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## “...4542 Miles from Home...”: Repositioning English Language Learners as Power Brokers and Teachers as Learners in the Study Abroad Context

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Article

# “... 4542 Miles from Home ...”: Repositioning English Language Learners as Power Brokers and Teachers as Learners in the Study Abroad Context

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**Abstract:** This article provides an empirical context for the role that bi/multi-lingual children and families may play in supporting pre-service and in-service educators engaging difference through a literacy and language situated study abroad internship in Chile. Drawing on data over a 15-year longitudinal study of the program, the authors examine how students and parents navigate serving the role of teacher, whereas the teacher participants navigate a new role as a learner in a context where they, many for the first time, experience being language and cultural minorities.

**Keywords:** language; bilingualism; multilingualism; study abroad; Chile; students as teachers; parents as teachers; teachers as students

## 1. Introduction

This article provides an empirical context as to the role bi/multi-lingual children and families play in helping pre-service and in-service educators engage difference, particularly for second language learners, through the lens of a longitudinal 15-year-long study abroad program. We begin with short vignettes describing how the first two authors (Kenny and Michaela) contextualize their own bilingual upbringings and related challenges having German-speaking mothers co-navigating their U.S. public school experiences. Next, we explore how those experiences inform our work co-leading an internship-based study abroad program in Chile designed to challenge teachers' sense of bi/multi-lingualism, and better engage differences when back in the United States. We then provide an overview of the study abroad program as a longitudinal empirical study. We go on to share two relevant insights from our work: (1) The value of reversing the role between students/teachers; and (2) the value of families in teaching and teacher education. Finally, we end with implications and a framework for guiding educator engagement with families and children across living and learning contexts.

## 2. Researcher Positionality Vignettes

### 2.1. Kenny's Vignette

My mother (German) spoke to me exclusively in German and my father (U.S.-born) exclusively in English. As he worked a lot, I spent a majority of my pre-school years with my mother. A vivid early memory of school was a meet the teacher event in kindergarten two or three weeks into the start of the year. After meeting my mother and hearing her speak, the teacher, Ms. Olsen, said “ohh, now I know why Kenny sounds funny when he speaks in class, you don't know English all that well, do

you?" My mom, not often lost for words, was shocked; she froze, and then started tearing up. Ms. Olsen said to her, "it's ok dear, maybe we can have Kenny spend some extra time after school with people that have better English and he won't sound so funny in no time." I don't think Ms. Olsen was a bad person, and I am sure that her intentions were admirable, but in the matter of 2 min her impact managed to marginalize who my mother was, who we were, and the cultural and linguistic strengths that could have been built upon to support me as a learner as well as my monolingual peers. My mother was embarrassed, leaving the school with these take aways: (1) She was not positioned to help her own child; (2) her language and my language were sources of marginalization; and (3) that her best course of action, for me to gain as a student, was to retreat from involvement. After that day, she has quite literally almost never spoken German with me again. I lost not only the majority of my German rapidly, but I also lost a huge part of my identity that could have been leveraged in service of my literacy engagement.

## 2.2. *Michaela's Vignette*

I remember the first time a teacher framed my mother as somehow "less-than" because she was not a native English speaker. My parents were meeting with my teacher to discuss allowing me to skip the sixth grade. As soon as Mrs. Cole heard my mother's accent, her focus shifted to my dad. It was almost like my mom became invisible. I was so uncomfortable and embarrassed for my mom. I wanted to tell Ms. Cole that my mom was the main reason I was so far ahead in school. My mother had taught herself English by reading children's books to me aloud when I was a baby. As her English improved, the books became more challenging, and I became a more active participant in our daily reading. By the time I started kindergarten, I was already reading English at a second-grade level. But when Ms. Cole heard my mom's accent, she could not even imagine the contributions my mom had been making to my education. The day after that meeting, Ms. Cole found a mistake on a homework assignment, and she suggested that I might want to ask my dad for help next time. I was also no longer allowed to read my favorite book, Ende's [1] *Momo*, during free-reading time because it was in German. My mother gave me fluency in two languages, yet, somehow, we were both punished for that gift.

