here Andrés say something to his group that when he first moved to the United States he went downstairs with his dad and he heard a group of kids talking in English and he thought they were talking about him. And he [sic] it is related to the story. You'll see. You'll see! Right? And I just stopped here because there's a lot of [sic]. What is this describing? It is describing a lot of …

Student 1: Action

Alejandra: Yes. The action. What's going on around.

Student 2: Habían personas hablando en inglés y yo decía hay pero ellos están hablando de mi y yo le decía a mi mami "vámonos para la casa" y ella me llevó a la casa y yo me sentía como muy mal y yo llegué a mi cuarto llorando y no sé por qué.

Alejandra: It is good that we can relate.

In this interaction, we can see how students’ experiences with language reveal their emotions and connectedness with family. The students and family members experience similar
reactions that include fear, confusion, and anxiety around their inexperience with the English language in community settings. It is telling that Alejandra ends the conversation with “it’s good that we can relate” because her first prompt after reading this selection was “have you ever felt like that?” In this way, the teacher values students’ connections to texts, makes space for discussion, and cautiously pauses the discussion so she can continue reading and teaching students how to analyze this text for writing moves. Andrés' and Genesis’ experiences (one shared by the teacher and the other by the student), not only show that they feel connected to their families through these moments, but also that they feel connected to the text because of these events and their repercussions. These moments that children shared (one from the partner discussion and the other with the whole class) also show their comfort-level with doing so in class. This is telling of the classroom environment that Alejandra has developed so early in the school year.

Another example of how Alejandra facilitates a discussion on issues of language and culture through this analysis of the text, happens when she reads a section entirely in Spanish while students follow along with the copies in Spanish and in English. In this part of the text, we get to see what Francisco experienced as he went into his classroom for the first time and heard his teacher speak in English. Below is an excerpt of what Alejandra read and the moment a student interrupted with something to share related to language practices:

_Cuando la maestra comenzó a hablar, yo no entendía nada de lo que estaba diciendo; ni una palabra. Cuanto más hablaba ella, más ansioso me ponía. Al final de la clase me sentía muy cansado de escuchar a la señorita Scalapino ya que los sonidos no tenían ningún sentido para mí. Pensé que a lo mejor poniendo mayor atención_
empezaría a entender, pero no fue así. Sólo conseguí un dolor de cabeza y en la noche, cuando me fui a acostar, oía la voz de la maestra en mi cabeza.

[When the teacher started speaking, I did not understand a word she was saying. The more she spoke, the more anxious I became. By the end of the day, I was very tired of hearing Miss Scalapino talk because the sounds made no sense to me. I thought that perhaps by paying close attention, I would begin to understand, but I did not. I only got a headache, and that night, when I went to bed, I heard her voice in my head.]

Student: Can I tell you something? When I first came when I was six years old, the first time we went to school, I was lucky because all of the girls wanted to be my friend. We started being friends in second grade and up to fifth grade. They were the ones that helped me understand. I started learning and now we only speak English.

Alejandra: You don't think about Spanish?

Student: Well I speak Spanish with my mom. Every time I speak English with my sister she doesn't really like it cuz she says that I have to speak Spanish with my sister at home so she won't forget it.

Alejandra: Yes and remember. Acuérdense: ¿una persona que habla dos idiomas vale más que? [Remember: A person that speaks two languages is worth more than what?]

Students: ¡Una! [One!]

Alejandra: Una persona que solamente habla un idioma, que no deja ese idioma atrás. [one person that only speaks one language, that doesn’t leave that language behind.]
In this exchange, precipitated by the reading and the student’s interruption that was welcomed by Alejandra, we can see how the text triggered something for the student. The teacher’s flexibility with the instruction provided the space and time for the student to share. Also, the Alejandra’s questions about the student’s language practices helped her and the class understand how she communicates in Spanish and in English. The final remarks show that this is something that they have discussed in the past with this motto of “one person that speaks two languages is worth more than one” and student participation in saying it out loud with their teacher. They also show, along with the other two examples discussed in this section, that the teacher makes use of extensive student participation in order to both meet the content and language objectives of the lesson, and to discuss culturally relevant issues.

The student that shares her experience here lets us know about the influence that her childhood friends had on her in learning how to speak in English. At this point in the memoir, the students have not been introduced yet to another key character, Arthur, a classmate who becomes Francisco’s friend as they speak in Spanish together in school (until they are reprimanded by the teacher for doing so). Even though they have not read this part in the text - which will help them as writers to consider how to introduce other characters and develop relationships in their personal narratives- it will now become even more special when read, as they will have in mind this student’s experience when they read this on their own (they are left to finish that chapter from the memoir independently for homework). On the one hand, Alejandra used this moment shared by the student to unpack the issue of language practices. On the other hand, this moment serves as further support for these writers in class to consider the people that impact our lives and — later when they read about this with Francisco’s life and his classmate — how writers create these characters to further support the development of key themes in their writing.
Pedagogy and Text Selection

When looking across Appendices A and B, both modifications, the pedagogy and the text selection for analysis created two very different kinds of lessons. As discussed in the introduction to the chapter, the classroom teacher did not have the time to follow the curriculum as given with the suggested seventeen lessons for the unit. Nor can the teacher include the recommended activities that are given as prerequisites for some lessons. For example, prior to this lesson, the curriculum says that the teacher has to read the mentor text in order to teach the suggested demonstration lesson in session five. It is assumed that teachers would have the time to do such a lesson.

In order to maximize the time that she has with the students and to consider that the classroom had students who were at different levels not only in English and Spanish, but also with their familiarity with writing workshop, the teacher decided to do both an interactive read aloud and demonstration of noticing strategies of writing around dialogue within one instructional class period. The lesson in the TCRWP curriculum is a mini-lesson that uses the demonstration method to teach students how to analyze a mentor text. This makes sense assuming that students have had the experience with writing narratives in fifth grade, fourth grade, third grade, and so on. Therefore, it is appropriate for the TCRWP curriculum in that case, to have the teacher demonstrate one specific craft move for narrative writing and expect students in the class to come up with other ways of analysis as they have done so for years in previous writing workshops.

In the case of the research study classroom, the students are not all experienced with writing workshop lessons from mentor narratives or the traditional teaching method of demonstration and active engagement in a mini-lesson. Although the students in Alejandra’s
classroom were not all familiar with writing workshop, they were familiar with stories, their own experiences with storytelling, and most important, as discussed in the previous section, are moved by the content of the mentor text that mirrored their own experiences in this country. For Alejandra, it made more sense to change her pedagogical approach, from a demonstration mini-lesson to an interactive read aloud. In this way, there were several places to pause for her to demonstrate analysis of a text (more so than a demonstration standardized mini-lesson would allow) and to allow for more student participation, given the varied experiences with workshop and storytelling in her classroom. This interactive teaching method allowed more room for students to participate with comments related to the goal of the lesson and with comments related to matters of their bilingual lives as mostly Dominican-Americans, some as immigrants, and all as writers.

The selection of a mentor text also impacted the student interaction and allowed for more interpretation and application of strategies for this classroom of writers. Although the “Inside Out” text is used in the TCRWP curriculum in the reading unit that launches reading workshop for sixth graders, these students had not seen this text in their reading class. Alejandra decided to use it for its brevity and applicability to their lives. Although the “Everything Will Be Okay” text in the TCRWP curriculum is powerful as a mentor narrative for the different moves mentioned in the lesson and for the themes of growing up, conceptions of masculinity, family, relationships, gendered expectations, and animal cruelty, this was best left as one of the texts in the students’ reading packets for literary essays in their following writing unit. The “Inside Out” text allowed students to participate more, given their connection with Francisco’s experience of learning English and starting at a new school. This made the author’s craft analysis work a much easier transition from understanding the content, since the matters discussed in the text were close to
their lives. This says a lot about our mentor text selections across a unit considering the time we have with students.

6.3 Class Session Two: Studying Leads in Mentor Texts

“Today we’re going to explore some leads. I’m going to show you how writers use different types of leads to start their stories and you’re going to have time to try them in your own stories,” Alejandra shares when setting up her class for the work of this class session. As opposed to the other session discussed, this class session is not an interactive read aloud of one text but a mini-lesson that guides the students through a study of several texts, focusing on leads, or ways narrative author’s start text. In Appendix C you can see the Personal Narrative Mentor Leads Chart, a tool created by Alejandra for students to use in this lesson. It shows how some narrative authors begin with dialogue, others with revealing actions, others use vivid imagery for setting description, while some use a combination of these to start their stories. After each lead analysis the writers in class were to practice the types of leads in their own writing (using this tool to write down their ideas). After they try these in their writing through writing partnership discussions and quick jotting of ideas, they work on their drafts on their own for the remaining time of the class period. As with session five from the TCRWP curriculum, Alejandra modified the use of the curriculum for this lesson, this time, from session seven titled “Rehearsing: Experimenting with Beginnings.” The overview of session seven describes this transition from the work done prior to this lesson to this one as follows:

You spent the first bend of the unit getting all the students launched as writers of personal narratives, helping them to feel that their lives are worth writing about and that they can write about compelling moments with insight and craft. In today’s session, the start of the second bend in the road of this unit, students will turn from generating many personal
narrative story ideas toward developing one narrative into a publishable piece of writing. This will be a noticeable shift for your students as they move from writing a new narrative each day to committing to just one story and taking that story through the whole writing process. (Calkins, Fell, Marron, 2014, p. 62)

As with the previous session analyzed, this lesson too showed three key modifications of the curriculum. First, the students’ linguistic and cultural repertoires were embraced through the use of flexible language in class discussions and in the reading of the texts, in Spanish and in English, with teacher-created translations of two of the three texts. Second, her pedagogical approach was changed from the demonstration mini-lesson in the TCRWP curriculum to a guided inquiry mini-lesson with multiple times for students to practice a strategy after the published text and teacher examples. Third, the text selection was modified, changing the TCRWP recommended text in order to continue using the “Inside Out” text in addition to two other texts. These two additional texts added are illustrated books. All of the texts deal with issues that the students experience in their lives (learning a new language, being new in school, poverty, making friends, and moving). This lesson also reveals a fourth modification, the use of teacher-written demonstration writing that is shared with students to show how the teacher transfers the strategies learned from mentor texts.

Using the Students’ Full Linguistic and Cultural Repertoire

“Me ayudó porque Ms. Medina nos contaba su historia cuando ella cosa.

Entonces eso nos motivó a escribir esa historia”

[“It helped me because Ms. Medina would tell us her story when she um.

So that motivated us to write this story”] (Interview with Oscary, June 3, 2016)
Alejandra reads the lead from the first text selection, *I Hate English*, an illustrated children’s book by Ellen Levine. As she reads each line in English, she translates it to Spanish. The students can see the pages of the text in English projected on their screen since Alejandra prepared this beforehand with pictures of the pages to show the class.

*I hate English. Mei Mei said in her head in Chinese.*

*Odio el inglés. Mei Mei dijo en su pensamiento.*

*Mei Mei was smart in school. In her school in Hong Kong in Chinese.*

*Mei Mei era una niña muy inteligente en su colegio en Hong Kong cuando hablaba chino.*

*But her family moved to New York. She didn't know why. She didn’t want to move. All she said all that in Chinese.*

*Pero su familia decidió irse a Nueva York. Ella no sabía por qué decidieron hacer eso.*

*Tampoco quería mudarse. Todo lo que decía era en chino.*

*Chinatown in New York was ok. People looked like people she knew. People talked like people she knew. In Chinese.*

*Chinatown en Nueva York estaba bien. La gente se veía como la gente que ella conocía y la gente hablaba el idioma que ella sabía. En chino.*

“A Turn and tell your partner 'how does she start the story?”,” Alejandra instructs the class and students discuss in writing partnerships at their tables. In one partnership, you can hear a student say “she starts with inner thinking, with the thoughts she has in her head.” Alejandra’s use of a text in English and translating the lead allowed the students to quickly implement this strategy in their own writing before they proceeded to another example from another text.
Following this example and the teacher’s application of the strategy of inner thinking, students not only practiced this in their own writing but also were given the time to co-create a class chart with the ways they were describing the character’s thoughts in their writing. The teacher used the students’ full linguistic repertoire in this part of the lesson, acknowledging the ways the students would describe inner thinking in Spanish and in English. Here is an excerpt from the lesson that details the class discussion:

Alejandra: I’m going to write this here because we're going to make a chart. I heard some of you said "pensé" right, "pensaba," and someone I think, that's right. Pensé, pensaba. I. Yo. Thought. ¿Por qué? Porque en castellano qué hacemos? Pensé significa la persona, uno mismo. ¿Pero en inglés que le tenemos que añadir?

Students: I

Student: I was thinking to myself.

Alejandra: Ooh! Pensé. Muy bien. También podemos decir "estaba pensando". You can write this down because this will help you. This actually helped me and it will help you. Entonces pensé significa I thought. Pensaba significa "I was thinking to myself" and this one will be "I was thinking."

[Teacher writes these on a chart with Spanish on one side and English on the other]

Alejandra: Ok we can work this out. So when we want to use inner thinking we want to tag our inner thoughts. This is more clear cuz we're going to be using this. If you have a question. ¿Tienen alguna pregunta? ¡Háganla! Estas son cómo las palabras claves.
In this discussion, we see Alejandra addressing language objectives while meeting the content objectives of the lesson. It is not just about what strategy or technique an author uses to start a narrative but also how we communicate this in our writing in Spanish and in English. By taking this time—about 3 minutes—to discuss the ways we would communicate our character’s inner thinking in our writing, the teacher shows her awareness that the students can do this quite well.

For the second text example, Alejandra continues this thread of awareness of students’ linguistic and cultural repertoire by inviting them to join her in the reading of the text in Spanish and in English. The following is an excerpt of that part of the lesson.

Alejandra: ¿Alguien me puede ayudar? Yo voy leyendo en inglés y uno lée el párrafo.

[Student raises their hand to volunteer]

Alejandra: Ok. Muy bien. Solamente yo voy a leer un párrafo y tu lées el otro párrafo. ¿Listos? Eyes up here now. This is focusing on the setting. En un lugar. Es un nuevo comienzo. Y comienza así.

[Alejandra begins reading Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson and a student follows her reading by reading the translation into Spanish.]

Alejandra: That winter, snow fell on everything, turning the world a brilliant white.

Student: Ese invierno, la nieve cayó encima de todo a nuestro alrededor, convirtiendo a el mundo blanco y brillante.

Alejandra: [instructs students to look at the illustrations in the book] Look over here.

Alejandra: [Alejandra continues reading Each Kindness in English]

One morning, as we settled into our seats, the classroom door opened and the principal came in. She had a girl with her, and she said to us, this is Maya. Maya looked down at the floor. I think I heard her whisper Hello. We all stared at her. Her coat was open and
the clothes beneath looked old and ragged. Her shoes were spring shoes, not meant for the snow. A strap on one of them had broken.

Student: [Student reads the same excerpt in Spanish]

Una mañana, mientras nos acomodamos en nuestros asientos, la puerta del salón se abrió y la directora entró. Ella venía con una niña, y ella nos dijo, Esta es Maya. Maya miró hacia el cielo [Teacher corrects: suelo] suelo. Creo que la oí susurrar Hola [Teacher goes to correct but then says "you're right, you're right"].

Todos la miramos fijamente. Su abrigo estaba abierto y la ropa que tenía debajo se veía vieja y desigual. Sus zapatos eran zapatos de primavera, no adecuados para la nieve. La correa de uno de sus zapatos se habían roto.

With the first text excerpt, Alejandra decides to let the students identify the technique used in the lead. In this example, she decides to tell the students that the lead uses setting details. Once again, in addition to meeting the content goals of the lesson with teaching students how to rehearse leads of narratives by looking at published texts, Alejandra also meets linguistic demands by having the text translated and asking a student to volunteer reading the Spanish translation. By welcoming the Spanish translation, there is not just validation of the language but also a move to make the transferability of the technique much more accessible with the text read in Spanish. Regarding her use of mentor texts this way, Alejandra reflects in the interview:

I use mentor texts in both languages, Spanish and English, and when I plan the shared readings, when we are looking at a Personal Narrative mentor text, I encourage the students to read, to do the shared reading with me, so I can start the shared reading, and then they can follow me and someone else can finish a paragraph and then another person does another paragraph. Or, sometimes, I read the version in English and I stop at one
paragraph and I chose a student to learn, to read it in Spanish, and we code switch, and we do it in a very organized way and we know when to stop. One paragraph I do, one paragraph you do, and so on. And when we stop and we do turn and talk to look at the noticings of the mentor texts and what is a personal narrative, when we do the turn and talk, that lets students, all of them, be a part of the lesson and be able to discuss their noticings about a mentor text. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

During the third reading of a mentor text, Alejandra reads the lead of “Inside Out” in English (something they had read as a class and discussed for the class session described in the first section in this chapter, a week before this lesson) and another student reads the same lead in Spanish.

**Pedagogy, Text Selection, and Sharing Teacher Writing Samples**

If Alejandra would have followed the same structure of the TCRWP curriculum for this session (session seven in the writing unit), she would have used only Francisco Jimenez’s “Inside Out” text lead, reread it, demonstrated one characteristic from the lead, and then given students an opportunity to notice others with their writing partners. Instead, Alejandra revisited the “Inside Out” lead rather briefly after two other texts, explaining to the students that they have spent enough time with this example (the previous week’s lesson described above) and they must move on to trying one in their writing:

Ese lo hemos visto bastante y hemos usado los dialogue tags y está escrito en una manera para que el lector entienda cómo se dicen las cosas. So we have really [writes examples on whiteboard] about nine minutes left. Pick the one that you love the best and rewrite only the beginning, the lead.
As described in the first section of this chapter, Alejandra and the class studied this lead carefully before they proceeded to notice other moves made by Jimenez, mostly on the use of dialogue. In this case, it was a helpful use of class time to add an analysis of the authors’ craft with leads by looking at different texts in addition to “Inside Out.” With regards to mentor text selection, Alejandra shares:

I asked for recommendations from my staff developer. We sat down together and we looked at other mentor texts that we could expose our students to with specific, with a specific purpose. I remember that we did different leads and within the leads we were focusing on specific writer's craft. When we did that, we had the texts in both languages. They were not available, but we translated and it is successful to use that strategy because again, you expose students to the same level of work, they produce the same level of work and then little by little they acquire the language as they listen to the texts in English, and then they can make, they understand, they make the connection. They know where they are, and what's happening in the story and how the author is doing it, rather than be lost just because it is in English and they don't understand a story that someone is reading to them. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

In this excerpt from the interview, Alejandra explains that the text selection was purposeful and that it was important for her that students understood the texts so translations were key.

*I Hate English* by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Steve Björkman, had a short enough lead that was accessible in both English and Spanish when read. The text also was engaging considering the shocking title and the immediacy with which the students reading it are introduced to a world of a student with struggles close to their own. Mei Mei, the main character in the text, has a contrasting experience in New York compared to her home in Hong Kong.
Although none of the students in the class came from Hong Kong or speak Chinese, this experiences of migration, language practices, community, and change are all ones that continue to impact their lives.

*Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis, provided students with a much different lead than what they had read in “Inside Out” and *I Hate English*. In this text, Woodson sets up the context with vivid setting details. She zooms in on the moments of a new student’s first day of school, from how the rest of the class sees her, to how she presents herself to others. Not only does this lead provide students with examples of vivid imagery (which can be returned to later for a study on how setting can be symbolic in a text), but it also helps them process their own first day of school moments. For some students, this was experienced with the rest of the class as they all started a new school for sixth grade, the start of their middle school years. For others, this was a moment that was not shared, as they arrived after the NYC Department of Education’s first day of school for that academic year. The way Woodson describes the main character with her clothing and shoes help readers and writers consider the reality of how the economic plight impacts children: *We all stared at her. Her coat was open and the clothes beneath looked old and ragged. Her shoes were spring shoes, not meant for the snow. A strap on one of them had broken.*

In order to allow space for an analysis of Ellen Levine’s, Jacqueline Woodson’s, and Francisco Jimenez’s leads, Alejandra guides the students through a mini-lesson that is part guided inquiry, “today we are going to look at how writers write memorable leads.” It is also part guided practice. She stops when she reads certain places in the texts and identifies the technique (“this describes the setting”). She also demonstrates this in her own writing. This method allows Alejandra and the students to read texts in Spanish and in English, look at the teacher-written
examples, and transfer those strategies to student writing. See Appendix B to note, in the class chart for session two, how Alejandra does this twice in the lesson. First, she pauses after reading Levine’s lead to show students how she transfers the inner thinking technique to her own writing. Next, she tries this with the technique of setting details after reading Woodson’s lead. Here is an excerpt from Alejandra’s demonstration writing that she shares before students are to try this on their own:

So now you're going to try this lead which is starting with the setting. Listen to me as I show you how to do it. I can say "el sol entraba por la ventana. Mis ojos sentían y veían algo amarillo dentro de mis palpados. Los apreté porque sabía que era hora de levantarme. Um. Esa mañana hacía frío. Tenia muchas cobijas encima mío. A pesar que el sol estaba afuera, yo vi por la ventana como las hojas de los árboles habían cambiado de color. En ese momento me di cuenta de que alguien llamaba por mí desde abajo.

"Melissa, apúrate, ya es hora de irnos, vamos a llegar tarde al colegio.” Con mucho dolor saque las cobijas encima mío y puse mis pies en el piso. Mire el uniforme. Mire el reloj y me dije, si ya es casi tarde.

Although this pedagogical practice takes much more time compared to the TCRWP method of demonstration of analysis of one excerpt from one mentor text, Alejandra allows students to see multiple examples and to practice the application of strategies immediately after seeing these examples multiple times, three times in total.

Considering the experience this class has had with writing workshop, practicing strategies frequently through a guided mini-lesson makes more sense in order to allow students the exposure to texts and the time to practice these strategies in their own writing. In addition to these benefits, the students, who already have limited time with this classroom teacher given
their compartmentalized middle school structure of different subject areas taught by different teachers, get to build more trust with their writing workshop teacher. With each lead that she tries, Alejandra lets the students in not only to her style of writing, but also into her life story! This helps them continue building community and a space where they can feel comfortable enough to share. The teacher does not assign tasks that she herself has not tried first, showing students that this can be done and that it helps us to do so in order to reveal more of ourselves in our personal narratives. This also builds the teacher's role as a "writer" and not just a "teacher of writing." This is a crucial difference when comparing her implementation of the lesson with the TCRWP Unit of Study that uses professionally-written pieces, whether as published texts or those written by the TCRWP staff and included in the curriculum resources.

This pedagogical approach also allows Alejandra to get in some quick writing conferences. Regarding conferring work, Alejandra notes:

Throughout the process we do conference, we confer. I'm not the only one conferring and I learned this because sometimes you have so many students in a class that you cannot get to everybody, so what I do is that I know with whom they are working and they can confer in partnerships and I always tell them: "I don't have the right answer all of the time. I probably have it once in a while. Your partner knows more, so before you come to me, you ask your partner. If your partner doesn't know, you ask your group. Then, if someone in your group doesn’t know, then try to ask another person from another group, Then, if no one knows the answer, you can ask me. But I am the last resource." Cuz I want to show them that they can lean on each other not only for social purposes but also to learn, for academic purposes, and that's how we develop our community of learners cuz then they're not afraid of asking their question to their friend and their friend is not
afraid of giving an answer or maybe they know not to laugh, right? or to say oh he or she doesn't know this, and he or she is less than me or knows less than me because of this.

They learn their strengths. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

Alejandra is fully aware of the constraints of class size and class time. Therefore, Alejandra maximizes the writing partnership times to have students give each other feedback, knowing that she cannot be the only one giving writing feedback. “Your partner knows more,” she tells the students as she acknowledges that these writers know how to help one another. She tells them that they should check in with each other first, before they go to her for support. This is key in validating their knowledge of writing.

6.4 Class Session Three: Internal and External Storytelling

“Yo me acuerdo que una vez Ms. Medina nos estaba enseñando lo que era la idea principal. Entonces como ella estaba hablando de la idea principal yo dije yo puedo poner mi idea principal de mi narrativa personal en mi historia. También me acuerdo que Ms. Medina nos enseñó del tema. El tema también es cómo la idea principal. Solo que yo hice un cambio. Porque mi tema fue yo le cambié porque mi tema era de la primera vez que yo vine aquí. Aquí también yo puse diferentes temas. Porque además de la primera vez que yo vine aquí también está por ejemplo la primera vez que yo vi a mi hermano en mucho tiempo, cuando vi a mi a mi papá y mis tres tíos. Porque tenía mucho que no veía a mi papá. Entonces yo puse como muchos temas y muchas idéas principales en mi historia cuando yo aprendí con Ms. Medina.” (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

In this third lesson, Alejandra teaches students a strategy for revising narratives that includes using a graphic organizer of a mountain to note the actions in the text (noting them on external part of the mountain) and the character’s feelings (noting them on the internal part of the
mountain). The TCRWP curriculum has this as session ten and it is taught in a demonstration mini-lesson format with the teacher showing students how they create their story mountain following each part of their narrative. During the active engagement, students sketch out their own story mountains and one partner gets to select one plan and tell their story to the other partner. Partners number two get to share during the first half of the independent writing time, and both partners get to continue writing and revising during the second half of the independent writing time.

As with the other lessons, Alejandra’s modifications to this lesson included the use of the students linguistic and cultural repertoire, a change to the pedagogical practice (from the TCRWP demonstration method to a guided practice method), different mentor text (from the TCRWP recommendation of using the teacher’s piece to create story mountains to Alejandra’s selection of a published text). Appendices A and B show the pacing and components for Alejandra’s lesson and the TCRWP lesson for Internal and External Storytelling.

