

Preparing Bilingual Teachers

A Culturally Sustaining Model for Clinical Practice

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Abstract

Following the passage of Proposition 58 and California's Global 2030 initiative, the demand for bilingual teachers has intensified, yet limited research examines how clinical practice shapes bilingual preservice teachers' (BPSTs) preparation for dual language bilingual education (DLBE) settings. This qualitative case study explores how one cohort-based bilingual teacher preparation program integrates clinical practice to support or constrain BPST development. Guided by the Clinical Praxis Model—comprised of Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK), Ideological Clarity (IC), and Teaching Identity (TI)—data were collected through pláticas with five bilingual cohort teacher candidates in a California Multiple Subject Credential Program. Findings indicate that the bilingual cohort model cultivated a strong sense of community and belonging that affirmed candidates' linguistic and cultural identities while integrated coursework strengthened ideological clarity and supported the transfer of theory into DLBE clinical practice. Immersive placements fostered the development of pedagogical language knowledge and professional

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confidence; however, tensions emerged due to misalignment between bilingual preparation and the English-dominant Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), as well as variability across DLBE program structures that affected mentorship coherence. Evidence suggests that bilingual teacher preparation programs should intentionally align cohort design, clinical placements, mentorship structures, and state policy to support culturally sustaining, justice-oriented preparation for multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: bilingual teacher preparation, teacher preparation, clinical practice, dual language bilingual education

Introduction

As teacher education programs strive to provide teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills needed to adequately support the needs of diverse learners in the k-12 context, scholars and practitioners continue to question the best approach in accomplishing this goal. Several studies outlined the most effective elements of teacher education being—strong foundational courses rooted in educational and development theory (Alexander, 2019; Willey & Magee, 2016), clear performance expectations, opportunities to connect theory into practice through a field based experience (Hammerness et al., 2016; Putman & Polly, 2021; Truwit et al., 2024; Willey & Magee, 2016), and intentional integration of learning experiences that allow students to confront cultural and learning assumptions (Amanti et al., 2023; Beck, 2020; Domke et al., 2025; Hammerness et al., 2016; Mulvaney et al., 2023; Willey & Magee, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2014, 2017; Zeichner, 2012).

Teacher educators supporting bilingual preservice teachers (BPSTs), also examine how to support BPSTs' ability to connect theory to practice through a multitude of modalities (Campbell et al., 2016; Cervantes-Soon, 2018; Collins & España, 2023), while also honoring the race-radical roots of bilingual education (Flores & Garcia, 2017; García & Sung, 2018). Some teacher educators have worked to celebrate and sustain the cultural identities of their BPSTs (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Espinoza & Kohler, 2023; Lozano-Soto et al., 2024; Nuñez et al., 2021). Espinoza and Kohler (2023), for example, modeled how to plan and implement culturally sustaining practices through a virtual library assignment. Each BPST was tasked with creating a virtual library that represented their identity. Through this experience some BPSTs noted the catharsis they experienced when able to reflect and process one's positionality in a formal assignment, later noting how they would like to replicate the process for their future students. Other scholars also examined how to model and

support translanguaging practices among BPSTs (Araujo et al., 2023; España et al., 2019; Herrera, 2023; Muñoz-Muñoz, 2021; Musanti & Rodríguez, 2017). This process includes first developing BPSTs epistemological stance toward a translingual practice—encouraging students to draw from their full linguistic repertoire across named languages to make meaning, express understanding, and engaging in learning. Then modeling and assigning learning experiences where they engage in praxis—connect theory to practice. Lastly, bilingual teacher educators have also noted the importance in developing the ideological clarity (Bartolomé, 2004) and critical consciousness (Alfaro, 2018; Cervantes-Soon, 2018; Chávez-Moreno, 2022; P. Freire, 2000; Hernández, 2017; Hernández & Alfaro, 2020; Lozano-Soto et al., 2024; Palmer, 2018; Rodríguez-Mojica & Briseño, 2019) of BPSTs. In other words, BPSTs are encouraged to examine how their lived experiences and positionalities inform the ways in which they interact with their students, communities, and world and if their interactions sustain or disrupt inequities perpetuated by systemic oppression (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2025). In regards to program design, Amanti et al. (2023) notes the lack of awareness potential BPSTs have of a bilingual preparation pathway for the bilingual teacher education job market.

Yet, despite the growing body of literature pertaining to bilingual teacher preparation, studies examining how BPSTs experience clinical practice is scarce. For example, Herrera (2022) discusses the importance of embedding translanguaging and critical bilingual pedagogies into daily teaching in bilingual classrooms. She advocates for teacher preparation programs to create reflective and supportive clinical environments that empower candidates to challenge inequities and affirm multilingual learners' cultural and linguistic assets. This gap in the literature presents a critical opportunity to examine credential programs in California, where the recent resurgence of bilingual education initiatives and the increasing demand for bilingual teachers create a timely and relevant context for understanding how clinical practice supports the development of future bilingual educators.

Bilingual Teacher Preparation in California

Within the context of California, the passage of Proposition 58 became a turning point in both the call for bilingual education and teacher preparation. The California Department of Education (CDE) has made a call to nurture the multilingualism reflected in the current student population. Through the Global 2030, the state articulated a shared vision of implementing 1,600 bilingual education programs

by 2030 and supporting the multilingual development of 175,000 students by 2030 (CDE, 2018). Since then, several school districts have implemented a reported 1,075 dual language immersion programs, increasing a demand for bilingual teachers (García Mathewson, 2025). However, recruitment and retention in teacher preparation programs for bilingual teacher candidates remains a challenge considering 20 years of restrictive English monolingual language policies codified within the state of California due to prop 227 (Briceño et al., 2018; California Secretary of State, 1998). For example, some BPSTs teachers grapple with the tensions of being judged by their language registers used to teach in a dual language bilingual education (DLBE) setting (Briceño et al., 2018; Muñoz-Muñoz, 2021; Sawyer & Rodríguez-Valls, 2023).

