

# Bridging Language Education Fields: An Interview with Kim Potowski

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## Background

Broadly speaking, Language Education fields might share interest in the teaching and learning of languages, yet the target languages, target students, teaching approaches and ontological perspectives toward the reasons for language study differ vastly across World/Foreign Languages (WL/FL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Bilingual Education (BE), Dual Language Immersion (DLI), and Heritage Language (HL) Education. Language Education also involves research to inform best teaching practices published in diverse journals across disciplines, creating subject specific terms, worldviews, and silos of knowledge.

*Foreign Language* (FL) teaching generally refers to the teaching of a nonnative language outside of the environment where it is commonly spoken. Although we tend to map languages onto discrete national boundaries, “languages do not lend themselves to precise categorization...and language minorities exist in countries that we strongly associate with a national language” (Rey Agudo, 2021, para 5). Accordingly, a change to the term *World Languages* (WL) as a field has emerged in the United States from a social justice turn to honor the many minoritized speakers of languages other than English spoken in the United States. WL Education, the typical focus of *Dimensions*, refers to the teaching and learning of languages other than English from around the world. Important issues in WL Education concern communication skills, cultural understanding, global competence, and technology integration promoting the interconnectedness of the world and preparing individuals for an increasingly globalized society (ACTFL, n.d.). The primary goal of WL Education is to develop students’ proficiency in communicating in languages other than their native language. Yet considerations within the field of HL Education put to question the singular view of the terms *native language* and *native speaker*. Simply being born into a family that speaks a different language at home than the language of instruction at school does not make one a native speaker. If the home language is not maintained at school, the input declines and with time the school language often becomes the dominant language. HL learners are a population of students with diverse needs. Important issues in HL Education concern translanguaging, language variation, acquisition of new registers, linguistic insecurities, and identity (Carreira

et al., 2020). Native speakers (NSs) do not experience heritage speakers' affective issues—being questioned as a legitimate speaker or incomplete speaker of their home language or “not having a language that you can claim as your own” (Carreira et al., 2020, p. 8).

Ideally, speakers of home languages different from the language of instruction at school would be supported with BE to maintain the home language while developing the school language. Yet due to political reasons, the majority of U.S. BE programs were closed in the 1990s during the period of *English Only*. A rebranded form of BE emerged in the 2000s as DLI in which children learn school content through a language other than English for at least part of the school day. Although several studies have revealed that DLI programs have been effective at fostering bilingualism, academic success, and English learners' home language maintenance (Howard et al., 2018), there is growing concern over issues of equity and access to DLI programs and neoliberal discourses that frame language proficiency as a commodity (Davin et al., 2024). Despite criticism, research in Spanish/English two-way immersion contexts point to “higher grade point averages and increased enrollment in post-secondary education for this student group, compared to Latino peers participating in other types of educational programs such as transitional bilingual education and various forms of English-medium education” (Fortune, n.d. para. 5). When not provided a DLI option, speakers of languages other than English are placed in ESOL programs that do not provide support for language maintenance like BE and DLI. In the United States, the majority of speakers of languages other than English who enter ESOL programs transition into the school language with the cost of losing legitimacy as a speaker of their home language, despite research supporting the benefits of bilingualism. Despite criticism of the neoliberal discourse around DLI, research continues to support that proficiency in multiple languages “affirms multilingual identities and boosts students' confidence, which can have lifelong impacts on academic achievement, ethnic identity, and familial relationships” (Davin et al., 2024, p. 18).

Each of these aforementioned language programs have multiple subsets of pedagogical approaches and expected learning outcomes. For example, ESOL has *push in* and *pull out* programs; WLS have content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approaches, communicative approaches, and Foreign Language Exploratory (FLEX) programs, to name a few. Although there are many types of language education programs, it is not our intention to describe each in detail or to differentiate greatly between them. Instead, we seek to provide a perspective through which we can understand and positively engage with the promotion of plurilingualism and a multicultural society. For this reason, we sought out insight and expertise from an individual who is widely revered across language fields, particularly DLI, WLE, and HL Education, Dr. Kim Potowski.

