"Si le entiendo, le respondo"

Parents' reported and observed practices to support their child's bilingual development during the transition to school

Sarah Surrain
University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
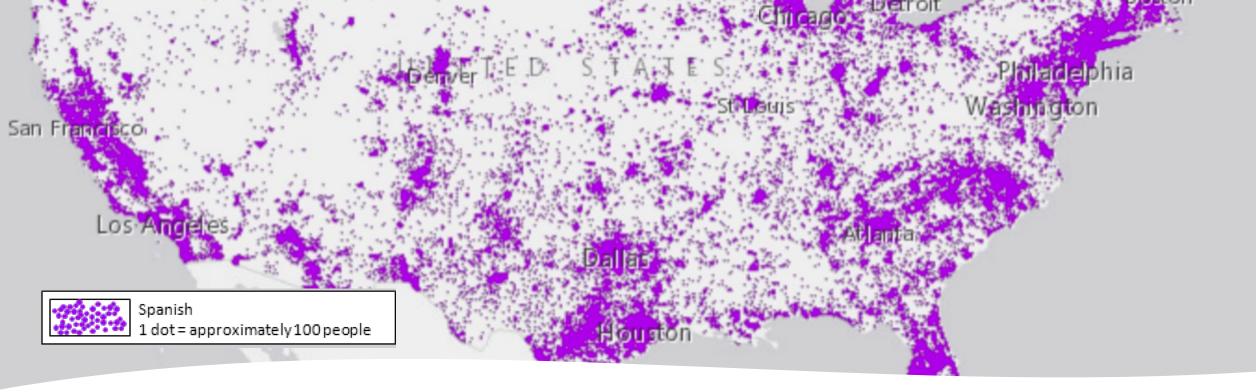
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Overarching Question

How do families who speak a minoritized language at home support their child's bilingual development during the transition to school in early childhood?

Spanish
1 dot = approximately 100 people

Why is home language development important?

- More than one third of U.S. children are born to Latine families
- 85% of Latine parents speak Spanish with their children
- For these emergent bilinguals, developing and maintaining their home language is critical for family communication, identity development, and learning through interactions with caregivers

Arredondo et al., 2016; Lopez et al., 2018; Schofield et al., 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019

Spanish-speaking Latine parents in the U.S.

- Tend to highly value their child's bilingualism in Spanish and English

- May receive misleading information about bilingual development

- Often have questions about how to sustain their child's Spanish development after starting school

- A common dilemma:
  - How to respond to their child's code-switching (CS) to English in Spanish-language conversations
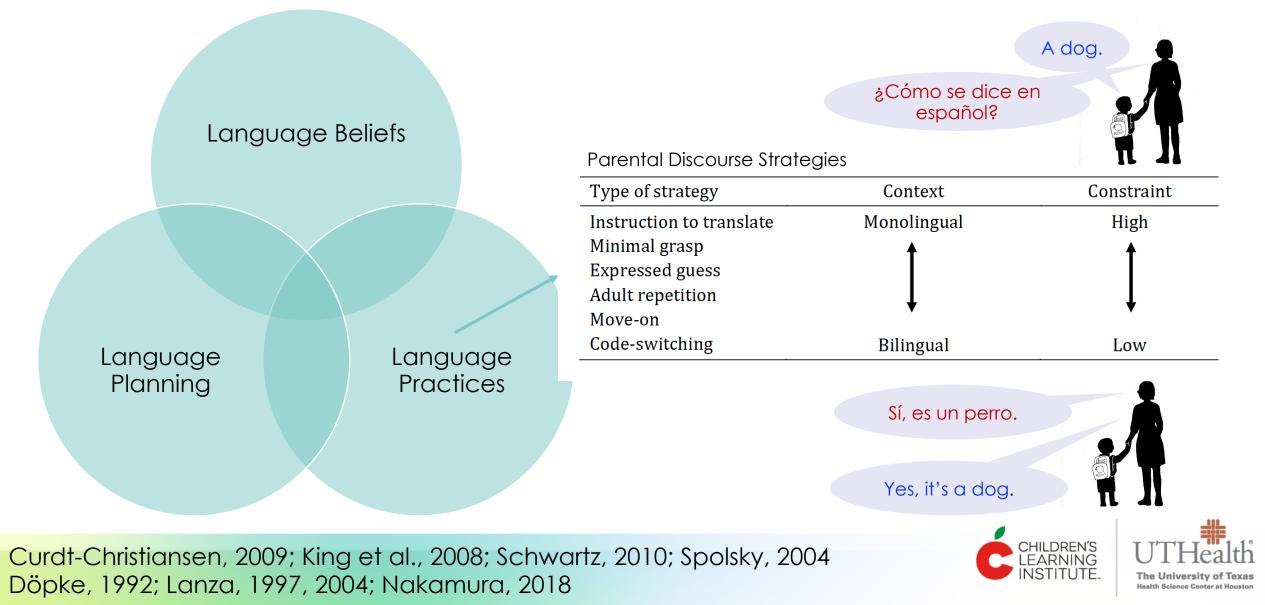
¿Qué es eso?