Traditionally speaking, teacher preparation programs design their credential program—coursework, fieldwork, and student teaching—to adhere to the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) located within the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* and set by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC, 2025). TPEs, as currently written, are divided into seven domains, and within each domain, teachers are expected to acquire competency across all listed elements. The elements listed within each domain of the TPEs are universally written to guide single and multiple subject TCs in their professional development. Teacher candidates are introduced to the concepts outlined in the TPEs through coursework, while they have opportunities to practice the concepts introduced in both field work and student teaching. Teacher candidates can complete 600 hours of clinical practice under the guidance and support of a cooperating teacher, or as an intern teacher who completes clinical practice through temporary status as the teacher of record.

The process of granting a bilingual authorization is separate, one that is added onto an existing teaching credential. Bilingual Authorization Programs follow a separate set of performance expectations—the Bilingual Teacher Performance Expectations (BTPEs)—that guide the design of courses and clinical practice (CCTCb, 2025). Bilingual teacher candidates can follow three different pathways to acquire an added authorization in bilingual education: (1) complete a series of state approved tests that assess a candidate's knowledge needed to provide instruction in a bilingual education setting, (2) matriculate into a program that integrates an added authorization into the already existing menu of courses, or (3) complete a hybrid approach of coursework and tests. However, there is variance in fieldwork requirements among these three pathways. If one pursues an added authorization through a state approved test, they are granted

a bilingual authorization without having completed field experience (i.e. clinical practice) in a bilingual education context. Those who decide to obtain their added authorization through additional course work, may adhere to an added number of clinical hours in a bilingual education setting. Those who matriculate into a credential program that integrate bilingual education methods throughout their program most likely fulfill all 600 hours of clinical practice in a bilingual education setting, with exception to programs or regions do not have access to dual language bilingual education program settings for less common languages. Regardless of the pathway candidates follow, the clinical experience remains a critical component in their development and growth as educators (Ahluwalia & Spicer, 2024; Ginsberg et al., 2021; Mulvaney et al., 2023).

A Conceptual Model for Clinical Practice in Bilingual Teacher Preparation

Considering the literature examining clinical practice in bilingual teacher preparation (Amanti et al, 2023), coupled with the emerging literature discussing the linguistic ideologies and practices of bilingual pre-service teachers (Briceño et al., 2018; Muñoz-Muñoz, 2021; Sawyer & Rodríguez-Valls, 2023), this study examines how the clinical practice integration of one bilingual teacher education program model supports or constrains BPST's preparation, utilizing the Clinical Praxis Model—a framework that integrates Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK) (Galgura, 2011; Bunch, 2013; Aquino-Sterling & Rodriguez-Valls, 2016; Zahner & Aquino-Sterling, 2022), Ideological Clarity (IC) (Bartolomé, 2004; Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023), and Teaching Identity (TI) (Espinoza & Kohler, 2023), as key components of effective preparation. This model extends existing scholarship for bilingual teacher preparation by emphasizing the role of dialogical reflection, community centered program design, and purposeful engagement with local linguistic communities.

Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK) in Clinical Practice

A core component of bilingual teacher preparation is Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK)—the ability to integrate language and content instruction while navigating professional spaces, including collaboration with colleagues, family engagement, and equitable instructional design. In clinical settings, PLK development is guided by structured observation and reflective practice. Candidates begin by engaging in focused observations of bilingual educators through live

classroom interactions, recorded teaching demonstrations, and field-based learning experiences. These observations emphasize not only instructional strategies, translanguaging practices, and scaffolding techniques for emergent bilinguals, but also encourage candidates to attend to all forms of languaging that occur within the classroom.

Central to this process is the recognition that how students use language—how they “lengüean”—is not a deviation from the norm, but rather the norm within a collective, multilingual classroom discourse (Garcia, 2014; Aquino-Sterling & Rodriguez-Valls, 2016). Grounded in translangual pedagogy, this approach reinforces the idea that the varied linguistic practices of students are legitimate, valuable, and integral to knowledge construction. Rather than passively consuming these demonstrations, candidates are invited into a process of critical reflection and dialogical critique, analyzing how observed practices align with the dynamic, asset-based principles of DLBE. By examining, questioning, and refining instructional methods, candidates begin to adopt a reflective teaching stance that embraces linguistic fluidity and affirms the full linguistic repertoires of their students (Worden, 2015; Martell & Sequenzia, 2016).

Ideological Clarity (IC) Through Community Engagement

Beyond technical instructional skills, effective bilingual teachers require Ideological Clarity (IC)—a deep understanding of the sociohistorical, political, and cultural forces that shape bilingual education. Bilingual education is rooted in the race-radical visions of the civil rights movement (Flores & Garcia, 2017; García & Sung, 2018). Given this legacy, bilingual teacher preparation must move beyond skill-building to cultivate educators who critically engage with language policy, educational equity, and community advocacy. Central to this work is the recognition that languaging—the dynamic ways in which students and teachers use language—is never neutral (García, 2020). How students express themselves carries deep socio-political significance and reflects their identities, lived experiences, and interlocking positionalities.

IC requires that teacher candidates understand not just what students say or how they speak, but why they use language the way they do. It calls on educators to interrogate the power structures embedded in linguistic norms and to view students’ linguistic and cultural practices as reflections of resilience, resistance, and cultural knowledge. To operationalize this clarity, this clinical model intentionally embeds candidates in linguistic and cultural communities as part of their

training. Candidates engage in ethnographic observations, conduct interviews with community stakeholders, and document local language practices—not to “fix” perceived deficits, but to understand and celebrate the richness of multilingual realities. In line with hooks (2003), who warns against the “death-dealing cynicism” that devalues linguistic and cultural difference, this approach fosters multilingual spaces where teacher candidates learn from community languaging practices rather than imposing rigid, monolingual norms.

