"You Can't Step on Someone Else's Words": Preparing All Teachers to Teach Language Minority Students

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> At [my undergraduate college], I was in the majority. That was mostly who was in the program: White women who were native speakers of English. [But] in the [BEM] summer program, out of thirty students, there were a handful of native English speakers. And no matter what language you brought to the program, you were constantly having to do things outside your language. It really made me relate to the experience of what it must be like to be a second language learner in a classroom. Every day, I came home with language exhaustion: just doing exercises and activities in other languages for even part of the day made me realize how challenging it must be. I'd had that feeling of language exhaustion from other experiences, but being in the program that summer increased my respect for people with multiple languages. When I went into the classroom in September, I was very sensitive to that feeling of language exhaustion. (Mary Cowhey)

Mary Cowhey is a first- and second-grade "mainstream" teacher in a combined bilingual/monolingual English classroom. At the time she was interviewed, she was also a master's student in the Bilingual/ESL/Multicultural Education (BEM) Practitioner Program in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Mary's sentiments capture the essence of

what the BEM faculty members want all teachers to know and understand about their work with language minority students. In our program, we grapple with such questions as: "What is the responsibility of schools and colleges of education that prepare teachers to work with students who are native speakers of languages other than English?" "What should all teachers, whether they plan to work in second language settings or not, know about language minority students?" "How can all teacher education programs, not just those that focus on language minority students, provide all prospective teachers with the skills and experiences they need to be prepared for the tremendous linguistic and cultural diversity they are bound to encounter in their classrooms?"

In this chapter, we report on the BEM Practitioner Program, a teacher education program that is attempting to address some of these questions. In designing our program, we are guided by a set of principles. First, we believe that all teachers, not just ESL and bilingual specialists, must be prepared to teach students of all backgrounds, including the growing number of language minority students (e.g., Olsen, 1991, 1994). Second, we feel that all teachers must make decisions within a pedagogical framework that critically focuses on issues of equity and social justice (Nieto, 2000b). Our commitment to these two principles has been shaped by our experience that most schools and colleges of education fail to prepare teachers to work effectively with students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995). It is certainly true that there are a number of high-quality teacher education programs with specializations in bilingual education and English as a Second Language (e.g., González & Darling-Hammond, 1997). However, in teacher education programs without these strands, sustained attention to issues of language and culture is often missing. It seems that too many teacher education programs are still guided by the erroneous assumption that their job is to train teachers to work in "regular" (monolingual English) settings, when in reality all classrooms have, or will soon have, students whose first language is not English.

The master's-level BEM Practitioner Program has been developed to respond to this problem. The four authors of this chapter are the core faculty members in the program, and we have thought long and hard about developing the kind of program that prepares both specialists (i.e., those preparing to work in bilingual and ESL settings) and

nonspecialists (i.e., those who plan to work in "mainstream" classrooms) to be equally capable of teaching language minority and language majority students. In this chapter, we provide a rationale for our program and describe its key components. In addition, to find out how nonspecialists in the BEM program approach their work with language learners, one of us, Meg Gebhard, interviewed a number of current and past BEM teachers because we wanted to hear how the BEM program helped these teachers think about the education of language minority students in their classrooms. We include our analysis of these interviews as a way of reflecting on our efforts to bring a linguistically and culturally responsive focus to the preparation of all teachers in our program.

The Need to Reconceptualize Teacher Preparation

Federal mandates from the late 1960s and early 1970s, partly as a response to community activism, required that schools better serve children of all backgrounds. Many of the mandates were specifically targeted to students of linguistically diverse backgrounds, most of whom had historically been poorly served by U.S. public schools (García, 1995; Minami & Ovando, 1995). At this time, there was also a clear mandate for schools of education to prepare teachers, school personnel, and researchers to take leadership roles in educating students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. During this period the call for bilingual and ESL education increased (Ovando & Collier, 1998). A decade later, multicultural education also gained increased acceptance in schools of education and opened the door to transforming the assimilationist positions held by mainstream teacher education programs.

In spite of these changes, teacher education programs have not kept pace with the unprecedented demand for teachers who know how to work effectively with students of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. At the dawn of the new millennium, there is still a critical shortage of bilingual and ESL teachers due to many factors. These factors include the combined effects of competing economic conditions, inadequate support for bilingual and foreign language education in the past, the reduced role of the federal government in language minority education, conservative political movements, and numerous legal challenges to bilingual education. Consequently, there is a shortage of spe-

cialists in bilingual education precisely at the time of greatest student need (Maxwell-Jolly & Gándara, this volume; Olsen, 1991, 1994). To make matters worse, a recent study conducted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) found that only one-fourth of all teacher education programs in the United States have bilingual and ESL teacher education programs (Yasin, 2000). According to David Imig, president of the AACTE, "The writing is on the wall: [Schools of education] are going to have to accelerate their efforts to keep pace with the changing needs of the student population" (Yasin, 2000, p. 1).

