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Narrative Self-Constructions of Senator Ralph Yarborough in the 1967 Congressional Hearings on the Bilingual Education Act

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The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 served as an important initiative in meeting some of linguistic needs of language minority students. This piece of legislation has been studied in terms of its content, interpretation and implementation. However, there is little research to explain how it was developed and passed into law and who played an important role in creating and supporting this bill. This paper uses political and linguistic anthropological discourse analytic methods to examine the narrative self-constructions of the co-author and chief sponsor of the bill, Senator Ralph Yarborough. After providing background on the socio-political climate occurring during these hearings, I address two separate research questions. First, I examine how Senator Yarborough constructed spaces where he introduced his self-construction narratives. Then, I analyze the self-construction narratives in which he presented himself in three distinct roles: educator, traveler and younger self. These narratives within the context of the congressional hearings have created a paradox of power and self-deprecation that characterizes Senator Yarborough's self-construction narratives.

Introduction

The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 was an important piece of legislation for creating a space in federal policies to foster multilingualism in U.S. public schools. The policy and its subsequent reauthorizations have been scrutinized by teachers, administrators and researchers. Although focusing on the policy as a text affords many meaningful insights, it ignores the agency of the authors or sponsors of the legislation. The politicians who were involved in creating the BEA were positioned in a role that provided them the opportunity to shape the content of the policy. However, there exists little information in bilingual education research that examines who these supporters were. In order to understand one of the most powerful positions in top-down language policy

and planning, this paper examines the self-construction narratives of the policy's chief sponsor, Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas in the congressional hearings for the BEA. His repeated narratives about his youth, travels and teaching experience offer a window into understanding the policy maker who advocated for the first passage of the BEA, through investigating his self-construction narratives. Wortham (2000) argues that self-construction can be analyzed by examining "...how the self *represented* in an autobiographical narrative and the self *enacted* in the same narrative can interrelate so as partly to construct the self" (p. 4, emphasis in original). By investigating Senator Yarborough's self-construction, this paper aims to show how the agency of a policy maker may influence the scope of a piece of legislation. In addition, by conducting a detailed analysis of Senator Yarborough's narratives at the hearings on the BEA, this paper may help researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of who decision makers are, how policy makers accomplish the task of making a policy law and a better understanding of the political discourses surrounding language policy as a whole.

Congressional hearings represent an important step in the creation and passage of a piece of legislation. Before any policy proposal can become law in the United States, senators or congress members must hold hearings. During these hearings, researchers, politicians, professionals and various other experts or concerned parties give spoken and written testimony, which is meant to inform the bill being debated (Government Printing Office, 2005). Senators or congress members preside over these hearings if they are the chief or co-sponsors of the bill. They introduce each witness, ask questions, thank speakers and elaborate on the points offered in the testimony. I treat these hearings as a form of *discourse*. Following Blommaert's (2005) definition, I define discourse as "...all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use" (p. 3). The semiotic human activities in the study include language use but extend to external contexts. Within the bounded discursive practices of the hearings, legislators are positioned in a powerful role as the controller of the proceedings. In this role, he/she can choose to represent him/herself in relation to the debated themes. Thus, the setting becomes relevant in terms of the constrictions of the procedures used for the hearings, as well as the influence of other social movements (e.g., the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement) occurring during this period of time.

During the hearings for the BEA of 1968, the bill's chief sponsor Senator Yarborough not only enacted this traditional role as the director of the proceedings but also created discursive spaces where he could engage in narrative self-construction. Over the course of seven days, he presents and emphasizes three distinct roles: educator, traveler and younger self. These interrelations can take various forms. Using linguistic anthropology and political discourse approaches, I analyze the discursive practices em-

ployed by Senator Yarborough to examine how he not only created spaces where these narratives could be spoken but also how he uses autobiographical stories to construct a self. Moreover, the devices and narratives that Senator Yarborough chose are a form of self-presentation to fellow senators and more specifically to the interlocutors. I conclude by relating his narrative self-construction to the legislative histories and intent of the BEA of 1968.

Background

Addressing Inequalities

The political climate in the United States began to shift in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This change was reflected in acts of federal legislation. The Civil Rights Movement marked this transition to the possible creation of more inclusive and tolerant policies for diverse populations. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the first national law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, sex or national origin (Crawford, 2008a). This was closely followed by changes to long-standing policies on immigration. In 1965, amendments to the Immigration and Naturalization Act (Hart-Cellar Act, INS Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-236) eliminated the quotas that had been in place since 1924, thereby opening U.S. borders to immigrants from across the globe (Wright, 2005).

This increased awareness of inequalities also directly affected education. The National Education Association (NEA) became more aware of inequalities after examining the 1960 census data regarding the levels of education of Mexican Americans. By isolating and comparing the self-reported categories of whites and Mexican Americans, the NEA found that whites averaged approximately nine more years of education than Mexican Americans. Drawing attention to this lack of equity in education helped to set the tone for expanding rights protection to linguistic minority students' access to education (Moran, 1988; Wright, 2005). These findings also served as the impetus for a 1966 NEA conference in Tucson, Arizona where the NEA specifically applied these findings in the census data to address issues facing Spanish-speakers in U.S. public schools. Senator Yarborough was invited by the NEA to attend and as a result, became a proponent of bilingual education. Following the conference, he began work on legislation to help raise the academic achievement of Spanish-speaking students. He was the chief sponsor of S. 428, an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) better known as Title VII, the BEA. The BEA introduced new perspectives in educational policy, changing pedagogical approaches to teaching linguistic minority students and paving the way for an increased focus in education to ad-

dress the linguistic needs of these students (Crawford, 1998, 2002).

