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# Bilingual Children's Literature: Bridging the Gap Between Language and Identity = Literatura infantil bilingüe: Cerrando la brecha entre el idioma y la identidad

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**Bilingual Children's Literature: Bridging the Gap Between Language and Identity**  
**Literatura infantil bilingüe: Cerrando la brecha entre el idioma y la identidad**

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Honor Scholar Program Senior Project  
2017  
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## Foreword

I believe that it is imperative all children learn to love to read. One way to do this is by ensuring that they can see themselves in the books available to them. I grew up going to the library to visit my reference librarian mother and having the school librarian as one of my best friends. As a result, libraries feel like home. I can lose myself so completely in a book that I will not hear what is going on around me. Books have taught me about so many things: friendships, growing up, loss, history, magic, love, adventure, confidence – but most of all about being myself. There is something both deeply profound and grounding about reading a book with a character that feels like you – so real you could step into their shoes or they could be your best friend. When I was deciding on my thesis topic, I struggled for a while. However, suddenly it all clicked; take my Spanish major, a Children’s Literature class, and my Education Studies minor and I had a story to tell. Throughout the process, it has been so exciting and thought-provoking to see the way my experiences and education have come together. I had little to no knowledge of bilingual picturebooks before, as I grew up in a very white suburb speaking only English until I started learning Spanish in high school. As a result, I can only urge people to see the importance of bilingual literature for identity affirmation without having the personal understanding to give credence to the experience. However, I believe that using my voice and sharing this passion for reading and searching for the truth is vital if we are to move forward. Through working on this project, I have come to realize that everyone deserves someone or something that inspires them, making them feel as if they have the power to make a difference. My hope is to persuade people to believe that bilingual children’s literature can be that something that can change a child’s world, showing them that they can be a protagonist in their own life story.





## **Section 1: Background and the Importance of Bilingual Children’s Literature**

### **Introduction**

In a world where we are surrounded by narratives, books have an immense impact on us as readers. Books tell us that we are not alone, give us answers, entertain us, show us the beauty of the world, teach us about ourselves, and so much more. Children’s literature has a particularly important role here, as picturebooks are usually the first encounter people have with written stories. As such, they have a big responsibility to introduce children to the joy, magic, and inspiration of books. Reading reminds us that “the human mind was shaped for story, so that it could be shaped *by* story” (Gottschall 56). When authors remember this, their books can bridge gaps of all kinds, including time, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, and language, because we are all human and humans tell stories. Specifically, bilingual children’s books allow a multitude of readers to project themselves into the story and discover how they fit into the world. It is crucial that children have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate, accurate, and affirming books so that they understand that they can, and must, share in the writing of the story of humanity.

The United States was founded as a multicultural melting pot of various ethnicities, religions, and languages, and this country continues to be called home by people of all different backgrounds. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, “Students who speak languages other than English are the fastest growing population in schools today,” making linguistic freedom a particularly relevant topic in regards to young children (Pacheco and Miller 533). For this project, it is necessary to note that Spanish-speaking children are a large part of that growing school-age population. They want to feel as if they can be themselves here in this country, speaking their language and embracing their culture. The U.S.

Census Bureau even predicts that by 2025, “one of every four students will be Latino, and that the population will continue to become more Hispanic,” therefore creating a society in which “Latino youth are inextricably linked to the nation’s future” (Gandera and Contreras 17). All youth have the incredible potential to do amazing things with this nation’s future, but only if they are given the appropriate opportunities to grow and create places for themselves in their communities. In particular, it is important that historically minoritized and marginalized groups are able to understand, as well as take control of, their worth and value in this country that was founded on the ideas of freedom and diversity. Because Latino youth have such great potential in shaping the future of the United States, it is imperative that they find themselves accepted, loved, and encouraged in their pursuit of finding their identity and their incredible potential to make a difference in someone’s life.

Despite the fact that Spanish-speaking youth are the foundation of the future, inadequate education and illiteracy damages their ability to see themselves and their worth. Especially in comparison to the education provided to white children, Latinos “are lagging dangerously far behind” (Gandera and Contreras 2). This will soon become a huge problem as they grow up, enter the work force, and begin to make decisions that affect the very fabric of our patchwork quilt country. Literacy affects not only the content that students learn but also how they come to learn it. By reading, students gain knowledge about themselves and their world. When a student cannot read at an appropriate level for their age, they get farther and farther behind the rest of their peers until they are left behind in the race to the top. Freire, an eminent education philosopher, declares that “Illiteracy not only threatens the economic order of a society, it also constitutes a profound injustice... [with] serious consequences, such as the inability of illiterates to make decisions for themselves or to participate in the political process” (Freire and Macedo

vii). Language is such an integral part of culture and the way that people find and make their place in the world that to eliminate an outlet of language and exclude a group of people from that community-making and -shaping space is to tell them that they do not matter. When results show that only 16 percent of Latino students in the fourth grade scored at or above proficiency for reading, and taking into account their large proportion of this nation's population, change is the only logical next step to correct this obvious problem (Gandera and Contreras 20). Being illiterate says to others that an individual cannot use language 'properly' or 'sufficiently' to communicate. Illiteracy is then an easy and readily available tool that powerful groups can use "to silence the poor, minority groups, women, or people of color" (Freire and Macedo 12). When undemocratic and unfair education practices subject an entire group to an illiterate identity, they tell that community that their voice does not matter. Spanish-speakers are an integral part of this country, and they deserve to have their voice heard and their ideas shared. To do this, however, requires active effort to change the way children are being educated.

### **Education**

Education is a powerful source of societal transformation if utilized fairly. As previously described, Spanish-speakers are receiving inadequate schooling where their Spanish language is devalued and unappreciated. If "education is the single most effective way to integrate the burgeoning population of Latinos into the U.S. economy and society," then they need to be allowed to truly participate in their education (Gandera and Contreras 13). Language is a key component of identity and affects how people see the world, so schools need to ensure they take that into account when teaching students. English is not only emphasized but pushed, and schools ignore students' home experiences. Spanish is a part of who they are, but the reality is that "minority children continue to be on the receiving end of these highly prescribed, watered-

down curriculum programs that do not see the teacher as having much value in students' learning," resulting in an education that does not have a firm foundation (Flores-Dueñas 238–239). Spanish-speakers are taught English because it is seen as a superior language in this country and they are expected to participate in a language that they can never feel is truly their own. Without being able to form connections to information and the world they already know and understand, young children struggle to take that next step. They lack the tools to build a bridge protecting them from getting lost in the abyss of ignorance.

Young bilingual children need affirmation and education in both of their languages. When they attend school, "they struggle to adjust to new speech and cultural surroundings," which could result in "feelings of isolation" (Kim 312). When children feel lonely and as if they do not belong, they are not motivated to put in the effort to learn information that does not seem to pertain to them. If their two languages are separated, where English is spoken at school and Spanish is spoken at home, an identity crisis can easily occur. Adjusting back and forth requires a lot of mental capacity and effort, and young children often feel lost or out of place. Isolated in their world of two languages, "They rarely see themselves and their home language represented in the books that they encounter in classroom and libraries" (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 24). When Spanish is not presented as valuable, students lose pride in part of who they are and they feel as if they must conform to their 'school personality.' They lose half of themselves because the educational system tells them that they must suppress their Spanish and only use English.

There are ways, however, to combat this phenomenon. The National Education Association states that "exposing Latino children to books that reflect their culture as well as their language is one of the most effective ways of motivating them to stay in school" (Naidoo 24). These books are physical evidence that society sees them and recognizes the value of

authenticating their experience in literature. It is imperative that young children have healthy self-esteem, and recognizing their own self-worth is the first step. Teachers can use “children’s literature as an invaluable pedagogical tool” to teach their students such skills as respect and self-dignity as well as literacy (Ghiso and Campano 48). Culture and language create identity, and when students see that they can be themselves – using both English and Spanish – at school as well as at home, they flourish. In combination, these skills and support give young bilingual students tools and confidence they can then use to interact with and change the world.

Educators have immense power to shape students’ lives, and in the case of Spanish-speaking students, on whose shoulders the future of this nation rests, they must take initiative in supporting those individuals’ linguistic landscapes. Fostering the development of students’ first languages involves incorporating it into the school setting because “the sociolinguistic environment of the classroom cannot be left up to chance” with these high stakes (Pease-Alvarez and Winsler 532). The Spanish language must be supported, and teachers have the tough job of providing the gauge of the nation’s linguistic attitude. School is where, in theory, students are taught how to survive in society and are prepared for life. If Spanish, a central part of these students’ heritages and identities, is ignored and not valued, then these students will assume that is how the world operates. Schools and teachers have the crucial role of “removing the invisible ‘English Only’ sign from their classroom walls by respecting children’s language learning and providing the necessary support and resources” (Sneddon xvii). The “English Only” attitude cuts off part of a bilingual student’s identity and does not allow them to participate fully in school, therefore effectively discouraging them from participating in society because no one taught them how or even that they could. Being an educator “means to recognize in others...the right to express their thoughts, their right to speak...[and therefore] the educator’s duty to listen to

them,” which manifests itself here as listening in two languages (Freire and Macedo 40). Even if a teacher is monolingual, there are ways that they can support their students’ bilingualism, such as using bilingual books. Suppressing half of their thoughts with an “English Only” policy negates bilingual students’ ability to speak and share their opinions. Their world consists of two languages, so their education and identity should reflect that.

This may seem like a daunting task, but stated simply, education must build on what already exists for the students, such as their backgrounds and previous knowledge. A good school focuses on “finding out about the lives and cultural meanings not only of the students who come to classes but also of those students’ families” in order to build on the foundation they already have (Martinez-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson 279). For bilingual children, much of that can be accomplished by bringing Spanish into the classroom alongside English. Their world at home is built upon a shared language and culture that creates their identity, so losing it while at school is extremely detrimental. Because communication is defined by dialogue, “creat[ing] spaces where all members of a learning community might communicate across languages and culture” means that schools must make the effort to dialogue with their students (Ghiso and Campano 54). Meeting bilingual students halfway can be all the encouragement and support they need to cross that bridge into full participation. By taking the initiative and crossing the bridge first, educators demonstrate that they value their students’ worlds and experiences and thus invite them into the education process. An easy integrative tool is books, and schools have the responsibility to ensure that all children in “classrooms, libraries, and child-care centers encounter their cultures and languages...[in the] curricula and in the books” on the shelves (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 24). Literature provides so many learning opportunities, and

including bilingual books is a simple solution to building on students' experiences within their multilingual worlds.

Picturebooks provide an easy way for adults both at school and at home to introduce children to language skills as well as demonstrate that they have the right and the ability to explore ideas with confidence and curiosity. For example, in one project, "the schools' own reading programmes were complemented with dual language books to help pupils develop reading skills in their home languages with the support of their parents," fostering a love of reading as well as a willingness and ability to bring their families into the learning process (Sneddon viii). Dual language books at home, in conjunction with efforts at school, enforce the idea that Spanish can cross that invisible boundary between the two. Children learn to value their experiences experimenting with the two languages at home and can bring that excitement into the classroom. When they feel comfortable exploring both languages, they learn better and can bring more to the conversation. In order for students to effectively learn to read and speak both Spanish and English, "teachers should create a *fluid* and *multifaceted* space where young children can freely share their ideas and apply whatever they know to the making of literary meaning" (Kim 332). Here, that means that they should be able to use their knowledge of both Spanish and English in order to make connections between the stories and their lives as well as share ideas. If they cannot, they will be at a disadvantage because that takes away a key part of their identity and how they see the world. When they are able to find and share those connections, children feel as if they are a part of something and have something of value to share.