## 2.3. *How Vignettes Inform Our Work*

We share our vignettes to help frame our interest in our work with educators generally, and for this article specifically. Parts of both of our identities have been complexly marginalized while other aspects are very privileged [2]. We are both white, come from European, and consequently Eurocentric, identity bases, and have the privileges of perceived class, sexuality, and religion aligned with dominant groups, even if those perceptions do not match reality. In both cases we are aware that our pedagogy and educational outlooks are shaped through identity, interactions with others, and hopes for how change can be effectuated. Our marginalization around language does not overshadow our privileges, but it makes us keenly aware of, and attentive to, how marginalization works in school settings, and how teachers can pay attention to what is, and is not, working for students; this is particularly so for students who do not receive the benefit of identity perception that we each receive.

In the eye of the storm representing the Trump presidency in 2019 we are more convinced than ever that helping pre-service and in-service educators engage difference through meaningful interactions, where teachers are pushed beyond their comfort zones, is of key import. The current U.S. presidential and administrative discourse is aggressively promoting the narratives that: "Mexicans are rapists," "immigrants are murderers", and coming to the United States with the intention murder its citizenry; immigrants are "stealing" jobs that "belong" to [white] Americans, "swarming" the border, and threatening national security; the U.S. population should be afraid of, and express hate toward, Muslims who are "terrorists," and, there is a "national emergency" as it relates to the Northern Mexican border [3–10]. At the same time, even according the U.S. Department of Justice there is a significant uptick in white nationalism inspired domestic terrorism [11]. From the massacres at Sandy Hook, Charleston, Orlando and Charlottesville, to the very recent (within two weeks of finalizing this

piece) massacre at mosques in Christchurch, the level of violence combined with vitriolic discourse has created a challenging climate to engage difference in meaningful ways, particularly for educators who may have significant disconnects in identity with their students. In the wake of 9/11, Kenny was seeking a way to develop an opportunity for educators to engage with difference in non-contrived and meaningful ways, creating the context for the Teaching in Chile program. Nearly 15 years after the program began the national context is more complex in many ways than it was in 2001, convincing us (Kenny and Michaela) that continued focus is needed on helping teachers recognize the strengths of students with difference—in our case, a focus on language and ethnicity—and how to engage and value families and students. The role of media, rhetoric, and deficit constructions of English Language Learner populations are essential to consider.

### 2.3.1. Media and Rhetoric

When considering the sources of disconnect between teachers and their English Language Learner students, it is important to bear in mind the ways in which the cultures represented by English Language Learner students are portrayed in media and political rhetoric. Absent the opportunity for authentic, immersive, cultural exchange, teachers' understandings of their students are inevitably shaped by media representation and political discourse. Due to Teaching in Chile's situation in a Spanish-speaking, South American country, our focus here is primarily on the misrepresentation of Latino cultures. This is not to discount the experiences of English Language Learners from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, whose marginalization mirrors that of Spanish-speakers, and in some ways, may be even more complex where religious differences are at play.

In a recent study of the state of Latinos in contemporary U.S. media, Negrón-Muntaner [12] noted that “in the relatively rare instances when Latinos appear [in media]”, they are represented as “criminals, domestic servants, sexual objects, and comic relief” (p. 107). These representations are not limited to fictional film and television, but also include news stories, where “66 percent of stories focusing on Latinos are about crime, terrorism, or illegal immigration” [12] (p. 108). Other studies detail the cultural homogenization of Latino characters in U.S. media [13,14], providing viewers with a “Latina/o subject on television that is stripped of national or cultural specificity” [15] (p. 2). The prevalence of this diluted representation of Latino cultures further hinders the ability of teachers to practice culturally-relevant teaching of English Language Learner students, let alone recognize them as anything other than generically Latino, or at worst, all Mexican.