Dr. Kim Potowski is a prominent scholar in the field of Spanish Linguistics, HL Education and BE. She holds a Ph.D. in Hispanic Linguistics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is currently a professor in the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Potowski's research primarily focuses on Spanish in the United States, particularly the linguistic, educational, and sociocultural aspects of Spanish-speaking communities

in the country. She is known for her work on Spanish heritage language speakers, bilingualism, language policy, and language attitudes. One of Potowski's significant contributions to the field is her advocacy for the recognition and support of Spanish heritage language speakers in the U.S. educational system. She emphasizes the importance of valuing and preserving Spanish as a heritage language among bilingual communities, and she has conducted extensive research on the linguistic development and educational needs of heritage speakers. In addition to her academic work, Dr. Potowski is also engaged in community outreach and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and supporting Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. Overall, Dr. Kim Potowski is recognized as a leading expert in the field of Spanish linguistics and BE, and her research has had a significant impact on both academic scholarship and educational policy and practice.

### **An Interview with Dr. Kim Potowski**

At the beginning of the year (2024), interviewers Jason Kemp and Paula Garrett-Rucks had the pleasure of meeting with Kim Potowski over Zoom in a video-recorded, semi-structured interview to discuss Language Education. Transcripts from the recording were slightly edited and organized in the following question and response structure.

*Question 1: Please tell us about your research and areas of interest across language teaching and learning.*

I found my research passion in the last class of my doctorate coursework, Classroom Language Learning. I'll never forget this child's face we saw in a video about a Canadian immersion program. There was a little blonde girl sitting there. She's a five-year old in a French immersion classroom, and she doesn't understand anything that's happening. The lights came on, and the angels sang! I was in a doctoral program for language acquisition, so dual language was perfect for me. You could say that is where I started. I then moved to Chicago in 1999 because there were no dual language schools in Urbana-Champaign at the time. I moved to study the second oldest dual language school in the nation. It was a wonderful, wonderful time. My research was mostly qualitative, an ethnographic study. I became a huge fan of dual language immersion and its potential.

After completing my doctorate degree, I was hired by the University of Illinois-Chicago, and I realized the kids from my study were now in eighth grade. I went back to the school for a follow up study and wrote a book about this research. I found myself in various positions at the University. For a couple of years, I directed our French and Spanish teacher education program, and then I became the director of our Heritage Language program which had existed well before I got there. I think it was formed in the 80s by Lucía Elías-Olivares who was a pioneer in the field. She had a deep commitment to Latinos and social justice. I was teaching in the area of Spanish heritage language, and the textbooks were very prescriptivist. They didn't have authentic texts. I started writing my own stuff, and then after a while, I thought, "Oh, I guess this could be a book." I sort of wrote the textbook that I wanted to exist.

I ended up landing on what I thought made the most sense for the heritage speakers I have here in Chicago where the majority are the children of immigrants. They were English Learners (ELs) when they were kids, typically speaking Spanish first. English began to be acquired when they entered school at the age of 5, 6, or 7. But clearly, you know the drill—English gets stronger than Spanish. They haven't had academic preparation in Spanish, and they've been bullied their whole lives. I've landed on the phrase *triple bullying*, the triple bullying that they experience.

*Question 1a: Could you explain what you mean by the “triple bullying” of heritage speakers of Spanish?*

My sense is that kids from Spanish-speaking families growing up in the United States experience bullying from at least three sources, so I've just called it triple bullying. One source of bullying is hegemonic U.S. society. You don't have to be in this country for more than a minute to realize it's approximately 80% monolingual. A lot of people like it that way. In fact, no they don't; they wish it were 100% monolingual, right? I maintain a website (Potowski, n.d.) which I don't enjoy maintaining at all. It has cases of linguistic bullying from our hegemonic society. These messages are tied to xenophobia and racism, and they indicate that Spanish is not wanted here in the U.S.

