

Cultural and Linguistic Fluidity in Bilingual Picture Books

In today's increasingly bilingual world, consumers of children's books encounter a wide array of stylistic choices in the available literature. The textual and visual integration of languages in picturebooks can serve as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural messages that shape a national perception of cultural identity for readers both inside and outside of the cultures. In this paper, we examine the various ways in which South Asian and Latino/a identity is constructed through the use of Urdu, Hindi and Spanish in contemporary picturebook such as *Hot Hot Roti for Dadaji*, by Farhana Zia, *In Andal's House*, by Gloria Whelan, *Sona and the Wedding Game*, Kashmira Sheth, the *Niño* series by, Yuyi Morales, the *Marisol Macdonald* series by Monica Brown, *Mango Abuela and Me* by Meg Medina, and *How Do You Say? Como Se Dice?* By Angela Dominguez.

Our analytical lens is grounded in Torres' (2007) linguistic framework that examines code-switching strategies in Latino/a literature to demonstrate the ways authors negotiate their relationships to homelands, languages, and transnational identifications. We examine bilingual picturebooks for the presence of these strategies, that range from very infrequent and transparent use of Spanish, Hindi, or Urdu, to prose that requires a bilingual reader. Code-switching strategies lend themselves to multiple readings and differing levels of accessibility. They also demonstrate the privileging or equalizing of languages which has direct implications for how cultural and racial perceptions are being maintained, challenged, or rewritten. While the United States is a hostile climate for multilingualism and diverse cultures, bilingual writers are making a tangible impact in the literary sphere and documenting and textualizing the reality of a multilingual America. Our interest lies in examining the ways in which Latino and South Asian characters are portrayed and what the implications were for readers within and outside of the cultures when it came to constructing perceptions about identity.