Teaching Identity (TI) as a Developmental Process

As candidates develop PLK and IC, their Teaching Identity (TI) emerges as an evolving construct shaped by self-reflection, lived experience, and community engagement. Teaching identity is not static but continually negotiated through experimentation, adaptation, and feedback (Beijaard, 2019). In the program under study, Bilingual Cohort Teacher Candidates (BCTC) engage in synchronous and asynchronous peer discussions, iterative cycles of lesson design, and collective reflection—integrating multiple perspectives into their pedagogical development. This mirrors the realities of bilingual teaching, where educators must constantly adjust their methods to honor students’ full linguistic repertoires and cultural ways of knowing (García & Wei, 2015; García, 2020).

Crucially, bilingual education is not only pedagogical—it is a form of activism in a sociopolitical context where monolingualism often obscures and devalues the linguistic richness of both teacher candidates and their students. This is evident in classroom practices that reinforce linguistic stratification and the artificial separation of named languages, often positioning English as dominant. Many BCTCs express that their own languaging is not a unitary or linear system, but a departmentalized and strategic act of communication—developed as a means of survival in response to systemic language oppression, often times viewed as code switching (Nilep, 2006). Recognizing this, one goal of bilingual teacher preparation is to move beyond technical competence and toward a critically conscious teaching identity—one that embraces bilingual education as both a pedagogical responsibility and a political commitment to equity, linguistic justice, and student liberation.

Reframing Clinical Practice in Bilingual Teacher Preparation

The Clinical Praxis Model reconceptualizes clinical practice as a dynamic, interactive process that extends beyond traditional field placements to engage candidates in structured observation, dialogical critique, community immersion, and iterative identity development. By

integrating Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK), Ideological Clarity (IC), and Teaching Identity (TI), this approach provides a holistic framework for preparing bilingual educators who are not only skilled in language pedagogy but also critically aware of the sociohistorical and political dimensions of their work. In doing so, it responds to the key research question of this study: to what extent does a clinical practice design in one teacher preparation program support or constrain bilingual teacher candidates' perceptions of their preparation for DLBE settings? Moving forward, empirical analysis of candidate experiences within this framework will offer further insights into how clinical practice can be restructured to better serve the needs of bilingual teacher candidates and the communities they aim to support.

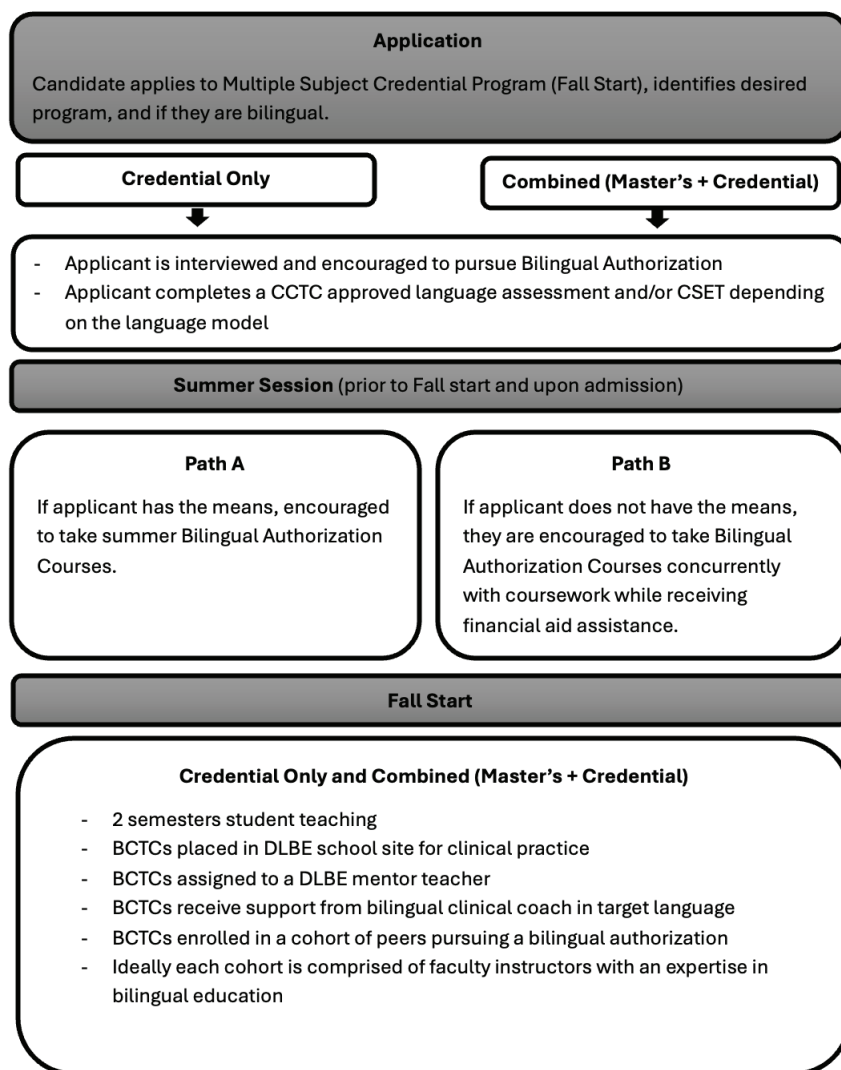
Context and Methodology

This study examines BCTCs perceptions of clinical practice in one California Multiple Subjects Credential Program (MSCP). Since the passage of Prop 227, bilingual teacher preparation programs faced a drastic decline in individuals interested in becoming bilingual education teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This decline is noted in the historical memory of tenure faculty that have witnessed the reorganization of the respective bilingual teacher preparation program under study. The MSCP program, once designed as a cohort model preparing bilingual teacher candidates through Spanish methods courses and integration of BTPEs, shifted to an added authorization program, where students who may be interested in obtaining a bilingual authorization could take two courses separate from and following the completion of their MSCP credential.

