

Mediating *Nepantla* through Multimodal Testimonio: First Year Latine Educator Teaching
Philosophies

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Abstract

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This qualitative case study explores how two first year Latine teachers use communal multimodal testimonio to mediate tensions in their identities, and how engaging in testimonio impacts their teaching philosophies as they experience constraints in their teaching contexts. The research questions were: how does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio mediate how we make sense of *nepantla*? And how does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio influence our teaching philosophies as we experience the constraints in our current educational context? Both participants participated in a in an initial semi-structured interview to share their teaching philosophies, views on multilingualism, and teaching contexts. Data was collected through two virtual communal multimodal testimonio sessions. The findings in this study suggest that multimodal testimonio in community can be a healing and powerful experience for mediating and embracing tensions while also unearthing values and commitments to co-construct knowledge for navigating constraints and thus enriching our teaching philosophies.

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Introduction

Positionality and Purpose

Socialization in the Juarez-El Paso border region is a testament of the fallacies behind static notions of culture and identity. While physical borders separate Mexico and the United States, our soul, language, and culture transcend boundaries. However, static notions of culture continue to form a large part of assimilationist discourses and practices surrounding our community. These were embedded in the assimilationist nature behind the curriculum I was exposed to as a student and then as an educator. Anzaldúa describes this feeling as she writes “We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*, the subject of your *burla*...Racially, culturally, and linguistically *somos huérfanos* – we speak an orphan tongue” (Anzaldúa, 2012).

I inevitably learned to compartmentalize my identity to embrace a static notion of culture where I was either Mexican or a United States¹ citizen and felt tensions when I could not separate one from the other. These ideologies paired with false discourses of meritocracy, and familial value became a means of survival and an erroneous stance to pedagogical practices. Loving my students unconditionally and working twelve-hour days, could not keep me from reproducing hegemonic practices when I did not understand this part of my identity. Under the guise of best practices, I helped design curriculum which asked for a clear separation of English and Spanish with a strategic bridging of language at the end of a unit. Due to a lack of criticality and understanding of my socialization, I perpetuated harm and tensions within my students as I

¹ I do not use the word American to refer to the United States or my status as a citizen because I believe the term American is inclusive of all North, Central, and South America. In addition, the structures, discourses, and practices surrounding US citizenship have constantly made me distance myself from parts of my culture that I hold sacred and thus creating tensions in my identity where I cannot see the United States and Mexican parts of my identity as connected without feeling discomfort.

asked them to separate their English and Spanish. Borders in language and thus identity are a fallacy and imposing them will never allow for liberation in our classrooms as we may unintentionally create borders in our students' identities.

My life and experiences exist in *nepantla* and in the constant in-between of being part of two constant dynamic cultural ideologies (Anzaldúa, 2015). Following Anzaldúa's *Coyolxauhqui Imperative* which states "a struggle to reconstruct oneself and heal, calling back pieces of the soul that have been dispersed, and dealing with the lack of cohesiveness and stability," (Anzaldúa, 2015) I engaged in this study in alongside two novice Latine teachers to reflect on *nepantla* to commit to a pedagogy of humanization.

To alleviate tensions and foster liberation, we must understand our positionality, the agency we have in our classrooms amongst structural constraints and embark on an ongoing journey of examining or reevaluating our teaching philosophies in relation to these questions and practices. The purpose of this study is to explore how communal multimodal testimonio facilitates first year Latine teachers' mediation of tensions in their identities, or *nepantla*, and impacts their teaching philosophies as they experience constraints in their current teaching context. The research questions are: how does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio mediate how we make sense of *nepantla*? And how does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio influence our teaching philosophies as we experience the constraints in our current educational context?

This study follows values of humanizing pedagogies and democratic education. I believe that education should advance the humanity, dignity, and achievement of our learners (Salazar, 2013). Furthermore, hooks (2003) writes "Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, and transcendence, about renewing the validity of life. It is about

finding and claiming ourselves in the world.” I believe that in a world where borders are constantly imposed on the spirit, we must find ways to collectively bridge our identities to humanize education.

Background and Rationale

Education should be a space for hope, humanization, and liberation. However, educational settings and contexts have never been neutral. Latine student relationships within the United States public school system have been historically multifaceted, complex, and ambiguous (San Miguel, 1987). Systematic approaches to assimilation are often masked in the educational language of standardization and measurement (Salazar, 2013). Systemic constraints such as high stakes standardized testing, tracking, and district mandated curriculum create tensions as educators and students mediate constraints with finding meaning in their educational contexts (Salazar, 2013). Therefore, a lack of criticality in our educational contexts reproduces systems that privileges hegemonic approaches aimed at assimilation and thus denying humanity in education.

Educator academic histories impact how they position themselves and the purpose of their work as dual language teachers (Varghese & Snyder, 2018). Flores and Rosa (2015) depict that raciolinguistic ideologies produce racialized speaking subjects who are then positioned as “linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects.” Therefore, it is common for novice teachers to question linguistic abilities in their languages due to their socialization and histories (Varghese & Snyder, 2018). I have noticed these tensions in myself as a dual language teacher, in conversations with my colleagues, and now with the teacher candidates I coach. Questions of

belonging in the field and teaching academic Spanish and English impact the way we position ourselves as educators and the philosophies behind our pedagogical practices.

As Latine educators, many of us find ourselves inhabiting different *nepantlas*. DeNicolo and González (2015) define *nepantla* as “a transitional space where those living on the margins are positioned and open to multiple perspectives and knowledge, allowing for a deeper examination of competing worlds, practices, and discoveries surrounding them.” In *nepantla*, we question our identity, our truths, and values. We question whether we inherited these through education or cultural practice (DeNicolo & Gonzalez, 2015). Varghese (2008) found that connections teachers make with their life experiences have tensions and doubts, and that there is a need for space to discuss these. Engaging in communal testimonio can create a healing space to discuss these tensions and doubts by cultivating critical consciousness and a sacred space for analysis (DeNicolo & Gonzalez, 2015).

Studies have used testimonios as a tool for accessing embodied literacies, disrupting dominant ideologies such as the hegemony of English sustained through school policy and practice whether implicit or explicit (DeNicolo & González, 2015). Testimonios also allow educators to give witness to each other and name who they are in relation to their educational pedagogies. Prieto and Villenas (2012) used testimonio for reflective theorization of their pedagogical practices as Latina educators in predominantly white institutions. Through testimonio, we are able to deconstruct hegemonic discourses and practices, become visible to ourselves and others, reclaim our identities, and find the critical role we can take in upholding education as a place for transformation and liberation (Prieto & Villenas, 2012).

This study was designed to extend previous findings regarding tensions and agency in teacher identity (Varghese & Snyder 2018) and the use of testimonio for a critical examination of

our positionality as Latine educators (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). I sought to engage in a democratic process of inquiry taking form through communal multimodal testimonio to mediate *nepantla* with multilingual novice Latine educators and to reflect on how these tensions impact our teaching philosophy and positionality. The specific purpose of this study was to explore how multimodal testimonio could facilitate first year Latine teachers mediation of tensions with their identities, *nepantla*, and impact their teaching philosophies as they experience constraints in their teaching contexts. The research questions guiding this study are: How does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio mediate how we make sense of *nepantla*? How does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio influence our teaching philosophies as we experience the constraints in our educational context?

