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## Investigating the Enactment of Core Teaching Practices for Multilingual Learners Across Teaching Contexts: A Case Study

Nancy Dubetz

Lehman College, City University of New York, NANCY.DUBETZ@lehman.cuny.edu

Jennifer Collett

Lehman College, City University of New York, jennifer.collett@lehman.cuny.edu

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## Cover Page Footnote

**About the Authors:** Nancy Dubetz is Professor and Chair of the Department of Early Childhood and Childhood Education at Lehman College, City University of New York. Her research interests include the study of teachers' theories of practice in urban bilingual settings, teacher advocacy, school/university partnerships in the preparation of teachers of multilingual learners, and English instruction in public school contexts in Latin America. She has published in *Action in Teacher Education*, the *Bilingual Research Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *The Journal of Research in Education*, and *Issues in Teacher Education*. In addition, she has published multiple book chapters on preparing teachers of multilingual learners, and Professional Development School partnerships.

Jennifer Collett is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood and Childhood Education at Lehman College. Her scholarship focuses on the intersection of literacy and identity development for emergent bilinguals and multilingual learners. She has published in the *Bilingual Research Journal*, the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *Action in Teacher Education*, and *The Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. Her publications include a chapter in *Stress and Coping of English Learners*, an edited book published by Information Age Publishing.

## End Notes

1. The term 'multilingual learners' is used to recognize the multiple languages and/or dialects students are learning and using across their lives.
2. As a credentialed teacher, data collection occurred during Carmen's initial two years in the classroom and then a more in-depth case study approach to data collection occurred during year four.
3. English as a New Language (ENL) is the term used to identify multilingual learners in New York State. Students classified ENL entered the school district with a home language of something other than English.
4. The term 'newcomer' indicates that the student is at the nascent stages of developing English.
5. SIOP refers to Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010/2014), which was introduced to Carmen during her preservice preparation as a set of practices that support content learning and language development in multilingual learners.

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**Nancy Dubetz**

Lehman College, City University of New York

**Jennifer Collett**

Lehman College, City University of New York

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Scholarship in language education has produced a specialized knowledge base for educating multilingual learners (MLs) that encompasses what teachers should know, i.e., the knowledge of learning a new language, and what teachers should be able to do with this knowledge in the classroom, i.e., effective pedagogical practices. In this article, we argue that it is important to identify pedagogy that has been proven to be effective in educating MLs and explore ways to engage pre-service and practicing teachers in using it in the classroom. We present examples of two specific core-teaching practices derived from research in language education and explore what they look like in the enacted practice of an individual during her pre-service preparation and first four years of teaching. Findings from this longitudinal case study investigation illustrate how personal and teaching contexts inform instruction over time and can have implications for how teachers are prepared to work with MLs.

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**Keywords:** core teaching practices, multilingual learners, practice-based teacher education, teacher education

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Scholarship in language education has produced a specialized knowledge base of teaching practices that are effective in helping multilingual learners (MLs) <sup>1</sup> achieve academically. This knowledge base is built on decades of research in diverse bilingual contexts, including transitional, immersion, and dual language classrooms, as well as second language education contexts such as English as a second language (ESL), content-based, and English language development (ELD) classrooms (August & Shanahan, 2006; Hinkel, 2011; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010). Supporting teachers to learn how to enact these practices in ways that address the unique needs of their learners is central to the work of teacher educators.

Recent teacher preparation initiatives defining the content of teacher education have not taken into account the specialized knowledge base on educating MLs (Grossman, 2018). Ignoring the existence of a specialized pedagogy for multilingual

learners risks affirming the myth that simply ‘good teaching’ will meet the needs of unique populations of learners, which will have detrimental impacts in the classroom for some of the most vulnerable learners (de Jong & Harper, 2005). In response to these sentiments, in this article we argue that it is imperative to identify practices proven to be effective in educating MLs and explore how pre-service and practicing teachers use these practices in the classroom.

To study a teacher’s practice, research must unearth how a teacher enacts a particular practice to meet her MLs’ needs and explore how this teacher justifies the practice. Classroom practice reflects an ongoing negotiation of multiple variables including the teacher’s beliefs and personal language learning history brought to the teaching context, as well as the conditions of the teaching context including the school culture and the characteristics of the learners. We refer to this negotiation process as a teacher’s theory of practice (Dubetz 2002, 2012). The research reported in this article explores a teacher’s theory of practice for MLs in two ways. First, it provides evidence of particular research-based practices for MLs in one teacher’s instruction over time. Then, it explores how the teacher’s understandings about language learning inform how she enacts these practices in particular ways with her students.

In this article, we present a case study of one teacher, Carmen, who we followed over a six-year period to understand how her theory of practice around language teaching and learning developed, and what her practice might reveal about how she was prepared to be a bilingual teacher. Collected data include Carmen’s instructional practice during her pre-service teacher preparation and her first years as a credentialed, practicing teacher. To study how Carmen’s pedagogical practice supported her multilingual students’ learning, we focus on two research-based practices, referred to as *core-teaching practices*, that Carmen learned in her pre-service preparation.

This study was part of a larger longitudinal investigation of research-based practices introduced to three cohorts of teacher interns participating in a pre-service program. One of the larger program goals was to ensure all teachers were prepared to effectively teach MLs. The two core-teaching practices under investigation were: (a) frontloading and reinforcing academic language, and (b) using multilingual learners’ resources to scaffold learning. The following research questions guided data collection and analysis: How does a pre-service intern enact core-teaching practices to support her multilingual learners? How does this same individual enact core-teaching practices to support her multilingual learners as a practicing teacher? What are the changes in how this individual uses these core-teaching practices in the transition from pre-service to practicing teacher?