At the time of this study, the MSCP program under study, BCTCs had the option of pursuing one of two credential pathways—a one-year credential only program divided into two intensive semesters of coursework and clinical practice, or a four-semester combined master's and credential program. BCTCs pursuing an added authorization are cohorted into a bilingual education block where they can nurture relationships with peers who share similar experiences. Candidates in the bilingual block are also encouraged to complete all clinical practice in a DLBE setting with the mentorship and support of instructional faculty, fieldwork supervisors, and mentor teachers. During the recruitment and admissions process, BCTCs learn about the added authorization program and are encouraged to take the authorization courses prior to or concurrently with their credential courses. Each member of support has experience in DLBE settings and/or are

bilingual. The intention of this design was to support the BCTCs in developing the PLK and ideological clarity needed to align their pedagogical practices to the race-radical roots of bilingual education (Flores & Garcia, 2017). The program pathway of the multiple subject credential cohort model under study is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1
Bilingual Cohort Pathway



Data Collection and Analysis

A qualitative case study design was employed to guide the scope of this work. At the completion of coursework, the researcher solicited interest from qualified applicants, five BCTCs who were a part of a bilingual education block self-selected to participate in the study. BCTCS must have completed at least one required added authorization course and completed one semester of student teaching in a DLBE setting (see Table 2).

Interviews were structured following the platica format (Flores & Morales, 2021). Platicas are grounded in LatCrit theory (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and Chicana feminist epistemologies (Bernal, 1998). The researcher first opens the interview with an entrada or informal check-in to build relational trust between researcher and participant. The interview, also known as a *amistad* interview, is structured as conversation between two parties about a shared interest. While the researcher had prepared formal questions aligned to the teacher preparation courses and clinical practice, the interview mirrored a conversation between peers. The interview then closed with a despedida where the research thanked the participants for sharing their experiences. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Magic AI on Zoom. Transcriptions were then coded and analyzed. The data analysis process involved three iterative cycles of coding. Initially, structural coding was applied to develop a broad

Table 2
Participants

<i>Participant Name</i>	<i>Credential Program Type</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Bilingual Authorization Course Enrollment</i>
Karla	Combined Master's Program	Spanish	Summer prior to beginning the credential program
Fabviola	Combined Master's Program	Spanish	Concurrently with credential courses
Ana	Combined Master's Program	Spanish	Concurrently with credential courses
Modesta	Credential	Spanish	Concurrently with credential courses
Carolina	Credential	Spanish	Summer prior to beginning the credential program

understanding of the dataset, with preliminary codes assigned based on their alignment with the research questions guiding the study. Axial coding was then implemented during the second and third cycles, using the Clinical Praxis Model to facilitate deeper analysis. Following the final coding cycle, the researcher employed code weaving techniques to explore relationships among the data, moving from individual codes to broader categories and overarching themes that informed key findings (Saldaña, 2013). The use of multiple coding cycles and data sources contributed to the triangulation process, enhancing the credibility and truthfulness of the findings (Creswell et al., 2016).

Limitations

While the research methods employed provided depth and culturally responsive engagement through *pláticas* and *amistad* interviews, potential limitations should be considered. First, the small sample size of five participants means that findings cannot be generalized across all bilingual teacher preparation programs but rather provide insights into the experiences of a few candidates within a specific program. Second, as the researcher independently conducted the interviews and performed the coding and analysis, researcher positionality and potential bias may influence interpretations, despite attempts at triangulation and multiple coding cycles. In particular, the researcher also served as an instructor in the teacher preparation program, which introduces a complex layer of power dynamics between faculty and students. These dynamics may have influenced participants' willingness to share openly or shaped how they framed their experiences. Lastly, the relatively brief duration of each interview (30–45 minutes) may limit the comprehensiveness of participant narratives, potentially omitting deeper insights that longer conversations might capture.

Positionality

My research lens is informed by my role as a teacher educator in a multiple subject credential program. At the time of this study, I supported and advised two bilingual education cohorts, focusing on recruitment, professional development, and the success of future bilingual educators. My commitment to bilingual education is deeply personal, as I am a product of the public education system post-Prop 227 and continue to reclaim my mother tongue while advocating for linguistically and culturally sustaining pedagogies. With previous experiences as a bilingual coordinator, I understand both the systemic barriers and the transformative potential of bilingual education. I

view language as power and bilingual education as an act of social justice, and I am committed to preparing educators who will challenge deficit-based narratives and create equitable, affirming spaces for multilingual learners. While my lived experiences nurtured my ability to connect and relate to several of my students, it is important to note the power dynamic that exists between students and faculty members. To mitigate coercion, students were asked to complete a survey soliciting interest in participation after the course was complete and grades were submitted.

Findings

Findings below highlight how the bilingual cohort model has influenced the clinical practice experiences of BCTCs. BCTCs discussed the strength and limitations of the cohort model and how it prepared them for student teaching. Strengths of the program model include learning in an educational space where the culture of familia and support was cultivated amongst their peers and mentors of support (Gonzales, 2019), the cohesive alignment across methods courses and their commitment to social justice for minoritized and marginalized communities (Bartolomé, 2008; Alfaro, 2019; Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023), and rediscovering language through consistent exposure to dual language immersion models in clinical practice. BCTCs also noted the tensions of learning how to teach in the DLBE context and completing the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA), thus raising questions about the validity and reliability of the TPA for students seeking to become DLBE teachers is a state with a commitment to producing and supporting multilingual students. (The TPA is a performance-based credentialing requirement for individuals pursuing a California teaching credential. Its purpose is to evaluate readiness to teach through real practice in K–12 settings aligned with the California TPEs; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, n.d.).