### **Power of Reading**

An essential part of developing a sense of self, reading literature creates a space for students to explore their ideas about the world as well as how the story connects to their own



lives. Reading is powerful. It is a catalyst for education, formation, and change because it allows people to share ideas and take charge of their own thoughts and lives. Reading “broadens the readers’ horizons, validates their experiences, invites reflection,” transports them to different worlds, encourages curiosity, and provides learning opportunities (Arenas 14). Books allow readers to explore various lifestyles, perspectives, and scenarios that help foster a stronger sense of empathy and self-awareness. Because we as humans search for people and situations we can connect to, choosing a wide variety of books opens up that circle of connectivity and invites us to share experiences with someone, something, or some place that we would never had the opportunity to do in real life. This idea, however, is rooted in the necessity for children to have access to all different types of stories, including the entire range of categories, conflicts, characters, and cultures that we see in our world. “By vicariously living in another culture [through fiction], we begin to gain an understanding of why people live as they do” because the authors allow us to see through their characters’ eyes (Yokota 164). Readers learn to understand the world in a way that those without literature do not. The very act of stepping into a character’s shoes for a few pages requires children to make that leap of connection between their own lives and the character’s. This is a necessary step in forming one’s own identity and being able to distinguish who an individual is with respect to others. Because literature has this vital function, it is imperative that all peoples are represented and valued in books. If we choose to believe that “Books are windows into the soul of society, illuminating the social, political, and cultural mores that underlie our world,” then it is all the more crucial that we work to create quality literature that helps move our global community forward into the future that we want (Naidoo 19). Therefore, children’s books must reflect the entire picture of humanity and not just the parts that the majority chooses to see. Voices cannot be silenced, for every individual has a

story to tell. Bilingual books are windows into the way that Spanish and English coexist in the world and both have power and value. This type of literature tells bilingual children that they belong in society and have a part to play. Reading can change lives, and quality children's literature affects the way readers see their place in the world.

A child who reads gains not only literacy and language skills but also grows in their ability to understand the world through their own individual perspective. Learning to read is obviously a major goal of the education system and seems pretty straightforward. Schools have an important responsibility to instill in their students a love of reading and learning, but this only occurs when they have rewarding experiences with books. Here we must tread carefully, for "if children cannot read in the dominant language of the school, does it mean that they should be denied their right to read it in their own language?" (Allen 444). In many places around the United States, Spanish-speaking children are being forced to learn English in schools by reading books written completely in their second language. Before they are proficient, this is neither enjoyable nor useful to them. They are not receiving full access to the knowledge supposedly available to them and that they deserve. In this case, educators must weigh the costs and benefits of reading occurring in English with reading occurring at all, and realize that literacy is so valuable that reading needs to happen regardless of what language in which the book is written. Literacy involves not only knowing the written words and sentence structures, but also how people's lives connect and intersect beyond the page. "It means developing the theoretical and practical conditions through which human beings can locate themselves in their own histories and in doing so make themselves present as agents in the struggle to expand the possibilities of human life and freedom," because children need to learn that they matter (Freire 10–11). A book written in both English and Spanish enables a bilingual child to locate themselves in the world

and gives them a space to realize who they are and who they can become while working on learning both of their languages. When they understand that they have the power and agency to create a space where they can speak both Spanish and English and be a part of both cultures, the doors to the world are opened to them. Books can help unlock and push open those doors. Narrative can be a way of knowing, and “literacy learning cannot occur without active participation by individuals” (Martínez-Roldán 506; Kim 315). However, the key here is to note that students must be able to participate in the story and actively read. A child’s language skills should not inhibit him or her from gaining a sense of worth and agency.

Crucial to being a participant in their community, individuals must learn to read the world in order to write their own chapter within it. In 1987, Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo published a book about literacy that continues to provide insight today, claiming that people must read the world as well as the word: a catchy statement, but also desperately and profoundly true. Paraphrasing these authors, Maria de la Luz Reyes claims that, “Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is *preceded and intertwined with knowledge of the world*,” making it imperative that children are given accurate texts that support and affirm their identity as citizens of this amazingly diverse planet (de la Luz Reyes 251). As human beings, we see story everywhere. We look around the world and create narratives about other people and about ourselves. Before we can learn to read the words on a page, we learn – as we must – to interpret the story that the world is writing about us and about people like us and about people different from us. Children are so perceptive, noticing what is said as well as what is kept silent, so we must work to give them empowering messages. Freire claims that the way “teachers and students read the world...is inextricably linked to forms of pedagogy that can function either to silence and marginalize students or to legitimate their voices in an effort to

empower them as critical and active citizens” (Freire and Macedo 19). Literature must confirm these students’ perspectives and identities in order to give them the liberty to voice their opinions. If the only books available do not represent their life experience and who they define themselves as, then readers feel as if they do not matter, effectively silencing them. Instead, bilingual books can provide children with evidence and examples of how they matter and that the way that they read the world is legitimate.

Quality bilingual books can provide children with the skills necessary to read the world as well as the word and then give them the confidence to write their own stories with themselves as the protagonists. They deserve to learn and to know the truth about the environment in which they live, so books must reflect the fact that they are a part of it and deserve to be there. In this vein, “debemos equipar a los niños con las herramientas de expresión y cuestionamiento de su propia visión del mundo,” [we should equip children with the tools of expression and questioning of their own world vision], providing them with the opportunity to see the world as it is (Slade 88). Minority groups get told time and time again that they do not matter and that they do not have a place in the world. This is absolutely false and must be changed. Seeing themselves in the books they read goes a long way in inspiring children to make their mark on the world. Literature equips them to make connections and empathize with people who are like them as well as those who are different. The power of story is that new tales and new endings are always being written. Because storybooks “constantly evolve to reflect changing values and culture norms,” they can be used to make sure every child sees themselves as part of the story that our world is writing (Kim, Green, and Klein 227). With this power to continually create new stories, there needs to be pressure to write books that validate their experiences and identities as well as enable children to read the world that they live in. For instance, bilingual

children who read books with characters who are like themselves have a clearer sense of identity as well as their strength as individuals and as part of a group. When they are told that the world also functions with multiple languages and cultures, they feel validated and are strong enough to embrace their identity as a bilingual individual with the strength to bring people together.

## **Bridges**

Bilingual children's literature inherently has the unique ability and opportunity to bridge together not only two languages, but also two parts of individuals' lives and identities. Authors and publishers design books of this type to act in this way by "representing the home culture and language with a high degree of authenticity, [and] presenting what is familiar to the children... rather than introducing new worlds (non-Latino worlds) to the children at the same time they are learning to read" because they recognize the power of the connection (Kanellos, Smith, and Higonnet 219). If the child can first look at their home language and experience the story in that way, then they have an advantage for when they try to tackle the book in their second language, matching vocabulary and plot points. Delving into a world they know gives them the confidence to then explore the new world that is connected to it. Bilingual children's books also aid "en la creación de un puente bilingüe y bicultural entre dos edificios: las casas de los estudiantes y la escuela," [in the creation of a bilingual and bicultural bridge between two buildings: students' houses and the school] helping to form a relationship between the two communities (Rodríguez-Valls 59). Books of this type show bilingual students that Spanish is for both at home and at school, letting them feel able to use and explore whatever language they feel more comfortable in at any particular moment. In addition, they create a bridge between what the teachers are trying to teach the students and what the parents at home can do. Oftentimes, parents of Spanish-speaking students learning English do not know English themselves. Therefore, books

with both languages can create a positive reading experience for parents and their children where they can look at both English and Spanish together. They can thus read the book in whatever language they are more comfortable in while also teaching each other new literacy skills in both. Since “schools clearly may not always honor the complexity of students’ lived experiences,” picturebooks can help “to bridge this divide,” bringing in both life knowledge and school knowledge (Ghiso and Campano 51). Reading informs a child about the world, and bilingual books tell them that the world is also bilingual (or multilingual). Seeing their dual-language world in a book reaffirms to them that it is right that their day-to-day life looks like that. For children, the picturebooks represent both English and Spanish, home and school, the world and their life experiences. Bridges like this are highly useful tools that enable children to see how they can safely cross from one side to another while also maintaining the connection between the two.

### **Bilingual Picturebooks**

Because reading aids in establishing a child’s world and inspiring their future, picturebooks act as a key form of support and have the opportunity to influence how children create their identities. They are constantly being used in schools because of their important capacity to teach, explain, and engage children in different ideas and subject areas. For instance, there is strong evidence and support that “picturebooks play a major role in...second language acquisition pedagogy,” making them the perfect tool for young bilingual students (Kümmerling-Meibauer 14). The stories, pictures, and format make both languages accessible for students developing their skills. In addition, what type of books they are exposed to early on not only affects their literacy but also their worldview. Because “children develop their schemata of social norms through their encounters with picturebooks,” it is imperative that authors,

publishers, educators, and parents realize that “negative picturebook images of cultures can stay with children for their entire lives” (Naidoo 306). Picturebooks are often children’s first meaningful encounter with the outside world, and as such, they must be accurate and authentic. They give children the lens through which they will see their community as well as groups of which they are not a part. Because these books are such a significant portion of the school experience, they are given an elevated sense of credibility. One definition of picturebooks “refers to them as ‘social, cultural, historical documents,’” and, as such, they need to be fair, accurate, and liberating (Daly 15). Literature is not supposed to silence its readers; rather it is supposed to free them to figure out who they really are. In this case, that means that picturebooks have a profound obligation show their readers accurate reflections of themselves and portrayals of others. As a result, it is imperative that we continue to work on ensuring that every person is given the recognition and respect they deserve. Beyond simple literacy, bilingual children’s books aim to prove to their readers that they are valuable and do have the power to make a difference in this world using both of their languages.

Specifically, bilingual children’s literature has a fundamental role in literacy education and can be categorized into three types. Nicola Daly lists the three main formats for DLBs – dual language books – as interlingual books, parallel texts, and simultaneous or sequential publication. Interlingual books have the main language (English in this case) interspersed with words from another language (Spanish) (Daly 12). This means that both non-Spanish-speaking and Spanish-speaking readers can enjoy these books, but they do not have quite the same effect as other formats that aid more in identity affirmation and development (Agosto 38). Books of this type can be beautifully done and are still a valid form of bilingual literature, but they are not the focus of this project. The third type, simultaneous or sequential, has the same story told in

separate versions for each language. In this instance, that would mean having the story told completely in English and then the same story told completely in Spanish right after. The second one listed, parallel texts, is the one most studied because it is the most useful and opens up discussion about the validity of language and cultural authenticity.

Parallel books are those that have the same text printed either on the same page or facing pages in the two languages. Most of the books examined in this project have the English text on one page with the same content in Spanish on the next page (Daly 12). This allows readers to refer back and forth between languages according to their skills and piece together the story using both Spanish and English. Combining the familiar with the unknown makes the new language more approachable, inviting exploration as well as opportunity to form connections and ask questions. The books need to maintain the magic of the story in both languages because otherwise the child loses an opportunity to gain not only literacy but also a chance to step into someone else's world. The different perspectives children gain from literature are priceless and therefore must be authentic and stimulating. Overall, bilingual children's literature not only aids in the acquisition of English, but also "the preservation of cultural practices, folklore, and history...[while] enhancing minority children's self esteem...and building a culture of tolerance and resistance to ethnic stereotypes" (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 29). That is a lot of pressure for a children's book, but when done right, they can make a world of difference in a child's life. Books of this type have a unique capacity here to share not only a story, but a culture, a perspective, and a spirit of worth.

