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# Reading Aloud with Bilingual Learners: A Fieldwork Project and Its Impact on Mainstream Teacher Candidates

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# Reading Aloud with Bilingual Learners: A Fieldwork Project and Its Impact on Mainstream Teacher Candidates

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This study describes the components of a field-based Read Aloud Project (RAP) in which teacher candidates create and implement language and literacy rich read-alouds for bilingual learners. In addition, an examination of the impact of such a project on several areas of teacher candidates' pedagogical expertise reveals that the RAP produces positive learning experiences for teacher candidates and may be worth replicating in other teacher education contexts to support the preparation of linguistically responsive teachers.

## Challenges for Equity in Teaching Bilingual Learners

The United States experienced record immigration in the past decade leading to an ever more diverse society (Capps et al., 2005; Crawford, 2004). This influx of immigrants has increased the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity in today's public schools and has led to a significant and consistent rise in the number of children growing up in the United States negotiating the use of two or more languages on a regular basis (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2010). Some of these students, who schools and districts have identified as "English Language Learners" (ELLs), are enrolled in a variety of specialized programs with specially trained English

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as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual teachers, such as self-contained bilingual, sheltered content area instruction, or self-contained ESL classrooms (Crawford, 2004).

However, political opposition to the use of languages other than English, the passage of No Child Left Behind, which promotes the early and frequent testing of bilingual learners in English, and the apparent cost savings of placing pupils designated by schools and districts as ELL in mainstream classes are factors that have contributed to a significant number of bilingual learners being instructed in mainstream classrooms (Brisk, 2006; García, Kleifgen, & Flachi, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). As a result, nearly one half of all U.S. teachers have taught pupils designated as ELL, even though less than 13% of them have received specialized training or professional development focused on teaching this population of pupils (Lucas, 2011; NCES, 2002).

The shift in demographics of American schools and the under preparation of teachers to work with the students now found in their classrooms are accompanied with increasing pressure for bilingual learners to quickly perform at the same level as their native English speaking peers. As would be expected from a population still working to gain academic English proficiency, students designated as "ELL" consistently score dramatically lower on language and literacy assessments than their native English speaking peers (Au & Raphael, 2000; NCES, 2008). These low scores can often turn into negative consequences for students, their teachers, and schools due to the high-stakes decisions such scores are frequently used to inform. Therefore, the educational community is faced with the significant challenge of meeting the academic needs of this population within a strict accountability context, a challenge that is further complicated in some states, such as California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, by the restriction or prohibition of the use of bilingual learners' native languages for instruction.

Such challenges highlight the important role of teacher education institutions in preparing teachers to successfully teach bilingual students, a role to which the Boston College Lynch School of Education (BC LSOE) has paid extensive and explicit attention over the past several years. As one of a number of efforts (briefly described below) aimed at helping prepare preservice teachers to work effectively with bilingual learners at all levels of English proficiency in mainstream classrooms, BC has implemented a Read Aloud Project (RAP). The RAP is currently engaged in by BC LSOE teacher candidates (TCs) with bilingual learners during early childhood and elementary field placements. TCs are required to read aloud to a bilingual learner a fiction or informational book and plan before-, during-, and

after-reading activities to engage the pupil in learning new vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies. TCs, who at BC LSOE are mainly White, female, monolingual, and middle to upper class, participate in this project weekly throughout each 10- to 12-week field placement.

This article examines some of the research that has been conducted to determine the effectiveness of the RAP in helping TCs develop and/or use knowledge, dispositions, and research-based strategies recommended for the instruction of bilingual learners. Our objectives in the remaining part of this article are twofold: (1) to provide a description of the RAP in terms of structure and content and (2) to report general research findings on the impact of the RAP on TCs' practices and perceptions within the context of a multifaceted effort across the entire teacher preparation program.

## The Read Aloud Project (RAP): Background, Purposes, Structure, and Content

In terms of curricular content, the RAP project focuses on the development of three specific types of pedagogical expertise Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez(2008) set forth in a framework for linguistically responsive teacher education:

> Familiarity with the students' linguistic and academic backgrounds; an understanding of the language demands inherent in the learning tasks that students are expected to carry out in class; and skills for using appropriate scaffolding so that ELLs can participate successfully in those tasks. (p. 366)

The RAP was created to help build the foundation for these pedagogical expertise through the use of read-alouds with bilingual learners in elementary and early childhood classrooms and is instituted as part of a multifaceted effort at BC LSOE to better prepare classroom teachers to meet the academic needs of bilingual learners (Lucas, 2011).

### Why Read Aloud with Bilingual Learners?

Research has documented numerous benefits of reading aloud in classroom settings for monolingual students including building an interest in reading (Pegg & Bartelheim, 2011; Teale,1984), vocabulary acquisition (Elley, 1989; Swanson et al., 2011), developing listening comprehension(Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Swanson et al., 2011), developing decontextualized language

(Dickinson & Snow, 1987), and building emergent literacy skills (Swanson et al., 2011;Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Research also shows that early book reading experiences for monolingual students are linked to later language and literacy success (Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, &Pellegrini, 1995). The research on read-aloud experiences is broad and includes a range of diverse practices and has been referred to in the literature by a number of different terms such as storybook reading, reading aloud to, reading aloud with, and book reading. However, the common thread of the phenomena is a fluent adult reader reading an appropriately selected text to a child or group of children.