Cultivating Community Through a Bilingual Teacher Preparation Cohort Model

As previously mentioned, the MSCP program follows a cohort model. Students are grouped into cohorts based on the program of enrollment and area of interest. During the time of this study, there were two cohorts of BCTCs who matriculated in the fall start credential programs—one that was a two-semester credential only program, and the other which was a four-semester combined master's and credential program. The candidates enrolled in these cohorts were bilingual and/

or pursuing an added authorization. The language representation consisted of Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Korean.

During the admissions process, each candidate was interviewed in a platica format (Fierros & Bernal, 2016; Flores & Morales, 2021) to learn about who they were as potential teachers, their vision for bilingual education, and offered information about the bilingual authorization program as well the potential of joining a bilingual education cohort. During the interview process, applicants shared their life experiences and how language has informed the ways in which they experienced k-12 education. These experiences either encouraged them to pursue a bilingual authorization without reservation or approach the opportunity with hesitation. As a program, we strategically grouped accepted applicants into a bilingual education cohort with the hope that working alongside one another would heal any traumas endured due to linguistic assimilation and nurture the love for bilingual education with the hope they pursue an added authorization (González et. al, 2026).

Once accepted into the program, all multiple subject teacher candidates attended a program orientation the first week of the semester. During the orientation, BCTCs had an opportunity to convene as a group, meet their peers and professors, as well as engage in various team building activities and co-construct community norms. Throughout this process, the block leader introduced her story and relationship to language education and how it informed her approach to dual language bilingual education (DLBE). This was inclusive of the introduction of the framework—(Re)rooted Visions Framework (RVF) (González et. al, 2026), grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Landson-Billings & Tate, 1995), indigenous epistemologies (Tuck, 2011), and Ethnic Studies Pedagogies (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2015; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), that guided the design of the bilingual cohort model. An important attribute worth noting is the college's commitment to a Just, Equitable, and Inclusive Education (JEIE) (College of Education, California State University, Fullerton, n.d.). This commitment permeates the design and employment of course content and teaching practices. It is also aligned with the RVF guiding the tone of the cohort experience.

In addition to the tone established within the bilingual education cohort, the leadership team—which comprised of academic advisor, placement coordinator, bilingual coordinator, and bilingual cohort advisor—also ensured that each support person hired to work with BCTCs were also a part of the DLBE community (Gonzales, 2019). Each BCTC was placed with a mentor teacher in a DLBE setting. All clinical coaches who offered onsite supervision were also bilingual and/

or taught within a DLBE setting. Moreover, the majority of faculty who taught within the bilingual cohort had expertise in bilingual education or taught courses grounded in social justice frameworks.

Considering the design, recruitment, and tone set within the bilingual cohort, one distinct element noted in the interviews was the sense of community BCTCs felt throughout the program. Community consisted of a support system that honored the shared bilingual identity of the students enrolled and cultivated a sense of empowerment and pride for being a bilingual person and future educator. Fabviola describes how being in a bilingual education cohort changed her perception of what it means to be an educator:

After I found out about being in this program, the bilingual ed, I think it just has helped me a lot more to be able to see past like the typical only English teacher. I think just general ed is good, but I think, being in a classroom setting that's still immersion. It has helped me to see that there's more... to teaching.

Fabviola's reflection reveals how participation in the bilingual cohort expanded her understanding of what it means to be an educator, allowing her to envision teaching beyond the confines of English-only instruction. Through intentionally crafted programming and integration of practicum throughout the credential programs, students began to develop the ideological clarity (Bartolomé, 2008) needed to interrogate their perceptions of linguistic hegemony of the English only paradigm of elementary education.

In addition to expanding one's understanding that education can go beyond English immersion, BCTCs also note the sense of community that was nurtured between cohort members. Modesta explains how the cohort experience allowed her to connect with peers who share cultural, linguistic, and lived experiences:

I think that the cohort was actually like a really really cool thing to be a part of...specifically like we all had something in common that I feel like if I was in any of the other blocks... we all had this very like specific, common thing. And I think it brought all of us together culturally, like we had something in common. And then, like we were all working...in a bilingual classroom. And so I felt like it was a very niche thing, and a very just, a cool community to be a part of...It felt different than just learning or just taking courses like in a credential program.

Modesta stressed how the bilingual cohort fostered a unique sense of cultural and linguistic solidarity, creating a space where shared experiences as bilingual individuals deepened peer connections. She emphasizes that the cohort was more than an academic structure—it

was a culturally affirming community where teaching in bilingual settings became a shared, empowering endeavor. Evidently, this collective experience reshaped her perception of the credential program, transforming it from “just taking courses” into an affirming space of belonging, growth, and professional identity formation (Gonzales, 2019).

Like Modesta, Carolina also noted how the cohort model, with a special focus on bilingual education, not only offered the opportunity to build community with her peers, but nurtured a space to be her most authentic self. She explains, “I think, also because we had the opportunity to be...everyone just became a family at the end, and I think that that’s something huge in our culture, like the sense of familia. And I love that.” According to Carolina, the bilingual cohort not only fostered a strong sense of community but also created a culturally affirming space where she could fully embrace her authentic self. She describes the cohort as evolving into a “family,” highlighting the deep emotional connections formed and the cultural resonance of familia within her identity as a bilingual person. This sense of belonging reinforced her pride in being part of a bilingual education space that honored both her language and cultural background. She then offered an anecdote of her peer to peer interactions that solidified her perceptions of the bilingual cohort experience:

I remember I was talking to... [Ivan] and [Eliz], and at the beginning they’re like, so is your name [Carol]? Or is your name [Carolina]? And I remember I told them it’s so funny, because throughout school I always went with [Carol]. Because again, I had a lot of white teachers, and they couldn’t pronounce my name. And I mean, but it’s [Caro-LINA]. And they’re like, okay, then own it like your name’s [CaroLINA]. So I think, finding that community of people in a setting where we’re bilingual, and it just helped me embrace that a lot more.