## Literature Review

### Educating Multilingual Learners

Prominent language education scholars have constructed models of effective preparation for mainstream teachers of MLs. Examples include the work of de Jong and Harper (2005) as well as Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzales (2008). These models weave together general knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of effective teachers for multilingual learners. For example, in Lucas et al. (2008) *linguistically responsive teaching* model, teachers are expected to identify classroom language demands across particular disciplines, develop an understanding of the principles of second language learning, and know how to apply these second language acquisition (SLA) principles to scaffold instruction. In addition, these teachers must demonstrate particular dispositions to include sociolinguistic consciousness, a valuing of linguistic diversity, and an inclination toward advocacy. The most effective way to help novice teachers develop important knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching MLs is to provide teachers with opportunities to learn through carefully scaffolded, practice-based experiences. In other words, novice teachers should learn the practice by 'doing' the practice and reflecting on that experience.

One approach to establishing a practice-based curriculum for teacher preparation is to identify a common set of research-based instructional practices proven effective in meeting students' academic needs. Multiple terms in the teacher education literature have been used to identify a common set of research-based instructional practices including high leverage practices (Ball & Fornazi, 2011), core practices (McDonald et al., 2013), and general pedagogical practices or instructional strategies (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Despite differences in terminology these research-based instructional practices share a common set of tenets. Central to these tenets is the underlying assumptions that practice is a space where content and pedagogy coexist, and instructional decision-making is guided by a teacher's prior knowledge and experiences in deciding when, how, and where to use an appropriate practice.

We have chosen to use the term *core-teaching practices* in our work. To identify core teaching practices for preparing teachers to work with MLs, we adopted a set of criteria that Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald (2009) and McDonald et al. (2013) recommend for establishing a set of common practices for teacher preparation in general. First, a core-teaching practice for MLs must be research-based; meaning that second language and bilingual scholars identified the core-teaching practice as having a positive impact on MLs' learning of both language and content. Thus, the core practice must incorporate aspects of language and content learning. A core-teaching practice must respond to varying levels of linguistic proficiency, such that it addresses the language needs of both emergent MLs who are at the earlier stages of linguistic development and more proficient MLs. Moreover, a core-teaching practice must be adaptable across multiple contexts including bilingual and English-medium classrooms. Finally, all teachers, including novice teachers at the early stages of their professional learning, must be able to implement a core-teaching practice. Using these criteria, we identified a set of core-teaching practices that guided our larger six-year investigation

of how effective pre-service candidates were in teaching MLs as they transitioned into classrooms as credentialed teachers.

### **Core-teaching Practices**

This section provides a brief literature review of the two core-teaching practices that are the focus of this case study: (a) frontloading and reinforcing academic and task-related language, and (b) using multilingual learners' resources to scaffold learning in a new language.

#### ***Introducing Multilingual Learners to Academic Language***

The importance of integrating language and content instruction in the classroom to meet MLs' academic needs has been widely recognized by scholars in language education for over 30 years (Short, 1994; Snow et al., 1989). Without preparation in how to develop what scholars refer to as *pedagogical language knowledge* (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011) novice classroom teachers will tend to focus on content, rather than language in their teaching.

Mastery of academic language is crucial for developing the level of academic literacy MLs need to meet grade-level content standards; language education scholars have consistently underscored the importance of exposing MLs to academic language (DeCerbo et al., 2014; Gibbons, 2009; Schleppegrell, 2004; Short, 1994; Snow & Katz, 2010). Drawing upon the work of Schleppegrell (2004) and Gibbons (2009), we define academic language as the language required to understand and participate in the discourse communities of the academic subjects taught in school. Gibbons (2009) notes "the language associated with academic learning traditionally 'codes' knowledge in ways that are different from everyday ways of expressing what we know" (p. 5). As a result, teachers must incorporate practices that provide MLs with access to this linguistic knowledge.

Schleppegrell (2009) argues the linguistic features of academic registers that characterize discipline-based language tasks in school reveal both a specialized lexicon, or vocabulary, and the use of particular grammars. Effective teachers must expose MLs to this academic language in meaningful ways. Pedagogical approaches recommended in the second language literature include frontloading academic language, as well as focused and repeated practice with this language during instruction.

Frontloading academic language is a strategy recommended for use during English Language Development (ELD), a time allocated during the instructional day to increase MLs' proficiency in the new language (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010; Dutro & Moran, 2002). Frontloading is an instructional routine that exposes MLs to multiple aspects of a given language including grammar, vocabulary, and language functions before the introduction of key concepts, classroom activities, and assignments. It is important to note that frontloading includes vocabulary, as well as important language forms and structures MLs must master in order to access content.

Frontloading is not to be confused with teaching lessons on isolated grammar points or language structures, an approach that has been demonstrated to be ineffective for advancing MLs' language proficiency (Lyster, 2004). Different genres will contain different sets of language functions, language structures, and content-specific

vocabulary that invoke different ways of engaging with a text. Teachers should introduce relevant vocabulary and language structures as part of the instruction around the topic or text under study, and then consistently and deliberately reinforce these structures during instruction. In other words, in any given lesson frontloading can look quite different. For example, in one lesson a teacher may choose to focus on teaching targeted vocabulary and linguistic forms to all students at the beginning of a lesson. While in another lesson that same teacher might introduce linguistic forms to MLs during a period when students are practicing or applying newly learned content and skills.

To participate in academic discourse communities, successful learners must engage in the exchange of ideas across diverse disciplines including mathematics, natural sciences, social studies, and the various genres of literature. Students must be able to access academic content and demonstrate what they know using different language modalities of reading, writing, listening, and speaking for specific academic purposes. For example, these modalities will differ when presenting an argument or when using textual evidence to support an inference. Therefore, frontloading instruction in the academic language associated with particular academic tasks is only effective when supported by continued, focused practice with that language across a lesson. Based on a review of studies from Canadian immersion classrooms, Lyster (2004) outlines how instruction must include opportunities for focused and controlled language practice to help language learners notice and deconstruct complex language structures required to complete the task, and learn how to use language to effectively communicate with others.

Building upon this literature, we define the core-teaching practice of frontloading and reinforcing academic and task-related language as upholding the following characteristics.