During the debate over the BEA, there were factors both inside and outside education that affected the scope of the bill. The BEA followed trends in changing orientations of educational policy set by the ESEA, which challenged and questioned state and local education agency decisions, ultimately giving more control to federal education policies. During this time the United States was also involved in two large conflicts, the Vietnam and Cold Wars. Thus, the Senate and House of Representatives had to contend with these military funding demands while debating other bills and legislation. These important factors influenced the BEA by limiting the amount of funding that could be allocated for services. Although not directly reflected in the congressional hearing, these external constraints have also been cited as possible reasons affecting the range of the BEA (Crawford, 1998; Moran, 1988).

The Role of the Congressional Record

The unit of analysis for this investigation, the content of the hearings, is seen as important in defining the congressional intent or overall meaning of a bill. In addition, these records serve as a key reference for many in the U.S. legal system who often turn to legislative histories to interpret and determine intent. Of these different components of legislative records, the greatest weight is generally given to conference and/or committee reports followed by the congressional debate and remarks from the bill's sponsor (McKinney & Sweet, 2006). Unlike most legislation, the BEA of 1968 lacks a conference report and the brevity of the committee report is uncommon. This elevates the significance of the discourses in the congressional hearings because these hearings function as the most relevant piece of the legislative record available to analyze to determine legislative intent. However, there are also constraints related to the transcripts. No audio or video files exist and therefore one must assume that the stenographers accurately recorded the proceedings. This limits the use of possible discourse approaches such as conversation analysis. Despite these limitations, these hearings are part of the legislative history of the BEA and a relevant, enduring piece of discourse.

Alternative Approaches to Studying the Formation of the BEA

The political and historical influences on the BEA are well documented by researchers of language policy. Within these analyses, policy makers are often quoted, paraphrased or summarized to determine legislative intent (see Crawford, 1998, 2002, 2008a, 2008b; Del Valle, 2003; Hornberger, 2006; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004; Wright, 2005). In addition, the voices of policy makers are also often characterized as a powerful, yet undefined group as shown in Table 1. However, within this large body of research,

policy makers' discursive practices in congressional hearings are rarely studied exclusively or examined as a unit of analysis. This omission may contribute to a misrepresentation of policy makers as a homogeneous group rather than as agentive individuals.

Table 1.

Undefined policy makers in academic discourse [emphasis added].

... reflects the stark reality that fostering Irish-English bilingualism through the education system is not a primary consideration of <i>policy makers</i> .	Coady & Laoire, 2002, p. 154
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Language policies then apply to members of speech communities who are in some way in the power of <i>policy makers</i> .	Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999, p. 50
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By portraying the public as simply having no interest in issues of language and language use, <i>policy makers</i> can all too easily avoid facing the hard questions.	Shohamy, 2003, p. 282
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There are many possible reasons for not examining the discursive practices of policy makers. For instance, some may argue that congressional hearings on policy are dull, institutionally constrained practices and therefore not rich sources of data. In addition, the research cited in Table 1 focuses on the implementation and interpretation of policies in terms of interactions at societal and individual levels. Thus, the intent of the policy makers may not play an important role in these types of investigations. However, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the rationale for supporting this change in educational orientations, the voices of the policy makers become increasingly significant. Further, these particular congressional hearings contain more than specific testimony related to the bill. They also include some policy makers' narrative self-constructions, which can offer more insight about *who* these policy makers are. Of these narratives given by the sponsors of the bill, Senator Yarborough offered more autobiographical stories than any other person. Although these hearings contain a variety of discursive practices, the scope of this research centers on Senator Yarborough's narrative self-construction in reference to his roles and experiences apart from his work as a senator. He selected specific moments from his childhood, travels, and career as an educator to narrate, often repeatedly. These autobiographical stories can be analyzed to gain a greater understanding of how Senator Yarborough presents his self within the setting of the congressional hearings for the BEA. This is a presentation of the self for short-term interactional purposes as opposed to a more enduring self. Therefore, the long-term implications of how

these narratives define Senator Yarborough are beyond the scope of this paper. However, this self-construction is then compared to the legislative histories and intent.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This analysis of Senator Yarborough's discourse during seven days of congressional hearings for the BEA during May, June and July of 1967 uses linguistic anthropology and political discourse approaches. Both approaches view language as a social tool, which can be analyzed to gain insight about the performed actions of a speaker (Chilton, 2004; Duranti, 2001). By combining these approaches, this analysis is able to gain more insight into Yarborough's autobiographical stories. Linguistic anthropology attends to narrative self-construction within this analysis, while political discourse analysis draws attention to the contextual framework wherein the narratives are developed.