Given the lack of trained ESL and bilingual teachers in the nation's schools, it is now widely acknowledged that these specialists can no longer be the only teachers who are responsible for educating linguistically diverse students. As the population of language minority students grows, as more language minority families move from cities to suburbs and small towns, and as bilingual programs are reduced to transitional and ESL programs, mainstream teachers more than ever will be teaching language minority students. As a result, there is a growing need to prepare all new and practicing teachers to understand what it takes to teach language minority students successfully while respecting the children's linguistic and cultural heritage. This need is keenly felt in Massachusetts, a state that has a growing population of language minority students. The BEM program was designed to respond to this need.

The BEM Practitioner Program

The BEM program is located in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Western Massachusetts is a predominantly rural area whose patchwork landscape is knitted into mostly towns and small cities. Besides the occasional old textile mill, silo, or paper mill smokestack, the university's buildings form the only high-rises that one can see for miles. The university has a mission to serve the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a region that as of the 1990 Census had about six million people. Each year, about 18,000 undergraduates and 6,000 graduate students attend the Amherst campus. Many teachers in our program come from the four counties surrounding the campus. We also accept teachers in our program from the other forty-nine states, Puerto Rico, and other countries around the world (e.g., Peru, Korea, Japan, and China).

The BEM Practitioner Program prepares educators to work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners in a variety of instructional settings (e.g., mainstream classrooms, dual language programs, sheltered content classes, and ESL/bilingual team-teaching configurations). Our program resides in the Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, one of three departments in the School of Education. Annually, more than forty student practitioners, mostly post-bachelor's, are enrolled in Master's of Education or Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies degree programs. Some may be simultaneously seeking either provisional or professional state certification in early childhood education or in a particular subject matter area. The BEM program introduces both specialists (bilingual and ESL teachers) and nonspecialists to issues of additive bilingualism, second language acquisition theory, and critical multiculturalism. Students in the program do not all take the same set of courses, but we try to incorporate our philosophy in all courses, field placements, and other program activities. Consequently, throughout the program, we hope all teachers will come to understand the following:

- Diversity is a resource, not a problem.
- Elementary and secondary students with previous schooling experiences need more than language instruction to help them meet the challenges of negotiating classroom interactions and expectations in academic subject matter.
- Students do not have to be separated from same-language peers to develop English language skills.
- Parents, other family members, and the community should be involved in the education of their children.
- Teachers must examine their own assumptions regarding students and their families to understand fully how racism and other biases operate within schools.
- Teachers must have high academic standards while simultaneously affirming student diversity.

Specifically, we try to help teachers puzzle through complex issues of equity and excellence, particularly as they relate to language minority students in both mainstream and specialized classes. Although we pay careful attention to issues of pedagogy, we do not focus on pat answers, such as prescribing specific classroom routines or pedagogical techniques as the magic cures to the problems of teaching and learn-

ing (Bartolomé, 2000). Rather, we want teachers to see themselves as cultural mediators by taking leadership roles in critically assessing taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of language, learning, and diversity, particularly as these issues relate to learning English as a world language (Pennycook, 1994, 1998). By doing so, we hope teachers will be able to negotiate differences within their classrooms and school communities as a way of constructing a more democratic, culturally responsive context for student learning.

We believe that our program's approach to preparing educators to work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners is unique in several ways as we strive toward these goals. First, we do not assume that classrooms are monolingual/monocultural places. Rather, we believe that it is to the benefit of all learners, including native English speakers, to develop more than one language. How effectively this occurs depends on a number of factors, including age, opportunities to learn a second language, how well the first language is developed when instruction in the second language begins, the nature of the community in which the program is housed, and the institutional contexts in which teaching and learning take place (Gebhard, 2000; Olsen, 1994; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Nevertheless, even in contexts where it may be difficult to develop two languages (e.g., where there is minimal institutional support or encouragement for bilingualism), teachers can learn to base their curricular and instructional decisions on the assumption that bilingualism and biculturalism are worthy goals. For example, rather than focusing simply on ways of teaching English, we encourage teachers to ask, "How do we support and encourage learners who are in the process of 'becoming bilingual' despite practices and attitudes that make it difficult for them to do so?"[1] Similarly, we encourage teachers to think about how schools need to change to accommodate cultural differences, rather than concentrating on how schools can assimilate students who are culturally different.

Second, we do not segregate mainstream teachers (both preservice and in-service) from specialists (ESL, bilingual, and multicultural teachers) and grade-level teachers (early childhood, elementary, secondary, and adult) as other teacher preparation programs often do. Rather, all teachers take classes and have other experiences together to support the formation of sustaining professional communities of practice (Louis & Kruse, 1995; Thiessen; Bascia, & Goodson, 1996) and learn from one another's work in diverse settings by collaborating on

common challenges, such as ensuring that the content of their instruction is age appropriate and meaningful to linguistically and culturally diverse learners while supporting second language development. Other challenges include finding ways to organize instruction around powerful learning principles and strategies (e.g., cooperative learning) and adapting curriculum to meet the mandated standards established by regulating state bodies while furthering the goals of social justice.

