

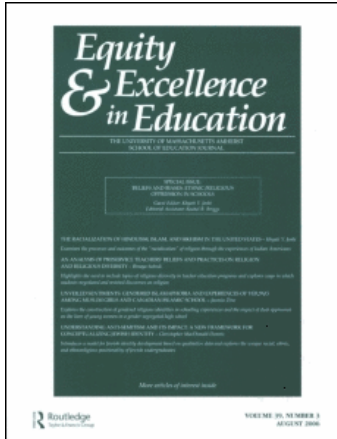
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María del Carmen Salazar ^a

^a University of Denver,

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English or Nothing: The Impact of Rigid Language Policies on the Inclusion of Humanizing Practices in a High School ESL Program

María del Carmen Salazar
University of Denver

This article discusses the results of a qualitative case study that examined how school district language policies impact humanizing practices in a high school ESL program. The theoretical framework builds on Paulo Freire's concept of humanizing pedagogy to explore policy and instruction in a secondary ESL program. Participants of this study include school district officials and high school ESL teachers. Findings indicate that when ESL teachers adhere to rigid language policies, they fail to create humanizing practices in their classrooms. In contrast, when teachers do not hold themselves strictly accountable to the institutionalized discourse of ESL, they are able to enact humanizing practices where students' linguistic and cultural resources are validated as essential for the development of academic resiliency. Paradoxically, even teachers who enact humanizing practices fail to question district language policies that render students cultural and linguistic resources invalid.

In the twenty-first century, immigrant high school Latina/o students are being relegated to the fringes of society through dehumanizing policies and practices that reproduce social and academic inequities. One such dehumanizing policy is cloaked in a noble slogan, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Supporters of NCLB argue that a national system of accountability advances educational equity for poor and minority children in U.S. public schools. Opponents contend that NCLB actually perpetuates institutionalized oppression and educational inequities, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Valenzuela, 2004). Furthermore, Valenzuela argues that the achievement gap actually widens because of a test-centric focus on "culturally and linguistically chauvinistic curriculum that privileges the English language while devaluing fully-vested bilingualism and biculturalism" (p. 20). NCLB has firmly identified English language development as a primary tool to reduce the achievement gap for culturally and linguistically diverse learners and as a result, bilingual education has been relegated to the back of the bus on a national scale. Advocates for bilingual education propose that NCLB could more appropriately be described as No Child Left Bilingual (Meyer, 2005).

In the current political climate, district language policies and practices privilege English-only instruction. Hopstock and Stephenson (2003) found that in U.S. public schools, over two-thirds

of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are enrolled in English-only programs with no native language support. In addition, the researchers found that roughly 23% of LEP students receive some native language support, and only 10% of LEP students in grades 7–12 receive significant native language support. In this current climate, educators find themselves entangled in a paradoxical puzzle, struggling to make sense of what leaving no child behind means and how this conflicts with the consequences of leaving no child bilingual. Despite the pressure to conform to dehumanizing language policies that deem students' cultural and linguistic resources as obstacles to learning, many educators seek to incorporate humanizing practices that build on students' assets.

This article examines a school district's language policy and its impact on the creation of humanizing practices in a high school ESL program serving predominantly Mexican immigrant students. The question posed is: How do language policies impact humanizing practices in high school ESL classrooms?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Humanizing Pedagogy

The theoretical and conceptual framework of this study is informed by Paulo Freire's conceptualization of humanizing pedagogy. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) describes humanizing pedagogy as a method of instruction that "ceases to be an instrument by which teachers can manipulate students, but rather expresses the consciousness of the students themselves" (p. 51). Freire adds that teachers who enact humanizing pedagogy engage in a quest for "mutual humanization" (p. 56) with their students, a process fostered through problem-posing education where students are co-investigators in dialogue with teachers. This dialogic approach to education is pursued with the goal of developing "conscientizacao" (p. 26) or critical consciousness. This is described by Freire as, "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 17). Teachers who enact humanizing pedagogy engage in praxis, reflection, and action upon the world in order to transform it.

A growing number of scholars have developed practical applications of Freire's (1970) conceptualization of humanizing pedagogy as it relates to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The term "humanizing practices" is used in the remainder of this article in place of "pedagogy" as a more inclusive term that incorporates teacher attitudes, curriculum, materials, instructional strategies, assessment, and classroom culture.