Bullying angle number two is the space where you'd think heritage speakers of Spanish would be welcomed: Spanish language classes. So, I'm talking about Spanish teachers. I'm talking about La Academia norteamericana de la lengua española (ANLE), which has published several nasty little volumes. Some may think they're clever and cute or funny, which is what they argue, but the introduction to the first volume is something like: “You don't want to sound like Tarzan when you speak Spanish, do you?” Really?!? So, you think shaming people is going to have a positive effect? A colleague, Andrew Lynch, and I published a piece about it (Lynch & Potowski, 2014), and then it unleashed this big series of events that makes my students' jaws drop every year. They're like: “I can't believe they called you racist.” So, that's the second source of bullying.

The third source of bullying is incredibly painful, as it comes from students' own families. It's the *no sabo kids* trend. I saw a mom on TikTok describe her son as a *no sabo kid*. She placed the Mexican flag above herself. She placed the American flag above her son and then made fun of his Spanish. My reaction is that nobody has control over the language they develop as a child. Now, I'm not wagging my finger at this mother saying she should have taught her son Spanish. No, what I am saying is, you really should refrain from shaming your son for a linguistic outcome that he had no control over. So, that is the third source of bullying. Thus, heritage speakers of Spanish experience these triple sources of bullying.

*Question 1b: In what ways can you empower these Spanish Heritage Students?*

Well, they taught me a lot, and I still consider myself their student. At the time, there was a Spanish writing book with some grammar. We were going to do narratives, and then arguments, and I realized that these students had trouble writing a good thesis statement. That's what college is for and that's what it means to participate in a democracy. So, I decided that's what we're going to do—argument, argument. I chose eight topics, such as, labor, gender, ethnolinguistic identity, and technology. Over the years, I've gotten the sense that students have enjoyed interacting with the materials. The best compliment I ever get is when they come back and say, "I was writing a paper in English for sociology or criminal justice," or whatever class, and they say, "I just write better now with the thesis and the arguments, and my conclusion." This contributes to social justice, because we know that even though a lot of Latino students might get into college, they graduate in lower numbers than hegemonic white students. So, yes, I want them to improve their Spanish obviously. However, if I have to choose between (1) being able to read like a writer and write like a reader and to dissect a text and see what makes it work and then produce their own text and to be able to influence policy and contribute to the betterment of their community, or (2) this is how you use the subjunctive more in a particular context, the choice is obvious; I prefer the former. But I also would like for students to bolster their confidence in an expressive range in Spanish. That's a current debate in the field and I have feelings about how the pendulum has swung.

But anyway, that's where I've landed professionally. I've done some work on Spanish in the United States, looking at the use of the subjunctive, code switching, the use of *so* versus *entonces* here in Chicago. Sometimes I hesitate to consider myself a sociolinguist, because I feel like people associate that with variation studies, and I don't really do that. I don't do statistics. I hire other people to do my statistics. I consider my strong suit to be that interpersonal, that ethnographic kind of research which I was sort of raised on academically and intellectually.

I've landed on another point in my career in which I take great interest in the preparation of future teachers of language, particularly Spanish. I used to teach a Heritage Language Teaching course, and I wrote a book in English with Sara Beaudrie and Cindy Ducar (Beaudrie et al., 2014) that I'm very proud of and I find it a tragedy that the publisher has just sort of let it languish. Now, I'm doing a brand-new book in Spanish about Spanish. I currently teach an online course for teachers who are going to work with heritage speakers, which is a completely different ball game with different goals and different rules. Unfortunately, far too many teacher prep programs do not address the needs of heritage speakers. In fact, I can tell you that in the state of Illinois there are 33 universities, last time I counted, that license high school Spanish teachers and my university is the only one to offer a full 16-week course on teaching heritage speakers. It is required for our undergraduate Spanish Majors as well as our teachers.

