

**Claire Darmstadter**

Hey everybody, I'm joined today by Jocelyn Orozco, UW-Madison student studying special education, as well as TESOL. Thanks for taking a couple minutes to talk to me!

**Jocelyn Orozco**

Yeah, thank you for having me.

**Claire Darmstadter**

Yeah. So can you give us a brief summary overview of your educational and linguistic background and how you decided on this particular major and certificate?

**Jocelyn Orozco**

Hi, everyone. My name is Jocelyn Orozco, and I am a third year, majoring in special education and TESOL. And the reason why I came about this was, firstly, for special education, my younger brother, he has autism. And so I want to work with students with autism in order to help and also just give back to my community. And when it comes to TESOL, I come from a Spanish-speaking home. And I understand the importance of learning English in the US, but also the barriers that it has when not being able to navigate through the world because of language. Second, I want to be that connection between ESL learners and English so that they are able to navigate easily in the US, even though there are other factors that will impact their experiences here. But I feel like when it comes to English and people learning English willingly, that's when I'm able to help. It's not that I want to impose that on anyone, but it's those who want to learn English,

**Claire Darmstadter**

For sure. And I believe you grew up outside of Wisconsin, and so I'd imagine you had a little bit of a different experience growing up. Was the surrounding community very supportive of multilingualism, and perhaps more specifically to Spanish. Was that something that was celebrated? And then being here in Madison, do you feel like there's a similar positive culture around speaking additional languages? Or is it maybe not as positive? Or maybe it's a little bit worse than where you grew up?

**Jocelyn Orozco**

Yeah, so I'm from L.A. And so in L.A., it's like you either speak English or Spanish, like, you could hear it every day. And so it's actually very rewarding for you to speak another language, especially since it opens more doors for you to speak with others who may not speak English, or also speak English, but also Spanish, and so you're able to have that sense of community. And so that's why I continue to learn Spanish, because of my parents. Yeah, Spanish was something that we spoke everyday at home. In fact, we weren't able to speak English at home, because my parents really wanted us to learn Spanish. And so that's how I'm able to speak Spanish today. And when it comes to being in Wisconsin, I feel like that's the opposite. I feel like a lot of friends that I have here, a lot of them sometimes don't speak Spanish because of how looked down upon it is, especially living in a predominantly white state, where you don't really get that sense of community with your own people. And so, with that a lot of people didn't grow up

speaking Spanish, which is sad to me, because, for me, language is definitely a strong point, a strong part of my identity. But it's just sad to see how in Wisconsin, it's not necessarily something that's very rewarded. And it should be honored.

### **Claire Darmstadter**

Right, for sure. And I know you also have a little bit of an interest in Japanese and Korean and you might not be as proficient necessarily as Spanish, but it's definitely something that you're working on and learning. And obviously since you were raised speaking Spanish and English, you might not have that frame of reference to like, compare the experiences. But have you found trying to acquire additional languages has been pretty easy or is it a pretty effortful process at your age?

### **Jocelyn Orozco**

I feel like it's a mix of both. When it comes to pronunciation it's a lot easier for me to speak in Korean and Japanese, specifically Japanese, because the way we voice specific sounds are similar in Spanish like in Japanese, you have like bread is pan, and it's also pan in Spanish too. So it's like that similar part, but also the way you pronounce things like, I can't think of a specific word right now, but like it's just similar and so it's like, it's more smooth to speak sometimes. But when it comes to like learning and memorizing things, I feel like it's just a question of me, dedicating time to it. I know last year I took Japanese and I was on top of it, but now that I didn't have Japanese my fall or spring semester this year, it's just been something that's been slowly erasing from my mind. So it's just a matter of having that exposure. But I feel like if I have that exposure, and I'm surrounded by Japanese speakers, then perhaps I could pick it up faster. I wouldn't say that it's impossible for me to learn because I know it's possible even with language acquisition theories, but if I put myself forward to it, then I can do it. But it's also been something that I've been kind of exposed to since the age of 14 with watching anime and other Japanese media. So it's not that I haven't been exposed to it. I mean, it's not necessarily such a long time, but it still makes a difference that I was still in my teens.

### **Claire Darmstadter**

Yeah, for sure. So turning a little bit now to focusing on your career, you're planning on going into a special ed as well as ESL, like you mentioned. And I've noticed often that there's a deficit-centered point of view, often associated with students who receive either or both services, seeing their multilingualism as a bad thing, or the accommodations they need, you know, to learn their best as something that's bothersome or disruption to other students. So how do we kind of break out of this mindset and celebrate what students have, rather than kind of taking them down, but also recognizing that there are certain areas where they need support?

