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CRITICAL REFLECTION ON LIVED EXPERIENCE IN A
BILINGUAL READING COURSE: IT'S MY TURN TO SPEAK

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Abstract

This ongoing self-study of the transformation of practice in a methods reading course reveals the pedagogical value of critical reflection/dialog on lived experiences, when combined with readings from the professional literature, in settings with a high degree of social and cultural diversity. Bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), special education and mainstream English monolingual teachers of varying levels of experience, and prospective teachers entering teaching as a second/third career, chronicle their experiences learning about and through an integrated literacy/biliteracy approach in which pedagogy and assessment are intertwined as a way of creating challenging environments for learning. Because this pedagogical approach broadens students' roles and responsibilities, it also extends their uses of literacy in and for academic contexts (Perez & Torres-Guzman, 1992). In their dual roles as students and teachers, participants gain "practical knowledge" (Smyth, 1989) about "significant and worthwhile" practice (Richardson, 1990) - practice that advances the learning of African American and Latino students currently overrepresented in programs of remedial reading. By reflecting critically on these experiences with others who bring different ideologies, participants confront assumptions and beliefs that explain their practice or confront practices in light of their beliefs. A dialog across a number of differences, including teaching status, may not always result in consensual agreements, but it may yield understandings about the interrelationship of literacy assessment, instruction, and educational equity.

Introduction

This self-study was formalized four years ago, but initiated long before that, as a way of coming to understand my own practice as an educator. I know that my experiences and identity as a Puerto Rican are a major influence on my pedagogy and research. Because we are culturally inscribed beings, to do the "good work of teaching" (Kincheloe, 1990) and to bring about "significant and worthwhile change in teaching practice" (Richardson, 1990) - work that makes a difference and leads to equity and excellence in education - we need to openly and critically examine the beliefs that guide our practices or the practices that reflect our beliefs, and the consequences these have for our students, as individuals and as members of identifiable groups.

Specifically, we need to understand who it is that we privilege and whose experiences we limit when we embark upon courses of action that reflect personal preferences (Richardson, 1990) and/or that are the products of historical forces (Smyth, 1989), particularly in public institutions of learning that cross social, cultural and experiential boundaries. To do the good work of teaching, educators must be

both willing and able to reflect on the origins, purposes and consequences of their actions as well as on the material and ideological constraints and encouragements embedded in the classroom, school, societal contexts in which they work (Zeichner & Liston, 1987, p. 23).

This self-exposure and self-confrontation is always uncomfortable, sometimes threatening, but never inconsequential when we engage in it with others with whom I stand in a pedagogical relation (Van Manen, 1990), especially with students whom I perceive as belonging to the dominant culture. I admit to being conditioned to marking differences in gender, class and ethnicity; it is a reflection of my experiences as a Latina who received most of her education in public institutions of learning in New York City where I was often "exotic" or "different" because of the way students were tracked academically. Because of these experiences, I have had to cross boundaries, to exist in many

different worlds simultaneously, but these experiences have also enabled me to mark similarities as well as differences, and to learn from both.

Because of and in spite of my experiences, engaging in a dialog across differences (Burbules & Rice, 1991) where alternative explanations of the "literacy problem" are critically examined constitutes a special challenge. I have strong emotions about the inequities and injustices in our society and about the moral and ethical responsibilities of teachers. Required courses are contexts in which students come together with others whose backgrounds and concerns are often worlds apart and where academic work is completed during a brief semester characterized by multiple and competing responsibilities. They are not ideal settings for these discussions but it is precisely in these contexts where such discussions must occur. I agree with Dewey (1964) about the importance of reflective thinking as an educational aim. Nevertheless, open-mindedness or an "active desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to facts from whatever source they come; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us" (p. 224) poses a formidable challenge under these conditions. It is easy to become defensive or emotional when our beliefs are questioned or threatened, even by those we trust and respect, let alone by strangers. It is also difficult, as McDiarmid (1992) argues, to get individuals to respond honestly when it comes to issues of diversity because they have learned to respond in socially acceptable ways. "(M)ost do not like to think of themselves as people whose attitudes or behaviors toward others would be influenced by appearance, language or custom" (p. 85).

It is a very complex process to try to do the good work of teaching within the context of schooling and teacher education in our democratic society, but it is a very necessary one (Burbules & Rice, 1991; Kincheloe, 1990; McDiarmid, 1992).

Context

I have been working within the programs in teacher education at Hunter College of the City University of New York since 1977, but as a faculty member in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching since 1988. At that time, there were only two full time Latino faculty members in the department; now there are six, disproportionately higher than most

other departments. The fact that this public institution of higher learning exists within the largest, most diverse and most segregated multiethnic urban center in the nation is of no minor consequence, and an important influence on our activities, as will become increasingly evident.

My specialization is in the area of language and literacy and "Advanced Studies in the Teaching of Reading and Language Arts" (EDUC 730) is a course that I have been assigned since I first came to the college to assume a position as "trainer" and adjunct within the bilingual teacher training programs. The bilingual (English-Spanish) section that I am given is intended to prepare bilingual educators for the classroom, and therefore legitimizes the use of both languages in course activities. Increasingly, course participants are neither bilingual nor planning to teach in bilingual and ESL settings, a striking development given that at the same time the number of bilingual teachers has dramatically decreased, despite a growing need. Currently, about half of the students in the class are monolingual English speakers who are preparing for teaching as a second or third career, and in some cases teaching or planning to teach within the independent/private schools, rather than the public schools in New York City. Although the mission of the teacher education programs at Hunter College is "the preparation of teachers for urban elementary and secondary schools who can deal effectively with the wide range of diverse learning needs found among the City's students" (Mission of the Division of Programs in Education), an increasing number of students admit to fears of teaching in the public schools based on what they hear or read about in the news, a trend that both troubles and challenges me.

The course also brings together veteran and novice teachers in the evening sections more than in those which are offered in the late afternoon, for obvious reasons. Most of our students have full-time employment. For the first time, in the Fall of 1993, 50% of the students in one of my evening courses (section B) were of non-European backgrounds (8 Latinos, 5 African Americans, and 1 Asian); in the other section (section A), about 25% of the students were of non-European ancestry (3 Latinas, 2 African-American, and 1 Asian). Moreover, in section A there was one European-American male, while in section B, there were three European-American males and one Latino. In the Fall 1994 semester, about 35% of the students were of non-European

ancestry and, of these, four were African American and Latino males, a small but significant demographic shift in a program that has been composed primarily of European American females. Although the City University of New York (CUNY) exists to provide educational opportunities to students from poor and working class families, teacher education programs both at the graduate and undergraduate levels have not tended to reflect this diversity, mirroring a national trend, despite efforts to recruit minority teachers. One of my challenges as a teacher educator is to support students who have been underrepresented in our teacher education programs while also being fair and just with students whom I consider to come from more privileged backgrounds.

