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Tenemos que hacer la lucha: Reflections of Latin@s in Rhetoric and Writing Studies

Introduction

In recent years Latin@s **have been** entering higher education at **higher** rates. According to the Pew Hispanic Center's study by Richard Fry and Paul Taylor, "a record seven-in-ten (69%) Hispanic high school graduates in the class of 2012 enrolled in college that fall, two percentage points higher than the rate (67%) among their white counterparts" (4). Although the education gap between high school and higher education appears to be narrowing, the study also claims that Hispanic students are not enrolling in four-year colleges. Latin@s may be entering higher education, but only about 11% of those that enter college actually earn a bachelor's degree. **At** the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the changing demographics do not make much of a difference because we already have a large Latino@ student population. Approximately 80% of the students are Latin@s. Compared to other campuses, UTEP has a high number of Latin@ faculty, but like many other schools, our Rhetoric and Composition Department does not reflect our student population. **Currently**, our department comprises of all women tenured professors, but only one of these professors is Latina. **Our professors opened up a space for us to critically think and embrace** our positions as future Latina scholars by discussing topics such as hegemony, symbolic violence, mimicry, and language ideologies, to list a few, in our classes. **This** affords us the opportunity to bridge the gap between **theory and practice** by using what we discuss and learn in class in our own classrooms. We can open up a space in our classrooms for our students to incorporate some of their language practices into their work. **Our experiences,**

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Comment [1]: Can you say a bit more about this deliberate move. How did the faculty decide to create this space and then do so? Was this move part of a single course? A programmatic decision as a result of other information/program review? Something else entirely? Readers will be eager to hear more about this significant facet of the program.

Comment [2]: Can you clarify what "this" is here?

Comment [3]: In rhetoric? Writing? Communication? All of the above?

and these practices, we hope, will not only help shift some of dominant standard language ideologies, but help raise the retention rates of Latin@ students.

Histories with Languages

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 Latina 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). As a result, Yosso argues that CRT shifts the focus from the dominant White, middle class culture to the cultures of Communities of color. Because the number of Latin@ scholars in our field is very small, it’s important for the two of us to share how our experiences are somewhat similar to those of our students.

Jennifer:

Spanish was spoken in my house as a child, but it was never directed at me. My parents are products of an era when “English Only” was enforced with corporal punishment. They spoke English to my siblings and I, and often used their first language of Spanish only when talking to my grandparents. My grandfather only spoke Spanish, and many of my earliest memories revolve around conversations with him where my bilingual grandmother acted as our translator. These experiences of needing a translator, or simply not fully understanding what was said around me happened often throughout my childhood. I was born and raised in Los Angeles, a melting pot of cultural and linguistic practices, where hearing not only Spanish, but many other languages everywhere I went was a common occurrence. It was equally common to witness

Comment [4]: Can you elaborate a bit here about the context you are referring to? Are you hoping for a shift in dominant standard language ideologies more broadly (what your readers can then take and implement in their own teaching, for example) or here, are you referring specifically to the experiences your students bring into your classrooms at UTEP and the ways in which these strategies may prompt changes for them? In other words, is the “we hope” a hope for your classrooms or for this essay?

Comment [5]: Can you clarify the relationship between the two clauses in this sentence? In other words, is sharing your experience a way to interrupt dominant narratives within the scholarship in our field?

In reading over the contributions to the collection, I’ve noticed that there is a common theme of wanting to connect/feeling an affinity with students from similar backgrounds.

people struggling to communicate with teachers, cashiers, gas attendants, etc. I grew up comfortable seeing signs, and store-fronts displaying text that I could not read. My knowledge of the existence of many languages manifests itself in my teaching pedagogies, which specifically encourage my students to see the value in, make use of all of their linguistic capital.

Lizbett:

“No Ingles en la casa,” or, ironically, “Spanish only” were phrases I heard plenty of times throughout my childhood. My parents, more specifically my dad, would scold my sisters and I if we spoke English at home. As a result, Spanish became a language we only used at home and to communicate with family in order to develop familial capital, as Yosso refers to it. As soon as I got home from school, I had to speak Spanish. To this day, I only speak Spanish with my dad because he never learned how to speak English. At times, my dad regrets not allowing us to speak English at home because he believes that would have helped him learn the language.

