



I Am My Language: Discourses of Women and Children in the Borderlands

Norma González

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“**I am my language,**” says the poet Gloria Anzaldúa, because language is at the heart of who we are. But what happens when a person has more than one language? Is there an overlay of language on identity, and do we shift identities as we shift languages? More important, what identities do children construct for themselves when they use different languages in particular ways?

In this book, Norma González uses language as a window on the multiple levels of identity construction in children—as well as on the complexities of life in the borderlands—to explore language practices and discourse patterns of Mexican-origin mothers and the language socialization of their children. She shows how the unique discourses that result from the interplay of two cultures shape perceptions of self and community, and how they influence the ways in which children learn and families engage with their children’s schools.

González demonstrates that the physical presence of the border profoundly affects the practices and ideologies of Mexican-origin women and children. She then argues that language and cultural background should be used as a basis for building academic competencies, and she demonstrates why the evocative/emotive dimension of language should play a major part in studies of discourse, language socialization, and language ideology.

Drawing on women’s own narratives of their experiences as both mothers and borderland residents, *I Am My Language* is firmly rooted in the words of common people in their everyday lives. It combines personal odyssey with cutting-edge ethnographic research, allowing us to hear voices that have been muted in the academic and public policy discussions of “what it means to be Latina/o” and showing us new ways to connect language to complex issues of education, political economy, and social identity.

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