A dog.

Kaveh & Sandoval, 2020; Luo et al., 2021; Pease-Alvarez, 2002; Ronderos et al., 2021; Surrain, 2021

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Family Language Policy & Parental Discourse Strategies

Language Beliefs

Language Planning

Language Practices

A dog.

¿Cómo se dice en español?

Parental Discourse Strategies

Type of strategy	Context	Constraint
Instruction to translate	Monolingual	High
Minimal grasp		
Expressed guess		
Adult repetition		
Move-on		
Code-switching	Bilingual	Low

Sí, es un perro.

Yes, it's a dog.

Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; King et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2010; Spolsky, 2004
Döpke, 1992; Lanza, 1997, 2004; Nakamura, 2018

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Research Questions

1. What do Spanish-speaking Latine parents of preschool-aged children say about their language **beliefs**, language **planning**, and language **practices**?

2. Do parents' **reported** language practices in response to child CS align with their **observed** language practices?

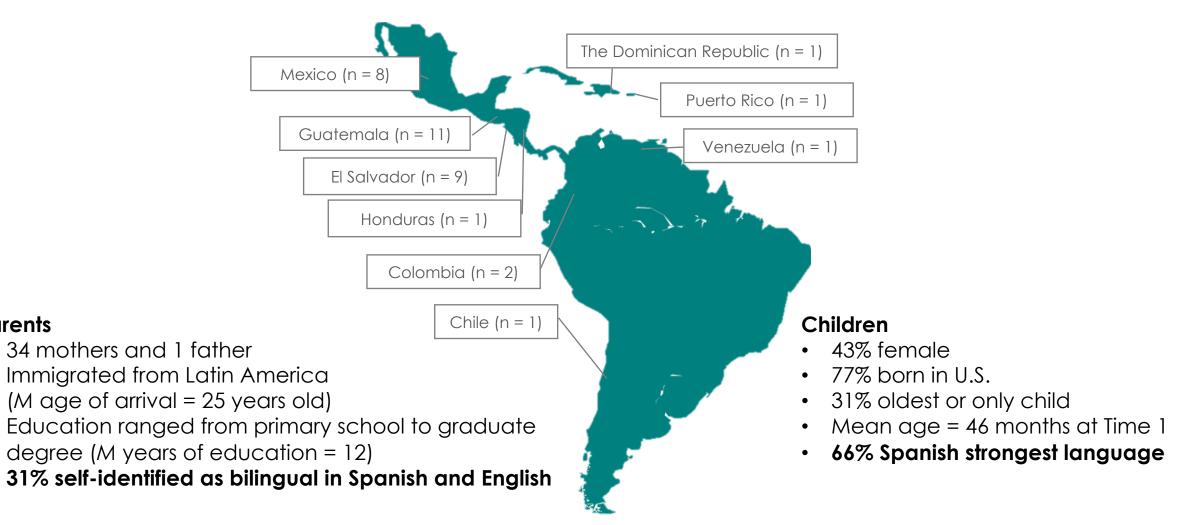3. Are parents' reported or observed language practices related to their child's Spanish skills after preschool entry?