There has also been a recent increase of jingoistic sentiment in popular media [16], advertising [17], and political rhetoric [18] in both the lead-up to and aftermath of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Federal policy changes such as travel bans [19,20], the Northern Mexican border wall [21], and the threatened repeal of DACA [22], seem to be reflected in the form of organized public displays of xenophobia [23] and overt racism [24], creating an environment hostile to internationalization. A simple text search of Donald Trump's posts on Twitter reveals that in tweets about Mexicans and other immigrants, he uses words such as ‘violent,’ ‘dangerous,’ ‘criminals,’ ‘threatening,’ ‘thugs,’ ‘cartels,’ ‘terrorists,’ ‘rapists,’ and ‘problem’ with alarming frequency.

The research community has been vocal in its response to the implications of recently implemented nationalistic policies and rhetoric on teacher education and education in general [25–29]. As Barrow [25] noted, “we are inextricably interconnected, and building walls or isolating ourselves in the name of nationalism will not change this fact” (p. 164). It would be both irresponsible, and blatantly historically inaccurate, to imply that issues with nationalism and internationalization first surfaced during the lead-up to, and the first term of, Trump's presidency [30–32]. The current climate of heightened awareness surrounding these long-standing issues, instead, gives a sense of urgency to researchers in related fields, and that impetus motivates the dissemination of a part of our longitudinal study, as a way to take up the lack of engagement with difference and the cultural connectedness of teachers in the increasingly diverse classrooms of today's public schools, specifically as it frames to the value students and families bring to bear on the teacher/student continuum.

### 2.3.2. Deficit Discourse and English Language Learners

Deficit discourse is persistent in research literature and educational practices involving English Language Learners [33–35]. Instead of emphasizing the inherent pedagogical value of student diversity, researchers tend to problematize cultural and linguistic differences [34] (p. 387). Gutiérrez and Orellana [33] note that “non-dominant students are first isolated and identified as a distinct unified group that is somehow different from an invisible and mostly unspecified norm” (p. 505), based not on language practices, but rather on racial and ethnic categories. The resultant framing of differences as deficits, “sustains cultural explanations for the persistent underachievement of non-dominant groups, supporting ideologies that conflate race/ethnicity, social class, and culture and diverting attention away from the inequitable distributions of resources” [33] (p. 506).

Mitchell’s [36] meta-analysis of scholarship regarding secondary multilingual learners identified “difference is deficit” and “English-is-all-that-matters” as two of four majoritarian stories common to the research literature (p. 339). Deficit discourses ignore students’ non-English linguistic resources, instead blaming achievement gaps entirely on low proficiency with the English language [34]. Multiple studies point out the hypocrisy of problematizing second-language acquisition of English Language Learners, while valorizing second-language acquisition of dominant native English-speakers [33,34].

## 3. The Teaching in Chile Program: Context, Methodological, and Data Considerations

The Teaching in Chile program brings predominantly monolingual educators to Chile for a three-week 120-h internship at a Pre-K-12 school in Concepción; our school partner is not a bilingual school, but teaches English intensively, and the students are overwhelmingly bilingual by the time they enter high school. During the school day participants are paired with teachers, most of whom do not speak English, to work together over the course of their time on the delivery of instruction for children with the support of the students who serve as language intermediaries. Time is spent with kids and teachers engaged in a variety of literacy and school-based interaction. With the support of the administration, the English department, our program faculty, and doctoral students, we structure bilateral literacy-based professional development where the Chilean teachers offer a professional development session the first week, the U.S. teachers offer one the second week, and the students of the school offer the joint group of Chilean and U.S. teachers a development session. Nights and weekends are spent living with host families where the 7-12th grade student is the only person in command of both English and Spanish; both the parents and participants have to lean into the adolescent as a source of linguistic knowledge and cultural brokerage. During their time, participants, along with their host families, are also given tasks to complete such as the U.S. participant shopping in a market and the families and participants having structured conversations together with the students that push participants and families outside of their comfort areas, turning toward the children as the knowledge sources.