We attempted to create a teaching endorsement in heritage language teaching with the state Board of Education, but despite initial interest, it did not come to fruition. I think they saw it as a barrier due to the current acute teacher shortage, and I get that.

Although we don't want any more barriers during this huge shortage of teachers, I think there's value to be gained for high school principals who may have an 85% Latino population to discern which candidate might be best prepared. So, I haven't given up on the endorsement idea and hope to see it happen before I retire.

So yes, my research interest started with dual language education, which I still do. Yet social justice issues have always been at the center of my work, and I see a need to work with and for heritage speakers.

*Question 2: Could you please talk about the scholarly disconnect that exists in language education fields in academia?*

I understand why the silos in academia happen. Some of my colleagues in World Languages are not very familiar with what's happening in Dual Language Education. We don't go downstairs or across the street often enough to work with and learn from colleagues working in slightly different, yet adjacent areas. For example, if you're teaching and researching Spanish in the United States, that is a de facto Latinx issue, right? I have two courtesy appointments: one in Curriculum & Instruction and one in Latin American/Latino Studies, so I try my best to work across fields. I think more robust joint appointments would be wonderful.

Sometimes I go to dual language conferences like La Cosecha, and it seems to me people are starving for knowledge about U.S. Spanish, code switching, and features of U.S. Spanish. Whereas a lot of us in Heritage Language circles have come to understand particular uses of the subjunctive, prepositions, or the gerund, dual language people sometimes seem surprised with the acceptance of varieties of Spanish. For example, in my own work, there was a DLI teacher from Mexico telling this Puerto Rican kid that *china* was not the correct word for *naranja*.

So, there's a big disconnect. I don't want to speak too strongly about this because I wouldn't center myself in Dual Language Education as my field, but this is my sense from people I've spoken with during conferences. There aren't very many dual language teacher education programs in Chicago. I believe there is only one at Roosevelt University—this is the only local program that prepares dual language teachers. These DL teachers are like magicians! Imagine you're a third-grade teacher teaching a science lesson on volcanoes. Half the kids are learning English, and half the kids are learning Spanish, and they all have to take a test at the end of the unit. Let's not knock the teachers! A lot of them are so marvelous, but they could really use some support. So, that's just one area in which I feel like I have something to offer.

And do U.S. world language teachers have the right ideas about language varieties? Do they understand what U.S. Spanish looks like, and ways to react to it if your goal is to empower students? All students educated in the United States learn, for example, that you can't write *ain't* in your schoolwork, not because it's wrong, although they're probably told that it's wrong and incorrect. They learn about register in English, but they don't learn about register in Spanish. Then the teachers tell them their Spanish

is wrong or incorrect. I'll never forget a time when I was teaching in Urbana-Champaign and corrected a student writing about what he did on the weekend. He wrote *nomás* in his essay which I crossed out and wrote *solamente*. If I saw him today, I would apologize! So, what is a dialect? What is a register? Dual language teachers often tell me they would really benefit from a deeper understanding of U.S. varieties of Spanish. So, there's one disconnect.

*Question 3: In what ways do you envision bridging language fields?*

It's curious to me that kids are called English learners up until they're a certain age, and then when we get them, we call them heritage learners. There's nothing wrong with the different labels, as we're coming from different perspectives, but it would be great if we could communicate with each other a little better so that we could think about K-16 learners. If we did, we could then ask, "How are we working together to develop strong bilingual language skills, a strong sense of identity, and a good sense of linguistic justice?" What's the K through 16 trajectory for these students? I think that approach would be better.

A great example is the work of Mike Peto (Peto, 2018) who argues very strongly against the whole class novel, like all students reading *The House on Mango Street*, at the same time. Some kids are behind. Some kids are ahead. So, he's all about free voluntary reading. He's able to take students who would hold a book upside down during silent reading time and turn them into actual readers. Mike describes how to display books—don't have just the spines out. You've got to show the covers of the books. He tells you where to go and what to look for to put on the shelves. He teaches students how to browse books. So, his goal, which I consider akin to mine, like I said earlier, is that I want my college students to become critical thinkers and writers. His goal is to get his high school students to become lifelong readers. And when you read his work, you're going to get goosebumps. He's able to convert the most recalcitrant learners into readers. He has a wonderful collection. It's now in its second or third edition. It's a big, fat book written by and for language teachers.