**Using the Students’ Full Linguistic and Cultural Repertoire**

Student: She [Jacqueline Woodson] wrote. Ella escribió el libro para dejarle saber a todo el mundo, no hay una diferencia solo porque son diferentes colores, porque tienen diferente colores de piel. Porque todos somos humanos y que todos deberíamos de llevarnos bien.

Alejandra read *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis in this lesson and pauses throughout the reading to guide students in their creation of internal and external story mountains for the text. This practice is to help the students later create their own versions of the internal and external timelines for homework as another revision strategy for their narratives. As the opening quote shows, this lesson, although serving as support for the revision
stage of the writing process with internal/external story mountains, also served to help students think about how authors reveal key messages in their texts. In this excerpt, a student said that she thought Woodson wrote the text to “let the world know that there isn’t a difference just because people are different color, because they have different skin color because we are all humans and we should all get along.” This is a powerful takeaway from a text, not only for a theme that the student interpreted, but also for the effect that the scaffolded process of analysis has on students as writers to also develop their key message(s) or what the TCRWP lesson asks them to do which is to ask the question “what is this story really about?”

As with the other lessons, Alejandra continues the practice of making texts accessible for the students and guiding them through an analysis of author’s craft by pausing throughout. Encouraging the use of Spanish in the translation of the text and in discussion allows for higher levels of participation and elaboration from students. Here is an excerpt from the first discussion after Alejandra began to read the book:

Alejandra:  [reads the beginning of The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson]

Once, when we were jumping rope, she asked if she could play. And my friend Sandra said no, without even asking the rest of us. I don’t know what I would have said. Maybe yes. Maybe no.

Alejandra: Right?

Ese verano la niña se sentaba en esa cerca. A veces me miraba y yo la miraba a ella fijamente. Right? Después dice que la niña le dijo a los niños si es que podían a jugar a saltar la - cuerda y una de las niñas dijo no.

Alejandra: So. I'm going to start thinking on the outside. Watch me first because then you will do it. On the outside. I'm going to focus on the? Actions. The,
Clover is the name of the girl, the Black girl. So I will say [teacher writes on the whiteboard], Clover is prohibited to cross the fence. Prohibited means to what?

Student: Not allowed.

Alejandra: It's not. ¿En castellano, cómo se dice?

Students: Prohibido.


On the inside, how did she feel?

Student: Mal.

Alejandra: I'm gonna say [writes on whiteboard]. Oh and I'm gonna add one more thing here: because it was unsafe. And in here, I'm going to put how is she feeling. How is she feeling?

Student: Do we have to copy that?

Alejandra: No. I'm showing you. I just want you to look.

Student: I think she felt kind of a little bit sad because they said no she can't play, she can't cross the fence.

Although the students do not have copies of the text in Spanish, Alejandra translates as she reads each page and pauses to show students how to add on to their internal/external story mountains. Alejandra asks students for the translation of “prohibited,” a key word in the text as the fence is the place where the characters meet, where their friendship grows, and the place that grows greater significance around social issues. Alejandra elaborates on this and reminds students of the importance of paying attention to repeated words in texts.
Alejandra continues reading in English]

Mama wouldn’t let me go out in the rain. “That’s why I bought you rainy-day toys,” my mama said. “You stay inside here—where it’s warm and safe—word is coming back again—and dry.” But every time it rained, I looked for that girl. And I always found her. Somewhere near the fence.

[Alejandra translates]

Mi madre no me dejaba ir afuera cuando estaba lloviendo. “Es por eso que te he comprado juguetes para que juegues cuando llueva. Tu te quedas aquí adentro—donde esta calentado, seguro y seco.

Student: ¿Y qué quiere decir?

Alejandra: Oh good. I love that. I like that. As readers, right, we have identified that there are two words that keep coming, and coming, and coming back. Now as writers, we have to think, huh? Why did this writer, por qué este escritor sigue usando las dos palabras: la cerca y el lugar que está seguro. ¿Por qué? ¿Cual es la intención? Remember, we’re revisiting, we’re going to revisit [Student interrupts]

Student: So they can’t be together.

Alejandra: To see what is really important in this text.

Alejandra’s flexible language use permits her and students to consider the symbolism in this text. Even though that is not the goal of the lesson or the “reading like a writer” activity as they jot the feelings and actions of the characters, the quick mention of repeated objects and words in the text helps the students as both readers and writers. With this activity and others in this unit (as described with the reading of “Inside Out” in class session one and the leads analysis
in class session two), Alejandra shows how she is supporting the bilingual students’ identities as readers and writers. Similar to the work of Katie Wood Ray in *Wondrous Words* (1999) Alejandra and the students “searched for patterns of language use, trying to understand what wondrous words have in common across many different, beautiful texts” (Wood Ray, 1999, p.162). For Wood Ray, reading like a writer means to attend to the craft of writing. She notes that it is imperative “to understand that for our students to learn to read like writers, they first have to see themselves as writers” (Wood Ray, 1999, p. 14). This is the work that Alejandra does with her bilingual pedagogy and curriculum modification that considers the act of reading to analyze the moves that author’s make and for students to try these out in their own writing.

The translation of the text as they read and Alejandra’s knowledge of the students’ cultural repertoires are also important for Alejandra’s instruction and can be seen in the following interaction.

Alejandra: [Teacher continues reading the text]

*I got close to the fence and that girl asked me my name. “Clover,” I said. “My name’s Annie,” she said. “Annie Paul.” “I live over yonder,” she said, “by where you see the laundry. That’s my blouse hanging on the line.”*

Alejandra: “The line” es el cordón de ropa que usamos para tenderla.

Student: El tendero.

Alejandra: El tendero. Yes. Good connection. Sometimes we look out - have it in the city. You look outside the building. Actually, this building right next to us they do have it.

Similar to the first lesson discussed in this chapter when Alejandra was reading “Inside Out” by Francisco Jiménez and briefly discussed the Goodwill store with the students, here we
see how connecting to language and community references helps explain matters in the text. Students are not only welcomed to participate this way in whole class discussions but also throughout their partnership work. After Alejandra finished reading the book and the students shared in partnerships one final time to work on the internal and external storytelling, she asked them to discuss the themes in the text, what Jacqueline Woodson wanted them to know as readers and writers. One student said, “She wrote. Ella escribió el libro para dejarle saber a todo el mundo, no hay una diferencia solo porque son diferentes colores, porque tienen diferente colores de piel. Porque todos somos humanos y que todos deberíamos de llevarnos bien.” Again, students translanguaging practice in their discussions along with the teacher’s use of translanguaging as pedagogy (through modeling of writing strategies) and communicative practice (through translating text and facilitating discussions), allow concepts to be elaborated upon in both partnerships and whole class conversations. This is crucial because students’ Spanish and English use is not inhibited but encouraged, and they feel comfortable enough to share what they know about issues that the text brings up for them as readers and writers. They can question what something means in a text (e.g. “safe” repetition) as well as how an author develops a story through characters’ actions and emotions giving the students more strategies for their own narratives.

**Pedagogy and Text Selection**

After reading the first scene in the text, *The Other Side*, Alejandra says: “So I’m going to start thinking on the outside. Watch me first because then you will do it. On the outside I’m going to focus on the actions.” This is the first and only time that she pauses the reading for her to show the students how to note the internal and external storytelling. For the following four pauses where she asks students to work in partnerships to jot and discuss the feelings and
actions, Alejandra coaches into different partnerships as she walks around the room. This means that she walks around the classroom listening to the conversations students are having with their partners and gives them feedback. The “coaching” feedback was either related to the process of the work (sequence of steps to follow to complete the task), the content of the work (feelings vs. actions for internal vs. external notes on the story mountain), the language support (providing strategies for integrating the students’ full language repertoire), or supporting the transfer of the strategies (helping students see how this work connects to their work in their narratives). There is one final student partnership conversation, and this fifth one is on themes that they noticed the author revealing in the text. Given the interaction nature of this lesson with one teacher demonstration and five student interactions with teacher facilitation (whole class) and coaching (in partnerships), this lesson can best be described as one that uses the guided practice method.

There was a clear goal that was demonstrated by the teacher with several steps. At each step, in this case parts of the story (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution), the teacher set the students up to work in partnerships, using details from the scene she had just read aloud in English and translated to Spanish. This structure of the lesson allows for a lot of student participation, unpacking of the text, and multiple times to practice a strategy.

This is helpful when considering the many students who did not have years of workshop experience from kindergarten through sixth grade. Instead, as mentioned in previous discussions of other class lessons, most students were new to writing workshop and repeated practice was a strategy that Alejandra used to make sure students felt confident with their writing after they had understood how mentor authors tried certain techniques. Alejandra also says the following regarding this structure:
They, we did turn and talk a lot. Ah, it's funny because, and then we also did a lot of share outs and they like to share! They all want to share and they will get upset when I will say this is the strategy right, okay, everyone turn and talk, so we make sure everyone is heard and you share, but when you only can pick some students so you can continue going on, sometimes it's difficult [laughing] to tell them "not today, tomorrow, you will be the first one tomorrow". So for that, I had these cards, right here, so we had the speaker manager. So, there was one person in charge of calling the first person to participate, and then after that to make sure that everyone will speak. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2015)

The guided practice method of teaching for this lesson allowed students to continue sharing in partnerships when they were not able to share with the whole class. It also gave Alejandra the time to coach into partnership talk, and to listen in to students' understanding of the text and of internal (describing the feelings the character has across the text) vs. external storytelling (describing the actions a character takes in the text).

In the previous lesson studied, Alejandra read the lead to Each Kindness to show how students can develop setting in their pieces. For this lesson, Alejandra read The Other Side in its entirety, paused at each part of the story, and had students practice noticing the actions and emotions of the characters, as well as how these were developed. Although The Other Side is not a personal narrative, it did meet the goals of the lesson and was a short enough narrative that was accessible not only in length for that one session, but also in reading complexity. Alejandra easily translated as she read the book and students were able to follow both plot and writing techniques when it was read aloud to them and when they were given time to discuss it in partnerships. Although the TCRWP curriculum has this lesson as a minilesson with a brief
demonstration using the teacher’s narrative draft, the way Alejandra taught it using Woodson’s
The Other Side was useful for internal and external storytelling analysis. Most important, if the
goal of the lesson is to go through this process of creating an internal/external story mountain to
make sure one can answer the question “what is this story really about?” then this modification
works well considering the students’ conversations throughout and at the end of the lesson.

6.5 Class Session Four: Editing Transition Phrases

At this point in the TCRWP curriculum, after students have asked “what is my story
really about” and created an internal/external storytelling visual for their stories, they are taught
how to elaborate their scenes and how to add new ones from the past and future. This is the goal
of the lesson that follows the previous one. After Alejandra analyzed the first piece of narrative
writing that the students wrote in her class (“on demand writing piece”) and got to know their
writing through the process in the first three weeks of this unit (“writing entries” and “first
draft”), she decided that she would not teach this lesson from the TCRWP curriculum. Alejandra
explained her planning process for the unit the following way:

So, the on demand is very important to me because I see where they are, they can see
where they are starting, and when they finish their piece they can see their growth
through their process. So, I start with the on demand assessment after looking at the unit
of study. Then, based on the on demand assessment, I select the minilessons per bend.
There are some that need to be taught maybe with more time, and there are some lessons
that sometimes we can skip. And I learned that it's okay to skip when they know
something already because you just remind them of what they know. You know that they
know it because you have the proof! Right! And I learned to go back to a lesson that it
didn't work. So, I usually plan, I have my map, and I look at my map so I know what my
ultimate goal is. And while we go to class and we learn, I adjust those lessons.

Sometimes, I can finish one lesson in one day. Some other times I need to finish one lesson in two days and that is okay because they need to learn what is going to move them to the next step. (Interview, Alejandra, September 1, 2016)

The lesson that Alejandra decided to teach was one on editing for transition phrases. Even though the students were not going to be working on adding new moments from their past or a future moment in their narrative (as the TCRWP curriculum recommends for this session), they would still need to make sure their narrative flowed seamlessly with transitions. Appendix B shows the pacing and components for this lesson.

Using the Students’ Full Linguistic and Cultural Repertoire in Class Discussions and Culturally Relevant Text Selection

In this lesson, Alejandra continues her acknowledgment of the students’ linguistic and cultural repertoires as she selects an excerpt from the text El color de mis palabras/The Color of My Words by Lynn Joseph. Students were already familiar with the text as they were reading it in their reading class with another teacher. Although that teacher only read the text in English and taught the lessons in English, she did make copies in Spanish available for the students to read on their own and to follow along. In this class, Alejandra used the excerpt to show the transition phrases and then to have students work in partnerships to find other examples in that same chapter. After the students worked with their partners to identify some transition phrases, Alejandra called the class back together to have them share, while she created a chart with their observations. She then set them up for their independent writing work, telling them that they would start on a new sheet of paper, working on a different draft so that they can edit their transitions phrases and work on other things they might want to add.
As with all three of the previous lessons studied, Alejandra used a culturally relevant text. *El Color de mis palabras/The Color of My Words* is a realistic fiction chapter book that takes place in the Dominican Republic. The main character, Ana Rosa, loves to write. She tells stories and although her father was a complicated figure in her life and in the story, he becomes her number one fan, motivating her to write about what happens in their community as the government plans to take their land to create attractions for tourists. Ana Rosa’s brother, Guario, decides to organize with others and resist in other ways. The story resonates with the children not only because of the setting, as most students are from the Dominican Republic in this class, but also because of the themes of family, injustice, resistance, and writing. Ana Rosa’s love of writing, family, and community connects with the students, as they too write about family and community (chapter 4 details the participants’ writing).

During the independent work time, Alejandra met with a group of students to teach them a strategy that would help them organize and elaborate their narratives. The group was made up of five newcomer students. These were students that had been in the country less than two years. Here is an excerpt from one part of the small group strategy lesson.

Alejandra: [to the entire group after coaching one student] ¿Han escuchado lo que Ambary ha dicho? Ella está escribiendo sobre un momento especial que tuvo en este momento especial con una persona, su mamá. ¿Por qué su mamá es una persona tan especial para ella?

Student: porque ella nos dio la vida.

Alejandra: no escucha, escucha, dilo, dilo.

Ambary: mi mamá me hizo sonreír.

Alejandra: ¿Cuándo?
Student: [ ]
Alejandra: Es como lidiar con una pérdida. Se murieron los abuelos y su mamá estuvo allí para apoyarla.

Other Student: Y mi papá estuvo allí cuando se murió mi abuelo y yo lloraba y lloraba.
Alejandra: Ahora escribe de que se trata tu historia. ¿Cuál es el punto de tu historia de la que estás escribiendo?

The small group work shows Alejandra’s use of the guided practice teaching method and her knowledge of students’ language practices. Alejandra began the small group strategy lesson by telling students that if she had to describe and number the important scenes in the chapter “Palabras” in *El color de mis palabras*, she would do so quickly on a post-it and then take each post-it with the brief description of the scene (conflict, main problem, secondary character comes in, etc.) and elaborate it on looseleaf paper.

In the following excerpt from the small group work, we can also see how Alejandra values the students’ experiences. In this part, she discusses the student’s writing as the rest in the group continue working independently.

Alejandra: ¿De qué se trata tu historia?
Student: De mi primer día de escuela.
Alejandra: ¿Qué pasó en tu primer día de escuela?
Student: Yo me sentía muy triste porque era, porque yo no iba a tener amigos y era una nueva escuela
Alejandra: ¿Pero no solamente estabas cambiando de escuela pero habías cambiado de qué?
Student: De país
Alejandra: De país. ¿Y tu creés que esa historia es una historia válida que todo el mundo tiene que saber?

Student: Sí.

Alejandra demonstrated with the first scene and then asked students to try this in their own writing. She followed this format (“guided practice”) for each scene. Meaning, she first demonstrated how to quickly summarize what happened in one scene quickly on a post-it. Once she did this she asked students to try the strategy with their own stories. As students each tried the work in their own writing, Alejandra met with each student separately. After one or two feedbacks shared she interrupted the group and have the student share their example. At the end of the strategy lesson, Alejandra heard from each of the students and was able to provide brief feedback to get them to elaborate. She set them up to take each post-it and place each on a separate sheet of paper where they would elaborate on each for their next draft.

This lesson, although not in the TCRWP curriculum, follows the workshop model with the teacher demonstrating a strategy, students practicing quickly with a partner, students having time to write independently, and the teacher conducting a writing conference, in this case with one small group to show them a strategy. The same modifications that were evident in the previous lessons were seen here with the flexible language use, culturally relevant text selection, and guided practice teaching method that allowed students to participate in different ways.

A major difference with this lesson compared to the others is that the amount of writing time was maximized. Another difference was the small group work. The former difference permitted the latter to take place. This lesson in combination with the previous session, on trying out different leads as studied in mentor texts, achieves what Laura Harper’s writing workshop with her seventh graders did, providing options and a common language (Harper, 1997, p.199).
Both Harper and Alejandra’s middle school writing workshop create a space for students to see themselves as writers and to have ownership over their writing. Alejandra goes beyond Harper’s workshop model though, adding the component of flexible language practices, increasing student participation, validation of language practices, and encouraging elaboration in their revision stage. This shows that the workshop model is helpful for emergent bilingual students if the teacher considers the data they have on the students compared with the assumptions made by curriculum that students have already done the work of previous grades’ writing units and only in English. With the accommodations, students find the work accessible with the right amount of challenge and the teacher can provide feedback to a class that has diverse experiences with writing, bilingual practices, and writing workshop.

6.6 Class Session Five: Writing Partners Revise Using a Checklist

This lesson was very different from the other lessons not only in the modifications but also in the way that it is written in the TCRWP curriculum. First, the lesson is not developed with a sample script, coaching tips, and student samples, as other lessons are in the unit of study. Instead, this lesson, session twelve in the curriculum, is written as a three-page letter to teachers with recommendations for each component (minilesson, conferring/small-group work, share, homework). Session twelve, titled “Using All Available Resources to Aid with Final Touches” recommends that teachers begin the minilesson by “reminding students that writers have many tools, and that over the course of this unit, they have learned to keep those tools close at hand so they can use them often” (Calkins, Fell, Marron, p. 107). The session recognizes the difficulty in using checklists when there are several checklists and within one checklist there are several items within each category (structure, development, conventions). See Appendix F for the sixth grade narrative checklist (in English) used in the curriculum in this lesson. It is also the checklist used
by Alejandra in her creation of this lesson. See Appendix G for the Spanish translation of the TCRWP checklist, translated by Rebeca Donoso, a Chilean educator who was a literacy coach at Colegio Nueva Granada in Bogotá, Colombia, one of the TCRWP partner schools.

To create this lesson, Alejandra had the following resources: data on the students’ writing (on demand writing, first drafts, notes on conferences), TCRWP session twelve letter with recommendations, TCRWP checklists in English and Spanish (Appendices F and G), and TCRWP professionally-written narrative piece written at a sixth-grade level (See Appendix H) and the Spanish translation that Alejandra prepared (See Appendix I). In Appendix B you can see how Alejandra structured the lesson for session five, following a guided practice method with minimal teacher demonstration so that the time students had with their writing was maximized. The purpose of the lesson was for students to use the checklists to give each other feedback in writing partnerships. Alejandra began the lesson by reminding the students that this was not their first time using the checklist. In the TCRWP curriculum, session six is the lesson that introduces students to the use of the checklist with a student piece. Alejandra followed that lesson and selected a different piece of writing from the curriculum, translated it, and guided the students in analyzing the piece with that checklist. For the lesson analyzed below, a week later, they used the checklists with their own pieces and their partners’ narrative.

Using the Students’ Full Linguistic and Cultural Repertoires

From the first minute of the lesson when a student hands out copies of the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist to classmates at different tables, we see Alejandra’s continued use of the students’ full linguistic and cultural repertoires. After a student asks if they can get both the Spanish and English copies of the checklist, Alejandra says “Of course! If you want both English and Spanish, you can have them both. Actually, that is a wonderful idea,” and the
student monitor calls out “¿Quién más quiere en español?” (Class Session Five Transcript, October 20, 2015). Alejandra begins the writing workshop following the recommended component for engaging students: a connection. In this connection Alejandra does not completely follow the suggestion from the TCRWP letter to teachers for session 12 in the curriculum which states:

You might begin your minilesson by reminding students that writers have many tools, and that over the course of this unit, they have learned to keep those tools close at hand so they can use them often. You can tell students that many professionals use checklists to guide their work. Doctors and nurses use them as a reminder about proper procedures, as do attorneys, pilots, and even teachers. You can say that similarly, as writers near the finish line of a project, as your students are doing today, they often use checklists to remind them of all they need to do before they say, ‘Here you are, world!’ and present a finished piece (Calkins, Fell, Maron, 2014, p. 107).

Instead, Alejandra begins with making a comparison between a common practice in the students’ daily lives and the practice of using a checklist as writers. Here is Alejandra’s “connection” in this writing workshop:

Alejandra: When I go grocery shopping, cuando yo voy de compras al mercado, I have an idea. I know what I'm going to cook. Right? For example, si yo voy a concinar arroz con pollo, yo sé que necesito el arroz, el pollo, caldo [If I’m going to cook rice with chicken, I know I need the rice, the chicken, the seasoning]

Student: Sazón [seasoning]
Entonces yo voy haciendo mi lista de ingredientes que necesito para hacer el arroz con pollo. [So I make my list of the ingredients I need to make the rice with chicken.]

Así uno va haciendo su lista. [So one makes a list.]

Exacto. So when I go to the supermarket, am I like "what do I need to buy?" No! I already have a specific goal: a group of ingredients that I need to get to cook. Just like that, when we are going to use our checklist, this checklist has been already made for you. Ok. Next time we will try to make our own. Ya están listos para ustedes encontrar lo que tienen que tener en una narrativa. So we are not going to go to the supermarket. No vamos a ir al supermercado. ¿Adónde vamos a ir? [We are not going to go to the supermarket. Where are we going to go?]

A tu historia.

¿Vamos a ir a nuestra?

Historia.

We are going to look. We are going to use the checklist with our story next to it.

Alejandra’s example resonates with the students. The example is easily recognizable, applicable, and accessible for their understanding in English and Spanish.

This example can also be interpreted as another kind of modification of the curriculum: modifying the “connection” component of the lessons. Instead of using the recommended examples, metaphors, anecdotes, in the TCRWP curriculum, teachers can use examples from the students’ community, their experiences, their language practices, etc. Of course, this means that
the teacher must be knowledgeable of the students’ cultures and consider them valid. It must not be done in a condescending way or disingenuous way if the teacher does not know, but must be done to shine a light on the beauty of students’ lives. Research in multicultural education (Nieto, 1992; Banks, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Gay, 2002) has provided educators with several studies and examples on the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Christopher Emdin’s *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y’all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education* (2016) discusses different ways educators can make the content and pedagogy relevant to students lives in a way that is genuine and impactful. Whether it is through “cogenerative dialogues” (small groups of students that provide feedback on lessons) or considering that educators must “teach from the standpoint of an ally who is working with them to reclaim their humanity,” it is imperative to integrate students’ lives into the learning experiences that they have in schools, day in and day out (Emdin, 2016, p.40). Alejandra’s modifications do just that. They allow students’ lives to be a part of the curriculum.

Another major modification having to do with the use of students' linguistic and cultural repertoires, is that opposed to the deficit perspective that often looks at bilingual students’ performance in terms of what they “lack,” focusing a lot of the feedback on spelling and grammar mistakes, Alejandra ends the lesson with reminding students of the goal-setting they are to focus on, and none of it has to do with the “conventions” section on the checklist. The following is an excerpt from the final seven minutes in the lesson:

Class? I like to hear some of you have a mini-debate. So I hear. Algunos de ustedes están teniendo como un pequeño debate. Remember that this, the purpose of having this is to make sure that we are enhancing our piece. We are making it better. Acuérdense que el propósito es de hacer esta pieza, mejorarla. Mira y no paran de hablar. Está bien porque
eso nos dice que estás completamente conectada y has invertido tu tiempo en la historia de tu compañero y está bien porque ahora sus compañeros que les están dando las sugerencias los están ayudando mejorar. Si ellos dicen "estoy confundido en esta parte,"
"I'm confused in this part," then it's a signal for you to say "wow maybe I'm not being clear. Let's talk about why I'm not being clear and you are confused." Then, you make it better. Do you understand? So, for homework, when we come in tomorrow, we're just going to have to come into our stations. But for homework look at your checklist. You have three. Your checklist is divided into three categories. The first one is estructura, structure. The next one is desarrollo, development. And the last one is conventions. Look at me. Conventions, it's right here. These are called subtitles. You see how they are here in bold. Right? You have the title "Narrative Checklist" and then you have your subtitles. Tiene su título y subtítulo. Así es que, if you have something that you need to work on in the structure, that is your priority. Do you understand? So look right now. If you have something in your structure that you need to work on, for example: Andersen has here in the general / overall he is fine. But in his lead he didn't use one of the leads we learned. So for homework he's gonna work in his lead. Is that understood? So check right now. If in the first category. "My goal is to work on my lead"

[Students check their checklists to note what their goal is in this first category]

Class? Ok. So make sure you write that down. Now look at me. For those who actually that first part is fine, your partner said it's ok, we're gonna look at the next category, el desarrollo. If you have something that you need to work on in the desarrollo then that's your priority because in the structure you are fine. Look at me. The conventions section is the least important right now. No one in here should be working, I don't think that you are
there yet in the conventions. You should be either working on the goal that you have in
your structure or in your development. Is that understood? So in your notebooks write
your goal: today my goal is to work on. What is your specific goal? Mi meta hoy es.