Although there has been limited research on the use of read-alouds with bilingual learners, the handful of experimental investigations of storybook reading with second-language learners that do exist demonstrate the positive impact read-alouds can have on second language and literacy development (Colins, 2010; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, & Share,1993).

Despite the variety in the specific practices in classrooms, reading aloud to children in school is a promising and prominent instructional practice. For bilingual learners, read-alouds may provide opportunities to receive comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) and engage in meaningful conversations surrounding the content, ideas, and illustrations in books that in turn can aid in language and literacy development (Allen, 1989; Colins, 2010). Additionally, the face-to-face social interactions that occur between teachers and bilingual learners during read-alouds can create rich language learning opportunities for students that focus on meaning rather than form (Colins, 2010; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). Teachers have opportunities to capitalize on bilingual learners' responses by accepting, extending, helping to negotiate meaning, and elaborating on their ideas (Colins, 2010; Ghosn, 2004). Thus, read-alouds can provide a venue for language growth as students have the opportunity to talk about literature and use English in authentic ways with high-quality, scaffolded language models (Colins, 2010). Further, reading aloud to bilingual learners is a researcher-recommended literacy practice (Brisk & Harrington, 2007; Peregoy &Boyle, 2005).

Grounded in research from the field, the RAP was designed and is implemented as a way to use as an effective classroom practice, reading aloud, as a vehicle to help TCs begin to develop the pedagogical expertise to become linguistically responsive teachers (Lucas, 2011; Lucas et al.,2008). Specifically, the goal is for teacher candidates to learn about students' linguistic and academic backgrounds, understand the language

demands for pupil engagement in a read-aloud, and develop the skills for using appropriate scaffolds so that bilingual learners can successfully participate in a language and literacy rich read-aloud. Therefore, to capitalize on the instructional potential of language and literacy rich read-alouds for TCs and bilingual learners, a fieldwork requiring TCs to read aloud to bilingual learners has become an integral part of the BCLSOE elementary and early childhood teacher education program.

### The RAP: One Effort Among Many

The RAP is one small but significant part of a broader effort to change the curricular content as well as structures and processes of BC LSOE's teacher education program to better prepare teachers to work with bilingual learners, especially in mainstream classrooms. The program has implemented, to varying degrees, all of the main approaches to enhanced program design reported in the literature (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2010). One aspect of BC LSOE's comprehensive approach to improving the preparation of linguistically responsive teachers was to increase the capacity of the teacher education program to address the needs of bilingual learners through faculty development that led to the infusion of relevant theory and practice in various courses across the teacher education curriculum (Costa, McPhail, Smith, & Brisk, 2005). Another aspect of the initiative was to create an optional endorsement-like program where courses were developed and are now offered enabling TCs to meet the Massachusetts requirements for becoming qualified to work with bilingual learners in sheltered content classrooms. An additional aspect of this approach was to infuse required field experiences with projects in which TCs would work with bilingual pupils. These field-based projects were created through the collaboration of faculty and Practicum Office staff and were bolstered by a state requirement for TCs to demonstrate the use of appropriate instructional strategies to shelter language and content for bilingual learners.

From the inception of the RAP, the term bilingual learners has been used to refer to the pupils with whom TCs work rather than ELLs. The reason for this choice is twofold. First, in agreement with Brisk (2006) and García et al. (2008), using the term English Language Learner or Limited English Proficient reduces the description of this population to their level of English proficiency and overlooks the expansive intellectual, cultural, and linguistic skills these students bring to the classroom. García et al. (2008) reminded us the way in which this growing population of pupils is identified has implications for their education:

> When officials and educators ignore the bilingualism that these
> students can and often must develop through schooling in the
> United States, they perpetuate inequities in the education of these
> children. That is, they discount the home languages and cultural
> understandings of these children and assume their educational
> needs are the same as a monolingual child. (p. 6)

For the purpose of promoting greater awareness of the lived realities of this
pupil population, we use the term bilingual learner, within the context of
the RAP and for the rest of this article, to describe pupils at varying levels of
English proficiency who negotiate each day using English and at least one
other language.

Second, using the term bilingual learners expands the scope of pupils
with whom TCs engage. The RAP encourages TCs to pay explicit attention
to the linguistic and literacy development of all students who speak any
languages other than English. Bilingual learners at all levels of English pro-
ficiency can benefit from the type of instruction promoted in the RAP, and
TCs are encouraged to work with all bilingual learners, even those who are
not designated ELL by the school or district.