Humanizing Practices

Macedo and Bartolomé (2000) suggest that humanizing practices include valuing students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences. They add that acknowledging and using students' heritage languages, and accessing their background knowledge makes good pedagogical sense and constitutes humanizing practices for students.

According to Suarez (2007), "a large body of research literature documents the positive effects of heritage language maintenance on academic achievement, cognitive development, social and

psychological growth, and family relationships” (p. 34). This claim is supported by current research from scholars such as Crawford and Krashen (2007), Fránquiz and Salazar (2004), Escamilla (2003), Portes and Hao (2002), Cummins (2001), Valdés (2001), Boals (2001), Wong Fillmore (2000), and Tseng and Fuligni (2000).

Despite a growing body of research that supports the benefits of English proficiency and heritage language development as a humanizing practice, Suarez (2007) argues that ESL educators often claim heritage language development is unrelated to their work. Suarez states, “If education in the heritage language results in overall benefits, then maintaining heritage language knowledge is of interest to all instructors” (p. 35). Suarez adds that ESL educators can support heritage language inside and outside of the classroom by fostering biliteracy, valuing and incorporating students’ heritage languages into classroom practice, and working collaboratively with families and communities.

Fránquiz and Salazar (2004) build a case that teachers engaging in humanizing practices focus on what students can do and achieve with the cultural and linguistic resources they bring to their classes. These resources include, but are not limited to: status of heritage language in secondary programs, types of classroom and academic materials, the nature of and the displays in schools and classrooms, and quality of relationships among teachers and students.

Educators who foster humanizing practices also create permeability in their curriculum that is inclusive of the contributions of students and their parents. Dyson (1993) describes a permeable curriculum as one that allows for an interactional space drawing on official school knowledge and students’ own cultural, social, and linguistic resources. Dyson found that a permeable curriculum serves as a bridge, bringing the worlds of teachers and students together in instructionally powerful ways. Humanizing practices also are inclusive of the contributions of parents. According to Cummins (2001) the contributions of students and their parents are essential in the empowerment of students. Lastly, teachers who incorporate humanizing practices into their classrooms often find themselves teaching against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 2001) of policies and practices that dehumanize students, their parents, and communities.

Dehumanizing Practices

Dehumanizing practices can potentially stifle the academic and social possibilities of learners. Such practices rob children of their full humanity through a banking method of education that encourages students to receive, file, and store deposits of knowledge that is transmitted by teachers (Freire, 1970). This approach promotes passivity, acceptance, and submissiveness.

Furthermore, dehumanizing practices prohibit the use of students’ heritage language(s) in schools through overt, indirect, and structural means (Terralingua, 2004). Incidents of overt prohibition of heritage languages can be found in headline news. For example, in 2005, in Kansas, a Latino youth was suspended for speaking Spanish with friends during his lunch hour. When the principal of this school was asked to clarify if this was a school policy, she responded, “No, but we are not in Mexico. We are not in Germany” (Cardinal, 2005, p 3).

Prohibition of heritage languages also can be indirect and structural (Terralingua, 2004). For example, if the heritage language is not used as the primary mode of instruction, this leads to indirect and also structural prohibition of heritage language use. Educators who prohibit heritage languages through indirect or structural means often argue that the use of English for the children is

to help youth acquire the language of power. Freire (1970) argues that “pedagogy that begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (anegoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) maintains and embodies oppression” (p. 36).

Dehumanizing practices include attributing academic difficulties to linguistic and cultural differences. Nieto (2002) asserts that educators often attribute the achievement gap to cultural differences; however, focusing on cultural differences often negates the dismal conditions of education that perpetuate inequality. Although schools may explicitly advocate respect for cultural and linguistic differences, their goals for these students are often that of cultural replacement and assimilation into mainstream values and practices (Valenzuela, 2004).

The aforementioned practices deprive students of their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2001), the cultural and linguistic resources they need to thrive and get ahead. They promote subtractive assimilation (Cummins, 1986; Gibson, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999); rob students of their culture, language, history, and values; and perpetuate cultural eradication and linguisticism (Macedo & Bartolomé, 2000). Linguicism arises when “ideologies and structures . . . are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups that are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 46).

Dehumanizing practices are the status quo in many schools across the nation. Freire (1970) emphasizes that those teachers who uncritically follow that status quo silence students and legitimize schools’ discriminatory practices. Freire also urges revolutionary teachers to take up the charge of dismantling school policies and practices that reinforce inequality. The theoretical framework that has been presented informs this qualitative study of educational language policy and its effects on humanizing and dehumanizing instructional practices in high school ESL classrooms.