I grew up in Oxnard, CA, an agricultural town, so my parents, while picking strawberries, celery, or whichever crop was in season, did not need to know English. Tired of the back breaking work, my mom decided to start her own housekeeping business, and my older brother, and I--only six years old--became her translators. My siblings and I would always translate, whether it was ordering for our parents at fast food restaurants or reading school notes written in English to our parents. I recall having a hard time translating from English to Spanish or vice versa. Plenty of times I did not know the Spanish version of words in English. These instances of translating are essentially what prompted me to start code switching and eventually using Spanglish to communicate with my parents.

In regards to language, second grade stands out for me. My teacher sent a note home recommending that I take speech classes, classes to help remediate my language skills. At that

Comment [6]: This is a really powerful statement given how un-comfortable those who cannot read English signs are made to feel in this country.

Comment [7]: Yes! Love this final statement.

Comment [8]: Maybe collapse these two sentences into one; there seems to be a little redundancy here.

Comment [9]: Can you offer a stronger transition here?

age, I probably did not know how to translate and relate the message of the note to my parents, so they just signed it. As a result, every week, I would get pulled into a small room with a few other students and we would get drilled on vocabulary. We were constantly reminded that we needed to speak English only at school if we wanted to “properly” learn the language. It was this year in grade school that impacted my relationship with the English language. I was a timid child, but speaking English terrified me. I was terrified that I would say something wrong, and I was also concerned that I would say something in English with a Spanish accent. Not only was I scolded at home for speaking English, but I was scared of speaking English in the one location where I knew it was acceptable.

Experiences as Undergraduates

Not only did our childhood experiences shape our language ideologies, but our experiences as undergraduate students did as well. The two of us attended universities in different regions of the country with very different academic cultures.

Jennifer:

Attending a four-year university was not presented as an option to me when I was a child. There were no discussions about if I would go to college. There were only expectations. I was told from a young age that after high school I would attend a university and earn my BA. This was, of course, not something I understood fully at a young age, but it was as present in my life as the sunshine of Southern California. During my senior year of high school I applied to many schools, but one visit to The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio and I knew where I would be spending my undergraduate years. However, earning acceptance to OSU, and learning to adjust and transition to living in the Midwest were two completely different battles.

Comment [10]: This image of being pulled from “regular” class and into a smaller room for these ESL sessions is a common one among the collection’s contributors.

Comment [11]: Yes, another really significant idea here that we have a relationship with the language whereas I imagine that this relationship is virtually invisible to those who are not dual language learners.

Comment [12]: Throughout the chapters I’ve read, there is a common theme concerning individuals being hesitant to speak or attempting to lose their ‘accents’. Please elaborate a bit more on this concern.

Comment [13]: Could you speculate here on why that may have been the case? Both of us (Serg and Letizia) found that our parents were insistent about our path toward a 4-year degree despite never having attended school in the US nor earned a 4-year degree themselves.

OSU is one of the largest universities in the country. It boasts close to 50,000 students on the main campus. That's about 44,000 undergraduates and roughly 13,000 graduate students. Flyers and recruitment videos mention the academic programs, the campus lifestyle, and the university's commitment to diversity.

During my time at OSU the university did what they could to fulfill this promise of building a more diverse experience for its students. The office of First Year Experience (FYE) puts on several programs throughout the school year. Each event is geared towards helping students' transition successfully from high school to college. During my freshman year FYE brought authors to campus, and held lectures at night that addressed such topics as time-management, study skills, and various other programs aimed at helping students. There was a short summer reading list passed out during orientation, and some of these programs revolved around the short summer reading list given to incoming freshman.

One of the books on the summer reading list was Julia Alvarez's "In the Time of the Butterflies." I eagerly read it, and looked forward to her visit to the university. I genuinely hoped that discussing her book in class would make me feel at home in a place so different from where I was born and raised. Unfortunately, this book was never discussed in any of my classes. I was able to attend a talk and book signing with Julia Alvarez. There weren't any other programs put on that year that were obviously catered to the Latino student population. In fact, for all their talk of diversity the numbers were quite low. On average, from 2002 to 2014, 2.5 to 2.9% of the ("Highlights") overall undergraduate population are Latino students. The talk of diversity is not only talk. There are numerous student groups that receive support from the university. The Alpha chapter of Alpha Psi Lambda, the nation's first co-ed Latino fraternity, often co-hosts events with the university, so the support is there for the students, but in my experience the talk of

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Comment [14]: How does this bear on your adjustment to the Midwest?

diversity only includes programs that bring minority authors, scholars, and activists to campus.