### *The Facts*

Publishing companies have the weighty responsibility of finding and distributing quality children's picturebooks that accurately portray the language and culture while also serving as fun



stories that open readers' eyes to a world of possibilities. As a result, some companies were created explicitly for this purpose, and their mission is to provide such books because they realize just how important it is to have culturally and linguistically authentic, appropriate, and accessible children's books. Several noted and popular publishers in the field of bilingual children's books are: Children's Book Press, Lee and Low Books, Piñata Books (Arte Público Press), Cinco Puntos Press, Groundwood Books, and Lectorum Publications (Scholastic) (Alamillo 30; Naidoo 52; Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 29–30). These companies and others have worked to find authors with authentic voices and experiences to share with their readers that promote all of humanity's worth, power, and dignity. While searching for books to provide to the world, "Publishers must consider cultural authenticity, the quality of the translation, and various formatting issues" because these three main factors affect the way a book is enjoyed and internalized (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 24). This requires work and care; work to find and create such stories and care for the children who need to experience them. Many large publishers do not have the time or desire to devote that much effort to an endeavor that often is not seen as important or worthwhile. As a result, many smaller publishing companies work tirelessly to provide their readers with books that teach, reflect, and inspire. There is still work to be done, however, as it is imperative to have a balance of quality and quantity (Naidoo 64). Bilingual children's books can help instill from a young age a sense of pride in their culture and Spanish/English identity. The important thing now is to keep striving to create and provide quality books so that they can soon become the norm.

The Cooperative Children's Book Center, part of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, compiles publishing statistics about multicultural children's literature that reveal some telling numbers. These numbers come from books received by the

CCBC that include those published by and about African/African Americans, American Indians/First Nations, Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans, and Latinos. In their system, the books placed into the Latino category are also divided further into the variety of cultures and heritages that exist under that umbrella term. In an initial review, looking at their data gathered about children's books by and about people of color from 1994-2001 is frightening. The number by and about Latinos ranged from 54-103 of the 4,500-5,500 books published each year. Even looking at the highest end of that spectrum the percentage is alarming; in 1996, only 2.29% of the books published were by or about Latinos. One would think that the number would increase as time went on, but in 2001, only 1.4% of those published were representative of Latinos in some way. Some individuals would look at these statistics and be optimistic about how drastically these numbers could have increased in the 16 years since this data was gathered, but jumping ahead to 2016, neither the overall number of children's books published by and about people of color nor the number written by or about Latinos has improved that much. Of the 3,400 books received by the CCBC, 101 were written by Latinos and 166 were about them. Looking at just those books published in the United States, the numbers get a little smaller: 2.94% of the 3,200 were written by Latinos and 4.91% were written about them (Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), "Children's Books by and About People of Color"). Additionally, the two subcategories of "by" and "about" are not mutually exclusive. A book can be by an author of color while also having a main character of color, or an author of color can write a book without such a character. Also, an author of color, for example an African American, can write a book with a Latino main character. Clearly the categories can be mixed and matched in any number of ways. An analysis of the year 2014 shows how drastically these subtle differences can affect the statistics. Based on a total of 3,500 books, 66 of them were

about Latino characters, while 36 were written and/or illustrated by Latinos. Adding to the confusion, 23 books were created by Latinos, but they did not have any Latino characters or significant cultural ideas (Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC), “2014 Statistics”). Looking at all of this data that the CCBC has been able to compile and analyze, it is clear that these numbers nowhere near represent the population of Latinos living in the United States, which was recorded at 17.6% of the nation as of July 1, 2015 (“Hispanic Americans: Census Facts”).

The simple fact of the matter is that we need more books. We need more books written by Latinos, about Latinos, for Latinos. Not only is there significant pedagogical research about literacy and identity to back this theory up, the statistics found by the CCBC described above should be enough to startle anyone. It is clear that “with the increasing cultural diversity of students in American schools today, we as language arts educators face the need to provide literary experiences that reflect the multitude of backgrounds from which the children in our schools come,” but the resources are hard to find (Yokota 156). With the ever-growing minority populations here in the United States, the book publication statistics do not match the demographics. Teachers and librarians know the value of having literature reflect the lives of the kids they are working with, but they still struggle to find and acquire quality children’s books to offer them. A significant amount of research shows the connection between literature, language, and identity, but “as we look more and more to literature to help our bilingual children develop critical reading and thinking skills, we do not have the variety of literature in their native language that can help them achieve this end” (Gonzalez-Jensen 208–209). As a result, it is imperative that educators, librarians, and parents are cognizant of and understand this vital connection that can be fostered between multilingual children and books that reflect their

worldview. The more books that are created and thus shared means a greater number of children who have the opportunity to have their identity and experience affirmed. In a childhood where reading is encouraged and enjoyed, the positive effects on self-esteem and literacy are incalculable.

### **Language Capital**

As one of the social forces that influences the way in which people see, use, and experience the world, language capital forces itself to the top of the agenda when examining the way children are taught to read the world through the written word. At the most basic level, language capital is a form of cultural capital and refers to someone's dominance of language. The Spanish-speaking population continues to increase, and "Globalization has pushed language onto the political agenda as a central symbolic and practical aspect of the struggle over how American society will adapt to its growing engagement with the larger world" (Sonntag 20). The power struggle between Spanish and English is becoming more and more prevalent as globalization becomes a hot topic of discussion, and our world is simultaneously more connected and more divided than ever. All of the technology we have today allows us to connect with people we never would have had the chance to before. This ability, however, leaves us with a greater responsibility to respect others and their perspectives. Language in particular is one such area through which this must be carried out, as we cannot "ignore the way language may either confirm or deny the life histories and experiences of the people who use it" (Freire and Macedo 149). When bilingual children with Spanish as their first language only hear and read English at schools and in libraries, they receive the message that Spanish is not as good as English. In the United States, English has more social capital in that it is seen as the 'main' language and people must know it in order to navigate society. All people are expected to understand English, and

instead of celebrating someone's bilingualism, their accent or confusion is scorned. The limited availability of books written in both Spanish and English denies the value of the life experiences of children who live in a bilingual world. It can be a powerful turning point for children when they realize that the world embraces their perspective and welcomes who they are as people because of the language skills and identity they have to bring to the table.

The ability to communicate has an inherent value, but it can only be fully realized if people believe that they have a perspective or idea worthy enough to share. Communication requires confidence, and it is the act of believing in the power of the ideas behind your words. In the United States, how well you can understand, read, speak, and write English is an indication of how much influence you are able to have. Freire writes that "Language is the means to a critical consciousness, which, in turn, is the means of conceiving of change and of making choices to bring about further transformations," explaining how language capital dictates how much someone participates in society (Freire and Macedo xv). Sadly, if an individual cannot speak the language of the place he is in, then he cannot speak up about what he thinks is true and good or what needs to change because his ideas will not be heard or respected. Respect is key. When someone feels as if they are being appreciated and heard, their feelings are legitimized and their identity affirmed. Language enables them to see and share the possibilities of a better world because they are able to communicate how they fit into that world. Reading books written in Spanish and English shows bilingual children a representation of their world, therefore encouraging and enabling them to communicate the possible transformations they envision. The side-by-side format "ayudaría a los hijos a crear una imagen de sus padres como un referente lingüístico-cultural," [would help the children create an image of their parents as linguistic-cultural references], allowing them to share language capital with their parents (Rodríguez-Valls

60). The child can help their parents with the English while the parents have the ability to share the beauty of their mother tongue with their child. This sharing of knowledge fosters people's self-worth as well as encourages them to share their voices with the wider community.

However, this only happens when people's stories are heard and respected, and in many cases, this does not happen because of English's dominance in the United States.

As the language with more social capital, schools in the United States teach English by defining it as the method of communication necessary to succeed. When "the central goals underlying federal bilingual education legislation are to develop the English language and to help language minority children make the transition to an English-only curriculum," it is not really a bilingual education (Pease-Alvarez and Winsler 509). This sink or swim method employed to get students on an all-English track as soon as possible negates the most basic purpose of education: fostering a healthy sense of self-esteem that inspires children to believe that they can accomplish their goals. While this may sound idealistic, this feeling is the foundation of success. It is in school where children learn to how to think as well as how the world thinks. A bilingual education is supposed to teach students to value both the languages, where neither is more important than the other, and each has a unique capacity to communicate part of their life experiences. In many cases, however, the dominant language, English, "structures and regulates not only what *is* to be taught, but *how* it is to be taught and evaluated," only benefiting those in power (Freire and Macedo 14). For example, many bilingual children are placed into bilingual education programs that try to get them to assimilate to English as soon as possible so that they can be placed with the 'regular' kids. Here their knowledge of Spanish is seen as a disadvantage and, sadly, many English-only speakers treat it that way. A deficit theory of learning has been nurtured, and instead of being seen as Spanish proficient, these children are seen as English

deficient. This distinction not only sets them apart from their peers, but makes them feel lesser. To truly empower them, the children's skills must be appreciated and used in order to spur them towards more learning.

### **Funds of Knowledge**

A child's first language has power because it sets the tone for their attitude towards reading and learning. Because children "have already acquired the ability to use language in important and effective ways within their family and community," it is imperative that schools utilize that knowledge when creating literacy programs (Naqvi et al. 502). Educators cannot simply ignore that the children have experience working with their Spanish language and they have to utilize their funds of knowledge if they want them to succeed. Bilingual books are a good way to bridge the two languages because they allow readers to "read the book first in the language they know best (L1), and then reread in the language they are learning (L2), with greater comprehension than if they attempted to read it first in L2" (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 29). This gives autonomy to the readers and tells them that their knowledge of Spanish is recognized and valuable. They are given the chance and the choice to decide which language they want to read first. However, this is not always the case, and many students "aprenden a hablar, leer y escribir en inglés completando actividades que no están contextualizadas ni enriquecidas con las experiencias culturales concebidas en su lengua materna, el español," [learn to speak, read and write in English completing activities that are neither contextualized or enriched with the cultural experiences conceived in their mother tongue, Spanish] thus dismissing the fact that they have any background knowledge of language or literacy at all (Rodríguez-Valls 57). The power of the first language, Spanish, is that skills can be carried over into the second language. Therefore, dual language books have an amazing

capacity to spur children forward into a love of reading as well as into acquiring English skills. Educators must tell their students through the books, activities, and lessons they use that their experience and identity matters and is a unique part of them that allows for deeper thought and the analysis of literature through an important lens. With this, they must also leave the discussion open to both languages so that students can express themselves however they choose.

### *Code Switching and Translanguaging*

Code-switching and translanguaging must be defined so that their scope and reach may not be underestimated in this journey towards understanding the power and use of utilizing Spanish and English together. Code-switching is when an individual switches between two (or more) languages while talking. Many people who hear others code-switching assume “that those who do this must not have very good command of either or both of the languages involved” because they believe that using both Spanish and English implies that they are not strong enough in either language to use just one; however, “the strongest bilinguals also tend to be the most prolific code-switchers” because they have the knowledge to use both languages simultaneously (Sayer 104). In addition, the belief that one language is better than two does not make sense, as the more languages someone knows, the more people they can communicate and connect with in their community as well as around the world. Code-switching is also the method many bilinguals use to define and show their unique perspective and how they live. There are three main forms – “borrowing words, switching from one language to another between or even within sentences, and mixing the grammar of one language with the words of another” – and this combination of languages should not be looked down upon just because it is not regulated (97). Spanglish is how some people choose to express themselves and start to use English for their own purposes instead of how the dominant society tells them to use it. When we tell people that



the way they speak is not valid with the books we give them, we not only discourage them from finding the pleasure and power in reading, we silence their voices, ideas, and ability to make a difference. Translanguaging is “the idea that emergent bilinguals regularly and naturally use all of their languages to make meaning in the world,” and bilingual books act in cooperation with this theory (Pacheco and Miller 533). Having both Spanish and English in the same book allows readers to use whichever of their languages they need to in order to comprehend the story and connect to it. Bilingual children cannot be restricted to using one language at a time because that is not how they view the world. English and Spanish are mixed together and therefore the books they read should be as well. Literature reflects the world, and if children cannot see their world reflected back at them, they do not gain the confidence to step forward and claim the world using all of their languages.