METHODS

The Site

This article is based on a three-year ethnographic study designed to investigate factors that impact the academic resiliency of Latina/o students in a high school in Northern Colorado, Alpine High School or AHS (pseudonym). According to school district records, during the 2001–2002 academic school year, approximately 29% of the students at AHS were identified by the school district as Latino, of these 98% were of Mexican origin. Approximately 20% of students were identified as second language learners; 95% of these were Spanish-speakers. The first floor of AHS was home to foreign language classrooms, an alternative education program, and the ESL program. The second floor was home to the math, English, science, social studies classrooms, and the library. According to Fránquiz (2001) Latina/o students at Alpine High referred to the second floor as the “smart place,” while the first floor was referred to as “little Mexico” and “the ghetto.” This research study focused on the ESL program in this school, which consisted of four levels of ESL instruction, as well as sheltered content courses.

The Participants

The participants in this study included two district administrators and five ESL teachers at AHS. The district administrators included the secondary ESL coordinator for the district and

TABLE 1
ESL Teachers

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Ethnic identity (self-described)</i>	<i>Proficiency in Spanish (self-described)</i>	<i>Number of years teaching ESL in U.S. & abroad</i>	<i>Number of years teaching high school ESL</i>	<i>Number of years teaching at AHS</i>
Mr. Arnold	White	Intermediate	10	1	1
Mr. Guy	White	Basic	3	1	1
Ms. Corazón	White	Fluent	3	1	1
Ms. Manos	White	Fluent	11	1	1
Mr. Bueno	Mexican national	Native-speaker	No previous experience teaching ESL	0 0	10 years teaching Spanish at AHS

the Executive Director of Student Services. The ESL teachers at AHS are described in Table 1, beginning with pseudonyms identified by ESL students.

Data Sources and Analysis

Textual analysis of three key documents (an ESL program mission statement, a program goal document, and a proficiencies document created in 2000 by the district's ESL coordinator and 12 ESL teachers) was conducted. These sources were supported with semi-structured interviews with key district administrators charged with developing the district's language policy. In addition to district data, multiple forms of data on a secondary ESL program within the district was collected and was relevant in exploring how district policy impacted humanizing practices in the program. As such, the five ESL teachers were interviewed on two separate occasions to determine how language policies impacted humanizing practices in their secondary ESL program. Additionally, four observations were conducted in each of the teachers' classrooms to document the presence or absence of humanizing or dehumanizing practices. Humanizing practices were conceptualized based on the literature on humanizing pedagogy. These were documented through consideration of teachers' beliefs, curricular content, and instructional practices as described in Table 2.

To triangulate the data collected through interviews and classroom observations, documents that were relevant to the research questions were collected and analyzed, such as classroom assignments and rubrics. An additional measure of triangulation included the documentation of the material culture of the ESL classrooms as evidence of humanizing or dehumanizing practices. Johnson (1980) referred to material culture as "the material artifacts, classroom decorations and displays that act as mechanisms for socialization and enculturation" (p. 45). Documentation of the material culture included detailed description of the posters, artifacts, and school communications displayed on the walls of the ESL classrooms.

Analysis of interview transcripts, observational field notes, documents, and the material culture was undertaken using the constant comparison method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In using this method of analysis, researchers look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories for focus. This has also been described as a process of "clumping" or "chunking" data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 77). In addition, discourse analysis techniques were utilized in this study, including analyzing dialogue among teachers

TABLE 2
Indicators of Humanizing and Dehumanizing Practices

<i>Indicators of Humanizing Practices</i>	<i>Indicators of Dehumanizing Practices</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate a student-centered approach aimed at developing critical consciousness ● Increase academic rigor through a focus on higher order thinking skills ● Build trusting and caring relationships among teachers and students ● Value and build on students' background knowledge and life experiences ● Acknowledge and capitalize on students' cultural and linguistic resources to improve teaching and learning ● Strengthen students' ethnic and linguistic identities to support bilingualism and biculturalism ● Inclusion of familial contributions ● Challenge the role of educational institutions and educators in maintaining an inequitable system ● Advocate transformational and revolutionary approaches to improving the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate an inflexible teacher-centered approach ● Focus on assimilating students and their families into mainstream culture ● Gear academic expectations toward rote memorization, skills, and drills ● Subscribe to the belief that students' heritage languages and cultural backgrounds are obstacles to learning ● Superficially incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum ● Remain unaware of the importance of students' sociocultural identities on their academic learning ● Prohibit heritage language use ● Disregard familial contributions as not conducive to the academic achievement of students ● Uncritically follow that status quo that maintains low expectations for culturally and linguistically diverse learners

and students, and documenting and subsequently analyzing proxemics or nonverbal actions of teachers and students.

