Statement
As foreign language teachers we experience life through multiple lenses, often without noticing how powerful this is. Throughout my life I have written for newspapers in both English and Spanish, had radio shows in both languages, wrote and delivered speeches in both languages, wrote business plans for clients in both languages, performed in theaters in both languages and taught in both languages. I attended meetings in the United States Capitol in English and worked with Latin American Consuls and Puerto Rican government officials to establish Economic Development programs in Spanish. I did a bachelor’s in
international communications in English and a master’s in communications in Spanish.

I have friends who only speak Spanish. I have friends who only speak English. I have friends whose main language is one other than Spanish or English but also speak in one of those two languages, in addition to their mother tongue. My life would not be complete, would not be what it is today without each of these beautiful beings, without their friendship or influence. I feel like I have been able to somehow connect with so many places on our planet! Whenever something newsworthy happens almost anywhere in the world, I can think of someone from that place who I have met or I’m friends with: Ukraine, Argentina, South Africa, Kenya, Spain, Germany, France, Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia, England, Japan, Korea, Cuba, Singapore, China, Turkey, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, Bangladesh, Poland, Slovenia, Perú, Canada, Morocco… You get the idea! This is possible because I have lived my life in two languages, as a curious person, someone who is open to listening to others, learning from others and being with others who come from different backgrounds and bring diverse ideas and worldviews to the table.

This openness and curiosity awoke in my bicultural household, with a Cuban mother and a Puerto Rican father. Afterwards, my curiosity was fed at school with knowledgeable teachers from different backgrounds, who taught me in both languages. One of my favorite teachers urged me to join the United Nations club in which I had a chance to represent different countries on a monthly basis, having to defend their unique worldviews in a Security or Human Rights Council. Another teacher urged me to apply to the Presidential Classroom, which led to my first time in the U.S. Capitol. Another teacher polished me in the art of performing. They continued what my parents had started. My parents lay the seeds (and my mom drove me everywhere), while my teachers and professors helped me bloom.

In college, when it was time to select a major, with the blessing of having received a full ride leadership scholarship, my professors helped me design an interdisciplinary major: International Communications. As president of the International Students Association, host of the radio show "Around the World in 60 minutes" and the founder/president of the International Business Organization, my professors and administrators were always ready to support, participate and inspire. I was taught to think critically at home and in school.
Teaching is my second career. I started teaching in Dual Language classrooms when I moved to Texas with my husband and my two small children. Now that my kids are both in Middle School and High School, I teach High School Spanish. I have always loved school, loved being surrounded by curiosity. Being able to teach while my own kids grow up has been a blessing. My husband (who is also Puerto Rican) and I have made sure that our children grow up fully bicultural and bilingual; they love the single white star in both the Puerto Rican and the Texan flag and they have a soft Texan accent in English and a Puerto Rican accent in Spanish!

Today, you and I, as educators, bring a different perspective to young people's lives. We give them a different way to experience life, because when we call something by another name, we are automatically obliged to see that person, that action and that thing in a new light. When we have new names for enough things, people, actions and ideas in our lives, our perception of life expands. In all, a bilingual and bicultural life is a rich and varied life, full options. We should know! As foreign language teachers we are living it. We are the gatekeepers, the guides for a new generation of students who get to see life through different lenses. Such a responsibility! Such a blessing!

Bio

Elda Acevedo Estefanía was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She graduated from DePauw University in Indiana with a bachelor’s in international communication and completed her Masters at Universidad del Sagrado Corazón in San Juan, Puerto Rico. After a 30-day train journey around the United States with her two children, she self-published the book Amtrak's Best Kept Secret: A guide to traveling the U.S.A. with a Rail Pass. As a tribute to her grandmother, who was also a teacher, she occasionally reads stories and poems, mostly in Spanish and publishes them on her personal website www.eldaacevedo.com. Elda currently teaches Spanish at Vandegrift High School in Austin, Texas and lives in Leander, Texas with her husband and two teenagers.