Also, Adrienne Brandenburg (Brandenburg, 2018) has a wonderful chapter about how she realized she's a language arts teacher. This is another example of connecting fields. Adrienne argues in her chapter quite convincingly that Spanish high school teachers who are working with heritage speakers might seek out permission and funding from their departments to attend the same conferences as English Language Arts teachers. Ideally, you can get your high school heritage kids to be doing English language arts and Spanish language arts. That's the main argument now in the Heritage Language field, or at least it's mine, and I subscribe to it. Spanish classes for heritage speakers of a particular level proficiency and higher should look more like the English high school classes. But it can't look a hundred percent like you went down to Peru and grabbed their textbooks to use in the United States. You have to do some sort of L2ish support in there, and the amount of support you're going to provide will depend on the proficiencies of your students. These kinds of things are just not being taught in our teacher prep programs, which is why

Adrienne is advocating for more collaboration with English teacher colleagues and their professional organizations. I suggest you find out what your heritage speaking students are working on in their English language arts class. If possible, you could then cover the same material in your Spanish class. This could be particularly helpful for students who are new arrivals who might be struggling with English.

There's no reason why we should be 14-15 years old when we're first starting to learn a new language. Greater access to dual language immersion programs could correct this late start to language learning. Yet our heritage language colleagues aren't talking about dual language immersion. During a presentation at the National Heritage Language Resource Center's conference in 2014, I said: "Y'all need to be advocating for dual language programs in your 'copious' spare time. Your research is valid, and you should keep doing it. I'm not saying you all need to jump ship and come over to dual language, but please be aware of the benefits of dual language immersion. Please take any opportunity to support it because if we had dual language programs for every single child, we'd be out of a job." I said this last part as a joke to get people thinking. If students came into high school and college language classes with a higher level and greater linguistic self-esteem, then we really could take them further.

*Question 4: What obstacles do you see to bridging language fields?*

Well, this is just my perspective, however, at a conference I once said something in public to Guadalupe Valdés that might not be well received. I said that I think opponents of dual language are throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and that's how I would sum up the whole thing. Yes, there has been a gentrification in DLI programs. I saw it at the school where I collected data for my dissertation. The school was founded for the empowerment of Latino kids. They couldn't get white people to put their kids in that school when it opened in 1975. And then, when it became a very successful school, wealthier Anglophone families and even Latino families who had lost their Spanish began to use their social capital to get their kids in the building. In fact, my kids attended this school for two years. We then moved to Mexico for a year, and my kids didn't get back into the school via the lottery. They enrolled in the neighborhood school where 85% of the student population was Latino, and this was the best thing that could have happened to us. The discourse at the other school was *bougie*, while the parents at our neighborhood school focused on their children's safety and wellbeing. Also, the Spanish environment was richer—everyone was speaking Spanish. I think that might help us understand a bit about the debate, the current state of the field. Too many schools are ending up like the above example.

*Question 4a: How can we work to prevent gentrification of DLI schools?*

Yes, let's fight against that, but again, you are throwing out the baby with the bathwater if the only thing you publish are critiques of dual language. During an open mic session at La Cosecha, I went up to a guy who was critiquing dual language and told him that I get it. This is important. I'm glad you're doing this work and calling out what needs to be called out and stopped. But if that's the loudest thing we're



hearing yelled from the rooftops, then I'm not sure we're doing all of the children in the United States a service. I really don't. We need to present a more united front. In the case of dual language immersion, we need people on the ground working to get *all* children enrolled in high-quality dual language programs and improving teacher prep programs so that teachers' language skills are more robust, and they feel more confident teaching in both languages. I used to rail against the railers, but I've realized that it is more important that we focus on goals and outcomes. However, I do worry that if the upper echelons in education only hear critiques of dual language immersion, then they will think that our field is divided, and then funding will end.