Self-construction within narratives functions in two distinct yet overlapping ways. First, the narrative allows an individual to characterize him/herself as a particular type of person. Within this representation, the narrator engages in self-construction through description of personality traits and actions (Wortham, 2000, 2001). However, during the process of narrating a storytelling event (e.g., re-telling a story about an experience), a person is able to perform within that role, reinforcing the described self, or, as is the case with Senator Yarborough, use indexicals or words that connect to broader social meanings to evaluate this description of the self (Blommaert, 2005; Wortham, 2000, 2001). This is related to what Bakhtin (1935/1981 as cited in Wortham, 2001) calls *voicing* (e.g., paraphrases or quoting of other speakers) and *ventriloquation* (e.g., taking on the voice of a speaker, speaking as if one is this other person). A narrator "...establish[es] a configuration of voices for various characters and position[s] [him/herself] with respect to these voices" (Wortham, 2001, p. 70). Senator Yarborough's voicing and ventriloquation of himself and others aids in his narrative self-construction in that this allows him to explicitly express how he positions himself in relation to other people, real and hypothetical.

As stated earlier, the context of these self-construction narratives is unique because they are uttered during the structured hearings on the BEA. Senator Yarborough's role as the chief sponsor of the bill translates discursively into the position of the controller of turn-taking, introducing, interrupting, commenting on and summarizing all speakers' testimony. Over the course of seven days in Washington, D.C., Texas, California and New York, he selects specific moments from his youth, travels and career as an educator to place on the Congressional Record. Before examining the content of self-construction in Senator Yarborough's narratives, I analyze

the specific linguistic devices used to create spaces where he is able to share these autobiographic stories to answer the question: *How does Senator Yarborough create discursive spaces to introduce his narratives?* There are several discursive markers that allow Senator Yarborough to construct and present himself. He used *meta-discursive* language or talk about talk (e.g., I am going to ask a question) (Blommaert, 2005), *temporal* (e.g., then, when, yesterday), *social* (e.g., he, she, they) and *spatial deictics* (e.g., here, there, nearby) (Chilton, 2004; Wortham, 1996) and shifts in verb tense. Deictics specifically help to define the relationship of the speaker to other individuals or events (Wortham, 1996). Together these contribute to Senator Yarborough's ability to control the discourse and produce a space where he can alter the topic of the interaction, placing himself as the main subject of discussion (Chilton, 2004; Wortham, 2000, 2001). I then focus on the content of the self-construction narratives to address the question: *What aspects of self does Senator Yarborough present during the congressional hearing for the BEA?* Within the narratives, Senator Yarborough again strategically uses temporal, social and spatial deictics not only to represent himself but also with respect to other groups. Identities are imposed on the other actors in the self-construction narratives, which also aids in analyzing how Senator Yarborough presents himself (Blommaert, 2005; Wortham, 2000). This interactional positioning uses Bakhtinian voicing and ventriloquation in addition to evaluative indexicals to construct the self by indexing group membership (Chilton, 2004; Wortham, 2001).

Senator Yarborough's remarks exist within a larger framework of society and thus draw from external *ideologies* or hierarchical structures. When issues regarding language are discussed, ideologies often influence the opinions and direction of the debate (Chilton, 2004). Ideologies can be understood as "...an ideational aspect of a particular social and political system, the 'grand narratives' characterizing its existence, structure, and historical development" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 159). For example within the hearings, Senator Yarborough reinforces power structure ideologies of state and federal control or oversight. During this period of time, there was a large push to take power away from the states, especially in terms of making decisions about education. The first initiative to place more control in the hands of the federal government, the ESEA, preceded the BEA by only three years (Moran, 1988). Thus, the claim by Senator Yarborough and others such as the NEA that the states were negligent in providing fair and appropriate education, in this case to linguistic minority students, strengthened this ideology. Another related external constraint that influences this discursive practice is the power dynamics inherent in the structure of the hearings themselves. As mentioned earlier, Senator Yarborough presided over the hearings which entailed taking on a position of power, introducing, questioning and summarizing participants' testimony. This also placed him in the position where everyone was obliged to listen to him, as there were no discursive mechanisms for other participants, other

than the other Senators, to interrupt Senator Yarborough. To further exemplify the power that this position holds, it should be noted that at no time during the hearings did any other person interrupt, contradict or question Senator Yarborough during his self-construction narratives. Thus, the influence of larger societal frameworks of ideological and hierarchical structures is evidenced through these discursive practices.

These power dynamics become especially relevant in relation to issues of language and education. The BEA constitutes the first federal language education policy in the United States, and within the text of the hearings, much of the discourse explicitly discusses opinions and position on languages. Therefore, language ideologies are particularly relevant when looking at Senator Yarborough's discourse. According to Blackledge and Pavlenko (2002) "[l]anguage ideologies are used as gatekeeping practices to create, maintain and reinforce boundaries between people in a broad range of contexts..." (pp. 131-132). Hence, language ideologies are more than stereotypes on languages, language speakers or language use; rather, language ideologies interact with larger domains of power of a community or society. This type of interaction can also be applied to the internal structure of the hearing, identifying how Senator Yarborough tailors his narratives for a particular context or audience. In fact, because Senator Yarborough gave the same autobiographical storytelling events more than once over the course of the hearings, his narratives not only relate to other speakers but also to each other. The inconsistencies or changes he made to narratives also help to characterize the types of self he is constructing.