FINDINGS

The Official Discourse of ESL

Three key district documents were examined in order to establish the district's secondary language policy: an ESL program mission statement, ESL program goals, and ESL proficiencies. Textual analysis of the three key documents signaled that the district's objectives were: (1) to develop ESL students' competency in English, (2) to support students' content knowledge in English, and (3) to help students use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways. In fact, textual analysis across the three documents unveiled that the word "English" was utilized 29 times.

Further analysis revealed omissions. There was no mention of students' heritage languages or cultures as resources for the development of academic English. Furthermore, no mention was made of engaging students and parents in the development of the district ESL policy. Highly regarded researchers of ESL education, such as Cummins (2001), suggest that including the heritage language and culture of students in the curriculum, and fostering the contributions of students and parents are critical for the academic success of ESL learners.

In order to establish district perspectives on the inclusion of heritage languages and cultures in ESL classrooms and the inclusion of student and parent contributions, two key district administrators were interviewed, the Director of Student Services and the secondary ESL Coordinator. In an

interview, the Director of Students Services declared that language was an asset not a liability and that bilingualism should be viewed as a gift. However, she advocated the following, “When you are trying to teach them English, then you force them into that, it’s that instructional time versus personal time.” She argued for the strict enforcement of boundaries between the personal and the academic, in this case, the Spanish and English languages, respectively. She also promoted the language ideology that students be “forced” into English. Such a message could inadvertently communicate to ESL teachers in the district that students must be forced out of their heritage language.

In his work, Ruiz (1988) identified common attitudes toward language, including: language-as-resource, language-as-problem, and language-as-right. Although a key administrator in this district described language-as-resource, she also described language-as-problem; however, at no time did she acknowledge that language is also a fundamental human right and need in ESL classrooms.

District administrators also described the importance of including students’ heritage cultures in the ESL curriculum. However, they admitted that most ESL teachers in the district included surface culture only, defined as culture that is observable, such as behavior, customs, and traditions (Gonzalez, 1988), in contrast to deep culture, which fosters personal connections and is defined as culture that is not visible, such as values, assumptions, thoughts, and feelings (Gonzalez, 1988). One of the district administrators also stated that parents and students did not have input into the formation of district ESL policy. She acknowledged that the district had a long way to go in fostering and supporting the contributions of immigrant students and their parents.

To summarize, district language policy was revealed through omissions and contradictory statements in the textual analysis of documents and interviews with key district administrators. An overt message that emerged from the official discourse of ESL was that academic success depended almost exclusively on developing competency in English. In addition, indirect messages also surfaced: students’ heritage languages and cultures, and their contributions and those of their parents, were not significant factors for English language acquisition. The unintentional outcome was that the district’s discourse of ESL privileged English above all else and disregarded the importance of the heritage language and culture, student input, and parental contributions. As a result, the discourse of ESL unwittingly created a boundary that marked a separation between the discourse of ESL and the cultural discourse of students and their families.

Policy into Practice in a High School ESL Program

ESL teachers at Alpine High School generally professed to value bilingualism and biculturalism, as well as the contributions of students and parents; however, their practices indicated many contradictions to their claims. These contradictions appeared to align with the district’s discourse of ESL.

An English or Nothing Discourse. Significant evidence emerged in interview and observational data that suggested that teachers maintained rigid language boundaries in ESL classrooms. For example, teachers proudly proclaimed that they would not provide heritage language support to students, despite the fact that current research shows heritage language support can increase

the acquisition of English (Fránquiz, 2008; Garcia & Bartlett, 2007; Serrano & Howard, 2007; Van Gelderen & Schoonen, 2007). One teacher described the ESL program as adhering to an “English or nothing” discourse. As a case in point, four ESL teachers stated that they maintained their instruction and personal interactions with students in English 99%–100% of the time. Furthermore, the “English or nothing” discourse was evident during classroom observations where ESL teachers adamantly upheld that English was the only language of communication in the ESL classroom, for teachers and students alike.