Participants blog weekly as well as communicate to program faculty through a two-way journaling system to mediate how they experience difference as a linguistic and ethnic minority, and how to lean into students, particularly second language learners, as rich sources of knowledge as opposed to framing them as difficult or deficient. Participants and program leaders meet daily for processing meetings where we make sense of the experience, the language practices, brainstorm ideas for our time there, as well as how to incorporate richer language and literacy practices back at home. Through a service-learning project, the participants, Chilean teachers, and students incorporate literacy skills toward the aid and support of the science, math, and social studies embedded into a coastal restoration effort.

We have gathered research data on the project over the 15 years of the program including the of pre-experience interviews and questionnaires, interviews with participants, teachers, administrators, families, and students, the gathering of material and video artifacts, lesson observations, journals, and blogs during the experience, as well as post surveys and interviews. We follow up with participants

every year, for those that are willing to continue—most have—about their classroom experiences and how they connect back to their time in Chile.

### 3.1. Participants

Since 2004 we have had 239 participants and the only year we did not participate was right after the 2010 earthquake (see Table 1, below). About 86% of participants are female, consistent with teaching demographics. For just over 57% of participants this is their first time outside of the United States and for 25% this trip is their first time on an airplane. 74% of participants identify as white, and over 25% Participants of Color, which is positively disproportionate to other study abroad programs. 29% of participants are 1st generation college attendees, and the ages of participants have ranged from 18 to 67. Interestingly, over 95% of participants remain in education, whereas typical teacher turnaround has shown a steady increase of teachers leaving the education and/or their practice with a national turnover rate at 16% [37].

**Table 1.** Participants Over Time.

Year	Participants	Female	Male	1st Time Out of U.S./1st Time on Plane	White/Of Color	1st Gen
2018	18	13	5	12/3	15/3	7
2017	22	19	3	14/5	16/6	8
2016	25	20	5	12/4	17/8	7
2015	20	18	2	12/5	16/4	10
2014	21	18	3	9/6	15/6	6
2013	24	20	4	14/4	19/5	7
2012	18	17	1	11/5	9/9	3
2011	19	17	2	11/7	15/4	6
2010	Program suspended for 2010 Concepcion Chile earthquake.					
2009	15	12	3	8/3	12/3	2
2008	13	13	0	9/4	10/3	3
2007	10	9	1	6/4	8/2	3
2006	13	11	2	7/3	9/4	3
2005	11	10	1	5/2	8/3	3
2004	10	8	2	6/5	8/2	2
Totals	239	205 (86%)	34 (14%)	136/60 (57%)/(25%)	177/62 (74%)/(26%)	70 (29%)

### 3.2. Data

Data for the larger longitudinal study included pre-trip, during-trip, and post-trip interview transcripts with participants and community partners, pre-trip and post-trip belief surveys, daily journals used for communication between participants, community partners, and program leaders, as well as participant blog posts, post-experience surveys, and follow up interviews, all of which were conducted by the research team of program leaders and doctoral research assistants. Participants signed informed consent documents to participate in the research study, though consenting or not consenting to participate in the research does not impact participation in the program. One hundred percent of participants included in this study signed informed consent, but three participants (1%) opted to discontinue participation at some point, one during the experience and two significantly after the experience. Community partners including teachers, administration, and host family adults also signed informed consent in Spanish for their participation. We neither studied, interviewed, nor directly collected data from minors as part of the research, and consequently did not obtain minor assent for participation. Students are referenced by other participants, but all names have been changed twice to ensure complete anonymity. Internal Review Board (IRB) has deemed the research exempt with a low probability of causing participant harm.

### 3.3. Methodological Considerations

A longitudinal case study methodology has been used to analyze and interpret the collected data. As described by Saldaña [38], detailed line-by-line coding provoked initial codes which were “tentative and provisional” (p. 81). The line-by-line process of coding was useful over time as the research team has generated categories and allowed for transformation within these groupings through a process of “theoretical sampling” [39] (p. 119). As doctoral student research team members have entered and/or left the project, we asked that each researcher keep memos and detailed code notes to ensure consistency across coders.