Finally, our program does not transmit an authoritative body of knowledge that we expect teachers to consume without question. Instead, through the design of individual programs of study and collaborative work in our courses, we aim to provide opportunities for teachers to explore their identities as *transformative intellectuals,* a term coined by Henry Giroux (1988) to describe educators who contribute deliberately and critically to the discourses and practices that constitute schools and society. Giroux contrasts teachers who are transformative intellectuals with educators who take on identities as producers and consumers of dominant discourses and practices.

To give readers a better understanding of our approach to preparing teachers, we describe some practices of the BEM program. Undergirding these practices are three key concepts that are incorporated into the program: a social-justice perspective, a dialogic stance, and a praxis orientation. These concepts are all integral to the process of preparing new educators.

A Social-Justice Perspective

A social-justice perspective is the foundation of the BEM Practitioner Program; it is infused into all program practices, beginning with selecting teachers who will create a vibrant learning community. We select individuals for the program who are committed to social justice and whose strengths and experiences will help our entire community better understand social justice: those who are "border-crossers" (Giroux, 1992; see also Bartolomé, this volume, note 5) and who speak languages and dialects other than standard English; those who have experienced poverty, immigration, culture shock, oppression, and prejudice; those who respect differences and want to work for a better world; and those willing to critically examine their own ideologies and assumptions. We recruit individuals who have shown us in various ways, not always

through traditional tests or grades, that they can think critically, gather evidence, analyze complex problems, develop arguments, and articulate the philosophies underpinning their practices.

Naturally, having a diverse community does not automatically result in creating a just community. As Beykont (1997) observes, people who experience oppression in one aspect of their lives do not necessarily understand other kinds of oppression or see beyond their own oppression. A White female teacher may understand gender-based discrimination, for example, but not color-based discrimination (Beykont, 1997). These issues are constantly brought out in our courses and other program activities, resulting in negotiations that are often as difficult as they are necessary. Although we try to create the conditions in which differences of opinion and experience can be hashed out respectfully, we understand that consensus is not always possible or desirable (Willett, Solsken, & Wilson-Keenan, 1998). Nonetheless, we attempt to organize class discussions so that all voices can be heard and learned from.

Another way that we introduce a social-justice perspective into the program is through nurturing the leadership qualities of participants as a way of helping them develop the strength and experiences they need to meet the many challenges they will face in their schools and communities. The primary means of promoting this kind of leadership is through the courses we offer and the pedagogy we use. In many courses, teachers work collaboratively on authentic and practical problems concerning social justice, such as infusing the state-mandated curriculum with an inclusive perspective or drawing on language acquisition theory to articulate the reasons for proposing a new practice to benefit English language learners. These course-based projects later develop into what we call "Leadership Projects," which are vehicles for engaging with issues of diversity and equity in a public forum that extends beyond the university. These projects may be collaborative or individual and are developed in consultation with faculty members. Projects have included making a video about the Latino community for new families, staff, and students in a school; developing a series of workshops about how mainstream teachers can support learners who are becoming bilingual; giving a presentation to a school committee about the problem of using Native Americans as sports mascots; and writing a bilingual handbook for ESL newcomers collaboratively with a school's ESL and mainstream children.

We also support the development of a social justice perspective by helping teachers understand that their profession is inherently political (Freire, 1970). In other words, they need to understand that every educational decision, whether related to pedagogy or policy, is political and that their decisions reflect their values and beliefs about students and students' families. Furthermore, the social-justice perspective carries over into school settings and beyond, as we encourage teachers to ask questions such as, "Is the bilingual program in the basement?" (Nieto, 2000a). When asked, this question forces teachers to think about the location of bilingual and ESL programs on school campuses and how this physical location influences students' access to sociolinguistic and material resources required for an equitable academic education.

A Dialogic Rather Than Monologic Stance

Although our social-justice perspective is explicit, we take a dialogic rather than monologic stance toward our cultural productions (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986); that is, we try to create the conditions in which diverse voices can be heard and provisional ideas and conclusions can emerge from dialogue across our differences. These conditions are created primarily through our efforts to recruit and retain a diverse group of teachers in our program, but diversity alone does not result in understanding. Without critical awareness about one's own cultural beliefs, dialogue too often validates rather than critiques taken-for-granted assumptions. Other practices in the program also encourage dialogue. For example, by putting teachers with varied teaching experiences and professional goals into the same classes (e.g., language specialists and general classroom teachers, preservice and in-service teachers) and not sequencing courses (e.g., so that the content of all courses can become part of the dialogue), we increase the possibility that teachers in our program will see one another as resources. Within these cross-discipline, cross-cultural, multilingual groups, it is possible for us to engage in the hard work of developing a social-justice perspective by confronting our own biases. For example, in the course "Foundations of BEM Education," we encourage and support teachers in exploring and confronting the privileges they have enjoyed as a result of institutional racism and the other biases that exist in our society. In one course assignment, teachers use Peggy McIntosh's (1988)

article on White privilege as the model for writing about what it means in concrete terms to have the privilege of being native speakers of English. In other courses, teachers tape, transcribe, and analyze their own collaborative interactions so that they see how easy it is for those who speak, act, or believe differently to become marginalized, even in their own project-based groups.