Given the space and acceptance to use Spanish and English in their own unique way, a bilingual individual not only feels valued, but also as if they can contribute something new and powerful to the conversation. For example, in a study that examined children’s responses to books in literature circles with their peers, the students practiced translanguaging. Since “they were able to switch their languages freely when responding to books and answering peers’ comments, ...[they had] opportunities to explore diverse perspectives about the books they read” and feel comfortable doing so (Kim 332). They could use what they knew and whichever language made the most sense to them in order to gain literary understanding. Instead of being forced to use English to interpret the book, a bilingual book gives children the choice and the chance to make use of both of their languages to draw conclusions, connect with the characters, and share their ideas with others. The switching between languages ensures that an individual can communicate exactly what they are trying to say without their ideas getting lost in

translation. For instance, bilinguals “use code-switching predominantly to cover a lexical gap of a single word or phrase because it is more salient” and includes the cultural context they need (Sayer 104). Bilingual individuals utilize code-switching and translanguaging because each language has a different purpose and sometimes Spanish makes more sense than English. Certain ideas and phrases lose their meaning and history when translated, especially when someone has no connection to them. As a result, people use a combination of Spanish and English in order to better reflect their thoughts and beliefs as well as the world they live in.

### **Identity: Seeing Themselves and Their Culture**

Societal mirrors play an important role in how children develop their identity and find their place in the world. Books not only open portals to unknown worlds that allow readers to step through and explore, but also provide worlds that allow them to practice for real life. A common metaphor used in the realm of children’s literature is that of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. The basic principle is that children need books that act as mirrors in which to see themselves reflected; windows to look through and see other cultures, people, and situations; and sliding glass doors to open, step through, and make those connections between the familiar and the unknown. Rudine Sims Bishop, the major proponent of this theory, explains that because “Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us...[reading] becomes a means of self-affirmation” where readers search for characters and situations that are familiar (Bishop 1). Books allow people to explore plotlines that align with or disregard reality as well as develop the skill of empathy. Dual language books are so important because they take one of the most crucial elements of bilingual children’s lives – their languages - and present it to them in the literature. That self-affirmation can empower readers when they are able to look in the mirror and see their voices, faces, and cultures celebrated and respected. Not only does it

foster self-worth, but “positive images of their culture in children’s literature...[can] assist with their ethnic identity development, provide positive role models, and support richer connections with the text” (Naidoo 304). When bilingual books act as mirrors, they do so much more than provide a child with a fun story. Bilingual children need those literary role models to show them that they and their Spanish-English world do have a place in society. These sorts of connections can inspire children to continue reading as well as convert the lessons they have learned from books into actions in the real world. For instance, “Latino-themed literature...can provide opportunities for admiration of the familiar images in the literary mirror, and even occasions for students to dance in front of that mirror” (229). The fact that books are written in both their languages and can bridge those two parts of their identity is life-changing. Once they see that these mirrors exist in bilingual children’s literature, kids begin to understand their importance in the world. They *can* be protagonists of a story, where existing is not enough; they have to act, they have to dance.

Humanity treats language as identity because it undoubtedly defines our existence and differentiates between people. “Discourse is a sort of ‘identity kit’” because communication explains humanity’s way of being in the world (Martínez-Roldán 499). Bilingual children do not naturally see the world only in terms of English; instead, the world for them is an intricate dialog and balance between Spanish and English. Therefore it is imperative that literature portrays this combination, affirms their form of discourse, and reflects their way of life. “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part” – something that cannot be allowed to happen (Bishop 1). Seeing accurate representations of their words and their faces, on the other hand, gives children

the opportunity to share their perspectives. They feel able and welcome to show off their heritage and language to others as part of the greater community. Gloria Anzaldúa, the author of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, passionately claims that “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (59). Words define who we are, and literature is a medium in which we can share words. Bilingual children’s literature is one such mirror that allows people like Anzaldúa to see their language reflected back at them. All children need this reflection and “need to hold a book in their hands that feels true... a book in which they will find themselves, their faces... a book in which to land and rest and then to dream” if they are going to discover their identities and show the world who they are (Naidoo 321). Bilingual books have the power to do this, giving people pride in themselves, the courage to share ideas, and the opportunity to connect with others. Reading opens the world to people and can teach them that they can write their own stories.

## **Conclusion**

By examining the world today and the way language functions within it and then exploring the power of reading and the bridges formed by picturebooks, the fact that quality bilingual children’s literature is a necessity in our world is evident. Books have so much influential power in our lives and can help inspire people to see their worth and express themselves and their ideas. In the case of bilingual children, it is crucial that the books they read reflect their reality, not only in the characters, but also the language. The combination of Spanish and English is what can form important bridges that lead to the discovery and affirmation of their identity. All of the research and background information about education, literacy, language, and identity put forth in this first section inspired the undertaking of the next:

an analysis of a selection of bilingual children's books. With both quantity and quality an issue, Section 2 aims to illuminate the key components of a bilingual picturebook and explore the power and possibilities they provide for children when written well.

## **Section 2: Analysis of Children's Books**

### **Methodology**

#### *Picking the Pool of Books*

For this section, I decided to look at twenty different children's picturebooks and analyze them according to my research on identity affirming bilingual literature in order to see where the field currently is and what progress can still be made for the future. The initial criteria included human, as opposed to animal, main characters and the side-by-side format with English and Spanish text. As the search continued, however, four interlingual (English with Spanish words interspersed) texts were also included because their other qualities made them worthy of analysis. On November 1, 2016, Tiffany Hebb (my sponsor) and I traveled to the Eagle, Glendale, and Central branches of the Indianapolis Public Library, where we looked at their collections of bilingual children's books. In this initial examination, we explored how the books were shelved; the various topics offered; the font, size, style, color, and placement of the text; and the publishers represented. I also searched the collection of the Putnam County Public Library, also in Indiana, on my own to see what a smaller library had to offer in terms of bilingual texts.

In the end, the twenty books chosen were selected for a variety of reasons, explained as follows. To make the initial cut, I had to have either read about the books in my research or found them at the library during the aforementioned trips. I tried to include well-known Latino authors as well as a fairly wide range of publishing dates. If I had not heard of the books or their creators in my initial research, some were picked simply for their at-first-glance estimate of quality made when I saw them at the library. There are repeat authors on the list, either because I saw their books recommended several times or because they offered different styles for the

analysis. In addition, I tried to gather a mixture of themes as well as complexity so that a more complete analysis could be made. The final list, along with how I found each book and my personal ratings, can be found in Appendix B.

### *Tools Used to Analyze*

Each book was read for general story quality in addition to cultural and linguistic value as a bilingual text because “with multicultural literature, evaluation of the piece must include the criteria for good literature, as well as the criteria for cultural consciousness” (Yokota 158). The children (and adults) reading them must enjoy the books if their identities are going to be affirmed. However, this gets complicated when researchers have slightly different ideas of what criteria should be included to examine literature of this sort. For instance, one article looks directly at bilingual books and claims that it is important to look for: a bilingual text, use of authentic language, authentic cultural representatives through the text and illustrations, and an insider perspective (Alamillo and Arenas 60). More generally, another viewpoint declares that there are six aspects to keep in mind when analyzing children’s books: genre; topic; cover and body; credibility of authors, illustrators, and translators; illustrations; and theme. Extrapolating this to bilingual books, the topic can either be general or culture-specific, the illustrations should not be stereotypical or culturally inappropriate, and the theme can be categorized as promoting multiculturalism, bilingualism, or neutral (Huang and Chen 135–138). Defining their analysis still differently, some schools looked at the books they were purchasing for their collections with four broader categories: “(1) relevancy to thematic and individual needs; (2) quality of literature; (3) attractiveness, accuracy, and quality of binding; and (4) that the material not be stereotypic” (Allen 447). All of these elements of a children’s book listed here are important, and should be taken into consideration.

In an effort to combine all of these components, an evaluation sheet offered by Naidoo in *Celebrating Cuentos: Promoting Latino Children's Literature and Literacy in Classrooms and Libraries* was utilized to compare and contrast the twenty books chosen for this project.<sup>1</sup> The general categories included: book characteristics, characterization in the narrative and illustrations, setting and plot, theme, cultural authenticity (stereotypes), and illustrations (Naidoo 369–372). Within these categories, I made sure to look at the treatment of the Spanish and English texts, the accuracy of the translations and cultural representations, and the importance of each book for the identity affirmation of bilingual children.

### **Analysis**

*Walking into any library, I stop and linger, savoring the familiarity of the bookshelves towering above me and the people moving around me, reading, learning, exploring. Everyone deserves to feel like they belong somewhere, and the library is a place where people can find those books that teach, encourage, transport, inspire, move, and welcome them.*

#### *Book Characteristics*

*When looking for my next adventure, I scan the shelves, waiting for a book to jump out at me. A fun or intriguing title or cover grabs my attention, and I pull it out to explore further.*

The first level of analysis asks about the book's identity as well as those of its creators. "Many cultural insiders believe that it is difficult to tell stories about things that one has not experienced firsthand," and all but two (*My Way/A mi manera: A Margaret and Margarita Story* and *The Cucuy Stole My Cascarones/El Coco me robó los cascarones*) of the 20 books chosen were written by Latino authors, allowing for those authentic insider perspectives to be shared (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 25). In addition, only four were interlingual texts; the remaining 16 were written in a side-by-side English and Spanish format, which enabled an analysis of the

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<sup>1</sup> To view a blank evaluation sheet, see Appendix B.



translation and treatment of the Spanish language. This format really allows the culture and language to shine through the text because, if done accurately and appropriately, the two languages are equal and respected. More than half of the authors directly addressed this issue by including a glossary, pronunciation guide, notes, or combination of these three; however, the others did not have any of these supplemental features. Also in this section was the space to note whether the book received any of the following children's book awards: the Américas Award, the Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award, and the Pura Belpré Award. The Américas Award was created "to encourage and commend" the creators of "quality children's and young adult books that portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the United States," and *The Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos* was an honorable mention in 2009 ("Américas Award"). The second, the Tomás Rivera Award, "honors authors and illustrators who create literature that depicts the Mexican American experience," and the book *Tomás and the Library Lady* won in 1998 ("Tomás Rivera Book Award"). The third, the Pura Belpré Award, is given to "a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth," and five of the 20 books chosen were given either an honorable mention or awarded the medal ("Welcome to the Pura Belpré Award Home Page!"). *Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia* and *My Colors, My World/Mis colores, mi mundo* each won the honor for illustration in 1996 and 2008, respectfully, while *The Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos* picked up the honor for both narrative and illustration in 2009. Winning the medal for illustration was *Book Fiesta!* in 2010 and *Niño Wrestles the World* in 2014. While they do not honor all the quality bilingual literature out there, these awards simply highlight those that are especially good mirrors for Latino children and examples of the types of books needed.