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to contextualize *nepantla* and how Latine students and educators experience tensions around competing ideologies. It also provides context for testimonio as a tool for critically examining our socialization, positionality, and identities as Latine educators and students. It concludes with a rationale for multimodality as a means for storytelling through testimonio.

Nepantla

As multicultural and multilingual beings, we are faced with different worldviews. Anzaldúa (2015) refers to these different worldviews as *remolinos*, or vortexes, each with different and often contradictory forms of knowing, perspectives, values, and belief systems. These competing vortexes are the basis of *nepantla*. Although full of pain, frustration, and tension, *nepantla*, is a space for healing and reconstruction of the self. Anzaldúa (2015) describes identity formation as an alchemical process that “synthesizes the dualities, contradictions, and

perspectives from our different selves and worlds.” Generally, *nepantla* can be an intellectual epistemological space where we can engage in profound critical analysis (Elenes, 2013). In classrooms, *nepantla* becomes a space for healing and identity formation.

Prieto and Villenas (2012) found that *nepantla* in their classrooms signals uncertainty as their students encounter themselves crossing or moving between different identities. It is present each time students are confronting and contesting power (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). Even though *nepantla* was described as a space of frustration and discomfort, the authors of the study found that it also served as a space for improvisation and visionary modes of teaching and learning.

DeNicolò and González (2015) found *nepantla* to be a space of possibility in classrooms as it allows for movement to a new consciousness as one sorts through different *remolinos*. This new consciousness or *conocimiento*, is an ongoing process of deconstruction and rebuilding of the self by constant searching, inquiring, and healing. It is an ongoing cycle with no final resolution, but ongoing healing (Anzaldúa, 2015). In our classrooms, we must embrace the dynamic nature of language, culture, and identity to embark in a continuous journey of healing and liberation. Different *nepantlas* are an essential component of our humanity and embracing them in our classroom, humanizes education.

Testimonio

Testimonio has origins in Latin American revolutionary struggles. It is associated with political activism, personal experience, and a rearticulation of Western construction of knowledge (Elenes, 2000). In essence, testimonios create a collective rather than individualism valued by Western knowledge. Sosa-Provencio et. al (2019) write “designing empowering and humanizing pedagogies of critical multicultural consciousness is a political act which centers untold stories and systems of knowing.” Testimonios are at the center of these practices as they

not only bring healing but disrupt systems of oppression in curricula. The authors describe testimonios as “narratives of struggle and resilience to structural oppression at intersections of race/ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexuality, and residency status to guide us to liberation.” Therefore, by incorporating testimonios into curriculum, we can experience historical healing, resistance, resilience, and hope for both students and educators (Sosa-Provencio et. al, 2019).

In their study, Prieto and Villenas (2012) found that engaging in communal testimonios allows for collective power to create a basis for a more compassionate pedagogy in teacher education programs. Testimonios allow educators to “build the theory of our practice and the practice of our theory” (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). In essence, sharing testimonios allows for a critical dialogue where educators can examine their positionality, and reasons for implementing pedagogical practices.

DeNicolo and González (2015) used testimonio for amplifying voices of elementary students to understand and reflect on their embodied literacies. The authors found that the tensions students face are not unique to individuals. Students constantly negotiated tensions between deficit ideologies and feelings of pride. Testimonios lead to a challenge of dominant ideologies, and redefined static notions of bilingualism (DeNicolo & González, 2015). In both studies, testimonio served as a tool for inquiry and dialogue as well as bringing healing into teaching practices.

Multimodality

I was socialized under the fallacy that language, culture, and identity are static. However, I now believe that our language, culture, and identities are dynamic. This study incorporates multimodality to testimonios because it is a literacy practice that promotes flexibility, creativity, and innovation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In addition, multimodality is centered on learners as

agentive in their own knowledge and allows for negotiation between different communities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). This will allow individuals engaging in testimonio to not be restricted by the medium of their narrative and instead be empowered to convey the message in a way that is true and authentic.

Theoretical Framework

Chicana feminist theory holds that all knowledge and ideology is constructed through social and political contexts. Furthermore, all ideologies whether hegemonic or counter hegemonic impact how we perceive and make sense of the world (Elenes, 2000). This theoretical framework is guiding my study as I explore how our histories and socialization as Latine students and now educators interact with our teaching contexts and how our teaching philosophy is impacted. I aimed to engage in an ongoing critically reflective process with my participants as we discussed our different contexts, discourses, and policies surrounding us. This study uses Chicana feminist theory as a basis for understanding the dynamic relationship between *nepantla*, multimodal testimonio, and educator positionality.

In line with Anzaldúa's (2015) Coyolxauhqui imperative: "a struggle to reconstruct oneself and heal calling back pieces of the soul that have been dispersed," this study aimed to engage with a process of reclaiming or restructuring identity through communal multimodal testimonio. Chicana feminist theories center healing narratives as an impetus for social reform (Elenes, 2000). Through multimodal testimonio, we engaged with our personal histories, identity, and experiences and how these have impacted our values and commitments as educators.

Community is one of the most salient themes in Chicana feminist theory. In community and by sharing testimonios, we engage in a practice of knowledge where "the I stands for the

collective we” (Elenes, 2000). Specifically, testimonio allows for community as individual experiences are linked to our knowledge. It also challenges Western forms of knowledge that value individuality (Elenes, 2013). I hoped to engage in communal multimodal testimonio sessions to find healing and liberation as we mediated *nepantla* and recentered our teaching philosophies.

Methodology

Participants

This project was designed as a qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in partnership with two Latine first year teachers, Guadalupe (Lupe) and Alejandro. The reason for this design is that in qualitative case studies, researchers are interested in the meaning participants derive from their shared specific contexts (Dyson et al., 2005). I studied the meaning Lupe, Alejandro, and I co-constructed in our communal multimodal testimonio sessions in relation to our shared Latine multilingual and multicultural development and their teaching contexts as first year teachers.

I knew Lupe and Alejandro before this study because I coached them during their year as teacher candidates in their Elementary Teacher Education Program. I selected them because they both expressed a deep commitment to multilingualism and student identity during our collaboration in their time as teacher candidates. Lupe and Alejandro crafted their teaching philosophy as they culminated their teacher preparation program. Both teachers identify as Latine, grew up in the same town in Eastern Washington, and were socialized in settings that positioned English as more valuable than Spanish. However, tensions around language identity vary.

Lupe and Alejandro both participated in a virtual initial semi-structured interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) co-designed by my colleague Grace Cornell Gonzales and me. These interviews were individual and consisted of five categories: academic context and bilingual identity tensions, views on bilingual education, bilingual teaching philosophy design, testimonio experience, and looking forward. The interview consisted of 15 core questions as well as ten suggested probing questions. The initial semi-structured interview provided more detail about their background and positionality as well as a revisit to their teaching philosophy. By the end of this study, Lupe and Alejandro both asked to keep their names instead of selecting a pseudonym.