The narratives present not only within themselves a piece of discourse, which provides a more nuanced perspective of a key policy maker but also index larger socio-political contexts. This analysis of Senator Yarborough's self-construction narratives consists of two sections. First, I identify the linguistic and paralinguistic tools Senator Yarborough employed in order to begin his narratives. Second, I examine the content of the narratives as a form of self-construction while also identifying societal influences.

Senator Yarborough's Self-Construction Narratives

Creating Spaces for Narratives

Before analyzing the content of the self-construction narratives, it is important to examine how Senator Yarborough was able to introduce these narratives during the BEA congressional hearings. He used multiple, specific linguistic forms and expressions to mark his shifts from debating direct content of the BEA to offering personal narratives. The clearest shifts use meta-discursive language. He announces or alerts the audience to these shifts from discourses related to the BEA to his self-construction.

He only begins a self-construction narrative with such a statement marking this shift. Table 2 lists the discursive constructions used by Senator Yarborough to introduce his autobiographical narratives. Although at the conclusion of his narratives he may link the content of his narrative to the larger discourse, only in the excerpt on page 131 does he make such a connection in the introduction. In all other introductions, the narrative is not directly associated with the topic of discussion in the hearing. The transition utterances are presented below with preceding and following sentences, with the statement itself in bold.

Table 2.
Transition statements from the Congressional Record (1967), in bold

page	
	Meta-discursive
57	That record, as you know, is checked by many government offices, libraries and universities all over the country. Now, I have one further observation. I spent a year....
405	I want to say that these young ladies, Mrs. Cortez and Miss Ruiz, have much more to offer in the way of their knowledge of this subject. I am going to take a second here to say, Miss Ruiz, that I went to school in Germany...
	Temporal shift
112	That [to be competent to teach bilingually] requires a great deal more training than people trained to teach only in one language, does it not? [witness responds: That is true sir.] I realize that from my youth, having tried to teach
459	I appreciate the ideas and things you have expressed in such a short period of time. When I was young I attempted to teach...
	Indirect referents
131	...for this instruction in other languages where that language is the mother tongue in addition to the national language of English. My own interest in this subject arose when I worked my way to Europe...
353	I confess I have put in more time on educational problems at the Federal level, since I have been in the Senate, than any other level. Of course, what a man does is usually rooted in experience. I attempted to teach...

His transitions include meta-discursive statements, temporal shifts and indirect referents. On pages 57 and 405 Senator Yarborough uses meta-discursive statements to signal his move from talking about topics referenced by the witness to personal narratives. He uses present tense declarative statements with the deictic pronoun "I" to mark his shift to a self-construction narrative. This unambiguously changes the focus of the hearing from discussing the terms of the bill to an autobiographical story. He employs less explicit, temporal tools on pages 112 and 459. He follows temporal deictic constructions "from my youth" and "when I was young" with a verb tense shift into the past tense to index a past event. The more direct approaches can be contrasted with the excerpts from pages 131 and 353. Senator Yarborough's use of possessive personal pronouns

in his phrase “my own interest” and even more so the indefinite referent “man” are used to point to Senator Yarborough but are less direct than if he were to use the deictic *I*. However, no matter the degree of explicitness, his transitions are always successful and are followed by a self-construction narrative. The fact that he is always able to execute a narrative after his introduction may be due to his role as the moderator of the hearings and chief sponsor of the bill.

It is also important to note that Senator Yarborough is not prompted by others to make these statements. No one asks him about these topics. Yet, because he presides over the hearings and controls turns, he is able to make these statements regardless of whether or not the witnesses or other senators want to hear these stories. However, he is not free to continue talking without end. His role as the moderator also means that he must be cognizant of time constraints of the hearing in relation to the number of persons who are scheduled to testify. He is also aware of how significant the content of the discourse of the hearings is. Therefore, by allotting the time to present his narratives, often repeatedly, he further emphasizes their importance. Before offering his first narrative, Senator Yarborough states explicitly that not only is there a limited amount of time to include certain content but also that the content of the hearings is important for both present-day and future audiences. His directness about the importance of such factors further supports the notion that his self-construction narratives are purposefully introduced to be included as part of the legislative history of the BEA. As Senator Yarborough states,

With the *limitation of time* I am not going to ask any questions although I had some. This is a very illuminating statement. I am going to put it in the Congressional Record today so those who see the Congressional Record tomorrow will have it. That record, as you know, is checked by many government offices, libraries and universities all over the country. Now, I have one further observation. I spent a year in Germany... (*Congressional Record*, 1967, p. 57) [emphasis added]

After discussing how Senator Yarborough creates spaces where he can state a self-conception narrative, I now turn to the different topics of the narratives that he presents throughout the hearings. He introduces and repeats three themes, which I have classified as specific aspects of his childhood, his travels and career as an educator. His narratives include multiple characters that he voices. Combined with his use of social deictics and evaluative indexicals, Senator Yarborough’s interactional positioning through self-construction not only points to how he represents himself but also shows the influences of ideologies from society through the ways he enacts these roles.

Travel Narratives

Within his autobiographical stories about travel, he spends a great amount of time describing his travels and more specifically his time in Germany. Table 3 shows the transcripts of each narrative sequence in the order they appeared in the transcripts.

Table 3.