The use of the checklist in Spanish and English helped students set their goals and their
teacher’s instructions to not focus on the conventions section allowed them to focus on the
structure and development of their piece. This way, the students can use what they already know
about storytelling from their own practices, from the writing workshop lessons, and from their
partner and teacher’s feedback, to further revise their pieces.

**Pedagogy**

Besides using the students’ full linguistic and cultural repertoires in the lesson (for the
connection, directions, and feedback), Alejandra also modified her pedagogical practice. The
letter to teachers in session twelve of the TCRWP curriculum for this unit recommends a
demonstration mini-lesson with students set up in partnerships to consider their own plans and
goals briefly during the active engagement. “Everyone should identify a few goals and places for
revision before they return to their seats and begin working toward those goals,” Calkins, Fell,
and Marron suggest in the mini-lesson section (2014, p. 108). For the conferring work during
independent writing time, teachers are recommended to take a look at students’ drafts to form
small groups according to patterns of revision that are needed according to the checklist (e.g.
leads, transitions, endings, elaboration to develop realistic characters, developing relationships
between characters, figurative language, etc.). In this lesson, Alejandra decided to have several
rounds where students would read and give each other feedback.

As seen in Appendix B with the detailed pacing and description of class session five,
Alejandra’s whole-class input was minimal, allowing students the time needed for them to read
their narratives out loud, give each other feedback, and reflect on their goals using the TCRWP checklists. The writing partner time was also effective for Alejandra to give feedback to students as she walked around the room meeting with two partnerships each time she asked them to either read out loud or share feedback. Here is how she set up the lesson:

Alejandra: This checklist is not new to us because we already used it with Julie's story [“My One Chance” TCRWP Professionally-Written Piece see Appendices H and I] remember we used the mentor text and how Julie wanted to be an adult and how she had realized that being an adult was not such an easy task? Here. So just right now have your story …

Alejandra: So partners number one, I want you to have. Look at Emiliano. You see how Emiliano has his story right in front of him? Partners number one make sure that you have your story right in front of you. The draft that you have done last. Partners number one, you look at me. You are going to read your story to partners number two. Your job is to read the story. Now when you read, you're not going to be [Teacher models reading fast and not making sense] reading so fast. No lo van a leer super rápido. You're going to make it?

Student: []

Alejandra: Yes you're going to make sure that the story provides its meaning. La historia tiene sentido porque van a respetar, you’re going to respect your commas, your exclamation marks, your quotation marks, everything. It's not about rushing. It's about making sure that your partner falls in love
with your story. Su pareja tiene que enamorarse de su historia. Partners number two. Partners number two listen to me: your job, tu trabajo, is to?

Students: Listen!

Alejandra: Listen to your partner number one. When your partner number one is done, together. Partner number one you're going to ask partner number two for feedback.

Student at Table 2 [newcomers table]: What's that?

Alejandra: Sugerencia. ¿Como puedo mejorar mi narrativa? Ok? Partners number two remember it's like when you're watching a tv show you need to understand everything and it has to make sense. If it doesn't make sense, there is something that is off. So your job is to be that inspector. Make sure that everything sounds good, you understand, you can visualize, you have leads, your gonna look at over the narrative checklist with your piece. If you have a question you need to raise your cards. If you have a question you need to raise your card. If you don't understand you need to let me know. Partners number one I think you'll have five, no, three minutes to read the story. Ok? Go!

These directions set up the students to work in partnerships independent of teacher support with the exception of the conferences.

The students seated at table two, those who met with Alejandra for a small group strategy lesson in the previous lesson, were the ones with the most questions. These students were the newcomers to the school, with less than two years in the country. These students, most of which had never worked with any TCRWP checklist, found that the checklist in Spanish was tough to
read for them and two of them out of five at that table were silent during the partner discussions (Class Session Five Field Notes, October 20, 2015). This is the table where Alejandra’s first conferences happened to help them understand what the descriptions for the categories meant by giving examples from her narrative as well as their drafts. This teaching method, of focusing on conferences during the writing period and only facilitating the work with pacing and explanations of examples, is helpful when there are several students that need one-on-one writing conferences. This example also shows that you can have a writing tool, like a checklist, or a text translated to the language students are most comfortable speaking in, yet it does not guarantee that students will understand the translation. Thankfully, Alejandra had the time to address the questions that came from students at table two with regards to the checklist. Students at table three (a heterogeneous group) asked for the TCRWP checklist in English because the translated one in Spanish was longer, “no porque es muy larga,” they said when the class monitor passed by at the beginning of the lesson with the copies (Class Session Five Field Notes, October 20*, 2015).

A partnership seated at table one, felt more comfortable using the checklist in English and while their teacher worked with students at table two with the Spanish translation, they worked on their own giving each other feedback. Here is their conversation after partner one read their narrative to partner two:

Partner One: [reads the lead section from the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist as seen in Appendices E and F] "I wrote a beginning that not only set the plot/story in motion but also hinted at the larger meaning the story would convey. It introduced the problem, set the stage for the lesson
that would be learned, or showed how the character relates to the setting in a way that matters in the story."

Partner Two: I think it was good.

Partner One: So do you think it was [reads columns on the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist] “No,” “Not Yet,” “Starting To” or “Yes?”

Partner Two: I think yes because you told us how it was outside. You told us about the blue dress.

Partner One: [reads next section from the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist] “I not only used transitional phrases and clauses to signal complicated changes in time, I also used them to alert my reader to changes in the setting to new point of view, or the time in the story (such as suddenly, unlike before, if only she had known).

Partner Two: “Starting to” because you were saying "what if my hair"

Partner One: If you were having a fifteenth birthday party where you have to go and you have to go do the [] like church, and you have to go to a party for your cousin, and a lot of people are staring at you and you're worried because if you fall you'll get embarrassed. I was supposed to be there for my cousin. I almost fell in the street and ruined my high heels. Like those are heels you put on for a party.

Partner Two: You were like five feet, three.

Partner One: No it wasn't that skinny thing. It was from here to [shows with hands]. It was kind of like this.

Partner Two: Oh like the ones [shows on footwear]
Partner One: Now. Ending. [reads this from the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist] “I wrote an ending that connected to what the story is really about. I gave the reader a sense of closure by showing a new realization or insight, or a change in the character/narrator. I might have shown this through dialogue, action, inner thinking, or small actions the character takes.”

Partner Two: “Not yet.”

Partner One: I would've said “Starting To.”

Partner Two: “Starting To” then. I mean “Not Yet” is like the same thing as “Starting To” cuz you're saying yet which means that you're going to.

Partner One: [Proceeds to the next and last item under the “Structure” category on the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist] “I used paragraphs purposefully, perhaps to show time and setting changes, new parts of the story or to create suspense for readers. I created a logical, clear sequence of events.” Ok I did create a logical sequence of events. I did use paragraphs purposely and I did use tension to show the reader how I'm feeling through each paragraph.

Partner Two: Which paragraphs have them?

Partner One: [shows on paper] Paragraph, paragraph, paragraph, paragraph, paragraph.

Partner Two: Ok!

Partner One: So I would say “Yes.”

Partner One: [reads this item under the “Development” section on the TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist] “Elaboration. I developed realistic
characters, and developed the details, action, dialogue, and internal
thinking that contribute to the deeper meaning of this story.”

Partner Two: You should've put that your mom hugged you or something that would've made it more.

Partner One: So what should I put?

Partner Two: “Yes.”

Partner one: Really? No. I would put “Starting To.” Read it. It says [rereads checklist excerpt] "develops realistic characters." You said, you suggested I needed realistic characters, and develop the details, actions, dialogue and inner thinking. I did that but.

Partner Two: Yeah you did the dialogue. You did it from [points to a section in the narrative] here and out and the action too.

Partner One: But for the rest I didn't, so I would say “Starting To.”

Partner Two: Well actually, you did develop the details. Your mom said "I love you" you said “I love you” back.

Partner One: So “Starting To.” Ok.

Partner One: “Craft” [reads craft section on TCRWP Sixth Grade Narrative Writing Checklist]

The teaching method that is centered on the students working in writing partnerships as teachers with Alejandra as facilitator and coaching into partnerships provides the time, space, and tools for this partner discussion to occur. These two partners spent the entire writing workshop reading their narratives out loud, going through half of the checklist item by item (structure and development categories), and giving each other feedback with specific ways they
can revise. Giving students the time to read their narratives out loud is crucial for this student population of bilingual children that need this throughout the school day, to hear their voices and get immediate feedback. In this partner discussion we see the students identify specific places in the text that exhibit the characteristics described in the checklist. We also see the students go back and forth trying to figure out which column to check off for “development.” We also see partner one, the author of the piece, disagreeing with partner two. Partner one shows her partner why they should jot “Starting to” and not “yes”, given that there is more work for them to do in developing realistic characters.

This work is important because students are working together using a tool and discussing strategies that are transferrable to other work and writing units in the writing workshop. The way Alejandra set up the lesson, used Spanish and English in her directions and with the tools, and moved from partnership to partnership in a more student-centered lesson gave the students and Alejandra time for immediate feedback. This in-the-moment feedback is central to writing workshop.

6.7 Conclusion

The modifications around language and culture use, teaching method, culturally relevant mentor texts, and sharing teacher writing, had an immense impact on the different student groups in the classroom and on Alejandra's understanding of her students and the TCRWP curriculum. One of the students, Ana, describes the difference between her experience in fifth grade the previous year when she first arrived from the Dominican Republic and her teacher would place her in front of a computer while the rest of the class participated in a lesson, compared to her learning as a part of the community in Alejandra’s writing workshop classroom:
Ana: Lo que ha cambiado es que la otra maestra no me enseñaba casi inglés porque cuando ellos estaban [mumbles] haciendo el exámen de inglés que ello estaban practicando, ella nada más me ponía a usar la computadora y no me decía “[Ana] ven practica esto en inglés” no me decía nada. [What has changed is that the other teacher didn’t teach me English because when they would be doing the English test that they were practicing she would only put me on a computer and would tell me “Ana come practice this in English” and wouldn’t tell me anything.]

Carla: Y usa la computadora. ¿Qué hacían en la computadora?

[And use the computer. What would you do on the computer?]

Ana: Uno ponía como un programa que ella nos ponían. [One would put on a program that she would put us on.]

Carla: ¿Para aprender inglés?

[To learn English?]

Ana: Un chín para aprender inglés. [A little to learn English.]

Carla: ¿Y cómo te hacía sentir eso cuando tú estabas en la clase y tenías que estar en la computadora.

[And how did that make you feel when you were in class and had to be on the computer?]

Ana: Que yo me daba cuenta como que ella, que ella. Como yo me daba cuenta que a mí y a otra amigita, que había llegado de Santo Domingo, que nosotras somos como una, una niña que, no me recuerdo.
[I would realize like she, she. Like I would realize that to me and my other friend that had arrived from the Dominican Republic, that we were like a, a girl that, I don’t remember.]

Carla: Sé que estás buscando la palabra. Entonces tu estabas pensando cuando yo te hice la pregunta: "¿Cómo te hace sentir cuando la maestra te ponía en la computadora?" ¿Qué tipo de sentimientos mientras la clase no estaba en la computadora, tú estabas en la computadora? ¿Qué te hacía sentir?

[I know you are trying to find the word. So you were thinking when I asked you the question: “How did it make you feel when the teacher put you on the computer?” What kind of thoughts, while the class was not on the computer, you were on the computer? What did that make you feel?]

Ana: Triste porque yo y mi amiguita queríamos aprender más inglés.

[Sad because me and my friend we wanted to learn more English.]

Carla: ¿Y cómo te sentiste en esta clase cuando estabas escribiendo este momento?

[And how did you feel in this class when you were writing this moment?]

Ana: Bien porque Ms. Medina cuando ella hacía algo en inglés ella no nos ponía en la computadora. Ella nos enseñaba mejor inglés.

[Good because Ms. Medina when she would do something in English she would not put us on the computer. She would teach us better English.]

Carla: Dame un ejemplo. Entonces ella hablaba inglés y después tú decías "nos enseñaba inglés". ¿Cómo te enseñaba inglés?
[Give me an example. So she spoke in English and then you said “she would teach us English.” How did she teach you English?]

Ana:  Ella nos enseñaba cuando ella decía, nos ponía hacer como un proyecto que ella decía, “escribelo en inglés” y no lo escribía. “Si tu no sabes una palabra en inglés, escribela en español.”

[She would teach us when she would say, she would put us to do like a project where she would say “write it in English” and I wouldn’t write it. “If you don’t know a word in English, write it in Spanish.”]

(Interview, Ana, June 6, 2016)

The TCRWP curriculum for the Personal Narrative writing unit for sixth grade meets students at the sixth grade level assuming that they have done the work of the previous narrative units from previous grades. As it is written, it also assumes that the students read, speak and write in English. This is not the case for Alejandra’s entire class.

For students like Ana, there needs to be a lot more support and modifications for the personal narrative unit. In fifth grade (at another school), Ana and others who were new to the country were not included in lessons but were placed on computers for different programs. In this writing workshop, this is not the case. Ana is included, her stories are considered, and her language practices validated as Alejandra modifies the instruction and materials to make sure Ana and others are welcomed and can make progress.

For students like the student partners we heard from in session five, the support provided in this writing workshop was of a different kind. Interactive teaching methods provided these two students, and others like them, the exposure to mentor texts, the ability to have their voices heard, and to participate in having questions and misconceptions addressed in guided practice
lessons. Alejandra's modifications were purposefully planned keeping in mind the diverse writers in her class. Her integration of language and cultural practices, use of interactive teaching methods, and analysis of culturally relevant mentor texts helped her support the different groups in her classroom. Sometimes this support was through whole class teaching. At other times, this support was through small group strategy lessons or providing feedback to two writing partners.

These kinds of changes to curriculum implementation have implications for all of the participants, teachers and students. In this chapter we saw how the teacher created a space for a bilingual pedagogy that welcomed the complex linguistic and cultural practices of her students. In the following chapter we see how this bilingual pedagogy transfers to students' construction of personal narratives that help them process their identities.
Chapter 7

The Stories We Tell and How We Tell Them

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides some answers to the second research question. We attempt to give some answers to the following question:

*How does the modified bilingual pedagogy described in chapter six help bilingual sixth graders construct personal narratives that build on their cultural and linguistic resources, and what are its effects?*

In this chapter, I describe how for all of the students in the study, the use of students' language practices & modified curriculum for the personal narrative unit presented them with opportunities to process intense moments in their lives. The intensity of these moments was raised as students considered what was happening inside of school, their homes, and their movement from one country to another. These revealed a complicated sense of displacement and hope, as well as a shift in their understandings of family, relationships with friends, and their multi-faceted identities. For some, this geographical move meant leaving some family behind, while being reunited with other family members in New York. For others, the moves were not happening across national borders, but within their own understandings of their identities, relationships to their academic lives and motivations in school. Using their entire language repertoire, students write their lives, their frustrations, their memories, and their hopes. They also reveal the ways writing can contribute to a sense of release, while also processing the tensions existing across their language use.

This chapter details how the opportunity for students to use all their language practices throughout the personal narrative unit, allowed students for ample release, an unburdening of the issues they are processing. These experiences reveal both the trauma and the strength of their
journeys. In this chapter, I analyze the students’ own voices as they describe the turning points in their lives and how their language practices are embedded in these experiences. Students in this classroom were encouraged to build a community as they shared common stories connected by themes of language, family, nostalgia, frustration, and hope. The modifications in the personal narrative curriculum enabled desahogos, gritos, emociones and expressions of teasing and failures. I use different students’ personal narratives to show how this processing of intense moments is manifested, while linking these expressions of release to the bilingual pedagogical modifications.

7.2 Oscary’s desahogo

“...yo quería escribir, desahogarme cómo yo me sentía, cuando yo vine aquí sin mi mamá.”

[...I wanted to write, to release the way I felt, when I came here without my mom.”]

(Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016)

Oscary’s words above reveal the trauma she experienced when leaving her mother in the Dominican Republic, and the role that discussing and writing about this has in her healing process. I asked Oscary why she wrote about that particular moment in her life. Oscary replied:

*porque yo quería escribir, desahogarme cómo yo me sentía, cuando yo vine aquí sin mi mamá...Mi mamá no vino. Pero ahora ya voy a estar más tranquila porque mis demás hermanos vienen...Extraño cómo mi mamá, cómo, cómo ella me trataba, cómo ella me ayudaba en la tarea en Santo Domingo* (Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016).

[because I wanted to write, to release the way I felt, when I came here without my mom...my mom didn’t come. But now I will be more calm because the rest of my siblings are coming...I miss how my mom, how, how she treated me, how she...]


Oscary’s use of the word *desahogarme*, shows the intensity of the moment and how she interprets this in her writing work. There is no simple translation for this term in English. It can mean to release something that has been bottled up or held back, to vent, or to get something off your chest. *Ahogarse* means to drown. The use of the word *desahogarme* presents a powerful image of someone letting everything out in desperation and in search for a feeling of comfort, healing, and relief. When I asked her how writing helped her “desahogarse” or find release, Oscary replied:

*Sí porque cuando uno se que, uno se viene aquí y uno no conoce a nadie de la familia de otra persona, uno se va a sentir triste. Porque uno ya está acostumbra, acostumbra, acostumbrado a su familia. No a la otra familia*

[Yes because when one, when one comes here and one doesn’t know anyone from the family of the other person, one is going to feel sad. Because one is accustom, accustom, accustomed to your own family. Not the other family] (Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016).

Oscary’s transition from her home in the Dominican Republic to her new home in New York carried many changes for her with new family structures (leaving her mother back home and here living with her stepmother and a new family) and different learning and schooling practices. In the Dominican Republic, her mother was instrumental in Oscary’s education, whereas here, she has had to find ways to learn on her own.

Some key concerns and questions arise with Oscary’s interpretation of her personal narrative writing. Is it possible for Oscary to feel that she can have that same sense of release
when using only English? If writing this way is interpreted as liberating, then what does she interpret when she is not allowed to use her full language repertoire in writing? Does Oscary find it confining and a way of not being true to her fullest self when writing first in Spanish and pushing to translate almost everything to English? What does that do not just to her confidence as a writer but also to her emotional well-being, since writing is a way of release, of *desahogo*? In the second section of this chapter I will return to these questions.

It first makes sense to see some examples of how writing in Spanish -in this case about people and topics that matter to her- helps Oscary *desahogarse*, find release. Oscary’s first narrative piece is about her transition from the Dominican Republic to New York, which is shown in Figure 7.1. What follows are a few excerpts from her piece as they are written:

> *Un martes a las 11:00 de la mañana era mi último día en la República Dominicana.*
> *Llegamos al aeropuerto a las 2:00 de la tarde entonces pasamos la maleta. Después yo me despedí de mi mamá y ella me dijo “te voy a extrañar” y yo le dije que “yo también.”* [One Tuesday at 11:00 in the morning it was my last day in the Dominican Republic. We arrived at the airport at 2:00 in the afternoon and we checked-in the luggage. Afterwards I said goodbye to my mom and she said “I’m going to miss you” and I said “me too.”] (Oscary’s Personal Narrative Piece, October 20, 2015)

After describing her flight, Oscary tells us about the moment she was reunited with her father in New York. The following is the excerpt as it is written:

> *Cuando llegamos al aeropuerto mi papa y el cuñado de mi madrastra no estaban esperando para llevarnos al departamento y afuera estaba muy frío porque todavía no era verano. Entonces mi papá cuando mebio me abrazó y yo lo abrace también por que lo*
extrañaba también y él me dijo “que como me fue en el vuelo” y nos fuimos para el departamento.

[When we arrived at the airport my dad and my stepmom’s brother-in-law were waiting to take us to the apartment and outside it was very cold because it wasn’t summer yet. So when my father saw me he hugged me and I also hugged him because I also missed him and he said “how was the flight” and we went to the apartment.] (Oscary’s Personal Narrative Piece, October 20, 2015)

Oscary reveals the conflicting feelings of leaving her mother behind and being reunited with her father. The entire piece is written in Spanish. Oscary ends her piece on a hopeful note saying, “Yo me sentí muy contenta porque ellos estaban demostrando que ellos nos iban ayudar en el idioma y aprender cosas nuevas de New York.” [I felt very happy because they were showing us that they were going to help us in the language and to learn new things about New York]. Even though her personal narrative piece started on a somber note with her leaving her mother, Oscary’s optimism about the move shows throughout the piece and in the final line with her gratitude for the new family that would help her with the transition.
El Día Que Vine a Nueva York

Un martes a las 11:00 de la mañana era mi último día en la República Dominicana. Llegamos al aeropuerto a las 2:00 de la tarde entonces pasamos la maleta. Después yo me despedí de mi mamá y ella me dijo “te voy a extrañar” y yo le dije que “yo también.” Llamaron nuestro vuelo y entramos al avión y yo me senté al lado de la ventana y el avión despegó. Y cuando el avión de pego y yo veía las cosas pequeñas. Entonces pasaron 50 minutos y la azafata fue adonde yo estaba sentada con mi hermana y mi madrastra entonces ella no preguntó qué “si queríamos al go de comer” “y nosotras le respondimos que sí” entonces ella no traigo papita y juego de manzana y nosotras le dijimos “gracias” y ella dijo de “nada” y esa papitas sabían muy buenas y el juego estaba helado. Pasaron 2 horas y dijeron que nos pongamos el cinturón que íbamos a aterrizar cuando aterrizamos hacia un ruido RUUUU.

Cuando llegamos al aeropuerto mi papá y el cuñado de mi madrastra no estaban esperando para llevamos al departamento y afuera estaba muy frío porque todavía noria verano. Entonces mi papá cuando me abrazó y yo lo abrace también por que lo extrañaba también y él me dijo “que como me fue en el vuelo” y nos fuimos para el departamento.

Llegamos al departamento y dijeron “es hora de comer” y fuimos a la mesa a comer y en la mesa había de comer arroz pollo, ensalada y lasaña y el arroz le salía el vapor porque estaba acabado de cocinarse y le salía un olor muy rico, el pollo estaba acabado de salir del horno, a la lasaña también y le salía el olor a pasta recién hecha y yo empecé a comer y yo saboreaba la comida en mi boca.

Después que comimos fuimos ala sala y las persona comenzaron hablar sobre cómo no había ido en viaje y yo le conté “que bien” y ellos dijeron “ok” y seguimos con versado.

Yo me sentí muy contenta porque ellos estaban demostrando que ellos nos iban ayudar en el idioma y aprender cosas nuevas de New York.

Figure 7.1:
Oscary’s Personal Narrative Piece:
El día que vine a Nueva York [The Day I Came to New York]
Oscary’s “on demand” piece from the end of the unit which she typed, titled “El dia que yo aprendí a leer” [The Day I Learned to Read], shown below in Figure 7.2 and Figure 7.3, also reveals how writing is a part of Oscary’s healing, as she continues this transition in her life. This moment focuses on the interaction with her mother and a book called Libro Nacho, a popular literacy text used in the Dominican Republic for beginning readers. Oscary later explains in the interview how Libro Nacho: “es todavía muy famoso en la República Dominicana porque los niños aprenden a leer rápido porque le enseña todos los vocabulario [Nachò’s Book that is still very famous in the Dominican Republic because the children quickly learn to read because it teaches all of the vocabulary] (Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016).

Oscary’s personal narrative about this event follows:

Al comienzo del libro decía amo a mi papá, amo a mi mamá y yo lo leía muy al paso como un robo y “mi mama me dijo vas bien pero si tu quiere aprender a leer perfectamente no puedes leer como un robo”, “pero para tu comienzo leyendo bastien muy bien”, Leí como una hora y cinco minutos. Entonces después que yo termine de leer yo me fui a jugar con mis a mi gitas (Oscary’s End of Unit On Demand Personal Narrative Piece, October 28, 2015)

[At the beginning of the book it said I love my dad, I love my mom and I read very slowly like a robot and my mom said you are doing well but if you want to learn how to read perfectly you can’t read like a robot”, “but for your start [sic] reading very well”, I read about an hour and five minutes. Then later after I finished reading I went to play with my friends.] (Oscary’s End of Unit On Demand Personal Narrative Piece, October 28, 2015)
Al día siguiente cuando yo llegue de la escuela mi mama me llamo para que yo leyera lo que estaba la comida y hoy comense a leer rapido no como un robo y mi mama me dijo “estoy impresionada de ti por que antes tu leia como un robo y ahora lees como una niña en su nivel de lectura”. Y yo me puse muy feliz porque ya yo sabía leer. Ese momento fue muy especial para mi, y yo dije alto ¡¡aprendí a leer por fin!! Estoy muy emocionada por que aprendí a leer (Oscary’s End of Unit On Demand Personal Narrative Piece, October 28, 2015).

[The next day when I arrived from school my mom called me to read as the food was being prepared and I started reading fast not like a robot and my mom told me “I’m impressed by you because before you read like a robot and now you read like a girl at her reading level”. And I got very happy because I knew how to read. That moment was very special for me, and I said out loud I finally learned how to read! I’m very moved because I learned how to read.] (Oscary’s End of Unit On Demand Personal Narrative Piece, October 28, 2015)

Both personal narrative moments reveal Oscary’s connection with her mother and the role that family plays in her life. For Oscary, writing her narrative in this unit allowed her to continue exploring her feelings around this major transition in her life. Oscary’s writing in Spanish also allows her to remain connected with her mother. In the interview, Oscary said that she speaks with her mom every day. They discuss her grades and her writing. Her mother compliments her writing and motivates her to continue this way because her grades are good: “Que está muy lindo y que siga así porque mis grados están bien para mí” (Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016).
El día que yo aprendí a leer fue con mi mamá. Ese día hera un momento especial para mí porque yo sabía leer sola sin ayuda y cuando yo no me sabía una palabra yo me preguntaba como sedise?. Y yo trataba de decir la y la decía correcta.