The title of my little TED Talk was "No Child Left Monolingual" (Potowski, 2014). No child left monolingual really means, no child should graduate from high school monolingual, right? That's not just a pitch to Anglophones, it is also true for children and grandchildren of immigrants. They should keep their languages, and the other students should learn a language. We live in an imperfect capitalist society, and education programs like dual language immersion are not exempt from the problems associated with capitalism. However, dual language is a wonderful model that is better than anything else out there. We need constructive criticism of dual language—not calls for the elimination of all dual language programs. No system works exactly the way it was designed to work. Maybe if we had more dual language programs, flawed as they are, might that not contribute to dismantling some of our problems? When somebody comes through a Spanish-English dual immersion program, they've learned alongside Latinos their whole life. So, for example, if they grow up and become a police officer, they may be more sensitive to certain things and less likely to target people from other cultures. So, even in an unfair society, it's still the best program type we have.

*Question 4b: What other obstacles do you see to bridging language fields? (Language varieties)*

I would like to mention something I feel is contentious in the field. It is the way we talk about and therefore work within the classroom—students' language varieties. Okay? So, here's the pendulum. Back in the day it was: "Nope, there is one correct way to speak Spanish, and you don't speak it. Therefore, I've got to kill all that stuff and replace it with the 'good' stuff." I'm glad the pendulum has swung, but I think it has swung too far. What I'm getting from critical pedagogy scholars is everything that falls out of a face is a community variety of Spanish. Now, some language features represent community varieties, and they form part of U.S. Spanish. I feel confident saying that because I was a reader for Advanced Placement (AP) Language exams. I have read and heard bazillions of responses from high school Latinos—67% of kids who take the Spanish AP language and culture exam are heritage speakers. Plus, I've been working with heritage speakers for 24 years at the University of Illinois-Chicago. I kind of have my ear to the ground. I know how Spanish sounds in several parts of the United States—not all parts. For example, I know the gerund in subject position is U.S. Spanish. Okay, *Caminando todos los días es bueno para la salud* that use of a gerund is U.S. Spanish—period. I tried for a while to get students to change

to using the infinitive, and then I stopped. First, it's not that stigmatized. Second, I understand what a student is communicating when they use this structure or feature. No sociolinguist worth their salt would argue against this use of the gerund as a community variety.

*Question 4c: What other obstacles do you see to bridging language fields? (Proficiency)*

I feel people are afraid to use the word proficiency. I don't want the outcome of the application of the concept of proficiency to result in dividing students in a classroom in groups of high or low proficiency. I don't agree with that set up, but I will say the following: I think that this pendulum swing has resulted in people being afraid or loathe to talk about proficiency. Yet, proficiency is a real thing. I have zero proficiency in Japanese. I think we can all agree that a woman my age, raised in Tokyo will have proficiency in Japanese. Okay, that's not controversial. Furthermore, I think it's not controversial to say that there are points in between me and her—that's kind of obvious, right? So, why are we afraid to say that this heritage speaker has a more robust Spanish system than this heritage speaker? It's a real thing. Now, I know you can't operationalize it, but that doesn't mean that you get to say that everything is a community variety and that all students have the same level of proficiency in Spanish.

I talked about this at the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium in Provo in October. I used some examples of U.S. Spanish from different sources. And I said: "What do we lose and gain by determining what is and isn't a community variety? What evidence do you have that it is a community variety? And even if we can't agree on what constitutes evidence that it is or it is not, what do we lose and what do we gain by that?"

*Question 5: What can you tell us about the current state of U.S. Spanish?*

Great question! I'll answer that question by providing some background on language varieties. I'd like to point out that a prestigious variety exists in every community. There's prestigious Spanish in Chile. There's prestigious Spanish in Mexico. The more prestigious the variety—the more they have in common. So, if I attend a public lecture at a university in Ireland, I will probably understand 90% of it. However, if I go to the pub afterwards, I'm going to feel like I do when I watch *Derry Girls*. I have to turn on the closed captions, but that is still English.