Senator Yarborough's traveler self-construction from the Congressional Record (1967)

page

- 57 1 I spent a year in Gemany when I was 18 years of age. They had 3 types of school: one for the
2 people who were not going to go to school many more years, the lyceum for girls and the
3 gymnasium for boys, and the middle school for what we might call the middle classes or trade
4 people. In the middle schools, at the third year they had to begin to study a foreign
5 language. Most of them took English, French or Spanish. The German teachers told me that
6 English was the most difficult language for Gemans to learn in comparison with French or
7 Spanish. I was surprised at that because I thought with many words in English that came from
8 Germany, of course, from Anglos and Saxons who conquered England in the early centuries
9 from the Christian era, English would be easier. Many of the words look very much like
10 English words, but they said in their school—and I think you have given some explanation
11 here, that written and spoken Spanish is so nearly the same that. That might be an
12 explanation, I do not know. But the Gemans told me that their pupils who undertook English
13 had more difficulty than those who studied either French or Spanish.
- 131 14 My own interest in this subject arose when I worked my way to Europe on a cattle boat when
15 I was 18. I had the wanderlust that a lot of college students have. I got a job on a French cattle
16 boat. I was the only English speaking person on it and I did not speak French. We were 22
17 days from New Orleans to le Havre. We picked up the goods along the way and we had cattle
18 there and I was tending the cattle. I was hired because I was from Texas. My nationality
19 helped me get a job.
20 I soon drifted over into Gemany and stayed there 8 months until the weather thawed out in
21 the spring and I picked up a working knowledge of Geman and went to school at that time. I
22 studied every day, took courses in speaking and reading Geman. I became interested in this
23 problem of foreign languages and, though I have not become bilingual in any other language,
24 I have retained an interest in it these years. *[note, this continues uninterrupted into the childhood passage]*
- 405 25 I went to school in Gemany for a year when I was young, and the usual public school, they
26 started to teach the child a second language in the third grade. Some took Spanish, some took
27 English, some Russian. The three most popular languages were English, French, and Spanish.
28 I thought Geman was probably the closest to English than any other language, but the
29 German teachers told me that the students that went to school in the Geman schools, their
30 students found that they could learn Spanish more easily than English, and that was an easier
31 language to learn. I thought since you mentioned Geman, you might be interested in that.

Beginning with Senator Yarborough's use of social deictics, "I" and "me" refers to him both in the present setting of the hearing (lines 10, 12, 24, 31) and with the remainder referring to the past when he was traveling. His use of "they" refers to different groupings of Germans, includ-

ing the general population (line 1, 30), students (line 4) and teachers (line 10). The use of “we” varies from an inclusive use that involves the people listening to the story (line 3) to an exclusive “we” restricted to travelers on a boat bound for France (line 16, 17). This use of inclusive and exclusive “we” is also marked with a verb tense shift. In line 3, Senator Yarborough temporarily leaves the narrated event, switching to present tense verbs and indexing the audience. Lines 3-4 are also very interesting because this marks a quick shift from the narrated event to the storytelling event and then a return to the narrated event. In the short statement “what we might call the middle classes or trade people,” he voices the audience to define the students at these schools in Germany using terms that index a certain type of middle class or trade worker person. He also uses this utterance to translate the German school system into terms that may be understood by the audience. This presupposes that the audience is not familiar with the structure of the German school system and positions Senator Yarborough as a mediator of this knowledge.

Senator Yarborough also voices the teachers by juxtaposing his view that English would be easier for Germans to learn with the teachers’ observation that students had an easier time learning French or Spanish (lines 7, 28-9). Within these statements he situates himself as separate from the teachers but not from the perspective that the teachers are presenting. He endorses these teachers’ point of view by relating it to the witness’s testimony, which stated that reading in Spanish was easier to learn than reading in English (line 10-11). Contrasting this with lines 25-31, he again voices the teachers. However, unlike the narrative in lines 1-13, he has chosen not to emphasize his alternative viewpoint as extensively.

Throughout these autobiographical stories, he references language learning, both his own experiences and learning by others. In lines 1-13 and 25-31, Senator Yarborough discusses languages that German students learn. Through his voicing of the German teachers, he oversimplifies second language learning by categorizing certain languages such as Spanish and French as easier to learn than English (lines 6, 12-13, 30-31). In addition to oversimplifying language learning, in lines 11-12 Senator Yarborough misclassifies French with Spanish as a language with a transparent orthography (i.e., an alphabet with near one-to-one phoneme-to-letter correlations). This is echoed in his narration about his experience learning German when he states that he “picked up a working knowledge of German” (line 21). However, he contradicts these views when he describes the effort it can take to learn a language. He “studied every day [and] took courses in speaking and reading German” (line 22), and despite the time he spent studying German, he does not classify himself as bilingual (line 23).

However, his English monolingualism has not precluded him from traveling. In fact, Senator Yarborough adds to the travel narrative with a story about his time on a boat bound for France (lines 14-24). Within this portion of the narrative he complexifies the discourses about language by adding another dimension: nationality. Within this short passage he

explains that his lack of knowledge of French did not preclude him getting a job. Rather, Senator Yarborough explicitly states that there are times when nationality trumps multilingualism. This rationale for his employment points to larger power structures that influence access. Although he was hired to work with the cattle, he presents himself as the “only English speaking person” (line 16) who also did not speak the language of the other workers, French. Although it is possible that the ship was in dire need of someone to take care of the cattle regardless of language, Senator Yarborough’s interpretation is just as plausible. He attributes receiving the job as related to his citizenship in the United States stating that “My nationality helped me to get the job” (lines 18-19).