The initiatives and diversity programming don't address language. Outside of a Spanish

language class, the issue of bilingualism, or multilingualism does not come up. The programs that FYE hosted focused on helping students succeed at OSU, but these programs never veered outside the world pushing students to develop good study habits, and making positive lifestyle choices. The percentage of international students, and Latino students suggest that these discussions should take place, and that many of the students enrolled at OSU possess language practices that aren't often recognized as valuable in Standard Edited American English (SEAE).

Despite the focus of FYE programs on students making a successful transition from high school to college, I was able to adapt to life in Ohio quickly thanks to their programs despite the extreme culture shock I experienced moving from Los Angeles to Columbus, Ohio. However, what I learned early on was that my peers expectations of me were based on what they saw in mainstream media. When they would ask to practice their Spanish with me I couldn't help them. When my friends were surprised at how well I spoke English, or how well written my papers were I understood that the common narrative of Latino students was that we struggle with language. That dominant image of our struggles will continue to hinder us at the university level unless we find ways to demonstrate the value and advantages of bilingual speakers in the composition classroom. My experiences at OSU, and with the FYE programs demonstrated the lack of discussion, or inclusion, of language practices outside of SEAE. If FYE, or similar programs at other universities, could incorporate some of these ideas into their programming, then perhaps there could be a shift in the ways in which the next generation of scholars, and professionals that graduate from OSU, or other universities will be part of the dismantling of these standard language ideologies.

Comment [15]: There seems to be a tension in the response to OSU's commitment to diversity. Can you address this tension a bit more or reconsider how you want to frame this information? Did the authors address language? Do you mean the role of language on campus beyond what the authors have to say?

Comment [16]: Take some time with this claim given what you have shared so far. Can you explain how the dominant image may have hindered you and/or other Latin@ students at OSU, specifically in your composition course? Since this is the first reference to composition courses, readers will be eager to hear more about the specific connections to first year composition given the focus of the essay and collection.

Comment [17]: Again, we don't hear much about your experience with language in your first year writing course, and this move to recommendations feels a bit sudden to readers. Is FYE combined with the first year writing course at OSU? That isn't always the case at many schools, so readers will want to hear more about this connection.

Lizbett:

According to Yosso, “*Familial capital* refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (79). Familial capital is strong among Latin@ families. Many Latin@ students attend college close to home because there is a sense of responsibility and desire to keep familial bonds strong. As a result, choosing where to attend college was not an easy decision for me. As a young teen, I wanted to be as far away from home as possible. However, I was greatly influenced by my parents. I almost did not apply to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) because it was too close to home, but my mom would always bring up the fact that when she was growing up in Mexico, UCLA was a name she always heard. I knew how competitive UCLA was, and continues to be, so I applied without ever thinking I would be accepted. When I heard back from all the schools I was admitted to, I had to make the decision of either moving up to Northern California to attend my dream school, UC Berkeley, or stay close to home and attend UCLA. I decided to stay close to home because of the close relationship I have with my family. Most of my mom’s family lives in Oxnard, but my abuelos and some tias and tios live on the same street as my parents. I did not want to miss out on family events--baptisms, birthdays, BBQs or other celebrations.

I have never once regretted attending UCLA, and I take pride in being a part of the Bruin family. However, my experiences there as a Latina student were a bit rough. From day one, I did not feel like I belonged. Going from a community and high school with predominantly Latinos and feeling like an outsider at UCLA was shocking. UCLA, a school that prides itself in being one of the best public research universities in the world, had a student population of approximately 25,000 students in 2004, the year I entered, according to their “Common Data Set

2004-05.” Of those students, 3,821 were Hispanic and only 517 were first-time, first-year Hispanic students (“Common Data”). I was fortunate to be one of the 517, but it was rare to see any of the 516 other Hispanic students on campus.

If it were not for the Academic Advancement Program (AAP), a program for many first-generation, underrepresented students, I do not know if I would have graduated from UCLA. AAP offers peer tutoring throughout the year in many subject matters. I received one on one tutoring for my English Composition 3 course, which I later learned most students at UCLA test out of. It was not labeled a remedial writing course, but reflecting back with what I now know as a scholar, it definitely felt like one. This classroom introduced me to students of very diverse backgrounds since a lot of the students in my course that semester were international students who wanted to learn English. However, it was not only the AAP tutoring that occurred at Campbell Hall, it was the space and location that allowed me to engage with the few minority students on campus. Walking into Campbell Hall for tutoring was always something I looked forward to because it felt like a safe place and much like home on a campus where I felt like a stranger.