### **Jocelyn Orozco**

Yeah. So I feel like a part of it is addressing one's own bias. Why is it that you feel that someone else's language isn't worthy enough to be spoken in classes? Right? I think that's where you have to unpack eurocentrism, and just being privileged, right? So with privilege, you oppress people. And so if you're not the norm, then you ostracize others. So just kind of understanding that, first of all, there is no official language in the US. So get that out of your mind already first.

Secondly, like, I just feel like people who don't speak another language are jealous of those who speak languages and feel excluded. So it's just a matter of people like if you, you could, you could also learn another language like no one's stopping you. So it's understanding that languages are beautiful, and that they build community, not necessarily separate people. Because once you have that language, you're able to bond with a group of people who speak the language as well. Even if your language isn't the same as others, like you could share languages. That's the beauty of it.

**Claire Darmstadter**

Yeah. And I really liked what you said about them being beautiful, right. But at the same time, language learning is a really messy process. And sometimes it can be difficult to determine if a certain behavior or way of using a language is just a typical part of developing multilingually, or perhaps could be tied to another underlying cause. So knowing that, in the past, we have both over and under diagnosed students as needing special education services, how does the linguistic background of a student kind of factor into that decision making process?

**Jocelyn Orozco**

So we definitely have biased tests based on the language right? So if languages are not registered in the student's native language, then of course, you're going to see results that aren't considered desirable, right? And so the test facilitators need to make sure that they're administering tests in the languages of the students and therefore it should not be biased, because it's a disadvantage when it comes to taking the test in English when people don't speak English, right? So it's just not fair. That's where the overrepresentation happens. Yeah, because oftentimes, English language learners get put in special education just because of their test scores. But in reality, they just need that language support. It's not that they have a learning disability, it's just the language is a barrier.

**Claire Darmstadter**

And so moving into another area you're involved, you work with the organization here at UW Madison Diverse Leaders in Education. Can you talk a little bit about how you're involved in that organization and what you guys may do together?

**Jocelyn Orozco**

Yeah, so Diverse Leaders in Education is an organization meant for students of color, to come together and kind of create a community as individuals who are interested in education, who want to become future educators, everyone is welcome. Of course, you don't necessarily have to be a part of the School of Education. And my role, specifically right now is the marketing chair. So I'm the one who creates content for Instagram. And I also mostly do, make sure that I'm interacting with other organizations on Instagram and supporting them, promoting their content. So it's just a matter of uplifting others and raising awareness to things in education that are important to us. So right now we have our Black History Month features. So every Tuesday and Thursday, we honor black figures in history or even who are still alive today and their impact in education. So that way, we bring their voices alive because a lot of times we're not taught that in, you know, our whitewashed education system. And so it's important for us to acknowledge

that, but then on Friday we bring it back to campus and we honor our students' greatness. And so we have a spotlight for them. And we also work on professional development and we want to get more involved in the community and support teachers in Madison with our experiences.

**Claire Darmstadter**

Yeah, for sure. Well, I will include the link to your social media page down in the show notes so people can check you guys out. And just one last question. So we always tell our kids that speaking more than one language is a superpower or something really cool. So can you kind of share with us one reason why you think being multilingual is a superpower. And if you want to respond in Spanish, or in a different language, feel more than free to but I don't want to put you on the spot.

**Jocelyn Orozco**

Yeah, thank you. So speaking language, speaking another language is a superpower because it allows you to navigate your world in a different perspective, it opens more doors for you. And it's able to allow you to help others as well with your language skills. Let's say if there's someone who doesn't speak English, needs help translating and also navigating through the world, then you're able to help them out with what you know, and so I think it's really beautiful that not only do you know this language, but that you're able to help others and help yourself too because that's important to support yourself, meet others, and there's just so many reasons why you should learn a second language just I just wish it wouldn't be ostracized by people just look down upon.

**Claire Darmstadter**

Yeah, it's something that should be celebrated. I really appreciate you taking a couple minutes to speak with us. I think, you know, sometimes these topics, they're a little bit difficult to discuss or uncomfortable, but I really appreciate you being open and honest with all your answers. And I think both people who are considering going into education, current teachers, parents, admin, so many people will benefit from your perspective. So thank you so much for taking a couple minutes to talk.

**Jocelyn Orozco**

Definitely thank you so much for this opportunity.