These dramatic changes in the student composition of a course that was once relatively homogeneous has transformed the character of our experiences, allowing all of us to gain from the dialog across a number of differences given the critical mass of students representing divergent ideologies, experiences, racial and ethnic identities. These changes challenge me in a number of ways, not the least of which is to "walk in the shoes of my students" as I face the very diversity that is inherent in the urban classroom and that is of concern to the teachers and future teachers in my classes. However, my biggest challenge is to create a safe and trusting environment to dialog across differences in a meaningful and respectful way. I agree with Burbules and Rice (1991) that "(p)ursuing dialog across differences is essential to important aims of personal development and moral conduct" (p. 413). Dialog across differences in social power is possible, worthwhile, and essential in educational contexts.

Procedures

The written materials students produce during the semester include (1) student profiles completed on our first evening together, (2) session logs, (3) field notes of activities with one learner using an integrated approach to assessment and pedagogy, and (4) summary reflections on the course. These are the raw material for this self-study. Ethnographic analysis has been employed to examine participants' shifting ideologies, as revealed in their written reactions to course activities. Specifically, changes in beliefs and understandings about literacy and assessment with and for underachieving students who are also socially and

culturally different from participants are examined as processes and products of collective, critical reflection. As an educational ethnographer, I agree with Kincheloe (1990): "The words of students are the ore of teacher research. From this ore the teacher researcher extracts invaluable insights into students' cognitive levels, their pedagogical intuitions, their political dispositions, and the themes they consider urgent" (p. 22).

However, what I extract from the words of my students is not just about them but about me, as well. As Bakhtin (1981) reminds us, language is not a neutral medium. It is "populated with other people's intentions;" words are situated in social and historical contexts and in the speech of individuals as they relate and interact. To understand the words we must understand the contexts and the relationship between individuals in dialogic encounters. Teaching is essentially a dialogic process constructed and influenced by all participants - teachers and students - both by who they are as well as when, where, and how they interact. In examining how language reflects and is used to construct and reconstruct relationships and understandings in individual classrooms, we come to a better understanding of the outcomes of pedagogical relationships within specific contexts of use.

As this is an ongoing self-study, the first level of analysis, initiated during the Spring 1991 semester, led to the preparation of a text that represented our experiences in the course from the perspective of one student and my own as instructor (Mercado & Oest, 1992). The purpose of this first attempt was to codify our experiences as a way of coming to a first level understanding of what we had accomplished (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Smyth, 1989; Van Manen, 1990). A second attempt at analysis of the same data resulted in a multivoiced text (Mercado with Drudy, Siegel, & Speros, 1993) that represented the reactions of course participants to our collective experiences, from their dual perspectives as students and as teachers. My concern was to create a heteroglossic text that, by capturing divergent perceptions of our "lived experiences," would enable us and others to gain a better understanding of what occurred without making claims to interpretive authority. In legitimizing the voices of my students, I wanted to establish that we are equal partners in this inherently collaborative process that is teacher research. I now see where my voice needs to be stronger, to explain my ideology

and to interpret our activities more broadly, which at the time I was neither ready nor willing to do.

Following a two year period in which I did not teach EDUC 730, in the Fall of 1993, I was assigned not one, but two, sections of this course. It was my Chairperson's way of lightening a teaching load of four courses or 12 credits for the semester. Because the decision came late in the summer, I prepared to teach the courses with the same materials, and the same emphasis despite the fact that only one of the sections had been officially designated as the "bilingual section." "Official" means that students are informed of this emphasis in their registration materials. It is significant, though not accidental, that I give thought to this difference when, in reality, it matters little as there had been no exclusive section of EDUC 730 for students in the bilingual specialization for some time. All "bilingual" sections have a mixture of culturally and linguistically diverse students, which means that Spanish is not generally used in teaching the course. This is an important change as it enables those students who are not in the bilingual specialization to gain from the preparation provided to teachers in this program. Though mainstream teachers and prospective teachers are usually surprised to hear about the special emphasis, suggesting that scheduling convenience is their overriding concern when registering, most are appreciative of this unexpected opportunity to broaden their preparation. A few may stay because they feel there are no other alternatives, as they have suggested.

This third analysis therefore seeks to reinterpret data from the 1991 semester with data gathered in the fall of 1993, in light of understandings that reflect changes and growth in my thinking over time. I continue to ask the questions that compel ethnographers: "What is happening here?" "What did we accomplish?" At this time, however, I want to get a better understanding of what I am learning by engaging in critical reflection within socially and culturally diverse settings. This concern results from connecting to the work of scholars who speak to me and to the practical knowledge I have acquired through my pedagogy. Buchmann (1990), Burbules and Rice (1991), Richardson (1990), and Smyth (1989) are among those who, through their writings, have helped me to make sense of my experiences, but I admit that discovering these connections has taken time. Part of the problem of doing research on lived experience is that it is difficult to understand

what is happening until one has stepped outside of the experience (Van Manen, 1990) and given an opportunity for the data to speak (Erickson, 1986). Because research and pedagogy are intertwined, my first concern has always been to let the data speak to me as an educator; to let it inform my practice. However, I have also been concerned about not imposing an interpretive framework too prematurely as I represent this experience to and for other researchers. More time and effort is required as analyses are shared with a broader community of researchers, but it is also through the rigors of this process that I gain further insights. Engaging in teacher research is both necessary and demanding. It is the only way I have found to create some level of harmony in my personal and professional life, as a member of an institution where teaching and service are said to be as important as research, if not more so, but where promotional standards suggest otherwise.

Our Lived Experiences

"In this class I am the child I wish to teach." (02/90)

"She (the instructor) made her students think and feel the same way as young children in the elementary classroom." (12/93)

As these descriptions suggest and as has been described elsewhere (Mercado & Oest, 1992; Mercado with Drudy, Siegel, Speros & Oest, 1993), participants in this course engage in documenting the process of developing thematic units and portfolio assessments with and for culturally and linguistically diverse students while at the same time experiencing what it is like to learn in this manner.

Our common experiences include those which we engage in during our weekly sessions and those which participants organize on their own with and for learners who are the focus of assignments. These activities are intended to be mirror images of each other, but they occur in two different settings at different points in time. In addition, all of our "lived experiences" are organized to challenge the preconceptions and misconceptions that teachers and prospective teachers have about what underachieving students are like, what they are capable of accomplishing and what their behaviors mean. These conceptions/misconceptions are rooted in notions of assessment and literacy that have had a profound effect on the lives and educational

experiences of students who course participants fear facing in the urban classroom and who test their preparation and abilities as teachers. I agree with Hull and her colleagues (1991) when they argue that

it would be unwise just to rely on a process pedagogy and experience in the classroom to foster the development of non-deficit attitudes among teachers and teacher trainees. We need to spend some time thinking about teacher development - not just what knowledge to impart about writing, but how to develop the ability to question received assumptions about abilities and performance, how to examine the thinking behind the curricula we develop and the assessments we make. (p. 18)

This course constitutes an attempt on my part to respond to the pervasiveness of this deficit attitude, an attitude that provides the sub-text for course activities and requirements. Our activities are not about methods but about ideologies - the beliefs and assumptions that result in particular instructional arrangements.