- Teaching and reinforcing important academic vocabulary and linguistic forms necessary for MLs to understand the content. Examples of such practice may include: (a) introducing language in a small group prior a whole class lesson, or (b) reinforcing language to a targeted group of learners during practice segments of a lesson.
- Planning and communicating language objectives to learners across a given lesson.
- Deliberately and consistently using targeted academic language throughout a lesson.

### ***Using Multilingual Learners' Linguistic Resources***

The practice of using MLs' linguistic resources in the classroom is grounded in sociocultural theories of language learning (García & Kleifgen, 2010). In this section, we substitute "native" with "home" language to reflect the adoption of the term in the standards for language learning in New York State. Strategically using students' home languages during instruction extends beyond simply soliciting prior knowledge, but rather includes providing MLs access to supplementary materials in the home language that might involve using multilingual texts and media, targeted instruction in the home

language to build content knowledge, or review instruction conducted in English to ensure comprehension.

Translanguaging is a self-regulatory mechanism used by MLs when problem solving during academic tasks (Velasco & García, 2014). By recognizing translanguaging as a valid form of communication and a bridge to literacy development in the classroom, teachers convey to students that all forms of language are valued and can serve as a resource for learning. As a pedagogical approach to support MLs, teachers use translanguaging to scaffold learning by incorporating opportunities that engage children in investigating comparisons across languages.

Research identifies important relationships between home and second language literacy development (August & Shanahan, 2006; Riches & Genesse, 2006) and that supporting home language helps develop second language literacy (August & Shanahan, 2010; Escamilla et al., 2007; García, 2009; Goldenberg, 2013). For example, successful learners who are literate in their home language make use of cognates and apply previously learned comprehension skills to facilitate learning to read in their second language (Jiménez et al., 1995). August, Calderón, and Carlo (2002) found that Spanish-speaking students knew significantly more cognates than their English-speaking counterparts, which enhanced their English language acquisition. Lucas and Katz (1994) found that exemplary programs were places where children were encouraged to use their home languages to assist one another, tutor each other, and interact socially. In these programs, teachers also used children's home languages to check for comprehension, translate terminology, and interact socially with children.

New research is yielding recommended practices that assist multilingual learners and their teachers in making strategic connections between home and second languages (Celic & Seltzer, 2013; Escamilla et al., 2007; García et al., 2017; Velasco & García, 2014). Developing metalinguistic awareness by engaging learners in strategic comparisons of the native and second languages, for example emphasizing certain English phonemes and combinations of phonemes that do not exist in Spanish, can serve bilingual learners in their literacy development (August & Shanahan, 2006).

MLs bring a range of linguistic assets that are instructional resources. Effective teachers of MLs use learners' full repertoire of linguistic resources to build bridges to academic content in multiple ways. These may include the following practices.

- Solicit MLs' prior knowledge of content in the home language. English speaking classroom teachers who are not proficient in their students' home language(s) and culture can support students' use of home languages by encouraging children who share a common language to work together (Fassler, 2004; García et al., 2017).
- Promote the use of translanguaging in the classroom (García & Wei, 2013).
- Provide students with multilingual texts and translations across a given lesson. Multilingual texts include using well-written bilingual books and resources, and posting multilingual classroom displays (de Jong & Harper, 2005; de Jong et al., 2013).
- Highlight connections between languages. This may include using cognate charts, multilingual vocabulary, and syntax investigations, as well as promoting

multilingual research by engaging learners in investigations of their languages (Celic & Seltzer, 2013; García et al., 2017).

These two core-teaching practices served as the lens for our investigation of Carmen's teaching practice and the theory of practice that informed her instructional decisions.

## Methods

To study how a novice teacher developed an understanding of, and enacted core-teaching practices, we used a case study approach to collect and analyze data of a teacher, Carmen, across a six-year period spanning her pre-service preparation experience and her initial four years of teaching. We return to the research questions guiding the study to frame the methodological approaches used to collect and analyze data. These questions include: How does a pre-service intern enact two core-teaching practices to support her multilingual learners? How does this same individual enact these same core-teaching practices to support her multilingual learners as a practicing teacher? What are the changes in how this individual uses these core-teaching practices in the transition from pre-service to practicing teacher?

### Participant

Carmen, a Spanish-English bilingual educator, is the focus of the case study under investigation. Carmen was born in the United States to parents of Puerto Rican descent. Raised in a bilingual home, Carmen decided to pursue her bilingual certification when she entered her teacher preparation program. At this time Carmen was in her early 20s and recently earned her undergraduate degree.

### Teacher Preparation Program

Carmen was enrolled in an elementary school teacher-preparation program at an urban public university that included a teacher residency. All teacher candidates enrolled in this program simultaneously completed graduate-level classes and a yearlong residency internship in a local school. As part of their coursework and prior to entering their internship, candidates were required to complete a two-course sequence focusing on multilingual learners. The initial course, *Issues of Bilingualism*, introduced and reinforced aspects of second language development theory as well as practices grounded in research on language learning, biliteracy development, and strategic uses of native or home languages in assessment and instruction (August & Shanahan, 2010; Edelsky, 1986; Escamilla & Coady, 2001; Escamilla et al., 2007; García, 2009; Manyak, 2002). The second course, *English as a Second Language Methods*, focused on classroom practices for teaching grade level content for students learning English as a new language. Candidates identified and analyzed practices in the classroom to support multilingual learners using resources from the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarría et al., 2010/2014). While it is important to recognize the criticisms that have been made about the SIOP model (Crawford & Reyes, 2015; Palmer & Martinez, 2013), the SIOP resources include videos and case studies of concrete examples of teachers incorporating academic language practice into instruction. The SIOP rating scales were useful for engaging pre-service teachers in critiquing particular practices. Because we were aware of the SIOP's limited emphasis on the use of MLs

home language in scaffolding instruction, we emphasized practices around home language use in the initial course of the sequence.