Mr. Arnold provides an example of the teachers’ “English or nothing” discourse. He held strict boundaries between languages and stated that he would not speak Spanish with his students inside or outside of the classroom, despite the fact that 100% of his students were native Spanish speakers and that he considered himself to be functionally adept in the Spanish language. In addition, Mr. Arnold frequently admonished students for speaking their heritage language. He often chastised with sound and gestures, “ahhhh, ahhhh, ahhh, in English.” In one particular classroom observation, a student was explaining the meaning of an English vocabulary word in Spanish to another student. Mr. Arnold called out, “Anna no! Go back to your seat. That’s not going to help her learn English!” In addition, Mr. Arnold stated that he strictly limited students’ use of their heritage language to requests for vocabulary translations. Clearly, Mr. Arnold maintained the discourse of ESL in his classroom in that he focused on developing students’ competency and fluency in English, but he failed to recognize the students’ need to make meaning through the use of their native linguistic resources.

Mr. Arnold was not the only teacher to maintain the district’s discourse of ESL through an “English or nothing” approach. Classroom observations revealed how Mr. Guy maintained the discourse of ESL through his use of a participation rubric. The rubric ranged from scores of zero to four, zero indicating the worst. Students would be given a zero on participation, if, as stated in the rubric, “I refuse to speak English to the teacher or with other students. I only speak my native language.” According to the rubric, if students did not “speak English at all times,” they would be penalized with a low participation score. Mr. Guy admonished his students verbally:

Many of you are not getting very good grades in speaking English. According to this rubric you are supposed to walk into the room and speak nothing but English, otherwise you are missing an opportunity to practice English. You need to make an effort to speak English to each other. You are in America so you should learn to get by here.

Mr. Guy communicated the district’s emphasis on English language acquisition. This particular statement suggested that missed opportunities for practice were deterrents to success. While he emphasized English above all else, he also inadvertently sent the message to students that their heritage language was a problem, a barrier to learning English.

Data analysis of classroom observations also revealed that the material culture of the ESL classrooms reflected an “English or nothing” discourse, as Spanish and other languages were nowhere to be found on walls, bulletin boards, and other areas where print could be seen and read.

A Fun, Food, and Fiesta Approach. Evidence emerged that teachers typically included only surface features of culture in their curriculum through a fun, food, and fiesta approach. For example, when asked how he incorporated the students’ heritage culture into his curriculum,

Mr. Arnold stated, “We’ve done some with different celebrations. We do something for Cinco de Mayo. Let’s see . . . foods. I would always ask them how to make different foods, chiles rellenos, ummmm.” In response to the same interview question, Mr. Guy stated, “We have had a few little fiestas where they brought in Mexican food and so forth. That’s always really good. I am always really happy to do that.” Banks (2005) argues that focusing on heroes, holidays, and foods is only one dimension of multicultural education and that educators must move beyond this dimension to include the broader range of students’ cultural experiences. Nieto (2002) adds that too often, “quaint artifacts or isolated ethnic traditions and folklore are the elements by which culture is defined” (p. 55). According to Pappamihel (2004), including deep culture in the curriculum is an effective strategy for helping students make connections to the curriculum.

In addition to including only surface culture into the curriculum, Mr. Guy and Mr. Arnold placed limitations on the inclusion of cultural knowledge, stressing that students should share their culture in English. For example, Mr. Arnold stated, “I would always ask them how to make different foods, but I try to get them to tell me in English.” Mr. Guy also expressed, “A lot of them, Mexican kids, are proud about being Mexicans. I say great, tell me about it. Just tell me in English.” These comments were striking because teachers expected students to share of themselves in a language that limited them and did not allow them to fully express their cultural knowledge. Furthermore, this practice implied that students had no right to share their cultural understandings (surface or deep) unless they did so in English.

The Non-Responsiveness of Students and Parents. As mentioned previously, district documents made no mention of the role of students or their parents in district mission and strategic goal statements. In addition, during interviews, district administrators acknowledged that work needed to be done to be more inclusive of the contributions of students and their parents. Furthermore, four ESL teachers revealed that they limited student input into the curriculum. Ms. Manos, who taught the highest level of ESL, maintained that asking students for their input was not advisable. She asserted, “Pedagogy says that kids who have buy in do better. But I think it would be a question that would flabbergast kids from other countries. It wouldn’t occur to them that the teacher wouldn’t know exactly what she thought they should learn.” Ms. Manos’s argument that immigrant students might not respond to being asked for their input is validated by research literature (McCarthy, 1993); however, more recent research has shown that immigrant students achieve at higher rates when their perspectives are integrated into the curriculum (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007).

