

**IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award Report**  
**Esther Bettney**

**Project Title:** Exploring Heteroglossic Approaches to Bilingual Education through a Comparative Case Study of Spanish-English Bilingual Programs in Colombia

As a recipient of the IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award, I was fortunate to travel to Medellín, Colombia in August 2019 to begin initial dissertation research. In the following report, I will provide a short overview of my dissertation research, my activities while in Colombia and my next steps.

My proposed dissertation research explores how bilingual schools in Colombia negotiate shifting from an understanding of language(s) that prioritizes the learning of English as a global language to an approach that reflects a broader understanding of multilingualism that values the role of Spanish and indigenous languages. While my long-term research agenda focuses on bilingual education across Latin America, for my dissertation I am focusing specifically on research in Colombia, a country that is rapidly expanding in terms of bilingual programs across public, national and international schools. While bilingual education in Colombia was traditionally reserved for the elite class, it is increasingly accessible to a more diverse population of students thanks to the implementation of the National Bilingual Program (NBP) in 2004. Yet, bilingual programs in Colombia continue to employ program models and language policies which prioritize English over Spanish and indigenous languages. This approach stands in contrast to the Colombian constitution which includes an explicit reference to Colombia as a multilingual nation (Usma Wilches, 2015). As more students in Colombia participate in bilingual programs from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, it is therefore essential to consider how bilingual programs can support the development of students' holistic multilingual repertoires and identities within a diverse society.

In order to explore these questions, I travelled in August 2019 to Medellín, Colombia, along with my husband and two children. Since arriving, I have been engaged in a pilot study at a bilingual school. For my pilot study, I have been gathering various documents such as the school's guidelines regarding their bilingual program model and language policies. I have also begun to engage in three types of classroom-based data generation with teachers and students at various grade levels through classroom observations, student and teacher interviews and multilingual classroom activities based upon the principles of Collaborative Learning through Multilingual Inquiry (Prasad, 2018). This pilot study has been essential as I continue to develop my research design and finalize my PhD proposal.

In Colombia, I have also had the opportunity to engage in a wide variety of other research activities and begin to develop a strong professional network throughout the country. I am honoured to be a research intern with Dr. Jaime Usma Wilches at the Universidad de Antioquia. Dr. Usma Wilches graduated from UW-Madison in 2015 and graciously offered to be my primary contact during my time in Colombia. Through my interactions with Dr. Usma Wilches, I have begun to deepen my understanding of the local and national context and develop key relationships with potential school sites to conduct my ongoing research. I recently presented at a national conference for English teachers and was able to speak to a number of researchers and teachers across the country engaged in similar work.

My situation is slightly unique as I was able to secure additional funding to remain in Colombia past the initial summer research months. At this point, my plan is to remain in Colombia until June 2020 and to continue with my data collection. The IRIS award provided the initial funding to begin my research and I am very grateful for the support.