Testimonios: Transformative Counterstorytelling for Dual Language Learning Communities
It’s almost like a personal statement from the heart, where you have the opportunity to speak your brave truth about yourself unapologetically.

Maestra M.
Goals

1. Explore the purpose, history and pedagogical context of Testimonios
2. Learn about how one group of bilingual Latina/o/x teachers use Testimonios in their school
3. Affirm and nurture our intersectional identities
4. Write and share our own testimonio
Shared Understanding

Purpose, history, theory and context of Testimonios as a pedagogical practice
Testimonio Defined

Testimonio, a Spanish term for "witness account," is described as a first-person storytelling of acts of injustice and oppression, experienced or witnessed, that can be either oral or in writing. Testimonios are also narrative counterstories of resistance, assets and accomplice.

As Dr. Jose Medina shares, testimonios are “a form of narrative that transcends awareness and gravitates toward political intention, questions institutional power, the need to speak for justice, and the importance of coalition as keys to building equitable social frameworks.”

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As a pedagogical practice, testimonios are an aid to develop a frame for unpacking structural marginalization and racism, and as such are poignantly employed in dual language immersion.
Testimonios as Critically Conscious Counterstorytelling

“...develop a frame for structural marginalization and racism if they can be used to recast and challenge pervasive theories, policies and explanations about educational failure as a problem not of individuals, but of systemic institutionalized practices of oppression.”

Blackmeyer Reyes p 527, 2012

The act of telling reminds us that there is resistance, hope, strength and perseverance.

Yosso, 2006
Transformational: Storyteller & Witness

There is a mutually reinforcing process between teller and listener, which both deepens well-being and validates identities...an awakening.

Testimonios As a Pedagogical Practice

A tool purposefully engaged in by bilingual teachers either with colleagues/each other, students, and/or families.

Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012; El Ashmawi et al., 2018; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019; Cuevas 2016; Passos DeNicolo et al., 2015; Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012
DL Programs: Promise of Equity

There is great potential for advancing equity via dual language programs for emergent bilinguals in terms of both educational access and outcomes.

DL program goals of social cultural competence and critical consciousness call us to act.

And yet, we navigate a K-12 educational context in which racism, linguicism, and many other oppressions and harms occur.

Loving our complex selves

How does that affect our work?

How is our job as dual language educators intertwined with our identities?
Their Voices

Theoretical framework, findings and implications from the research study
Background

DL TWBI Latina/o/x K-6 teachers in this study use testimonios in their learning community…

with each other during planned purposeful professional development,

with families during back-to-school night and gallery walks, and

with students in connection to Welcoming and Affirming thematic units

Data from qualitative interviews that occurred 3-4 months after a PD session; study asks about all uses of testimonios in the school setting.
Critically conscious counterstories
“A personal statement from the heart.”

Recasting educational failures not as individual but system failures—institutionalized practices of oppression.

1. Prop 227/ English Only hegemony
2. Raciolinguistic registry oppression
3. Racialized intersectional identity oppression
Testimonios as transformative
“The work I do is valued.”

- Bravery
- Reciprocal positive regard
- Deep connections
- Awakening, healing
- Emotional processing
Testimonios influence relationships & interactions
“You’re able to not assume but wonder.”

Improvement in colleague relationships
Making less assumptions
More honesty, deeper connection
More trust, safety
Feelings of “closeness”
Mutual appreciation
Be a researcher!
Read the quotes and place them near the finding area.

Critically conscious counterstories

Testimonios as transformative

Testimonios influence interactions with the school community
Implications

Importance of making space for *raciolinguistic critically conscious reflection* in DL teacher preparation and for those in the field/current practitioners.

Importance of **communal** counter storytelling & listening for individual well-being, effect on school climate and pedagogical practices, and interpersonal relationships.
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Maestra M.
Our Testimonios

Opportunity to write, to share, and to listen
As dual language leaders, we may find it difficult to **serve as guerreras/guerreros**, if we are **not willing to bare our souls and share of ourselves fully**.

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Think Time, 2 min

Think about an experience or instance that illustrates a time when you felt (or witnessed) oppression connected to (your) language, race, ethnicity or other identities.

What is an event/experience I want to share?
Writing Time, 10 min

Questions to consider:
• What made this event memorable for you?
• How did this event impact you?
• What did you learn about yourself, others, the "rules" of society?
• What personal or family strengths or assets did you lean into to make sense of the experience?
Share Your Testimonio

Four minutes each

In a dyad or (no more than a) triplet, take turns and share your testimonio.

When we come back to the whole group, we will make space for a few share again.
It’s almost like a personal statement from the heart, where you have the opportunity to speak your brave truth about yourself unapologetically.

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Thank you for sharing
What was it like for you to share? How were you affected as a teller?

How were you affected as a listener?

What was the hardest or best part of sharing or listening? How do you feel now?

Who do you want to hear your testimonio? Why?
Appreciations at our table

I appreciate...
Learned...
I’m thinking about...
Thank you for...
THANK YOU