As to the contributions of parents, although the ESL teachers expressed their desire to improve parental involvement in the ESL program, they often described Mexican immigrant parents in terms of what they lacked. One ESL teacher stated,

Any other parent would be jumping up and down, calling the school saying, “What do you mean there are no books in the classroom? What’s going on?” But these parents don’t do that for whatever reason. These parents aren’t strong advocates for their students.

Over and over, Mexican immigrant parents were described by the ESL teachers from a deficit perspective, yet they had no plan for mediating what was perceived as cultural and linguistic

deficits of Mexican immigrant parents. Such deficit notions may have created a barrier to providing effective ways to include parents in ESL discourse and curriculum decisions.

In sum, ESL teachers uncritically followed the district's discourse of ESL resulting in the inadvertent creation of dehumanizing practices that wavered between tokenizing and invalidating the linguistic, cultural, and familial resources of students. While most of the ESL teachers were unaware of the dehumanizing spaces in the ESL program, two ESL teachers were becoming conscious of the need to foster humanizing practices in their classrooms.

Teachers Struggle to Create Humanizing Spaces. In many ways, Mr. Bueno and Ms. Corazón contradicted the official discourse of ESL by attempting to create a permeable curriculum that allowed for the inclusion of students' linguistic, cultural, and social resources during instruction. In her research with primary students, Dyson (1993) describes a permeable curriculum as one that allows for an interactional space drawing on official school knowledge and students' own cultural, social, and linguistic resources. Although these two teachers attempted to incorporate humanizing practices through the enactment of a permeable curriculum, they also perceived themselves accountable to the district's discourse of ESL.

Mr. Bueno Struggles to Break the Mold. Mr. Bueno had been teaching in the Spanish department at AHS for ten years. A Mexican immigrant himself, he asked to teach in the ESL department so that he might make a difference in the lives of immigrant students. Mr. Bueno expressed his dissatisfaction with the ESL program at AHS, as he stated,

In the past eight years I have seen people come and go, but as far as the outcome, I don't see that many critical changes . . . I think that in school we think this mold works for certain kids, so let's keep this mold going, and the mold is not working for our Hispanic kids. We need to change our molds, our approach to our Mexican kids.

His actions spoke louder than words in that he created permeability in his classroom practices by accepting students' use of Spanish and using Spanish himself. Mercado (2001) found that allowing Latina/o immigrant students to use Spanish broadened their intellectual and expressive possibilities, lessened the social distance between teachers and students, and elevated the status of Spanish. Mr. Bueno also included a focus on developing Spanish literacy. He stated, "We focus a lot on reading in Spanish. That probably goes against every research that everybody has ever looked at, but we focus a lot on literature in their own language. I think it's important to get them to read, no matter what language it is." A vast body of research suggests that programs that strongly promote students' native language literacy skills promote the development of English and reinforce cultural identity (Cummins, 2001; Grant & Wong, 2003; Suarez, 2007; Valdés, 1998).

Surprisingly, despite Mr. Bueno's attempts to incorporate humanizing practices, he advocated for changes to ESL policy that would reinforce the prohibition of the heritage language. During the second trimester of the 2001–2002 school year, Mr. Bueno drafted a memo to the school's principal and the teachers of the ESL department recommending that ESL students be given one year of intensive English instruction and mainstreamed thereafter. Furthermore, Mr. Bueno stated

in interviews that students needed to be responsible for their own learning and that a quick-exit ESL program would force English language learners to “sink-or-swim” in the mainstream classroom as the result of their own efforts. Mr. Bueno’s commitment to changing the mold for Mexican immigrant students completely contradicted his plan to remediate students’ deficits through a sink-or-swim approach. Out of frustration, he embraced the bootstrap mentality, described by Villanueva (1993) as, the belief that an ethnic group is responsible for their own upward mobility, and if they are not successful it must be their fault.

