

Multiple Cultures, Multiple Voices: Effectively Educating All Children  
Harrisburg, PA - June 18, 2007

# Promoting Writing for English Learners through the Language and Cultural Stories of Preservice Teachers

Lilia E. Sarmiento Ph.D., CSUDH

Dolores Beltrán Ph.D., CSULA

# Presentation Goals

- Learn ways to tap into the historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students in preparing them to excel as teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

# Condition

Growing diversity of  
students in our public  
schools

# Challenge

- Build culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms
- Develop teachers who have the understanding and skills to draw upon the wellspring of cultural and linguistic resources of their students

# Solution

Work through the  
complexity of language  
and culture for  
academic proficiency

# Solution

Create instructional spaces  
that transcend the  
boundaries of cultural and  
linguistic diversity for  
responsive teaching

Spaces that draw from  
the wellspring of who  
teachers are and  
students are

# Our Contexts

- Latinas
- Bilingual educators
- Teacher education professors
  - Second language development
  - Primary language development

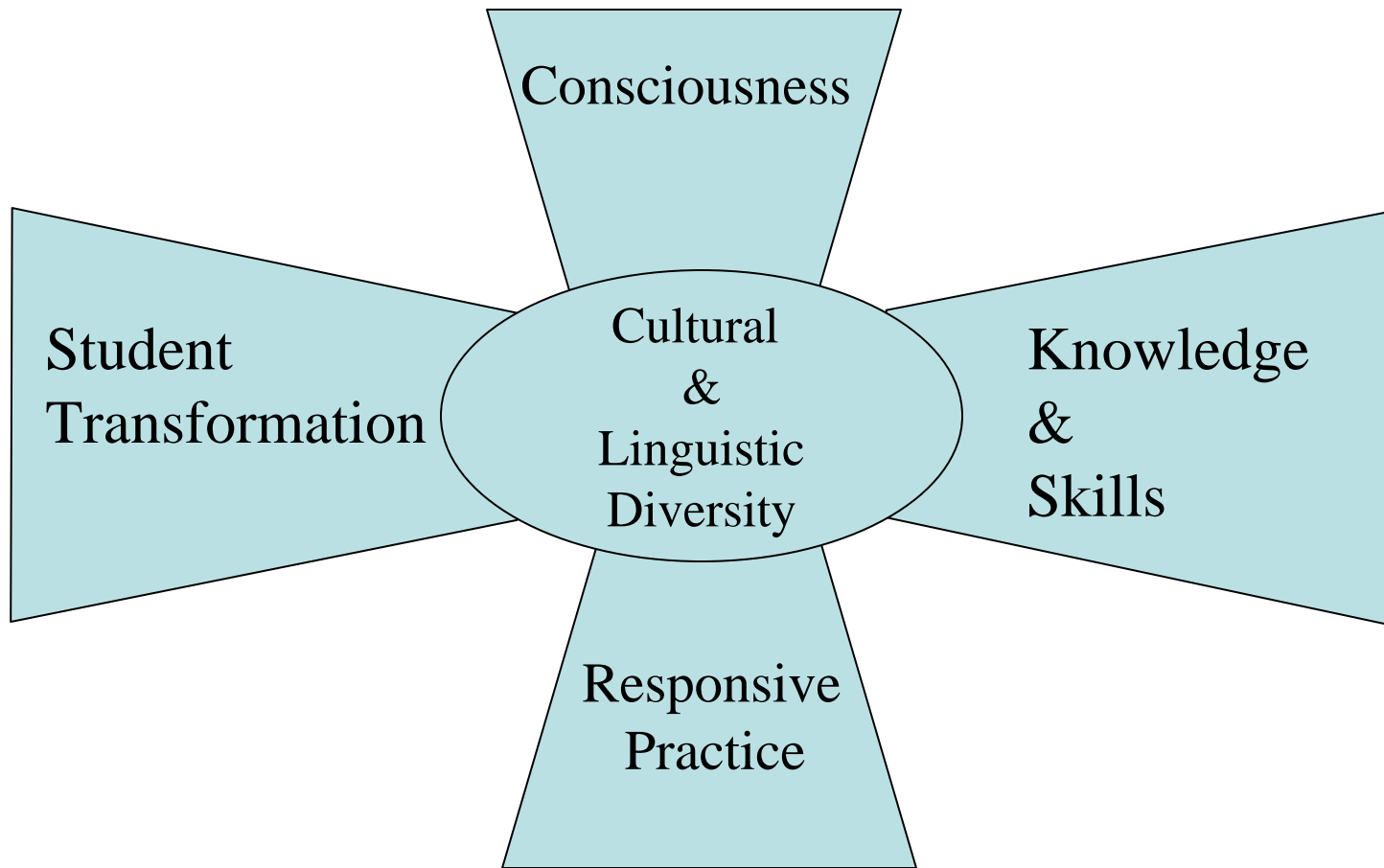
# Cultural and Linguistic Narrative Spaces