Cuando yo aprendí a leer fue con mi mamá en la casa en un lugar tranquilo llamado mi habitación. Un día mi mamá me compró un libro llamado Libro Nacho que es todavía muy famoso en la República Dominicana porque los niños aprenden a leer rápido porque le enseña todos los vocabulario.

Cuando mi mamá me llamó me llamó ben aber un libro que me compre para que aprenda a leer “YA BOY MA MIMI” le dije alto con una voz feliz porque yo quería aprender a leer, y me fui corriendo como un león. Entonces yo vi el libro y me pareció interesante porque yo iba aprender a leer muy bien y también tenía una buena portada y la portada era una niña con un gorro marrón y una ropa de vaquera y un perro.

Al día siguiente yo me desayuné y me fui a lavar mis dientes y a ponerme ropa para ir a la escuela en la república dominicana. A la 12:30 yo salí de la escuela y cuando llegue a la casa mi mamá me tenía la comida preparada y la comida era arroz con pollo y al pollo le salía un olor de lisioso recién hecho. Después que yo comí yo response y mi mamá me llamó “mi niña bella ben a leer tu libro nuevo” “ok la voy para alla.”

Figure 7.2:
Oscary’s End of Unit On Demand Personal Narrative Piece:
“El día que yo aprendí a leer” [“The Day I Learned to Read”] (page 1)
Oscary’s use of her own language practices in writing (some might say with features of what may be considered Dominican Spanish) are at the center of this parent-child relationship. Not only does speaking in Spanish with her mother allow Oscary the intimacy needed to maintain this relationship, but as Oscary moves along the bilingual continuum as she lives in the United States (going on two years now), her language practices are much more fluid. The following is an excerpt from the interview:
¿Y cuándo tú hablas con tu mamá, hablas en qué idioma?

Yo le hablo a veces en inglés para que ella aprenda porque ella que, ella coge clases de inglés también. Entonces ella me saca a leer. Ella se sabe el abecedario en inglés porque yo le enseñé. Y ya se está aprendiendo los colores y los números.

¿Y los libros que tú estás leyendo? ¿Tienes libros en español y en inglés o solo inglés?

Inglés y uno en español; yo creo y cuando yo estoy hablando con ella yo le leo en inglés a ella y ella se pone feliz conmigo cuando yo le leo en inglés.

¿Y tu mamá hace lo mismo con ti?

¿Y cuándo tú hablas con tu mamá, hablas en qué idioma?

Yo le hablo a veces en inglés para que ella aprenda porque ella que, ella coge clases de inglés también. Entonces ella me saca a leer. Ella se sabe el abecedario en inglés porque yo le enseñé. Y ya se está aprendiendo los colores y los números.

¿Y los libros que tú estás leyendo? ¿Tienes libros en español y en inglés o solo inglés?

Inglés y uno en español; yo creo y cuando yo estoy hablando con ella yo le leo en inglés a ella y ella se pone feliz conmigo cuando yo le leo en inglés.

(Entrevista, Oscary, 3 de junio de 2016)

Here we see how Oscary’s language practices that include English are a source of pride, support, and joy. There are several dynamics at play here in this family communication. Oscary takes the role of teacher and support for her mother. Oscary also continues to practice her
English fluency as she reads to her mother in English. The mother’s compliments affirm Oscary’s progress and contribute to Oscary’s sense of confidence in her academic life.

This flexibility with language practices that is seen at home with family communication is also one that is reflected in the writing workshop with Alejandra, the bilingual teacher. In the following excerpt from the interview, Oscary explains how they use Spanish and English in the narrative writing unit:

Carla:   *Cuéntame de tu experiencia en escribir narrativas de tu vida.*
[Tell me about your experience writing narratives of your life.]

Oscary: *Mi experiencia fue escribir mejor en inglés.*
[My experience was to write better in English.]

Carla:   ¿Y solamente en inglés y solamente en español o pueden mezclar los dos?
[And write only in English or only in Spanish or could you all mix both?]

Oscary: *Mezclar.*
[Mix]

Carla:   ¿Qué dijo ella?
[What did she - the teacher - say?]

Oscary: *Ella dijo que si uno sabe. Por ejemplo “un martes a las 11 de la mañana era, it was my last day” si uno lo escribe así. Si uno lo sabe escribir.*
[She said that if one knows. For example, “One Tuesday at 11 in the morning it was, fue mi último día” you can write this way. If one knows. If one knows how to write.]

Carla:   ¿Y cómo te sientes si la maestra te da ese tipo de opciones?
[And how do you feel if the teacher gives you those kinds of options?]

Oscary: *Yo me siento bien porque aunque yo ese día lo escribí en español para no pensar.*

[I feel good because that day even though I wrote it in Spanish so as not to think.] (Interview, Oscary, June 3, 2016)

In this excerpt, it is clear that the teacher provides the space for students to use their full language repertoire. It is also clear that Oscary’s goal is to make progress with her English, even though she has written the narratives in Spanish. These actions are not seen as contradictory. This is due to how the students’ language practices in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, are framed in the classroom and how they are experienced outside of the classroom setting. Oscary’s full being - the experiences she brings with her, the way she speaks and writes about them - is welcomed and nourished in this classroom context. She reflects on this process: “*Yo me siento bien porque aunque yo ese día lo escribí en español para no pensar*” [“I feel good because that day even though I wrote it in Spanish so as not to think”], when I asked how this flexibility with language use made her feel. Writing in Spanish for Oscary is not only a way to “desahogarme,” a way of releasing and unburdening, but also a way to write that comes with ease, “para no pensar,” so as not to think. Yet, Oscary qualifies this feeling and act with the word “aunque” [although], which reminds us of her goal of improving in English. She did not say “I feel good because I wrote in Spanish that day so as not to think” but says “I feel good because that day *even though* I wrote it in Spanish so as not to think.” We already know that for Oscary, reading in English to her mother and teaching her mother the alphabet in English also makes her feel good. Oscary’s use of “even though” reveals her flexible language use and how she is processing this experience.
7.3 Ana’s grito

“Mi experiencia ha sido un chin triste porque yo no puedo ver a mi mamá en real, en [ ]
la tengo que ver con cámara y esas cosas.”

[“My experience has been a bit sad because I can’t see my mom in real life, in [] I
have to see her with a camara and things like that.”]

(Interview, Ana, June 3, 2016)

Ana’s narrative, as “Cuando yo benia para los Estados Unidos” [When I Was Coming to
the United States] describes her trip from the Dominican Republic to New York and the impact
of leaving her mother (See Figures 7.4 through 7.7 below). Ana begins by giving the reader the
details of her morning. This is no routine breakfast with mom as Ana reveals the complexity of
this her attempt to hold back the tears and sadness. Ana tries to keep her composure so that her
mother will not “gritar de tristeza,” or scream due to the immense sadness. Ana proceeds to
describe another scene when she is with her family at the airport, followed by the flight and
finally, the arrival. The narrative ends with a conversation she had with her mother on the phone
and her hope to be reunited soon. The following are two excerpts from this narrative piece:

Yo le estaba diciendo a mi mamá “que yo te boy a extrañar mucho.” Yo quería llorar
pero me dije “Ana no llore” porque despues mi mamá va a gritar de tristeza...A las 8:30
ve gamos al aeropuerto sa camos la maletas del carro y mi mamá me dijo “Ana y Oscary
las boy a extrañar en ese momento yo quería gritar y se me salieron las lagrimas mi
mamá me dijo “Ana no grites” yo le conteste “Ok.”

[I was telling my mom “I’m going to miss you a lot.” I wanted to cry but I told
myself “Ana don’t cry” because later my mom will let out screams of sadness...At
8:30 we arrived at the airport and took out our luggage from the car and my mom]
told me “Ana and Oscary I’m going to miss you at that moment I wanted to
scream and tears came out my mom said “Ana don’t scream” and I said “Ok.”]

Cuando llegamos a la casa ya la comida estaba echada ensalada, pollo, arroz, soda.
Cuando yo comí mi papá me saco para llamar a mi mamá. Yo le dije a mi mamá “mamita
me extraño mucho.” Mi mamá comenzó a gritar y yo también, Oscary también comenzó a
gritar, en ese momento yo estaba triste, ese día fue el peor día de mi vida porque yo
estaba separada de mi mamá.

[When we arrived at the house the food was already done it was salad, chicken,
rice, soda. When I ate my dad took me aside to call my mom. I told my mom
“mom I miss you so much.” My mom started screaming and I did too, Oscary also
started screaming, in that moment I was sad, that day was the worst day of my life
because I was separated from my mom.]
Cuando yo benia para los Estados Unidos.

Era un martes por la mañana, que yo benia para los Estados Unidos era mi último día en la República Dominicana. Esa mañana yo me sentí muy triste porque yo benia para los Estados Unidos y mi mamá no benia con mía y mi hermana. Cuando mi mamá me levantó para huirarme yo le dije a mi mamá: "Que mamá Yo me le bante, me bante y me besaure un manjúe de platano con queso frito a lo que me besajunada yo le estaba bisiendo a mi mamá que yo te boy en extrañar much yo quería lloví pero ame.
Ana’s Personal Narrative Piece:

“Cuando yo venía para los Estados Unidos” (page 2)

[“When I Was Coming to the United States”]
Figure 7.6 Ana’s Personal Narrative Piece:
“Cuando yo benia para los Estados Unidos” (page 3)
[“When I Was Coming to the United States”]
Ana uses her writing to explore her feelings that revealed the complex reality of her life and transitions. She acknowledges that her experiences have been a bit sad although her personal narrative also includes a hopeful ending. Through her writing, Ana was able to show the pain and the joys that accompanied her move from the Dominican Republic to the United States. Although
not a text read in class, her repeated use of the word “gritar” or scream, in the context of leaving her mother, bears a resemblance to Naomi Shihab Nye’s “Gate A-4,” with the description of the distraught passenger at an airport:

An older woman in full traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor, wailing loudly. “Help,” said the flight service person. “Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this.” I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke to her haltingly. “Shu-dow-a, Shu-bid-uck Habibti? Stani schway, Min fadlick, Shub-bit-se-wee?” The minute she heard any words she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought the flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day.

Ana, Oscary, and their mother’s reactions to this difficult change in their lives can best be described by that word: gritar/wailing. Writing this moment allowed Ana to think about her feelings, the love she has for her mother, as well as the hope that she has for being reunited with her mother and the rest of the family left behind: “En diciembre yo voy a ver a mi mamá y a mi familia. Especialmente a mi mamá y a mis sobrinos”. [In December I’m going to see my mom and my family. Especially my mom and my nephews.] Ana ends her piece on this hopeful note of a time when she will be reunited with her family.

7.4 Genesis’ emociones y esperanza de no ahogarse

“Yo escribí sobre esos momentos porque yo siento que haciendo una narrativa personal tú puedes cómo sacar lo que tú hiciste, la cosa mala que te pasaron, y a mí, y cosa emocionante.”
[“I wrote about those moments because I feel that by writing a personal narrative you can like take out what you did, the bad things that happened to you, and to me, and emotional things.”]

(Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

In her interview, Genesis elucidates the importance of writing her story and having teachers who encourage her to write using any of her own language practices. Genesis shared the following advice she would give a student recently arrived from the Dominican Republic who is writing a narrative:

_Estoy escribiendo un párrafo sobre esos momentos porque siento que al escribir una narrativa personal puedes extraer lo que hiciste, las cosas malas que sucedieron a ti, y a mí, y cosas emocionales._

_Not to worry. That if it is something that he, that this person is writing and is very personal, that he had never shared with anyone, not to worry because if he has Ms. Medina or you, he can share it with you so he can feel liberated and be able to write. That if he can’t write, that if that person feels like he can’t write this, to share it with you or with Ms. Medina so he will feel more free and can share it_
with the world. And not to worry, that the whole world won’t, can’t criticize him for something he has done wrong or something he has done very well because it is like your opinion that you have to have. You can’t fear sharing something good or bad because if it is something bad that you’ve never shared, let it go. Do not stay silent because you’ll feel more stuck and you’ll never share this. You will feel as if you are suffocating.”]

Similar to Oscary, Genesis sees writing as a liberating practice. She understands the importance of letting go of bottled up feelings so as to process difficult moments. Like Oscary, Genesis uses a form of the word “desahogarse,” a process of unburdening, releasing, liberating oneself from something. For Genesis, it is imperative that the student writer release the stories in conversation in class and then in writing. It is interesting that Genesis says that the student should share these in order to be able to write. It seems as if she believes the act of oral storytelling precedes the act of writing, as the former enables the latter. For Genesis, the oral storytelling and writing are ways that encourage her freedom. Genesis trusts her teacher, she felt safe sharing with the teacher, and later, with the class. Genesis encourages other students to not stay silent or else they will feel as if they are suffocating or drowning, “te vas a sentir como ahogado,” she explains.

Genesis’ personal narrative shows how she processes her experiences through writing. It also shows how these experiences are mediated through her language practices. Telling stories in Spanish, for Genesis, is also a way to share the memories that she has of her family back in the Dominican Republic and her transition to this country. Genesis practices the advice she gives. Just as she advises students to tell their stories and desahogarse, in the interview she shares the moment that she left the Dominican Republic:
Que ese día yo lloré mucho, pero mucho mucho. Entonces yo lloré desde que empezamos a salir de mi casa porque yo me despedí de mi mejor amiga, de mis tres mejores amigas, y estaba llorando mucho. Me despedí de su mamá que siempre ha sido una buena amiga mía. También me despedí de ella. Me despedí de mi abuelo fue como muy triste y muy feliz al mismo tiempo porque yo sabía que mi abuelo estaba muy feliz de mi de que yo había cumplido una meta de ir, de venir a esta país a aprender inglés y también me sentía triste porque yo sentía como que era la, entonces cuando tú desde otro país tú te sientes que va a hacer la última vez que tú vas ver a las personas. Pero entonces después tú sabes que tú vas a ver. Entonces para mí fue triste ese día porque yo pensaba que eso sería la última vez que yo iba a ver a mi abuelo en muchísimo tiempo. Entonces eso sería otro momento especial para mí para compartirlo en una narrativa.

[That that day I cried a lot, but a whole lot. So I cried from the moment we started leaving my house because I said goodbye to my best friend, my three best friends, and I was crying a lot. I said goodbye to her mother who has always been a good friend of mine. I also said goodbye to her. I said goodbye to my grandfather who was like really sad, and also very happy at the same time because I knew that my grandfather was very happy for me that I had met one of my goals do go, to come to this country and to learn English and also I was sad because I felt as if it was, then when you come from another country you feel like it’s going to be the last time you’re going to see people. But then you know that you will see them. So for me that day was very sad because I thought that it would be the last time I would see my grandfather in a long time. So that would be another special moment for me to share in a narrative.] (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)
These narratives reveal to us the intense emotions and strength that Genesis and others go through in their transition to the United States. Genesis not only describes how much she cried, but also says that the day was sad for her because she thought that would be the last time she would see her grandfather. Although Genesis encourages other students to share their stories and not hold back, she has an approach to doing so that moves her from Spanish to English. Her draft is pictured below in Figure 7.8. In this draft, Genesis plans out the sequence of events from an important moment in her life. These are all done in Spanish. She then goes back and translates them. Her subsequent drafts and final piece, pictured below in Figure 7.9, are all in English.
1. My history is about one of the most sad times of my life. When I was my best friend for last time, first she told me if I want to play with her and I say 'yes.'

2. Después yo estaba jugando con ella y las escondidas.

3. Estábamos jugando de y yo me caí, pero mi amiga es también buena que ella me puso una curita.

4. Después yo estaba jugando tan feliz que mi cortaba no me dolía.

5. Después yo le dije adiós pero yo estaba tanto triste que yo casi iba a llorar porque iba a extrañar tanto tanto tanto.

Then I sayd goodbye to her but I was so sad that I was about to cry because I was going to miss her so so much.

Figure 7.8: Genesis’ Personal Narrative Draft 1
Figure 7.9 Genesis’ Personal Narrative Piece:

“The Last Time I Saw My Best Friend”

In the following exchange during the interview, Genesis explains her rationale for writing the narrative in English after her draft in Spanish. It is interesting to reflect on Genesis’ idea of “release” and “unburdening” when her storytelling shifts from using only Spanish in her draft to only English in her final piece.

Genesis: *Por ejemplo, aquí hay personas que lo escriben sus historias que en la parte del diálogo, el diálogo, lo escriben en español porque su madre, su padre le hablan así. Pero entonces yo lo traducí al inglés.*
[For example, here there are people who write their stories that in the part of diálogo, the dialogue, they write it in Spanish because their mother, their father speak that way. But then I translated it to English.]

Carla: ¿Y por qué esa decisión? Cuéntame. ¿Qué estabas pensando? ¿Como escritora por qué traducirlo al inglés al contar tu narrativa?

[And why that decision? Tell me. What were you thinking? As a writer, why translate it to English to tell your story?]

Genesis: Porque como yo estaba aprendiendo inglés entonces yo quise como escribir mucho inglés. No en español para yo, por ejemplo, tener todas esas palabras en mi mente para yo aprenderlas más. Además, porque sería bueno aprender a traducir las cosas. Por ejemplo, del español al inglés sería muy bueno porque hay muchas palabras que son muy diferentes. Entonces, yo puedo aprender nuevas escribiendo.

[Because since I was learning English then I wanted to like write more English. Not in Spanish so that I can, for example, have all of the words in my mind so I can learn more. Also, because it would be good to learn how to translate things. For example, from Spanish to English it would be very good because there are many things that are different. Then, I can learn new ones writing.]

Carla: ¿Eso es algo que tú haces a común cuando escribes? ¿Lo traduces?

[Is that something you do often when you write? You translate it?]


[Yes. Yes. Always.]
Genesis gave the example of students writing the dialogue in Spanish in their narratives because this reflects the way their family members communicate. She explained that she translated to English because she wanted to continue learning more English. She also finds value in translating from Spanish to English. With this interaction only, one would think that Genesis maintains a language hierarchy, holding English as a more valuable language.

Genesis also has a clear understanding of audience and the purpose she has when writing. In the interview she explains why she feels the need to tell these stories about her life:

Genesis: “Entonce para mí fue muy bueno que la primera vez que yo vine aquí fue algo muy emocionante para mí entonces yo dije "wow si es tan impresionante, tan bonito entonces yo debería compartirlo con más personas. Yo escribí de eso porque a mí me gusta escribir como cosa buena. A mí no me gusta escribir mucha cosa como tristes. Entonces ese una de las más felices que yo he tenido.”

[So for me that first time that I came here was very good, it was something very emotional for me so I said “wow if it is that impressive, so beautiful, then I should share it with more people. I wrote that because I like to write about good things. I don’t like writing too many sad things. So that is one of the happiest that I have.]

Carla: Tú usaste la palabra "yo debería compartir eso con otras personas". ¿Por qué sentías como ese deber que tú tenías que compartir?

[“You used the word “I should share that with other people.” Why did you feel that duty that you had to share?”]
Genesis: Porque es como un regalo muy bonito porque es como la primera vez que tú vienes a un país que nunca habías visitado. Por ejemplo esa fue mi primera vez que yo vine aquí. Entonces al ser tú primera vez, tú te sientes como emocionado y hace muchas cosas bonitas. Por ejemplo, yo me acuerdo que cuando yo vine fue la primera vez que yo vi la nieve. Yo vine en invierno y estaba cayendo nieve y yo quería tirarme al piso y jugar con mi hermana. Y fue muy bonito porque fue la primera vez que yo veía nieve y me la comía. Yo sacaba la lengua y me la comía. Fue muy bonito.

[Because it is like a very beautiful gift because it is like the first time you come to a country that you’ve never visited. For example that was the first time I came here. So as it is your first time, you feel like emotional and do many beautiful things. For example, I remember when I first came here I saw the snow. I came in the winter and snow was falling and I wanted to throw myself on the floor to play with my sister. And that was very beautiful because that was the first time that I saw the snow and I would eat it. I would take out my tongue and eat it. It was beautiful.] (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

Genesis’ topic choices for her narratives show a complex understanding of life. Although Genesis says that she does not like to write too much about sad moments, the stories she shares (in the interview and in her writing) show moments that reveal complex emotions. Although her transition from the Dominican Republic to the United States gave her the encounter with snow that she so poetically explains in the previous excerpt, it also brought her painful moments when she cried and cried as she left her grandfather and friends. The freedom to choose topics for
personal narrative writing will be further explored in the following chapter on the classroom lessons. These stories shared by Genesis further support the importance of allowing students the freedom to *desahogarse*, and speak about their experiences.

### 7.5 Emiliano: Teasing and Failing

When it’s the first year. Like for example when school starts every kid is nervous so we have to tell the story like how we begin school, how we start, how, what, how it affects us, what talents do we have, how many problems, enemies we have in school, plan...My purpose to write this story was like to convince you to not be nervous cuz now that we meant we not going to be nervous. (Interview, Emiliano, June 3, 2016)

Emiliano’s narrative piece is about his first day of school. This is a common topic for narrative entries and published pieces - due in part to the strategy of “first times and last times” taught in personal narrative units. This is an important piece as it reveals emotional responses, physical reactions, and students turning them around to find a lesson learned or piece of advice to be shared. Like the other focal students, Emiliano’s moment is an example of the trauma experienced by a sixth grader. Emiliano’s moment began with the joy and excitement of the first day of school but quickly turned to the anger and sickness caused by teasing. The piece can be read in its entirety in Figure 7.10. Even when I asked Emiliano what other moments in his life are important in addition to this one, he continued to identify moments that were both emotional and physically jarring.

So one bad was when I was a little kid I went to school and I always got picky [sic]. I always got bullied, sometimes. One day, I don't know her, his name but I don't want to say it. I was in second grade I think. He started picking on me, like pulling my bookbag. Then one day he we [] he hit my neck, it was painful. (Interview, Emiliano, June 3, 2016)
Emiliano still wrote about this moment in the school year through a research-based informational writing piece on bullying. Emiliano shared another moment:

Another second bad thing was all my friends I missed. One day I had friends, then I failed, then my friends passed, then I failed I had to repeat. Then again I had another friend I met they were so special, but then I failed again and went again and I finally passed and my friend passed….Passing the year is so hard like passing the tests, tests, tests, tests and homework. (Interview, Emiliano, June 3, 2016)

Emiliano’s selection of topics included the first day of school when he got teased, the moment a bully hit him, and being separated from his friends twice because he did not pass the tests. The freedom to choose the topic of his piece was a liberating practice.
FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

It is time to go to school, “YEAH!” I said jumping around like a bunny. I was so excited that I almost had a tear in my eye like a frog. I ate a waffle. In my mind I said, “yummy and SPONGY.” So then I prepared myself and said, “goodbye mom and daddy,” I said loudly. My parents said back, “goodbye my kids have a wonderful day at school.” So we rushed to school like if I was an angry bull.

I was running to school. I saw many dancers dancing because there was a festival. I thought “I wish I could go there,” but I had school. Then, I got to school and there were many teachers. I met Ms. [blank], she was beautiful with her straight hair. I also met others teacher, and friends. Some friends were nice to me and some were mean to me. An angry kid said, “Ha! You think you are smart? NO! I am the one who rules the kids here.” I was so mad. I felt angry. I yelled angrily pushing him in the wall “Listen I am not your slave and I am not your doll so LEAVE ME ALONE!”

Meanwhile “Omg, please stop, Stop!” I heard a noise coming from the library so I immediately stop fighting with the kid and came running to the library. There was no one there. It was so embarrassing. The kids started laughing because they played a prank on me with a fake scream. So I ran to my class in pain and sadness because they were laughing at me.

Later at lunch time, I waited in line to pick up my food. Then, I sat down in a table and was eating a beef patty. Five minutes later my heart was beating fast like if was exercising and I didn’t know why, but it stopped. Then at class time, my heart started beating fast again. So I told the teacher “I don’t feel good” and she called the nurse. Then the nurse came and said, “Okay your heart was beating fast because you were eating too fast.

It was the time to go home and I packed my bags as fast that I could. Then I hugged my friend and said, “good bye.” I learned that the first day of school is fun and sometimes a kid can tease you but you shouldn’t let it bother you.

Figure 7.10: Emiliano’s Personal Narrative Piece:

“The First Day of School”
7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine how for the students, writing is interpreted as liberating when all of the students’ language resources are encouraged. The students’ stories were full of turning points in their lives. Students felt comfortable and confident crafting these stories in an environment that was welcoming of their language practices as well as provided them with the freedom to choose the moments from their lives that they wanted to share. “Desahogarse,” releasing all that was bottled up inside of them, was a common practice in this personal narrative unit, supported by a bilingual pedagogy, that included the use of language resources and community-building through culturally relevant texts and interactive lessons. The students’ language practices proved to be dynamic, a grito. This grito, this voice that emerged from their flexible language practices meant that their stories were stronger. At the same time, they were able to write in ways that connected more intimately with their family members. Finally, translations enabled them to develop more metalinguistic awareness. In this chapter, we have seen that students express the importance of engaging with bilingual pedagogies. Each of the students described traumatic moments connected to their journeys inside and outside of school. For some, it had to do with separation from family as they moved from one country to another. For others it had to do with fitting in with classmates, schooling and a reshaped [American] identity.