As the project has progressed, codes have been verified annually and were/are collapsed/expanded as needed. We recognize the challenges of having a complex set of research team members, thus we made sure to have a clear color-coding system that was accessible to all members to establish and confirm consistency across time and researchers. While all members of the team had input, the primary researcher on this project and first author of this article served as codebook editor, the “one who creates, updates, revises, and maintains the master list for the group” [38] (p. 27). New research team members are trained in the coding system and interrater reliability is checked with sample data from the study that the core team has established as meeting particular code thresholds. As Saldaña [38] suggested, coding with a team must be a coordinated and collaborative effort, thus intercoder agreement was conducted through group meetings. When a new code has emerged from data, previous data are re-analyzed with the addition of the new codes to evaluate for occurrences of that code in the corpus of data.

## 4. Insights

When asked in a pre-trip interview to describe English Language Learners, participants in the Teaching in Chile study abroad program have given very similar answers over the fifteen years that the program has been in operation. In fact, answers to that question from the years 2004 through 2016 were almost indistinguishable. Preservice teachers consistently framed English language learners as “challenging”, “time consuming”, and “diverse”. Responses from several participants in the past two years, however, have shown an alarming shift in tone. “Challenging” has become “difficult”, “time consuming” is now “takes time and resources from American students”, and “diverse” has been replaced with “different.” As troubling as this development is, it is not altogether surprising. Nationalism and xenophobic racism have recently become more prominent in media and politics [18,23,24]. These discourses serve to perpetuate the deficit modeling of English Language Learners, fueling preservice teachers’ tendencies to problematize rather than to value differences among students in their classrooms. The effect is particularly noticeable among program participants who have had no prior experiences outside of their own domestic context.

Research shows that teachers’ negative attitudes towards English Language Learners and their families perpetuate and intensify inequities faced by students from non-dominant cultures [33–35,40,41]). The challenge, then, for teacher educators is to provide meaningful and authentic contexts in which pre-service teachers can develop the cultural competence needed to fully engage with the diverse populations of learners they will serve. Study abroad programs such as Teaching in Chile, though not a catch-all solution, offer one way to meet that challenge. The program is intentionally designed to foster a relationship in which English Language Learners are empowered, and preservice teachers organically come to value the skills and contributions of multilingual students. At the same time, teachers gain significant insight into the motivations of parents, through intimate inclusion in day-to-day family life as non-dominant participants in a culture and context otherwise inaccessible to educators.

#### 4.1. Role Reversals: A Swap in Deux Course

When examining our code book for insights into the preservice teacher/English Language Learner relationship for this article, we found two main themes that focused first on a shift in role who taught and who learned, emphasizing the role of student as teacher and teacher as learner. Second, we see a theme of teachers re-shaping and reconceptualizing the role and value of families through active participation as an invited member of the host family throughout the program.

#### 4.2. Who Teaches and Who Learns?

The first significant aspect of role reversal that we want to discuss is the rapid swapping of roles, in which English Language Learners become power brokers through language use. Our pre-trip data over time has suggested that while the nature of responses may be more problematic in terms of reflecting the current political landscape, there has always been a disconnect on what the participants thought about what would happen on the trip. Preservice teachers participating in the program who had previously expressed problematic views of English Language Learners found themselves completely reliant on bilingual students, some as young as six or seven years old, for all of their communication. Prior to the trip, a significant portion of our participants ( $n = 183$ ; 76.6%) expressed some idea that they were excited bring children in Chile 'better' U.S. teaching/learning and/or conceptualized that the learning landscape would benefit from what they would bring to these children through their participation. Cassandra, for example said, "it will be great. I mean I love helping my own students learn but think about the impact you can have on these kids who have a whole lot less." Cassandra reflects a common pre-trip sentiment of participants, namely that the children in Chile must be in a 'worse-off' context necessitating altruistic teachers to come in and save the day (white savior complex). Interestingly, the children of this partner school are all middle to upper-middle class and do not suffer from any lack of resource. Equally interesting about 149 participants (just over 62.3%) expressed some combination of fear or anger about non-English language speaking in the United States, and another nearly 11% ( $n = 26$ ) identify feeling confused and unsure about what they think and believe about people who live in the United States and speak languages other than English. Because "cultures of domination rely on the cultivation of fear as a way to ensure obedience," many educators venture to decontextualize from their own reality in an effort to separate themselves from others, and the fear of the unknown in difference "promotes the desire for separation" [42] (p. 83).