- Language and Literacy  
Autobiography
- Family History Writing Project
- Cultural Connections

# Inspiration

- Sonia Nieto (2003)
  - Teaching as Autobiography
- Concha Delgado-Gaitan (2006)
  - Culturally Responsive Classrooms
- Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz (2001)
  - “Cross-Cultural Travelers”

# Working Through Complexity



# Cultural & Linguistic Narrative

#1

Language & Literacy  
Autobiography

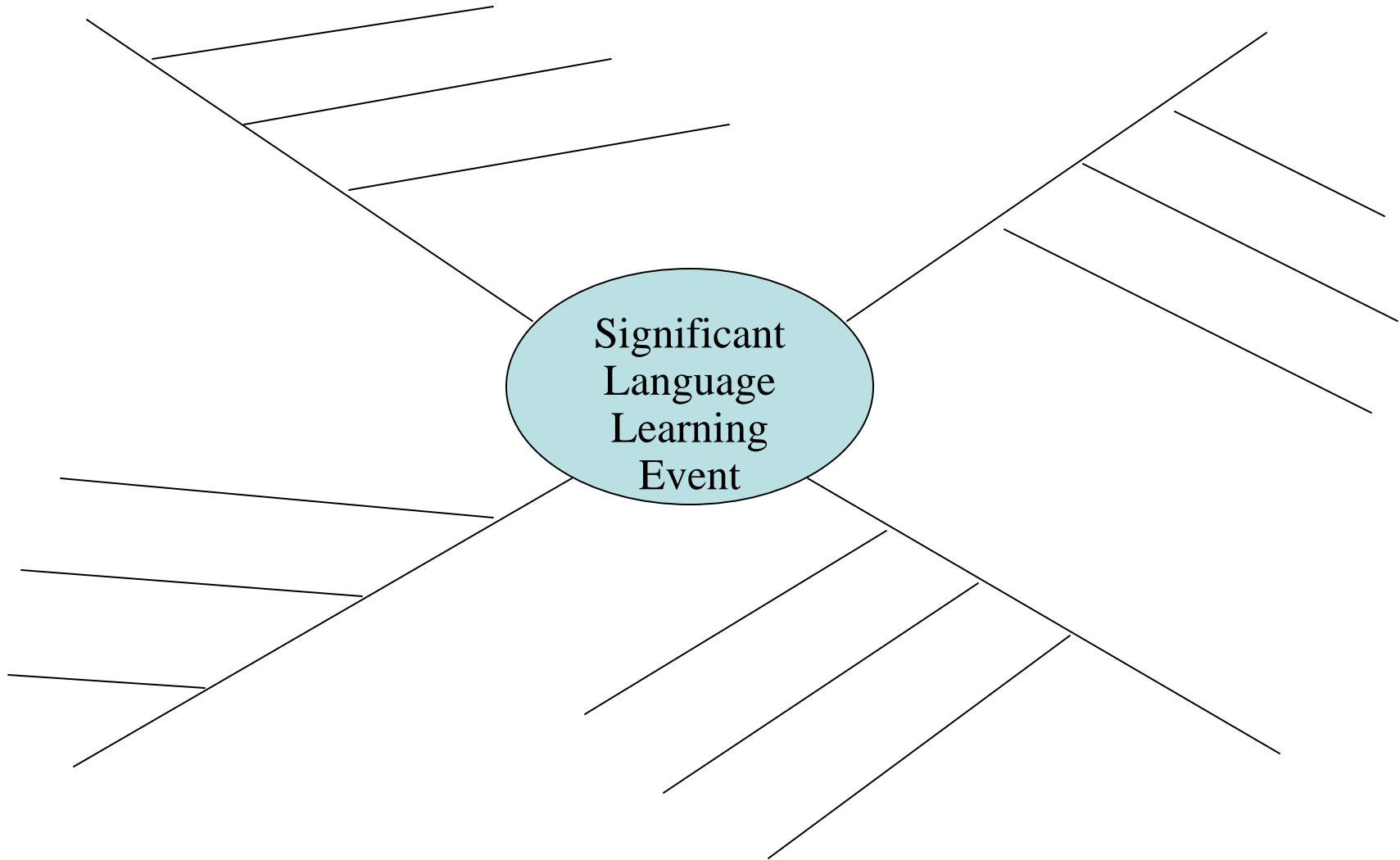
# Step One

*Think as far back as you can remember about the significant language learning events of your life (first or second language).*

*Who was involved? What were your feelings?*

*What was the setting? What happened to help you learn language?*

# Cognitive Map



# Step Two

- Share your story with your group.
- Once everyone has shared, identify the common elements that contributed to language learning.

# Next Steps

- Compile a list on an overhead.
- Label “Principles of Language Learning.”
- Discuss implications for English Learners who are acquiring a second language.
- Discuss implications of home, family, and culture for language learning.

# Writing Practice

- Keep your hand moving (Don't pause or reread the line you have just written).
- Don't censor yourself. Don't cross out (Even if you write something you didn't mean to write, leave it).
- Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- Lose control (Go off on a tangent).
- Go for the jugular.
- Enjoy the flood of memories.

Natalie Goldberg (1986) *Writing down the bones*

# Language & Literacy Autobiography

Based on the stories you shared in class today, write about your personal experiences developing language and literacy. Describe your earliest memories of using language in your family. What influences did parents, siblings, baby-sitters, teachers and other significant role models have on your language development? Did your family have oral traditions? Did the media have a negative or positive influence on your desire to speak and read in the language of your parents? If you learned a second language, what do you remember about the process?