This class community and bilingual writing workshop provided the space for them to process and release their feelings as they developed their bilingual writing craft. Christopher Emdin in *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education* discusses the trauma experienced by urban youth and how schools must not ignore this. Emdin states “The work to become truly effective educators in urban schools
requires a new approach to teaching that embraces the complexity of place, space, and their collective impact on the psyche of our youth" (Emdin, 2016, p.23). Alejandra embraced this complexity. The impact is seen in the students’ personal narratives, as well as their reflections during the interview. Writing personal narratives is the way these students get their stories out; it is the way they form community, and notice shared experiences. That is, it is the way they write themselves on to the narrative, the way they write themselves out. Singer/songwriter, Aloe Blacc, sings in "Wrote My Way Out," on the Hamilton Mixtape (2016):

I wrote my way out

When the world turned its back on me

I was up against the wall

I had no foundation

No friends and no family to catch my fall

Running on empty, there was nothing left in me but doubt

I picked up a pen

And wrote my way out

Alejandra's students are writing their way out and on to the pages of stories of children whose humanity has to be recognized, whose trauma has to be listened to, and whose courage and ideas about the world must be reckoned with in and outside of the classroom. New York City native, Nasir Jones, better known as Nas, ends the "Wrote My Way Out" song with the following words: "I thought that I would represent for my neighborhood and tell their story, be their voice, in a way that nobody has done it. Tell the real story." Genesis took on a lot of this in her storytelling, wanting her audience to get to know about her transition from the Dominican Republic to New York. It was raw, genuine, and purposeful. Although writing was a sense of
release and it was certainly supported through a process with bilingual modifications by the teacher, it was difficult. The findings in this chapter are complicated by the tension across feelings of pride and shame related to these practices. The complexity of this writing as release is further explored in chapter eight where we find this personal narrative writing supporting students through their processing of various pressures.
Chapter 8

Politics of Bilingual Practices: Living the Tensions

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I continue addressing the second research question of the study:

*How does the modified bilingual pedagogy described in chapter six help bilingual sixth graders construct personal narratives that build on their cultural and linguistic resources, and what are its effects?*

When I interviewed the students about the bilingual pedagogy of the teacher and their experiences, I did not find the descriptions of intense emotions that I discovered in their personal narratives – desahogos, gritos, emociones, failures. Instead, I found expressions of what I call “living in the tensions” between English and Spanish, home and school, Latin America and the United States. That is, these emergent bilingual middle schoolers are exploring their bilingual Latinx identities and how these relate to the politics of bilingualism. This highlights the many factors at play that influence bilingual youth’s ideas about language and how these influence identity-formation and language ideologies. The classroom teacher has an important role in creating a space that affirms Latinx bilingual identities, stands in solidarity with them, and encourages critique of the systems that threaten to control and diminish the bilingual experience.

Every student in the study expresses the pressures connected with their lived experiences. For some it has to do with relationships being created or impacted with the move away from one family to join another. For others, the middle school experience presents challenges unforeseen during the elementary school years. Shame is also a common response when revisiting their writing or experiences having to do with school. Whether the pressures are coming from family members, teachers, or society’s expectations, writing about lived experiences is most important.
It is through writing that students are finding a space to share their voice, develop it, revisit assumptions, and reconceptualize resistance.

In *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova, 2008), we see how a longitudinal study on immigrant children’s experiences in schools reveals the importance of relationships:

Relationships are critical to the process, and it is in schools that immigrant youth forge new friendships, create and solidify social networks, and begin to acquire the academic, linguistic, and cultural knowledge that will sustain them throughout their journey…The relationships they establish with peers, teachers, coaches, and others will help shape their characters, open new opportunities, and set constraints to future pathways. It is in their engagement with schooling most broadly defined that immigrant youth will profoundly transform themselves. (p.3)

The bilingual pedagogy in this study created a third space for developing these crucial relationships.

8.2 Oscary: Shame and Self-Advocacy

“Ella nos comparaba con ella y eso me daba coraje porque a mi nunca me gusta que me comparen con alguien. Y entonces ella decía que nosotras íbamos a salir una estudiante mediocre que eso. Entonces yo le dije “yo se lo voy a mostrar que yo no voy a salir una estudiante mediocre.” Asi mismo. Mi papa me dijo “no le haga caso. Tu cuando tu vaya a la escuela tu le mos, mostr, cómo he, tu le vas a enseñar que tu no vas a ser una estudiante mediocre.” Y ahora lo que ella dice es que ahora ella se arrepentió de lo que dijo, de lo que ella dijo. Y yo ese día cuando ella me lo dijo yo le dije “no no ve lo que yo le dije que yo no iba a salir una estudiante mediocre.” Asi mismo.”
[She compared us with her and that would make me mad because I never like it when someone compares me to someone else. Then she said that we were going to end up being mediocre students and that. Then, I told her “I’m going to show you that I’m not going to end up a mediocre student.” Just like that. My dad told me “don’t pay her any mind. You when you go to school you show, show her, how um, you are going to show her that you are not going to be a mediocre student.” And now what she says is that now she regrets what she said, what she said. And I on that day when she told me I told her “you see what I told you that I wasn’t going to end up a mediocre student.” Just like that.] (Interview, Oscary, June 3, 2016).

Oscary was very critical of her own writing, specifically her personal narrative piece. Yet you would not be able to tell from the opening narrative here as she describes how she proved her stepmother wrong when both she and her sister were told that they would be mediocre compared to her stepmother’s daughter. Oscary was both full of rage — “me daba coraje” — and confidence as she took her father’s advice and made her stepmother regret her words. The bilingual pedagogy in this personal narrative writing unit helps her process these conflicting feelings as she navigates her schooling, transition into a new family structure with her move to the United States, and her role as an advocate for her own educational progress.

When Oscary revisited her personal narrative (on the moment she arrived in the United States from the Dominican Republic) during the interview, there was none of the confidence she expressed in the words above. We see a highly self-critical student who views writing in English as a major issue. Oscary was only three sentences in of her reread when she said “eso se ve tan raro,” [that looks so weird] and “porque uno ya sabe cómo hacerlo mejor,” [because one already
knows how to improve it]. I asked her what she would change and her reply was “escribirlo en inglés y el lenguaje que usé” [write it in English and the language I used]. With her eyes and head downcast, Oscary refused to continue rereading her narrative. Although she did identify one way she would improve it, by using English, she did not have a clear and confident stance on on her language practices. When I asked her why write it in English she said: “porque ahora yo sé cómo mucho más y escribir en inglés y yo quiero aprender más inglés” [because now I like know much more and write in English and I want to learn more English]. “What else would you change?” I asked, and Oscary replied “no repetir mucho, dique entonces, y yo también tengo que describir cómo yo me sentía” [not repeat too much, like “and then,” I also need to describe how I felt].

Oscary’s final comment regarding improvement on this piece is extremely telling of the experience she has with writing and her identity formation through transition leaving the Dominican Republic and starting a new life.

Carla: ¿Por qué dices eso se ve tan raro?
[Why do you say this looks so strange?]

Oscary: Porque ahora yo escribo mejor. Porque esa fue mi primer historia.
[Because now I write better. Because that was my first story.]

Carla: Entonces tengo aquí tres cosas que te gustaría cambiar: Uno: Escribir cómo te sentías Dos: No repetir mucho y Tres: Escribir en inglés porque ya ahora sabes mucho más. ¿Y lo escribirías de nuevo en español?
[So here I have three things that you’d like to change: One: Write how you felt. Two: not repeat so much. Three: Write in English because you now know much more. And would you write it again in Spanish?]
Oscary:  

Si. Si me lo piden si.  

[Yes. If they ask me to yes.]  

(Interview, Oscary, June 3, 2016)

It seems that for Oscary, she now would consider only writing in Spanish if it was mandated by a teacher, not by choice, but writing in English now is by choice, her choice. In other words, the more Oscary learns English, the more she wants to write in English and the less she wants to write in Spanish. What factors contribute to this change? Oscary’s experiences within the writing workshop, her past experiences in another school, and present realities with pressures witnessed in her family related to the American identity influence her feelings about choosing English.

Oscary also described another personal narrative piece written in the past, in fifth grade. Oscary describes this piece “de el día que 3 niñas me comenzaron hacer bullying porque yo no hablaba inglés, porque yo no sabia hablar inglés, ella me decían que yo no tenía que estar en esa escuela porque yo no sé hablar inglés,” [of the day that three girls began bullying me because I didn’t speak English, because I didn’t know how to speak in English. They told me that I didn’t have to be in that school because I do not know how to speak English].

Oscary:  

Yo me hice, me hizo sentir bien porque si a otro niño de mi clase que le estaba pasando él podía decir pero yo a veces me quedaba callada y no se lo decía a mi papá. Pero el día que llegó yo se lo dije a papá y mi papá tuvo que hablar con la directora porque esa muchachita ya no cosa [?] y ella no [sic] decían de todo, me decían mala palabra en inglés y eso. Y ellas creían que yo no entendía nada de inglés.  

[I made myself, it made me feel good because if it was happening to another classmate he could speak up but sometimes I stayed quiet and didn’t tell my dad but the day that arrived I told my dad and by dad had to speak with the principal]
because that girl didn’t like [sic], and they would tell us all kinds of things, they would call me bad words in English and that. And they thought that I didn’t understand any English.\] (Interview, Oscary, June 3, 2016)

Oscary associates not speaking in English with harassment by classmates. Even though the experience was painful, Oscary said that writing the narrative about that incident made her feel good because she could then help other students in the future.

Oscary not only sees writing as a way to process these traumatic events that she goes through, but also sees her own progress in English as a way to help others deal with the pressures that come with their own American identity. In the following quote, Oscary relates the exchanges she has with her dad who wants to become a citizen. Oscary speaks in English with her dad to help him prepare for his citizenship exam, but her dad at times wants her to speak in Spanish and at other times in English:

Oscary:  

\[Pero yo le hablo a mi papá en inglés porque se quiere hacer ciudadano y él me dice “háblame en español que yo no te entiendo.” Y yo le digo, “¿pero usted un día me tiene que entender a mí porque usted no se quiere hacer ciudadano?”\]

[But I speak to my dad in English because he wants to become a citizen and he tells me “speak to me in Spanish because I don’t understand you.” And I tell him, “but one day you have to understand me because don’t you want to become a citizen?”]

Carla:  

¿Y cómo te sientes en ese momento cuando él te regaña y te dice que hables español?

183
[And how do you feel in that moment when he scolds you and tells you to
speak in Spanish?]

Oscary:  
*Yo me río. Porque él dice que no le hablen en es- en inglés. Que le hable
en español. Pero él me dice que le hable en inglés. Y después dice que no
le hable en español.* (Interview, Osary, June 3, 2016)

Oscary wants to help her father on his path towards citizenship and this support is filled with
tensions as there are moments the help is solicited while at other times the father asks for her to
speak in Spanish so he can understand her.

This is a major transition in Oscary's life. Back in the Dominican Republic, Oscary's
mother was her advocate for academic matters. Now, Oscary takes responsibility and initiative
on her own. Besides supporting her father, she is also advocating for her own education. Oscary
explains that several teachers in her school in the Dominican Republic were on their phones and
not paying attention to the students. The following excerpt from the interview explains the role
that Oscary's mother had in her education in the Dominican Republic. It is important to read the
following keeping in mind the opening remarks in this section where Oscary vows to show her
stepmother that she is not a mediocre student.

*Que viven chateando en los teléfonos. Es verdad. Mis profesoras se iban, y se iban para
ver televisión y comenzaban a usar su teléfono. Nos decían que nos poniéramos a hacer
su trabajo y después nos corrige cuando ella quería. Es verdad. Y mi mamá tuvo que...
Mi mamá era cosa, presidente de, que ella daba las quejas de la escuela que le daban los
padres. Mi mamá tuvo que ir a dar queja al coso, al la, al distrito que era de esa escuela.
Y tuvo que quejar. A la profesora la sacaron por eso. Es verdad. La sacaron porque los
padres se estaban quejando porque los niños les decían.*
They lived chatting on their phones. It's true. My teachers would go, and they'd go to watch television and would start to use their phone. They would tell us to start getting our work done and then they would correct it when she'd like. It's true. And my mother had to. My mom was like, president of, that she would give the complaints to the school that the parents would give. My mom had to go give a complaint to, to the, the district of that school. And she had to complain. They removed the teacher because of that. It's true. They removed her because the parents were complaining because the children would tell them.

Porque mi mamá trabajaba allí. Mi mamá trabajaba dos trabajos. Mi mamá trabajaba con una doctora y también con cosa. Pero ahora ella está terminando la escuela para entrar en la universidad para ser una enfermera.

[Because my mother worked there. My mom worked two jobs. My mom worked with a doctor and also with that. But now she is finishing school to go into the university to be a nurse.] (Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016)

Oscary's mother is not physically present in Oscary's day-to-day events with school now in New York, but these memories are powerful as a reminder of the difference between her schooling experiences and the role that advocacy has in her life. "Yo se lo voy a mostrar que yo no voy a salir una estudiante mediocre" [I’m going to show you that I’m not going to end up a mediocre student”] are Oscary's words we began this chapter with, getting to know the pressures she is facing with her schooling and new family structure. Oscary now is her own advocate for a better future. She takes a stance with her definition of progress or success, which includes more use of English in her writing. She also supports her family with their path towards an American identity.
Oscary navigates the pressures through writing and processing these moments in community with her classmates in her writing class.

All of these experiences reveal Oscary’s complex relationship with English, considering how speaking, reading, and writing in English inside and outside of school is interpreted. Not speaking in English is associated with painful experiences. While on the contrary, being able to communicate in English is associated with success. Oscary has internalized this pressure. She takes it upon herself to help her father pass his citizenship exam, to prove her stepmother wrong by succeeding in school, and to be a student in the midst of constant harrassment that has to do with her identity and cultural formation.

8.3  Ana: Pride, Pressures and Shame

Ana’s experience with using her writing and language practices to explore a connection with family reveal a pattern of complex language use. In these practices there exists a tension between the pride of using all of her language practices, along with the pressure towards more English use. The following is an excerpt of our interaction:

Carla:  
Y en término de hablar. ¿En la clase estás hablando en qué idioma?
[And in terms of speaking. In class, what language are you speaking in?]  
Ana:  
En los dos idiomas.
[In both languages]  
Carla:  
En los dos idiomas. ¿Y en casa?
[In both languages. And at home?]  
Ana:  
En un idioma. En español. Pero con mi hermana yo hablo en inglés a veces.
[In one language. In Spanish. But with my sister I speak in English sometimes.]

Carla:  
*A veces. ¿Y cómo te hace sentir eso?*

[Sometimes. And how does that make you feel?]

Ana:  
*Me hace sentir feliz porque yo ahora sé más inglés.*

[It makes me feel happy because now I know more English.]

Carla:  
*¿Y por qué te hace sentir feliz?*

[And why does that make you feel happy?]

Ana:  
*Porque ya es como yo me estoy desarrollando en el inglés.*

[Because it is now how I am developing in English]

(Interview, Ana, June 3, 2015)

In this excerpt we see the same reaction that Oscary had to speaking in English earlier: pride and joy. For both Oscary and Ana, making progress in English gives them joy. Along with this joy comes the satisfaction they feel when discussing difficult moments from their lives and these are written and discussed in Spanish. In reflecting on her personal narrative about the moment she left her mother in the Dominican Republic, Ana says “Yo estaba muy triste, ese día fue el peor día de mi vida porque yo estaba separada de mi mamá” [“I was very sad. That day was the worst day of my life because I was separated from my mother”].

As the interview came to an end, I asked Ana if she had any final remarks to share about writing and learning English. Ana replied “Que uno nunca se tiene que dar por vencido por lo que uno tiene y también que nunca deje su cultura y que y uno tiene que escribir los dos idiomas si uno le parece” [“that one should never give up for what one has and also that one should never leave one’s culture and that one has to write in both languages if that’s what one
Ana’s advice for recently arrived students is that their histories, and linguistic and cultural practices be acknowledged in writing assignments. Ana does not see writing in English or Spanish as mutually exclusive. For Ana, language practices cannot be assimilationist towards English only, or transitional in using Spanish only until one can write English well. There is no replacement of one (language and/or cultural practice) with another. Instead, Ana keeps the individual’s agency at the center “si uno le parece,” leaving the use of one language or another up to the writer.

I then asked Ana to repeat the last thing she said and she replied: “y que uno siempre tiene que escribir inglés y español para tener un mejor futuro” [and that one always has to write in English and Spanish to have a better future]. Ana is aware of the implications of bilingualism. We must hold on to these words along with her rationale for selecting the moment of when she left her mother in the Dominican Republic:

Porque como yo me inspiré a escribir cuando yo vine a Santo- a los Estados Unidos

porque en ese momento yo no sabía qué escribir pero yo me recordé que como yo extraño a mi mamá yo podía escribir eso.

[Because I got inspired to write when I came to the Dom-to the United States because in that moment I didn’t know what to write but I remembered how I miss my mom I could write that]

(Interview, Ana, June 3, 2015)

Ana’s words are a cautious warning and reminder for educators to consider the stories that students can process if given the opportunity to use any of their language practices.

It is complex for classrooms to create this inviting space when there are both pressures and value-laden ideas about language:
Ana: *Yo lo escribí en español porque en ese momento yo no sabía mucho inglés.*

So ahora yo estoy escribiendo en inglés porque ahora yo se más inglés que lo que sabía antes.

[I wrote it in Spanish because at that moment I didn’t know much English.

So now I am writing in English because now I know more English than I knew before.]

Carla: *¿Qué ha cambiado?*

[What has changed?]

Ana: *Lo que ha cambiado es que, es que. Que yo me he dado cuenta cuando a mí me decían que yo tenía que hablar, que escribir más inglés porque si yo no escribía más inglés yo no nunca iba a aprender. So yo ahora sé más.*

[What has changed is that, is that. That I realized when they would tell me that I needed to speak, to write more in English because if I didn’t write more in English I would never learn.]

Carla: *¿Y quién te decía que tenías que escribir más inglés?*

[And who would tell you that you needed to write more in English?]

Ana: *Me lo decía mi papá, los maestros y esa cosa.*

[My dad, my teachers would tell me and that stuff.]

(Interview, Ana, June 3, 2016)

Ana, like Oscary, has internalized the pressure to speak and write in English. Ana says that this push for more writing in English comes from her family and teachers in school. The major authority figures in Ana’s life contribute to the way she processes language. In this case, there is the pressure to write more in English. This also fits with the program model of the ENL
class (see chapter three on context of the study) even though the bilingual teacher encourages use of Spanish.

8.4 Genesis: Pride in Culture and Pressure to Progress in English

The more we hear from Genesis, the more we realize that her language practices are complex. Genesis describes the importance of developing her Spanish, and links that development of Spanish to her goal of learning and speaking more English:

Carla: ¿Y cómo tú piensas que la clase de escritura te ha ayudado con eso [no olvidarse del español]?
[How do you think that the writing class has helped you with this [not forgetting Spanish]?

Genesis: Me ha ayudado bastante.
[It has helped me a lot.]

Carla: ¿Sí o no? O dame ejemplos.
[Yes or no? Or give me examples.]

Genesis: Un ejemplo sería que la clase de escritura así con Ms. Medina, y Ms. Medina habla los dos idiomas, inglés y español. Ms. Medina hasta me ha enseñado más palabras en español que se habla en su país. Por ejemplo ella, nosotros decimos español, pero cuando Ms. Medina nos pregunta si queremos hablar en inglés o en español pero ella nunca dice español. Ella dice inglés o castellano. Ella no está enseñando cosa nueva, palabra [sic] más nueva en español y en inglés. Entonces eso me ha ayudado mucho porque aquí una de mis metas es aprender inglés y hablar mucho inglés.
[One example would be that in writing class with Ms. Medina, and Ms. Medina speaks both languages, English and Spanish. Ms. Medina has even taught me more words in Spanish that are spoken in her country. For example, she, we say Spanish, but when Ms. Medina asks whether we want to speak in English or in Spanish but she never says Spanish, she says English or Castilian Spanish. She is teaching us new things, newer words in Spanish and in English. So that has helped me a lot because one of my goals here is to learn English and speak a lot of English.]

(Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

Although the teacher uses her full language repertoire and encourages students to do the same, Genesis’ goal is about making progress in English. At the same time, she notes that she is learning new words in both Spanish and English.

Genesis identifies a difference between the Spanish that she speaks and knows with the kind of Spanish spoken by the teacher, what the teacher calls castellano, or Castillian Spanish. In class session one, as the teacher is setting up the lesson and has students distributing copies of the mentor text in both English and Spanish, the teacher uses the term castellano. A student makes a confused face and the teacher clarifies that this means the same as Spanish. The teacher clarifies that the chapter from Francisco Jiménez’s memoir would be handed out in both English and in Spanish. Yet Genesis does not mention the reverse, that students are sharing with the teacher words from their country. For Genesis, what is crucial, are the words she is learning in English.

Genesis also advocates for a transitional approach to language practices where a student moves to using more English as they learn it. In her advice to a newcomer, Genesis recommends:
Que escriba en español pero que como la mayoría de las cosas la escriba en inglés, la trate de escribir en inglés, porque ello hay muchas palabras que se parecen a la, que hay muchas palabras en inglés que se parecen a las de español. Por ejemplo: personal es así mismo que se escribe. Si él quiere escribir, por ejemplo, un "title" que tenga la palabra "personal", que la escriba pero que piense que en inglés y en español se parecen mucho para que él tenga una idea cómo escribirla y como pronunciarla. Entonces él tiene que, por ejemplo, buscar las palabras que son un poco similares, iguales, en inglés y en español para que pueda escribir en inglés. Algo sería que escriba las palabras que él no entienda que él no, que él no entienda mucho, en español, pero la que el encuentre que son iguales, que la escriba en inglés. Que trate para que así pueda aprender palabras nuevas.

[To write in Spanish but like for most things to write them in English, to try to write them in English, because there are many words that are similar, that there are many words in English that look like the words in Spanish. For example: “personal” is just like how you write it. If he wants to write, for example, a “title” that has the word “personal,” to write it but to think about if in English and in Spanish they are very much alike so that he will have an idea of how to write it and pronounce it. Then, he has to, for example, look for the words that are a bit similar, the same, in English and in Spanish so that he can write in English. Something would be to write the words that he doesn’t understand, that he doesn’t, that he doesn’t understand much, in Spanish, but those that he finds to be the same, to write them in English. To try so that this way he can learn new words.] (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)
Genesis recommends that students move to writing mostly English. Her approach is a transitional one, which views the use of Spanish as a way to get to words that are similar in English. Genesis shows her familiarity with cognates, something that the teacher has also used in her instruction. This strategy has helped Genesis in meeting her goal of writing more in English and communicating more in English through her conversations. In the following excerpt from the interview, Genesis considers her observations of her own and her friends’ language practices both at home and school.

Genesis: Porque yo tengo muchas amigas que son Dominicanas, Dominicanas, Dominicanas. Y entonces a veces cuando quieren decir algo ella te lo tienen que decir en inglés porque entonces de tanto que hablan inglés en su casa para enseñarle dique enseñarle a sus papá o para hablar con su hermano o algo así, entonces se le olvidó el español y hay mucha palabra importantes en español. Entonces yo tengo como ese ejemplo así entonces me gusta hablar mucho español en mi casa y aquí me gusta hablar mucho inglés en la escuela.

[Because I have a lot of friends that are Dominicans, Dominicans, Dominicans. And so sometimes when they want to say something they have to tell you it in English because they speak so much English in their homes to so-called teach their parents or to speak with their sibling or something like that, then they forgot the Spanish and there are so many important words in Spanish. So I have like that example so I like to speak a lot of Spanish in my home and here I like to speak a lot of English at school.]
Carla: *En casa estás con tú mamá, vino contigo ¿si? ¿Tú mamá te dice que tú hables en español o en inglés? ¿Qué te pide tú mamá?*

[At home you are with your mom, she came with you right. Your mom tells you to speak in Spanish or in English? What does she ask you?]

Genesis: *Mi mamá ella nunca me dice nada porque yo siempre como estoy hablando español entonces yo le digo que yo hablo mucho inglés en la clase. Entonces ella me dice que eso es bueno para que a mí no se me olvide el español y para que yo aprenda más inglés. Mi mamá me dice que hable los dos idiomas.*

[My mom never tells me anything because I’m like always speaking in Spanish so I tell her that I speak a lot of English in the class. So she tells me that is good so that I won’t forget Spanish and so I can learn more English. My mom tells me to speak both languages.]

Carla: *¿Y por qué razón?*

[For what reason?]

Genesis: *Por lo que te dije, porque después a mí se me olvida el español. Entonces ella quiere que yo hablé mucho español pero también quiere que en la escuela yo hable mucho inglés para aprender palabras nuevas.*

[Because of what I told you, because then I will forget Spanish. So she wants me to speak a lot of Spanish but also she wants that in school I speak a lot of English so I can learn new words.]

(Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016).
There is a clear tension between the value and pride for Spanish language practices and a new way of being that involves a move towards integrating more and more English. Observing her friends and taking heed to her mother’s advice, Genesis recognizes the value in not forgetting her Spanish but also separates her language practice: Spanish for the home and English in school. Both Genesis and her mom emphasize the importance of learning more English words. This is a pattern across the interview. There are many more instances of English being stated as a goal of learning, while the same is not considered for Spanish. Again, this is also pattern across the focal students, a focus on making a transition to more communication in English (writing and speaking), fulfilling the goals of the ENL program.