Common experiences during our weekly sessions are composed of a flexible sequence of activities that usually extend over two sessions. These include (1) direct experiences, (2) debriefing activities, (3) discussions relating these experiences to our readings, (4) writing activities in which participants indicate how they plan on using these insights in pedagogical relationships with the learners who are the focus of assignments this semester, and (5) small group activities in which participants share and reflect on field-based assignments with colleagues interested in the same age/grade level. Each of these is explained next.

Direct experiences. These are activities organized to lead participants to construct their own understandings directly, through purposeful interactions with others. In effect, it is learning by doing rather than by "being told." Further, the understandings acquired/constructed in this manner are intended to conflict with previously held beliefs and assumptions and it is expected that these conflicts will result in the questioning or alteration of previously held beliefs and assumptions. For example, in one experience students engage in learning in Spanish for a period of 30 minutes, an activity that privileges those who know Spanish and excludes the many others who

do not. In this manner, participants experience what their second language learners may experience in an all English speaking classroom. In another experience, students examine quantitative and qualitative evidence of the remarkable and almost immediate accomplishments of underachieving Latino and African-American students through an enrichment (rather than remediation) approach which emphasizes writing to learn. The writings of these young adolescent students chronicle their experiences doing and learning from ethnographic research over a period of one year. These artifacts of learning are the result of a collaborative project which I initiated with a former student, a bilingual teacher; sharing it I am also sharing my practice-derived knowledge.

Debriefing activities. These activities engage participants in a dialogic process that usually involves (a) describing our experience, (b) explaining why we engaged in it, (c) noting the significance of the activity for different students, as individuals and as members of identifiable groups, and (d) making plans to use these understandings in our work with children. The purposes of debriefing is to acquire another level of understanding of lived experiences, as these have limited instructional value without the benefit of debriefing, as Dewey (1964) and others have observed. Debriefing is critical reflection, analogous to the process described by Smyth (1989).

Discussions relating these experiences to our readings. Connecting practical knowledge derived from our common experiences to knowledge gained from the assigned readings is important. I agree with Richardson (1990) that an important purpose for reading is to go beyond an individual experience and to learn from the experiences/words of acknowledged authorities. However, for many students in this reading course, exposure to authorities on literacy in multiethnic contexts will be a new experience. Generally, course participants have had limited exposure to this literature as most popularly assigned texts in reading courses typically devote one chapter to the "needs of special learners" and treat differences as deficits.

Writing activities. Re-presenting knowledge constructed through our collective experiences in our pedagogical interactions with learners is essential for self confrontation, a first step toward self transformation. Through the chronicles of their activities with individual students,

course participants are expected to plan, but also to give evidence of their efforts to put into practice the knowledge they are gaining through our activities together. In effect, knowledge is at the service of our work as teachers and writing is at the service of learning.

Small group activities. Sharing the chronicles of our assessments-in-progress in small groups with peers engaged with similar age/grade learners allows all of us to profit from another's experiences, and to explore and consider different ways of relating to and making sense of others with whom we stand in a pedagogical relationship.

It is evident that students' field-based assignments give meaning and purpose to our joint activities. Specifically, in these assignments students are to let themselves

be adopted by a second language learner of academic English from a bilingual, ESL, or mainstream class grades K-6 and engage him/her in a series of thematically related literacy events. The theme or focus for these sessions may be derived from the learner's interests or concerns or from an interest or concern you have. These activities should be designed to advance the literate development of this learner, but they should also provide a window through which you will get a better understanding of the notions of literacy/biliteracy discussed in this class. In effect, you are helping the student and they are helping you (1994 syllabus for EDUC 730)

Course participants are expected to meet with their respective learner for no fewer than 7 two-hour sessions, or the equivalent, during the semester. Basically, what I ask is that course participants create a meaningful/authentic relationship for learning in which they will assume both the role of teacher and learner with a learner/student who will also be their teacher. Prospective teachers are encouraged not to limit themselves to the institution of school. For about half of the class these activities occur in public and independent school settings, but for the others they occur in the homes of students and/or course participants, community centers, churches and even the neighborhood "bodega," or Spanish grocery store. This diversity of learning contexts enables all to extend the boundaries of our personal and professional existences in

very powerful ways, particularly during group activities and collective reflections. Specifically, this allows us to examine the artifacts of learning that result from different social and instructional contexts, thereby exposing us to important influences on and differences in literacy and learning.

All course participants are expected to engage in this assignment, no matter their background or level of experience. By not underestimating their abilities to deal with requirements many consider beyond their abilities, my purpose is to challenge practicing and prospective teachers to reconsider traditional notions of readiness, as reflected in constructs such as reading readiness. These notions have limited the learning opportunities provided to identifiable groups of students who never appear ready to move on to more advanced work, primarily on the basis of the way they use and respond to oral/written language in school contexts.

Little specific direction is given to course participants when they initiate these activities as a way of making visible the beliefs and values that are reflected in the pedagogical relations/practices they organize. This also enables me to gain a clearer understanding of each participant's entry level needs so that at the end of the semester I do not privilege or penalize him/her on the basis of past experiences, an important source of inequities in education at all levels. My purpose is to support and advance the learning of course participants in ways that more appropriately reflect their needs as these are constructed and reconstructed during the semester.

As course instructor, my roles and responsibilities are broadened to emphasize that of guide and mediator. My responsibility is to maintain an open dialog with and among course participants, providing them with frequent opportunities to confer with me and to consult with classmates. These discussions are often about some of the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions that surface when, for example, we use literacy to learn as opposed to using direct instruction of reading/skills; when we attempt to make sense of students' responses to instructional activities as well as their changes over time; and when pedagogy and assessment are intertwined as a way of supporting and advancing student learning.

Course participants are expected to submit drafts of their work-in-progress and my challenge is to keep abreast of what each is

doing and to provide timely feedback. Given my demanding schedule, I struggle to "be there" for students, to read carefully through and to respond thoughtfully to the many written documents that they produce and to use what I am learning from these oral and written exchanges to modify activities and to generate issues for discussions as we move through the semester.

Learning from experience means that the usual lecture process is reversed, with conversations about our experiences, examined in light of the practical knowledge we are constructing together and which the professional literature informs. I have already indicated one rationale for this approach - that I want to get at the barriers to the internalization and appropriation of significant and worthwhile practice, but there are others. Course participants have learned or are inclined to be passive recipients of other people's knowledge in their graduate studies, and often rely on information presented in lectures as the substance of their learning. This is not consistent with my view of learning nor with what I know about creating significant and worthwhile change in teaching practice. To change practice, participants must experience it themselves, an especially appropriate approach in methods courses. Sometimes participants do not relate positively to these traditional ways that knowledge is transmitted in institutions of higher education, even when they want to find connections between experiences in graduate studies with their world as teachers. Although this approach continues to evolve, in its present form it represents my appropriation or internalization of the theories and research of scholars from a variety of disciplines. Admittedly, I can no longer identify many of them, Freire (in Freire & Macedo, 1987), Smyth (1989), and Vygotsky (1978) are more memorable and have had a profound influence on my work as an educator. I continue to discover commonalities with the work of other scholars, as occurred when I read Richardson's (1990) essay on significant and worthwhile change in teaching practice.