Lupe

Lupe is a sixth grade English Language Arts teacher in Eastern Washington. She currently teaches in the same middle school she attended as a student. She grew up in a rural setting where her parents worked in the fields and primarily spoke Spanish. This setting provides Lupe with a strong connection to her students as most of them also have parents who work in the field and communicate primarily in Spanish.

Lupe named erasure and assimilation (through the hegemony of English) as the forces that experienced her to feel tensions in her multilingual identity in her early education years. “So as a student, I think language tensions a lot in elementary [sic] and in middle and high school because Spanish wasn’t really accepted, even though it was the first language of a lot of us here.” Lupe shared that although she felt embarrassed to speak Spanish in academic settings, she felt safe speaking it among friends and family.

Lupe drew on her experiences as a multilingual student to set up a strong foundation for her teaching philosophy. As she shared her commitments, she questioned the setting of dual language programs, who they serve, and how families are invited to collaborate. She reflected on

her philosophy and highlighted constraints in her educational context that have impacted her teaching philosophy. Even though constraints such as large number of students, curriculum guideline, and language limitations impacted her philosophy, her commitments to multilingualism and core values remain centered on her students' multilingual identities. The following table depicts her pre-service teaching philosophy, current constraints in her teaching context, and the evolution of her teaching philosophy in her first year teaching.

Table 1. Evolution of Lupe's Teaching Philosophy

Teaching Philosophy as a Teacher Candidate	Educational Context Constraints and Negotiations	Teaching Philosophy First Year Teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ La diversidad lingüística trae riqueza, no es un problema/Linguistic diversity is wealth, not a problem. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Dual language programs are accepted because they want students to be more marketable but when a student is trying to strengthen their home language while also learning another language it is not given the same value.” ❖ Literatura en diferentes lenguajes y alrededor del aula/Literature in different languages and around the classroom environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “What is around them is very important, the environment, what they see, and how it connects to them.” ❖ Co-inventar y co-intervenir con los padres/Co-invent and co-intervene with parents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Parents are their first teachers, they know them best.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Large number of students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Makes it difficult to make positive phone calls home. ➤ Sends announcements as a whole class but not individually. ❖ Curriculum limitations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Must follow common core and co-plan with teachers. ➤ Tweaks her entry tasks and when she is able to, she edits her lessons to connect with her students' lives. ❖ Language Limitations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Her curriculum is in English, and she is expected to teach English Language Arts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Literatura en diferentes lenguajes y alrededor del aula/Literature in different languages and around the classroom environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mentor texts reflect student home and community knowledge: students are reading Esperanza Rising to connect with their parents who work in the fields. ❖ La diversidad lingüística trae riqueza, no es un problema/Linguistic diversity is wealth, not a problem. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lupe includes Spanish in her classroom environment both in print through posters, the phrases she uses to express herself, and conversations with students. ➤ She encourages her students to include Spanish in their poetry compositions to connect with their voices as writers and to incorporate their cultural identity. ❖ Co-inventar y co-intervenir con los padres/Co-invent and co-intervene with parents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A goal is having her students interview their parents about their community roles and professions.

Alejandro

Alejandro is a dual language co-teacher for grades kindergarten through fifth grade in Western Washington. He finds a lot of support from his fellow co-teachers and the teachers he supports. Like many of his students, Alejandro reflected on learning both Spanish and English at the same time. He was born to Mexican parents but spoke English in school.

Similar to Lupe, Alejandro experienced erasure of Spanish and pressures to assimilate. “Growing up, there were a lot of expectations to assimilate and not speak Spanish. I don’t think I was ever ashamed of speaking it, but I did feel tensions there where it’s like well, I am going to get in trouble so I shouldn’t speak in this other language.” Alejandro also expressed tensions where his English felt more academic and his Spanish more social.

As he crafted his teaching philosophy, Alejandro questioned the role of institutions and whether they are designed for student flourishing and well-being or to replicates systems of oppression. He specifically questioned the role of “academic” language and the impact it has on student identity and negotiations. Alejandro expressed a deep commitment to centering student voice “By allowing students to understand that academic language is important but not the only thing that we can communicate with. It allows students to embrace their identity and know that their language matters, that no matter how they say words, or even if it is not academic or even if it’s “rural” it is so meaningful because it comes from where they are from.” In addition to student linguistic identity, Alejandro expressed a deep commitment to fostering community wellbeing, knowledge, and advocacy.

In his initial interview, Alejandro noted curriculum and language limitations as constraints. However, as the year has gone by, Alejandro’s teaching philosophy has evolved to include scaffolds, metalinguistic conversations to navigate language constraints, and forging

trusting relationships. The following table depicts Alejandro’s pre-service teaching philosophy, current constraints in his teaching context, and the evolution of his teaching philosophy in his first year teaching.

Table 2. Evolution of Alejandro’s Teaching Philosophy

Teaching Philosophy as a Teacher Candidate	Educational Context Constraints and Negotiations	Teaching Philosophy First Year Teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Language as identity and beyond a skill. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Language use beyond navigating contexts but to find one’s voice. ➤ Moving beyond academic English and Spanish: ❖ Language for advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How are students expressing themselves and their feelings creatively? ➤ Students learning about social issues in English and Spanish ➤ Students writing about what they see in their community and world. ❖ Collaboration and community over individualism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students learning from each other. ➤ Bringing parents into the classroom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I am facilitating learning, but learning is coming from the communities... from their parents, from their families because I see that as a means for voices in the classroom that might not have been there traditionally.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Curriculum Limitations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Plans for six different grades. ➤ Material taught is influenced by the partner grade teacher but can negotiate material. ❖ Language Limitations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Separation of languages in content areas. ➤ Abrupt switching from Spanish to English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “for me it’s like there is no switch to turn, it is like your brain is processing and thinking in both languages.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Language as identity and beyond a skill. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incorporates scaffolds so that all students can participate in lessons in a meaningful way. ❖ Language for advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continues to engage with families to center community knowledge ❖ Collaboration and community over individualism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has been very intentional about building trusting relationships with students. ➤ Learning ways for his students to feel seen and valued.

Data Collection

Data was collected through two communal multimodal testimonio sessions. Due to proximity constraints, these sessions occurred virtually via Zoom. These sessions followed a semi-structured format centered around specific themes but allowing for an open conversation structure guided by the participants’ emerging worldview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Following

Chicana feminist theory's conceptualization of *confianza y comunidad*, or trust and community, I engaged in these sessions alongside Lupe and Alejandro by sharing my testimonio as we gave witness to one another. Both sessions lasted around 40 minutes each. The first session occurred on January 31, and the second on February 8, 2023.

First Communal Multimodal Testimonio Session: Contextualizing Nepantla in Our Multilingual and Multicultural Development

Our first session was designed to name and map *nepantla* and Anzaldúa's conceptualization of *Coyolxauhqui Imperative* (Anzaldúa, 2015) in our multilingual and multicultural development. In essence, we questioned what it means to find ourselves in a place where our personal codes clash, and how we reconstruct our beings, or heal by "calling back pieces of the soul that have been dispersed" (Anzaldúa, 2015).