Dialogue in our courses also occurs around real-life educational problems and tasks that teachers work on in their heterogeneous and collaborative groups. In the process of working through these tasks, the ideologies, identities, and meanings that individuals bring to the group become part of the dialogue. For example, in a course on language analysis, teachers work in groups to analyze the structure and ideology of texts used in actual classrooms. Teachers make predictions about the kinds of difficulties learners might have in using these texts and then design ways to help learners make better sense of written materials. English-language learners in the schools serve as informants regarding their understanding of these texts; when insights from ESL students become part of class discussion, it soon becomes evident that many teachers' assumptions about students do not hold up. This situation helps teachers realize that they must constantly seek input from their students rather than rely solely on either standardized tests or authoritative assumptions about what makes a text difficult for different learners.

A Praxis Orientation

The notion of praxis, inspired by the work of the late Paulo Freire (1970), is another theme that permeates all aspects of the program. Praxis means taking action on the world in order to change it and also critically reflecting on these actions and changes. In a course called "Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation," preservice teachers collaborate with practicing teachers to develop culturally responsive and critically challenging ways to prepare linguistically diverse students for the mandated statewide standardized test. Although taking action in the BEM learning community is one important way to change the world, we also design activities that support how teachers think about and take action outside their classrooms. For instance, a few years ago an elementary teacher at a local school developed a collaborative project with a graduate of the BEM program who taught Cambodian students. The purpose of this project was to address the academic and social

problems of many of their Cambodian students. These problems were making it difficult for the students to engage successfully in academic work, and the teachers assumed that if a group of teachers and students worked collaboratively on the problems, school life might become more engaging. More recently, another teacher developed a unit about the Underground Railroad, in which elementary school students demonstrated how they might have supported people attempting to escape from bondage and discussed how these skills could be used today.

Another example of a praxis orientation is evident in a course entitled "Teaching Heterogeneous Classes." This course draws together in-service and preservice teachers from many subject areas and teaching levels so that those who are majoring in ESL, bilingual, and multicultural education interact with the mainstream content teachers they must work with in schools if they are to advocate effectively for their second language learners. Teachers work in teams to design curriculum for heterogeneous classes. A cooperating teacher from a school or agency brings in a particular learning issue that he or she has encountered in a heterogeneous class. The teams explore the issue proposed by their cooperating teachers, often reframing it based on their readings and dialogue, and then design an interdisciplinary curriculum that is more responsive to the learners and reflective of transformative practice. The interdisciplinary curriculum enables all members of the team to contribute their expertise and experience to the curriculum. The kinds of projects teachers have developed in this course in the past include the following:

1. A project for an ESL and Hmong literacy program for adults, funded by a grant and taught by two public school teachers who had Hmong children in their classrooms. Inspired by books written by people in other Hmong communities around the country, the Hmong women and their teachers decided to research and write about traditions and experiences in their local community and produce a bilingual book, for which they would seek a publisher. For the book, the children in the public school classes wrote and illustrated stories that they had heard in the community. The goals of the project were to (a) help the community preserve and pass on their traditions to the younger generation; (b) share their rich culture with people outside the Hmong community; (c) learn about dominant literacy practices; and (d) develop biliteracy skills.

2. An interdisciplinary and problem-based project for a middle school that served a growing Russian immigrant community. The project engaged the middle school students in researching, designing, and proposing a gathering place for teenagers in the community. The team struggled with how to include the Russian students, whose parents wanted them at home studying after school rather than congregating with other teenagers. A goal that emerged as a result of dialogue in the class was how to work with the Russian bilingual teachers more equitably and collaboratively.

3. A project that aimed to work with parents as curriculum partners in a transitional bilingual elementary classroom. The team visited the family of each child in the classroom to brainstorm themes and ideas for helping their children develop biliteracy. The members of the group presented their work at our annual Curriculum Fair and it inspired other teachers, several of whom chose to do something similar for their teacher-research projects the next semester.

4. A curriculum for a new two-way Spanish/English bilingual program at the kindergarten level. The group struggled with issues such as how to handle the enormous power that English and mainstream culture has in schools. This diverse team discovered that some of the same hegemonic notions were operating in very subtle ways in their own curriculum deliberations. This issue surfaced when the group grappled with the theme of their project, "All about Me," a mandated theme for the kindergarten curriculum in the school. The Latino teachers in the class, for example, felt that the theme was too individualistic, preferring instead a community-based perspective that was more congruent with their cultural orientation. As a result, the team first had to understand their classmates' objections to the theme and then figure out how to wed the mandated curriculum theme with a more culturally appropriate perspective.