The Metamorphosis of Ms. Corazón—Almost. Multiple forms of data revealed that Ms. Corazón began to contradict the discourse of ESL when she realized that conforming to the district’s stated and unstated policies was not having the desired result of engaging students. At the beginning of the school year she described her efforts to maintain the discourse of ESL. She stated, “I really do expect my kids to speak in English, unless it’s a life or death emergency. I don’t let them speak Spanish, unless it’s something personal that isn’t related to class where they are struggling with something and need to talk to me.” Ms. Corazón also noted that because of the abundance of Spanish-dominant students in her ESL classes, she did not have a good way to “force” students “out of Spanish and into English.” Thus, Ms. Corazón maintained close adherence to the official discourse of ESL.

In the second trimester of the academic year, Ms. Corazón expressed that she had changed her position on allowing students to use Spanish in her ESL classes. She stated that students were struggling with the curriculum so she decided to allow them to make sense of the curriculum by using their heritage language. As corroborated in classroom observations, Ms. Corazón held some measure of permeability regarding the use of Spanish in her classroom. She allowed students to speak Spanish in class discussions, and to speak Spanish during group work. She used a limited amount of Spanish herself, translating key vocabulary and repeating key Spanish phrases that students used in classroom discussions. Ms. Corazón utilized Spanish in an intentional manner in her classroom in order to foster student comprehension of the material. As a consequence, she sent the message to students that their heritage language was valued as an academic resource.

Ms. Corazón’s journey to incorporate humanizing practices became more evident in the third trimester of the school year when she declared that she had changed her view of “resistant” students.

At the beginning of the year I thought almost all of my students were resistant. I have changed both how I look at them and what I am doing. Now I understand that I have kids who are not motivated by traditional classroom approaches. If I weren’t trying to motivate them it would be easy to call them resistant. Now we have lots of moments where they are connecting. When they connect, their chances of success go way up.

Ms. Corazón had come to the realization that her students had not been motivated by traditional classroom approaches that did not provide sufficient connections to prior linguistic and academic experiences. She related that she looked for alternative ways to meet the needs of her students and in doing so she created a permeable curriculum with humanizing potential for herself and her students.

Dyson (1993) argued that a permeable curriculum cannot emerge from a unidirectional vision; rather, the vision for learning must be negotiated by teachers and students. Ms. Corazón negotiated a shared vision with her students where they were encouraged to give input into the curriculum, express their voices, generate knowledge, and make personal connections. Ms. Corazón adapted her curriculum so that it acknowledged and respected the worlds and languages students brought into her ESL classroom. Consequently, she began to take cues from students' interests and planned units of study that were responsive to these interests. For example, Ms. Corazón incorporated lessons on the U.S. Civil Rights Movement at the request of her students. One particular lesson stood out for her, "The lesson on César Chávez has been the one they have gotten the most excited about. It's been the one they have shown the most interest in."

Ms. Corazón actively attempted to adapt the ESL curriculum to reflect the diversity of her student's lives, as advocated by Dyson (1993). In addition, in the material culture of Ms. Corazón's ESL classroom, a Mexican flag was prominently displayed on one wall and a jersey of a Mexican soccer team on another wall. These cultural artifacts belonged to and were placed on the walls by the students themselves with Ms. Corazón's nod of approval.

Toward the end of the school year, Ms. Corazón revealed a critical reflection, "I realize my students are people who learn from the heart. You have to touch their heart in order to engage their minds." This understanding was essential to the sustenance of humanizing practices in her classroom. This statement also was an indicator that the students had given her a pseudonym that truly captured the essence of her approach to students, *corazón* (meaning heart in Spanish).

Ms. Corazón had veered from district policies that emphasized strict boundaries between languages, yet paradoxically she also held herself accountable to the district's rigid language policy. For example, Ms. Corazón repeatedly attempted to maintain strict boundaries in her own use of students' heritage language, despite the fact that she was a fluent Spanish speaker. As a case in point, toward the end of the academic school year, a student asked Ms. Corazón a question in Spanish, to which Ms. Corazón uttered, "Huh, I don't understand." As the teacher walked away, the student quietly muttered expletives about Ms. Corazón to her classmates. In addition, Ms. Corazón did not challenge the role of educational institutions and educators in maintaining an inequitable system. She reflected on her own practices, but did not conceive of a wider link with district language policies or institutional practices that promote social and academic inequality. Ultimately, Ms. Corazón's metamorphosis was stymied in some ways due to the district's discourse of ESL, which pulled her to conform to an "English or nothing" directive.