Critical reflection on lived experience

It should be evident that experience and collective reflection are inseparable processes. It should also be evident that reflection takes on many forms and occurs at different points in time in the course activities. Participants engage in reflection through writing, as occurs

through their session logs after each evening's activities, but also when they share the previous week's log through an uninterrupted readaround. Students tell me that this enables them to reconstruct memories of what occurred as they quietly listen to each one's sharing. Students are also guided to reflect collectively, in a structured way, as occurs when we debrief activities but also when we examine children's writings together and when we share field notes containing interpretations of interactions with "adopted" students. Writing the summative reflections, which involves reviewing, and reflecting upon, the record of a semester's work, represents yet another form of reflection. In this course, writing plays a critical role in reflection; literacy is at the service of critical reflection.

In this course, dialog and reflection are inseparable and intertwined. Reflection is always a dialogic process, even when the dialog becomes internalized, as Vygotsky suggests. The reflective processes used in this course have evolved over time, becoming more collective and systematic, in large part as a result of what I learn from students and as a result of the discoveries I continue to make about the uses of reflection in teacher education.

Recently I have discovered the work of Smyth (1989), who engages teachers in reflection in a very structured and focused manner. "Critical reflection" is a structured way of reflecting that is directed at the transformation of practice by enabling practitioners to

see teaching realities not as immutable givens but as being defined by others, and as essential and contestable....If teachers are going to uncover the nature of the forces that inhibit and constrain them, and work at changing these conditions, they need to engage in four forms of action with respect to their teaching...best characterized by a number of sequential stages that can be linked to a series of questions: (1) Describe....what do I do? (2) Inform....what does this mean? (3) Confront....how did I come to be like this? (4) Reconstruct....how might I do things differently? (p. 5)

This is important for teachers working in marginalized communities where certain pedagogical and assessment practices persist despite their negative effects on students.

Buchmann (1990) describes reflection both as a mental activity and as a disposition which one has to be willing to submit to the process. Ellsworth (1989) and Burbules and Rice (1991) remind us that engaging in and sustaining dialogic relations that are essential to reflection is a complex undertaking in unequal power relations in any context, but more so in the context of the classroom. Some would even consider it an impossible endeavor (Ellsworth, 1989). However, dialog is essential for mutual understanding and for learning, and mutual understanding enhances learning. They are interactive and inseparable processes.

Over the years, I have discovered the potential of session logs as a tool for creating safe and respectful environments in which to engage in written conversations, and for stimulating individual and collective reflection. Through session logs, students reflect to make discoveries through/from an evening's activities, but also to understand the sources of their uncertainties and disagreements. I struggle to respond to each student in a timely and individual manner as a way of establishing that I value the voice of the student. This is especially important for students who are intimidated or reluctant to express their views publicly and/or in writing, for any number of reasons. Logs are used to give purpose and meaning to class discussions; this occurs when I read from unidentified logs and when I encourage participants to share portions of their logs, voluntarily. Sometimes I create handouts for discussions by photocopying reduced segments of anonymous logs and by organizing excerpts from individual logs to create a new text (see example on the next page) Gradually students come to value these logs because they understand the very important pedagogical purposes they serve for all of us, not the least of which is illustrating the constructive and interactive nature of comprehension and learning - the different ways that individual students experience/construct their understandings of course activities. While there is always the possibility that some students may not react to them as genuine communicative efforts, I always respond to them as if they are. It is through oral and written discourse that we establish the importance of logs for engaging in and sustaining dialog. Giving public voice to "uncertainties and disagreements" extends our dialogic possibilities, and creates the opportunity to learn from our differences.

Collective reflective processes begin with the reading and rereading of logs, which is also an important way of establishing that divergent views are respected and valued, a message that some initially view with disbelief or skepticism, as I have been told, after the fact. Both for this reason and because I do want to gain a clearer understanding of my pedagogy, this becomes the initial focus of critical reflection. This emphasis helps me, but it also helps students to understand what I do. It is also an important way of reducing the anxiety many admit to having. This anxiety needs to subside if participants are to allow their practices to be critically examined, which includes sharing their ongoing assessments publicly and in small groups. However, reflecting on the language of our assessments and what it reflects about our unexamined beliefs and assumptions is a major emphasis in this course.

Excerpts from the Logs of Students in EDUC/EDC 730, Spring 1994

Set 1:

Discovery:

"When I came to this country at age 9, I felt as if I was being asked to give up who I was in order to fit in. I'm glad kids aren't being asked to do that. It took a long time for me to integrate both and feel a sense of pride that I have." (02/08)

Uncertainty:

"OK I believe we should use what kids know but what about what society demands? Meaning if they write as they speak, (white) society is going to look at them as inferior." (02/22)

Set 2: Uncertainties

"re: Cummins' framework -- while I understand and comprehend his statements -- when I'm in the classroom, how ~ I translate the abstract to reality -- real activities and ways of teaching that promote Cummins' points." 02/08)

"I'm not certain as to how what you've outlined can be successfully done in light of pressures by administrators to teach traditionally and not stray from that path." (02/22)

Set 3: Uncertainties

"How we underestimate or overestimate children's reading abilities? How we as teachers are able to determine this? What are we to do! How to go about this?" (02/08) "How important is motivation? What is more important as a teacher-grammar? or their thoughts and ideas! or both?"

Set 4: Uncertainties

"Why are basals forced on teachers and students when there are so many more interesting things to read and write about?" (02/08)

"How do we include this change of assessment focus in a system where the teaching is at times governed by standardized testing?" (02/22)

Set 5: Disagreement

"At one point when a student was saying that people should be very patient with people who don't speak English --I agree -- but also there are many people who live in this country for many years who call it their home but never learn to speak the language well. I don't understand this. I know it's (English) is a difficult language to embrace. But if you can't or won't, don't you set yourself up to fail, to not succeed?" (02/08)

"Although I feel that the curriculum should reflect everyone's culture and be meaningful to all students (and also that it is more interesting to students from "traditional American homes"), I have some problems with having to change everything (?) in order for these various "minorities" to adapt." (02/08)

Set 6: Uncertainties

"One issue that concerns me is how to define genuine dialog as Cummins says that children should engage in. How does one rate true genuine dialog when what everyone says has validity? (is important)?" (02/08)

"I totally agree that students should be given the time to engage in reflecting their writings, it's very important but it's also so difficult when you're pressured from all sides teachers, administrators, parents and students to score well on MATs and DRP' forget about being creative." (02/22)

When combined with guided and collective reflection, these direct experiences are far more effective at initiating the process of self-interrogation than are exclusive reliance on readings from the professional literature. Assigned readings in this course, primarily from a textbook, *Learning in Two Worlds: An Integrated Biliteracy Approach*, by Perez and Torres-Guzman (1992), are intended to provide important contextual influences on literacy, an aspect that receives scant attention in most reading textbooks and in other course sections where concern with techniques of teaching developmental reading and the remediation of reading difficulties prevail. Breaking away from the deficit ideology that is pervasive in this context poses many problems. It is for this reason that I need to make my practice visible, to provoke thought about why we are learning in this manner, and to make clear that my purpose is not to indoctrinate students into "Whole Language," as a few have

suggested. I want course participants to assume a critical stance toward pedagogy by giving thought to questions I raise about my practice, questions that have become clearer to me from reflecting on my interactions with students:

1. Why do I embrace this pedagogical approach despite the tensions that it produces for me? How did I get to be this way?
2. What do my pedagogical behaviors mean?
3. How could I do things differently to respond more directly to your needs, and still challenge you to develop further/to learn?
4. How do I allow you to teach me to teach you?
5. To what extent is allowing you to learn from each other the same as letting you teach yourself?