This session followed an arts approach (Bagnoli, 2009) as participants were invited to craft a timeline or share their truths in a chronological fashion to best express instances where they found tensions and mediated tensions around their multilingual and multicultural identities. The reason for engaging in a multimodal or artistic approach was to craft a testimonio that is true to our beings as words may sometimes lack to convey that which we hold most sacred (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

We used our timelines as inspiration to craft a testimonio that highlighted our interactions with *nepantla* and mediating the tensions we encounter in our multilingual and multicultural development. Participants were invited to bring an artifact, craft a poem, engage in a conversation, or select any medium to share their testimonio. To engage in *confianza y comunidad*, I shared my timeline and testimonio which consisted of two poems. I then invited Lupe and Alejandro to share their timelines and testimonios. We then concluded the session by

sharing what this experience meant for us and what we took away from this experience as we enter a new week as educators following four guiding questions.

Second Communal Multimodal Testimonio Session: Anchoring our Teaching Philosophy

Our second communal multimodal testimonio session took place one week after the first session and followed a more open format as our conversations took a very organic and natural rhythm. This session was designed to unearth core values and revisit our teaching philosophy. We reflected on two questions prior to crafting our testimonios. First, we reflected on the core values we bring to our work with our multilingual students. Second, we reflected on constraints and how we then anchor our values and visions for the future to navigate constraints. For this session I brought in an artifact, a dress designed and decorated by my third graders, and a poem. I then invited Lupe and Alejandro to share their testimonios.

Our closing consisted of two questions. The first question asked our “why” or reason for teaching as our contexts may present constraints. The second question asked us to share our dreams, visions for the future, and goals as multilingual and multicultural educators.

Data Analysis

Each initial individual interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded to highlight each participants’ teaching philosophy, context constraints, and evolution of their teaching philosophy in their first year teaching. Each communal multimodal testimonio session was recorded, transcribed, and coded for salient themes. For these sessions data was open coded and then analyzed using Chicana feminist theory’s conceptualization of knowledge creation: all values and ideologies are socially constructed, centering community for knowledge co-creation, and testimonio as a tool for spiritual connection, giving witness, healing, unearthing histories and positionality (Elenes, 2000).

A qualitative analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was conducted to draw connections between instances of tension and healing, and reflections on our positionality and teaching philosophies as we engaged in communal testimonio. Beginning with our naming of *nepantla and Coyolxauhqui Imperative* (Anzaldúa, 2015), I highlighted instances of shared tensions as well as moments of healing. I then noted how we were impacted by our shared testimonios and the knowledge we co-created as we centered our values and reasons for teaching, or our teaching philosophy. For our second session, I highlighted instances of ideology and value construction, moments of tensions between context constraints and enacting our teaching philosophy, and the learning gifted to us from each other's testimonios as we centered our visions moving forward.

Results

Naming Tensions: The Hegemony of English

The first finding is that through our first communal testimonio session, Lupe, Alejandro, and I were able to map instances where separation of languages, particularly the hegemony of English, forced us to negotiate our identities. We also found solace as we shared these instances. We connected over the fact that we are all children of parents who immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Lupe and Alejandro were born and grew up in the same city in Eastern Washington. We all were surprised to learn that we don't remember the exact moment where we learned English and that the process seems to be a blur full of tensions where the essential amounted to knowing English. First, our names were constantly changed, misspelled, or mispronounced. I became Christina, Alejandro became Alex, and Lupe felt embarrassed of her name, Guadalupe, as it was mispronounced Guadaloopy. Alejandro expressed:

“It is strange to think how easy it was to accept our new names. And I thought it was cool at the time, how accepting I was. And I mean, that happened to a lot of folks. So, I think of *nepantla* there, that's the tension there in education to begin with. My culture as

Mexican, and the culture, white system of power, in you know, something as simple as just changing a few letters, like, restructures me, against my will, you know, I'm renamed."

Like Alejandro, Lupe was able to map tensions with her linguistic identity in her elementary education. She expressed more apprehension for speaking Spanish than Alejandro.

"In elementary, I guess that's where I started feeling very embarrassed of my language and of my name, because my name is Guadalupe, and I would always be called Guadaloopy. That's when I started noticing like okay, well, then Spanish doesn't really matter because English was better. I would see the better language and maybe I felt superior to some way, like to know English and try to hide my Spanish.

These tensions impacted the way we negotiated our identities in spaces. I shared that my language, Spanish and English in unity, was constantly invalidated in academic settings. This led me to adopt a very shy personality and thus turn to writing and poetry to communicate.

Alejandro related to me by expressing that he feels tensions when he finds himself in places where systems are shaped by white norms, specifically institutional settings.

"I feel like a lot of that culture is embedded in education, but it speaks more for you know, the systems, the legal systems, the laws, the way in which we're like reshaped, as the immigrant that fits in, that can speak English well, listens to American music, eats steak, eats pizza, as opposed to tamales and eating tacos, or enchiladas, or whatever it may be."

Something worth noting is that when he began his testimonio, Alejandro began by speaking about his parents and family in Spanish. This depicts how he associates Spanish with feelings of home and family. He then transitioned his testimonio into English to describe his timeline and journey in multilingualism as he previously mentioned relating English to academic settings.

Lupe talked about her early education years and having white educators who could not communicate with her parents and then experiencing the erasure of Spanish throughout her educational trajectory.

"I really got embarrassed to speak Spanish or even you know that I was Hispanic in the class...and it wasn't until I left, like the whole university or I left my class to go to my

dorm that I am able to speak Spanish, with my roommate, my friends, my parents over the phone.”

Through our testimonios we unearthed how the hegemony of English impacted our multilingual and multicultural identities from the very beginning in our educational contexts. We also found healing by noticing that our experiences, although different, are similar. By naming our tensions we found solace in each other.

Healing: Coyolxauhqui Imperative

Another finding is that through our testimonio session we were also able to name how we mediated *nepantla* in our multicultural development. When asked to share moments of healing, or mediating tensions, Alejandro shared his journey in sociology. He began to see different layers in systems and began to embrace his own culture without having to deny the other.

“I started learning that they could live in harmony, that what was harmful was inequity and the ways control was pervasive from one to the other. And from that college experience, all the way onward, I really started thinking holistically about what it meant to be anything, a citizen of a town, the citizen of a country, the citizen of a classroom, right? And what did that mean?”

Alejandro posed questions about what it means to work with the community and its holistic values as opposed to thinking about what he calls “these almost mediated realities” or negotiation of identities to fit into the assimilationist mold. He recognizes that there are tensions in his multicultural identity but the acceptance and embracing of being multicultural is what ultimately pushed him to pursue education as a profession.

Lupe related her experiences growing up in eastern Washington to her fear of coming back to teach in her middle school. She found irony in the hegemony of English in an academic institution where most of the population is Latine. She really centered her experiences as a student, and what she wished she had in her practice. She adds student names into examples,

corrects mispronunciations of student names, and is intentional about the stories she uses to make sure her students find connections in her lessons.

“I think just coming back to over here, how I grew up, just wanting to make the smallest change...talking more about social justice, things I never got back then.”

Lupe and Alejandro both shared a strong commitment to honoring their students linguistic and cultural identities by unearthing their histories and tensions as students. The work they are doing and hoping to do is one way they find healing and mediating *nepantla*.