Carolina’s anecdote highlights the transformative power of peer interactions within a bilingual cohort, where shared experiences created space for identity reclamation and affirmation. Her reflection on reclaiming the correct pronunciation of her name—after years of adapting it due to linguistic erasure in monolingual educational spaces—demonstrates how the cohort functioned as a healing and empowering environment. Through the support and validation of peers who understood the nuances of navigating bilingual and bicultural identities, Carolina embraced her full self, reinforcing her commitment to becoming a bilingual educator who honors and uplifts the identities of her future students.

The community established amongst cohort members also

transferred into a system of support during clinical practice. Karla explains:

Well, first of all, how the community is there. So it's very like welcoming. They all are connected, they're all supported with one another ...we build that support system and try to just help each other and give feedback on what we could improve.

Karla describes how the relationships nurtured between cohort members also extended in the planning and preparation for clinical practice. Cohort members would solicit and provide feedback in pedagogy and practice as they navigated clinical practice in a DLBE setting. The anecdotes noted by Karla and her peers exemplified above demonstrate the importance of designing and implementing educational programming that cultivates the sense of familia amongst Latinx youth and their families (Gonzalés, 2019). Through familismo, BCTCs cultivated a sense of community that affirmed and strengthened their sense of belonging, identity development, and ultimate success in the program.

Becoming More Aware Through Coursework

Intentional integration of DLBE subject matter from methods courses in clinical practice became a second salient theme when seeking to understand BCTCs experiences in clinical practice. As previously noted, the program recommends BCTCs to enroll and complete bilingual authorization courses prior to or concurrently with the teaching credential courses. Furthermore, teaching credential courses taught within the bilingual education cohort have a unique specialization in bilingual methodology and/or alignment with the college's mission for Just, Equitable, and Inclusive Education. The first half of the semester is dedicated to coursework and fieldwork, while the second half of the semester is exclusively student teaching. Teacher candidates discuss how the course content introduced and discussed in both bilingual authorization and methods courses offered the necessary background knowledge needed to enter student teaching without surprises. Carolina explains:

[The professor] would talk about the difference between like dual immersion...being a need for students; and then it kind of just prepares you for the type of students you're going to have. And the type of areas you're going to work...it kind of opens like your brain to see what dual immersion really is and what to expect.

Carolina's reflection demonstrates how the intentional integration

of DLBE-focused coursework into the credential program provided critical preparation for student teaching. Her experience highlights how early exposure to bilingual pedagogical concepts and discussions on the purpose of dual immersion allowed her to enter the classroom with clearer expectations and a stronger sense of purpose. By taking bilingual authorization courses prior to full-time clinical practice, Carolina not only built essential background knowledge but also developed ideological clarity (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023) about the value of bilingual education, affirming her commitment to serving multilingual students through equity-centered teaching.

While some students were able to enroll in the bilingual authorization courses prior to beginning the MSCP program, others (primarily due to financial aid for summer programming) took their added authorization courses concurrently with their MSCP courses. While they were building their background knowledge as bilingual student teachers concurrently with clinical practice, this did not limit their ability to draw connections between theory and practice. Ana notes how her coursework—specifically taking the bilingual authorization courses concurrently with student teaching—developed her ideological clarity of the inequities that exist within language education and how she can transfer her new knowledge to student teaching. She explains:

That class has made me more aware of inequities and the barriers. The language barriers place on school systems...I am more aware and conscious about like what I do, and my effect on the students in terms of their bilingualism.

Her awareness also translated to lesson design and implementation. She explains, “ [I did] a whole lesson on social justice. So I feel like even doing that. I was like, oh, wow! Like, it’s not as hard as one would think, to incorporate those themes.” Ana’s reflections reveal a deepened critical awareness of how systemic language barriers perpetuate inequities within educational institutions, an understanding she attributes to the concurrent coursework taken during student teaching. This ideological clarity translated into praxis, as evidenced by her implementation of a social justice-themed lesson, which affirmed for her the accessibility and impact of embedding equity-focused content into classroom instruction.

Like Ana, Fabviola also speaks to the transformative impact her courses had on her ability to become more aware of the purpose of bilingual education and the impact of bilingual education teachers. She states:

I think, in class we like talked a lot more about ...what it means to

be a bilingual teacher...I'm able to be less biased because we learn about these things in class. So I think I'm more aware of my own understanding and personal beliefs. So once I'm in the classroom, I go in with a clear mind...[and] to not create any biases.

Fabviola shares how the content of her courses expanded her knowledge about bilingual education and provided the opportunity to reflect on her beliefs, examine her biases, and understand the power she holds as a teacher and ensure her biases do not harm her students. She continues to explain:

Being a bilingual teacher isn't just about the money. It's more about being able to be out there having a teacher that we didn't get to have when we were younger, coming from like a bilingual family, a Spanish speaking household being someone you can help.

Fabviola's reflection illustrates the profound impact of coursework in shaping her ideological clarity and self-awareness as a future bilingual educator. Through class discussions and critical engagement with bilingual education, she became more conscious of her own biases and the responsibility she carries to ensure her teaching affirms her students' identities. Fabviola reframes bilingual teaching as a form of advocacy and healing, seeing her role not only as an educator but as a cultural and linguistic bridge for Spanish-speaking families—filling the gap she herself experienced as a child.