Across the two-course sequence candidates were taught methodological practice and theory aligned to supporting the linguistic and academic needs of multilingual learners to help candidates begin to construct a theory of practice on how and when to implement certain core-teaching practices into their pedagogy. Among the core-teaching practices candidates were introduced to across this two-course sequence were the two practices that are the focus of this case study investigation. As noted, these two core-teaching practices include: (a) frontloading and reinforcing academic language, and (b) using MLs' linguistic resources to scaffold learning in a new language.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection occurred during three distinct periods: (a) when Carmen was enrolled in the teacher residency program, referred to as pre-service data, (b) during Carmen's initial two years as a full-time practicing teacher, and (c) during Carmen's fourth year of teaching.

Pre-service data were collected from an electronic program portfolio containing key assignments across Carmen's tenure in the graduate program. There were five artifacts selected for analysis. These artifacts included: (a) one science lesson plan, (b) two edited videos of Carmen teaching, one in math and one in literacy, along with written reflections on those edited videos, (c) a case study from Carmen's bilingualism course, (d) reflective essays on Carmen's practice for a course in ESL methodology and a math practicum course, and (e) three Evidence Collection Records (ECRs). During formal observations, Carmen's supervisor prepared the ECRs where these records became a structured way to document and organize candidates' teaching around areas of effective instruction as identified by Charlotte Danielson's (2007) *Framework for Teaching*.

To document Carmen's classroom practice as she transitioned from the residency program to a full-time credentialed teacher, classroom observations were conducted during her initial two years of teaching. Classroom observations were conducted once during each academic year, where a researcher, the first author of this article, took detailed field notes of a complete lesson.

Analysis of Carmen's pre-service and early teaching showed evidence of the two core-teaching practices under investigation, and, therefore, during Carmen's fourth year of teaching her classroom became the context of a case study. Across one academic year, the authors of this article observed Carmen's practice three times. For these formal observations, one researcher took descriptive field notes on what Carmen said and did, while the other researcher documented Carmen's instruction as well as the participation of Carmen's English as a New Language (ENL)<sup>2</sup> students. Both sets of field notes were combined into one document and then shared with Carmen prior to an interview. During the interview, Carmen reviewed the notes and the work produced by ENL students during the lesson, sharing her reflections on the enacted practice captured through the field notes. In addition to these three formal observations, one of the authors spent two days each month in Carmen's classroom documenting her pedagogy, as well as student participation.

Data collected during Carmen's fourth year of teaching included the field notes from the teaching observations, follow-up interviews with Carmen around the field notes, and a review of the ENL students' work produced during the lessons. By including observation-based data and self-report data, we were able to gain insight into Carmen's theory of practice to understand what she considered when introducing academic language and using MLs' linguistic resources to scaffold their learning.

### **Data Analysis**

All pre-service artifacts, as well as observations from Carmen's first two years of teaching were divided into five lesson segments: the introduction, whole class instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and conclusions. Then, each artifact was analyzed by using a coding manual consisting of 11 descriptive and thematic codes using the qualitative software ATLAS.ti. The codes identified descriptors of each core-teaching practice under investigation. An example of a code used was 'primary language instruction', which identified data where explicit language instruction was something other than English. A practice could only be coded once within a segment. ATLAS.ti was used to provide frequency counts and to organize analyses by core-teaching practice and artifact type. All other pre-service artifacts including teacher reflections, memos, and course assignments were coded with the same set of codes.

During Carmen's fourth year of teaching, when Carmen's classroom became the context of a case study design, a similar coding practice was implemented. Classroom observations were analyzed for instances of the two core-teaching practices. Interviews were coded for factors that might explain why Carmen made these instructional decisions during observed activities. The following section provides findings on the two core-teaching practices for MLs under investigation to include frontloading and reinforcing academic and task related language, and using MLs' linguistic resources to scaffold learning.

### **Findings**

The findings are divided into three sections. In the first section, Carmen's personal language learning history and the language contexts of the classrooms in which she taught is presented. These experiences inform Carmen's theory of practice and can help explain how she enacted the two core-teaching practices in the classroom. In the second and third sections each core-teaching practice is explored through Carmen's theory of practice.

#### **Carmen's Personal and Classroom Language Story**

Carmen was born in the United States to two parents born in Puerto Rico. Carmen's mother lived in Puerto Rico until she married Carmen's father who moved to the United States at the age of three. Carmen grew up in a bilingual home where her mother spoke Spanish to Carmen and her siblings while her father spoke English. As a child, despite the fact that Carmen spoke Spanish and English, she used English at home and only spoke Spanish in the summers when visiting cousins in Puerto Rico. In high school she began dating a Spanish-speaking boyfriend, and began speaking Spanish to him and listening to Spanish music. In college she was placed in an upper level Spanish

class that she believed was too advanced, decided to drop it, and took Italian to meet her foreign language requirement.

When Carmen entered the teacher residency program, she pursued her teaching certification in childhood education with a bilingual extension. For her yearlong residency, Carmen was placed in a transitional bilingual fifth-grade classroom co-taught by a bilingual general education teacher and a special education teacher. Although the classroom was designated as bilingual and all students were Spanish speakers, the school did not provide home language instruction or curriculum materials. Rather, teachers in the school-wide bilingual program, and more specifically in Carmen's classroom, spoke Spanish and used Spanish to clarify directions or informally check for understanding. Students would speak Spanish among themselves at times during group work, but all formal instruction occurred in English.

When Carmen began teaching, she was hired to teach fourth grade in a school with a large population of multilingual learners. Carmen noted that this school had a strong commitment to help "English learners achieve". Carmen's fourth grade class was not part of a bilingual program and all texts and materials were in English. During her first year of teaching, ten students were classified as English as a New Language (ENL). In her second year, seven ENLs were enrolled in her class. In her fourth year of teaching<sup>3</sup>, seven students were designated as ENLs; she also identified six Spanish-speaking students who were not classified as ENL but were students she believed struggled and needed additional support.