IMPLICATIONS

Educators across the nation are deeply committed to increasing equity and excellence in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Many come to the realization that they must teach against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 2001) of dehumanizing practices. They teach toward equity and access through a process of mutual humanization (Freire, 1970) alongside students and their parents. Paradoxically, they are compelled, and at times coerced, to conform to practices that strip students of their sense of self-worth.

This article has illustrated an example of the complexity of policy and practice. Findings indicate that teacher conformity to rigid and subtractive language policies may yield dehumanizing practices that devalue students' heritage languages and cultures and the contributions of students

and their families. In contrast, teacher contradictions to such policies may result in the infusion of humanizing practices that foster the belief that language, culture, and student and familial contributions are viable tools for learning. Nevertheless, even as teachers strive to create humanizing spaces in their classrooms, they are often pulled to conform to rigid language policies that strip students of their dignity. Ms. Corazón was a prime example of a teacher who came to the realization that “you have to touch their heart in order to engage their minds.” She actively incorporated humanizing elements into her instruction, however, despite her growing understanding of the need to humanize ESL instruction, she did not critically reflect on the role of language policy in inhibiting the success of students: She dutifully followed the district’s rigid language policy by maintaining strict boundaries in native language use, even at the risk of alienating students.

This study has implications along various levels of educational reform. First, on the policy level, I suggest that educators, such as educational policymakers, school district administrators, and teachers, must begin by critically examining traditional notions of ESL instruction. This consists of identifying and dismantling dehumanizing practices that limit students’ social and academic potential. Furthermore, educators must advocate for an inclusive vision for ESL at a federal, state, and district level. Moreover, a new vision for ESL must move beyond a myopic view of the acquisition of English alone to include an emphasis on valuing, acknowledging, and building and extending students’ cultural, linguistic, and familial resources to improve teaching and learning. This vision must support heritage language development in official and unofficial spaces of school, such as courses for native Spanish speakers, advanced placement courses in Spanish, and extracurricular opportunities for students to continue to engage with and build on their mother tongue. In building an inclusive vision for ESL, educators must send the message that the whole student is welcome in the ESL classroom, not merely the part that wants to learn English.

Second, school administrators, teachers, and support staff need ongoing professional development on how to implement an inclusive vision for ESL. This includes the following:

- Integrate the heritage language of students into the classroom in strategic ways in order to further English language development;
- Support heritage language development in official and unofficial school spaces;
- Communicate the message that students’ heritage languages have tremendous value in social *and* academic contexts;
- Infuse the heritage culture of students into the curriculum beyond surface features;
- Strengthen students’ ethnic and linguistic identities to support bilingualism, biculturalism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism;
- Create permeable curricula that incorporate the contributions of students, their families, and communities;
- Build trusting and caring relationships with students and parents;
- Foster inclusive attitudes of familial contributions; and
- Reflect the inclusion of students’ heritage languages and cultures in the material culture of ESL classrooms, mainstream classrooms, and the entire school.

Third, institutions that practice teacher education must develop teacher leaders for equity and access who are prepared to take a critical stance in support of children that includes the following:

- Implement curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that foster equity, access, and social justice;
- Engage in praxis (Freire, 1970), or critical reflection and action, in order to nurture critical consciousness for teachers, students, and parents;
- Identify and navigate the challenges they will face in incorporating humanizing practices into their curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- Challenge the role of educational institutions and educators in maintaining an inequitable system;
- Act on knowledge of how they can impact educational policy in federal, state, district, and school spheres; and
- Advocate transformational and revolutionary approaches to improving the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

CONCLUSION

Educators who are dedicated to advancing educational equity and access for culturally and linguistically diverse learners must not wait for federal language policy in this country to cultivate the full potential of our children. We must begin by abandoning archaic notions of ESL instruction and advocate for a twenty-first century vision of ESL that is inclusive of the resources of bilingual, multilingual, bicultural, and multicultural learners. In building this vision we must unequivocally refuse to yield to dehumanizing language policies that attempt to strip our children of their cultural and linguistic roots. Ultimately, an inclusive vision of ESL hinges on dismantling dehumanizing practices and waging a countermovement to construct an alternative discourse, a discourse of dignidad (dignity) that respects the fundamental human rights of all learners. This is a call for educators, students, and parents to co-construct a foundation for learning that respects the dignity and humanity of all. Only then can we engage children academically.

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María del Carmen Salazar is an assistant professor in the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. Her research interests include the achievement of Mexican immigrant and Chicano youth, teacher research, and teacher education.