### *Characterization in Narrative and Illustrations*

*As I read the first few pages, I am searching for something. It is imperative that I connect to the characters, finding a best friend, an ally, or a role model with whom to share in their adventure.*

The characterization in bilingual books is especially important because in order to continue investing in the story, readers must connect with and relate to the characters. In addition, the characters in bilingual books often have an even greater responsibility placed upon them to portray their culture and identity accurately, without stereotypes or exaggeration. However, "characters are to be regarded as distinct individuals whose lives are rooted in their culture, no matter how minor their role in the story, avoiding the practice of including minorities to fulfill a 'quota' of sorts," and must be fully developed people with emotions and lives that transcend their language (Yokota 160). The evaluation form takes both the narrative and illustrations into account when it asks about gender, stereotyped roles, disabilities, the "Latin Look" (physical appearance), age, extended family, and emotions. *Book Fiesta!* is the most all-encompassing book evaluated in this group in terms of those categories. Pat Mora crafts a tale where children celebrate both El día de los niños and El día de los libros and tell where and with whom they share stories. While there is not a main character that is extensively developed, this simply allows any reader to place themselves directly into the story. Every race is represented and people of all ages and backgrounds come together over reading. The illustrations are whimsical and inviting, and inspire readers to join in the fun that books provide. As another example, the characters in *Grandpa's Magic Tortilla* are developed as unique and relatable people who are grounded in their heritage. Alejandra, Daniel, and Benjamín's grandpa makes tortillas for breakfast, they share in the work on the farm, and the family has a strong relationship. This book had the longest text of the ones analyzed, allowing the readers to really

delve into the siblings' story and find themselves invested in the outcome of the magic tortilla. No matter what the plot is, a good character can make or break a bilingual book because readers recognize their authenticity and heart immediately. Reading a book should feel like finding a friend.

### *Setting, Plot, and Theme*

*The story needs to feel real, and I wait for a book to draw me into its pages to the point where I no longer hear the world around me and instead am lost in the journey, walking alongside the main characters.*

The setting lays the foundation for the story and introduces readers to the plot as well as the theme. The goal is for all of these elements to work together to create an intriguing story to which people can relate. Most of the books chosen for analysis had a contemporary setting and either took place in the United States or the location was not addressed in order to make them applicable to children today. The three that were set before 1980 did so because they tell the story of a historical figure or share the author's childhood experiences, making them valuable to look at for their thematic contributions. Two of the books, *Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia* and *Dalia's Wondrous Hair/El cabello maravilloso de Dalia*, take place in Mexico and Cuba, respectfully. This adds to the story's authenticity and invites readers to explore places they may either know well or not know anything about. On the other hand, the books that do not address the location allow readers to extend the story to a place with which they are familiar and comfortable. For instance, in *My Way/A mi manera: A Margaret and Margarita Story*, there is no indication of where Margaret and Margarita are. The two girls are simply best friends who do things in their own way, except when they like to do them both ways, together. The author only requires that the readers step into a world of friendship and ownership, opening up the interpretation and the connections that can be made.

In general, however, the plot has the power to narrow or focus the theme and therefore who can relate to a book. The evaluation sheet asks if the books deal with issues especially pertinent to bilinguals, such as immigration, language barriers, racism, etc. These more specific plotlines have the advantage of being able to present these certain mirrors to children, but the disadvantage of not being a story to which every reader can personally connect. Yet when done well and authentically, these types of books can give Latinos autonomy and power, as well as provide role models for bilingual children who may also be facing these issues. In the pool of books chosen for this analysis, three of the 20 focus on these kind of issues. Addressing English's dominance as well as the existence of migrant workers, *Tomás and the Library Lady* tells the story of how Tomás visits the library where a librarian helps him to find books he can read and encourages him to teach her some Spanish words. Tomás, a storyteller, discovers that the library is a place for him and his Spanish and realizes that he gets to take his stories with him to both Texas and Iowa, where his parents are migrant workers. Even though I did not have to deal with this language barrier in my own life, I – and therefore other readers as well – could still relate to Tomás' discovery of the power of books. In another vein, the book *Waiting for Papá/Esperando a Papa* explores the topic of immigration with a young boy named Beto waiting for his father to be able to come to the United States from El Salvador after he could not initially get a visa. Then turning to the end of that timeline, *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre* tells the story of a girl who learns that her mom is in fact not an alien – as she mistakenly saw on her resident alien card – but about to become a citizen of the United States after immigrating there. Although I have no family members who recently immigrated here, I was still able to relate the young girl's identity crisis as well as the family relationship portrayed by the author. These three examples respectfully and authentically share specific instances where bilingual children may

feel caught between two worlds and provide stories where the characters act positively. While this gives them the opportunity to see that there are other people like them in the world, books with these types of plots do not reflect their everyday experiences.

The theme the author chooses provides them with an enormous opportunity to create both mirrors and windows to the experience of Spanish speakers or bilinguals. It is important that the topics of Latino-specific holidays, foods, etc. are not overrepresented because the children reading them want to see that their lives are not just reduced to these few features; they are more than el día de los muertos, piñatas, or las tortillas. So because some people lament “that traditionally children’s literature about Latinos has mainly focused on folktales, food, and customs rather than the daily experiences of Latino children in the United States,” the books chosen for this analysis include a wide variety of themes that are accessible to all (Naidoo 61). The evaluation sheet breaks the category down into six different areas – Celebrations/Festivals, Immigration/Migrant Workers, Family Traditions, Foods/Customs, Growing Up & Gaining Confidence, Important Latino Figure/Role Model – while also including a space for Other. For the purposes of this analysis, family relationships were also included as part of the Family Traditions section. The two most represented categories were Celebrations/Festivals with five books and Family Traditions/Relationships with six. The rest were pretty evenly spread out. Important to note, however, was that although the Latino culture – whether it appeared in theme, language, characters, or illustrations – could clearly be seen in each of these books, any child could relate to them. Some books were about specifically Latino celebrations or foods, but the majority of the books addressed everyday topics like playing with siblings, a school recital, a birthday, reading books, exploring their home, and visiting grandparents. Most notably, the book *Finding the Music: En pos de la música* does an incredible job of telling a family’s story while

sharing the beauty of their Latino identity. In the book, Reyna accidentally knocks her grandfather's vihuela (a guitar-like instrument) off the wall at the restaurant her mother owns because customers are being loud while she is trying to read. She then goes on a quest to get it fixed before her mom finds out. Along the way, she meets people who give her a picture of her grandpa with his mariachi band, his old sombrero, and a record of his band playing. By the end, Reyna appreciates the noise and the music of her grandfather's past and her heritage. It does not feel as if the book is forcing the fact that Reyna and her family are Latino; rather, it is simply the reality that she lives. Instead, the family theme shines through and enables any reader to connect to the story in some way – exactly what a good book should do.

#### *Cultural and Linguistic Authenticity*

*The book must be accurate, yes, but more than that it must be authentic. The story, the language, the culture – all must come from the heart.*

A highly debated topic in bilingual children's literature, cultural authenticity encompasses everything from the plot and theme to how the book presents and represents its characters. In general, it has to do with people's responses to the book. "Discussions about cultural authenticity typically revolve around the right to write—who has the right to tell the stories of a culture" – because the storyteller has the power to change the way the story is perceived and the meaning behind it (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 25). The hope is that anyone can write a bilingual book if they respect both languages, the culture about which they write, and have a story they want to share. However, when someone is not a member of the culture which they are writing about, they need to take extra care in how they present the story; their point of view automatically steers readers in a certain direction. Publishers of bilingual books are also cognizant of this fact, as Children's Book Press said: "By no means do we feel that people can't

produce successful stories and art about experiences other than their own, but it is our guiding principle to ensure that our books are culturally authentic, sensitive, and accurate" (32). The main goal about which book creators must agree is that bilingual books must provide children with role models who represent their realities and inspire them to make a difference in their world. In this analysis, some of the characters that felt most real were Niño in *Niño Wrestles the World* and Lupita in *Lupita's First Dance/El primer baile de Lupita* because of the way they were unapologetically themselves as well as relatable. Niño is a young boy with a wild imagination who fights some traditional characters *lucha libre* style, a type of professional wrestling. It turns out, however, that his little sisters are his most worthy opponents – something any sibling understands! Similarly, when Lupita's dance partner sprains his ankle and cannot perform, she decides that she has worked too hard to miss out on this moment to dance in front of an audience and goes out on stage alone. Lupita basks in the spotlight and feels like a star, getting lost in the music and her imagination. Both of these characters have the opportunity – in everyday moments – to inspire readers to explore and participate in their surroundings while being themselves. Their authentic emotions and responses resonate with readers and allow them to see the possibilities for their own lives.

As part of cultural authenticity, bilingual picturebooks must also be linguistically accurate, authentic, and affirming because we connect with other human beings through language. Language is a major component of our identity, and "Language is also culture...[as well as] knowledge itself" (Freire and Macedo 53). As such, it is imperative that it is treated with respect, and its power must be acknowledged, especially in literature. Children need to be able to read these books and find their experience validated. Often that means sharing the beauty and reality of the Spanish language. When done well, bilingual books can communicate to their

readers not only the surface-level story, but also the message that Spanish and English can and do coexist. However, "In some instances, the Spanish version of the text is printed in an illegible font, italicized, and/or produced in a color that is difficult to read against the page background" (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 27). Books with these issues are counterproductive to the cause of helping bilingual children find their mirrors in literature. Flaws such as these reinforce the idea that Spanish is a lesser language and that people who speak Spanish do not have a place in the world. When choosing the books for this analysis, the placement of the Spanish text was definitely a consideration. In all of the side-by-side formatted books, the English text came before the Spanish, but there were no other blatant differences between them. In the interlingual texts, the Spanish words were often italicized, but this did not seem to affect their readability. Additionally, glossaries, pronunciation guides, and/or author notes were included in 11 of the 20 books in order to assist readers in their comprehension of the story. The books chosen all treat the Spanish language with respect because the creators understand the necessity of having authentic and affirming literature for children.

The language utilized not only dictates how readers understand the story, but also guides their responses and how the book affects people. As a result, translation is a major concern for bilingual books. The translation cannot match word for word because then it does not leave room for the meaning behind the story to shine through. "A translator is not an interactive dictionary—he or she is a mediator between peoples, between literary traditions," and needs to have an extensive knowledge of not only both languages, but the different cultures as well (Naidoo and Lopez-Robertson 34). This mediation is meant to bring readers of all backgrounds together around a beautifully written story in whatever language they read it in. Sadly, it is often the case that the Spanish version of the story is badly translated, with grammar, spelling, or



punctuation mistakes. Therefore the book is not truly bilingual anymore. To be bilingual, the story in each language needs to be crafted carefully, not only for content, but for readability, flow, and the nuances that exist in each. “Diego (2007) suggests, ‘The work of a translator is to build a bridge—a sound, sleek, and smooth bridge that perfectly, and seamlessly, connects the book in question with a new group of readers’” because someone should not be able to tell in which language the story was first written (26). If this happens, not only will there be a bridge between readers and the two languages, but also a bridge to young readers’ futures, showing them where they have the opportunity to go and who they have the power to become. Of the books chosen for this analysis, eight of them had translators who were different from the author. Because they took this level of care to ensure linguistic authenticity, their books read smoothly in Spanish and English. This smoothness shows readers that both languages are important and valued. Bilingual readers can then feel affirmed in their linguistic identity, whether that is defined by English, Spanish, or a mixture.