### The RAP: Structure

The RAP is now a routine and required component of prepracticum experi-
ences for all elementary and early childhood TCs (a separate project exists
for secondary TCs focusing on content area academic language). Under-
graduate TCs participate in the RAP during each of their three prepracti-
cum field experiences and graduates during their one prepracticum field
experience. On average, approximately 100 TCs participate in the RAP each
semester.

For the RAP, each TC must select a book, design a lesson plan, and then
read aloud to a bilingual learner each time she or he visits the school site,
which is typically once a week for 10 weeks. Reading aloud is a practice in
which a TC reads aloud a carefully selected children's book and engages in
before, during, and after reading instructional discussions about the text,
comprehension, and vocabulary stemming from the content of the text.
Working either one-on-one or with a small group that includes at least one
bilingual learner, the RAP session is designed to take 20 to 40 minutes with
the same pupil(s) each week (the typical time necessary for a successful
read aloud and depending on the schedule determined collaboratively with
the cooperating teacher[CT]).

Bilingual learners are selected for participation in the RAP by the TC in collaboration with the cooperating classroom teacher. LSOE supervisors monitor and evaluate TCs' work through mandatory observations (at least one per semester), responses to TCs' weekly journal reflections, and written RAP lesson plans. Playing a prominent role in the RAP, LSOE supervisors coach TCs throughout and provide any necessary supports. As doctoral- and master's-level students in the LSOE, supervisors typically serve in this capacity for 1 to 3 years. However, supervisors have varying levels of expertise in classroom instruction, working with bilingual learners, and teaching language and literacy.

The RAP began in the 2004 to 2005 academic year. As the program has grown, a variety of supports have been developed to scaffold and mediate TCs' development of the appropriate skills and dispositions to work successfully with bilingual learners. See Table 1 for a list of thesupports.1

*Training for the RAP*

Mandatory RAP training sessions for TCs and supervisors are offered during the first few weeks of each semester and vary in content depending upon the number of prepractica TCs have already completed. Because there are three required prepracticum field experiences, each successive prepracticum is referred to as P1, P2, and P3. The P1 training explores the purpose and basic implementation of the RAP, including an introduction to choosing books, teaching vocabulary, and supporting comprehension. However, each of these topics is explored more comprehensively in the successive training sessions as TCs advance through the program. The P2 training focuses on book selection (Hetherington, 1985; Meier, 2003), the development of vocabulary for bilingual learners (Drucker, 2003; Gersten, 2000; Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, &Vaughn, 2004; Peregoy &Boyle, 2005), and also contains a Read Aloud demonstration conducted in a language other than English. Finally, the P3 training concentrates on scaffolding higher level thinking and comprehension as well as explicitly teaching and modeling comprehension strategies (Braunger & Lewis,2006; Gibbons, 2002; Lavadenz, 2003; Massey, 2003; Meier, 2003). All trainings are conducted by doctoral students along with the Title III Project Director, are improved continuously based on data collected regarding the RAP, and encourage the development of linguistically responsive teachers (Lucas, 2011; Lucas et al., 2008) who can create classrooms that accept "all languages and cultures as rich vehicles for learning" (Brisk & Harrington, 2007).

## RAP Supports

The handbook and i-movie provide an overview of the RAP, a description of expectations for TCs, a rationale for the RAP as part of the field experience, as well as an introduction to bilingual learners and effective read-aloud practices and strategies. Both of these supports have been used or distributed during the training TCs attend prior to beginning their first prepracticum. These supports are also in the process of being updated as the project continues to grow and we continue to learn more about how to best support TCs in developing as linguistically responsive teachers.

In the early years of the RAP, TCs often struggled finding books to which their pupils would respond positively. It became clear TCs needed explicit guidance in considering factors such as language proficiency, first- and second-language literacy, cultural background, as well as general and specific background knowledge order to choose appropriate books for their learners(Hetherington, 1985; Meier, 2003). By creating and training TCs to use the Book Selection Checklist, TCs learn the skill of matching books with bilingual learners based on their unique and often complex cultural and linguistic profiles. Therefore, TCs are explicitly developing expertise in becoming familiar with students' linguistic and academic backgrounds, the first feature of the framework for linguistically responsive teacher preparation (Lucas, 2011; Lucas et al., 2008).

The lesson plan template was developed as a scaffold for TCs to address specific aspects of the RAP session by requiring them to think explicitly about instructional work including vocabulary development and comprehension supports before, during, and after the actual reading of the text (Gibbons, 2002). With this support and requirement, TCs are taught to consider the language demands of their read-aloud session and design specific scaffolds to support the successful engagement of their student, the two other features of the linguistically responsive teacher preparation framework (Lucas, 2011; Lucas et al., 2008).