Participants have to rely on 12–17-year-old students (though sometimes as young as six) as the only people guaranteed to be able to communicate in both Spanish and English. For nearly every participant this may be the first time in their life that they had to consistently rely on an adolescent for a prolonged period of time. During the school day participants see that children are managing not only learning in the classrooms but also complex social relationships with peers and teachers. At home they see the same children manage family obligations, outside peer pressures, and the overall challenge of being a tween/teen. At the same time, these adolescents give generously to participants and challenge what they believe. Margaret, a participant, shared:

Every time I say something about how we do stuff in America, Felipe reminds me that he is American too, and I think wow this 13-year old has the courage and confidence to keep teaching me as an adult, and the thing is he is right. I wonder if, when I am at home, I have listened to my students with enough attention to learn about the things they know and are right about...

Margaret in her reflection shifted toward seeing the student as her teacher and also began the work of conceptualizing students generally as having intellectual capital that she had not considered. Participants across years have expressed strikingly similar reflections. Billy, another participants said, "I am sunk without my host brother, but he is not sunk without me, and I guess the point is that where I have strength and an ability to connect I need to reach out as kindly and thoughtfully the same way my little Chilean brother uses his language strength to help me, like literally eat and stuff while I am on this trip." Comments like those of Margaret and Billy reflect the reversal of the traditional boundaries

of student and teacher, helping teachers recognize that they can be both learner and teacher at the same time their own students can do the same.

Participants also challenge how they conceptualize second language speakers in the United States, how their attitude toward students changes in the program (and contemplate how they understand colleagues framings of students), and express the fatigue of being a learner in this setting that helps develop an empathetic perspective needed back in the United States. Davis, a 2017 participant, for example, captures this in a journal entry at the end of his first week:

If I am being honest, I have gotten really pissed in a store like Walmart, when I hear people speaking Spanish and I have said things like, “In my country speak my language”—how arrogant. I don’t mean what I think, but I guess I am frustrated with my own inability to understand what people are saying, and that is totally my problem, not theirs.

Preservice teachers frequently report their relief that their host students are so proficient at English. Hannah, now a secondary mathematics teacher, writes that her attitude towards her English Language Learner students is dramatically different from the other teachers at her school:

To hear them [other teachers] talk, you’d think that the Spanish-speaking kids were hopeless. The worst possible students to have in your class. I just think back on my host-sister and how she handled all of the translation between me and the rest of her family without ever complaining or getting frustrated or impatient. If a 14-year-old girl can show that much patience for someone who doesn’t speak her language, then the least I can do is show that same respect to my students who are learning to speak English.

Participants also describe a language fatigue resulting from their attempts to make sense not only of the Spanish being spoken to them, but also all of the background language and noise of passing conversations, radio banter, and dialogue on television. “I’d be exhausted every night. Not physically, but mentally from all the Spanish,” writes one participant. “At least I knew it would all be back to normal in three weeks. Now I can kind of imagine how frustrating it must be for kids who don’t speak English to have to process a foreign language all day with no end in sight.” Another participant shares:

I have had to really struggle several nights. My family includes me in whatever they are doing, but their friends all speak Spanish and I rarely know what is going on. They laugh and I hope they are not laughing at me. I laugh too because I don’t know what else to do. I feel so lost and I have to imagine a lot of kids in our classrooms feel lost. It would be easy for me to focus on the language learners in my class that might be lost, but this experience has also made me think about other students who just might not understand what is going on or why something is going on. I have a huge obligation as a teacher to make sure my students feel included AND understand. My family here includes me but we just don’t have the language skills for me to understand. Now that is my task, figuring out how to bridge understanding even without language.