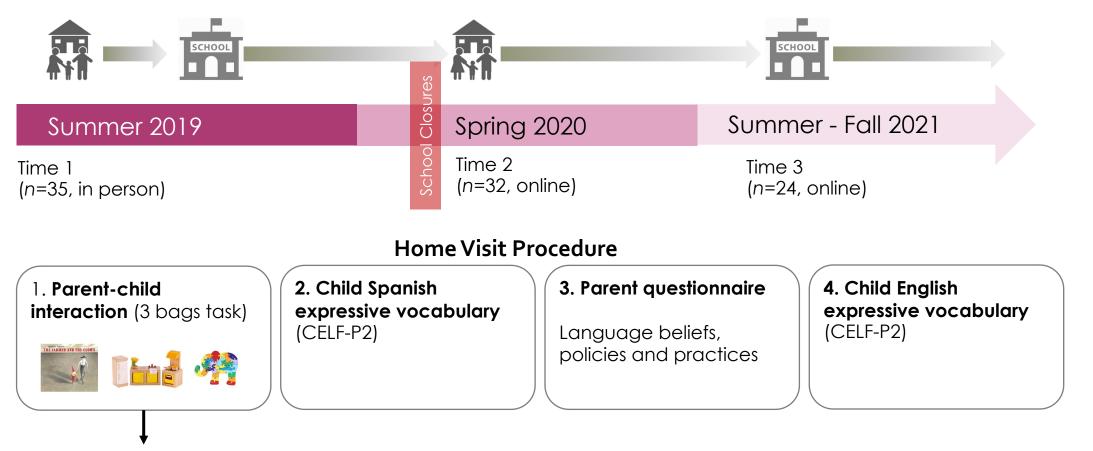# Method: 35 Spanish-speaking parent-child dyads in the Boston area

Mexico (n = 8)

The Dominican Republic (n = 1)

Puerto Rico (n = 1)

Guatemala (n = 11)

Venezuela (n = 1)

El Salvador (n = 9)

Honduras (n = 1)

Colombia (n = 2)

Chile (n = 1)

Parents
- 34 mothers and 1 father
- Immigrated from Latin America (*M* age of arrival = 25 years old)
- Education ranged from primary school to graduate degree (*M* years of education = 12)
- **31% self-identified as bilingual in Spanish and English**

Children
- 43% female
- 77% born in U.S.
- 31% oldest or only child
- Mean age = 46 months at Time 1
- **66% Spanish strongest language**

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Method: Study Design and Procedures

Time 1
(*n*=35, in person)

School Closures

Summer 2019

Spring 2020

Time 2
(*n*=32, online)

Summer - Fall 2021

Time 3
(*n*=24, online)

Home Visit Procedure

1. **Parent-child interaction** (3 bags task)

2. **Child Spanish expressive vocabulary** (CELF-P2)

3. **Parent questionnaire**

Language beliefs, policies and practices

4. **Child English expressive vocabulary** (CELF-P2)

Transcribed using CHAT (MacWhinney, 2000)
Coded for parent responses to child-initiated CS to English

RQ1: What do Spanish-speaking Latine parents of preschool-aged children say about their language **beliefs**, language **planning**, and language **practices**?

RQ1: Language Beliefs

Do you have any specific goals or hopes for your child's future?

34% had language-specific goals
- Importance of **multiple languages** (*n* = 5)
- Importance of **Spanish** (*n* = 5)
- Importance of **English** (*n* = 2)

Que no pierda el español es mi única meta.
That he doesn't lose Spanish is my only goal.

How important is it to you that your child be bilingual?

77.14%

22.86%

| 0% | 0% | 0% | | |
| Not important | A little important | Medium importance | Very important | Extremely important |

RQ1: Language Planning

Do you have rules about when (and with whom) you want your child to use English and Spanish?

68.57%

31.43%

No   Yes

If so, what are they?
- Spanish at home, English at school ($n = 10$)
- Spanish when a particular person is present (e.g. grandma) ($n = 1$)

Es libre de expresarse en inglés y español. Quizás si él empieza a hablar más en inglés, podemos ser un poco más estrictos.
He is free to express himself in English and Spanish. Maybe if he starts to speak more in English, we can be a little more strict.

Ya dijimos que en la casa, sólo español. Afuera pueden usar lo que quieran.
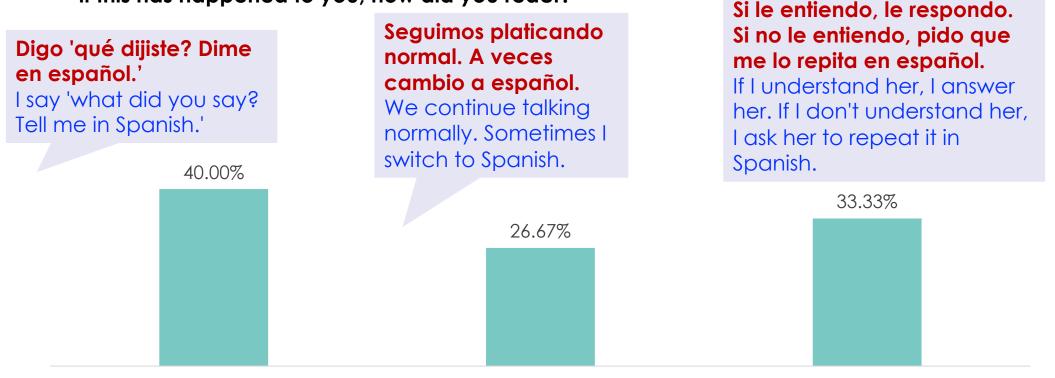We already said that at home, only Spanish. Outside they can use what they want.