Although I went into UCLA as a Pre-Med student, it was not until my second year that I made the switch to English. My experience in the English Composition course, along with some Comparative Literature courses, made me realize the power of language. Although UCLA, like many other universities, places emphasis on Standard Academic English, I always felt out of place. As a Latina on campus, I never felt like I was at UCLA due to my academic ability, but I always felt like a statistic to boost the university’s minority numbers. I can now see how UCLA and the capital that is associated with the institution instills hegemonic discourses, but interacting with the people I did in Campbell Hall made me realize I could make a difference in changing

Comment [18]: Can you clarify the relationship between the clauses in this sentence? What is the connection between Standard Academic English, feeling out of place, and then what follows in the next sentence?

Comment [19]: There are places in the essay where you don’t use the @ for the a/o of this term. Is this a stylistic move you want to continue using? If so, consider being more consistent with this use of punctuation.

these hegemonic discourses by pursuing a degree that would give me access to higher education. As a result of my time at UCLA, I came to understand how language ideologies form, which has led me to be interested in basic writing and language practices in RWS.

Outsiders to RWS

Both of us arrived at UTEP with undergraduate backgrounds in English Literature, without much knowledge in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Our graduate degrees are not in Rhetoric and Composition. Between us, we have an MA in English Literature, and an MFA in Creative Writing. As a result of our previous school experiences we found ourselves very much outside Rhetoric and Composition when we began PhD coursework.

Not only are we outsiders to the field of Rhetoric and Composition, but we have also joined a discipline where there are not very minority scholars, especially Latinas. In this respect, despite our academic success, we find ourselves feeling very much outside of our academic field. This disconnection does not only occur within our field, but it is felt in our personal lives as well.

We constantly explain to relatives and others the nature of our field, and research interests, without them fully comprehending why this is of value, or how it will help “la Raza.” One of the reactions we commonly encounter from others is why we are not in a discipline such as Chicana@s Studies. Not only do we have to defend our career choices, but we must constantly explain to people the power of language, whether it be relatives or students. As dominant of a position oral practices have in the Latin@ culture, not many students take composition courses because they enjoy it, but rather because it is a requirement.

UTEP as Contact Zone

Although the two of us have different backgrounds and attended different universities, what ties us together was our choice to move to El Paso, TX. For the two of us, this city provides

Comment [20]: How so? Can you elaborate on when/how you came to see what you describe here and when/how you encountered these discourses as an undergraduate? What made you pursue English as a major in light of these experiences?

Comment [21]: In the previous section, both of you describe first year experiences as undergraduates but we hear less about how those experiences led you to pursue degrees in English and how, ultimately, those choices in major were connected in some way to your prior language experiences. Given the focus of the collection and target readers (other scholars in our field), could you share a bit more about these topics in your individual sections?

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Comment [22]: How did you choose the program? Readers will be particularly interested in this choice.

Comment [23]: This “outsider” theme is common among many of the collection’s chapters as well.

Comment [24]: Yes.

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Comment [25]: Who are the “others” and to whom do you have to defend these choices?

Comment [26]: Here, too, can you say more about this idea of oral practice within Latin@ culture and perhaps its connection to your own interest in Rhet/Comp?

some of the comforts of home, but it also took some adjusting. El Paso, Texas is in a very unique location. It finds itself right on the U.S./Mexico border. El Paso is a city with very close ties to its sister city of Ciudad Juárez located in Chihuahua, Mexico. According to the U.S. Census's "El Paso County, TX State and County QuickFacts," about 81% of the population in El Paso County are Hispanic or Latino. The data also shows that 73% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. Of the people that speak another language at home, 71.6% of these people speak Spanish ("El Paso County").

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has an estimated 23,000 students. "UTEP Quick Facts" states that about 78% of the student body population identify as Hispanic, and about 5% of students are international students from Mexico ("UTEP Quick Facts"). Many students cross the border on a daily basis from Ciudad 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 wall separate UTEP from Juárez, Spanish is heard everywhere on campus. The linguistic complexities of students ~~at UTEP are~~ very rich. Plenty of Latino/a students at UTEP do not speak Spanish at all. However, many students are fully bilingual in Spanish and English, and are thus as proficient in English as monolingual speakers of English. There are also many students on campus that speak English fluently but show Generation 1.5 characteristics, which are very complex. Students at UTEP identify with multiple cultures and multiple languages; hence, neither English as a Second Language or "mainstream" FYC curriculum serve the student body at UTEP.