In terms of Senator Yarborough’s narrative self-construction, he describes himself as a person who has traveled, studied another language but is by no means an expert on the topic. Rather, he voices others in order to provide evidence about language learning and in the case of lines 1-13, to give additional support for the witness’s testimony. In lines 10-11, he attributes the knowledge about language learning to the witness and follows this with an explicit statement, which clarifies that he is not the expert in lines 11-12. In addition, he lessens the significance of his own language learning experiences by following the description with a qualifier that he does not consider himself to be bilingual. The way he enacts this self-construction sheds more light on this self-description. In relation to language, Senator Yarborough supports an oversimplified view of language acquisition while also misrepresenting what qualities may or may not aid or impede language learning. In addition, when describing his job on the boat to France, he does not question hierarchical power structures; rather he uses these to his advantage. These self-constructions are elaborated on in his narratives about his youth (Table 4).

Youth narratives

Table 4.
Senator Yarborough’s youth self-construction from the Congressional Record (1967)

page	
	<i>[note, this continues uninterrupted from the traveler passage]</i>
131 32	I came from an area where I never heard a word spoken in any other language but English
33	until I was 14. In WWII a bunch of nationals from Mexico came to work on the railroads.
34	School let out one afternoon at 3, and about a hundred of the students crowded down to this
35	cut band in the railroad in this little town. We stood there looking at the Mexicans, saying in
36	English, “say something in Mexican.” We did not know it was Spanish. We thought it was
37	Mexican language and wanted to hear some words spoken in that language. When I went 200
38	miles away to Austin, to the University of Texas, newspapers were published in 5 languages,
39	English, German, Spanish, Swedish, and Czech. The German and Czechs are gone now but
40	they still publish in Spanish and Swedish as well as English. So, I began to get acquainted
41	with a bilingual society.

Senator Yarborough emphasizes spatial and social deictics to position himself in relation to languages other than English and their speakers in his childhood narratives. The spaces he constructs are defined by their language use. He describes his hometown as a place “where [he] never heard a word spoken in any other language but English” (line 32). But this space changes over time and, after living there for 14 years, “a bunch of nationals from Mexico” (line 33) enter a nearby area. He describes an interaction where “we” [a large group of his classmates including a teenage Senator Yarborough] (lines 35-36), go “there” [a cut band in the railroad] (line 35) for the purpose of hearing a different language (line 37). Spatially, the groups are not described as sharing a space, rather the group of students is “looking at” (line 35) the others from an unspecified distance. The area of his hometown is contrasted with the University of Texas in Austin. Senator Yarborough defines the language practices in Austin and explains that he had to travel a great distance, 200 miles to be exact (line 37-38), to encounter multilingualism. He describes his interactional position as a person who has limited exposure to different languages due to spatial constraints in specific moments in time, first in one encounter at age 14 and second during his finite time as a student in Austin. In addition, he evaluates within this statement. He shows that he values multiple languages or at least does not avoid them by purposefully engaging with the Mexican immigrants at age 14.

In this narrative self-construction, Senator Yarborough voices the large group of students (lines 35-36). He reports not only what the people said but also the language they said it in. By explicitly stating the language, he is drawing attention to language use. He also chooses to voice the group with a direct quote, which uses the imperative form “say something in Mexican” (line 36). He explains why they did not know what languages the workers spoke in the first person (line 32) and applies this rationale to explain why the entire group of students thought Mexican was a language. He concludes this autobiographical story with an explicit explanation as to the importance of his remarks, “So, I began to get acquainted with a bilingual society” (lines 40-41), summarizing the content of this narrative as his first encounters with multilingualism.

How does Senator Yarborough describe and enact his self-construction in relation to these childhood moments? He presents himself as a child who had limited contact with, and therefore limited knowledge of, other languages. However, he juxtaposes this autobiographical story with his experiences as a student at the University of Texas in Austin. His description of the University of Texas gives little information about him other than the fact that he made these observations and is now reporting them. He also explains why the group of students approached the Mexicans in the manner in which they did. He attempts to rationalize why the group of students went to see the Mexican railroad workers as a curiosity but also due to their ignorance about other languages. They “thought it was Mexican language and wanted to hear some words spoken in that language” (lines 36-37). It is important to note that he did not have to tell the story in this way. He

chose to present himself to Congress as a person who did not know which language was spoken in Mexico despite the fact that he lived in the border state of Texas. As shown with the traveler narrative self-constructions, here he also presents himself both in description and actions as a somewhat weak figure in that he lacks experience with and knowledge of other languages. As a member of this group, he also benefits from this characterization as an attempt to relate with other participants in the hearings who share these limited experiences. Alternatively, this could also position the participants who are offering testimony in an elevated position of power as experts on the subject of language learning or multilingualism when juxtaposed with his limited experiences. Either strategy has a similar effect of promoting the participants to a high position of power, either by affiliating with Senator Yarborough and his power presiding over the hearings or by having Senator Yarborough position participants as experts. In reference to aligning with others with limited experiences, Senator Yarborough strategically relates with the other children in his neighborhood to support the information in his self-construction in the story in lines 32-37. This *strength in numbers* approach to justifying his statement is similar to lines 3-4 in the traveler narrative when he aligns himself with the audience's definition of "middle class or trade people". Thus, whether he seeks reinforcement of his experiences from the audience of the hearings or from other participants he voices in his narratives, Senator Yarborough seeks external validation to construct a self in close relation to others. However, Senator Yarborough does not always group himself with others. His autobiographical stories about his career as an educator position him as an active agent invested in education (Table 5).