But I want to make it clear that the fact that other people can't understand you is not, in my opinion, reason enough for you to change the way you speak. I call the area in the back of a car a trunk, and somebody in England would probably call it a boot. I don't have to say boot. Nobody in my whole life ever said, "Kim, you really ought to say boot, so they'll understand you in England." I'm not in England. If I go there, maybe I'll start to change the way I speak, but I don't have to while I'm here. Heritage speakers can say whatever they want because they're here. But I've heard teachers contradict this perspective by arguing for the importance of comprehension. As we

all know, comprehension is a two-way street. Somebody has to be willing to take on the communicative burden. I don't write to the creators of *Derry Girls* and say: "I need you to change the way you speak because I don't understand." We have another issue with U.S. Spanish, but let me give the example of African-American English (AAE). I can understand speakers of AAE. It is rule-governed, and we know some features or aspects of AAE are more sophisticated than what Rosina Lippi-Green calls mainstream English. Nonetheless, AAE is still considered to be bad or wrong in many schools. This type of awareness takes an entire semester to change my undergraduates' minds!

Yet a big difference between AAE and U.S. Spanish is that U.S. Spanish is being lost. AAE and Irish English, among others, are all stable varieties. If it's a stable variety, that's when I say let people talk how they talk. I don't care if you understand or not. Heritage Spanish is being lost. It still deserves respect, but we have to acknowledge that it isn't a stable variety. I don't have the answer, but I question researchers and educators who ignore the decrease in proficiency. Yes, I call it a decrease in proficiency, as more and more speakers struggle to communicate their ideas in Spanish. It feels like we're just looking the other way when instead, we should be ringing alarm bells and finding ways to bolster U.S. Spanish. I don't think we're doing students any service by calling everything a community variety and then not discussing any further. I'm not going to describe students' community varieties as errors. I'm not going to make students do drills. I'm not going to make them feel bad about their Spanish.

What I want to do is bolster students' Spanish to a point that they've increased their proficiency. Strong bilinguals have 64 crayons in their box while some students have eight crayons. The eight crayons they have are lovely and wonderful, but they can't do a lot with them, and every year they lose another one. The children of current college students might have no crayons in their Spanish box. This is what concerns me. I want current and future speakers of U.S. Spanish to be able to draw the whole rainbow.

*Question 6: What heritage language resources or advice do you recommend including in teacher education programs?*

One of the best resources is the online workshop created by the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC, n.d.). The workshop can be incorporated into an undergraduate or graduate course, or educators across all levels of instruction can participate in the workshop. The NHLRC workshop is divided into eight self-paced modules. The workshop is relevant for all heritage languages, not just Spanish. The modules are a wonderful resource. The videos in the lessons feature María Carreira, and they are interactive. The modules address both the linguistic and affective needs of heritage learners. Some of the module topics are differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and teaching mixed HL-L2 classes. The workshop is affordable, and there is an option that will give you feedback from NHLRC instructors.

Also, it is important to privilege and center Latinx experiences. I have a number of

textbooks, and I donate all the proceeds from those textbooks. Authors get 10% of the sale price. I take my little 10% and put it in a fund. I use it for different things such as supporting heritage speaker students' participation in our Oaxaca Study Abroad program. I fund three scholarships on my campus—one is for an essay written in the Heritage Speaker program; one is for an essay written by a heritage speaker in an advanced course; and one little scholarship is for any Latino undergrad who applies to our graduate program in Hispanic linguistics. We need more Latinos in linguistics, right?

