# Chapter 17
# Pre-Program Education Students' and Teacher Educators' Understandings of Teaching and Learning Within a Bilingual Community

**Annmarie P. Jackson**
*University of North Georgia, USA*

**Cristina R. Washell**
ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1052-4097
*University of North Georgia, USA*

## ABSTRACT

*This qualitative case study explores ways in which three teacher educators and three pre-program education students' understanding developed while working with students in an after-school literacy program within an immigrant community. The theoretical lenses guiding the study were funds of knowledge, translanguaging, and cultural responsive teaching. The results of the study show that teacher educators' understanding of pedagogy was shaped as they theorized about their own teacher preparation. The pre-program students were able to gain invaluable strategies for working with the children within their own community. Their learning included not only understandings about pedagogy, but also about the experiential realities of students' lives, outside of their cultures.*

## INTRODUCTION

A review of the educational landscape in the United States over the past twenty years reveals significant changes related to accountability and reform. Many of these changes were due, in part, to demographic transformations that have impacted our schools in ways that were unpredictable twenty years ago. Increas-

ingly, the student demographics in the United States has seen a shift that has resulted in the matriculation of many non-English speaking students in public schools (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Many of these students are classified as English Learners (ELs), who speak another language besides English or are from homes with non-English speaking parents (Diaz-Rico, 2008). In 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that 76.6 percent of EL students identify Spanish as their native language. NCES (2019) projects that by fall 2020, there will be over 14 million students in public schools entering prekindergarten through grade 12 who identify as Hispanics.

According to Richards-Tutor, Aceves, and Reese (2016), many instructional practices used to address the needs of ELs are similar to those used with non-EL students. The authors of this chapter caution that although good teaching practices are beneficial to ELs, it is not acceptable to expect that these students' language needs will be addressed through the use of best practices. Empirically-based recommendations for ELs include additional practices in the areas of: a) academic instruction, b) monitoring of student progress, and c) family-school partnerships (Richards-Tutor, Aceves, & Reese, 2016). Given the demands placed on teachers to effectively address the unique learning needs of ELs, it is not surprising to find that many teachers are faced with the challenge of how to best support their EL students (Diaz-Rico, 2008). Although it is clear that all teachers need to be prepared to provide "linguistically rich classroom instruction to support their English language learners" (Cardozo-Gaibisso, Allexsaht-Snider, and Buxton, 2017, p.11), the question of how to best prepare teacher candidates to do this needs further exploration.

It is with this in mind, the authors explore how community-based experience can inform pre-program education (PreEd) students' understanding of what is important for teachers of English Learners. The authors share their own experiences as teacher educators and those of their PreEd students in an after-school literacy program. The study highlights how the participants' understandings were shaped as they worked with K-5 students within an immigrant community. The study's significance is to increase awareness of how language equity practices for EL students in their own communities can inform teaching and learning. Language equity practices are educational and linguistic experiences, including literary activities, which support teaching and learning for students within given contexts. While there are studies with pre-service and in-service teachers along with teacher educators, serving students within immigrant communities, (Tinker Sachs et al., 2017; Reyes, Iddings, and Fellers, 2016), there is not much research on pre-program education (PreEd) students and teacher educators. This study serves to add to the literature for this gap. Two of the three teacher educators who participated in this study are the first and second authors of this chapter.

The authors will first discuss the theoretical perspectives which shaped the study. Then, there will be a review of the literature relating to work with students within immigrant communities. The chapter then unfolds in the methodology section which describes the collection and analysis of data, followed by the findings. Finally, conclusions and a discussion on the outcome of the study, as well as implications follows.

## Theoretical Lens

There were three theoretical lenses which informed decisions throughout the study. Each lens sheds an additional layer relating to perspectives, approaches, and methods used in the study.

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