This empathy will forever, we hope, inform their relationships with English Language Learners in their future classrooms, and we see a shift and reversal in the traditional framing of who is teacher and who is student, leading away from binary distinctions of these roles toward a fluid landscape where the ‘assigned’ teacher and ‘assigned’ students might share both identities in practice.

#### 4.3. *The Role of Families from the Inside Out*

The second significant aspect of role reversal we want to discuss is the re-shaping of how teachers conceptualize who parents are as a result of the home-stay process. Pulling back the curtain on home life leads to significant insights for many of our participants. There is no longer any guessing or assumptions about parents’ intentions or their interest in their children’s education. Glenda a 2012 participant reflected on her learning with the family she lived and how it impacted her practice, saying:

The family I stayed with worked very hard...many nights, the mother and father didn’t return home from working multiple jobs until long after everyone else was asleep ... when I hear my colleagues complaining about parents not caring about their kids’ work because they are not available on my colleagues time schedule, I tell them “STOP!”, because they

just don't know. My host dad told me how much he wished he could spend more time with his daughters and that the only reason he doesn't quit is that he knows his daughters' futures depend on his ability to provide for them. When I was doing my practicums before Chile, I know I probably thought the worst of families and thought the worst of why they didn't do this or that. It took me living with a family and seeing the demands of their lives to realize, "WOW! Everything I thought about people wasn't like real facts or ideas, they were a reflection of my own privileged little world . . ." it was during those weeks in Chile I realized how limited my experiences were, and how limiting they become to making sense of anything else. A day of my teaching doesn't go by where I don't think about this.

Seeing the effort parents put into keeping their kids in school led approximately 33% (n = 80) of participants to articulate some rethinking of their notions of disengaged parents with reflections similar to Glenda.

Living with host families, participants also contemplate what might be seem as mundane or ordinary things as making up an important part of life outside of school. Many participants share that they had never fully considered how busy and complex the students' lives are, and how better coordination with families could help children balance their lives while enhancing learning that takes place in non-school settings. Sara, a participant shared:

I am exhausted by the level of activity kids have outside of school and the people demanding of their time. At home I give homework as if the kids have all sorts of free time. I need to figure out how to stay in my lane and think about what can school do with our time and help kids capitalize on their learning outside of school with the activities and spaces they actually use, over this mostly boring and arbitrary crap I have them do.

Kevin another participant echoed similar sentiments when describing the beauty and complexity of a weekend with his family:

Our weekend was busy with a birthday party at Chuck E Cheese's, my brother's soccer game, and a large barbecue with my family and their friends. It felt so ordinary moving from one event to the next and each member of the family taking part in the laughs and joys of each event. While ordinary, I guess I never thought about my own students as doing these things and that they have a whole life outside of school that is both ordinary and yet super important.

Participants also have the time to see the expressions of love families have, how families hold their children accountable, and the desire that every family has for their child to be happy and fulfilled. Tiffany asked her host parents why they would let a stranger come into their house and why they are participating. Tiffany shared in her journal:

When we talked it was emotional because my host brother and sister were translating to their parents for me and they heard what their parents thought about them and their hopes. Maria Paz, my host mother said, "look, we know that knowing English is not just for fun, it is important to access the world, and we want the best for our kids just like I am sure you do for yours. So, having a native English speaker in our home is amazing. But what is even more amazing is seeing how good our kids are at English, and seeing how proud they are to make sure we all can communicate. It has been so joyful for us to see. Sometimes when you are a parent you come off as harsh or strong with the kids about their behavior and when the school calls and it's a problem you internalize it yourself because you want your kid to be the best so it's the thing that when you become a parent is just internal to you, you want your child to have a better life than you had." And we were all teared up a little bit, and you just realize as a teacher that what you say to parents about their kids matters, and how you treat someone else's kids matters, and even when you think this or

that might be in place or wonder why a parent doesn't respond the way you want or on your timeline, it isn't probably because they don't want the best for their kid, it is that our lives are all super complicated. I wish my teacher ed program had taught me how to navigate these conversations with parents without having to go live with a student, but I am so thankful that this experience gave me what my teacher training could not do.

While an extended response, we felt it was important to capture and end this section with Tiffany's ideas here. A program like the Teach in Chile reminds us what should be true of any approach to working with children, which is that considering and engaging parents is surely a likely pathway to reaching children, and that children and their families deserve being engaged with wholly.

## 5. Implications

Our work in Chile has highlighted several key elements and ideas supported by various perspectives in education. Since the focus of our work is on language learners, we are influenced by what the International Literacy Association suggests in their new standards, which is that goal of this work involves the need to push past equality and toward equity. Part of that move toward equity is working with children and families to discern truth and positionality from the myriad ways that they are framed and reframed by schools and teachers. Programs like Teaching in Chile are a potential intervention toward the goal of helping teachers and educators connect with students and families toward equity. Part of what happens in the study abroad program for our participants is that, owing to language differences and the overwhelming nature of a new context where they are in the minority—often for the first time in their lives—they are forced to listen twice as much as they speak. In fact, that has become a program principle we teach while abroad, encouraging our participants to learn how to listen and not feel compelled to teach or tell others what to think or do. The move toward equity is not only about access, but also about engagement and how communities use tools more than having tools used against them. Our Teaching in Chile approach helps participants learn to form those relationships with students and parents as partners.

Second, the International Literacy Association has articulated not to focus on learning environments without a focus on the learner and who the learners are. Given the current climate around immigration and the robust demographic diversity of the United States, needs of multi-cultural language learners will not only continue to be pressing and urgent, but will change the dynamic that tolerates monolingualism as a choice. The Teach in Chile program allows for a focus that is not theoretical about methods or pedagogy but that is engaged in the living learning landscape that students negotiate—that in fact, we believe, is the only way to seriously work toward a culturally engaged pedagogical approach.

Not everyone can have the chance to participate in a program like this. In fact, 239 participants over a decade and a half contextualized against the larger demographic of teachers is insignificant. While we are proud of the work we do in Chile and believe that more teachers should take advantage of such opportunities, we also are keenly aware that our focus needs to be on some larger structures that we have learned in this work that can be applied to other contexts, programs, and approaches. In other words, what have we learned that can be a proxy of potential action for other educators? One of the host sisters that Kenny has had contact with is named Ema, and she said, "maybe one day when you write your work you can name something after me." As it turns out Ema is a perfect set of letters to contextualize what we think are important considerations of any effort to equitably engage students. So, for us, the EMA is making any act or approach Explicit, Meaningful, and Authentic. We achieve these aspects in Chile by communicating explicitly about what is happening in the context, structuring the opportunity for meaningful engagement, while focusing on authentic and real engagements, but those principles have transversal applicability to nearly any approach an educator might take where the goal is to be engaged in solidarity with those they teach and the communities those folks live and learn in.

We understand that neither our program nor simply encouraging this approach is a fix all for an educational system that is rather complex and driven by the free market, but we hope that this article

is an opportunity to think about the possibilities that engaging the literate and language filled lives of second language learners has for mediating the challenges and disconnects experienced by so many in these tumultuous times. Briana, a recent participant, explains what we see as a big take away, and we leave you with her words:

It took me traveling 4542 miles from home to realize that these 2nd graders knew more about my language and their own than I even know about my own language. Being monolingual is not cool like I thought it was, and I have too often ignored how much bilingual people really know.

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