Rediscovering Language in Clinical Practice

As the cohort model nurtured the BCTCs identity development (Gonzales, 2019), and coursework refined their ideological clarity (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023), clinical practice, particularly student teaching in a DLBE setting, reinforced their ability to strengthen their PLK (Galguera, 2011; Bunch, 2013; Aquino-Sterling & Rodriguez-Valls, 2016; Zahner & Aquino-Sterling, 2022) across all content areas in their respective grade levels. BCTCs note the challenges and opportunities that emerge from this process. Challenges include immersing themselves in the classroom and developing the PLK needed to teach the various content areas. Fabviola explains, "I was able to like rediscover my Spanish...I think my vocabulary grew within just that time frame of being in the classroom with the students." Fabviola's quote illustrates how immersive clinical practice in a DLBE setting served as a catalyst for linguistic growth, allowing her to reconnect with and expand her Spanish vocabulary through authentic interactions with students. Other BCTCs also noted the need to preserve and push themselves beyond their comfort. Modesta explains:

It's intense, but I've gotten used to it, and I'm still learning. I still feel like I make so many errors in my Spanish, and even just still like trying to learn to teach...I'm really glad that I'm doing it overall, because it's like pushing me to do something that I probably never would have done, and I'm getting exposure every day.

Modesta's reflection highlights the productive struggle inherent in developing both pedagogical and linguistic skills, underscoring how the challenges of daily practice pushed her beyond her comfort zone and fostered continuous learning and professional resilience. While both Fabiola and Modesta expressed their joy and pride of challenging themselves to develop PLK as DLBE educators, it is also important to note remnants of internalized linguistic appropriateness (Flores & Rosa, 2015) as they measure their proficiency through a "word rich" vocabulary (Cushing, 2023) and "correctness."

When reflecting on the clinical practice experience, BCTCs acknowledge that the cohort model coupled with DLBE placement fostered confidence in teaching in a DLBE setting. Modesta explains:

I think it would be a complete shock if I went into teaching dual without ever student teaching. I definitely had doubts, and like things were challenging. But I think actually going to the placement every day and like working closely with my mentor teacher, with other teachers at the school. It just like made me believe that like I can do it. And I'm doing it so like I can do it in the future, too. So yeah, I think it gave me the confidence.

Modesta's reflection highlights the crucial role that clinical practice plays in building confidence for teaching in a DLBE setting. She acknowledges the initial doubts and challenges she faced but emphasizes how daily immersion, mentorship, and collaboration with experienced educators transformed those uncertainties into a strong sense of self-efficacy. Her growing confidence, nurtured through sustained collaboration with experienced educators, exemplifies how the cohort model and clinical practice work in tandem is essential for BCTCs to envision themselves successfully leading DLBE classrooms in the future.

When Policy Collides with Practice: The Misalignment of the TPA in DLBE Contexts

While BCTCs note the benefits of completing clinical practice in a DLBE setting, they also note the challenges that emerged when completing the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). Ana and Fabiola note a misalignment between the TPA and bilingual

pedagogical practices they were learning in their student teaching. Ana explains:

I think it made it a little bit harder to accommodate for the TPA...not only I struggled, but I think a lot of us were like, well, what do we do? Do we just fake it? That's kind of what we're doing like we're thinking, oh, this is what we would have done, or even on my TPA. I made it more language based.

Ana's quote highlights the tension bilingual teacher candidates experience when navigating the TPA's English-centric expectations within the realities of a DLBE placement where content, such as math, is taught in Spanish. Her decision to focus on how she scaffolded language development—rather than conforming strictly to ELD standards—reflects the persistent misalignment between the state's assessment priorities and the ideological and pedagogical commitments of bilingual education, revealing how systemic structures continue to privilege English despite programmatic efforts to center multilingualism.

Fabviola, also expressed the TPA feeling disconnected from the day-to-day flow of student teaching. She shares, “So I think we were just really focused on student teaching, and then, like boom we had to like, do [the] TPA.” Fabviola conveys the abrupt and disjointed nature of the TPA process, which feels out of sync with the immersive rhythm of daily student teaching in a DLBE setting – findings previously noted by Campbell et. al., (2016) across various teacher preparation programs in the state of California. Her experience reflects how the high-stakes assessment can interrupt authentic learning and instructional flow, creating additional stress and reinforcing a disconnect between standardized evaluation and the realities of bilingual classroom practice.

Supporting Bilingual Teacher Candidates Across Varied DLBE Structures

While our program is fortunate to have access to a multilingual community—every neighboring district offers established dual language immersion programs across four different languages (Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean)—we learned that all program models vary significantly. For example, in some cases, teacher candidates are self-contained with the same class throughout the day, while in other contexts, students switch between two teachers: one for English and another for the target language. This presents a challenge for selecting and supporting mentor teachers. Modesta's experience teaches us that we must also consider new ways of mentor teacher support that align with the diverse realities of dual language program models. She states:

I've actually had this on my mind a lot lately, and I do wish that I was traveling with one group of students, because another thing about this model is that my teacher doesn't teach all the subjects. It's like the English teacher covers some subjects, and the Spanish teacher covers some subjects...

Her reflection underscores the fragmentation that can occur when instructional responsibilities are split between languages and teachers. This segmented model can hinder the development of meaningful, sustained relationships with students and limit teacher candidates' opportunities to enact bilingual pedagogical approaches across subjects. Modesta's insight reveals the importance of rethinking mentorship structures to better support coherence in instructional practice, linguistic integration, and identity development for BCTCs within varied dual language settings.

Discussion

The findings from this study illustrate the multifaceted impact of clinical practice on BCTCs' development, particularly when embedded in a cohort-based, community-centered bilingual teacher preparation model. Analyzed through the Clinical Praxis Model—emphasizing Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK), Ideological Clarity (IC), and Teaching Identity (TI)—several key themes emerged: the cultivation of a bilingual community and sense of belonging; the integration of coursework and practice to build ideological and pedagogical clarity; the rediscovery and expansion of linguistic identities through clinical immersion; and the structural misalignments between bilingual preparation and state policy, particularly the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA).