### *Illustrations*

*Flipping through the pages, I look for depictions of real places and real people. I want to enjoy the story with all of my senses, appreciating the author’s craft through their words, images, and feelings the book shares with me.*

As a concluding consideration, the evaluation form asks specifically about the illustrations because before children can read, they look at the pictures. In bilingual books, the images are that much more important because of the way they play a role in helping readers see themselves and affirm their experiences. “Positive illustrations can ‘make children feel respected and included,’” so it is necessary to look at how the illustrations functioned within the story as well as if they included any cultural ‘props’ or stereotypes (Huang and Chen 134). When children do not see characters like themselves or familiar settings in the books they read,

their sense of identity is undermined, and they have trouble finding where they fit into the world's narrative. Maya Christina Gonzalez, the author and illustrator of *My Colors, My World/Mis colores, mi mundo*, declares proudly that "We [Latinos] belong everywhere. Our face is important. It is a mark of who we are and where we come from" (Alamillo and Arenas 58). Gonzalez decided to become an author and illustrator because she could not find books with her face in them when she was younger, and this book includes an author's note that shares how the little girl in the story is meant to be her. In this story, a young girl explores her desert world to find the colors within it, learning to appreciate where she lives and what she sees – her worldview. Similarly, the book *Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia* was created in response to a desire to see her life experiences shared and affirmed. Carmen Lomas Garza painted each picture in the book from her memories of growing up in Kingsville, Texas, right near the border of Mexico, and then turned them into a picturebook. For each of these authors, the illustrations they created provided them with a unique opportunity to create their own mirrors. For many readers, the pictures may be what they remember best, so it is imperative that bilingual picturebooks provide images that reflect reality.

## **Conclusion**

Reading the 20 books in this selection provided a brief glimpse into the quality and availability of bilingual picturebooks, thus illuminating the reality of what still needs to be done. In summary, when done well, the side-by-side format with the English and Spanish provides learning opportunities in addition to the underlying message that the two languages are equally beautiful. Readers should be able to relate to the characters as individuals and recognize themselves and their experiences within the story. In addition, contemporary stories set in the United States that revolve around everyday plotlines allow for interpretation, ownership, and the

opportunity to bring two worlds together. Everyone has a right to write these types of books, but only if there is respect. The insider perspective, however, is very valuable and shows readers and authors alike that they are not alone. Furthermore, the books should not perpetuate stereotypes, instead promoting positive images and the awareness that bilingual children deserve to see themselves in literature. These essential components of bilingual picturebooks are taken a step further and explored by librarians and authors in the next section. The interviewed individuals bring these concepts closer to home as they explain how they personally interact with bilingual books and express a need for more stories that provide a mirror which shows readers their dignity and worth.

## **Section 3: Interviews**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of conducting interviews was to gain firsthand knowledge of what authors, teachers, and librarians are currently struggling with when trying to create, teach, or find bilingual books to use with children. The research I have done has given me a comprehensive background of all the nuances involved in writing, finding, and analyzing books of this sort, but I hoped that conversations with these people would provide me with personal knowledge of individuals putting these ideas into action in reality. I also believed that these interviews would add another layer of depth to my project, allowing me to show just how important children's literature is out in the world by having the everyday people I chose breathe life into the theories and concepts I have been examining.

### **Methodology**

#### *General: Process and Procedure*

I reached out to each prospective candidate through email, having already met them or provided an introduction, and explained what the premise of my thesis was. After receiving an affirmative answer in response to their willingness to participate, time slots were scheduled for the month of January. Ideally all of the interviews would have been conducted in person, but distance restricted that objective. Therefore I offered the options of a phone call or email as well. For both Amy Friedman's and Janet Spaulding's interviews I traveled to the Central Branch of the Indianapolis Public Library. After receiving their permission, I recorded our conversations to on my laptop using Audacity. Each of the remaining three interviews (Lulu Delacre, Jessica Moore, and Melissa Reyes) was conducted over the phone, during which, again after asking permission, I recorded our discussions using an app called Record My Call. The

purpose of recording the interviews was to ensure that I did not miss any part of their answers or insight.

To begin the discussion, I provided a quick overview of my project so that they would know where I was coming from as well as what work I had already done on the topic. I then dived into the questions<sup>2</sup>, starting with having them explain their background and elaborate on how and why they got to be where they are today. From there I jumped around my list of questions depending on where the conversation took us. At the end of each interview I thanked them for their time and perspective, promising to send them the final copy of my thesis that they could read if they were interested. If necessary, I followed up with them via email.

#### *Who*

In total, I interviewed five people – three individuals who work at a library and two children’s book authors – to gain a variety of perspectives. I initially met Amy Friedman via the Indianapolis Public Library Ask a Librarian email when she responded to my query. She then offered Jessica Moore and Janet Spaulding’s names to me as other sources of information. Claudia Mills (1<sup>st</sup> reader) introduced me to Lulu Delacre, one of her author friends, and Rebecca Alexander (2<sup>nd</sup> reader) connected me with Melissa Reyes, one of her former students. Introductions for each of these individuals in alphabetical order are below.

Lulu Delacre is the author and illustrator of many books (bilingual, Spanish, and English) for children, including *Arroz con leche: Popular Songs and Rhymes from Latin America* (1989) and *How Far Do You Love Me?* (2013). Born in Puerto Rico and now living in the United States, she started writing for her daughter and continues to write because she has something to say and wants to share her culture and heritage with the world.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C for a full list of the questions.

Amy Friedman is a Children's Librarian working as the head of the Learning Curve (children's department) at the Central Branch of the Indianapolis Public Library. She had worked in a library for a while before getting her master's degree in Library Science, making it an easy transition. The Learning Curve strives to incorporate pedagogical input as well as technology into the library experience for children.

Jessica Moore is the Immigration Outreach Specialist at the Indianapolis Public Library. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Spanish and also has a master's degree in International Relations. She previously worked in the Indianapolis Public School System with the ESL and bilingual education programs and now works to develop and implement multicultural initiatives at the library.

Melissa Reyes is an author and educator who went to school for an Environmental Justice degree but had always had teaching in the back of her mind. Eventually she decided to earn her teaching credentials and became an elementary school teacher. She wrote *I am Sausal Creek* (2015) after she saw a need for accessible social studies material in her students' curriculum. Although she is of Puerto Rican heritage, she did not grow up speaking Spanish, and her book is part of her efforts to connect to family history and her identity.

Janet Spaulding is the Collection Development Librarian for the Indianapolis Public Library. Noting that it was very cliché, she said that she has always loved books and therefore decided to go to library school. She began her career in the circulation department, next transitioning to a position as a Children's Librarian, and she currently orders the materials for the juvenile section.

### *How I Analyzed the Interviews*

In order to analyze the interviews, I first typed up all the notes I took during the conversations, organizing them by person and by question. This allowed me to see if there were similarities or differences in the way that each individual answered the questions. It also revealed if there were questions that I did not end up using or that were previously answered in response to another question. I therefore ignored those and turned to making conclusions about what the interviewees had to say, connecting them to each other as well as my research. When writing, I grouped questions together and went back to listen to each interview in order to acquire direct quotes so that I could let the power of each individual's own words shine through. The discussion section encapsulates each interviewee's responses, turning them into a narrative that displays the relevance and importance of bilingual children's literature.

### **Discussion**

Overall, the interviews I conducted confirmed my research and beliefs about bilingual children's literature while adding a personal and relevant connection that further heightened its importance in my eyes. The five individuals all agreed with each other on a basic level, but differed in where they were coming from as well as in how they chose to offer their opinions to the world. All were adamant in the fact that bilingual children's literature absolutely matters, and Melissa Reyes shared that in a world where so many people are constantly being told that they do not fit, "having books that support kids to recognize their inherent value, the value of their families, the value of their communities, the value of their language and their stories, and support kids to see themselves in the world" is critical. They need to see their power and potential as well as how the world welcomes all people. When done well, all interviewees agreed that literature of this type affirms readers' identities. Amy Friedman said that with the

view that “multiple languages [are] valuable and maintaining your identity and heritage is valuable,” these books definitely validate Spanish-speaking readers, and Janet Spaulding and Jessica Moore both mentioned the theory of mirrors and windows. Spaulding said: “It is important that kids be able to see themselves in books and to know that their experience is one that is recognized and that’s validated.” Moore explained that “literacy is important regardless of first language,” and bilingual books allow parents and their children to interact in this capacity. Windows are ubiquitous, but “it is really important for them to be able to see characters and people who look like them” because these mirrors share the idea of you can do this too and build self-esteem (Moore). Moore asserts that readers are engaged when they can relate to the characters. Reyes adds to this idea, saying that human beings are not flat or stagnant; “we’re all complex and have contradictions and our lives are beautiful and magical and also challenging and painful.” Seeing all of our complexity reflected in literature allows people to tell their stories while exploring their multifaceted identities with books that “affirm culture and cultural practices so that kids and families see themselves reflected in the visuals and...also the values” (Reyes). When choosing books for her classroom, Reyes was pretty picky: she wanted high-quality writing; developmentally appropriate stories; strong, poetic, and powerful language; beautiful illustrations; and in general, culturally appropriate books. Lulu Delacre then made sure to tell me that the key component of an identity affirming bilingual book is that “it needs to be a text that actually reads well in both languages.” She continues to say that, “For me, it’s extremely important that the Spanish is as good as the English because I don’t want the Spanish to be a second...like an afterthought.” Translations need to be accurate and the English and Spanish need to be treated equally in order to create “something that is as beautiful and as



valuable in both languages” (Delacre). The bottom line is that authors, publishers, and translators must respect Spanish and English when creating bilingual books.

Turning then to the idea that children need to have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate, accurate, and affirming books, Spaulding and Moore latched on to the idea of accessibility. In her capacity as a collection development librarian for the juvenile section, Spaulding has found that translations of American white authors are much more available. However, she knows that those written by native speakers are so important because they add meaning and depth to the book. She often gets requests for more bilingual books because people are searching for resources to help them keep their first language and support the new one simultaneously. As the Immigration Outreach Specialist, Moore was able to add more context specific to the Indianapolis Public Library. She said that “our population demographic has shifted drastically over the past 10-15 years... [such that the] kids that are being born in Marion County, in Indianapolis specifically, are brown.” It therefore becomes even more important for those kids “to be able to preserve what is so unique and beautiful about who they are,” which includes their linguistic experience (Moore). The reality of this city, of this country, of the world is that “we are becoming a part of a less homogeneous community, such that there are people who look different from us [and] who have different life experiences” (Moore). Moore believes that bilingual books “give value to the experiences of these children... whatever their native tongue” by representing and celebrating their diverse realities, thus allowing them to feel welcomed and a part of the community. When I then asked about the difference between books written in Spanish, in English, English with Spanish inserted throughout, and Spanish and English side by side, all five agreed that it depends on who was accessing them and why. For instance, Friedman said that books with the interspersed format are valuable because when they

are “very well done...[they] would have benefited everybody,” and that the side-by-side books can bring parents into the reading experience while also acting as a crutch for children to use to look back and forth between languages. One was not necessarily better than the other, because, as Moore said, it depends on the goal and the audience. Spaulding, Delacre, and Reyes all asserted that each type has its place because they speak to different audiences. Reyes went a little further to say that we need all of them as well as a lot of more of these types of books in order to show the realities of more people.