### **Carmen's Use of Academic Language**

During Carmen's pre-service preparation language instruction played a more prominent role in Carmen's planning than in her enacted instruction. Lesson plans she prepared for bilingual course assignments and for observations by her internship supervisor consistently contained language objectives. However, in reviewing the supervisor's field notes of these observations there was no evidence that language objectives were explicitly communicated to students. Analysis of planning artifacts from different methods courses revealed that the work Carmen produced for instructors who were language educators included evidence of planning for language instruction to address gaps in MLs' language proficiency. In contrast, lesson plans she prepared for instructors who were not language educators did not include attention to language instruction. In other words, Carmen made specific modifications for MLs when there was an expectation to do so.

The analysis of teaching artifacts across time demonstrated that Carmen's understanding of academic language development centered on teaching important academic vocabulary. Her approach to teaching vocabulary evolved over the course of her pre-service preparation, and then remained consistent when she began teaching. Early in her internship, it was evident that Carmen was not focused on vocabulary development in her enacted practice even though she identified important vocabulary in her lesson planning. For example, in Carmen's initial observation as a pre-service intern she began a lesson by asking students to write the teaching point in their notebooks. She did not state the teaching point. Then, she displayed content-specific mathematical terminology including definitions and examples. Again, Carmen asked

students to write down these terms and definitions, but did not explain why or how these terms were going to be used across the lesson. Carmen explained that copying definitions was a routine practice used by her mentor teacher. At this stage of her preparation, her theory of practice did not yet reflect an understanding of the importance of frontloading vocabulary and language objectives even though she had been exposed to planning for language instruction in her coursework.

By the final months of her internship there were clear examples in Carmen's instruction of frontloading with an emphasis on teaching content-specific vocabulary at the beginning of the lesson. This change is represented in the data below: an excerpt from the supervisor's evidence collection record from a May observation.

*The lesson opens with an invitation for students to think about their past learning experiences about graphs. "So I want you to take a second and think about graphs. I want you guys to think about what graphs are and what we use them for. Take a moment to think. Turn to a partner and talk."*

*Carmen asks, "What are graphs?" She documents student responses on the SmartBoard. The first student offers an example of a graph and Carmen asks him, "Do you want to tell us how you use them?" When he cannot offer an answer, another student responds, "to collect data." Additional students' answers include using graphs for height, comparing, and to measure. Carmen clarifies how graphs are used to collect and organize data. She displayed the definition of a graph on the SmartBoard, and to a ML newcomer<sup>4</sup>, she says, "Te lo puse en español para que puede ver. [I wrote it in Spanish so you could see it.]" Carmen calls on a child to read the definition of graph in English, "A drawing showing a relationship between a certain set of numbers." She introduces a line plot with a picture and a definition of the word graph to include 'shows frequency of data along a number line.' She instructs students to copy the definition in their math notebooks.*

*Carmen introduces the definition of frequency and asks, "Who can tell me what that is?" A child responds, "The times that something happens." Carmen asks, "Does anyone want to add to that?" She asks a child, "Frequency, what does it make you think of?" He responds, "doubling." She reads the definition displayed on the SmartBoard, "The frequency is how often a certain number appears in a set of data." She asks students to think about when they studied mode and how mode is the number that appears most frequently in a set of data. Referring to a list of numbers written on the SmartBoard - 1,3,4,2,2,5,1,1,1,7,8 - Carmen explains, "The mode would be one and two if it was repeated at the same time but one is repeated most often."*

The emphasis on vocabulary is evident in this example. In multiple instances Carmen used several different techniques to frontload vocabulary for her MLs. In her initial question, "What are graphs?" she draws upon students' prior knowledge before offering an academic definition. She uses a similar strategy when introducing the term *frequency*, connecting the term to a prior learning experience when the students were learning about mode. In addition, Carmen provides definitions of these key terms in

Spanish and English. While visible changes were observed, still absent from her instruction included examples of explicit instruction on language forms.

When Carmen became a credentialed teacher, every observed lesson began with an introduction focusing on important academic vocabulary. She displayed the key vocabulary on the SmartBoard and reviewed the words with her students as the lesson proceeded. This was a consistent practice across content areas. For example, during an observed read aloud she introduced key terms including ‘ecstatic’ and ‘ludicrous’ to support students’ reading comprehension. In an observed math lesson, she reviewed terms such as ‘converting’ and ‘kilogram’ before students independently solved math tasks, and in a writing lesson ‘point of view’ and ‘circumstantial evidence’ were key concepts Carmen highlighted before addressing the learning objectives.

Across collected data, Carmen engaged in elements of the core-teaching practices frontloading and reinforcing academic and task-related language; however, she focused on only one dimension of language, which was academic vocabulary. While she intended to communicate language objectives in her teaching as indicated in lesson plans and key artifacts from coursework, this did not translate into her practice as a pre-service and practicing teacher. In addition, teaching and reinforcing linguistic forms by providing students sentence frames to support their syntactic development were not evident. These findings are further discussed in the discussion. The following section will present findings in how Carmen engaged in the core-teaching practice of exploiting her multilingual learners’ resources to support their learning.

### **Carmen’s Use of Multilingual Learners’ Linguistic Resources**

During her pre-service preparation, Carmen’s practices and commentaries reflected a commitment to use her students’ linguistic resources to scaffold learning. More specifically, she demonstrated this by using the three strategies of translating for individual MLs, translating assignments for MLs, and collaborating with other educators to provide support to Spanish-dominant speakers during independent practice.