The cohort model emerged as a central structure that fostered deep relational ties among BCTCs, allowing them to form communities of practice grounded in shared linguistic and cultural identities. This sense of “familia,” as described by participants, extended beyond peer relationships—it permeated their experiences with faculty, supervisors, and mentor teachers, all of whom held expertise in DLBE settings. These relationships created an affirming space for teacher identity development rooted in authenticity and collective support, echoing scholarship that emphasizes the critical role of belonging and shared identity in latinx learning communities (Gonzales, 2019). The cohort model functioned not just as a logistical grouping but as a pedagogical intervention—one that actively resisted assimilationist norms and allowed BCTCs to reclaim and embrace their linguistic and cultural selves as assets in the classroom.

Candidates also consistently described coursework—particularly bilingual authorization courses and justice-centered methods classes—as transformative in shaping their understanding of bilingual education. For Carolina, Fabviola, and Ana, the coursework offered the theoretical grounding and ideological clarity needed to approach student teaching with intentionality. These findings reinforce the importance of critical coursework that connects theory to practice, challenging candidates to reflect on their positionalities, confront bias, disrupt linguistic appropriateness, and commit to educational equity (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Valenzuela, 1999). Importantly, participants described how this clarity was not confined to academic spaces but was actively transferred into the clinical context through lesson planning, student interactions, and community engagement. This interplay between coursework and fieldwork substantiates the Clinical Praxis Model’s emphasis on the cyclical and reciprocal nature of ideological development and pedagogical enactment.

Immersive experiences in DLBE classrooms enabled BCTCs to strengthen their PLK while rediscovering and expanding their own linguistic repertoires. Fabviola and Modesta’s reflections exemplify how clinical settings serve not only as technical training grounds but also as deeply personal spaces where bilingualism is reclaimed and reimaged. These experiences aligned with translanguaging pedagogies (García & Wei, 2015), as BCTCs navigated dynamic linguistic ecologies and learned to scaffold content in two languages. Yet, this process was not without challenge. Several participants highlighted the intensity and vulnerability involved in navigating a new professional identity while simultaneously refining language skills. Clinical practice, then, becomes a site of “productive struggle,” pushing BCTCs beyond comfort zones and fostering resilience—an essential trait for sustaining bilingual educators in the field.

While the program design supported the holistic development of BCTCs, a key constraint emerged in the form of the TPA. Participants voiced strong concerns about the English-dominant structure of the assessment and its disconnection from bilingual pedagogical practices. Ana’s and Fabviola’s quotes underscore a systemic contradiction: BCTCs are being prepared to teach in multilingual classrooms, yet evaluated through monolingual standards that do not reflect the realities of DLBE instruction. This misalignment not only forced candidates to “fake it,” as Ana noted, but also interrupted the coherence between coursework, clinical practice, and assessment. These findings align with existing critiques of high-stakes testing as a mechanism that reinforces assimilationist policies and marginalizes linguistically

and racially minoritized teachers (Campbell et. al., 2016; Valenzuela, 2017). If California is truly committed to fostering multilingualism, policy reform must address the incongruence between performance assessments and the goals of bilingual education.

Finally, the BCTC revealed that DLBE program variability—particularly differences in instructional structures—posed additional challenges for clinical practice. Modesta’s experience in a split-language model, where students alternated between English and Spanish teachers, highlighted how fragmented instructional responsibilities can hinder relationship-building and coherence in pedagogical development. This raises critical questions about how programs support mentor teacher selection and supervision across diverse DLBE models. The findings suggest a need for differentiated mentoring structures and programmatic flexibility that can adapt to varied school contexts while maintaining fidelity to bilingual pedagogical goals.

Implications AND Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest important implications for bilingual teacher preparation programs, particularly in the design and implementation of clinical practice. First, intentional cohort models that foreground shared linguistic and cultural experiences may foster a deep sense of belonging and identity affirmation among BCTCs. These community-based structures must be maintained and expanded, not only as support mechanisms but as potential pedagogical strategies for nurturing future bilingual educators committed to equity and justice. Second, teacher preparation programs might consider prioritizing the integration of bilingual authorization coursework within the credential sequence, ensuring that candidates enter clinical practice with both the ideological clarity and pedagogical tools necessary for DLBE settings. Embedding bilingual pedagogies and translanguaging theory within core methods courses emerged as promising practices in this study for developing critical consciousness and robust PLK. Third, the variation across DLBE program models points to the potential need for flexible, context-sensitive mentorship frameworks. Programs might benefit from developing differentiated strategies for selecting and preparing mentor teachers in both self-contained and team-teaching bilingual models. Additionally, mentor teacher support should go beyond logistical concerns to include professional development in critical bilingual pedagogy. Such preparation may help candidates experience stronger coherence between coursework, fieldwork, and classroom practice. Finally, participants’ experience

raised concerns about how state policy — particularly the design and implementation of the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA)— aligns with the goals of bilingual education. While the sample size was limited, participants described tensions between their preparation for linguistically inclusive pedagogy and the current TPA structure, which they perceived as not aligned to the teaching expectations in DLBE classrooms. These findings suggest that policymakers could benefit from engaging bilingual teacher educators and practitioners in efforts to revise assessments in ways that more accurately reflect DLBE classroom realities.

Moving forward, bilingual teacher preparation programs are encouraged to continue innovating clinical models that are not only technically sound but also culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) and grounded in critical consciousness (Alfaro, 2018; Cervantes-Soon, 2018; Chávez-Moreno, 2022; P. Freire, 2000; Hernández, 2017; Hernández & Alfaro, 2020; Lozano-Soto et al., 2024; Palmer, 2018; Rodríguez-Mojica & Briseño, 2019). Such models may support candidates in developing not just technical proficiency but also the ideological clarity (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2023) and professional resilience needed to enact justice-oriented pedagogy in diverse classroom contexts. By embedding principles of justice, community, and transformation into clinical and coursework experiences, teacher educators can play a key role in preparing bilingual candidates to disrupt inequities and cultivate linguistically inclusive learning environments.

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