A support originally developed for supervisors, yet also beneficial for TCs in planning and self reflection, is the observation protocol. This rubric is a list of the research-based teaching skills and behaviors that the RAP was designed to promote and develop in TCs and related directly to the second and third aspects of the linguistically responsive teacher preparation framework (Lucas,2011; Lucas et al., 2008). It was created to align with state teaching performance standards as well as state standards for English language development (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003) and includes

elements of sheltered instruction that are part of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The read-aloud observation protocol assists TCs in lesson planning and delivery and supervisors in observations of and feedback to TCs about the RAP. Supervisors observe at least one RAP session during each prepracticum and use the observation protocol for documentation. Training for supervisors on protocol use is conducted each semester and is mandatory. A short excerpt from the observation protocol for TCs in their first practicum placement is included in Table 2.

TCs participating in the RAP receive web-based support through a practicum-linked site providing copies of all training materials, additional resources, and a discussion board. Finally, the CT packet provides teachers hosting TCs with background information about the RAP and samples of tools that TCs and supervisors use in the implementation and observation of the RAP.

## Researching the RAP

In the 3rd year of RAP implementation, a study was undertaken to learn about TCs' development of the pedagogical expertise set forth in the framework for linguistically responsive teacher education by Lucas et al. (2008). Specifically, the research questions were:

- What teacher candidate practices are observed in the implementation of the Read Aloud Project over one semester?
- How do supervisors and cooperating classroom teachers perceive the impact of the Read Aloud Project on teacher candidates' practices and perceptions in regard to bilingual learners?

Participants in the collection of data during the 2006 to 2007 academic year included three groups:

- Group 1: Nine "case study" TCs who were enrolled in elementary or early childhood field experiences in the spring of 2007: Three P1s, two P2s, and four P3s.
- Group 2: Seven CTs in whose classrooms the RAP has taken place.
- Group 3: Nine BC LSOE supervisors of TCs participating in the RAP.

All students participating in the RAP during the course of the 2006 to 2007 academic year were invited to participate in the study as well as all CTs and all BC LSOE supervisors. The participants included in this study represent a small subset of each group as participating in this study required engaging with the researchers above and beyond the required completion of the RAP project. Therefore, the teacher candidates were not in the same schools and were not necessarily working with the supervisors or CTs interviewed as we solicited participation from all and accepted participation from among those who volunteered. The participants in this study also represent the majority of the TCs, supervisors, and CTs in the BC LSOE teacher preparation program in that the participants were overwhelmingly White, female, middle to upper class, monolingual English speakers. However, there were some male participants as well as two participants who spoke varying amounts of Spanish.

The data sources documenting the practices of the TCs for this analysis included 24 sets of researchers' field notes and transcripts of audiotaped RAP sessions as well as 24 transcripts of interviews with TCs debriefing after observed RAP sessions. In addition, transcripts of interviews with seven CTs and nine LSOE supervisors of the TCs were collected. A summary of all the practice data collected is presented in Table 3.Each read-aloud session observed was unique in terms of the book read, the length of the session, and the instructional activities engaged in as individual TCs were responsible for selecting the book and designing a read-aloud session specifically with their particular bilingual learner in mind. Generally, each read-aloud session lasted long enough for one book to be read aloud. Bilingual learners listened and interacted with the TCs as the TCs read aloud and also engaged in vocabulary and comprehension activities.

Due to the researchers' desire to increase our understanding of a particular case (Stevenson, 2004), specifically the experiences of TCs engaging in the RAP and their development as linguistically responsive teachers, a qualitative approach to investigating the RAP was utilized. Therefore, the inherent limitation exists in having a small sample size, but the explanatory power of the detailed qualitative data provides useful insights into our intended unit of analysis (Stevenson, 2004).

The data were analyzed using a rigorous implementation of the process of "consensual qualitative research" (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). In the initial stages of analysis, individual case studies were thoroughly examined to create domains, core ideas, and categories through

research team consensus. An outside auditor reviewed these initial analyses, and the research team then restructured codes before proceeding to a cross-case analysis in which assertions and arguments were created and tested. Throughout the analysis, trends and patterns were identified and conclusions were tested against raw data.

## Findings: Developing Linguistically Responsive Teacher Candidates Through the RAP

Our investigation revealed that, with the context of the RAP, TCs employed a range of practices related to developing as linguistically responsive teachers. However, as expected, not all TCs demonstrated the same level of expertise and development in terms of understanding their pupils' linguistic and academic backgrounds, understanding the language demands of a read aloud, and skillfully implementing appropriate scaffolds for successful participation in a language and literacy rich read-aloud. Despite these differences, the research presented below suggests that the infusion of the RAP to our program's required field work is a helpful tool in developing linguistically responsive teacher candidates.

### *Becoming Familiar with Students' Language Backgrounds, Experiences, and Proficiencies*

Through the RAP trainings, TCs were encouraged to learn about their pupils' linguistic and academic backgrounds and use that knowledge to inform their RAP book selection and lesson planning process throughout the semester. Although none of the teacher candidates indicated that he or she had indeed referred to the book selection checklist in the process of choosing a book, their rationales for book selection typically matched one or more of the criteria on the book selection checklist. The analysis of the TC observation and interview data revealed that TCs considered a range of information about their pupils as they chose books. They mentioned thinking about pupil enjoyment, experiences pupils could relate to, themes or content that connected to topics being studied in class, and pupils' language and academic needs.