5. A project centered around "Current Issues," a course in the social studies department of a local high school for "non–college bound" students. Having unpacked widely held assumptions about students who are not college bound, the team's project eventually focused on an issue that emerged in dialogue with the high school students, namely, disciplinary policies and practices that are disrespectful to students. The high school students decided to make suggestions on how to revise the school's student handbook to make it more respectful. The curriculum team helped the high school students formulate written and oral arguments that would make sense to the administrators and faculty in ways that would enable the team to incorporate standards from the state's curriculum frameworks. It was not good enough for students to say, "School sucks"; the high school students also needed to put forth the reasons why and how they believed school was unresponsive to their needs and then frame their revisions in a way that the administrators and faculty could take seriously. By doing this, the team helped students develop strategic competence in the dominant discourse while supporting them in their effort to transform the school practices they found oppressive.

A third example of a praxis orientation is a course on policy, in which teachers undertake projects that examine policy issues that may negatively affect a local, national, or international community, and they propose innovative responses to address the problem. One such project included a review of the impact of the Massachusetts teacher certification examinations on candidates with second language backgrounds. Other projects have involved an analysis of policy initiatives concerning indigenous education and dual-immersion programs in China, Mexico, and the United States.

BEM in Action: Teachers' Voices

To provide the reader with a sense of teachers' perspectives of the BEM program, Meg Gebhard, the first author and a new faculty member, interviewed three current and two former BEM students.[2] These interviews were conducted to incorporate the teachers' voices in this chapter and to understand more fully how teachers experience the program's approach to professional development. The perspectives of these five teachers stand in contrast to previous studies on the socialization of teachers in general (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Little, 1990). Lortie's (1975) landmark study, for example, describes how the work of teachers is often compromised by a weak knowledge base, high norms of autonomy, and a sense of profound isolation. In contrast, as the following discussion illustrates, these BEM teachers described their work as intellectual, collegial, and collaborative.

The program graduates who were interviewed included Patty Bode, an art teacher at a local middle school; Beth Wohlleb, a social studies teacher at the same school; and Mary Ginley, a second-grade teacher in

a nearby community. The two currently enrolled teachers included Shakira Alvarez Ferrer and Mary Cowhey. Shakira Alvarez Ferrer had previously taught both introductory Spanish and English composition courses at the university level, and Mary Cowhey was coteaching in a mixed first- and second-grade bilingual/mainstream classroom. These teachers did not come into the BEM program seeking certification as either bilingual or ESL specialists.[3] We selected these teachers because we wanted to focus on people working in mainstream monolingual classrooms rather than specialists such as bilingual and ESL teachers who are more likely to have prior experience working across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Moreover, we focused on European American mainstream classroom teachers because they are the vast majority of teachers and the most likely to teach the growing number of language minority students in our nation's schools.

Each teacher was interviewed for about an hour, and the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The questions focused on their backgrounds, their expectations of the program, and their experiences in the program. The teachers were also asked to describe the guiding principles that shaped their work and to relate a moment or event when they recognized or witnessed these principles "coming alive" in their classroom practices. In thinking about what these interviews might offer, we expected that they would reveal an orientation that differs from teachers who have studied in more traditional programs, as suggested by the professional development literature (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Little, 1990). However, the level of clarity, sense of purpose, and insights these teachers offered pleasantly surprised us. Specifically, four salient themes emerged. The first of these themes relates to the awareness BEM teachers have of their own biographies, their race, and their class; second, the teachers defined their work in political and ethical terms; third, they described themselves as cultural mediators between students' home worlds and school worlds; and last, they characterized teaching as a collaborative activity conducted in solidarity with others.

Teachers' Biographies and Their Awareness of Race and Social Class in Their Work

The White BEM teachers had a great deal of awareness and were comfortable talking about their race and social class. Mary Ginley, for instance, described her motivation to return to school and pursue a graduate degree in this way: "I'm a White middle-class woman who grew up in a White middle-class neighborhood and went to a White middle-class college. I knew if I was really going to teach today's kids, I had a lot to learn." She gave a concrete example of how teachers often do not even consider how race and social class come into the picture:

> I went to a conference and this teacher said to me, "I don't understand you! What is all this multicultural stuff? Why can't we talk about how we are the same?" And I said to her, "The problem is when we do that, we are talking about how everybody is like us — White, middle-class, and monolingual." I know she didn't get it, but you have to step outside of yourself . . . and it takes a lot of energy to bridge that cultural gap.

Beth Wohlleb gave a specific example of how a "tight group" of Latino boys in the hallway could be a "red flag" for White teachers. She said she had learned to handle this kind of situation by "having an awareness of the racism that White teachers sometimes bring to that situation and to be able to catch yourself and realize that this is an important way for Latino boys to make school their own place." She tried, she said, "to recognize my impulses as a White teacher and to push myself to think deeper about why I make certain kinds of decisions."