Educator narratives

Table 5.
Senator Yarborough's educator self-construction from the Congressional Record (1967)

page	
112	42
43	43
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459	52
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55	55

These narratives explicitly state his role was as an educator and how he evaluates this role. In his characterization of his role as a teacher, Senator Yarborough uses evaluative indexicals to reduce his credibility as a teacher. As he explains: “[I] wasn’t even qualified, so I don’t say I taught, I attempted to teach” (lines 49-50). By stating that he was not qualified or that he “tried” or “attempted” to teach, he positions himself as an ineffective teacher. However, it is worth noting that he does not use these same negative self-evaluations in his statements about teaching at the University of Texas Law School (line 51) or working as a principal (lines 53-4). He further elaborates his poor teaching by relating with the witness in the storytelling event. He switches to present tense in line 45 and directly relates his difficulties teaching an illiterate child and contrasts this with teaching a bilingual child, which he states “gives you a slight indication of the problem when you are trying to teach two languages concurrently” (lines 45-46). It is not clear from this narrative what “the problem” indexes; therefore the witness or audience member is able to choose a referent. Illiteracy, language or bilingualism are all possible *problems* that Senator Yarborough could be discussing. His consistent use of the social deictic I points directly to him as the agent in these descriptions. Within these narratives, he also frequently switches from the narrated event of his teaching experiences to the storytelling event of the hearings. He specifically addresses the witness with *you* (lines 46, 55) and, unlike the other narratives, explicitly mentions the relevance to the BEA (lines 47-8).

Why would he choose to present himself as lacking knowledge in the field of education when he is entrusted as a legislative leader of education? He again shows how his knowledge is not the basis for the BEA and goes to great lengths to explicitly state that he is not qualified to make such decisions without consulting experts, thus lessening his agency and promoting the knowledge of the witnesses. However, he also presents himself as an interested party. Like the final statement in his childhood narrative, Senator Yarborough offers an explicit reason for sharing these narrative self-constructions. He says that, “From this experience I have long been interested in education” (line 55). Within the autobiographical stories about his experiences as an educator, Senator Yarborough presents himself as an unsuccessful former teacher who understands the difficulties of teaching. However, by explicitly taking on the role of the ineffective teacher, he diminishes his authority on the topic. In contrast to his other narratives, he does not group himself with others to justify his statement. Rather, he offers his stories to the witnesses while maintaining his agency. By taking agency in a role, which he states he was not qualified for, Senator Yarborough enacts a self with diminished authority. However, he also gains credibility through his investment and experiences, limited as they may be, in education. This paradox of power and self-deprecation characterizes Senator Yarborough’s self-construction narratives.

Summary and Conclusions

In these narratives, Senator Yarborough describes his travels, childhood experiences and career as an educator. These self-constructions do more than just give information about his previous experiences. Rather, he has selected specific narratives that relate to his multilingual experiences from his travels to Europe and life in his native state of Texas. Within these narratives, Senator Yarborough classifies his stance on language learning as immaterial when contrasted with the expertise of the witness and maintains two distinct positions as (a) the powerful senator who writes a bill, conducts hearings about the bill and who can use these hearings as a space to construct personal narratives and (b) an inexperienced person who does not offer any definitive evidence on how to best educate linguistic minority students. However, his narrative self-constructions are more complicated, as Senator Yarborough had a choice as how to present his multilingual and international experiences.

On one level, these narratives present Senator Yarborough as an individual who has lived and worked in diverse multilingual educational contexts. In his narratives about traveling to Germany, studying German and working on a French cattle boat, Senator Yarborough constructs a self who has experience with language learning. Although he does present an oversimplification of language learning, he also does not exaggerate his German language proficiency. This complex portrayal of self continues with his childhood narrative. In this self-construction, Senator Yarborough shows that he has some knowledge of the linguistic context specific to Texas and other southwest states. This is connected to the NEA conference, which was the impetus for the BEA. Senator Yarborough's understanding of the linguistic and educational needs of Mexican Americans are further elaborated on in his educator narrative. As a teacher, he "attempted" to meet the needs of his students, many of whom were not literate. In relation to the legislative intent of the bill, this level of the self-construction narratives indicates that the chief sponsor is knowledgeable about and has experience with the language and education issues inherent in the BEA. However, the 1968 BEA did not wholly embrace bilingualism in U.S. public schools.

Although the BEA introduced the term "bilingualism" into the federal discourse, the scope of the act was extremely limited and did not, in fact, support maintenance or additive bilingualism¹ (Crawford, 1998, 2002; Moran, 1988). Another level of Senator Yarborough's narratives clarifies how his self-construction narratives are aligned with these limitations of the BEA. Although Senator Yarborough is in the most powerful role in the hearings, he constructs a self that lacks agency and is presented as a weak form. Therefore this second level demonstrates how, throughout his narratives, self-deprecation is a reoccurring theme.