One of Carmen’s first assignments in her pre-service program was to develop a series of sheltered, content-based lesson plans to address the needs of a fifth-grade bilingual learner, Mari, whom she followed for a case study assignment in her bilingualism course. In an explanation of why she made certain instructional decisions for Mari, Carmen noted how Mari was proficient in her home language, but struggled as an English learner, “particularly in the areas of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speech.” An excerpt from Carmen’s assignment where she identified and justified some of the instructional decisions she made regarding the use of the students’ home language reveal elements of her theory of practice regarding home language as a teaching resource. In her reflection on her work with Mari Carmen writes:

*In assessing each of these areas [speaking, reading, and writing] in Spanish it was obvious that Mari was just going through the steps that any English language learner will go through. When I asked her to speak, write, and read in Spanish Mari excelled. When I spoke to her in Spanish, Mari responded with longer sentences and was more confident in her voice. Her writing sample in Spanish had no errors and what she wrote in the sample proved that she felt more comfortable than she felt when she had to write in English. Another suggestion would be for Mari’s teacher*

*to build more on Mari's native language academic skills, which I believe are strong. I think that having Mari in a bilingual classroom is the first step, seeing as she is surrounded by Spanish speakers, but I feel as though her teacher needs to be building more on Mari's Spanish and English skills simultaneously so that she will learn more. For students such as Mari, who explained to me that she struggled with vocabulary, I thought it was important to translate at least the vocabulary words, which are the base of each lesson.*

*There are plenty of ways that teachers can advocate for their students and one of the ways that I felt was important was for teachers to create connections between a student's home culture and school by building on their native language academic skills. This is directly related to a feature in the SIOP<sup>5</sup> model, which suggests that concepts be linked to a student's background experiences. Mari's native language skill and knowledge, for example, were very strong and could work as a stepping stone to achieving a clear understanding of concepts in English. If teachers were to take the time to make these connections with their students they would be working to support their students and their education.*

This excerpt from Carmen's assignment illustrates key ideas about her theory of practice regarding effective pedagogy to support MLs. First, Carmen clearly identifies Mari's linguistic and academic strengths as she reflects on Mari's Spanish writing sample by indicating how there were "no errors", and how these written literacy skills needed to be leveraged as assets to support Mari's learning. However, Carmen also alludes to the importance of infusing English into Mari's instruction in careful and deliberate ways. Citing how vocabulary is a key construct of any given lesson, Carmen indicates how vocabulary should be translated for Mari. Finally, Carmen recognizes how Mari's cultural resources should be exploited in the classroom by drawing upon Mari's personal or home experiences.

Carmen's pre-service lesson planning and teaching observations provided additional evidence of how she used MLs' linguistic resources to support student learning. Below are two samples of data from a lesson Carmen taught in the bilingual classroom where she completed her internship. The first data point is an excerpt from a lesson plan she prepared in May where Carmen indicates how she plans to support her Spanish-dominant multilingual learners.

*Guided Practice: A small group of students will work at the back table with Ms. M, who will offer additional support (Students include: Carmen, Michal, Pedro, Betina). Ms. V. will work with newcomer students and English Language Learners (Students include Victoria, Anthony, and David) for additional support. These students will be working with the same data (students' heights) and be asked to create a line plot on construction paper to display this data.*

*Differentiation – Translated worksheet will be provided for newcomer students. Students that often require extra help will be given additional support by sitting in a small group with Ms. V. or Ms. M.*

It is important to note that Carmen intends to leverage her MLs' linguistic resources in two critical ways. First, she wants to group students by their language needs, specifically collaborating with two teachers, Ms. V and Ms. M, to provide her MLs with

additional support that includes home language support. In addition, Carmen intends to provide supplemental translated documents for her MLs so they perform the necessary tasks and engage in the activities of the lesson.

In Carmen's evaluation of how she taught the aforementioned lesson, supervisor's notes indicate how Carmen put into practice her plans to differentiate instruction for her Spanish-dominant multilingual learners:

*Several students (i.e. special needs students) were working with Ms. M. and a couple students (i.e. Spanish speaking students) were working with Ms. V. Differentiated planning for Spanish-speaking newcomers and small groups assigned to other teachers for children needing language or learning assistance demonstrated attention to unique learning needs. (Supervisor's Evidence Collection Record)*

In the transition from pre-service to first year of teaching, Carmen increased her emphasis on using MLs' linguistic resources to assist her students' transition to English. She routinely enacted four practices:

1. Translating key vocabulary words through visual displays used during instruction,
2. Translating during lessons for individual students,
3. Developing assignments in Spanish for newcomers, and
4. Using translanguaging to develop students' metalinguistic awareness.

The following example from a classroom observation during her second year of teaching illustrates the first and fourth strategies. More specifically, Carmen provided visuals of Spanish-English translations for key vocabulary words. The excerpt highlights the vocabulary word *disturbance* and students' insights on the Spanish translation.

*Carmen posts a slide of vocabulary words with coordinating pictures and explains that these are important words that will be used in the chapters she will read aloud today. She introduces "circumstantial evidence", reading the word in Spanish and the definition [in English] from the SmartBoard where each key word has the word in Spanish in parenthesis followed by the definition in English.*

*Carmen: [Referring to a keyword on the vocabulary list] The last one is "disturbance."*

*Carmen points to the picture on the slide of a cartoon figure getting out of bed and shares how this is the way she, Carmen, is in the morning because she doesn't like to get up and her alarm causes a disturbance.*

*Carmen: So usually [referring to story] the cops come because there is a disturbance, there is some noise, or some [one] calls the cops.*

*Child: You see the Spanish word [referring to the word *disurbio* in brackets following the word *disturbance* on the SmartBoard], if you take the *o* in *disturbio* and add 'ance' it makes disturbance.*

*Carmen: It's a cognate. It's the same as Spanish and English.*

In this exchange Carmen made certain instructional decisions to support her MLs. Carmen presented a written definition, as opposed to only an oral/aural translation of the word *disturbance*, as well as provided a picture and a short experience from her personal life to explain the term. These instructional moves created a particular context for a student to make an important metalinguistic observation between the word *disturbance* and *disturbio*. Carmen ends the segment by identifying the student's metalinguistic observation as a cognate. It is clear how Carmen's use of key vocabulary words through visual displays supported students' metalinguistic awareness.