All TCs wanted the read-aloud session to be enjoyable for their pupils so they noted that they made an effort to choose books about content in which their pupils had expressed an interest such as animals or sports. In addition, many mentioned trying to select a book that connected to an instructional theme in the class such as fairytales or folktales, a Native American theme,

or the study of the solar system. Some TCs also considered academic needs, as in the case of Diana who worked with a bilingual pupil who she perceived to be more advanced than many of her peers. Diana stated that she chose a book that "was a little bit harder, not the words, but the inferences and the concepts. So I thought PJ would be able to handle it so that is why I picked it" (Diana, Observation #3).

Finding an appropriate match between the language level of the book and the pupil's proficiency in English was highlighted in the checklist and in the trainings. However, in the relatively rare cases in which TCs referred to pupils' specific language needs in regard to book selection, it was one of a number of factors. Warner discusses the nature of this dilemma saying:

> At first I was thinking [the book] was a little young, and then I decided that I was going to go with it because there are still words in these books that are beneficial to him, and even if he just hears me reading it. Rather than picking something that is too academic, where all the words are great to learn, but he may not enjoy reading. (Observation #3)

Clearly, as Warner indicates, in terms of book selection, it was a challenge to balance consideration of pupil enjoyment and language proficiency along with the language level of the book and its conceptual difficulty.

For three of our novice teachers, with little background in children's literature, the "default" method of choosing a book that they themselves had enjoyed as a child persisted to varying degrees. For example, when asked why she chose a particular book, Greta simply said, "I loved it when I was little." Similarly, Sonia explained how the book she chose was one with which she was familiar, one she recalled liking as a child and one that her pupils would enjoy and be able to relate to in terms of the central plot and message of the book.

Even though TCs were still learning how to apply their growing knowledge about their pupils' languages backgrounds, experiences, and proficiencies to select appropriate books, once they were actually engaged in a read-aloud session, all of the TCs we observed were able to successfully utilize the interaction during their read-alouds to learn more about their pupils. For example, while reading Duck at the Door (Urbanovic, 2007), Donna pointed to the illustration and asked her Guatemalan pupil about his family's pets.

> Donna: Do you have this many pets in your house?
> Pupil: [indicates yes.]
> Donna: You do? How many pets do you have?
> Pupil: I have cats, one two three.
> Donna: You have cats? (Observation #2)

Similarly, in another example, Sonia read aloud to two pupils, one of whom was Taiwanese, about a child learning how to ride a bicycle and as they predicted what the story was going to be about, she probed them about their own experiences riding bikes and introduced the concept of training wheels. As these examples illustrate, TCs utilized the interactions that occurred during their read aloud sessions to become more familiar with various aspects of students' backgrounds including their level of proficiency in English.

Data collected from supervisors and CTs indicated that the RAP facilitated teacher candidate learning about bilingual learners. Both of these groups of participants commented on how participating in the RAP with bilingual pupils helped heighten TCs' knowledge of bilingual learners' unique educational needs as well as a general awareness of their presence in mainstream classrooms. As one supervisor noted, "Had these [TCs] not had this [read aloud project] experience, I'm not really sure that they would know the level of need of particular ELL kids." She continued, noting that on a very basic level, the RAP helped TCs learn "that the [ELL] children exist in the classroom." Another supervisor noted that the RAP was a vehicle to sensitize TCs to bilingual learners and their particular needs:

> What's strong about the Read Aloud is that [TCs] are identifying that students in the classroom have different needs. Because if not, I don't think that they would necessarily point out "oh that's an English language learner I need to." (Derrick, Supervisor Interview)

The RAP has created an opportunity for TCs to become aware of and responsive to the presence of bilingual learners in mainstream classroom and to begin to develop strategies aimed at learning about their language backgrounds, experiences, and proficiencies.

Supervisors and CTs also felt the project was especially powerful in helping TCs develop strong relationships with individual bilingual learners. The value of this bond and its relationship to TCs' capacity to assist the bilingual pupil is illustrated in this comment from a CT:

it seems that after the students work together for about two weeks, something changes . . . the [TC]comes into the classroom with a sparkle in their eye. "I'm really helping little Joey . . . I can't wait to see him next week." The bond begins and they seem to form a relationship. (Chelsea, CT Interview)

The value of these relationships was reciprocal in that TCs gained important insights into particular pupil characteristics and pupils formed positive bonds with caring adults.

### *Understanding the Language Demands of Read-Alouds*

For bilingual pupils, successful participation in a one-on-one read-aloud demands receptive and productive language use. To illustrate the difficulty of comprehending and discussing a text in a language in which one is not proficient, the RAP trainings include a simulation in which TCs themselves engaged in a read-aloud in Spanish or German and then were asked to reflect on the experience. The goal was to assist TCs in recognizing the language demands inherent in any read aloud experience and to demonstrate the importance of identifying specific language that could be taught to their particular bilingual pupil through the texts they selected. One area of language demand that TCs tended to focus on was vocabulary. As the examples below illustrate, some TCs had identified specific vocabulary before their RAP sessions whereas others became aware of vocabulary that needed to be taught during the actual reading of the text.

