**Introduction**

The number of Latin@s entering higher education has significantly increased in the last few years. According to a Pew Hispanic Center’s study published in 2013 by Richard Fry and Paul Taylor, the number of Hispanic students ages 18-24 enrolled in college has more than tripled since 1993. However, the study claims Hispanics are not earning as many four-year degrees compared to other groups, mostly because Hispanic students attend two-year colleges and enroll in college part-time. At the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the nationally changing demographics reported in the Pew study do not make much of a difference because we already have a large Latino@ student body population. UTEP has an estimated 23,000 students, and according to “UTEP Quick Facts,” about 78% of the student body population identify as Hispanic and around 5% of students are international students from Mexico (“UTEP Quick Facts”). What differentiates UTEP from other Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the United States is its unique location.

UTEP is located on the U.S/Mexico border, and students cross the border on a daily basis from Cuidad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico to attend UTEP. Most of the students attending UTEP are from the El Paso or Juárez region, with very few students from out of state or other countries. Because only a highway and a border fence separate UTEP from Juárez, Spanish is heard everywhere on campus. The linguistic complexities of students are UTEP is very rich, and one must step foot on campus or be in a classroom to fully understand these complexities.  Plenty of Latin@ students at UTEP speak Spanish, but there are many who do not speak Spanish at all. Many students consider themselves fully bilingual in Spanish and English. However, there are also plenty of students who speak Spanglish. On any given day, students at UTEP are code switching and/or code meshing.

Since the conception of the Rhetoric and Composition doctoral program in 2004, the faculty developed a curriculum that focused on critically analyzing language and culture. Through graduate coursework that takes into account our unique context along the border and our professors’ interests, some of our regular courses focus on Global Rhetorics, Cultural Rhetorics, and Critical Race Theory. Our professors invite us to critically think and discuss controversial topics, such as hegemony and standard language ideologies. Since UTEP is predominantly a Latin@ campus, our graduate program affords us the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice. As writing instructors, we grapple with teaching students to critically think about their language practices and the active role in creating knowledge these language practices have in and out of academic discourses..

By sharing our personal histories and experiences with language and our pedagogical practices in this article, we hope will help shift dominant language ideologies that permeate across many writing programs and  institutions of higher education across the United States. As instructors, we invite you to open up spaces in your classrooms for students to incorporate some of their multilingual literacy practices into their work.

**Personal histories and experiences**

Language ideologies inculcated in us by our families, and how this differed from those ideologies we learned at school at a young age, are what drive our positions as young Latin@ scholars in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. In “Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth,” Tara J. Yosso uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) to critique Bourdieu’s idea of cultural capital by stating that his ideas “expose White, middle class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of ‘culture’ are judged in comparison to this ‘norm’” (76). Yosso argues that CRT shifts the focus from the dominant White, middle class culture to the cultures of Communities of color. As Latin@ instructors in rhetoric and composition, it is important for the two of us to share our experiences with language and education in order to disrupt some of the dominant narratives about language and language practices. This disruption allows for an alternative rhetoric that informs a dominant group about a marginalized group, and gives the marginalized group a voice. It is our hope that this is beneficial for students and instructors to (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)