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RQ1: Reported Language Practices

Have you ever spoken in Spanish to your child and had your child respond in English?
- 80% said yes, this happens at least some of the time

If this has happened to you, how did you react?

Digo 'qué dijiste? Dime en español.'
I say 'what did you say? Tell me in Spanish.'

Seguimos platicando normal. A veces cambio a español.
We continue talking normally. Sometimes I switch to Spanish.

Si le entiendo, le respondo. Si no le entiendo, pido que me lo repita en español.
If I understand her, I answer her. If I don't understand her, I ask her to repeat it in Spanish.

40.00%

26.67%

33.33%

High-constraint strategies only   Low-constraint strategies only   Both low- and high-constraint strategies

RQ2: Do parents' **reported** language practices in response to child CS align with their **observed** language practices?

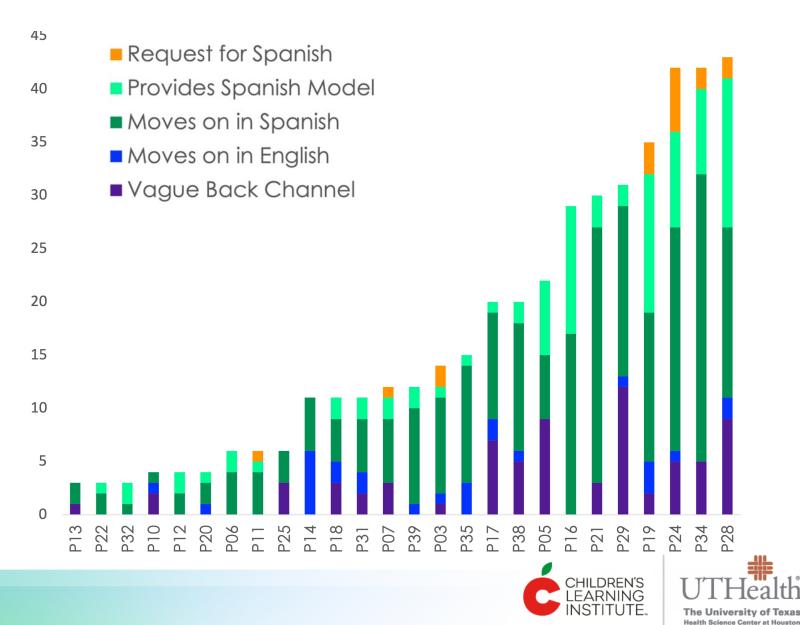# RQ2: Coding Language Practices in Response to Child CS

High Constraint

Request for Spanish	*PAR: qué es esto? [what is this?] *CHI: un cow. [a cow] *PAR: cómo se llama en español ? [what is it called in Spanish?] *PAR: tú sabes.
Provides Spanish Model	*PAR: qué es? [what is it?] *CHI: es the fast. [it's the fast] *PAR: sí, va muy rápido, muy rápido. [yes, it goes very fast, very fast]

Low Constraint

Moves on in Spanish	*PAR: quiénes duermen aquí ? [who sleeps here?] *CHI: sisters . *PAR: es ...? [is it...?] *CHI: no this is, this is there . *PAR: ponlo . [put it there].
Moves on in English	*PAR: y de qué color es este gorro? [and what color is this hat?] *CHI: uhm ... red. *PAR: red. *PAR: ok.
Vague/Back-channel	*PAR: es una almohadita. [It's a little pillow.] *CHI: bed. *PAR: mhm, yeah.