Learning Through and From Critical Reflection on Lived Experience

Because EDUC 730 emphasizes the integration of assessment and pedagogy, changes in the learning of participants are assessed on an ongoing basis through an examination of the artifacts of their learning over time. Session logs chronicle participants' shifting understandings and ideologies. Field notes chronicle changes in the way participants interact with and make sense of the learners they have "adopted." Summative reflections are self-assessments which combine insights from the logs and the field notes, as participants relate how they have changed over the semester. I emphasize the careful rereading of all written documents as a way of coming to understand changes in knowledge, values, beliefs, dispositions as the course has evolved. Participants are also asked to make recommendations that will enable me to be more responsive to the needs of future students in this course. These summative reflections are not graded to encourage a critical examination of my pedagogy, as we have done throughout the semester, and as former course participants have suggested. Excerpts from the summative reflections of five representative cases are presented in the Appendix both to illustrate and to serve as evidence for the claims I am making. Cases 1 and 2 are drawn from summative reflections of students in section A and cases 3 through 5 are drawn from students in section B.

These cases were specifically selected to represent a range of reactions to the course but also to represent the diversity of course participants: bilingual education, special education, and prospective English monolingual teachers.

As students' words are a reflection of our collective activities, I also learn about me, to see my pedagogy through their eyes and their words. The documents that chronicle their changes also chronicle mine as occurs when I reread my written reactions to individual logs, but also when I reread logs and field notes in sequence. They provoke me to reflect upon how I need to change as well as how I have changed over time. I also learn about our mutual influence, especially evident in the self-assessments of participants in which I often hear my voice, especially when they admit to errors in judgments and to the low expectations they held for students.

As I have previously stated, my purpose in the third analysis is to examine the processes and outcomes of critical reflection from my perspective as instructor. These understandings will influence my pedagogy, both by way of what I learn about the consequences of specific practices and by way of questions it raises for me as I continue on this journey which is teacher research. Since I first embarked upon this more systematic study of my practice, I have sought to understand: "What is happening here?" It is a question that I will continue to pose and answer because with each new re-examination of my practice, a new response surfaces. This is as it should be in research of this nature: research of events in progress in which we make sense of new experiences in light of those that have occurred before and which informs and guides subsequent actions. In fact, this entire text is a reflection of those learnings in that the manner in which I represent and interpret our activities reflects my new understandings of what we accomplished.

Through this analysis, I have heightened my understanding about the "possibilities, limits and potential benefits of" (Burbules & Rice, 1991) critical reflection when it occurs as a dialog across difference. I will emphasize three understandings that have special significance; they were arrived at by engaging in the same processes emphasized in the course: through direct pedagogical experiences, by reflecting with others

who participated in these experiences, and by connecting to the work of other researchers.

First, I have gained new awarenesses that differences that influence critical reflection and that affect the possibility of "consensual agreements" (Burbules & Rice, 1991) in communicative relations go way beyond sociological categories such as race and ethnicity. Among the differences that influenced our communicative relations in significant ways were age, interests, dispositions, educational specializations and, related but distinct, membership in particular discourse communities. Through this self-study, I have gained further confirmation that it is sometimes more difficult for me to communicate with someone whose experiences growing up in New York City are very similar to mine than it is to engage in dialogical relations with someone who spent much of their life in a small town in Iowa - a real example. Perhaps it is my expectation that understandings will be easier to arrive at in the first situation than in the second, or perhaps there are other reasons, or influences that need to be explored. I will need to continue to examine this issue.

Moreover, I agree with Burbules and Rice that differences cannot always be inferred or assumed from the outside. As it turned out, teaching status became a salient difference in one course whereas social and cultural differences among participants was one of the salient differences in the other. These differences had a definite influence on how we engaged in critical reflection as well as what we reflected on. Section B of EDUC 730, which was characterized by the greatest degree of diversity among participants, was also where we experienced the greatest tension in communicating across differences, not surprisingly and as Case 4 (see Appendix) accurately captures. It is interesting, however, that the summative reflections of students in this section also suggest that participants may have gained greater sensitivity to social and cultural differences precisely because of the differences inherent in the group. In effect, we learned about differences from engaging in a dialog across differences in which we also discussed our work with students in relation to assigned readings and in relation to the narratives of our lives. It is true what Burbules and Rice say; our social and cultural differences yielded many "reflective moments" and these moments may have contributed to the changes that were evident to us, as

Case 4 describes, and that we each experienced. "Both as individuals and as groups, we can broaden and enrich our self-understanding by considering our beliefs, values, and actions from a fresh standpoint" (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 405).

In contrast, section A was characterized by less social and cultural diversity as most participants were European American and entering teaching as a second or third career. In this section, the difference that was salient was teaching status as only 10 of the 27 participants were classroom teachers, a salient difference that comes across in Cases 1 and 2. This increased percentage of prospective teachers (17 out of 27), relative to those who were in the classroom, heightened other kinds of tensions. From the perspective of participants, the perceived lack of "classroom experience" increased anxieties about completing course requirements. Although my expectations differed according to what I knew about participants' experiences as teachers, their anxieties increased my own about the need to provide timely and necessary support during a semester when I was teaching four graduate courses. Because of this imbalance, I could not count on creating supportive structures within course activities that would enable participants to gain from the expertise (if not the confidence) of peers. What this tells me is that my pedagogical approach needs to be modified to accommodate imbalances that may occur, whether related to teaching status or to other "differences."

Second, when we engage in critical reflection/dialog with others who bring different interpretive lenses, we may not achieve common meanings, but we may achieve mutual understandings - a tolerance and a respect for difference. This is personally significant because I tend to be excessively hard on myself, especially in assessing my pedagogical relations with students. Some of us have been conditioned to expect that we have to be completely successful at what we do, that partial success is unacceptable. Yet, as Burbules and Rice argue, achieving a respect across differences may be more significant than achieving consensus precisely because it shows a tolerance for differences, a needed disposition in our democratic society. This is illustrated in Case 1 where a course participant openly admits to areas of agreement and disagreement.