Three of the TCs we observed, Grant, Wendy, and Warner, explicitly pre-taught vocabulary in their read-aloud sessions before they read aloud the text. They typically prepared vocabulary words on cards or sticky notes to teach new words to their pupils before reading the text. Their pre-teaching included showing students pictures to illustrate the meaning, using child-friendly definitions, using gestures, modeling how the word could be used in a sentence, or connecting the word to the pupil's experience. This work shows an understanding of the vocabulary language demands any text might present to a bilingual learner and an explicit commitment to helping students develop their English vocabulary.

Although six of the nine TCs did not pre-teach vocabulary, all of them did employ some vocabulary teaching strategies during their actual read-alouds. Many students used the strategy of defining words as they were encountered in the text. Some stopped reading briefly to give extensive

definitions and explanations that were closely tied to the text as Diana did with her Korean pupil.

> Diana: Do you know what sloppy means? Look at them. [Indicates the illustration in the book.] Do they look like neat pigs?
> Pupil: [Shakes head no.]
> Diana: Sloppy means messy, so they have food on the floor and things everywhere. They are really, really messy piggies. Except for Otis, Otis is very neat (Observation #1).

Other times a TC barely interrupted the flow of the reading to provide a quick definition or synonym as Cami did while reading Cinderella to her Spanish speaking first grader.

> Cami: "A fine banquet was served," that's like a dinner, "but the young prince only gazed at her and could not eat a bite" (Observation #1).

In addition to providing definitions, teaching the meaning of an unfamiliar word by using it in a sentence, as illustrated in the example below, was a vocabulary-building strategy that was observed in most of the read-aloud sessions.

> Warner: [Stopping after having read a sentence in the text with the word erected.] Do you know what erected means?
> Pupil: No.
> Warner: Erected means to build or to assemble. You erect a building. He erected the new playground (Observation #1).

The use of gestures was another method that TCs used in conveying meaning of new vocabulary words. Wendy was able to efficiently communicate the meaning of scratch by pretending to scratch her arm and search by putting her hand to her forehead as if she were looking for something. An additional effective practice observed in regard to vocabulary was TCs' connection of words to a pupil's experience. Warner did this after he defined erected and used it in a sentence.

> Warner: Have you ever built anything? Have you ever erected anything?

> Pupil: Snowman.
> Warner: Snowman. Have you, um, erected a lot of snowmen this winter?
> Pupil: No, just one.
> Warner: Just one. Probably with that big storm that we got, huh? (Observation #1).

Although all TCs implemented some kind of interaction around vocabulary in virtually all of their read-aloud sessions, planning in advance for the integration of vocabulary teaching within the RAP was a challenge, as mentioned above. In her interview, Sonia describes her struggle with this aspect of the RAP:

> Vocab is actually the one [part of the read aloud project] I have the most trouble with. Choosing . . .not just choosing the words, but where to fit them in my lesson. I always feel like it's awkward to be like "Here's three words, remember them, now let's read a book," and then at the end, "can you remember what they mean?" It seems like sometimes . . . hard to do that. So I never found a way to incorporate it that well into the reading of the book. (Observation #1)

As these examples illustrate, TCs demonstrated a range of understanding about the vocabulary demands of the read-aloud sessions for their bilingual pupils. The TCs we observed did not show evidence of understanding about other aspects of language demand in the RAP. However, the focus of RAP trainings and support materials was on vocabulary, therefore, we did not expect to see TCs extending beyond vocabulary work into other aspects of language such as function and structure.

### Scaffolding Successful Engagement with Read-Alouds

Teacher candidates modeled and engaged pupils in a number of reading comprehension strategies before, during, and after the reading of the text to facilitate comprehension. All the TCs modeled and engaged their pupils in the reading comprehension strategy of making predictions about the text at some point in one or more of their read-aloud sessions. Many TCs demonstrated the strategy of using the illustrations to preview and predict before reading. For example, some TCs had the pupil make a brief prediction of the story based on the cover or had them engage in a "picture walk" of the entire book before sharing it together. There was variation in this approach

as well. For example, Wendy engaged her Spanish speaking pupil in a great deal of conversation while he previewed the pictures whereas Greta, on the other hand, allowed her Taiwanese pupil to just look quietly at the illustrations while she turned the pages saying, "First we are going to look through the pictures. OK, so stop me if you have a question, or if you might have a question about one of the pictures" (Observation #2). Several TCs would stop periodically throughout their reading of the book to ask their pupil to make predictions. Mary stopped reading one book right before its conclusion and asked her pupil to draw a picture representing her prediction of what would happen next. Mary herself had also drawn a picture, which she subsequently shared with the pupil before they then discussed how and why their predictions were different (Observation #1).