From Mediating to Embracing *Nepantla*

Another finding is that we were not only able to name instances of mediating *nepantla* but begin to embrace the duality in our identities. During our first testimonio session, I shared my poem *La H Muda*, The Silent H, to convey the constant shift in my identity as I moved across the border from El Paso to Chihuahua. This poem really highlights *nepantla* in my life and how I am almost two different beings across each side of El Rio Bravo, The Rio Grande River (even the river has two names on each side of the border). Alejandro connected with my modality of using poetry for my testimonio, as poetry is one of his passions. He stated that poetry would be one way he reclaims his linguistic identity. His poetry is mostly in English, but he is going to push himself to write it in Spanish. After listening to my testimonio, Alejandro made this strong connection that really impacted both Lupe and me:

“When you were reading your poem, I thought of like what’s called brackish water. It’s like the water where fresh water meets saltwater right? And it’s in constant change. It’s neither one nor the other you’re in the middle there where the freshwater meets the salt. And you know, you can never remove one from the other. It’s just there. And so, I think that’s where I am at right now where I am not trying to remove it. I’m trying to be at peace with the mix of both waters.”

Lupe made a strong connection to Alejandro’s words and finding peace with both cultural identities. As she listened to Alexandro’s testimonio she uncovered a strong purpose for coming

back to eastern Washington to teach. She really appreciated how Alejandro strived to make both languages coexist rather than overpower each other. She also noted that our shared tensions, that stem from our childhood have impacted our work and our commitments. She shared:

“The education system did not serve us and that led each of us to turn that around and little by little be the ones who do this for our students.”

When I asked Lupe and Alejandro how they felt about this testimonio session, they both shared that they appreciated the free-form (multimodal) format because it really allowed for us to engage with our testimonio and share our stories in a way that felt authentic. Lupe appreciated this as she related to always having her stories to make sense to other people, especially in English. Here her story only had to make the most sense to her. Alejandro expanded on the idea of perspectives and those on the “inside” and “outside” he thinks back and forward between:

“How we construct knowledge and the sense that we make from the world and how we can go away from these objective ideas of meaning, and how we can teach students to understand the subjectivity of language like giving meaning to things ourselves and picking and choosing what meanings we choose to derive from language.”

Lupe echoed Alejandro’s idea and added that this is vital because it is part of our identity and sense of belonging.

“Language is such a big part of one’s identity. Even when I was smaller, I didn’t think it was. It brings kids together, makes them feel comfortable. Like I hear them speaking with one another and they’re so comfortable with the words they tell each other.”

Our first testimonio session allowed us to name our tensions, find healing by giving witness to one another by sharing our multimodal testimonios, and anchor commitments to multilingualism in community.

Ideologies and Value Construction: Humanizing Education in Community

Another finding is that through testimonio, we were able to unearth and share core values and co-construct knowledge. Alejandro crafted two poems for our second testimonio session.

One poem was written in Spanish, reflecting his commitments in the previous week to try poetry in Spanish. The second poem was written in English but incorporated words in Spanish for words held as sacred to Alejandro. Alejandro did not title either poem, but his first poem refers to life in *El Rancho*. Each line begins with *en el Rancho* and depicts values of community care and wellbeing. Alejandro named these values to be reciprocity and community. This poem was written and read in Spanish. As Alejandro described his values, he referred to discourses of individualism and competitions dominating schooling in the United States, versus community well-being in life in *El Rancho*. He pointed out that students are not taught to share answers or strategies in math.

“And I’ve found that there’s so many borders here in the United States, because a lot of kids are not taught to be, you know, citizens of the community in that way. So, there is this fight in myself against Western ideals of what it’s like to engage in a space where I think they get taught to be workers, to produce...how to consume commodities. And there’s so much more to life than that.”

Lupe appreciated Alejandro bringing in community and related his testimonio to her teaching context. She mentioned that in middle school, everything is done individually and “only counts” if it is done individually. She shared a school system called top 30 and when students don’t make it to the top 30, they feel their work is not valued and give up. Lupe mentioned that her goal is to move away from individualism into community wellbeing.

“And I think this will connect to what I’m going to now speak about what I’m holding on to values for this week or I’ve been starting to even more... is move away from that, like the individualistic, you know, like, it only counts if you do it by yourself more towards you know, like, do it in community, do it in a group learn from each other, learn from your different languages.”

Lupe brought an artifact, a language support book, to showcase her commitment to multilingualism and bridging student linguistic identities into the curriculum. She shared that as a

first-year teacher, she finds a lot of helpful ideas from these books. She tweaks these books so that they reflect student voice by adding phrases or Spanish sayings known as *dichos*.

“Students can take language any way they want and bring in any language...I am hanging on to a lot of linguistic supports for my multilingual students...and also really prioritizing group work because I noticed that when their partner speaks the same language they feel more comfortable.”

She expressed a very strong commitment to her students having an authentic voice, where both languages are used and celebrated. In essence, Lupe values multilingualism and linguistic development in community and reflective of community knowledge.

Enacting Our Teaching Philosophy amongst Constraints

One last finding is that by engaging in communal testimonio, we centered joy and found ways to incorporate social and emotional components into planning amongst standardization. When we reflected on our current constraints in our teaching context, both Alejandro and Lupe posed the following question: How can we bring joy into our lessons among constraints? This question came into being after I shared my artifact, a white dress decorated by my third graders during the week of state testing in Texas. I shared that during the months prior to the state test, our curriculum enforced teaching to the test and leaving little to no room for the social and emotional aspect of learning.

Alejandro navigates this constraint by finding “that grey area” where we make room for creativity and development. He asked who do these tests benefit and what discourses do they perpetuate. Although the tests give some information, Alejandro has a strong commitment to getting to know his students, teaching them, and working with their strengths in mind. He pushes his students to think creatively, something he recognizes is mostly omitted by these tests.

Lupe advocates for her multilingual students’ emotional wellbeing. She shared tensions with testing students new to the country for proficiency levels in English rather than focusing on

social and emotional needs of finding themselves in a new setting. Lupe notes that the focus should be on learning more about the students, their emotional needs, and community building. She shared that this week, she received a student new to the country, and that she was committed to finding her partnerships in her classroom, getting to know her and her family, as well as finding resources for them. Lupe continues to find ways to foster humanization in her teaching context. She is committed to reaching her students even in the smallest of ways.

“I am trying to find my ways in that-the stories I give them and connecting back to the curriculum.”

Eventually, Lupe expressed that she would love to move into a bilingual classroom to have more linguistic autonomy in her lesson planning. She voiced a deep commitment to continue working with multilingual students, growing, and enacting curriculum in culturally responsive ways. Her why and reason for teaching are her multilingual students and families, and designing lessons aimed at their flourishing rather than simply meeting standards.

After reflecting on constraints, Alejandro mentioned that constraints are his “why” or reason for teaching. He mentioned that having tensions and constraints brought him to education.

“Because as a brown student going through a White system, I felt a lot of inequity, I couldn’t see myself in the curriculum, I might have had some teachers that look like me, but they didn’t really care. And so I think that is my why that these tensions exist and that being an educator, I can push against them...And so I want to be one of those teachers that is there on the ground learning with the kids and struggling too...not put these kids into a box. I don’t have any grand goals or anything besides them reflecting on me as an educator and seeing that I was someone who cared for them and that found them as valuable so that they could find value in themselves too.”