However, this tolerance for differences also poses a dilemma for me as an educator who is concerned about significant and worthwhile practice as a means of accomplishing educational equity. I agree with Buchmann (1990) that "professionals do not live (and improve) their moral life by following their fancy. Teaching affects the inner self and the self as it appears to others, as well as those others and the course of one's life..." (p. 489)

As educators, our primary responsibility is to act in the best interest of the learners we face in our classrooms. However, as teacher educators, we have the additional responsibility of acting in the best interest of the students who are in the classrooms of the teachers we teach. While creating awarenesses through direct experiences about the discrepancies between particular beliefs about pedagogy and learning and significant and worthwhile practice, this may not always be successful (as Case 5 illustrates). It is a struggle to influence the process of classroom change in the direction we value in a one semester course. Teacher educators have a serious responsibility to express disagreements and concerns. However, what I have come to realize about myself is that I depend on an affective bond between people as an influence on changing behaviors in the direction we value. In the academic community we often strive to achieve intersubjective understanding through logical argumentation, but the more I study my practice the more I realize that it is the connections we make with others at a very human level that is a powerful way of accomplishing our purposes as educators, especially when combined with critical reflection on lived experience.

Third, I have had to accept that dialog across differences is also fallible, as Burbules and Rice discuss. There are irreconcilable differences that cannot be bridged. I had two particularly disturbing experiences in the Fall of 1993, in the same section of the reading course. In one case, a young prospective teacher angrily accused me of practicing the opposite of what I preach because I did not accommodate her need for more structure and direction. In the other situation (Case 5), a course participant accused me of being biased against her because she was not bilingual. These two experiences have provoked a great deal of introspection as I consider the meaning of these reactions. Although I take some measure of comfort in knowing that I did not dismiss these

accusations and that I reflected upon and questioned my actions with others, I admit that the first of these two reactions has stirred me the most. I believe there was a real need that I did not address in ways that the student could understand, which is my responsibility as an educator. However, the student's reaction violated standards of appropriate conduct in adult-adult pedagogical interactions. A disrespect for another through a public display of defiance, which is what occurred, is, as far as I am concerned, unacceptable behavior, particularly when other alternatives exist. This student's reactions also reveal an intolerance and disrespect for difference that is troubling in someone who is entering the teaching profession. Still I ask, "Why?" "What does this mean?" "How could I have acted differently?" Although I attempted to address these issues with the student directly, there was no possibility for mutual understanding without a willingness to listen on the part of both individuals. I have not yet sorted all of this out. But, what I do know is that this unexpected direct experience made all of us pause to reflect and to gain even more from the critical stance toward pedagogy that I had been advocating, evident from the private conversations students had with me via their logs.

The five cases that have been included illustrate the spectrum of convergence or divergence that Burbules and Rice describe in their insightful article on dialoguing across differences, with Cases 2 and 4 showing the greatest degree of consensual agreement and Case 5 showing the least. From each one, I learn about myself and my pedagogy. None of the cases, however, demonstrates either extreme as levels of consensual agreement vary and understanding and misunderstanding co-occur.

In addition, I have learned that I need to be clearer about the pedagogical intent of this course, without detracting from its challenge as a former participant insisted when I sought her advice. I need to emphasize that dispositions, such as the willingness to try, to take risks, to question, to challenge, to be resourceful are essential to creating environments that challenge and invite underachieving students to engage in a broad range of academic literacies. I have realized that course participants, especially prospective teachers, need to have a more concrete understanding of the differences and disparities that exist

across school contexts in terms of literacy instruction in view of the limited experiences that many have had.

Further, I need to spend more time discussing the significance of certain terminology that appears in assigned readings and in the course outline, as Case 1 emphasizes. It is important to discuss what students consider to be the special language of this course in relation to language used in other reading courses. Terms such as "literacy" rather than "reading," or "creating environments for engaging in literacy," rather than "reading methods" need to be given continual emphasis as these constitute unfamiliar ways of talking about reading instruction. Participants need to understand that these terms represent particular views on and beliefs that shape literacy instruction and that influences the outcomes of education.

Finally, although we were constantly engaged in critical reflection on our experiences I am not certain of the extent to which course participants understood the significance of engaging in a dialog across differences, especially as a way of developing the "communicative virtues" (Burbules & Rice, 1991) that help make dialog possible and sustain dialogic relations over time.

These virtues include tolerance, patience, respect for differences, a willingness to listen, the inclination to admit that one may be mistaken, the ability to reinterpret or translate one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, the self-imposition of restraint in order that others may "have a turn" to speak, and the disposition to express one's self honestly and sincerely. The possession of these virtues influences one's capacities both to express one's own beliefs, values, and feelings accurately, and to listen to and hear those of others (p. 411).

Summary and Implications

Engaging in critical reflection on lived experience with educators who bring different experiences and interpretive lenses is a significant and worthwhile practice, but it is also a way of creating significant and worthwhile practice. Because teaching and research were intertwined in

the activities of this reading course, a critical stance toward pedagogy became a lived experience during an entire semester.

When critical reflection occurs as a dialog across differences, tensions are inevitable, but opportunities to learn are greater. Practicing and prospective teachers confront and examine beliefs and values that influence the learning opportunities they organize for the students they face or will face in the urban classroom. These anxieties are reduced when course participants are also allowed to confront our practices as teacher educators. We gain from a dialog across differences because it enables us to learn about the extent to which our practices get in the way of beliefs that make possible change in the direction we value. It is evident that this willingness to submit ourselves to self-interrogation requires a relationship of trust and respect, which is also created through and as a result of our dialog across differences when "communicative virtues" (Burbules & Rice, 1991) are present to some degree. Understanding that others are not trying to indoctrinate or change us to their "enlightened" ways by having disagreements acknowledged is especially important.

Teacher educators play a significant role in the preparation of teachers when they assume a critical stance toward their pedagogy. It is possible and necessary to transform university and colleges classrooms into safe havens in which to benefit from a dialog across differences that focuses on the problems of practice. Courses in bilingual and multicultural education provide especially appropriate contexts to gain from the perspectives of "different others" who are in principle "equal status peers" (Ross & Smith, 1992), perspectives that may be missing in individual school contexts given the demographics of teaching. Moreover, as teacher educators representing the spectrum of disciplines, it is our responsibility to create these opportunities in all courses. The significance of these opportunities is heightened when we consider that most of us lead a rather insular existence relating to a small number of individuals who think and look like we do. This limited lived experience does not provide a comprehensive basis for those who are or are contemplating becoming teachers.

Direct experiences created opportunities to extend the learning opportunities for all of us. However, they also create new opportunities to learn. I will continue to examine the influence of my practice and to

learn about the extent to which activities I organize in my work as an educator are an influence on the classroom practice of course participants when the course is over. The analysis continues.

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Appendix

CASE 1: A FUTURE TEACHER (SECTION A)

Looking back over this semester I am somewhat amazed that it is over, partly because it seemed to go by so quickly. Upon reviewing my class notes and the logs, I see that this has been a true learning experience for me.

Working with... I have become far more patient. I've come to realize that I can't just decide on my own what will be taught; I have to engage the learner in this process. I have come to see that I can't make snap judgments, that I can't decide what a student needs after only a short period of time with him/her

This class has given me much more of a sense of confidence in myself. Perhaps that's a part of "CAPE,"* in that I was involved in a relationship of respect that enabled me not to feel anxious and to be less nervous when I was speaking. The class was certainly also challenging; in every class we were challenged by you to go a little bit further in our thinking and in our analysis of our students and ourselves.