Teaching as Political and Ethical Work

In all the interviews, these BEM teachers talked about their work in political and ethical terms. For example, they viewed their roles as teachers in ways that went beyond their classroom and the school and into the community. It was striking how many times these teachers talked about working not just with parents, but with extended families. As such, these teachers constructed the location and object of their work in a broader and less bounded way than teachers who limit their focus to the classroom and the mandated curriculum. Shakira Alvarez Ferrer described her role in this way: "My job as a teacher is to make sure I give everyone a fair shot, that everyone gets to play. Instead of closing doors, I want to open doors and help [students] get through them." Beth Wohlleb explained how she sees her efforts at inclusiveness as an ethical endeavor: "Kids come with a wealth of cultural knowledge that, depending on that culture, will be affirmed or not affirmed by

the school, and it is my job to affirm cultures that the school does not. And one way I can do that is to get as much information about students as I can." Mary Cowhey also believed that teaching is political work, and she articulated this commitment in the following way:

> The reasons why I teach, and how the [BEM] program has contributed to how I teach and how I see myself as a teacher, is that for me being a multicultural educator is my contribution to world peace and a more just and peaceful community. And I work with the idea that through my work, if there could be even one child who is less likely to bully and more likely to defend her rights and other people's rights; less likely to follow the crowd and more likely to question the status quo; less likely to exploit and more likely to problem-solve cooperatively; more likely to look at a situation from a variety of perspectives, then I will know I have made a difference. I know from family participation and feedback and home visits that the ripples of what I do go beyond the thirty students I teach to parents and grandparents, and foster parents, and cousins, and siblings, and community people. And for me, that's why I do this.

It was clear from the interviews that these BEM teachers thought of themselves as activists. Patty Bode was inspired by an "anti-racist, anti-bias vigor." According to Patty, "Putting the social action in the forefront is what it's all about." In many cases, the teachers spoke about their out-of-school work with families and with the community at large. Patty noted that social action "unfolds" through the relationships teachers form with students and their families. Besides viewing families and students as allies, some of the teachers spoke of colleagues as political allies. Mary Cowhey, for instance, praised her coteachers and spoke about their collaboration and its contribution to her development. This was significant for her because collaborative work was something she had not done much before coming to the BEM program, in which collaboration is one of the key components. Thus, most teachers also talked about influencing other teachers' practices, school practices, and community practices. Patty Bode, for example, spoke at length about the importance of teachers in promoting whole-school change. She described two schoolwide projects centering on the education of Latino and Asian students. In both cases, teachers and families worked together to help teachers become more aware of and responsive to linguistic and cultural issues that students were facing. She spoke of the resistance that some teachers might display when asked to discuss these issues, but she concluded, "I think most teachers recognize that they need help with ESL students."

Teaching as Sociocultural Mediation

Interviews revealed that these BEM teachers thought of themselves as sociocultural mediators. They felt strongly that all teachers, regardless of whom they teach, needed to be mediators between schools and communities (Valdés, 1996). Mary Ginley, although currently teaching in a White middle- and upper-class community, had for many years taught primarily Puerto Rican Spanish-speaking children in an impoverished small city. Mary believed that the attitudes she developed there had made her a better teacher of all students. She insisted that

> all teachers need to go through some kind of multicultural education or SLA [second language acquisition] training because to try to teach without it will make you ineffective. I mean, I was a good teacher, but so much was missing. I don't think I looked through their eyes. Looking through the eyes of a seven-year-old when you're fifty-two is hard enough, but to look through the eyes of a child from an entirely different culture, who speaks an entirely different language . . . you are not going to get anywhere.

She added, "Our responsibility is to meet them where they are and take them someplace else, and have them carry who they are along with them." She gave the example of Pedro, a Puerto Rican child she had taught. She had known him from teaming with the bilingual teacher and she described him as "a leader," "animated," "alive," and "very competent." But the following year, when Pedro was placed in her monolingual class, he became a different person. He was quiet, withdrawn, and had few friends. Mary Cowhey described how she experienced a turning point with him when she brought in a children's book about a family returning to Puerto Rico. She described how, in the context of the lesson surrounding the book, "he became the expert."

Another example comes from conversations with Mary Cowhey. Mary had taken more courses in second language acquisition theory and was very knowledgeable about language issues. She spoke about "not stepping on other people's language" as she described an experience during her first year of teaching. In that class, she had a native

English speaker she described as being "very impulsive" and as always "jumping in and cutting other students off." She said, "If there was a second of silence, he would fill it." In the same class, a Puerto Rican student would raise her hand to answer, but she needed time to get her thoughts together. The native English-speaking boy would immediately interrupt her. After speaking about the situation with her students, the class took action:

> The kids generated this rule that "you can't step on someone else's words" because it messes up what they are trying to say. You really have to give them the time, the space, and the quiet so they get their idea out.