In their RAP sessions TCs also modeled how good readers use their own background knowledge to comprehend text by engaging their pupils in the activation and accessing of background knowledge. Sometimes the modeling of the strategy of activation of background knowledge was linked to the process of learning about the pupil and was as simple as a question or two as in the case of Sonia who simply asked, before reading a story in which a character learns to ride a bicycle, whether the pupils had bikes or knew how to ride. Other times the activation of background knowledge was less direct or more elaborate. Grant had his two pupils, one of whom was Portuguese speaking, use home-made paper cut-out puppets of the sun, the moon and the water before reading Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky (Dayrell & Lent, 1968) saying,

> So this [indicating the book] is a story that's going to use the water, the moon, and the sun, and I want you guys to come up with a story about why you think the sun and the moon are in the sky using these three things. [He hands the pupils stick puppets representing the sun, the moon and water.] So tell me the story. (Observation #1)

In this way Grant allowed his pupils to use their background knowledge to practice using English in preparation for reading and comprehending the book. Wendy, who was about to share Pickles to Pittsburgh (Barrett & Barrett, 2000) with her pupil, first engaged him in activating his background knowledge about its prequel, Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs (Barrett & Barrett, 1978), by asking him to retell that story.

Another reading comprehension strategy in which TCs engaged their pupils while they were reading the text was "comprehension monitoring" or

checking in from time to time to see if meaning was being constructed, or, in other words, if the book was making sense. Here we see Warner engaging in a comprehension check with his pupil with whom he was reading *Miss Nelson Is Missing* (Allard & Marshall, 1977):

> Warner: So what do you think really happened to Miss Nelson when she was missing?
> Pupil: Miss Nelson, she was the new teacher to. . .make her student get better behaving.
> Warner: That's right, so they wouldn't misbehave anymore. So they wouldn't be silly or fool around during class and story hour, right? (Observation #2).

TCs also modeled and engaged their pupils in a number of reading comprehension strategies following the reading of the text such as retelling, summarizing, comparing/contrasting with other books, or identifying the main idea. These practices were varied and included assisting in the creation of oral or written retellings or summaries with the aid of pictures or text scaffolds following a read-aloud. Sonia, after reading If You Give a Mouse a Cookie (Numeroffe & Bond, 1985) to her small group of pupils, had them place pictures that related to the story's events in order and then orally retell the sequence of events. Wendy had her Spanish speaking fourth grader dictate missing words to complete a graphic organizer "flow chart" about the events in a folktale How Chipmunk Got His Stripes (Bruchac, Bruchac, Aruego, & Dewey, 2003) to have him summarize the plot. Cami had her Spanish speaking first grader draw a picture of the Cinderella in the fairy tale they had just read while briefly discussing the similarities and differences among the various "Cinderellas" they had encountered in the series of Cinderella stories from around the world they had read. Grant had his pupil identify the main idea of the story he had read by making a copy of the cover of the book with the title deleted so that the student could have the opportunity to create an appropriate title (Observation #3).

   In addition to providing pupils with models of effective comprehension strategies and opportunities to engage in activities to practice such strategies, TCs also employed other scaffolds to promote pupil comprehension of and engagement with the text they were sharing. One of these practices was the use of strategies to build background knowledge necessary to understand a read-aloud. For instance, Warner had his Korean pupil listen to some Irish music on his iPod to develop some background knowledge for a text about St. Patrick's Day festivities in which Irish jigs were discussed. Another practice observed was the explanation of a potentially confusing

passage. For example, to clarify that what she was reading was not dialogue, Wendy stopped to explain to her pupil that she was reading aloud the contents of a letter, something that might not have been obvious to a pupil who was perhaps unfamiliar with salutations in English.

> Wendy: "Dear Henry and Kate," So, it's the grandfather who's writing a letter to his two grandchildren, OK? He's writing a letter to the two kids (Observation #2).

Virtually all TCs also used book illustrations as scaffolds to promote comprehension. As noted previously, illustrations were used in teaching vocabulary, in previewing the text during "picture walks" and, in some cases, in the actual read-aloud process to promote comprehension. Overall, illustrations were a rich scaffold during the read-aloud sessions as they contributed to comprehension of the text at being shared as well as the development of comprehension strategies.

   CTs and supervisors also offered some additional insight into the scaffolds that TCs were learning and applying in their work with bilingual learners. Specifically, CTs and supervisors found that TCs were more skillfully integrating "wait time" into their practice. They consistently talked about TCs learning to give pupils more time to respond, a valuable technique in working with bilingual learners.