I believe that this course has also taught me how to begin a relationship of mutual respect with my future students and how important it is that teachers do this. At the core of any relationship there must be respect. Before I can expect the students to respect me, I have to show them that I respect them along with their opinions and feelings. We need to be involved in a dialog that will allow us to be both teachers and learners. They have to see that I am not only there to teach them but also to learn from them.

This course has helped me to learn what literacy is really about, that it isn't just about reading words but about understanding them, using them in writing and speaking. Literacy is about listening. Literacy isn't just like a "skill" to be learned but it's a practice.

This course also gave me a lot of insight into bilingualism and bilingual education. This subject became, for me, something of both a positive and a negative. It was positive, of course, because I learned more about the subject.

However, the one thing that has bothered me more than a little since the start of the semester is the heavy emphasis placed on the subject. The only reason it concerned me at all was because I am not a bilingual-education major; in fact, I speak only English. I couldn't, and to some point still don't, understand why so much time was spent on this subject, to the extent that even our required text was on this subject. I wonder if the emphasis on this was to the exclusion of something else. For instance, I would have liked to have spent more time on the issue of the whole language. If we hadn't spent so

much time on bilingualism, would we have been able to spent more time on whole language?

I also would have liked to have talked about other reading methods. I still am somewhat concerned that I'm not aware enough of "advanced-reading methods." Admittedly I am not a reading-specialist major, but I worry that I needed more emphasis on helping those children with reading "problems."

We all as individuals have those things we care passionately about, and I'm sure that it's not a stretch for me to say that the issue of bilingual education is one of yours. I'm not in a position, I believe, to recommend that you not place such an emphasis on this subject, since I don't know if this was required by the department or if the other sections of this course are taught the same way. (I've noticed that the spring schedule of classes includes a bilingual advanced-reading course and that one section of the advanced-reading course notes that it's open to bilingual-education majors; however, I don't recall that being the case for this semester's course.)

The only thing I wouldn't hesitate to recommend, though, is that you not use the same textbook next semester. (It) was one of the hardest books I have ever been asked to read for a course. But this isn't because the subject matter is so difficult; it's because the authors made it so "dry." It was as if they made it as "academic" as possible, a book that only professional researchers would want to read. This isn't to mention the number of times they gave an example of a concept in Spanish and not in English. In those cases I had to get translations from co-workers. Fortunately I was able to do this; if I had been unable to, however, it would have been even more frustrating.

Overall, though, my reaction to this course is positive. I don't want my comments of the past few paragraphs to detract from all that I have learned due to this course, to you and to my peers. It didn't bother me not getting grades on all papers; I think I worked harder when I wasn't sure of what grade I would have gotten on previous paper. In fact, if anyone was really concerned, I'm sure all they needed to do was to ask you how they were doing.

In conclusion, the course has been a mostly rewarding experience and certainly a learning one. I will able to take things from this course and then use them in my own classroom in the future. And in the end, isn't that what's important?

CASE 2: A FUTURE TEACHER (SECTION A)

The name of Professor Mercado's advanced reading course should not be *Advanced Studies in the Teaching of Reading and language Arts*. Instead it should be named: *Advanced Studies in Everything You Want and Need to Know to be An Effective Teacher*. When I began this course in September, I knew a little about being a teacher from my prior coursework.... As an avid student, I learned what the books taught me. Now, ... I have learned a little about teaching from the practitioner's standpoint. Professor Mercado's class has given me hands-on experience with the "new trends" in teaching which my other teachers only lecture about. This alone is more valuable than any textbook I could read.

...Did this course challenge me? Simply put, absolutely. I added this course late so I missed the first week of class. Initially, I was overwhelmed. I took me a few days to read the syllabus! Classes were stressful for me because I did not think that I knew what was going on. At times I felt this class was too advanced for me. I thought that I had to be a practicing teacher to understand concepts like the coupling of pedagogy and assessment, bilingual teaching and literacy. Now I realize I was mistaken.

The reason why this class worked for me was because of the assistance and support I received in my work.... However, I wanted more of a detailed outline in terms of the class projects. But this need of mine comes from years of structured schooling. In Professor Mercado's class, her practice of not giving a detailed outline provided for greater learning and creativity by the student. The student's own process was just as, if not more, important than the product the student produced.

I have developed several relationships in and outside of this class. My fellow peers and I have grown closer because we have "lived through" this experience together. During the semester, when I saw a fellow peer in the hall, the conversation centered around Professor Mercado's class. We asked questions such as: "What do you think I should do about . . .?" or "Did you meet with her yet?" or "How are you doing your Thematic Unit?" It seemed as if all we could think about was her class. Professor Mercado provoked us to think.

I have also formed a special bond with ... the student I studied during the semester. We spent three and one half months together, talking, learning, writing, and laughing.... I learned a lot about my own pedagogy and assessment. For example: Lessons do not always come out the way you plan them to. Children have a lot to say when you listen to them. Assessment is not about giving weekly vocabulary tests. It is about evaluating the ability of the learner and the effectiveness of the teacher.

This class will help me a great deal when I am teaching. I am very afraid to teach in a classroom where a large percentage of the children do not speak English. I do not speak any language other than English. My philosophy used to be: "They all must learn

English right away so they can learn other subjects." However, due to several literacy events I experienced in class, I realize that immediately learning English is difficult for a small child. When Professor Mercado walked into class one day and spoke Spanish for 30 minutes and did not acknowledge any English questions or comments that were spoken, I understood how it felt to be a non-English speaking child in an English speaking classroom.

One major insight that I acquired is that literacy is a process, not just an acquired skill.... Literacy is not about "doing reading and writing" in class. It is about a school day filled with planned and unplanned literacy events in which students and teacher learn.

I also gained insight into Vygotskian theory. I studied Vygotsky in my Educational Psychology class.... I now believe that Vygotsky's ideas also facilitate learning by allowing children to acquire knowledge based on their experiences and social interactions. Vygotsky's ideas are very important for the classroom. A teacher should use discourse (questioning) as a temporary scaffold that builds on student's learning. I plan on using Vygotsky's ideas in my classroom.

What skills did I acquire? Briefly: 1)I learned how to debrief and the importance of debriefing. This is necessary for a teacher to assess her pedagogy and the students' learning.... 2)I learned how to look at a student's writing with more meaning... 3)I learned how a teacher could foster individual relationships with a large number of students through individual group meetings, logs (journals), reflective writings and phone conversations.

As I have stated above, initially I found the process of this class very difficult... But because, as a group, we were all honest in stating our problems, I realized that I was not alone in my difficulties. This honesty made me feel comfortable in the class. I am glad that as a student I have experienced the pedagogy I should be practicing.... (this) aided me when taking my New York State Teacher's Certification Examination. I passed the essay portion of the exam because of this class.

I would recommend to a student interested in taking Professor Mercado's class that he or she should be teaching when taking the class. I felt a little disadvantaged because I wasn't a professional.... I would also recommend -- for Professor Mercado's sanity and for fairness to all students-- that there be some sort of class calendar where each student could sign up to meet at least once with Professor Mercado. Several times I stopped by her office and either there was a line which stretched down the hall or she was not there.... I think that some students were able to meet with her more than others.