Shakira Alvarez Ferrer also spoke about the role of teachers as cultural mediators between students' home worlds and school worlds and her work with parents in helping them understand how U.S. schools work. She was emphatic about helping parents understand "the system" while pushing school personnel to explore their biases surrounding immigrant parents because she felt this kind of negotiation could not be the parents' responsibility alone. She explained, "It isn't that parents don't care or work hard, but they didn't have the knowledge of the school to provide the experiences other kids take for granted their whole life."

In another example of cultural mediation, Patty Bode described two extensive projects, including teacher workshops and all-school cultural events, in which the education of Latino and Asian (Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian, and others) students was the focus. She explained that the real change came afterward, especially for the families:

> The families didn't want to stop having meetings, didn't want to stop coming to school. So we started having monthly meetings to talk about their kids' education. Many families wanted to be involved in the school day, reading stories, participating in art projects, and those kinds of things. And many of those relationships are still going on.

Teaching as Collaborative and Intellectual Activity in Solidarity with Others

Throughout the interviews, the BEM teachers talked about the central place of group work in the BEM program. They described how at first

this aspect of the BEM program was sometimes frustrating. Mary Cowhey, for example, said that initially "all this group work was driving me nuts!" She explained that at her previous college she and her classmates had been taught about group work, but in the end, their individual work was evaluated and graded by individual professors with no feedback from other students. As time went on, however, Mary began to appreciate the importance of collaborative work:

> The thing that I came to understand from my experience at UMass and from my own classroom as a teacher was that for all the lip service paid to collaboration, the majority of elementary schoolteachers go into their individual classroom and shut their door and do their own thing. So we're telling students to collaborate, but we provide no model for what collaboration looks like.

In fact, Mary Cowhey maintained that her experience with constant collaboration in the BEM program provided the impetus for creating the collaborative, multi-age, team-teaching model her school uses to integrate bilingual/ESL students and native speakers of English in the same class, a model that had not previously existed. In commenting on a draft of this chapter, Mary wrote, "Even with my co-teachers who[m] I love, collaboration is never perfect. We all have different strengths, weaknesses, experiences, and perspectives. We push, pull, and negotiate all the time. Our collaborative work can often be messy, uneven, and somewhat aggravating, but our collective product is so much greater than what any one of us could accomplish alone."

In terms of using group work with children learning English as a second language, Mary explained, "Second language learners can get some airtime. In groups, they have the time to listen, to try out what they want to say, and to practice using new vocabulary." She gave a specific example of an inquiry-based science unit she did with her first and second graders. This project centered on students investigating several variables that might influence the motion of a pendulum (the weight of the bob, the length of the string, the height of the drop, and the color of the string). She related the story of Carlos, a second language learner who presented his group's findings at their Pendulum Exhibition; he was able to make an articulate presentation to the class (including the visiting superintendent) about his hypothesis concerning the pendulum. In his presentation, he used scientific words such as *prediction* and *variable* because he had been using these words and struggling with these concepts all week with his teammates. Mary

Cowhey's conclusion about group work was that "it is painful and glorious, but in the end there is a lot of learning that goes on in groups even when it is messy and painful and seems to be going nowhere."

Patty Bode also mentioned the impact of the group work on her thinking as a teacher. In the curriculum course she took, for example, Patty remembered everybody who had been in her group, the curriculum project each person developed, and how the projects unfolded over the course of the semester, based on the constant feedback she and others received from their groups. Beth Wohlleb also discussed the benefits of cooperative learning, which she described as central to her teaching. She had first learned about structuring group work in the BEM program, and she thought it was particularly helpful when working with learners of various strengths and abilities. Beth explained, "I think when you have kids with different skills, like a second language learner who has a lot of knowledge but may not be as adept at writing it out, in a group they can share what they know without getting bogged down." She gave the example of a student who was able to get more done in a group when the task was shared because, although he had the information, he had trouble with the writing. If she had relied on the individual worksheets he was handing in, he probably would not have passed social studies, even though he understood the content. Having the knowledge of second language issues and the ability to structure group work was an advantage to her and to her students.

For all the BEM teachers, having classes in which they interacted with widely diverse groups of graduate students was a bonus, but it could be frustrating at times. Specifically, they spoke about the value of working with other graduate students who were themselves language learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. But the diversity in BEM classes is not only cultural and linguistic. There is also diversity in terms of discipline knowledge and professional goals. This diversity was disquieting at times because it meant that teachers needed to accept a multiplicity of viewpoints with which they might not be familiar. Many teachers mentioned, however, that these experiences increased their comfort level with being an outsider, a position some had never occupied.

Beth Wohlleb also discussed how important it was to have allies who had been through the BEM program. At her first school, she looked around in vain for other teachers who shared her convictions and experiences. She explained, "It kind of felt like I had all these

things in my head, but in terms of having models, it was really hard." Fortunately, she found Patty Bode at her next school, and now they collaborate on numerous projects. For both of them, having someone else who went through the program is affirming of the work they do.