Due to the diverse student body population and the scholars in our program, one of the required courses for the PhD in Rhetoric and Composition is Advanced Critical Theory. Unlike other PhD programs, Advanced Critical Theory is not a special topics course offered periodically

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to students. This course focuses on everything from Critical Theory to Critical Race Theory to Global Englishes, and language policies in RWS. The importance of this course lies within the topics discussed, such as racial formations, whiteness studies, and Latin@ studies, and the very real possibility of implicating a new learned theory or approach immediately into the classroom. The student population of UTEP allows PhD students that also teach to begin to close the gap between theory and practice. A considerable amount of coursework addresses the issue of Standard Language Ideologies (SLI). The reading material forced us to consciously come to terms with the ways in which SLI has shaped our own language practices in the classroom, but more importantly it affords us the time to work through how we, as Latin@ instructors, can challenge and change some of these SLI practices in our classrooms.

Another course that discusses language ideologies, but with a global focus is Global Rhetorics. Although this is not a required course for the PhD program, many graduate students enroll. The focus of this course is to discuss global cultural flows as described by Appadurai to more local issues presented in Chavez's *Latino Threat*. Students in this class have the opportunity to discuss Global Englishes and how language ideologies can construct certain identity narratives for groups of people, and examine transnational literacies, specifically how Global Englishes are transforming educational practices. Like the Advance Critical Theory course, this class allows students to critically analyze language practices.

According to Beatrice Méndez -Newman's "Teaching Writing at Hispanic-Serving Institutions," "Compositionists with little or no experience at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) quickly discover that traditional training in rhetoric and composition inadequately addressed the impact of many Hispanic students' sociocultural, socioeconomic, and ethnolinguistic makeup on performance in the writing class and on acculturation into the larger

Comment [27]: Since the focus of the essay aims at discussing your respective experiences, do you think that including this overview of your institution at the beginning of the essay may be more effective? If these discussion move to the beginning, you could use the following parts of the essay to discuss how your personal experiences have informed your work at the university as instructors and doctoral students.

academic community” (17). When a large number of students in First-Year Composition (FYC) have different academic preparation and perspectives than the fictional “mainstream” student, classroom dynamics alter; this is where instructors at these institutions need to take into account the linguistic complexities at HSIs. “Compositionists at an HSI does not have to be Hispanic to be an effective in the writing classroom. However, awareness of Hispanic students' cultural and ethno-linguistics identities should figure prominently in the construction of the writing classroom” (19) states Méndez-Newman. In *Latino/a Discourses: On Language, Identity, and Literacy Education*, Michelle Hall Kells, Valerie M. Balester, and Victor Villanueva write, “We know. We know of the Latinos and Latinas in our classroom. We know of their linguistic complexity, but we haven't found ways to translate this knowledge into classroom practices that aren't still founded on an assimilationist set of assumptions” (2).

One of the elective courses the two of us enrolled in was an Ethnographic study on our First-Year Composition Program. This course focused on the literacies/biliteracies practices of first semester composition students and instructors. One of the things we quickly learned is that literacy practices are so ingrained with language ideologies and identities. While conducting research, our class observed that some instructors were adamant about not allowing students to speak Spanish in the classroom. The two instructors we observed welcomed and invited students to use Spanish, Spanglish, or other languages in their classes. However, both instructors did not make it explicitly clear that these language practices were allowed in their classrooms.

Interestingly, we found that despite the instructors’ openness to students using other languages in their writing or class discussions students did not often take advantage of this opportunity to make use of the linguistic capital they possess as a result of their bilingualism. Students we interviewed expressed to us that they often use Spanish, Spanglish, and other

Comment [28]: Can you review this quotation?

Comment [29]: Missing word?

Comment [30]: Review quotation for agreement

Comment [31]: Can you take some additional time commenting/reflecting on the quotations you offer in this paragraph before moving onto the next paragraph? Readers will want to hear your thoughts about these ideas and the connections to your work at UTEP.

Comment [32]: Can you think of another way to open this paragraph that foregrounds key ideas about language and linguistic capital rather than your coursework?

Comment [33]: Do you think the instructor would have responded poorly if those practices were brought into the classroom?

languages outside the classroom. It was quite common that students speak Spanish, or Spanglish, at home, with friends, and in text message conversations. However, one of the students we interviewed made it clear that speaking Spanish was something he only did at home and not at school. Most students we interviewed expressed that Spanish was an “insiders” language, a language only practiced among family and friends, and not shared among academic settings. Based on the interviews conducted with students we quickly realized how detrimental the dominant English standard language ideologies are to students. We found that even when given the option to make use of their varied language practices, they chose not to based on their assumptions and/or experiences about what is, and is not allowed in an English Composition classroom.