Observations from Carmen's fourth year of teaching also revealed a limitation in how she exploited MLs' linguistic resources in the classroom. During this time Carmen had a large number of multilingual learners, some of whom were designated as ENL and others whom she had concerns about their language fluency even though they did not carry the designation. One student spoke Arabic and the rest spoke Spanish. Carmen used the home language of her Spanish-speaking students, a language she shared with them; however, there was no evidence she included the language of her Arabic-speaking student. Carmen valued bilingualism as evidenced in her post-observation interviews where she was able to review and comment on the field notes from her lessons. On numerous occasions she shared the importance of being bilingual as indicated in her comment, "I also have always thought just the ability to know two languages, it's huge." Despite the fact that she valued the notion of bilingualism, her pedagogy only supported Spanish-English bilingualism.

Interviews revealed that Carmen's theory of practice reflects a preference for using the home language to transition students to English. In the following interview segment Carmen works through her pedagogical decisions as she considered how to support a student transition from Spanish to English on academic tasks.

*Interviewer: [referring to the lesson transcript] And this was the place that you translated to the child. I couldn't hear but I think you were translating to the child the task. Tell me about your choices as a teacher. Why do you choose to use Spanish, why do you do that?*

*Carmen: I'm just always so torn with her. I'm really not sure what to do with her sometimes. She's very, she's a smart girl, she's articulate in Spanish, she knows her stuff, and I guess in translating, I know that she can do the task, it's just in Spanish. So I have been very torn at what point do I switch to English but I don't want to make it not accessible to her. I think if she's doing it and she's doing it in Spanish and she has people that can communicate with her in Spanish, then I'm going to let her do what she needs to do in Spanish, and when we're ready for English, hopefully we'll get there.*

Carmen alludes to this notion of 'accessibility' in that she wants to make both the content and the act of learning accessible to all students. This is why she chooses to create Spanish-English bilingual opportunities with one student, a newcomer, who is at the earlier stages of her English language development. However, there is a visible tension in how Carmen makes these pedagogical choices as she states, "So I have been very torn at what point do I switch to English." The statement reveals the prominent role that transitioning students to English plays in Carmen's theory of practice. While it

is difficult to determine how Carmen's transitional language stance developed, contributing factors could include her school's emphasis on transitioning students to English, her own personal language learning history in which she preferred to speak in English at home as a child, and/or her socialization into the profession under the mentorship of a teacher whose own practice emphasized English as the language goal.

## Discussion

We begin a discussion of the findings by returning to the research questions: How does a pre-service intern enact core-teaching practices to support her multilingual learners? How does this same individual enact core-teaching practices to support her multilingual learners as a practicing teacher? What are the changes in how this individual uses such core-teaching practices in the transition from pre-service to practicing teacher? In analyzing Carmen's data we attempted to demonstrate how two core-teaching practices were enacted in the transition from pre-service candidate to credentialed teacher and to explore what these pedagogical moves revealed about her theory of practice.

In using Carmen as a case study we studied two practices that our pre-service teachers were exposed to during teacher preparation. Analysis of Carmen's theory of practice in relation to the first core practice - *frontloading and reinforcing academic language* - revealed that as a pre-service intern and a practicing teacher Carmen enacted this core-teaching practice by focusing on academic vocabulary development throughout her instruction. Frontloading academic language was accomplished by starting her lessons with a focus on specific words that students would encounter, namely in offering a definition and examples. During her pre-service preparation Carmen included language objectives in her lesson planning, but she did not communicate these objectives to her students when teaching. She also did not focus on teaching linguistic features other than vocabulary. Carmen did not explicitly introduce other linguistic forms needed to complete academic tasks, nor did she provide structured practice of these forms for her MLs. Instead, Carmen supported students' academic participation in lessons by using the second core-teaching practice - *using multilingual learners' linguistic resources to scaffold learning* - by inviting students at the lower levels of English proficiency to communicate in Spanish and produce written work in Spanish.

It appears the practice of frontloading and reinforcing academic vocabulary was not fully embedded in Carmen's theory of practice as a pre-service intern. If the importance of language-focused instruction was not reinforced consistently beyond the two-course sequence she completed early in the program prior to entering her internship, this lack of reinforcement would have limited Carmen's enactment of the core practice across content areas.

Once Carmen became a practicing teacher, opportunities to develop her understanding about language-focused instruction were limited. In the interviews Carmen explained that the content and teaching materials from the observed lessons were developed with colleagues in grade level meetings. If developing language objectives was not a priority in the school's planning process and if an emphasis on language instruction was primarily focused on vocabulary development, it can be

expected that Carmen's instruction might not reflect some of the practices around frontloading and reinforcing academic language she learned in her pre-service program. Carmen's limited attention to language-focused instruction in an English-medium classroom is not uncommon. Bigelow, Ranney, and Dahlman (2006) have observed how difficult it is even for language-instruction teachers to focus on language when the curriculum focus shifts to meeting content learning goals.

An observable change in Carmen's transition from pre-service candidate to classroom teacher was an increased reliance on using MLs' linguistic resources to scaffold learning. As a classroom teacher, Carmen's language stance disrupted the notion that English should be the only language used by teachers and learners in an English-medium classroom. It is clear how Carmen appropriated particular strategies for using students' multilingual resources to support learning. However, her choices revealed a focus on transitioning students to English and a preference for the language she shared with students, as indicated in her Spanish-English translation despite the fact that one student was from an Arabic-speaking home.

By Carmen's fourth year of teaching, she continued to express uncertainty about when and how to transition her multilingual learners at beginning levels of English proficiency from their home language to English. This uncertainty is not uncommon to teachers in both transitional bilingual programs and in programs where English is the medium of instruction. These tensions have important implications for how a teacher preparation program promotes multilingualism and supports their teacher candidates to understand how multilingualism can be exploited in the classroom.

The overall findings in this case study suggest that a teacher's theory of practice, which for Carmen encompasses her Spanish-English bilingual identity, impacts the teacher's approach to language instruction. Multiple factors play a role in a teacher's pedagogical decisions to support their MLs. These findings challenge teacher educators to explore how to support a novice teacher's negotiation of specific core-teaching practices while considering competing factors including the individual's professional identity and the classroom context where the practice is enacted. It suggests, too, that support must continue into the early years of teaching as teaching contexts change and new challenges arise.