In terms of challenges and needs for the future, the interviews illuminated the difficulty of finding bilingual books and the goal to make them more accessible. Spaulding told me that while books in Spanish are the easiest language to acquire, “finding them can be a challenge.” Translations of books originally published in English are easier to find, but she tries to balance her orders between culture (especially those that represent the community they have in Indianapolis) and the books that their monolingual friends are reading. Delacre confirmed this by saying that “publishers to some extent will regard their bottom line [and] will respond to the politics of the time,” causing problems in the realm of bilingual books. Moore answered this question with a wider lens, looking more at the scope of access issues in general. Part of her job at the library is trying to “figure out how we help those [minority] communities to think of us differently,” as a safe space, a place where they belong, and a place where resources are available for them. With the only complaints being that there are not enough bilingual books and resources, Spaulding believes that the next steps include understanding how and why the Spanish community uses them so that their collections can reflect where the library and its patrons want to be going. Moore knows that to move forward, her next step involves a lot of outreach and going out more “so that we’re developing relationships so that we can provide better access to

services.” Delacre simply stated that “We need more voices”; we need more Spanish authors, editors, reviewers, etc.

If we claim that we need more books, we first need to know exactly where we stand with what we already have and do in our libraries. I asked Friedman and Spaulding about their bilingual book collection at the Indianapolis Public Library and Spaulding shared with me her statistics about the juvenile world language collection. They record that, as of September 2016, the library has 6,664 books classified as Juvenile Spanish, but this may not include everything because sometimes the books are not defined or catalogued as bilingual. Friedman notes that the bilingual and Spanish books are shelved in their own separate sections, and Spaulding says that they all have Spanish call numbers. In theory, this is to facilitate the access of the target audience when looking at thousands of books, but it could be construed as segregating them from the rest of the collection. Friedman makes it a point to say, however, “if we’re doing our jobs, we [as librarians] make sure everybody sees everything” and that people find them. When trying to acquire more bilingual books, Spaulding tries to fill the holes that the collection has, but says that “it’s harder because I rarely get reviews of those.” As a result, she has her usual sources that she turns to, such as the School Library Journal who publishes a list of Spanish items twice a year, popular authors, and vendors who provide ‘vetted’ lists. Moore added that partner groups will often send book recommendations as well. In terms of other ways that the library serves its Spanish-speaking patrons, Spaulding has tried to have more than 1,000 books in Spanish to enable children to complete the 1,000 books by kindergarten program, and Moore said that if a specific branch reaches out, then she will help them with whatever programming they have in mind. As stated before, however, more can always be done.

Transitioning into the questions specifically aimed at authors, I was inspired by what Lulu Delacre and Melissa Reyes shared with me. Both of them chose to write their books based on the need they saw around them. Delacre explained to me that “The ideas that I’ve had throughout the years comes from what I have personally lived, witnessed, seen, heard.” She is proud of her heritage and believes that “language is a window to the culture.” Delacre writes because she wants to share this pride, saying, “I created those books for kids like my own kids, for families like my own family.” Similarly, Reyes “had a really hard time finding resources for kids about the history of Oakland [California],” and so wrote her own theatre piece about Sausal Creek for them. She claimed: “I decided [later] to publish it because I felt like as a teacher...it would be great to have this be a children’s book...so I’m going to make it one.” She wanted it to be in English and Spanish to both honor the demographics and history of the place as well as make it a personal affirmation. Even though she has three Puerto Rican grandparents, she did not grow up speaking Spanish. When Reyes chose to learn and reclaim Spanish, a piece of the book became “about wanting to continue on that path and continue on that commitment [believing] that language is powerful and is a powerful connection to culture and history and to our families.” Reyes wrote her book in English and her publisher was able to then find a translator for her. Oppositely, Delacre generally thinks in Spanish and agrees that is very hard to write the story in both English and Spanish and keep the same feeling in both versions. With this, she does not believe in literal translations because she wants “the English to be as beautiful as the Spanish is and vice versa.” Both need to be equally sincere and empowering.

Finally reaching the end of my questionnaire, I asked about writing my own bilingual story, searching for insight and advice. Lulu Delacre told me right away that if I, someone who is not of Spanish-speaking heritage, “know the language, of course you can write in Spanish.”

She cautioned, however, that I must do so with respect. Research is crucial because prospective authors have not lived the Latino experience and subtleties might escape them, but that just means that they must work harder. Melissa Reyes also made sure to highlight that the stimulus behind the idea to write a bilingual book was important. She advised that a prospective author “really reflect on why, like what their interest and motivation is” as well as “getting support to do it in a good way.” Like Delacre, Reyes pointed out that translations are not word for word. They need to capture the meaning behind the original text, so it will be important to work with a native speaker who knows Spanish and knows books. In the end, Delacre left me with some heartfelt advice. She said that “the best projects are those that you really feel deep inside you.” If I want to write a bilingual book, I have to do so with great respect and write from my heart. “Persistence is the key to your dreams,” she proclaimed, quoting one of her books, and so I will persist to be respectful in all of my endeavors.

### **Future Research**

In retrospect, I would have planned and carried out the interviews a little differently, looking specifically at the people involved. The original plan was to include librarians, teachers, authors, and publishers if possible, but in the end, I was only able to interview librarians and authors. I had planned on interviewing Elisa Villanueva Beard, the CEO of Teach for America who has taught bilingual education, in order to get a teacher’s perspective. However, due to scheduling difficulties, I was unable to speak with her during this project. If I had known at the beginning how difficult the logistics would be, I would have searched for additional bilingual teachers to interview and acquire that viewpoint, something I will be sure to do next time. Through my research I also discovered that a small publisher of bilingual books, Raven Tree Press, was located ten minutes away from my house. I was excited to possibly have the chance

to talk to a publisher, but when I scoped out their office, it appeared to be a satellite space and I did not pursue that avenue. In my next project, I will find a publisher to interview because I think it will be useful to compare their point of view with that of an author. The authors I talked to provided incredible insight and advice, but in the future it would be interesting to compare the views of authors of Latino background (both Lulu Delacre and Melissa Reyes) with those who do not have that inspiring their writing. Turning to libraries, I was able to talk to three individuals who worked at the Indianapolis Public Library in different facets, and I think it was very valuable to hear their stories and input. However, next time I will try to talk to people who work in other libraries as well, hopefully from different areas of the country and cities with different socioeconomic statuses. As a final observation of the people I was able to interview, I realized once they were all completed that all five were women. The male perspective would have been valuable here, as both women and men have something to bring to the table, especially in terms of what their children deserve to see and read in books. In general, my further research includes conducting more interviews that cover the spectrum of occupations, backgrounds, and beliefs in order to make this a richer analysis and more meaningful section.

## Conclusion

“We read to know we are not alone.” – William Nicholson

We read to find ourselves and our place in the world. We read to understand, to explore, to dream. Literacy allows people to truly participate in their communities and communicate not only their ideas, but their worth as human beings as well. When culturally and linguistically authentic and affirming, bilingual children’s literature presents readers with their reflections so that they might see their value. Every single person is a part of the world’s story, and it is imperative that each child learns that they have the opportunity and the responsibility to help write it. Books that show Spanish and English side-by-side can have a tremendous influence on how bilingual children see the world. Literature that accurately represents their reality can give them the confidence to discover, create, and celebrate their identity.

Now we must ask ourselves where we go from here: what is the next step? At the heart of it all, the issue is that of a lack of access. While there are amazing authors, publishers, teachers, librarians, and parents out there who are striving to give children the best quality literature they can, there is still not enough. The message that bilingual children, and all children, have power and a voice and the capacity to inspire must be everywhere. Children have the incredible potential to bring us confidently forward into a world where we respect and listen to each other. However, that can only be achieved if we lead by example and teach them that every person has dignity and worth. To do that, more people need to realize the importance and influence of bilingual children’s literature so that quality books can be created and utilized with care and intentionality. My hope in writing this thesis was to illuminate the value and necessity of literature that inspires children to be themselves and share their story. Only with respect and love can we guide young readers to discovering the joy of reading and the miracle of life.

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## Appendix A

### List of Children's Books

#### List by Publication Date

1. *Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia* by Carmen Lomas Garza (1990 bilingual)  
This book was recommended at least three times in my research, so I decided I had to be one that I looked at for this section of my project.
2. *Tomás and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora (1997 interlingual)  
Pat Mora has done great things for the bilingual and multicultural children's books movement, and this one, although interlingual, came highly suggested because of its reading empowerment content.
3. *I Love Saturdays y Domingos* by Alma Flor Ada (1999 interlingual)  
Alma Flor Ada's thoughts on bilingual children's literature are illuminating, and this book was highlighted in some of my research, so I decided to put it on the list.
4. *Family, Familia* by Diane Gonzales Bertrand (1999 bilingual)  
I found this at the Glendale Branch of the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library during my search for bilingual books, and knew that family was a theme I wanted to explore.
5. *Waiting for Papá/Esperando a Papa* por Rene Colato Laínez (2004 bilingual)  
I found this book at the Eagle Branch of the IMCPL and a quick perusal showed that it dealt with immigration, so I felt that it would be a good one to explore in my analysis.
6. *My Way/A mi manera: A Margaret and Margarita Story* by Lynn Reiser (2007 bilingual)  
I saw this at the Glendale Branch, and without even reading it thought the Margaret/Margarita theme was such a cute way to explore the similarities and differences between English and Spanish.
7. *My Colors, My World/Mis colores, mi mundo* by Maya Christina González (2007 bilingual)  
I read about the way Maya Christina González felt that she couldn't see herself in books when she was younger, so deemed it appropriate to include the book in which she shared her own face.
8. *A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para soñar* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz (2008 bilingual)  
I found this at the Glendale Branch during my search for bilingual books, and the artwork was so vibrant and beautiful I decided I wanted to look at it more closely.
9. *The Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos* by Lucia Gonzalez (2008 bilingual)  
As a story about the librarian Pura Belpré and a winner of the award by the same name, this book begged to be included in this survey of bilingual books.
10. *Book Fiesta!* by Pat Mora (2009 bilingual)  
This was a must-use, as it centers around the celebration of reading on Children's Day/Book Day.

11. *A Piñata in a Pine Tree: A Latino Twelve Days of Christmas* by Pat Mora (2009 interlingual)  
A holiday themed book that wasn't about El día de los muertos by Pat Mora seemed like a necessary addition to the list.
12. *Floating on Mama's Song/Flotando en la canción de mamá* by Laura Lacámara (2009 bilingual)  
I found this at the Putnam County Library and was intrigued by the title and whimsical illustrations, so I chose to take a deeper look.
13. *Grandpa's Magic Tortilla* by Demetria Martínez and Rosalee Montoya-Read (2010 bilingual)  
I found this at the Central Branch of the IMCPL, noted that it was longer than other books I was perusing, and decided to analyze it for variety.
14. *Alicia's Fruity Drinks* by Lupe Ruiz-Flores (2012 bilingual)  
I saw this at the Central Branch, noted that it was published by Piñata Books, and therefore decided to put it on the list to explore.
15. *Lupita's First Dance/El primer baile de Lupita* by Lupe Ruiz-Flores (2013 bilingual)  
I saw this at the Putnam County Library as well as the Central Branch and thought it should be included for its thematic elements of traditional dance and self-esteem.
16. *Niño Wrestles the World* by Yuyi Morales (2013 interlingual)  
I read a lot about Yuyi Morales in my research and this book in particular was recommended as a fun, interlingual, culture sharing book.
17. *The Cucuy Stole My Cascarones/El Coco me robó los cascarones* by Spelile Rivas (2013 bilingual)  
I found this at the Central Branch, and thought it was a cute way to include some Latino folklore into the list while still being an enjoyable story for all readers.
18. *Dalia's Wondrous Hair/El cabello maravilloso de Dalia* by Laura Lacámara (2014 bilingual)  
Found at the Putnam County Library, this was a fun book that celebrated hair as well as Cuban heritage.
19. *Finding the Music: En pos de la música* by Jennifer Torres (2015 bilingual)  
I found this book at the Central Branch, and the artwork and inclusion of traditional music ideas made it appealing.
20. *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre* by Rene Colato Laínez (2016 bilingual)  
I discovered this book in my perusal of the Putnam County, and after my initial read decided to include it for its lighthearted treatment of immigration and citizenship.