I have a blog post called *Owning up: When you make your living off a language that was denied to its speakers* (Potowski, n.d.). Many heritage speakers experience the triple bullying we talked about, and then become adults who don't think they can do what I do. We need to think carefully about our positionality and power and do our best to empower students and their families. I want to use my position to help more parents understand that their kids' English language development won't be slowed down or delayed if you enroll them in a dual immersion program. It's unfortunate that our language assessment practices scare parents. Yes, test scores in English might be lower in the short term, but we have to be thinking about long term language acquisition and maintenance goals.

The current approach to testing was designed for monolingual development. What if our approach to language testing was "How bilingual are you?" A lot of families would suddenly be in favor of dual language programs. I don't aim to pressure anyone or make them feel bad about themselves. I want us to prioritize the development of a healthy sense of identity and strong bilingual skills. If our testing policies didn't make people so scared, maybe we'd have more dual language immersion programs in schools.

Lastly, as L2 learners, we have to be good listeners. We have to work together, as we all have a role to play. That said, we have to be very careful to make sure marginalized and minoritized voices are included and amplified in these conversations and discussions of just and equitable language education practices.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Our initial intention to interview Dr. Kim Potowski was to seek a better understanding of the bridges between the fields of World/Foreign Languages, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Bilingual Education, Dual Language Immersion, and Heritage Language Education concerning intersections of epistemological perspectives and best teaching practices. Ultimately, Potowski underscored the common goal across language fields; our commitment to teach students how to communicate and develop relationships with other people, both within and across cultures and to actively support and advocate for marginalized individuals or communities.

Dr. Kim Potowski ended her interview reminding us to work together and to advocate for and amplify the marginalized and minoritized voices in conversations of just and equitable practices. Allies recognize their privilege and use it to challenge injustice while working towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society, particularly those who face systemic discrimination or oppression based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, and preferred use of language. Several prominent figures from various fields have put forth calls for allies and spoken about the importance of allyship in advancing social justice and equity. Angela Davis, the activist, scholar, and author has emphasized the need for solidarity and intersectional allyship in challenging systems of oppression including racism, sexism, and capitalism. Malala Yousafza, the Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate has called for allies to support girls' education and equality worldwide. John Lewis, the late civil rights leader and U.S. Congressman often spoke about the importance of allies in the struggle for racial justice and encouraged people of all backgrounds to join together in the fight for equality. Dr. Bettina Love, education scholar and advocate for equitable education purports that education should not merely transmit knowledge but empower students to critically engage with the world, challenge injustice, and advocate for systemic change.

With Dr. Kim Potowski, these are just a few examples of individuals who have championed allyship in various contexts. Their calls for solidarity and collective action highlight the importance of working together across differences to create a more just and equitable world. They remind us of some key aspects of being an ally; (1) Listening and Learning: Allies listen to the experiences and perspectives of marginalized individuals without invalidating or dismissing them. They educate themselves about systemic inequalities and the historical context of oppression; (2) Amplifying Marginalized Voices: Allies use their platform and privilege to amplify the voices and concerns of marginalized groups, rather than speaking over them or taking credit for their work; (3) Taking Action: Allies take concrete actions to support marginalized communities, whether it's attending protests, signing petitions, donating to relevant causes, or advocating for policy changes; (4) Challenging Discrimination: Allies speak out against discrimination, prejudice, and microaggressions when they witness them, whether in personal interactions or institutional settings. They actively work to create inclusive spaces where everyone feels welcome and respected; (5) Self-Reflection and Growth: Allies engage in ongoing self-reflection and growth, acknowledging that they may make mistakes or inadvertently perpetuate harm despite their best intentions. They are open to feedback and commit to continuously learning and improving their allyship.

Ultimately, being an ally is about recognizing the humanity and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their background or identity, and actively working towards dismantling systems of oppression and promoting justice and equality for all. Although it was not our initial intention when putting forth a special issue on bridging language education fields, our interview with Dr. Kim Potowski has helped us identify a shared goal across language education fields: allyship. Finally, for an

analysis of allyship and the ways in which it can shift into a more robust system of support called co-conspiracy, please see Love (2019) and Love et al. (2019) for an engaging discussion of these concepts.

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