## Implications

The analysis of the data reveals that in the context of the RAP, TCs exhibit nascent development of three types of pedagogical expertise necessary for mainstream classroom teachers to effectively instruct bilingual learners as recommended by Lucas et al. (2008). In terms of the first area of recommended expertise, "familiarity with the students' linguistic and academic backgrounds," the majority of participants (TCs, CTs, and supervisors) report increased TC awareness of bilingual learners and general language development issues in the classroom. TC practice data also revealed that they used the RAP as a vehicle to learn more about their pupils' backgrounds and interests. Their practice, however, showed little explicit attention to learning specifically about bilingual learners' language proficiency and using that particular knowledge to guide book selection and RAP lesson planning. In fact, though the RAP facilitated an ongoing learning process in which TCs selected books they considered good matches for their students and then used the interactions in reading aloud the books to continue to

learn about their pupils, this learning did not clearly demonstrate TC use of "viable methods to learn about the ELL students' language backgrounds, experiences and proficiencies to better tailor instruction for them" (Lucas & Villegas, 2011, p. 62, emphasis added). In terms of the second area of pedagogical expertise, "understanding of the language demands inherent in the learning tasks that students are expected to carry out in class" (Lucas et al., 2008, p. 366), the data reveal that TCs tended to look at language demand in terms of vocabulary, which is, in fact, a critical but partial feature of language demand. We wanted to build on this emergent capacity to "look at language (rather than simply through language) in order to effectively mediate student learning" (de Jong & Harper, 2011, p. 85). As a result we revised the RAP trainings and supports in ways that highlighted language in the read-aloud context. First, we introduced efforts to emphasize key principles of second-language learning (Lucas & Villegas,2011) including an awareness of the distinctions between conversational and academic language proficiency to sensitize our TCs to the need to learn about their pupils' language proficiency. We also focused more on having TCs practice identifying the language demands of RAP sessions beyond vocabulary and introduced a framework for writing language objectives and developed revised lesson plan templates. The framework asked TCs to develop language objectives focusing on vocabulary, word-level structures, and sentence-level structures. Moreover, in regard to vocabulary, the framework introduced a more sophisticated perspective regarding the selection of words to teach by distinguishing among different "tiers" of vocabulary words, based, in part, on the work of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) and Zwiers (2008). The revised lesson plan template was designed to emphasize the development of these more refined language objectives.

As described above, the third area of pedagogical expertise recommended by Lucas et al.(2008) is "skills for using appropriate scaffolding so that ELLs can participate successfully in[learning] tasks " (p. 366). The observation data show varied levels of TC development in this area of expertise as relates to research-based best practices in reading aloud to bilingual learners. Many specific skills such as a variety of vocabulary teaching strategies, modeling and engaging students in reading comprehension strategies, building background knowledge, and facilitating general comprehension of the text were observed. However, TCs did not report specific attention to these scaffolds in their post-RAP session interviews about their planning and implementation. This finding is understandable from a developmental perspective: these developing teachers are able to demonstrate an appropriation of particular strategies without a fully developed theory-based

rationale for their implementation.

Overall, we feel that the strengths and weaknesses observed in TC practice are a reflection of the developmental stage of TCs in their own construction of knowledge related to language and literacy development of bilingual learners as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these aspects of our curriculum as a whole: coursework as well as fieldwork. As we have described, this research has informed improved supports for the RAP. However, it also has implications for course work and other aspects of the teacher education program. For example, one clear implication is that the principles of second-language learning and teaching need to be infused across the teacher education program, not just in the RAP or in the specially designed optional methods courses about working with bilingual pupils. Although some recent efforts have included this kind of infusion in language arts and literacy coursework, there remains work to be done in terms of coherence and comprehensiveness in those contexts. Furthermore, beyond addressing the area of language development within a literacy context, we believe our findings have parallel implications for helping TCs develop as linguistically responsive educators within other academic contexts as well. In other words, though some of the areas of pedagogical expertise developed through the RAP can be transferred to instruction in other disciplines, there is a need to focus on specific knowledge and skills required for the instruction of bilingual pupils within each content area. At BC LSOE this is an area of our current program development.

## Conclusion

The research presented here about TCs' practices with bilingual learners in a read-aloud context can perhaps best be viewed as a snapshot of the development of pedagogical expertise that is embedded within a teacher education program that itself is evolving to better address the specific needs of bilingual learners. We believe that our findings indicate that the RAP is a useful tool to promote the development of linguistically responsive TCs. However, this research also demonstrates the degree of training and support that is needed within a field placement, to have teacher candidates begin to implement valued practices with bilingual learners. Yet if schools of education intend to meet the challenge of preparing effective teachers of bilingual learners, field based activities focusing on these learners are obviously a necessary component of any approach. Because its design promotes development of an array of pedagogical expertise as well as utilizes a common classroom practice, the RAP is a field-based project that has shown promise

as a valuable feature of such an approach and one that could be replicated in most teacher preparation programs. In 2005 Zeichner observed that "(r)esearch on the preparation of teachers to teach underserved populations should pay special attention to the preparation of teachers to teach English language learners because almost no research has been conducted on this aspect of diversity in teacher education" (p. 747, emphasis added). We hope that this study adds to a small but growing body of research in this area.

## Acknowledgements

**Note**
1. Many of these resources and supports are available on the Boston College Title III website: http://www.bc.edu/schools/lsoe/title-iii/resources/readaloudresources.html.

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