One student expressed during an interview that he understood he could use Spanish in his writing, or a source from a Spanish academic journal, but chose not to do so. He informed us that he felt comfortable in his knowledge that his instructor would not be opposed to him doing this, but that he would not use Spanish, or any other language in his research, or writing. When prompted to explain this, the student did not have a clear answer as to why he would not use Spanish when his instructor was open to this. It is important to note that while most students are bilingual they may not have a lot of experience writing in Spanish. We understand that this could be one reason as to why some students, despite knowing they can integrate Spanish into their work, choose not to do so.

As a result of our coursework, we have learned how the classroom can serve as a contact zone. In “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermath as they are lived out in many

Comment [34]: Did they indicate how they came to these conclusions/decisions?

Comment [35]: Helpful use of example here with an even more helpful explanation for readers.

parts of the world today” (34). Not only are we confronted with our own language ideologies but with student language ideologies as well. After examining our own language practices and the practices we discovered when interviewing students, we have come to realize that as instructors we will constantly be grappling with these issues. Fortunately, the unique location and student body population at UTEP gives us the opportunity to not just read theory, but actually put it into practice. Each of us ^vis committed to taking action by attempting to dismantle SLI. We understand that SLI has a long history in and outside of the classroom, but we see our positions as scholars and instructors as an opportunity to continue to do research in this area of RWS, and encourage inclusion of language practices that exist outside SLI in the classroom. It’s not enough for us to know that we are okay with students ^s speaking Spanish. We need to explicitly let them know that they are welcomed to make use of any, and all of their linguistic capital in the classroom.

As a result, each of us takes ^s on different pedagogical approaches to make sure that our classrooms are linguistically diverse. For example, we encourage students to use sources in Spanish when conducting research, if the student feels comfortable doing so, and the sources are appropriate. We invite students to communicate amongst each other in Spanish, Spanglish, or other languages as long as they are learning the rhetorical practices they need in order to communicate effectively. We find these practices in our classrooms help ^v the students understand the assignment guidelines easier, and promote ^v more conversation ^v. If students are more comfortable talking to one another in Spanish, Spanglish, or other languages, then we see no reason to stop this. We encourage that they use the language, and language practices that they feel most comfortable using. We do everything we can to let students know that we do not have a specific policy against them incorporating Spanish into the classroom. If students wish not to

Comment [36]: Yes.

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Comment [37]: I'd like to see some discussion of how each of you do so. You might address your approaches in the same way you each addressed your early and undergraduate education experiences (in the mode of a dialogue).

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take advantage of this, then we encourage that they make use of all of their language skills. This may result in students using Spanish throughout their writing process. If a student prefers to only speak, write, and use sources in English we encourage them to do so. Our goal is to create an environment that allows the students the freedom to use all of their linguistic practices, because we view them as beneficial, and in no way detrimental to their development as writers. This is supported by the curriculum we teach as several of the assignments in our writing courses and writing program allow our students to move away from using alphabetic Standard Academic English practices and move into other modes of composing.

Conclusion

Like many of our Latin@ students at UTEP, we both know what it is like to navigate through unfamiliar territory when entering college. Our experiences as undergraduates and now as PhD students, who also teach college level composition courses that have a nontraditional curriculum that incorporates more rhetoric than traditional composition courses, allow us the opportunity to incorporate language practices that exist outside of SLI. As a result, we are able to encourage our students in our first year composition courses to use the languages they know in order to communicate effectively with their peers, and us. We are both aware that change does not occur from one day to another, but we are hopeful that the small changes we make in our classrooms will have an even greater impact on our students in and out of our classes.

Comment [38]: I'm starting to notice some repetition in the essay that could be reduced in order to make space for some more detail about these pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Comment [39]: Readers certainly will be interested in these assignments and classroom practices. Could you offer an example here and perhaps narrate/illustrate how a student might use various language skills throughout the writing process for that assignment?

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Comment [40]: Can you take time to develop this conclusion with particular attention to your own experiences as students who may have benefitted from these pedagogical practices and as scholars now attempting to encourage this work among other teacher scholars within the field?

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Comment [41]: Check the order of the works cited.