# Four Corners

- Culture represents an individual's or group's preferred ways of perceiving, judging, and organizing the ideas, situations, and events they encounter in their daily lives.
- Cultural self-awareness begins with an exploration of our own heritage, history, encounters, and experiences.

# Four Corners cont...

- There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched or altered by culture.
- The challenge facing educators who desire to create a culturally responsive and relevant environment for all their students is to acknowledge how culture influences them both as individuals and as teachers within a classroom setting. Source: ASCD, 1998

# Cultural & Linguistic Narrative

#2

Family History  
Writing Project

# Rehearsal

- Create a cultural web (traditions, home remedies, sayings, advice, recipes, events...)
- Establish a writing practice
- Maintain a writer's notebook
- Sketch a floor plan
- Generate a list of people to write to
- Read like a writer

# Exploration of Genres

- Autobiographical narrative
- Biographical narrative
- Historical narrative
- Descriptive narrative
- Informational
- Letter writing
- Family legends

# Family History Writing Project

## Purpose:

- To engage in a writer's life
- To record one's own oral family history
- To gain a deeper understanding of different writing genres.

# Writing Project Requirements

- Create a 16 page book that includes: title page, dedication page, table of contents, and family tree.
- Include a minimum of 6 revised family stories in different genres.
- The entries may be written in the heritage language or English.

If you are responsible for the teaching of writing, then it is critical that you engage in the life of a writer.

# References

Delgado-Gaitan, Concha (2006). *Culturally responsive classrooms: a guide for K-6 teachers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Nieto, Sonia (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Trumbull, E., Rothstein-Fisch, C., Greenfield, P. M., & Quiroz, B. (2001). *Bridging cultures between home and school: A guide for teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Publishers.