I have enjoyed Professor Mercado's class.... I am enlightened and, I must admit, exhausted.... Thank you, Professor Mercado, for such an insightful experience and such a demanding learning environment. I have grown from this experience. It will make me a better teacher.

CASE 3: A FUTURE TEACHER (SECTION B)

I must say that initially, in the early weeks of this class I was unsure of what exactly I would get out of this class. I was daunted by the book, which I felt overly favored the bilingual students who were familiar with bilingual teaching methods and are able to think in two languages. I was uncomfortable with the fact that many of the students in this class were already teaching. I felt as though they had an unfair advantage during discussions due to their increasing experience. At many times I was disinclined to participate in discussions because I felt many students had an agenda that they wanted others to conform to, e.g., taking offense to calling students children and instead wanting them to be called learners. I felt that this did not contribute to making the classroom a "safe" environment where healthy exchange of ideas could take place. At many times I was extremely uncomfortable with discussions and with the attitudes of certain students. I often noticed that when students disagreed with each other they did not speak to each other in respectful manners and tones. In general I did not feel that the environment in the classroom was one of mutual respect and caring.

On other hand, I did grow to like the book. Even though I am not in the bilingual teaching program, I feel that the book used in class ... will be helpful to me when I actually do get into the classroom because, as Lillian told me, even if I'm not a bilingual teacher, once I get into the classroom in the City I will be a bilingual teacher. I got a lot out of the book in terms of me being more understanding of the problems non-native English speakers face in our classrooms. I think the approach the book takes presents materials in a different light than I am accustomed to. I think the book takes an important position in calling for the creation of meaningful environments that promote literacy. I especially appreciated the chapter concerning resources, because as a non-native Spanish speaker I would not feel qualified to pick children's books in Spanish to have in the classroom. There is a wide variety of books to choose from that I will feel comfortable in using because they have been recommended by educational associations.

I feel I gained the most in working with ... on the assessment project and thematic unit. Actually working with a student did much to increase my self-confidence and to make me realize that I really, truly do enjoy working with children. Watching progress through the methods described in the book and in class showed me that assessing students should not merely consist in assigning grades based upon test performance. As the months passed I watched David mature as a writer and gain the skills he needed to improve. I saw him learn to take the time to think before writes in order to develop his stories more thoroughly. Had I merely looked at this test scores I would not have noticed these small changes in his writing. I think that this assessment project has broadened my ideas about the ways we can watch students progress. Whereas I had known of alternative assessment methods from other classes, actually carrying them out did much to increase my appreciation of using them. I also think that the experience of using these methods will make me much more confident to use them in the future.

CASE 4: AN EIGHT YEAR BILINGUAL TEACHER (SECTION B)

On September 1st was the first day of class for my advanced reading course. When I walked in, the syllabus had been handed out. My first impression without even reading it was "My God! Look at how many pages!" I knew that I was in for it. In my head I imagined having to do research papers, write lesson plans, have to observe teachers in other schools, keep a log, etc. My mind went crazy with images.

Finally, I came back to reality and noticed my professor was a woman, Hispanic, and to top it off, a doctor. I began to look around the room and was surprised to see such a diversity of cultures. Professor Mercado began to review the syllabus and as I looked around, the faces of my fellow classmates were from confused to horror. I could see that people were already considering dropping the course. I was, too, but that was only because it sounded so familiar to me. I kept saying, I think I've done this before.

By the time 8:30 rolled around there was a thick fog in the room (tension). I would see people whispering to one another and asking, so where does reading come in?

Many times in class I felt a bit uncomfortable because comments were made in negative ways and I was able to find comfort in my reaction log, although sometimes I had to say something in class for e.g. When people used the word illiterate, special education, etc. I had to often remind myself that some people in this class had never taught and others were set in their ways.

As time went on, it was exciting to see people like ... change the way they spoke about children they were working with.

The tension from the first day came and left during certain sessions especially as time drew nearer to begin handing in assignments. It was clear that there were many different needs to be met by professor Mercado and still the question remained for some, so when are we going to talk about reading?

Overall, the class was receiving two courses in one because just reading the text and discussions of the contents could have been one course in itself, which I believe is what people would have preferred. The assignments and discussions of the things we were actually doing would have been the second. Together, they began to give a sense of community and it was a great experience to hear so many people turned on to alternative assessment, whole language, discussing the zone of proximal development. Here I'd say that peoples' boundaries were extended.

This course was designed to meet the needs of all involved. Many times at the expense of Professor Mercado who had to be a jack of all trades and try to please everyone and constantly answer the major question; so, WHEN DOES READING COME IN?

**CASE 5: A THIRD YEAR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER
(SECTION B)**

...This class has definitely been a memorable one in both positive and negative ways... The most challenging part of this course was of taking an alternative route to assessment, especially of those whose primary language is other than English. I both realize and agree that it is necessary to develop one's higher levels of thinking skills and this can be done very well in the practice of writing. From my perspective, which is one of dealing with learning disabled adolescents, this creative writing process is a very beautiful experience, but it is not always an effective way of making reading stick. I understand your expressed resentment of teachers who have penalized many students for not being able to read and write English, and you are right, it is not a just way to judge somebody. I have always taken this fact into account when grading a student. I am aware of the student's effort and will usually grade on that with some concrete evidence that he has made an attempt to succeed. I have also realized that many students may feel different from you, especially those that are bilingual (in my experiences), and they may not feel comfortable with having any sort of exchange with you as an instructor, be it friendship exchanges or concerns about oneself within a class. Unfortunately, I felt as if I was on the opposite side of the spectrum here. Because I was not bilingual, I felt uncomfortable. I suppose that was why when you and L finally spoke about my status within the class, I felt as if you were angry at me for not being able to meet with you in your office.... Because of my job responsibilities, it was impossible for me to do so, so I tried to make alternative efforts to meet you both before and after I received my first actual grade from you, the midterm. So, I hope you as a culturally sensitive person can try and empathize with my perspective and viewpoint of things. I was not trying to be hard on you emotionally, but it was hard for me to understand your seeming anger towards me. One thing I did learn was to try to control my emotions more with my students. I think it is wonderful that you are so passionate about your work. I think it is even more wonderful that you take action on your passion by publishing your work and teaching it at the graduate level. I think you are a great mentor, despite our differences. You have a lot of useful and practical ideas, but many of them are yet accepted in the classroom due to behaviors of students. Hopefully, this will one day change.

...I think that the most useful literacy event that you taught us was to model reading and writing in front of our students. I have been doing this more in my classes and have seen a change in behavior in my students.... Most of my reading instruction was done through a basal reader. I learned this way, but not everyone can be as fortunate as I was. I grew up in a single parent home, with my father, because my mother past away when I was a year and a half. My father was a teacher, like myself, and always made sure I was surrounded by books. I actually never learned to enjoy writing until we had a creative writing class in the fifth grade.

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A lot of information in this course that is related to teaching is of extremely practical value. I think it is a great course for beginning teachers because it prepares them for more complex teaching strategies. I only wish that I had taken this course during my first year of teaching rather than now. This course was a reinforcer of what I have already been doing.