



# CULTURAL AUTONOMY AND COGNITIVE AUTONOMY: TEACHER POSITIONING & MOTIVATIONAL PRACTICES FOR EMERGENT BILINGUALS

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# BRIEF BACKGROUND

- My Current Research Interests
  - Students' achievement motivation in various contexts; Multilingual learners (e.g., HLL)
  - Sociocultural/situative perspectives, particularly through connecting to “students' identities in contexts”
  - Teachers' practices to support students' motivation
- Context of the current study
  - In 2011-2012, co-facilitated a PD for a group of middle school teachers in reading intervention department
  - Led by Barbara Dray; an extension study of UCD-DPS collaboration
  - Shared motivating practices—autonomy supportive practices

# CURRENT STUDY: QUESTIONS

- How did the teachers appreciate the various autonomy supportive practices shared and discussed during their monthly PD?
- What are the major patterns of the 10 participating teachers' practice in motivating and engaging their emergent bilingual students in urban middle school reading intervention classes?
- How was the teachers' practices to motivate and engage students (here, autonomy supportive practices), given the positioning of their students and themselves as teachers?

# NEED FOR THE STUDY

- In the K–12 classrooms of the US, students who are emergent bilingual make up 9.3% of all students in school year 2013–14 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).
- The field of achievement motivation has extensively investigated teachers' practices to foster students' willingness to learn, although limited studies have focused on practices to support emergent bilingual students.
- Teaching emergent bilinguals is not a mere matter of “just good teaching” (Harper & de Jong, 2009).
- We aimed to argue the case for examining the intersection of existing motivational practices (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2002) and critical and culturally relevant practices (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mitchell, 2013) for emergent bilinguals.

# AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS

- To support students' motivation to optimally engage in achievement contexts, teachers can support students' psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Self-determination theory: Deci & Ryan, 2002).
- Students' autonomy—the *need for both the self-initiation and the redirection of tasks or activities* (Connell, 1990)—could be supported
  - through offering choices about classroom management or the medium of presentation (i.e., **organizational or procedural autonomy support**)
  - through offering chances to think independently & and to generate their own solutions or ideas (i.e., **cognitive autonomy support**; Stefanou et al., 2004).

# POSITIONING IDENTITIES IN SHAPING TEACHERS' PRACTICES

- Researchers have found how teachers' different pedagogical approaches are shaped by their identity positioning, which also shaped differing participation by and feelings of emergent bilinguals (Reeves, 2009; Yoon, 2008).
- Positioning theory - As we position people in certain ways, they experience affordances or constraints around various thoughts and behaviors, such as what they can say and do (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999).
- Mitchell identified **four majoritarian stories** that impacted emergent bilinguals in secondary schools: (a) There is no story about race; (b) difference is a deficit; (c) meritocracy is appropriate; and (d) English is all that matters.

# METHODS

- 10 reading intervention teachers from an urban middle school in the U.S.
- 86% of the students were Latino/a, 63% of all students were eligible for language learning services
- Direct observation in one of their classes (50 minutes x 9 classes = approximately 450 minutes of classroom discourse) and follow-up semi-structured interviews of the teachers (30-50 minutes x 9 classes = approximately 360 minutes of interviews) -- Transcribed verbatim
- Monthly professional development - Triangulation
- Cross-case analysis and constant comparative analysis

*Demographics of Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Students' Grades	Students' Reading Proficiency Level at the Current School	Teaching and Educational Experience
Ms. Delgado	20s	Hawaiian	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Proficient"	Language Arts (first year as a teacher at the current school; six years as a middle-school LA teacher)
Ms. Fischer	30s	White	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Proficient"	Language Arts; Speech and Debate (fourth year as a teacher at the current school)
Ms. Stoker	30s	White	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Partially Proficient"	Language Arts (fifth year as a teacher at the current school)
Ms. Ryan	50s	White	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Unsatisfactory"	Special Education (Third year teaching reading intervention; sixth year as a teacher at the current school; ten years as a teacher; additional 5 years as a counselor); MA in Psychology
Ms. Jones	30s	White	8 <sup>th</sup>	"Proficient (lower end)"	Language Arts (seventh year as a teacher at the current school)
Ms. Johnson	40s	White	8 <sup>th</sup>	"Proficient (lower end)"	Language Arts (seventh year as a teacher at the current school)
Ms. Treble	30s	White	8 <sup>th</sup>	"Proficient"	Language Arts (first year as a teacher at the current school); MA in ELL
Ms. Andrews	20s	White	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Partially Proficient"	Theater (first year as a teacher at the current school)
Mr. Garcia	50s	Hispanic	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Unsatisfactory"	Social Studies (second year as a teacher at the current school; 15 years of teaching experience as a paraprofessional)
Ms. Greene	20s	White	7 <sup>th</sup>	"Partially Proficient"	Language Arts (first year as a teacher at the current school; two years as a paraprofessional at the school)

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# MAJOR FINDINGS

- The teachers' social, cultural, and political positioning of their students and the associated positioning of themselves was important in understanding their motivational practices in supporting the autonomy needs of emergent bilinguals.
- The teachers varied in their kinds and degrees of autonomy supportive practices – 4 different patterns (Table 1)
- The teachers varied in their intentional or unintentional tendency to identify, understand, and nurture their students' systematically underrepresented cultural or linguistic interests, values, and perspectives.