This reality is full of contradictions. For example, when I asked Genesis about how the writing unit started with the quick draft, Genesis recognizes that sharing her stories, using all of her language practices, allows her to express herself better.

_Durante ese proceso yo como que sentía, yo pensaba que estaba mejorando mis cosas, mis, el talento como escribir y de cómo hablar en inglés. Y de todo eso lo mejor fue como el, um, el "draft", el borrador, porque por ejemplo un flash draft porque el flash draft tú puedes poner todo lo que tú quieras. Puedes poner las palabras que tú desees en español o en inglés porque entonces así tú puedes cómo expresarte mejor. Tú puedes expresar mejor todo lo que te pasó, tú historia. Por ejemplo, aquí este es mi primer borrador._

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[During that process I kind of like felt, I thought that I was improving my things, my, the talent of how to write and how to speak in English. And of everything the]
best was the, um, the draft, the draft, because, for example a flash draft because the flash draft you can put everything that you want. You can put the words you desire in Spanish or in English because then, this way you can like express yourself better. You can express better everything that happened to you, your story. For example, this is my first draft. So here I put all of the words and didn’t worry. I didn’t, also I like it because I didn’t worry if I made a mistake in a word or not. I later I had to fix it. So that would be my favorite part of the whole process.]

(Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

These words reveal the tension and contradictions of language practices. In this case, Genesis describes how the first draft, or the “flash draft” as called by the teacher and used in the curriculum, was her favorite part of the writing process. Genesis explains that this is so because she can express herself fully without any concerns for spelling. Here, she explains, you can use any words that you “desire” in any language. This kind of writing is a liberating practice as it helps her express herself better. It is crucial to consider the way Genesis theorizes her language practices because you sense the tug and pull of moments fraught with these liberating writing practices while others are sprinkled with self-imposed challenges to make progress in English that are further exacerbated by people in authority (parents and teachers).

Another way in which Genesis’ language practices show tension is in the ways she interprets the benefits of not forgetting her Spanish. When I asked Genesis what is the benefit of speaking in Spanish she said the following:

Sirve porque ello hay personas, por ejemplo yo, mi abuelo se quedó en Santo Domingo, entonces si un día voy a Santo Domingo y se me olvida el español yo le digo "Hi, How are
"you?" entonces él no sabe inglés, entonces ¿cómo él me va a entender? Por eso hay, un beneficio bueno sería que, pensar en que tú tienes un abuelo que se te, que no sabe inglés, entonces tú tienes que quedarte con tu español para poder hablar con él y que él te entienda.

[It is useful because there are people, for example myself, my grandfather stayed in the Dominican Republic, and if one day I go to the Dominican Republic and I forget Spanish, I tell him “Hi, How are you,” so he doesn’t know English, how is he going to understand me? That is why, a good benefit would be, to think that you have a grandfather that, that doesn’t know English, so you have to keep your Spanish to be able to speak with him and so he can understand you.]

(Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

In this case, we see that speaking in Spanish provides Genesis with the benefit of facilitating communication with family members. Compared with the previous rationale given by Genesis on her translation practices, we can see that for Genesis, the Spanish language is important. For Genesis, English is important for writing and academic life, and Spanish for communicating with family and friends. Genesis gives a second reason for maintaining Spanish — to maintain our knowledge of words that are particular to our cultures. Genesis gives the following examples:

El español es importante porque tú sabes que nosotros los Dominicanos somos como medio un poquito loco entonces nosotros como que a vece nos gusta decir palabras que son asi de esa que decimos asi allá en Santo Domingo. Por ejemplo, di que, "que lo wachi", qué eso diciéndote como "qué pasó", como en los, los mexicanos que dicen "que onda" y cosas así. Entonce esas palabras asi no se te pueden olvidar porque son palabra buena. Por ejemplo, "vacana", como decimos nosotros, "buena así bonitas". Entonce a ti
Genesis is encouraging people not to forget their Spanish or else they’ll miss these idiomatic expressions, idiosyncracies of the particular way of speaking in certain geographical regions. Genesis shows knowledge about the regional varieties of Spanish. Her understanding of these shows an appreciation for the diversity within the language. The aforementioned examples also show Genesis’ complex understanding of language practices. Genesis also says that these are good words, beautiful words.

Finally, Genesis’ final words from the interview also reveal the complexities of her language practices as she discusses the resiliency and survival mechanisms necessary to cope with intense moments in the immigrants’ journey:
Algo importante sería que el día en que yo vine aquí a New York, yo me sentía un poco nerviosa, porque al ser la primera vez a venir a un país que tú no conoces, te sientes nerviosa y me sentía como perdida porque del aeropuerto a mi casa, en mi casa yo me perdía, porque en mi casa es un pasillo y entonces después se abre en donde está la sala y las habitaciones y a veces yo cogía para la habitación de mis tíos o para la sala en vez de mi habitación porque como que yo me sentía perdida porque era un país y un apartamento que yo no conocía muy bien. Y lo bueno fue que ese día yo me dormí hasta el otro día. Desde que llegue me dormí. Entonces para mi un comentario muy bonito sería como que cuando tú llegas a algún lugar que tú no conozcas, que te sientas, que si te sientas perdida ten esperanza que tú puedes aprender las cosas buenas. Por ejemplo, cuando yo llegué yo no sabía nada de inglés entonces con mi esperanza así con querer aprender inglés, yo me sentí bien y aprendí mucho inglés. Ahora yo hablo con todo el mundo inglés. Entonces como nunca te des por vencido cuando tú llegas a un país que tú no conozcas y que no hables el idioma, que tenga un clima diferente, que a veces te sientas como rara, perdida, que nunca te rindas. Que sigas adelante para que puedas acostumbrarte a un país nuevo.

[Something important would be the day I came to New York, I felt a bit nervous because for it being the first time in a country that you do not know, you feel nervous and I felt like lost because from the airport to my home, in my home I would get lost, because in my home there’s a hallway and then it opens up into where the living area and the bedrooms are and sometimes I would go to my uncles’ room or the living room instead of my room because since I kind of felt lost because it was a country and an apartment that I didn’t know very well. And]
what was good about that day was that I fell asleep until the next day. I slept since I arrived. So for me a good comment would be that when you arrive to a place that you do not know, that you feel, that you feel lost, have hope that you can learn good things. For example, when I arrived I didn’t know any English so with my hope and desire to learn English, I felt good and learned a lot of English. Now I speak English with everyone. So never give up when you arrive at a country that you do not know or do not speak the language, that has different weather, that sometimes you feel kind of weird, lost, to never give up. Continue so that you can get used to this new country.] (Interview, Genesis, June 3, 2016)

Hearing and reading from Genesis’ stories we see that language, identity formation, journeys, and writing, are not mutually exclusive. When Genesis speaks of the changes and challenges in her life she does so considering not only the impacting experiences that have forever influenced her life, but she does so with an awareness that there are expectations of ways to communicate, to perform, to exist. The fact that she ended the interview with words of advice for students not to give up but to “continue so that you can get used to this new country” is powerful. “Get used to this country” becomes Genesis’ survival mode, her motto, her rationale for her experiences and language practices. What that means to her involves a complex understanding of how to remain close to the way she communicates with family (in conversations) and for them (in writing). Whether it is with a draft that begins in Spanish and is published in English, or words particular to the way her family and friends communicate in the Dominican Republic, Genesis is clear about her use of writing as release, remembrance and resistance.
8.5 Emiliano: Language Separation/Switch

Emiliano’s language practices include Spanish and English but differ from the ways experienced by the other students interviewed. The following is an exchange from the interview after I asked Emiliano what languages he spoke at home:

Emiliano: Spanish. I'm really timid speaking English at home.
Carla: Oh why is that?
Emiliano: I don't know its like I'm really scared to talk English at home.
Carla: What makes you feel comfortable speaking English at school and not comfortable at home?
Emiliano: At school because well........I have to write. Ima skip this but Ima write it. But at home I feel. No. I can't say it out loud. I'm feeling they gonna laugh.
Carla: They being the people at home, do they speak English?
Emiliano: Nah they speak Spanish.
Carla: Ah. But they think, you think they're going to laugh because of, because they wouldn't understand or they think it would be funny?
Emiliano: My dad understands a little bit of English and my mom doesn't.
Carla: Ok. Ok. And do they ask you to speak Spanish or English.
Emiliano: No they really don't ask nothing.

(Interview, Emiliano, June 3, 2016)

Emiliano claims not to speak English at home. He states that he does not feel comfortable with speaking English, but cannot articulate clearly the reasons for his shyness and fear with speaking
in English at home. He does say that his dad understands a little, but not his mom. This might have to do with trying to emotionally bind with his parents who always speak Spanish.

Although at first it seems as though Emiliano practices strict language separation as described in this part of the interview, he explains how he is struggling with what he calls the “switch” from school language which is generally in English and now in the bilingual classroom is also in Spanish.

Emiliano: Speaking in Spanish here is kind of comfortable and uncomfortable. Speaking here is really uncomfortable. Speaking Spanish in my home is comfortable and speaking English is uncomfortable. It's like switching place.

Carla: Why do you think we have to switch?

Emiliano: No I mean switching language here. Spanish a little bit makes me feel uncomfortable and uncomfortable. English here comfortable.

Carla: Have you tried not switching the language?

Emiliano: Yeah I've tried. We worked perfectly.

Carla: So do you think in the future you might try not to do the switch?

Emiliano: No Ima, I might just speak the two languages.

Carla: Ah. Both in the same place. So that's your solution.

Emiliano: Yeah.

(Interview, Emiliano, June 3, 2016)

Like the other students in the study, Emiliano is working through his language practices and finding ways that these would work for him considering the context. Like Oscary, it is important to consider the students' words in the context of their history with learning English and
developing their identities. Oscary and Emiliano have both experienced bullying in their schools. We know that Oscary's incident was directly related to her speaking in Spanish and not English. We also know that Emiliano has been teased and repeated grades because of the ways he performed on standardized exams that were in English. Emiliano now is trying to figure out how best to navigate his language practices at home and in school, all the while being comfortable with himself through this process.

8.6 Conclusion

In Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture, Marjorie Faulstich Orellana (2009) discusses the phenomenon of language brokering, as young children engage in translation for their families, something we see some of the students doing for her families. Orellana’s research of Kindergarten through sixth grade found that “children’s actions contribute to households and communities” as well as acknowledging the “role that translation work has played in their processes of learning and development” (2009, p.98). Orellana advocates for schooling to include child translators’ skills and funds of knowledge that are gained from language brokering. Genesis took that initiative when translating her draft from Spanish to English. The classroom lessons included these translation skills and funds of knowledge throughout the reading of the texts and the sharing of the writing pieces. Orellana’s study highlights the importance of recognizing the lived realities of bilingual students and how these impact their learning as well as reminding educators of the language as resource perspective, where translation work can be interpreted as being cognitively, socially, and linguistically demanding. The students in this personal narrative project were given the space to engage this linguistically demanding work in a way that honored their knowledge, language practices, and helped them negotiate the pressures at this point and in this place in their lives.
Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Research Summary

This dissertation provides an analysis on how a teacher develops a bilingual pedagogy that welcomes translanguaging and the impact of this teaching on bilingual sixth-graders' narratives as they process the tensions experienced on their journeys. The focus teacher developed a bilingual personal narrative curriculum that begins with the knowledge of students and the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project sixth grade narrative curriculum. But the teacher understood that modifications needed to be made.

An analysis of the classroom interaction helped me locate modifications to the curriculum around using the students’ full language and cultural practices, more interactive teaching methods, integrating culturally relevant texts and sharing the teacher’s own writing. I examine how students, given the space to use their full language and cultural repertoires, viewed writing as a liberating practice allowing them to release and remember key moments in their lives. Both students and their teacher experienced tension around pride and shame in their linguistic and cultural practices. And yet they were able to redefine what it meant to be an emergent bilingual learner in a writing workshop classroom, an immigrant in the United States, and a Latinx member of the community. The personal narrative writing unit that the teacher developed helped the students and their teacher navigate these complexities. This chapter outlines several implications of this study for policy, professional development, pedagogy, and partnerships.
9.2 Policy

*Supporting curriculum modification*

Bilingual programs need to consider their curriculum and how teachers are supported in ways to modify it if necessary, with knowledge of the students’ language and cultural practices. This study examines four different kinds of modifications that the classroom teacher implemented given her experience teaching in bilingual contexts, her knowledge of the curriculum, her changing language ideology given the partnerships with CUNY-NYSIEB and TCRWP, and her ongoing assessment of the bilingual writers in the classroom: using the students' full linguistic and cultural repertoires, implementing a more interactive pedagogical approach, using culturally relevant texts, and showing students her own writing samples.

Teachers must be supported to implement modifications to the curriculum and to develop alternative pedagogical practices when teaching emergent bilinguals. They need the support of their school staff, administration, and families. Monthly newsletters informing families of the rationale for the learning experiences and ways they can be involved should be translated and circulated. Administration unfamiliar with these modifications and practices of bilingual language use should visit the classrooms and create structures in the school to provide space for teachers to visit one another's classrooms and present on their learning experiences from their classroom teaching, partnerships, and professional development sessions at faculty meetings. The school's parent coordinator and president of the parent association can also work with teachers to co-create family workshops where families' languages and cultures are welcomed, valued and shown to be integrated in the school's curricula.
9.3 Professional Development

As teachers, however, we too often hear students' speech without opening our ears to their voices. That is to say, we tend to interpret students' language within our own sociohistorical experience, within the social reality of which we live. While this strategy may work fine when students come from class, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds similar to our own, it frequently works to reject and negate the voice (and thus the community) of the divergent child. In this negation, some students accommodate to the classroom norm, others struggle (either subconsciously or consciously) to maintain a semblance of voice by using language and communicative or discourse practices in ways supported in the community but deemed inappropriate in school. - Catherine Walsh (1987, p.16)

Study groups for teachers, administration, staff, students, and families

The teacher in this research project was not only aware of students' language and cultural practices, but also validated them and integrated them into the lessons. The teacher’s own experience as a bilingual being, moving from Peru to the United States, and facing oppressive schooling practices here, all contributed to her connection with the students. Furthermore, she lived in the students’ neighborhood, thus increasing her familiarity with the community, something revealed in the references she made throughout her lessons.

This is not always the case (Delpit 2009, Ladson-Billings 1992, Valenzuela 1999). Sometimes teachers are not aware of the students cultural and linguistic practices. Sometimes they do not live in the same communities as the students they teach and are not aware of the experiences of their daily lives. Although some fast-track teacher preparation programs try to fill the need for teachers, the disconnect between some of the teacher’s experiences and those of the students is so immense, that for many it becomes an insurmountable challenge.
Besides the many instances where students in this project shared (in conversation and in writing) moments of trauma with their identities not being accepted here, there were also two instances where one of the participants, Genesis, mentioned "racism." Although the classroom teacher did not elaborate on this comment, this was addressed through the reading selections ("Inside Out" and The Other Side). It is imperative that teachers and students engage in a careful study of issues of racism and linguicism, amongst other forms of systemic injustice that students experience in and outside of the context of schooling.

Professional development sessions for all school staff need to move to centering race in the discussion on language and placing the emphasis on the white listening subject as opposed to the bilingual speaking subject, as Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa recommend, taking an approach that questions long-held practices that view bilingual speakers as deficient:

We argue that the appropriateness-based model of language education not only marginalizes the linguistic practices of language-minoritized communities but is also premised on the false assumption that modifying the linguistic practices of racialized speaking subjects is key to eliminating racial hierarchies. Our argument places racial hierarchies rather than individual practices at the center of analysis. (Flores and Rosa, 2015, p. 155)

For Flores and Rosa, it is crucial that we consider language teaching and learning through a different framework, one that considers eliminating the racial hierarchies. This requires a paradigm shift for professional development to support bilingual speakers as these workshops often center on the deficit view of bilingual students. Flores and Rosa also push against the argument made by Lisa Delpit (2002) that encourages teachers to affirm students’ language
practices in addition to teaching them the “codes of power” in order to have access, achieve social transformations, and upward mobility.

This approach reifies the relationship between linguistic practices and upward socioeconomic mobility by viewing the codes of power as objective linguistic practices rather than ideological phenomena. Without an analysis of the codes of power as a raciolinguistic ideology, we are unable to scrutinize how nonracialized people are able to deviate from these idealized linguistic practices and enjoy the embrace of mainstream institutions while racialized people can adhere to these idealized linguistic practices and still face profound institutional exclusion based on the perceptions of the white listening subject. (Flores and Rosa, 2015, p. 165)

Instead of reifying language hierarchies and continuing to see bilingual students through a deficit perspective, Flores and Rosa call for critical language awareness and language practices that are not based on “appropriateness.” They call on us to consider the example of Gloria Anzaldúa who “explicitly refuses to embrace an appropriateness-based model of language and consciously uses language in ways that transgress the white supremacist status quo” (Flores and Rosa, 2015, p. 168). My research study considers how the bilingual students’ language practices are interpreted by themselves and their teacher, as well as how the personal narrative writing unit as modified by the teacher, created a space for this critical language awareness. What would it look like for professional development sessions to encourage critical language awareness and the elimination of racial hierarchies when providing curriculum and pedagogy support for teachers of bilingual students? What would this look like with conversations across school building administration, teachers, and staff including counselors?
For example, at the TCRWP Social Justice Fall 2016 conference titled, "Teaching Hope When the World Teaches Otherwise: Building a Toolkit for Social Justice in Today's Classroom," I led participants in a workshop that considered personal reflection before curriculum implementation. My workshop titled, "Living, Teaching, and Addressing Intersectional Lives: Leading Teacher Study Groups on Issues of Race, Gender and Sexuality, Class, Immigration, and Language," took participants through three ways of engaging these pertinent issues and their ideologies: a language study, curriculum study, and culturally relevant texts. For the first part, I showed participants tools that they can use (for example see CUNY-NYSIEB "Languages of New York State") to get to know the languages that their students speak. They then can use their knowledge of the languages and their students to create another tool to share with their staff. My students, all in-service teachers at Long Island University in a summer literacy course, created such tools and found this practice to be incredibly helpful to come to an understanding of the intricacies of their students' languages and their own misconceptions.

For the curriculum study, we looked at both sample curricula and the hidden curriculum, focusing on the teacher-student relationship and community-building. We watched video clips from Media that Matters "Immersion," the documentary "The Mask You Live In" and powerful interviews from Girls for Gender Equity on "Black Girls Breaking Silence on School Push Out" to address intersectional issues. For the culturally relevant texts section we thought about our implementation of these texts using Alma Flor Ada's "Four Phases of the Creative Reading Act," focusing on the creative action/ transformative phase and whether we could make space for such work with the texts and writing pieces that we teach.
9.4 Pedagogy

 Creating the space for students' language practices in instruction

Bilingual programs in schools need to create space for bilingual students to use all of their language practices to affirm bilingual identities and encourage language processing. Most important, making this approach to education the norm in the school. This means revisiting fixed language separation in such programs (such as those seen in many Dual Language Bilingual Education classrooms), questioning the rationale, and studying its impact. Bilingual classrooms of any form (dual language or transitional) or English as a New Language Programs (formerly known as English as a Second Language Programs) can welcome students' use of their language practices in several ways. If the classroom teacher knows the language practices of the students and is a bilingual practitioner themself, they can use the language in instruction. This might mean writing demonstration pieces that include this language use, reading texts out loud in different languages, and going through writing processes and strategies in these languages. These are the practices that we see in Alejandra's classroom as she modified the curriculum. If the classroom teacher does not know the languages spoken by the bilingual writers in the classroom, there are other ways that the language can be used in instruction.

Texts written in the students' languages can be shared as mentor texts with their English translation. Families and community members can be invited to participate in translations of mentor texts. Partnerships can be set up with other school communities that have speakers of this language in the neighborhood or other areas. Listening centers can be set up in the classroom with devices that have access for students to listen to texts in various languages (Celic, 2009). These centers, common in reading workshop classrooms for lower grades, can be brought into the intermediate grades to encourage and celebrate students' bilingualism, in addition to
providing a space to analyze writing techniques, as we saw done with Alejandra's lessons. Teachers can include mentor texts that include translanguaging, as Alejandra does in her teaching. One helpful resource is Vanessa Pérez Rosario & Vivienne Cao’s CUNY-NYSIEB Guide to Translanguaging in Latino Literature (2015), this pre-kindergarten through high school guide, gives a brief description of authors, key texts, and examples of how they use translanguaging in their writing. If teachers would like to have sample student work where more than one language is used, then they can refer to the work of Cummins and Early’s Identity Texts (2011) that includes links to student writing available online as shared by schools.

Creating opportunities for bilingual writers to engage with authentic audiences

Cornelius Minor, a lead staff developer at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, has shared at his workshops how he once visited the local businesses and community spaces around a school in Brooklyn, New York, asking if students' writing from that school could be displayed on their bulletin boards. A laundromat, library, and bodega were a few of the places opening their doors for students' writing. The students' engagement increased and there was much more discussion around the purpose of their writing. In this study, Oscary also presents us with a similar example, revealing the importance of making sure writers engage with authentic audiences.

Oscary: Mi otra experiencia fue que ahora Ms. Medina nos puso en un programa a nosotras y nosotros, y nosotros escribimos un libro y lo van a vender en cosa, cómo eh? En amazon.

[My other experience was that now Ms. Medina put us in a program and we, we wrote a book and they're going to sell it on, that, what is that? On Amazon.]
Carla: Oh.

Oscary: Lo van a publicar.

[They are going to publish it.]

Carla: ¿Cuéntame? ¿Qué tipo de libro?

[Tell me. What kind of book?]


[Where one writes a story. She [points to "Stories from the Heights" biography of the director of the program] of that program]

Carla: ¿Historia de su vida? ¿De qué tipo?

[Story of your life? What kind?]

Oscary: No. Era una historia de que uno se.

[No. It was a story where one.]

Carla: ¿De ficción?

[Fiction?]

Oscary: Aha. Entonces casi toda la clase escribió de novio. Uno tenía que poner si uno tenía si uno estaba grande. Entonces yo mi historia en la que escribí que mi best friend creía que yo le quite su novio pero yo no andaba con su novio.

[Aha. So almost all of the class wrote about a boyfriend. One had to put if one had, if one was older. So my story I wrote that my best

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5 Title of the publication has been changed to protect the identity of the student.
friend thought that I took her boyfriend but I wasn't seeing her boyfriend.

Carla: ¿Y tu escogiste ese tema o la maestra te lo dio?
[And did you choose that topic or the teacher gave it to you?]

Oscary: No. Yo lo escogí.
[No. I chose it.]

Carla: ¿Y por qué escogiste ese tema que es muy diferente a este?
[And why did you choose that topic that is very different from this one?]

Oscary: Porque era una historia uno tenía que escribir que no es tan real. Entonces yo escogí una historia yo tenía una best friend que es Carolina. Ella cosa no. Ese día yo no hablaba con ella. Por eso mismo. Por eso.
[Because it was a story that one had to write that isn't that real. So I chose a story that I had a best friend that was Carolina. She's not. That day I wasn't talking to her. That is why. That is why.]

Carla: ¿Y tu? ¿Cuentame entonces? ¿cómo te sentías cuando tu dijiste “nosotros escribimos” es la clase o un grupito que escribieron para ese?
[And you? Tell me then. How did you feel when you said "we wrote" is it the class or a small group that wrote this?]

Oscary: Un grupito de diez niños.
[A small group of ten kids.]

Carla: ¿Y cómo te hace sentir que tu libro va a ser publicado y se va a vender en Amazon?
[And how does it make you feel that your book will be published and it will be sold on Amazon?]

Oscary:  *Me hace feliz porque yo ahora, yo no se porque. Yo eso me hace feliz.*

[It makes me feel very happy because I now, I don't know. That makes me happy.]

(Interview, Oscary, June, 3, 2016)

Although it is good practice for all writers to have authentic audiences, it is especially important not to forget this for bilingual writers, especially when their bilingual writing practices are often interpreted to be as less than other writing practices if this is not the norm set up by the school. This means considering audiences within the classroom, other classrooms that include students from outside of the bilingual program, school administration and staff, and community members. It is important for bilingual writers to be integrated with the rest of the school community and providing audiences across these spaces is one way that students can feel that their writing, languages, and cultures are welcomed, celebrated, and a part of the school.

**Schools Providing Spaces for Students to Process Trauma In and Out of Class**

Alejandra's writing workshop for the personal narrative unit provided the space that students needed to process traumatic events in their lives. Where else is this happening and how can we create spaces for constant reflections in community in our middle schools? Some schools use their advisory period to address culturally relevant issues, providing the time to listen to students' stories. A sixth grade through twelfth grade all girls school in Brooklyn, New York uses their advisory time (about thirty minutes each day) for this purpose. The curriculum is built around the students' experiences, questions, and connections to the curriculum. The students in this study discuss trauma around family separation, immigration, fitting in their schools,
bullying, and identity negotiation. Although this was done in this writing unit, this kind of space for listening, sharing, writing, and processing must continue.

Some schools integrate this with more formal academic curriculum in order to address the pressures around high-stakes standardized testing preparation. One sixth grade through twelfth grade school in the South Bronx, New York, does this through their adaptation of the Word Generation vocabulary curriculum that takes controversial issues and has students engage with them through a reading, a math and science word problem, a debate, and a writing activity. Most elementary schools use their morning meeting time to have these kinds of conversations around community-building. Advisory or homeroom time in middle schools can be considered as options along with the after-school time in some settings, as times and spaces for students to be heard.