## **Implications**

Findings from Carmen's case study have important implications for teacher educators. As a result of lessons learned from Carmen, we are currently modifying our preparation program to: (a) include opportunities for candidates to develop a greater awareness of how multilingualism is related to learning and how this relationship can specifically inform practice; (b) include repeated opportunities for candidates to critically examine the relationship between their theories of practice about language-focused instruction and their instructional choices across content areas; and (c) provide candidates with access to classrooms where effective teachers of MLs are enacting research-based practices.

We position these implications in the literature of teacher language awareness (Andrews, 2003). This literature emphasizes the importance of teachers developing metacognitive awareness of the relationship between instructional content, language of

instruction, and learners' perspectives of the language. Grounded in both empirical studies of teacher language awareness and literature describing the pedagogical content knowledge that constitutes second language teacher expertise, Andrews (2003) argues that a teacher's level of language awareness can have a significant impact on how she addresses language in her instruction. Although this literature focuses on second language teachers, there are important connections to be made to classroom teachers who work with multilingual learners.

Carmen's case indicates that exposure to and practice using effective instructional strategies does not transfer directly into classroom teaching. Lindahl and Watkins (2015) have argued that providing teachers with a toolkit of teaching strategies is not adequate in preparing teachers to help their MLs successfully access academic content. Developing a teacher's awareness of the relationship between language and learning is a necessary ingredient of an effective teacher's theory of practice. As we have seen, Carmen's theory of practice revealed an incomplete awareness of some important dimensions of academic language that can pose challenges to MLs and a limited understanding of how to fully leverage her MLs' home languages in a classroom where the curriculum is in English.

Carmen's story would suggest that, as Bunch (2013) and Andrews (2003) have argued, it is critical to develop teachers' awareness of how language informs MLs' access to learning content. This also suggests that teacher educators must create learning spaces where teachers can develop a theory of practice that integrates content knowledge and language knowledge (Bigelow et al., 2006). Based on our findings we believe that this can only be achieved if pre-service candidates are exposed to these opportunities across disciplines, which will require faculty collaboration across content areas and disciplines.

Lindahl and Watkins (2015) offer helpful suggestions about how teachers might develop language awareness, which we are building into our current preparation program several types of tasks: (a) analyzing transcripts of classroom exchanges as an artifact of lesson enactment, that is, reviewing transcripts of student teacher exchanges during a lesson as a form of evaluating lesson effectiveness for MLs; (b) investigating the language demands of the content area, and planning for ways to address these demands for students at different levels of language proficiency; and (c) engaging teachers in multilingual experiences. We believe these recommendations can be used to prepare content and language teachers.

In Carmen's case, we see how a teacher's theory of practice promotes the use of students' home language to help students gain access to the content and participate in academic tasks. However, we also note how Carmen used only one home language to do this, Spanish. A significant portion of Carmen's pre-service preparation focused on helping her become an effective bilingual teacher. If her preparation created opportunities to help her practice strategies for using the language she shared with her students, in this case Spanish, but did not anchor pedagogy in the knowledge that all students are advantaged when supported in their home languages, then our preparation program needs to revisit how to help novice teachers develop a repertoire of strategies for supporting the use of languages unfamiliar to them during instruction.

Finally, teacher preparation programs must also consider the context of where teacher learning most effectively takes place. Carefully scaffolded field-based learning under the guidance of effective teachers of MLs can, as Clift and Brady (2005) point out, limit the disconnect that pre-service teachers often experience between “advocated practice”, which is understood as research-based practices supported in teacher education programs, and “situated practice”, the practice that pre-service teachers are exposed to in their field placements. In other words, pre-service candidates need more classroom-based opportunities to study firsthand how and why particular practices impact MLs’ language learning. As part of our efforts to incorporate more of these opportunities in teacher preparation, we have worked with local educators to develop a video series of effective practices for MLs enacted in local schools and to identify settings where candidates can work directly with MLs under the mentorship of effective teachers of MLs.

### Conclusion

We would like to close by emphasizing the importance of practice-based preparation while also challenging the notion that one common set of core-teaching practices should be used by all teacher education programs to prepare teachers to work with MLs. The practices introduced to novices must be research-based and demonstrate positive impacts on MLs’ learning, but they do not need to be static. Perhaps, as is currently being explored by the TESOL International Association, it is more useful to agree upon a set of research-based core *principles*. As noted by the authors of TESOL’s *Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* (Short et al., 2018), these principles are not “ground-breaking” but rather outline a vision of exemplary teaching for MLs and identify qualities this teaching should embrace. In doing so these principles connect practice to what teachers need to know about language development in order to effectively plan for teaching MLs. The advantage of a shared vision should apply to teacher education programs, where faculty is vested in preparing teachers for multilingual learners.

As a profession, teacher educators with expertise in bilingual and multilingual pedagogy have an obligation to take a stand against practice-based teacher education models that suggest there are generic practices effective for “all students”. This perspective will not create learning environments that support academic success for multilingual learners. Language educators must commit to sharing with colleagues, across all aspects of teacher education, research-based pedagogy that meet the unique needs of MLs. This will help ensure MLs’ needs are recognized as the profession continues to formulate and refine models of effective practice.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup>The term ‘multilingual learners’ is used to recognize the multiple languages and/or dialects students are learning and using across their lives.

<sup>2</sup>As a credentialed teacher, data collection occurred during Carmen’s initial two years in the classroom and then a more in-depth case study approach to data collection occurred during year four.

<sup>3</sup>English as a New Language (ENL) is the term used to identify multilingual learners in New York State. Students classified ENL entered the school district with a home language of something other than English.

<sup>4</sup>The term ‘newcomer’ indicates that the student is at the nascent stages of developing English.

<sup>5</sup>SIOP refers to Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2010/2014), which was introduced to Carmen during her pre-service preparation as a set of practices that support content learning and language development in multilingual learners.