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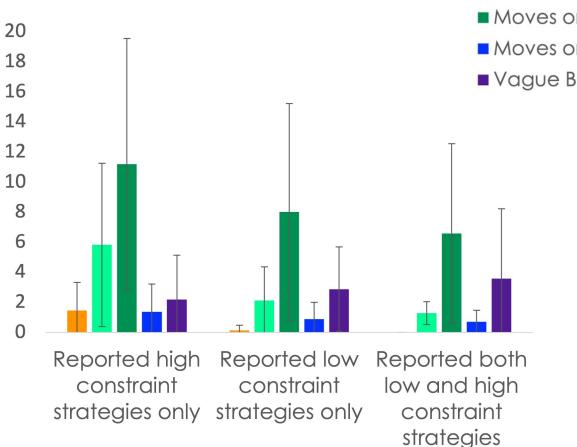# RQ2: Observed Language Practices in Response to Child CS

- 439 coded responses to child-initiated CS to English
- 3 – 43 per dyad (*n* = 26)

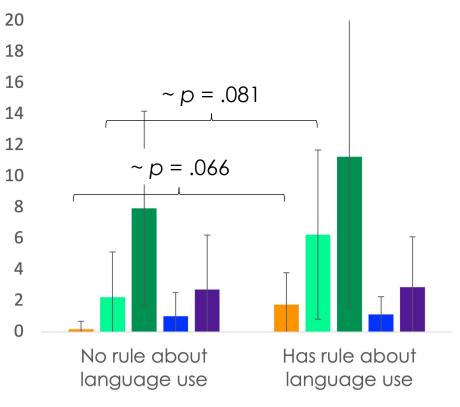Pie chart:
- 53% (Moves on in Spanish, dark green)
- 21% (Provides Spanish Model, light green)
- 4% (Request for Spanish, orange)
- 16% (Vague Back Channel, purple)
- 6% (Moves on in English, blue)

Bar chart legend:
- Request for Spanish
- Provides Spanish Model
- Moves on in Spanish
- Moves on in English
- Vague Back Channel

Bar chart x-axis: P13, P22, P32, P10, P12, P20, P06, P11, P25, P14, P18, P31, P07, P39, P03, P35, P17, P38, P05, P16, P21, P29, P19, P24, P34, P28

RQ2: Reported and observed language practices

RQ3: Are parents' reported or observed language practices related to their child's Spanish skills after preschool entry?
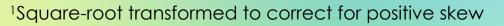
Limited to children with coded parent responses to CS at T1 and Spanish measures at T2 (*n* = 23)

RQ3: Correlations with child Spanish skills at T2

	T2 child Span. types/min (*n*=23)	T2 Span. Exp. Vocab CELF-P2 raw, (*n*=21)
T2 Span. Exp. Vocab. (CELF-P2 raw)	**0.716*****	
Child age in months at T2	0.250	0.176
Child gender is female	-0.002	-0.089
Parent years of education	0.081	0.192
Parent years since immigration	-0.014	-0.316
Child MLU in words at T1	**0.725*****	**0.651****
Child-initiated CS per utterance at T1	**-0.684*****	**-0.727*****
High constraint only	0.034	-0.262
Low constraint only	-0.312	-0.100
Both high & low constraint	0.306	**0.413~**
Request for Spanish	-0.072	-0.269
Provides Spanish Model	**-0.400~**	**-0.607****
Moves on in Spanish	**-0.432***	**-0.746*****
Moves on in English	-0.207	-0.049
Vague back-channel	**-0.398~**	**-0.475***

Row group labels (left margin): Potential Covariates; Reported; Observed[1]

*~p<.1, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001*

Interpret with caution: correlation is not causation!

[1]Square-root transformed to correct for positive skew

Summary

- Parents highly valued their child's bilingualism.

- A minority had rules regarding their child's language use, and those who did tended to have a "Spanish only at home" rule.

- A majority reported using "high constraint" strategies (e.g. asking child to translate) at least some of the time.

- However, high-constraint strategies were rarely observed.

- Parents who reported using both types of strategies tended to have children with slightly stronger Spanish skills at T2.

- *Providing Spanish models* and *Moving on in Spanish* were negatively associated with later Spanish skills, **but this may be because children with more limited Spanish CS to English more frequently**.

Language Beliefs

Language Planning

Language Practices

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions

- First study to explore Parental Discourse Strategies in this population

- Unique combination of qualitative and quantitative data over multiple timepoints, but very small sample with limited power

- Parent proficiency in English was not measured

Next Steps

- How do children react to different parent responses? And how does this change over time? (Sequential analysis - ISB14 in Sydney)

- How can parents support children with developmental language disorder?

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Questions?

sarah.surrain@uth.tmc.edu

sarahsurrain.com