# CULTURALLY AND COGNITIVELY AUTONOMY SUPPORTIVE (PATTERN 1)

## Positioning

- The teachers' positioning of themselves and their students as cultural beings by rejecting dominant narratives
  - Multiple languages as assets
  - Positioned their *students* as owning their linguistic and cultural background and *themselves* also as cultural beings
  - Positioned their *students* as capable and *themselves* as facilitators
  - Initiating multilingual community: Connected through intentional linguistic/cultural sharing

## Practices

- Their provision of autonomy support on managerial and cognitive levels that were frequently combined with cultural levels of autonomy support (*and cultural relevance*)
- Facilitation and Hybrid space

# MS. FISCHER'S IDENTITY POSITIONING

Identity Positioning of Herself: **"clearly a White female that doesn't have the [same] background [as the students],"** **"a motivator... [and] a facilitator."**

Identity Positioning of Her Students: **"I've found that once I open up about my own personal life or ask them about their culture, then it's a floodgate and they just are so excited to share."**

**"fun... imaginative ... Squirrely, off the wall..."**

# MS. FISCHER'S PRACTICES FOR EMERGENT BILINGUALS

**“... they wanted to play La Lotería [instead of jeopardy]... Mexican bingo... I gave her [a student] \$5 and she bought me the game from this Hispanic market, and then I adapted the game to our vocabulary and the kids loved it.”**

- Encouraged students to share their culture
- Incorporated cultural practices in the classroom

**“I try to learn a few Spanish words in each class, and they love teaching me that, and I teach them German.”**

- Supported students' autonomy via reciprocal sharing

# COGNITIVELY, BUT *NOT* CULTURALLY, AUTONOMY SUPPORTIVE (PATTERN 2)

## Positioning

- Positioned their students as capable
  - Collaborators; Students as teachers
- Teachers positioned themselves as Facilitators or Guides
- English is all that matters & Monolingual community
- Students and teachers connected through psychologically safe and flexible space and through compliments; Students are seen as members of monolingual community

## Practices

- Constant support of students' co-construction in class objectives or class rules
- Constant cognitive autonomy support
- No evidence of cultural autonomy support or culturally relevant practices

# MS. RYAN'S IDENTITY POSITIONING

## Identity Positioning of Herself

“Help guide them through some curriculum—either reading a new text or writing or —just sort of thinking about how we can relate to the text that we are reading so I’m just sort of a guide and a role model.”

## Identity Positioning of Her Students

““unsatisfactory” in reading and in writing, so it’s a tier 3 group...They’re all significantly below grade level...[they are] hard to motivate, but good listeners, answer lots of questions...readings, they just love that so.”

# MS. RYAN'S PRACTICES FOR EMERGENT BILINGUALS

## Motivational Practices (Supporting Cognitive Autonomy):

- Ms. Ryan [during class]: “What type of problems might we have here today that we would have...your problem-solving skills? What problems might we encounter? What might come up to us?”
- Ms. Ryan [during class]: “I like it that you guys are coming up with your own definition, and you’re all right. Okay. You’re all right.”

*LESS* COGNITIVELY, AND *NOT* CULTURALLY, AUTONOMY SUPPORTIVE  
(PATTERN 3)

*NEITHER* COGNITIVELY *NOR* CULTURALLY AUTONOMY SUPPORTIVE  
(PATTERN 4)

## Positioning

Positioned their students as less capable

- Difference as deficit - Blaming students and parents

Teachers positioned themselves as Leader, Norm, Model

English is all that matters & Monolingual community

## Practices

Heavy modeling with rigid structure; Frequent directive scaffolding

Directive and controlling terminology

No evidence of culturally relevant

# MR. GARCIA' IDENTITY POSITIONING

**Identity Positioning of Himself:** I was a language learner. My first language is Spanish. I didn't have any of these programs. We were just immersed, and either you sink or swim, so I learned the hard way, but I learned that that's because my parents valued education. . . . My mother's like, "... You need to go to school. You don't wanna be like me, not knowing anything, not being able to read or write."

**Identity Positioning of His Students:** I can only make some assumptions . . . but the value at home is not there as strong as it should be - as it is in other classes - so a lot of it comes from home, whether they're really serious with their kids about education or not.

# MR. GARCIA'S PRACTICES FOR EMERGENT BILINGUALS

**Practices:** What does plow mean? Anybody? Let me use the word in Spanish: la vechar. Does anyone know what la vechar means? La vechar. None of you grew up on a farm, huh? To cut grass. La vechar, to turn the soil... So when you want to plant, every year farmers get a set of plows out there on the tractor and it turns over the soil.

This is why I am on you all the time- because I care, if I didn't care, I would just let you do whatever you want and let you fail.

# DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- Proposed autonomy supportive practices that go beyond “interpersonal sentiment and behaviors teachers provide during instruction” (p. 160)
- - Understanding autonomy support in social, cultural, and political contexts
- Importance of teachers’ holding an ideology of critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995)
- PD only effective to certain teachers (motivational filters)
- Need to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own majoritarian stories/ideologies
- Cognitive autonomy supportive practices versus Cultural autonomy supportive practices (Student outcome)