Our communal testimonio gifted us an opportunity to share our struggles and the values we hold close to our hearts. We were able to look at our positionality, constraints, and recenter our teaching philosophies as we gave witness to one another and found healing alongside each other.

Discussion

The findings in this study suggest that multimodal testimonio in community can be a healing and powerful experience for mediating tensions, embracing them, and unearthing values to name our commitments as we co-construct knowledge to navigate constraints. This section will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions: how does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio mediate how we make sense of *nepantla*. And how does engaging in communal multimodal testimonio influence our teaching philosophies as we experience the constraints in our current educational context?

Testimonio and Mediating *Nepantla*

Anzaldúa (2015) describes identity formation as an alchemical process where we synthesize the “dualities, contradictions, and perspectives from our different selves and worlds.” Furthermore, Varghese (2008) found that connections teachers make with their life experiences have tensions and doubts, and that there is a need for space to discuss these. During our first communal testimonio session, we were able to bring all our different selves into a shared space where we gave witness to one another and mediated tensions. Furthermore, Alejandro’s words comparing *nepantla* to where saltwater meets fresh water really moved Lupe and I from mediating *nepantla* towards embracing it. Lupe shared appreciation for the way Alejandro framed *nepantla* and drew meaning from being at peace with her competing “worlds.” Lupe did display more tensions with her multilingual identity than Alejandro and having this space helped both Lupe and I look at *nepantla* as a place where dualities can coexist. In addition, when I asked Lupe and Alejandro to select a pseudonym for this project, they both chose to keep their names. We spent our time talking about our names constantly being changed against and they both

agreed that it felt right to keep their names alongside their stories. This is one way Lupe and Alejandro both embraced and reclaimed their identity.

To engage in *comunidad y confianza*, I shared my testimonio in the form of poetry. I shared with Lupe and Alejandro that I write my poetry in Spanish because I feel insincere or inauthentic when I write poetry in English as I have yet to discover my voice in English. After I finished reading my poem, Alejandro shared his passion for poetry and that he writes it in English because he usually thinks in English. He was inspired to start writing poetry in Spanish to reaffirm his multilingual identity. This space allowed Alejandro to find different ways to reclaim and construct his multilingual identity. The following session he brought a poem in Spanish and a poem in English that also included words in Spanish.

The multimodality format of our communal testimonio sessions also helped us consider how we tell stories both to ourselves and our peers. It also raised the question of different perspectives. This was particularly salient in the way Lupe described her feelings with the “free-form” format. She expressed that it was comforting to be given a space where she could craft a story in any way that made the most sense to her. This was comforting to her because throughout her life, her stories were only valued if those who spoke English understood them. In this space, what mattered the most was that her story was of value to her and that it conveyed her truths.

Alejandro then brought up how we can teach our students to use different modes to convey what we find most meaningful and true. He also expressed giving students autonomy so that they can give meaning to their storytelling when he shared “we can teach our students to understand the subjectivity of language like giving meaning to things ourselves and picking and choosing what meanings we choose to derive from language.” In a way, Alejandro and Lupe both perceive multimodality as a way to mediate *nepantla* as we hold agency in how we share

our stories and the meanings we wish to convey. This falls in line with Prieto and Villenas (2012) and their findings on how we can reclaim our identities, find the critical role we can take in upholding education as a place for transformation and liberation through testimonio.

Testimonio for Centering Teaching Philosophies

In line with Varghese & Snyder (2018) finding: Educator academic histories impact how they position themselves and the purpose of their work as dual language teachers, Lupe and Alejandro drew on their histories to anchor their commitments to their multilingual students and families. Our testimonio session led both Lupe and Alejandro to question who dual language programs are designed to serve and their purpose.

Lupe related to this question by sharing her experiences as a student in Eastern Washington having teachers that could not communicate with her parents to now teaching in that same context. Her main commitment in her teaching philosophy were her multilingual students and to make even the smallest of change for her students. This is evident in the way she seeks to contact all her students' parents, even though she has a large number of students. When she talked about her teaching philosophy in our testimonio session, Lupe kept coming back to giving her students what she did not have, even amongst constraints. Even though Lupe is an English language arts teacher, she navigates language constraints to honor her students' multilingual and multicultural identities. She is intentional about the stories she gives her students and that they reflect aspects of their lives. She negotiates space for incorporating Spanish not only in her classroom environment, but in giving her students autonomy to incorporate it in their writing.

When Alejandro shared his hopes and visions for teaching, he also used his history to convey his purpose especially when he shared "Because as a brown student going through a White system, I felt a lot of inequity, I couldn't see myself in the curriculum, I might have had

some teachers that look like me, but they didn't really care." The following fragment from one of his testimonios conveys Alejandro's commitments:

"my fire is stoked by the voices of children who sound like I sounded, whose parents are like mine, whose blood runs thick like *atole*, those who dance like *maíz* in the wind..."

Alejandro really drew from his communal upbringing and emphasized his drive to really embrace communal wellbeing over individualism. He talked about really bringing back the humanity into learning rather than adopting values of competition. He brings this into his teaching by finding places to foster creativity or what he referred to "the grey area" where we can really bring in the joy into learning alongside the curriculum standard.

In addition to giving witness to each other's teaching philosophies and how we navigate constraints, our testimonio sessions allowed us to co-construct knowledge and center important values into our philosophy. One example of this is when Alejandro shared his struggle against western ideologies of individualism and production, Lupe was able to reflect more about her teaching context. She shared how in middle school, her students move from one period to the next and feel exhausted by the time they reach their last period. She reflected on ways to connect with her students to help them feel excited. Alejandro also reflected on our testimonio experience and the multimodality/multilingual space so that his students can have agency in showcasing their knowledge in a way that is most meaningful to them. By engaging in shared testimonio, we may be able to find ways to further develop our teaching philosophies to foster an ethic of love and humanization in our classroom amongst constraints.

Implications

One implication from these findings is that by sharing our testimonios in community and by reflecting on our teaching philosophy, we can create more loving and liberating classrooms even amongst constraints. Our shared testimonios allow us to unearth our histories to reflect on

our reasons and commitments for teaching and the pedagogies we wish to implement to honor those commitments. Specifically, testimonio in community is a space that allows us to name structures, such as the hegemony of English, discourses, and policies that historically positioned us to negotiate our identities. By unearthing our histories and examining our multilingual and multicultural identity in relation to our histories, we can begin to transform our teaching contexts to embrace values of love and commitment to our communities. This is reflected in Lupe and Alejandro's words.

Lupe: "I just think coming back to over here, how I grew up, just wanting to make the smallest of change."

Alejandro: "...I might have had some teachers that look like me but they didn't care. And so I think that's my why."

As we unearth our histories and reflect on our commitments and values, communal testimonios allow us to create more loving pedagogies as we enrich our teaching philosophy with the knowledge we construct in community. Alejandro inspired us to thinking about finding ways to move away from Western values of individualism to fostering communal wellbeing and reciprocity. The multimodality in our sessions inspired both Lupe and Alejandro to question practices that can allow their students to convey their truths and stories in a way that is most meaningful to them. Lupe inspired us to find spaces for joy amongst constraints in our curricula. This conveys how by engaging in community to share our teaching philosophies we can craft a more holistic practice to embrace our students' dynamic identities.