### List by Number of Stars

Stars guide: 1 = did not like it, 2 = it was ok, 3 = liked it, 4 = really liked it, 5 = it was amazing

1. *Waiting for Papá/Esperando a Papá* por Rene Colato Laínez 2 stars
2. *A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para soñar* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz 2 stars
3. *Alicia's Fruity Drinks* by Lupe Ruiz-Flores 2 stars
4. *Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia* by Carmen Lomas Garza 3 stars
5. *Family, Familia* by Diane Gonzales Bertrand 3 stars
6. *Grandpa's Magic Tortilla* by Demetria Martínez and Rosalee Montoya-Read 3 stars
7. *Lupita's First Dance/El primer baile de Lupita* by Lupe Ruiz-Flores 3 stars
8. *Niño Wrestles the World* by Yuyi Morales 3 stars
9. *The Cucuy Stole My Cascarones/El Coco me robó los cascarones* by Spelile Rivas 3 stars
10. *My Colors, My World/Mis colores, mi mundo* by Maya Christina González 3.5 stars
11. *I Love Saturdays y Domingos* by Alma Flor Ada 3.5 stars
12. *A Piñata in a Pine Tree: A Latino Twelve Days of Christmas* by Pat Mora 3.5 stars
13. *Dalia's Wondrous Hair/El cabello maravilloso de Dalia* by Laura Lacámara 3.5 stars
14. *Tomás and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora 4 stars
15. *My Way/A mi manera: A Margaret and Margarita Story* by Lynn Reiser 4 stars
16. *The Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos* by Lucia Gonzalez 5 stars
17. *Book Fiesta!* by Pat Mora 4 stars
18. *Floating on Mama's Song/Flotando en la canción de mamá* by Laura Lacámara 4 stars
19. *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre* by Rene Colato Laínez 4 stars
20. *Finding the Music: En pos de la música* by Jennifer Torres 5 stars



## Appendix B

Evaluation form based on the one found in *Celebrating Cuentos*, pages 369-372.

Title of Book:	Publication Date:	Publisher:			
Author:	Illustrator:				
<b>Book Characteristics:</b>	<b>Please Bold ONE Answer</b>				
1. What is the genre of the book?	Fiction	Nonfiction	Folktale	Other	
2. What is the format of the book?	Picture Book	Novel			
3. Is the author of the book Latino or non-Latino?	Latino	Non-Latino			
4. Is the illustrator of the book Latino or non-Latino?	Latino	Non-Latino			
5. Is the text of the book bilingual, interlingual, or written only in English?	Bilingual	Interlingual	English Only		
6. What supplemental linguistic features are present in the text? (multiple)	Glossary	Pronunciation Guide	Author Notes	None	
7. Which children's book award(s) did the book receive? (multiple)	Américas Award/Honor/Commended	Tomás Rivera Award	Pura Belpré Award/Honor	None	Other
<b>Characterization in Narrative &amp; Illustrations:</b>	<b>Please Bold ONE Answer</b>				
1. Overall, are female Latino characters depicted in minor or major roles in the narrative?	Minor	Major	No Female Characters		
2. Overall, are male Latino characters depicted in minor or major roles in the narrative?	Minor	Major	No Male Characters		
3. Which gender of Latino character appears more often in the narrative?	Female	Male	Equal Representation		
4. Which gender of Latino character appears more often in the illustrations?	Female	Male	Equal Representation		

5. Overall in the narrative are female Latino characters portrayed in gender stereotyped roles such as house wife, maid, cook, mother of many children, sweet and submissive girl?	Yes	No	N/A		
6. Overall in the narrative, are male Latino characters portrayed in gender stereotyped roles such as bread-winner of the family, man full of machismo, superior boy?	Yes	No	N/A		
7. Do Latinos have a primary (actively participate; main character) or secondary role in the narrative?	Primary Role	Secondary Role			
8. What is the socioeconomic status of Latino characters in the story? (Guess)	Low	Middle	High		
9. Which Latino culture is represented?	Puerto Rican	Mexican/ Mexican American	Cuban	Central American	
	South American	Caribbean	Generic Latino		
10. Are Latino characters with disabilities represented in the story or illustrations?	Yes	No			
11. Do <i>all</i> Latino characters have a "Latin Look" of brown skins, brown eyes, and dark hair?	Yes	No			
12. If Latinos without a "Latin Look" are represented, what is the other look? (multiple)	Black (African)	White (Non-Anglo)	Asian	Other	N/A
13. Are any of the Latino characters described as being of mixed race?	Yes	No			
14. Are there <i>any</i> elderly Latino characters in the story or illustrations?	Yes	No			
15. If elderly Latino characters are present, are they depicted as frail and feeble-minded?	Yes	No	N/A		

16. Do the Latino characters in the book include an extended family of Aunts (Tias), Uncles (Tios), grandparents (Abuelos/as), or cousins?	Yes	No	
17. Do any of the Latino characters have a role as community leaders?	Yes	No	
18. Are the Latino characters in the story recently-arrived immigrants?	Yes	No	
19. Are the main "Latino" characters animal or human?	Animals	Humans	
20. Are the Latino characters portrayed as having a broad range of emotions similar to characters from other cultures?	Yes	No	
21. Do Latinos move to the U.S. where everything is "perfect" and everyone is happy? (Do they leave their home country to find success in America?)	Yes	No	
22. Do Latinos spend their time taking siestas and putting off things until mañana (lazy) or do they have active roles like other characters in the narrative?	Yes	No	
<b>Setting &amp; Plot:</b>	<b>Please Bold ONE Answer</b>		
1. Does the story have a contemporary or historical setting?	Contemporary (1980-Present)	Historical (pre-1980)	
2. Is the story set in the United States/Puerto Rico or in another country?	U.S. Setting/Puerto Rico	Non-U.S. Setting	Not Addressed in Narrative
3. Is the overall mood of the story upbeat and positive or full of despair and negative?	Positive	Negative	



4. Do Latino characters of the story face common, everyday problems such as bilingualism, immigration, family relationships, social relationships, etc.?	Yes	No	
5. Is the English language a barrier to the Latino characters?	Yes	No	N/A because Native Country
6. If the story is about a contemporary Latino child, does he/she face issues with racism at school or in society?	Yes	No	N/A
7. Does the book's narrative imply that Latino people are unable to solve their own problems without the help of Anglos?	Yes	No	
8. Does the narrative or illustrations contain magical realism?	Yes	No	
9. Are positive role models of both genders provided for Latino children in the book's illustrations and text?	Yes	No	
<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Please Bold ONE Answer</b>		
1. Which <i>one</i> of the following themes best represents the theme of the book?	Celebrations/ Festivals	Immigration/Migrant Workers	Family Traditions/Relationships
	Foods/Customs	Growing Up & Gaining Confidence	Important Latino Figure/Role Model
	Other, Please Specify:		
<b>Cultural Authenticity (stereotypes):</b>	<b>Please Bold ONE Answer</b>		
1. Is the use of Spanish accurate and authentic or does it contain errors?	Accurate	Errors	N/A

2. Is the character's use of Spanish natural or does it seem forced/contrived?	Natural	Contrived	N/A
3. Do Latino characters decide to give up/have to abandon some aspect of their root culture in order to achieve happiness or success?	Yes	No	
4. Is the Latino subculture trivialized by limiting to fiestas, piñata parties, foods, patron saints, etc.?	Yes	No	
5. Are Latino cultural factors communicated, such as strong sense of family relationships, sense of humor, respect for elders, responsibility for communal welfare?	Yes	No	
6. Are Latino characters in culturally stereotyped roles such as newly arrived immigrants, men full of machismo, shy girls, mothers of many children, or gang members?	Yes	No	
<b>Illustrations (If applicable)</b>	<b>Please Bold ONE Answer</b>		
1. Are the illustrations in color or black-and-white?	Color	Black-and-White	
2. Are the illustrations photographs or media based (drawings, paintings, computer generated, etc.)?	Photographs	Media Based	Both
3. Do the illustrations extend the story, adding further information?	Yes	No	
4. Do the illustrations contain cultural "props," such as sombreros, burros, mariachi bands, palm trees, and cacti that seem employed to add a <i>cultural flavor</i> to the story?	Yes	No	

5. How are barrios (Latino neighborhoods) portrayed?	Charming/Post-Card Appearance	Dirty and Crime-filled	Natural, Every-day Environments	N/A	
6. Do Latino characters wear period or peasant clothes in settings where they would ordinarily wear contemporary clothing?	Yes	No			
7. Are females shown outdoors and as equally active as the male characters in the illustrations?	Yes	No	N/A		
Additional Observations or Comments Regarding the Book's depiction of Latinos and/or the Spanish Language of the Text:					

## **Appendix C**

### *Questions*

Here are the questions I created in preparation for the interviews, trying to be as clear and precise as possible. During the actual conversations, however, I ended up not using some of them depending on how the discussion was going. This happened for several reasons. For example, sometimes the interviewee addressed a subsequent question while answering the one I originally asked. Other times, I skipped questions that did not seem relevant to the individual I was talking to at the time. I tried to avoid this by grouping the questions under the categories General, Specific for Librarians or Teachers, and Specific for Authors or Publishers, but sometimes the discovery came after I learned more about them. In general, several of my questions examined the same idea or issue from different angles, so asking them all seemed redundant during the actual conversation. The original question list is as follows.

#### **General**

Why do you do what you do? How did you decide on your career path? (Why do you write? Why are you a librarian? Why are you a teacher? etc.)

Does bilingual children's literature matter? Why or why not?

What is the role of bilingual children's books in identity affirmation? What are the components of an identity affirming bilingual book?

Why is it important that bilingual (speaking/learning both Spanish and English) children in particular have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate, accurate, and affirming books?

What is the value of bilingual books (with Spanish and English side by side) as opposed to books in English that portray Latino culture or books in Spanish for bilingual children?

What challenges do you face in your field?

Have you encountered any negative responses to bilingual books? (objections to bilingual offerings at libraries for example or negative reactions by Latinos to depictions of Latinos in the books)

What do you need to move forward? What do you see as a need for the future?

### **Specific for Librarians or Teachers**

About how many bilingual books do you have in your collection? How are they shelved? (Interspersed or in a different section?) And what does that say to patrons (Why does their position matter?)

How do you select bilingual books for your collection/classroom? (certain publishers or authors? Do you have a system to analyze quality? What components – theme, placement of language, accuracy of translation, accuracy of cultural representation, credibility of author, illustrations – are you looking at?)

How do you serve your Spanish speaking patrons? Do you have any bilingual programs?

### **Specific for Authors or Publishers**

How do you choose what and who to write about?

How do you decide what kind of voice to use? Is it hard to write the story in both English and Spanish and keep the same feeling? Do you write the English and Spanish simultaneously or one before the other?

Are there customs, themes, or ideas you hope to preserve or advance through bilingual texts? What questions do you want to/think need to be explored? Are there conversations you want to incite?

How do you reflect the diversity of Latino experiences in your work? How do you avoid reinforcing stereotypes or replicating clichés?

How does your personal identity (language identity and career – author, publisher) influence what you write or what you decide to publish?

Can someone who is not Latino/Chicano/Spanish-speaking write a bilingual book? How do cultural appropriation and the problems of translation influence that?

Do you have any advice for someone trying to write a bilingual children's picturebook?