Most of the teachers interviewed discussed the theory-practice connection, which is a major characteristic of the BEM program. This connection becomes even stronger when teachers learn to work collaboratively. Shakira Alvarez Ferrer, for example, explained that one of the reasons she applied to the BEM program was the way it combined an emphasis on research and theory with the "practitioner side of it." This side of the program becomes more evident when teachers are involved in collaborative projects that engage them in both philosophical debates and concrete activities. Shakira maintained that a lot of other programs she had looked at had the academic rigor she was seeking, but they did not focus on the preparation of teachers. She said:

> On the flip side, there were a lot of programs that were training teachers but weren't framing their work in a larger social or political way. So I was left with the idea that I can go to night school for six months and get an ESL certificate and not be any further along in my thinking, or I could sit in a classroom for two years and not ever actually see any kids, or I could come to UMass.

Finally, and also as a direct result of their collaborative inquiry, the BEM teachers talked in ways that elevated the status of the profession of teaching in a manner that ran counter to the usual discourses surrounding teachers' work and school change. These discourses are ones that often position teachers as "the problem," as "anti-intellectuals," or as "foot-draggers" in the process of school reform. In contrast to this perspective, these teachers described themselves as reflective practitioners with extensive knowledge of how best to connect theory and practice as they work toward an agenda that focuses on equity in education.

Conclusion: A Program in Progress

As we read and discussed the interviews, we became aware of a number of tensions or contradictions between what we as faculty members in the BEM program view as major principles and goals of the program and some of the ways the teachers described their experiences. Because

we view our program as a work in progress, we welcomed the opportunity to look more critically at our work through the teacher interviews.

One issue that surfaced in the interviews immediately was the weak connection between the BEM program's articulation of the link between language and culture and the teachers' understanding of that link. That is, the teachers spoke eloquently about multicultural issues, but they spoke less specifically about the role of language practices within multicultural education. The exceptions were the teachers who had taken a good number of courses in bilingual and ESL education. Because most of the teachers interviewed had focused on multicultural education in their academic work, however, their course work was heavily concentrated in this area. Although all our courses address aspects of language and culture, the interviews made it clear to us that we must work more purposefully at making our understanding of language as a social practice more visible, tangible, and concrete for teachers (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Gee, 1996).

A second issue is a structural one, namely, we have deliberately never had a list of required core courses; instead, we have encouraged teachers to think about their own academic and professional goals and what courses they need to take to reach these goals. We suggest that they take courses not just in our program, but also in other programs in the School of Education and in other departments in the university. Maintaining this flexibility is important to us because of the way we envision the program. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that common courses and other experiences are necessary if graduates are to develop a broader and deeper understanding of issues connecting language, culture, and social justice. As a result of this thinking, we have begun to redesign courses so they better reflect our understanding of the connections between these fundamental components of our program. Moreover, we now have one course that all BEM students are required to take ("Introduction to BEM Education") to make our understanding of the connection between language, culture, and social justice in multicultural education explicit. This new title makes it clear to teachers that regardless of their eventual teaching context, they all need to give time and attention in their studies to the education of language minority students.

It also became evident through the interviews that we need to work more diligently to help our graduates develop counter-discourses about their work with language minority and other culturally dominated students. This is especially urgent given the growing strength of discourses about standardization and accountability taking hold in schools around the country. These discourses have resulted in the erosion of institutional supports that affirm both student diversity and teacher professionalism. Language minority students are especially vulnerable in this climate of standardization because their language strengths are frequently overlooked in the rush to "pass the test," which is generally in English. Teacher professionalism is challenged by accountability measures that are narrow in scope and punitive in nature. We have thought about a number of ways to address this problem, including helping our graduates develop a political base among themselves in their diverse schools and inviting graduates to speak with those new to the BEM program. However, it is clear to us that one program, no matter how well conceived or implemented, cannot challenge these negative discourses on its own. Coalition building across programs and between organizations is needed to support teachers in their work with linguistically and culturally diverse students.

In spite of the contradictions between the goals and guiding principles of the BEM program and the current context of schools and society, we know we are doing what is needed both morally and substantively to prepare effective and caring teachers of language minority students. No child loses when this is the case. When all teachers become more effective with their language minority students, when they understand the role of their identities and biographies in their teaching, when they describe their work as a political and ethical endeavor, and when they view teaching as collaborative work in solidarity with others, teachers also learn to view all their students, not just language minority students, as having talents and strengths that can help them learn.

Notes

1. "Becoming bilingual" is a phrase the BEM faculty members use to capture the process by which all students can become linguistic and cultural border-crossers (Giroux, 1992).
2. It should be noted that although these interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed, they do not constitute a formal study or evaluation of the BEM program.
3. The exception was Mary Cowhey who, although already certified as an elementary schoolteacher, at first thought she might like to work toward her ESL

certification while in the program. She changed her mind, however, and ended up following the noncertification route.

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