**Studying the Development and Impact of Authentic Bilingual Writing Assessments**

The students in this study used checklists to reflect on their writing with their writing partners. Although the classroom teacher modified assessment tools from the curriculum to assess the final writing pieces—from the published work that was developed across the weeks as well as the final “on demand”—an analysis of these tools was not a part of the research study. Further research on how bilingual teachers develop writing assessments that consider the linguistic and cultural practices of bilingual students at the middle school level is necessary. What do these assessments look like? How do bilingual teachers create them so that they honor students’ linguistic repertoires? How do students use these tools throughout the writing process? How do the assessments reflect the bilingual pedagogy? Studying the process of creating such assessments and their impact on bilingual students in different bilingual programs at the middle school level would be helpful for classrooms and the conversation on standardized exams.
9.5 **Partnerships**

*Supporting bilingual teachers' questions, knowledge and experiences through partnerships*

The support for bilingual teachers comes from different participants in the learning community. Schools need to partner with organizations and institutions of higher education for professional development that is centered on the lived experiences of bilingual students and the latest research. This helps acknowledge bilingual teachers' questions, knowledge of students' learning and their experiences. The partnership between the CUNY-NYSIEB project and Alejandra’s school was crucial in her transition to embracing translanguaging practices in the classroom and with her own bilingual identity. Schools need professional development that acknowledges the voices of bilingual beings and validates their humanity through curriculum implementation. In this support of bilingual teachers' does this professional development spend time getting to know what the students are already able to do with their writing, acknowledging their full linguistic and cultural repertoires? Just as Alejandra began her unit with the "on demand" writing pieces that informed her of all that her students knew about her students and days after she had the students participate in activities that let her know about their reading and writing lives, does the professional development take the time to begin by getting to know the students in this manner?

Schools and their partners for professional development working with bilingual teachers and classrooms also need to question their views on language and bilingualism. What is their philosophy on bilingualism? I once asked a principal of a K-8 school in New York City why is it that the school had a bilingual dual language class on every grade from kindergarten through to sixth grade but not in their seventh and eighth grades? The principal's reply included her
knowledge of bilingual research in the time it took for students to make progress as well as her concern about the impact of high stakes-standardized testing, saying that the students will "get higher grades on the ELA and Math exams" by seventh and eighth grades after having gone through the Dual Language Bilingual Education program for seven years. What are the pressures facing schools that impact their philosophies on language and bilingual program implementation? Have they internalized racialized language practices so the language practices of children (and teachers) of color are considered “less than” when compared to other languages?

Schools need to assess which languages are celebrated and why in communities with diverse language speakers.

This is also an area of future research that can answer these important questions through longitudinal studies of school partnerships with community-based organizations, professional development organizations, and institutions of higher learning. Most important, continuing the work of connection across these sites, such as the work done by the National Writing Project. Future studies can assess how teachers’ language ideologies are shaped, how they impact their students, and how the school partners’ influence both the teachers’ ideologies and curriculum implementation, all with a focus on supporting a bilingual pedagogy.

*School partnerships with community-based organizations, teaching artists, and teacher preparation programs to discuss culturally relevant pedagogy*

All constituents benefit when learning from one another when schools partner with organizations in the community and teacher preparation programs. Teacher preparation programs must address culturally relevant pedagogy not only within the walls of academia but also in the clinical practices. Teacher candidates should have instruction that is aware of the latest research on bilingual practices along with student teaching and fieldwork experiences in settings that
align with this philosophy. A bilingual teacher candidate should never be told to “lose an accent” or that only “native English speakers” should teach emergent bilingual students by a professor or a cooperating teacher in the student teaching experience. For teachers seeking additional professional support, these teacher preparation programs can provide workshops for teacher candidates that welcome these teachers with more experience. Schools partnering with community-based organizations can get to know the students' community better and bring in the community knowledge into the classrooms. Not only do we need more of these partnerships across these institutions but more research needs to be done in this area, especially research that can be taken to schools in presenting such partnerships as viable opportunities for professional learning and community-building.

Alejandra's class partnered with a local art program that sends an artist to work with teachers to co-create lessons where the artwork is embedded with the content and language goals of the curriculum. The artist is a part of the lessons and just like the students move across the writing process for their writing unit from collecting ideas through to publishing, the artist takes students from sketch to finished pieces. For the personal narrative writing unit, the artist helped students create self-portraits. These self-portrait process revealed more about the students' self perception and how they want others to see them.

One of my sixth grade classes participated in a Silk Road Connect partnership for the entire school year. The Silk Road Connect Project is a nonprofit partnership where performers from the Silk Road Ensemble, led by Yo-Yo Ma, connect with several schools to provide students with arts-based experiences. The program has general goals for the school visits that align with the units of study. These can also be thought of as starting points for the thematic unit recommendation described above. Some of these goals are: journeys and cultural exchange.
These experiences were carefully planned and integrated into the sixth grade social studies, reading workshop, and writing workshop curricula, addressing the cultural learning expectations of the Silk Road units. The Silk Road was used as a metaphor for a space where languages, belief systems, and other cultural experiences met, were exchanged, and were in constant flux. With this partnership, students learned how to tell stories in different ways. As a calligraphy and sketch artist created a scene while listening to music, the students did the same, some in Spanish, others in English. They shared their stories and these discussions served as the foundation for their narrative writing.

When a Sheng player from China visited our classroom, students learned that just like language differs according to geographical region and personal preference, music differs as well. When some students in a monolingual sixth grade class laughed at the Sheng player’s accent, it spurred a discussion on cultural awareness, appreciation for accents, and questioning which accents are deemed more desirable than others and why that is so. In one beautiful example of hybridity and the creation of new forms with the blends of previous isolated ones, Cristina Pato, a gaita player and Charles “Lil Buck” Riley, a dancer, collaborated for a performance that brought many students to tears. This collaboration and integration of bilingual writing and performance with the arts was a new way of considering the way the curriculum could meet the standards and meet the cultural and learning experiences of the students. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, at the end of one performance, one of my sixth grade students asks if she can share one of her poems, titled “Bilingual Matters.” Students were working on an anthology of poems, one of which was about their bilingual experience. She confidently got up in front of the class and read:
"Bilingual Matters"

Some people are like
"What did he say?"
but I knew what he said.

Why don't you be
bilingual?
'Cause I know what
he said.

Listen guys this is what he said
"Vamo comer mucho plátano
con salami ahorita."
(Translation to people who are monolingual)
We're going to eat some
sweet plaintains with salami later.

Holla & Peace Out.

The class erupted in applause. I gave them time to provide some feedback and other students began to share their bilingual poems, some of which were written in a blend of English and Spanish. The class loved her poem and delivery so much that they asked to include it in our culminating performance at New York City’s Central Park Summerstage with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble. Not only did the student’s message of Bilingual Matters make it to the New
York City community but Yo-Yo Ma and Damian Woetzel of the Aspen Institute Arts Program also shared it with students in a Chicago school that performed it. The performance made it on the local Chicago news, the link was emailed to us, and my student was able to see how her message made it beyond the page, beyond the bulletin board and the portfolio. This is another example of authentic audiences. Although this partnership may not be available to all schools, teachers can still integrate the arts and bilingual products for classroom work with local community members and teaching artists. The model of this partnership and its goals must be studied further to note the impact of the arts in bilingual students' formation as writers, historians, participants in communities, and advocates for their learning and bilingual identities.

9.6 Write, Rite, and Right to Remember

This personal narrative unit taught in a way that honored students' bilingual identities, experiences, and knowledge, was instrumental for students' processing of difficult moments in their lives. With the knowledge of her students and her own experience of being a bilingual immigrant in this country, the teacher co-created the space with the children so that they were affirmed, supported and challenged to write their stories. In her chapter “Indigena as Scribe,” from *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness*, Chicana playwright, educator, and poet, Cherrie L. Moraga says the following about the act of writing:

I write to remember.

I make rite (ceremony) to remember.

It is my right to remember.

The students and the teacher in this study live these three ways of remembering through writing in this classroom community. They write to “remember” turning points from their lives, some moments full of pain, others full of joy, while some a complicated mix of both as students are
separated from family members or deal with really tough moments in their lives in school. They make “rite” as Alejandra and the students co-create a space where memories in Spanish and English are shared in community through whole class discussions on mentor texts and their own writing, through writing partnership discussions, and through small group strategy lessons. Together, in this interactive writing space that welcomes their linguistic and cultural repertoires, they follow an iterative writing process. Finally, with pride and reverence, they advocate for these stories to be told, for languages not to be forgotten, and for progress to be made along their bilingual journeys. Alejandra's classroom was a space that welcomed the discussion of these experiences.

Gloria Anzaldúa, in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, uses the Nahuatl term *nepantla* to discuss the *tierra entre medio*:

Transformations occur in this in between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement, an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time its become a sort of “home.” (2002, p.1)

The students' and Alejandra's experiences revealed in this study show that they are dwelling in this in-between space. The bilingual personal narrative writing moments helped them process this *nepantla*. In times like these where bilingual identities are forged in the face of racist and xenophobic ideologies, where languages are racialized and where American identity is constantly questioned and redefined, it is imperative that we listen closely to students' and teachers' ways of releasing, remembering, and resisting.
### Appendix A
TCRWP Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories
Grade 6 Narrative Unit of Study Classroom Lessons

Class Session Five from TCRWP Curriculum:
Reading Closely to Learn from other Authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Connection**             | 1. Teacher uses a metaphor to show the students the process of learning from experts when we are beginners at things.  
2. The teacher names the teaching point “Today, I want to teach you that writers read aloud other authors’ texts not only to experience the characters’ story, but also to admire, study, and emulate the quality of the writing” (p. 43).                                          | 1. Students listen.                                                                                     |
| **Teaching**               | 1. Teacher reminds the students of the read aloud yesterday of “Everything Will Be Okay.”  
2. Teacher returns to one part of the text that they circled and rereads it.  
3. Teacher thinks out loud about the author’s use of dialogue and rereads certain lines with emphasis to show how the tone comes through the dialogue.  
4. Teacher names what the author did: “So it looks like Howe really thinks about the kind of person the character is, and then based on what he wants to reveal about the character, he makes the character talk in a particular way” (p. 45).  
5. Teacher jots down this writing strategy on a chart titled “Lessons from Mentor Narratives”                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1. Students listen and follow along in their copy of the text that the teacher has available for them for this lesson.                                                                                                     |
| **Active Engagement**      | 1. Teacher reads another excerpt and asks students to listen and think about how they can try this out in their own writing.  
2. Teacher asks students to notice what they author did in this part of the text that they could also do in their own writing.                                                                                                                                                 | 1. Students look at their copy and get ready to jot what they notice.  
2. Students silently reread the text using their own copies and annotate.  
3. Students discuss in partnerships.  
4. One student shares and the class listens.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Link | 1. The teacher reminds the students of the teaching point.  
2. The teacher tells the students that they will add the ideas from today’s chart to the other class chart titled “How to Write Powerful Personal Narratives.”  
3. The teacher tells students what they can do when they go to write independently for the next part of the workshop. | Students listen and prepare for independent writing. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Writing (repeats after Mid-Workshop Teaching)</td>
<td>1. Suggested conferring and small-group work involves meeting with students to read aloud more excerpts from mentor text and help them notice more writing strategies.</td>
<td>1. Students write independently and silently as the teacher meets with small groups or has one-on-one writing conferences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mid-Workshop Teaching | 1. Teacher reminds the students that soon they will choose one story to turn into a published piece of writing so this means that they need to be writing many entries.  
2. Teacher reminds them of the class chart on strategies for generating ideas for their personal narrative. | 1. Students listen.  
2. Students listen and look at the chart. |
| Share | 1. Teacher goes over the homework by giving students options and time to plan that work.  
2. Teacher asks students to discuss that plan for homework with their writing partner. | 1. Students listen and then think about their plan.  
2. Students share their plan for homework with their writing partner. |
## Appendix A

**TCRWP Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories**  
**Grade 6 Narrative Unit of Study Classroom Lessons**

### Class Session Seven from TCRWP Curriculum:  
Rehearsing: Experimenting with Beginnings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Connection**             | 1. Teacher tells students about the work of the workshop with them selecting a narrative idea.  
2. Teacher asks students to reread writing notebook entries and select one.  
3. Teacher tells the students to tell their stories to their partners.  
4. Teacher names the teaching point “Today I want to teach you that writers also rehearse for writing by trying out several different leads” | 1. Students listen.  
2. Students reread notebook entries and select one idea.  
3. Students share their story ideas.  
4. Students listen. |
| **Teaching**               | 1. Teacher shows the first page of their annotated copy of the mentor text “Everything Will Be Okay” by James Howe.  
2. Teacher asks the students “What is he doing at the start - the lead - of his story that I can try?”  
3. Teacher reads the lead out loud.  
4. Teacher thinks out loud to consider what they noticed (details of the characters and inner thinking).  
5. Teacher names the strategy and tells students that they can do this in their writing, that this technique is transferable.  
Teacher jots this on chart titled “Techniques for Writing Memorable Leads”  
6. Teacher summarizes the work. | 1. Students look at the teacher copy.  
2. Students listen.  
3. Students listen and follow along.  
4. Students listen.  
5. Students listen and follow along on chart.  
| Active Engagement | 1. Teacher sets up the students to practice this work by telling them to get ready to tell their partner. “One thing I notice that he did that I could try is”  
2. Teacher reads a little bit more of the lead out loud.  
3. Teacher listens in to writing partnerships.  
4. Teacher shares a few observations.  
5. Teacher jots down additional techniques to the “Techniques for Writing Memorable Leads” chart. | 1. Students listen.  
2. Students listen and follow along.  
3. Students share their observations with their writing partner.  
4. Students listen.  
5. Students listen and follow along. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>Teacher sets the students up for the independent writing work telling them to “try a few different leads” (p. 67).</td>
<td>Students listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Writing (repeats after Mid-Workshop Teaching)</td>
<td>Teacher walks around the classroom to notice how students are trying out leads. Teacher pulls a group together based on these observations and teaches them another strategy.</td>
<td>Students write independently. Students continue writing independently while a small group meet with the teacher for a small group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mid-Workshop Interruption | 1. Teacher reminds students of the anchor chart titled “How to Write Powerful Personal Narratives”  
2. Teacher adds work of the day to this chart.  
3. Teacher asks students to talk in partnerships to discuss what work they’ll continue to try as they work on their leads. | 1. Students listen and follow along.  
2. Students listen and follow along.  
3. Students discuss in partnerships. |
| Share | 1. Teacher gathers the students at the meeting area and shares one example from the conferences/small group work.  
2. Teacher asks students to select a lead and to share it with their writing partner.  
3. Teacher reminds the students of the “Techniques for Writing Memorable Leads” chart.  
4. Teacher assigns the homework. | 1. Students listen.  
2. Students share in partnerships.  
3. Students listen and follow along.  
4. Students listen. |
### Appendix A

**TCRWP Personal Narrative: Crafting Powerful Life Stories**

**Grade 6 Narrative Unit of Study Classroom Lessons**

**Class Session Ten from TCRWP Curriculum:**

**Re-Angling and Rewriting to Convey What a Story is *Really* About**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Connection**            | 1. Teacher reminds students of revision work.  
2. Teacher reminds students of the strategy that asks “What is my story really about?”  
3. Teacher shares example of their own narrative to show what the moment is really about.  
4. Teacher asks students to show if they had at least one idea on what their narrative is mostly about by holding a thumbs up.  
5. Teacher states the teaching point: “Today I want to teach you that when you let yourself be guided by the question, ‘What is my story really about?’ you find yourself wanting to tell your story in a completely new way. You can plan and rehearse your new draft in ways that will hint at the larger meaning, early on in the story, and develop deeper meaning throughout the rest of the story.” | 1. Students listen.  
2. Students listen.  
3. Students listen.  
4. Students give a thumbs up if they already have at least one idea on what their narrative is really about.  
5. Students listen. |
| **Teaching**              | 1. Teacher draws a line and above it jots “External Story (Physical Events)” and “Internal Story (What’s my story really about?)” below the line.  
2. Teacher thinks out loud about their story and jots the feelings on the bottom of the mountain and actions on the top. | 1. Students follow along.  
2. Students listen.  
3. Students listen.  
4. Students listen.  
5. Students listen.  
7. Students listen. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Engagement</th>
<th>Link</th>
<th>Independent Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher rehearses the story bit by bit.</td>
<td>1. Students listen to directions.</td>
<td>1. Partners #2 storytell (it is their turn now since partners 1 did this at the meeting area during the mini-lesson).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher names the internal feelings and the external actions.</td>
<td>2. Students sketch out different story mountains/timelines with internal and external details.</td>
<td>2. Some students get feedback from the teacher as the teacher listens in and coaches during the partner talk or they are pulled into a small group on symbolism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher shares a bit more out loud.</td>
<td>3. Students listen to directions and then partners #1 share their story with their partner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher names the realization on what is really important.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Teacher moves around the room to listen in to partners storytell for this half of the writing time and helps the partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher debriefs on the transferable skills that students can try.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher helps students who are having trouble with starting a new draft by helping them notice new places where the narrative could start.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Active Engagement**

1. Teacher asks students to sketch out some possible internal / external story mountains.
2. Teacher walks around the area coaching students to try different ways their stories could go.
3. Teacher asks partners #1 to choose one timeline and think about the details that will reveal the meaning. They are to share this with their partners.

**Link**

1. Teacher sets the students up to work on another draft of their story. Teacher tells them to continue working with their writing partner so this time partners #2 can tell their story to partner #1.
2. Teacher reminds the students of the anchor chart titled “How to Write Powerful Personal Narratives.”

**Independent Writing**

1. Teacher moves around the room to listen in to partners storytell for this half of the writing time and helps the partnerships.
2. Teacher helps students who are having trouble with starting a new draft by helping them notice new places where the narrative could start.
3. Teacher can pull a small group
together to teach them how to add symbolism to their writing.

4. For Independent Writing Time after the Mid-Workshop:
   Teacher meets with students for conferences and possibly pulls a small group on symbolism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mid-Workshop Interruption</th>
<th>Teacher shares out effective partner work with an example from the partnership in the class.</th>
<th>Students listen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Share                     | Teacher sets up the share by telling the students to talk with another partnership (groups of 4). Teacher gives them options for sharing. Teacher tells the students that they are to jot the techniques used. Teacher listens in and tells students about revision for homework. | 1. Students listen to directions.  
2. Students get into their small groups and share their writing. |
Appendix B
Modified TCRWP Classroom Lessons

Class Session One: Mentor Text Analysis: Interactive Read Aloud - Looking at Francisco Jimenez’s “Inside Out” Through the Lens of Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Connection** (7 minutes)  | 1. Teacher hands out text in Spanish and in English.  
2. Teacher and students interact regarding the genre of the text.  
3. Teacher and students interact regarding the goal of the lesson: author’s craft analysis of using dialogue - how the use of dialogue in a text reveals details about the characters.  
4. Teacher gives a brief introduction of the text’s main character, setting, and vocabulary related to key issues. | 1. Students choose which language or they can get both copies.  
2. Teacher and students interact regarding the genre of the text.  
3. Teacher and students interact regarding the goal of the lesson: author’s craft analysis of using dialogue - how the use of dialogue in a text reveals details about the characters.  
4. Students listen to the teacher’s text introduction. |
| **Teach & Active Engagement Part One** (2 minutes) | 1. Teacher reads first paragraph in Spanish.  
2. Teacher reads first paragraph in English.  
3. Teacher and students discuss the way the text started with dialogue.  
4. Teacher reminds students of what they already know about story elements and storytelling. | 1. Students listen and read along silently with their own text copy.  
2. Students listen and read along silently with their own text copy.  
3. Teacher and students discuss the way the text started with dialogue.  
4. Students listen to the reminder about previous lesson on story elements. |
| **Teach & Active Engagement Part Two** (6 minutes) | 1. Teacher reads a line of the text in Spanish.  
2. Teacher and students discuss the actions of the characters.  
3. Teacher reminds the students of the goal of the lesson and they discuss (and chart) the use of dialogue.  
4. Teacher gives examples from students’ lives that connect with the text. | 1. Students follow along as the teacher reads a line in Spanish.  
2. Teacher and students discuss the actions of the characters.  
3. Students participate in adding on to the class chart on dialogue moves.  
4. Students listen to examples given by the teacher. |
| **Teach & Active Engagement Part Three** (9 minutes) | 1. Teacher continues reading the text in English (paragraph two).  
2. Teacher rereads three-fourths of the previously read section again, this time in Spanish.  
3. Teacher pauses to show pictures of | 1. Students listen and follow along.  
2. Students listen and follow along.  
3. Students listen and look at the pictures projected on the screen.  
4. Students listen and one student participates with reference to |
the setting (tents/carpas that are mentioned in the text). She shows pictures from the illustrated book, *La Mariposa*, another text written by Francisco Jimenez with illustrations relating to this part of his life.

4. Teacher continues to read in Spanish and pauses to explain “Goodwill store”.
5. Teacher continues to read in Spanish.
6. Teacher shares an anecdote about language.
7. Teacher listens in to two to three partnerships.
8. Teacher highlights what she heard.
9. Teacher listens as another student shares.

**Teach & Active Engagement**

**Part Four**

(4 minutes)

1. Teacher continues reading in Spanish.
2. Teacher pauses after one minute to ask if anyone wants to continue reading. No one volunteers and she continues.
3. Student interrupts to share and teacher listens.
4. The teacher reminds the class of a motto and they participate in a call and response fashion.

**Teach & Active Engagement**

**Part Five**

(4 minutes)

1. Teacher listens and follows along.
2. Teacher listens and follows along.
3. Teacher continues reading the next line with emphasis on how a character spoke (teacher in the text tells Francisco not to speak Spanish in class, “No!”)

**Share**

(3 minutes)

1. Teacher adds to the class chart on ways to use dialogue in a narrative.
2. Teacher assigns homework which is to finish reading this story and to continue analyzing how dialogue is used by completing a chart.
3. The teacher listens in to make sure the students understand the homework.

**Teach & Active Engagement**

1. Students listen and follow along.
2. Students look to see who will volunteer.
3. A student shares an anecdote related to language use. The rest of the class listens.
4. The class participates in the call and response for the motto on language.

1. A student volunteers to read in Spanish. The rest of the class listens and follows along.
2. Another student volunteers to read in Spanish. The rest of the class listens and follows along.
3. Students listen and follow along.