Another implication of these findings is that by sharing our testimonios in community, we can embrace *nepantla* rather than perceiving it as something solely to be mediated or negotiated. In community, we are able to unearth shared tensions and discuss how we perceive

and mediate them. By sharing testimonios we can build a holistic image of what it means to find ourselves in *nepantla* and perceive our dualities, or contradictions, as strengths. By naming *nepantla* in our shared testimonios we can replace feelings of dissonance in our dynamic identities with acceptance and confidence. This was apparent when Alejandro reflected on constraints and tensions and named them as the driving force that led him to pursue his role as a dual language teacher.

Finally, the teacher candidate, novice teacher, and coaching relationship could benefit from communal testimonios. This study was designed to study how multimodal communal testimonio impacts first year Latine teaching philosophies. However, as we engaged in dialogue, *comunidad, y confianza*, my teaching philosophy and perceptions of *nepantla* were also deeply impacted. Alejandro's words, "...It's like the water where fresh water meets saltwater right? And it's in constant change. It's neither one nor the other you're in the middle there where the freshwater meets the salt..." challenged me to find ways where I can begin to embrace my Mexican identity with my United States identity. This makes me question the implications this may have in the way I perceive my coaching of novice multilingual teachers and teacher candidates, the questions we may ask together and how we approach our work thinking about our students' identities holistically. In essence, how can we continue to hold space to share our tensions and dismantle borders in our identities to co-construct knowledge that continues to position our students' identities as dynamic and fluid? And when we encounter "borders" in curricula or policies, how can we co-construct knowledge to navigate them and center humanization and liberation in our practices? How do these conversations in our pre-service year impact how we set to position ourselves as multilingual educators and the commitments we will protect and honor?

Limitations

This project considers the experiences of two first year teachers who graduated from the same teacher preparation program and teach in the state of Washington. The findings here cannot be generalized to the experiences of first year teachers in other states or who graduated from different teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, data was collected for two sessions in the middle of the school, end of January early February. The results would be more comprehensive if we had a session to close the school year. The data could be more holistic by incorporating observations of the teachers in their teaching contexts and collecting artifacts of student work, communication with families, and lesson plans. Finally, our conversations could have been different if we were afforded the opportunity to meet in person rather than video call via Zoom.

Conclusion

Lupe and Alejandro's experiences with communal multimodal testimonio depict how gifting our stories and giving each other witness has the power to dismantle borders in our identities by naming the forces that imposed them in our beings. As they shared their testimonios in community, Lupe and Alejandro embodied bell hook's vision for education for "healing and wholeness... about finding and claiming ourselves in the world." They were able to unearth histories and name tensions that arise when assimilationist discourses, policies, and practices create static notions of cultural identity.

Their experience also indicates that shared multimodal testimonios allow for healing and solace as we encounter and discuss shared tensions. In the case of Lupe and Alejandro, the image provided by Alejandro of brackish water, or finding peace amongst two strong forces, inspired us to consider the possibility of finding peace in *nepantla* and to consider the implications this may have on our teaching philosophies.

The findings in this study also show how Lupe and Alejandro enrich their teaching philosophies while engaging in communal multimodal testimonio sessions. Their experiences show how these sessions can disrupt hegemonic practices imposed by constraints and create more loving multilingual classrooms as we unearth values and co-construct knowledge to navigate the constraints. This space allowed us to question the purpose of our dual language programs, who they serve, and how to embrace community wellbeing over values of competition and individualism.

I propose that future studies should explore the role of communal multimodal testimonio in the coaching and teacher candidate relationship. If testimonio allows us to unearth histories and center our commitments, we can co-create knowledge to enact our hopes and visions for multilingual education while forging trusting relationships and healing. This may impact the way we approach our coaching and the way our teacher candidates approach their work as novice multilingual educators. Together, we could create teaching philosophies that embody love and respect for our communities and students.

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Appendix I

Initial Semi-Structured Interview Protocol: By Grace Cornell Gonzales and Cristina Barriot

Note: Before conducting each interview, prepare to show candidate their bilingual teaching philosophy presentation slides and testimonio if applicable.

Opening Script: Thank you so much for agreeing to chat with us! We're so excited to hear more about your thoughts on your experiences as a bilingual teacher, your language identities, and how your vision for bilingual teaching is shifting/expanding/deepening during your first year of teaching. This interview should take between 45-60 minutes.

A. Academic Context and Bilingual Identity Tensions

- a. Tell me a bit about your current teaching context. What grade, what languages, what school, and how are things going?
- b. How would you describe your own language history and identities?
 - i. How have you experienced tensions within your language identity or cultural identity as a student?
 - ii. How have you experienced tensions within your language identity or cultural identity as a teacher?

B. ELTEP/Bilingual Methods and Views of Bilingual Education

- a. How did your experience in ELTEP change or shape your views on bilingual education?
 - i. What particular experiences within ELTEP shaped these views?
- b. How did your experience in the bilingual methods course this summer change or shape your views on bilingual education?
 - i. What particular experiences within ELTEP shaped these views?

C. Bilingual Teaching Philosophy Design

[Show slides from teaching philosophy presentation and initial philosophy statement.]
You turned in an initial philosophy statement, and at the end of our class, you presented your teaching philosophy and stance on language presentation.

- a. Tell us about your experience crafting this presentation.
 - i. How did your presentation build off of or differ from your initial philosophy from the first day of the class?
 - ii. How did you choose what to include in your presentation?
 - iii. What was easy about crafting this presentation? What was difficult?
- b. How is this philosophy shaping the decisions you're making in your own classroom now?

- c. How are you shifting this philosophy as you experience the realities of your first year of teaching?
- d. In what ways are you encountering resistance around your philosophy in your current context?
- e. In what ways are you encountering support for your philosophy in your current context?

D. Testimonio Experience

This summer, we engaged in a testimonio experience in our class (show Cristina's slides).

- a. What was your experience like with this testimonio activity?
 - i. What felt difficult about the experience? What felt easy about it? What felt limiting about this experience?
 - ii. How did it connect with your identity or allow you to explore tensions around your identity?
 - iii. How did you think about language and identity through testimonio?
- b. [For students who turned in their testimonio] Here is your testimonio from the summer. Can you talk a bit about how you created it and why you chose to write this testimonio?
- c. [For students who didn't turn in their testimonio] Would you be comfortable sharing what you wrote your testimonio about and how you chose to write that testimonio?

E. Looking Forward

- a. When you encounter tensions/constraints, what is your reason for continuing on? What is the "why" that you come back for?
- b. What are some plans that you're committed to enacting this year?
- c. What are your hopes for your students and how they will learn/grow in your classroom?
- d. How do you envision yourself as an educator moving forward? What are your dreams or goals for your teaching future?

Appendix II

First Communal Multimodal Testimonio Session: Contextualizing *Nepantla* in Our Multilingual and Multicultural Development Protocol and Artifacts

Opening Script:

Hi, it is so good to see you today. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to engage in this conversation. I am excited to see where this session takes us and what we find. Prior to meeting today, I asked you to think about these following concepts [Show slide with concepts]:

“*Nepantla* is the place where my cultural and personal codes clash, where I come up against the world’s dictates, where these different worlds—*nepantla* is the point of contact y el lugar between worlds” (Anzaldúa, 2015).