This weak self-construction is a choice that Senator Yarborough makes and reinforces through each narrative. When constructing his traveler narratives, he constructs a self with limited authority to speak about language learning. His voicing of teachers in Germany demonstrates that his perspectives on language learning contrasted with the teachers' experiences. By sharing this story about his previous misconceptions, Senator Yarborough shows that his knowledge about language learning is dependent upon the expertise of others. Just as in the NEA conference when he was a receiver of the knowledge of others, in the hearings Senator Yarborough is also dependant upon the witnesses for expert knowledge to help inform the content of the bill. This reduces his power within the narrative itself, which parallels his position within the hearings. Specific to his own language learning experiences, he claims that he "picked up a working knowledge of German" (line 21) and that he "studied every day, [taking] courses in speaking and reading German" (line 22). However, this is immediately followed by his self-admission that he describes himself as a person who has "not become bilingual in any other language" (line 23). Although Senator Yarborough had the opportunity in this part of the narrative to comment more specifically about his stance on bilingualism or language learning, he does not. Nor does he use his experiences learning German to empower his position in the hearings as someone with experience with bilingual education. Rather, he minimalizes the impact of his language learning experiences by qualifying his language proficiency as essentially monolingual in English. Hence Senator Yarborough suggests that, although he is in the position to write and vote on the passage of the BEA, he is not an expert on language learning. By stating that these experiences of language learning helped to fuel his interest in language learning, he is thus implying that bilingualism or expertise about language learning is not a necessary prerequisite for understanding or supporting the BEA.

The narratives surrounding his childhood and teaching experiences also position Senator Yarborough in a less powerful position. In the childhood narratives, he purposefully engaged with speakers of other languages but readily admits that he did not know which language was spoken by the workers from Mexico, which demonstrates his lack of linguistic awareness of neighboring communities. This story may have endeared him to participants who also had limited experiences with multilingual contexts while simultaneously elevating the status of the witnesses who could offer expertise on bilingual education. Further, when describing his experiences as an educator, Senator Yarborough repeatedly identifies himself as a person who has great respect for educators but was by no means a successful teacher himself. On the one hand, although he does not have direct experience, he acknowledges how difficult the task of educating students who do not speak English as a first language could be. When making a direct comment on the prospect of teaching linguistic minority students, he compares bilingual education to teaching illiterate monolingual English speakers. He classifies both as challenges that teachers, especially inexperienced teachers such as himself, face in the

classroom. He therefore acknowledges some of the difficulties facing bilingual educators and “the importance of this bill to train teachers for that kind of work” (lines 47-8). On the other hand, by presenting himself as a person with limited knowledge about teaching, he again positions himself as inexperienced and thus someone who lacks agency to make decisions about education.

Now, this presents an interesting paradox because if the chief sponsor constructs himself as weak and lacking the experience or knowledge to make an informed decision about language teaching, does this defer the power to other experts involved in the hearings? He explicitly questioned his ability to provide adequate education for his students who speak only English and mentioned the challenges of teaching children who do not speak English or who are not literate in his educator narratives. However, this is contrasted with his position in the U.S. Senate where he wrote and was chief sponsor for a bill to provide bilingual education to this same population of students. During the hearings, he did not offer any information about what made him more qualified to make these decision about the educational needs of linguistic minority students, in fact he states that he has little information about language learning and teaching. If his only experience in education is when he only “attempted” to teach, what then makes him qualified to write and pass legislation for these students? The answer to this problem, however, is less complicated. To understand how and why he was in this position, one must look to the larger power structures. The ingrained hierarchical power structures of a congressional hearing (and politics as a whole) play an important role that constrained Senator Yarborough from relinquishing control of the hearings and construction of the bill. He was up for re-election in 1970 (a race he subsequently lost) and needed to show that he could successfully pass an education bill that directly affected his constituents in Texas (Moran, 1988). Thus, despite his overt admissions of his own limitations on the topic of bilingualism and education, he remained the chief sponsor. His lack of expertise in knowing the appropriate actions to successfully design education legislation for linguistic minority students is reflected in the BEA. The early implementation of the BEA tangentially addressed the linguistic needs of students who did not speak English as a first language and did not actively foster bilingualism (Crawford, 1998). Therefore, the content of his self-construction narratives potentially shed light on some of the major drawbacks of the BEA.

The influence of these narratives remains debatable. However, the evidence presented in this analysis about the self-deprecation constructed by Senator Yarborough may correspond with the limited scope of the BEA. Combined, his narratives about his travels, childhood and career as an educator construct a self that lacks the experience to effectively advocate for bilingual education. This additional knowledge about the content of the congressional hearings of the BEA of 1968 gives more information about the original legislative intent of the act and demonstrates the influence of a policy maker on bill construction.

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Note

¹ Lambert (1974) introduced the terms “additive” and “subtractive” bilingualism into the literature to clarify the language acquisition purposes of different models of bilingual education. Additive bilingual education maintains a learner’s first language and culture while adding high proficiency in a second or additional language, whereas subtractive bilingualism is the learning of a language at the expense of the first language and/or culture.

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