1. Students copy down the class-created chart and some participate to add to the chart.
2. Students listen, jot down their homework, and look at the chart handout.
3. A student repeats the homework assignment reviews the chart with dialogue example from the text on the first column and the question “what does this dialogue reveal about the character?” on the second column.
Appendix B
Modified TCRWP Classroom Lessons

Class Session Two: Studying Leads in Mentor Texts:
Guided Practice Lesson Studying the Leads of Ellen Levine’s *I Hate English*, Jacqueline Woodson’s *Each Kindness* and Francisco Jimenez’s “Inside Out”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Connection** (9 minutes) | 1. Teacher reminds students of their classroom routine: copying down teaching point in the table of contents and answering do now task.  
2. Teacher reminds students of their latest work in the writing unit: flash draft.  
3. Teacher states the focus of the lesson. Today they will answer the question together: How do writers write memorable leads? (guided inquiry teaching method). Teacher does this in Spanish and in English.  
4. Teacher asks the students to share a memorable first scene from a film. Teacher asks them to note whether it started with dialogue, action, setting details, or other ways that it was a powerful first scene.  
5. Teacher shares out one example: Titanic starting with flashback, flashfoward.  
6. Teacher states that today they will explore leads together. She asks students to have their drafts out. | 1. Students copy down the teaching point in their notebooks.  
2. Students listen.  
3. Students listen.  
4. Students discuss with a partner the lead of one of their favorite movies.  
5. Students listen to the teacher share out one example.  
7. Students take out their draft. |

<p>| Teach and Active Engagement (guided inquiry) (13 minutes) | Text #1: <em>I Hate English</em> by Ellen Levine | 1. Teacher reads the first page of “I Hate English” by Ellen Levine. She read each line first in English and then in Spanish. Students did not have copies of the text at their table. The teacher instead, projected pictures of the pages of the book (she took pictures of each page and put them in her presentation). (1 minute) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teach and Active Engagement (guided inquiry) (10 minutes)</th>
<th>Text #2: <em>Each Kindness</em> by Jacqueline Woodson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher introduces text by this time stating the kind of lead: setting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student (in Spanish) and Teacher (in English) alternate the reading of the lead for this text. (1 minute)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher and students (whole class) discuss the ways the setting was described. (2 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher shows how she tries this in her writing. She asks students to identify elements of setting in her example. (1 minute)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students try this strategy in their writing. (3 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher shares one student example and highlights the show not tell work. (2 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teach and Active Engagement (guided inquiry) (12 minutes)</th>
<th>Text #3: “Inside Out” by Francisco Jimenez</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher reads the lead in English. (1 minute)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A student reads the lead in Spanish. (1 minute)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher notes dialogue use which is one that she says, all are familiar with by now. (10 seconds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Link (1 minute)</th>
<th>Teacher shows the students the chart with the options so far. Tells them to pick their favorite strategy and to try this out.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Writing Time (7 minutes)</th>
<th>Teacher has two writing conferences and checks in with one table.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students write independently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share (2 minutes)</th>
<th>Teacher asks students to identify clues in the student’s lead that helped them understand which strategy they used.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One student reads her lead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Modified TCRWP Classroom Lessons

Class Session Three: Internal and External Storytelling:
Guided Practice Lesson Using Jacqueline Woodson’s *The Other Side* as Mentor Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component and Pacing</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection</strong> (7 minutes)</td>
<td>1. Students wrote down the teaching point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher introduced the text (The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teacher passed around copies of the text in both English and in Spanish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part One:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(guided practice)</td>
<td>1. Teacher reads the first part of the text (English then in Spanish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher demonstrates what the plan/ visual / graphic organizer would look like when planning this for their writing. She writes the action and asks for student participation for the internal work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 minutes)</td>
<td>3. Teacher continues reading (English then in Spanish).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Teacher pauses at one point for students to perform an action in the book.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Teacher continues reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Teacher pauses at another point to notice the repetition and how that is important in texts (in this case it’s the repetition of the fence and what that might mean).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part Two:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3 minutes)</td>
<td>1. Students in partnerships work on their first jots for the visual that shows what is happening (external) and how the characters are feeling (internal). Students are assigned a role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part Three:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4 minutes)</td>
<td>1. Teacher continues to read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher pauses to describe a term in both English and Spanish, connecting it to students’ experiences (“tenderos”).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teacher continues to read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part Four:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3 minutes)</td>
<td>Students in partnerships work on their first jots for the visual that shows what is happening (external) and how the characters are feeling (internal). Teacher walks around to meet with one partnership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach and Active</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part Five:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher continues reading in English and in Spanish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong> (2 minutes)</td>
<td><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong> (4 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part Six: Students in partnerships work on their first jots for the visual that shows what is happening (external) and how the characters are feeling (internal). Teacher meets with three partnerships. With one partnership she coaches student to elaborate on action. With another partnership she coaches student to elaborate on feelings. With the final partnership she helps students with their confusion on the characters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong> (3 minutes)</th>
<th><strong>Part Seven:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Teacher reads two pages in English and in Spanish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher highlights one student observation regarding an important scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teacher reads the final page in English and in Spanish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teach and Active Engagement</strong> (2 minutes)</th>
<th><strong>Part Eight:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student partnerships write their final jots for this part of the story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Share** (3 minutes) | **Students write one theme so far they’re thinking that the story reveals. They write this on a sticky note and place in middle of their visual.** |
## Appendix B
### Modified TCRWP Classroom Lessons

**Class Session Four: Demonstration Mini-Lesson on Editing Transition Phrases Using* El color de mis palabras / The Color of My Words* by Lynn Joseph**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Set-Up and Connection**  | 1. Students jot the teaching point in notebooks.  
2. Teacher passes out the materials.  
3. Teacher reminds the class about the work they did last week on revising for author’s craft around figurative language.  
4. Teacher states the teaching point and sets up the work with the mentor text, chapter from* The Color of My Words* by Lynn Joseph. Students have been reading this book in reading workshop with another teacher.                                                                                                                         |                   |
| (11 minutes)               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   |
| **Teach and Active Engagement (guided practice)** | **Part One: (3 minutes)**  
1. Teacher begins reading and pauses when a transition in time is mentioned in the text.  
2. Students identify the transition.  
3. Teacher continues reading and pauses when the scene changes to another day.  
4. Students identify when this is happening and how they know (“the following day”).  
**Part Two: (3 minutes)**  
1. Students try this work out in partnerships and the teacher meets with one partnership.  
**Part Three: (7 minutes)**  
1. Whole class discussion to create a chart with a list of transitional phrases they see in the text and naming the type.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |
| (13 minutes)               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   |
| **Link**                   | Teacher asks students to write their writing goal down so that she can see what they’re all going to work on during independent writing. She walks around to check them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                   |
| (2 minutes)                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   |
| **Independent Writing**    | 1. Students work independently on their second drafts according to the goal they set for themselves.  
2. Teacher meets with one small group (large group of 6 students who are writing in Spanish, and have less than two years in the country).  
Teacher scaffolds the revision process for this group of newcomers. She uses chapter 2 from the mentor text, *The Color of My Words*, to teach the different scenes and has the students do the same after each step.                                                                                                           |                   |
| (17 minutes)               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   |
| **Share**                  | Teacher assigns the homework which is for students to continue working on their writing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                   |
| (1 minute)                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                   |
## Appendix B
Modified TCRWP Classroom Lessons

### Class Session Five:
Writing Partners Revise their Personal Narratives Using a Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Component</th>
<th>Teacher’s Actions</th>
<th>Students’ Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Set-up and Connection</strong></td>
<td>1. Student passes out checklists in Spanish and in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4 minutes)</td>
<td>2. Teacher shares an anecdote with using a list for grocery shopping (with meal that students recognize - arroz con pollo). (English). Teacher shares the teaching point (in English and Spanish): “We are going to use the checklist with our story. So today you’re going to be working with partners. The first part of the lesson will be on using the checklist first with our partner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Students make sure they are seated by their partners. Teacher asks them to reflect on the importance of partnerships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Teacher reminds them that they’ve already used this with another story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Teacher assigns students numbers (1,2).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Teach and Active Engagement** | Part One: Partners #1 Read Draft to Partners #2                                |                                                                                  |
| **(guided practice)**          | 1. Teacher gives directions for this part in English and in Spanish (4 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | 2. Partners #1 read their draft to partners #2 while teacher meets with two partnerships (4 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | Part Two: Partners #1 Reflect on Piece with Input from Partners #2              |                                                                                  |
|                               | 1. Students reflect while using the checklist as a guide and the teacher meets with two partnerships (5 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | Part Three: Partners #2 Read Draft to Partners #1                               |                                                                                  |
|                               | 1. Teacher reminds partners #1 to jot down their goals. Teacher reminds partners what the work is so that partners #2 get a chance to practice the same by reading their drafts (2 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | 2. Partners #2 read their draft to partners #1 while teacher meets with two partnerships (6 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | Part Four: Partners #2 Reflect on Piece with Input from Partners #1             |                                                                                  |
|                               | 1. Teacher reminds the class of the next step for suggestions (1 minute).        |                                                                                  |
|                               | 2. Students reflect while using the checklist as a guide and the teacher meets with two partnerships (4 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | Part Five: Teacher Reviews the Checklist & Goal-Setting                         |                                                                                  |
|                               | 1. Teacher reviews the three categories of the checklist (structure, development, conventions) (4 minutes). |                                                                                  |
|                               | 2. Students write down their goals based on their conversations with their writing partners and the teacher answers questions in Spanish at a table where several students had questions (3 minutes). |                                                                                  |

| **Share**                    | Three students share their partner’s goals with the whole class.               |                                                                                  |
| (2 minutes)                  |                                                                                  |                                                                                  |
**Appendix C**  
**Personal Narrative Mentor Leads Chart**  
**Examples from Texts in English and in Spanish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Example from the Text</th>
<th>Ejemplo del texto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner Thinking</td>
<td>I hate English! Mei Mei said in her head in Chinese. Mei Mei was smart in school. In <em>her</em> school in Hong Kong. In Chinese.</td>
<td>¡Odio el inglés! Mei Mei dijo en su cabeza en chino. Mei Mei fue inteligente en la escuela. En su escuela en Hong Kong. En chino.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But her family moved to New York. She didn’t know why. She didn’t want to move. And she said all that in Chinese.</td>
<td>Pero su familia se trasladó a Nueva York. No sabía por qué. Ella no quería mudarse. Y ella dijo todo esto en chino.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinatown in New York was OK. People looked like people she knew. People talked like people she knew. In Chinese.</td>
<td>Chinatown en Nueva York estaba bien. La se veía como la gente que ella conocía. La gente hablaba como la gente que conocía. En chino.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>I Hate English!</em> by Ellen Levine</td>
<td>- [traducción] <em>I Hate English!</em> por Ellen Levine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Lead Option #1</th>
<th>My Lead Option #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Example from the Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>That winter, snow fell on everything, turning the world a brilliant white. One morning, as we settled into our seats, the classroom door opened and the principal came in. She had a girl with her, and she said to us, \textit{This is Maya}. Maya looked down at the floor. I think I heard her whisper \textit{Hello}. We all stared at her. Her coat was open and the clothes beneath it looked old and ragged. Her shoes were spring shoes, not meant for the snow. A strap on one of them had broken.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- \textit{Each Kindness} by Jacqueline Woodson

- [traducción] \textit{Each Kindness} por Jacqueline Woodson |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Lead Option #1</th>
<th>My Lead Option #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Example from the Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>“I remember being hit on the wrists with a twelve-inch ruler because I did not follow directions in class,” Roberto answered in a mildly angry tone when I asked him about his first year of school. “But how could I?” he continued, “the teacher gave them in English.” “So what did you do?” I asked, rubbing my wrists. “I always guessed what the teacher wanted me to do. And when she did not use the ruler on me, I knew I had guessed right,” he responded. “Some of the kids made fun of me when I tried to say something in English and got it wrong,” he went on. “I had to repeat first grade.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- “Inside Out” (in The Circuit: Stories from a Life of a Migrant Child by Francisco Jimenez)  

- “De dentro hacia afuera” (in Cajas de carton: Relatos de la vida peregrine de un niño campesino by Francisco Jimenez) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Lead Option #1</th>
<th>My Lead Option #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Example from the Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td>Zora Hurston loved the chinaberry tree. Her mother taught her to climb it, one branch at a time. From the tree, she could see as far as the lake, as far as the horizon. Zora dreamed of fishing in the lake, catching bream and catfish in the moonlight. Zora dreamed of seeing the cities beyond the horizon, of living there one day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree</em> by William Miller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| My Lead Option #1 | My Lead Option #2 |
Appendix D
Interview Protocol for Student Participant

Part One

1. Ask students about their cultural background. Where are you from? If born abroad: How long did you live there? Why did you come here? For all: Can you share what a typical weekend is like at your home? How do connections to another country or culture play a role in your life and daily activities?

2. If student was born abroad, ask students about their transitions with school, language, and family. How was your transition coming here? How do your schools compare? How does your family life compare?

3. Ask students about key moments that stand out for them in their immigration story, migration, or school journey. Tell me about key moments in your journey.

4. Ask students about their language use. What languages do you speak with family, friends, and teachers? How do you make the decision to use your languages?

5. Ask students about their middle school bilingual experience so far compared to elementary school. How does this 6th grade bilingual classroom experience compare with your experiences from 5th grade?

Part Two

1. Ask students about the first part of the narrative writing process. How did you make decisions as to what kinds of life moments to collect during the first part of our writing process? Can you tell me which strategies you found most useful and why? How did you feel collecting ideas about moments from your life? How did you make the decision to use a certain language or two for your partner discussions? How did you make the decision to write your ideas in certain languages?

2. Ask students about drafting, revising, and publishing. How did it feel to draft in multiple languages? How did you make the decision to select the moment you decided to draft? Can you tell me which strategies you found most useful and why? How did you feel revising moments from your life? How did you make the decision to use a certain language or two for your partner discussions? How did it feel to share your writing with a larger community? Can you tell me what you wanted the audience to get from your writing pieces?

3. Ask students about their experience overall in this bilingual personal narrative unit. How did it feel to write bilingual personal narrative moments? What was helpful for you in articulating your stories?
4. Ask students about personal significance. Can you tell me what was meaningful to you about writing bilingual personal narratives? What were some of the themes you believe your writing revealed about your experience to the readers?

5. Ask students about language use. What do you think your language use in conversations and in writing say about how you use language in communicating ideas?

6. Ask students about the role of partner discussions. How did your writing partnership help in your writing process?

7. Ask students about classroom pedagogy. How did the classroom lessons help you go through this bilingual writing process?
Appendix E
Interview Protocol for Teacher Participant

Part One

1. Ask the teacher about her cultural background. Where are you from? How long did you live there? Why did you come here?

2. Ask the teacher about her transitions with school, language, and family. How was your transition coming here? How did you process your changes in family, language use, and daily life? Tell me about key moments in your journey.

3. Ask the teacher about her language use. What languages do you speak with family, friends, and teachers? How do you make the decision to change your language use? How do you make the decision to plan your lessons with a fluid language use? What are some challenges with teaching in this way?

4. Ask the teacher about her educational journey. How did your teacher preparation program prepare you? What were some key moments from this preparation? How have you continued to develop your teaching philosophy?

Part Two

1. Ask the teacher about the planning that went into the first part of the narrative writing process. How did you make the decisions on what kinds of modifications to implement with the unit? How did you make the decision on what mentor texts to use? How did you decide on what languages to use during this stage? What are some key supports you have in place for students in this stage of the writing process?

2. Ask the teacher about drafting. How did you make the decision for students to draft in multiple languages? How do you assess these writing pieces to provide feedback? What are some of the challenges?

3. Ask the teacher about the revision stage. How did you make the decision on which revision strategies to teach? Can you tell me about the way you coach student partner discussions? How do you create a safe space for these revisions to take place?

4. Ask the teacher about the publishing and celebration moment. How do you ensure that the students feel safe sharing their writing pieces with larger audience?
Part Three

1. Ask the teacher about the rationale her language use. How do you think your language use in class impacts how the students navigate the bilingual writing process?

2. Ask the teacher about her modifications of a scripted curriculum. How did it feel modifying the curriculum? What were some key modifications? What was your rationale behind making these changes?

3. Ask the teacher about the standards met. How did your instruction meet the Common Core Learning Standards for writing on the sixth grade level?

4. Ask the teacher about her overall planning moves for this writing unit. Can you tell me what were some of the essential components for you in this bilingual personal narrative unit? How did you make sure that those were met? Why did these matter to you?

5. Ask the teacher about her overall dreams for her bilingual writers. What do you want your students to come away with after they have published their narrative pieces? What are some of your dreams for them as bilingual writers? How do you make sure you provide the students with ways to meet challenges that have come up during their writing? What are your own takeaways from this bilingual narrative unit?
# Appendix F
## TCRWP Personal Narrative Writing Checklist in English

**Name:**

**Date:**

### Narrative Writing Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>NOT YET</th>
<th>STARTING TO</th>
<th>YES!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>I wrote a story that has tension, resolution, realistic characters, and also conveys an idea, lesson, or theme.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead</strong></td>
<td>I wrote a beginning that not only set the plot/story in motion, but also hinted at the larger meaning the story would convey. It introduced the problem, set the stage for the lesson that would be learned, or showed how the character relates to the setting in a way that matters in the story.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions</strong></td>
<td>I not only used transitional phrases and clauses to signal complicated changes in time, I also used them to alert my reader to changes in the setting, tone, mood, point of view, or the time in the story (such as suddenly, unlike before, if only she had known).</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ending</strong></td>
<td>I wrote an ending that connected to what the story is really about. I gave the reader a sense of closure by showing a new realization or insight, or a change in the character/narrator. I might have shown this through dialogue, action, inner thinking, or small actions the character takes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>I used paragraphs purposefully, perhaps to show time and setting changes, new parts of the story, or to create suspense for readers. I created a logical, clear sequence of events.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Development

| Elaboration | I developed realistic characters, and developed the details, action, dialogue, and internal thinking that contribute to the deeper meaning of the story. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Craft | I developed some relationship between characters to show why they act and speak as they do. I told the internal, as well as the external story. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | I wove together precise descriptions, figurative language, and some symbolism to help readers picture the setting and actions, and to bring forth meaning. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | I used language that fit my story's meaning and context (for example, different characters use different kinds of language). | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

### Conventions

| Spelling | I used resources to be sure the words in my writing are spelled correctly. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Punctuation and Sentence Structure | I used punctuation such as dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons to help me include extra detail and explanation in some of my sentences. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | I used commas and quotation marks or italics or other ways to make clear when characters are speaking. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
Appendix G
TCRWP Personal Narrative Writing Checklist Translated to Spanish

Criterios de Autocorrección para Alumnos en Escritos Narrativos

Nombre: ___________________ Fecha: ________________

Criterios de Autocorrección en Escritos Narrativos

**Sexto Grado**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Escritos Narrativos</th>
<th>Sí</th>
<th>Comenzando</th>
<th>Aún No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estructura</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escribí un relato que tenía tensión, resolución de conflicto, personajes realistas, y que también transmitía una idea, lección, o mensaje.</td>
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<td>Comienzo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Escribí un inicio que no sólo pusiera la trama de mi relato en movimiento, sino que también sugeriera el significado más amplio que dicho relato intentaba transmitir. Se introdujo un problema o conflicto, se preparó el escenario para la lección que se iba a aprender, o se mostró cómo el protagonista se relacionaba con la ambientación, de una manera que tuviera significado para la historia.</td>
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<td>Transiciones</td>
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<tr>
<td>No sólo utilizó frases transicionales y cláusulas para señalar cambios complejos en el tiempo, sino que también las utilizó para poner sobre aviso a mi lector acerca de los cambios en la ambientación, tono, estado de ánimo, punto de vista, o tiempo en el relato (tales como, de repente, muy diferente a lo anterior, si sólo ella tuviera sabido ...).</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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<tr>
<td>Escribí un final que se conectaba con lo que realmente era el corazón o significado de mi relato, sino que también le proporcioné al lector un sentido de cierre o conclusión al mostrar una intuición, un &quot;darse cuenta de&quot; algo, o un cambio en el personaje, protagonista, o narrador. Puede haber mostrado esto, a través de diálogo, acción, pensamiento interno, o pequeñas acciones de personaje.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organización</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usé párrafos con un propósito, tal vez para mostrar cambios en el tiempo y lugar de los hechos, para nuevas partes del relato, o para crear suspenso en los lectores. Desarrollé una secuencia lógica y clara de hechos.</td>
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**Desarrollo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaboración</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desarrollé personajes realistas y puse detalles, acción, diálogo y pensamientos que contribuyeran a darle un significado más profundo al relato.</td>
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### Criterios de Autocorrección para Alumnos en Escritos Narrativos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oficio de Escritor(a) o Lenguaje</th>
<th>Desarrollé algunas relaciones entre personajes para mostrar por qué actuaban y hablaban como lo hacían. Conté tanto la historia interna como la externa. Entretejí descripciones precisas, lenguaje figurativo y algo de simbolismo para ayudar a los lectores a imaginarse la ambientación, las acciones y también para realzar el significado del relato. Usé un lenguaje adecuado al significado y contexto de mi relato (por ejemplo, distintos personajes utilizan distintos tipos de lenguaje).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convenciones de la Lengua</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ortografía</td>
<td>Utilicé los recursos necesarios para asegurarme de que todas las palabras en mi relato estaban escritas correctamente.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puntuación y Estructura de Oraciones</td>
<td>Utilicé puntuación, como guiones, paréntesis, dos puntos, punto y coma para poder incluir detalles y explicaciones adicionales en algunas de mis oraciones. Usé comas, comillas o letra cursiva, entre otras estrategias, para identificar diálogos o intervenciones habladas de mis personajes.</td>
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</table>
Appendix H
TCRWP Professionally-Written Sixth Grade-Level Personal Narrative

My One Chance

It was the first day of school, and my sister Sara was going to her very first day of Kindergarten. She looked grown-up in her new clothes. I thought about when she was just a baby, and now she was in school.

“Come on down here and eat your breakfast!” yelled mom. We went downstairs and we got to pick out what we wanted to eat because it was the first day of school. I picked my favorite cereal with lots of sugar and Sara had eggs. My mom said to me that I had to be very careful and look before I crossed the streets, and hold Sara’s hand the whole time. “OK,” I said to my mom, but inside I felt annoyed. Then she kept talking about how she could trust me. I thought, “Why does she keep saying how she can trust me? It makes me think maybe she doesn’t really trust me.”

Then it was time to go, and we put on our new school shoes and got our bags. We hugged mom and said good-bye.

“Don’t worry, Mom,” I said. “I promise I’ll take care of Sara.”

Sara was already outside. She was skipping across the front yard. Mom was watching us from the kitchen window. I felt like she was watching because she didn’t trust me. I grabbed Sara’s hand so Mom could see I was being responsible.

“Are you excited for your first day of school, Sara?” I asked, trying to make my voice sound like Mom’s. Sara smiled and nodded her head yes. Her bow shook up and down. “Come on. I’ll show you the way.” I thought about my first day of school. Mom and Dad walked me and I was really nervous. I wondered if Sara felt nervous too.

We walked and saw trees that were bright green and flowers blooming. I felt happy and proud. I thought that I would finally prove I could be treated like a grown-up. But then suddenly I heard a growl.

We both saw it.

It was a large dog, with black hair and a big chain around its neck. It came closer and growled even louder. “GRRRR!!!” Sara jumped behind me.

I grabbed her hand again, hoping she wouldn’t feel that my palm was sweating with fear. “I’m scared, Julie,” she said.

“Everything will be okay,” I said in my calmest voice. “I’ve got you.”

“A plan. I need a plan,” I thought to myself. “Be brave.”

As the dog got closer I could see it was the size of a small pony, its fur standing up on its neck. “Maybe I’m not ready to be in charge,” I thought.

I whispered to Sara. “When I say ‘run,’ run! Okay?”

I said, “Ready, set, RUN!”

We ran down the sidewalk. My feet hurt because I had new shoes. I yelled for Sara to go faster. “Run! Run!” Just then the bright red door of the schoolhouse came into view. Mrs. Crowley held it open as we ran in. We threw ourselves through the door and practically fell over trying to catch our breath.

“We did it,” I said to Sara, giving her a high-five. “We made it.”

I thought back to Mom’s words earlier that morning. I’m trusting you to get your sister to school safely. “Maybe this whole grown-up thing is over-rated,” I thought to myself.

Turning to Sara, I smiled. “Hey, Sara, I bet Mom will give us a ride to school tomorrow!”
Appendix I
Alejandra's Translation of the TCRWP Professionally-Written
Sixth Grade Personal Narrative

Mi Única Oportunidad

Era el primer día de escuela, y mi hermana Sara iba a su primer día de jardín de infancia. Se veía como una niña grande con su ropa nueva. Yo pensé cómo hace poco ella solo era una bebé, y ahora ya estaba en la escuela.

"¡Bajen a tomar su desayuno!" Mamá gritó. Bajamos y mamá nos dejó elegir lo que queríamos tomar de desayuno porque era nuestro primer día de clases. Escogí mi cereal favorito el cual tenía una gran cantidad de azúcar y Sara escogió huevos. Mi mamá me dijo que tenía que ser muy cuidadosa al cruzar la calle y que mirara hacia ambos lados antes de hacerlo. También me dijo que le agarrara la mano a Sara todo el tiempo. "Está bien," le dije a mi mamá, pero por dentro me sentía fastidiada. Luego siguió hablando acerca de cómo podía confiar en mí. Yo pensé: "¡Por qué sigue diciendo cómo puede confiar en mí? Eso me hacía pensar que tal vez realmente no confiaba en mí".

Luego llegó el momento de irnos. Nos pusimos nuestros zapatos nuevos para ir a la escuela y agarramos nuestras bolsas. Abrazamos a mamá y le dijimos adiós.

"No te preocupes, mamá", me dijo. "Te prometo que me haré cargo de Sara."

Sara ya estaba afuera. Ella estaba saltando por el patio del frente de la casa. Mamá nos estaba mirando desde la ventana de la cocina. Sentí como si nos estuviera viendo porque realmente no confiaba de mí. Agarré la mano de Sara para que mamá pudiera ver que estaba siendo responsable.

"¿Estás emocionada por tu primer día de escuela, Sara?", Le pregunte, tratando de hacer de que mi voz sonara como la de mamá. Sara sonrió y asintió con la cabeza que sí. Su rostro se balanceaba de arriba abajo. "Vamos. Te voy a mostrar el camino. "Pensé acerca mi primer día de clases. Mamá y papá me llevaron a la escuela y me sentía muy nerviosa. Me preguntaba si Sara se sentiría nerviosa también.

Caminamos y vimos árboles de color verde brillante y flores floreciendo. Me sentía feliz y orgullosa. Pensé que por fin iba a demostrar que podía ser tratada como una adulta. Pero entonces, de repente oí un gruñido.

Las dos lo vimos.

Era un perro grande, de pelo negro y con una cadena grande alrededor de su cuello. El se acercó y gruñó aún más fuerte. "GRRRR!!!” Sara saltó detrás de mí.

"¡Corre! ¡Corre!" dijo.

"Todo va a estar bien", le dije con una voz tranquila. "Te tengo."

"Un plan. Necesito un plan .", me dijo a mi misma. "Ser valiente."

Mientras el perro se acercaba pude ver que era de tamaño de un pequeño potro, su pelaje parado sobre su cuello. "¡Tal vez no estoy listo para estar a cargo", pensé.

Le susurre a Sara. "¿Cuando diga 'corre', corre? ¿Bueno?"

Le dije: "En sus marcas, listos, CORRE!"

Corrimos por la acera. Me dolían los pies porque tenía zapatos nuevos. Grite para que Sara corriera más rápido. "¡Corre! ¡Corre! "En ese momento la puerta de color rojo brillante de la escuela quedó a la vista. La señora Crowley mantuvo la puerta abierta mientras corrimos hacia dentro. Nos tiramos hacia la puerta y prácticamente quedamos sin aliento.

"Lo hicimos”, le dije a Sara, dándole cinco. "Nosotras lo hicimos." Me acordé de las palabras que dijo mamá temprano esa mañana. "Estoy confiando en que llevaras a tu hermana a la escuela con seguridad." Tal vez todo este tema de ser adulto es sobrevalorado", me dije a mí misma. Voltee y le sonrei a Sara diciendo "Hey, Sara, apuesto a que mamá nos traerá al colegio mañana!"
References


Emdin, C. (2016). *For white folks who teach in the hood ... and the rest of y'all too : Reality pedagogy and urban education* (Simmons College/Beacon Press race, education, and democracy series book).