Coyolxauhqui Imperative- A struggle to reconstruct oneself and heal. Calling back pieces of the soul that have been dispersed. Dealing with lack of cohesiveness and stability or tensions (Anzaldúa, 2015).

You were also asked to create a timeline and note where we experienced *nepantla* in our socialization (growing up, as students, as adults, and now as educators). In essence, where in your timeline did you experience instances of tension and healing? Finally, I asked you to use this timeline as a tool to craft a testimonio which can take the form of a poem, artifact, conversation, or a mixture of any medium that allows us to convey our story in a way that is most true to us.

We will begin by sharing our timelines briefly and then engaging in our testimonios. I will get us started, then whoever feels ready can move us along this process. We will end by sharing what this experience meant for us and what we are taking from this session into our week as educators.

Note: If participants do not have these artifacts ready, we will devote some time to crafting together.

Show my timeline please see Appendix 1.

Share my testimonio please see Appendix 2 & 3.

This is important to me because I want to engage in *Confianza* and *Comunidad* with my participants.

Participant 1: Timeline and Testimonio

Participant 2: Timeline and Testimonio

Debrief on Testimonio Session/Closing:

- a. What was your experience like with this testimonio activity?
 - i. What felt difficult about the experience? What felt easy about it? What felt limiting about this experience?
 - ii. How did you think about language and identity through testimonio?
- b. How would this connect with your teaching philosophy?

- c. Can you tell me more about how you created it and why you chose this modality/form?
- d. What connections or themes are you noticing among us?

Closing Script: Thank you so much for creating this space with me. I really value your time and am looking forward to our next meeting.

Artifact II: Cristina's Poem, La H Muda

Si Perro Que Ladra No Muerde
La H Muda es la más brava

cada que mueven el piano
se desafinan sus cuerdas

cada que cruzo la frontera
se desafinan mis cuerdas vocales

do re mi fa sol
Ahora
C D E F G

Cristina
Ahora
Christina

aunque las teclas parecen ser igual por fuera
por dentro
su sonido
es un desastre

aunque pretendo ser la misma por fuera
por dentro
acepto la pena antes de dudar
tartamudeo
mi sonido
es un desastre

pero quien va a querer escuchar
esa canción desafinada

una canción que no encaja ni aquí ni allá
o estás muy *agringada* o eres *Too Mexican*

pero estás perpetuamente entre el aquí y allá
y en esta interfaz
se aniquila la confianza
se aprende a hablar sin usar palabras
y solo así
se aprende a afinar las cuerdas.

-CB

If the dog that barks doesn't bite
The silent H is feral

each time the piano is moved
its strings lose their tune

each time I cross the border
my vocal cords lose their tune

do re mi fa sol
now
C D E F G

Cristina
Now
Christina

even if the keys remain the same on the outside
inside
their sound
is a disaster

even if I pretend to be the same on the outside
inside
I embrace shyness without stopping to doubt it
I stutter
my sound
is a disaster

but who would want to listen
to a song out of tune

a song that does not fit here nor there
or you are too *agringada* or too Mexican

but you are perpetually in between
the here and there
in this interface
trust is annihilated
one learns to speak without words
and only then
you learn to tune cords.

-CB

Artifact III: Cristina's Second Poem, Ser El Crayón Blanco

Edgar colorea furiosamente en una hoja blanca
Observa el crayón blanco
Lo rompe en dos y lo bota
¿Para qué guardas cosas que no sirven?

Ser El Crayón Blanco

Quizá la vergüenza más grande que haya vivido
será haber sido maestra del año
cegada a los sistemas de poder

Me retumba recordar la costumbre
de separar los idiomas en el salón
Azul es para el inglés y el verde para el español
*Si traigo la bufanda azul háblame en..
¡ENGLISH!*

Piensa en el idioma en términos de poder
Me dice mi profesora
A mis 29 años
Descubrí lo efímero
de las doctrinas
toda una vida de aprendizaje
para desprenderme de

Las buenas intenciones
que al ponernos las gafas
No son tan sinceras

Será de cobardes proclamarse
humanos para excusar la ignorancia?
Será de humanos
Perder el orgullo
deslavarse de las doctrinas
y pintar con otro color?

-CB

Edgar colors furiously on a blank page
He looks at the white crayon
Breaks it in half and tosses it
Why do you keep things that don't work?

Being The White Crayon

One of the most embarrassing things
I'll have to live with
is being named teacher of the year
while blind to the systems of power

I am ashamed of the custom
of separating languages in the classroom
Blue is English and Green is Spanish
*If I am wearing the blue scarf speak to me in...
ENGLISH!*

Think about language as a system of power
My professor's words haunt my past
At my 29 years
I discovered the ephemeral nature
of doctrines
a life of learning
to detach myself from

Good intentions
that when I truly see them
aren't as sincere

Is it of cowards to proclaim the self
human to excuse the ignorance?
Is it human
to rid ourselves of pride
wash away the doctrines
and paint with a different color?

-CB

Appendix III

Second Communal Multimodal Testimonio Session: Anchoring Our Teaching Philosophy

Opening Script:

Hi Lupe and Alejandro. I hope you both are having a lovely week. Last week we got to talk about our multicultural identity development and our experiences in *Nepantla*. Today I want us to think more about the assets we bring to our teaching as a result of being part of more than one culture.

Some of the questions I asked us to reflect on were:

What core values or ideas am I hanging onto as I approach this week in how I show up for my multilingual students and as I plan for the week or in my teaching?

What constraints am I encountering and how am I anchoring in my vision for multilingual education to navigate them?

I brought in two artifacts for this time. One depicts the constraints/cycle of teaching the other is a sort of portrait of my teaching philosophy.

A. Closing

- a. When you encounter tensions/constraints what is your “why” that you come back to?
- b. How do you envision yourself as an educator as you continue your journey? What are your dreams or goals for your teaching future?

Artifact I: Cristina's Poem Clemencia

Clemencia

Criábamos orugas en el salón
las movíamos de un entorno a otro
con un pincel de acuarelas
cautelosamente
sin tocarlas
*Hasta el aceite de nuestros dedos
con el toque más dócil les puede causar daño*

Criábamos orugas en el salón
les dimos malva
las vimos crear su crisálida
el misterio de la metamorfosis
encapsulado

Liberamos mariposas en el jardín escolar
llegaron los cuervos
y los gritos infantiles

¡Pero si las tratamos con harto cuidado!

Sin querer queriendo
La vida nos enseñó su
Ciclo

-CB

Clemency

We raised caterpillars in our classroom
we moved them from one setting to another
with a watercolor brush
cautiously
without touching them
*Even the oils in our hands
with the gentlest of touch can harm them*

We raised caterpillars in our classroom
we gave them mallow
watched them build their chrysalis
the mystery of metamorphosis
encapsulated

We freed butterflies in the school garden
the crows came
and so did the childish screams

But we treated them with utmost care!

Without warning
Life taught us its
Cycle

-CB