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Reactions to Latinx Children's Picture Books from Indie Presses:
An Analysis of Online Consumer Reviews

by
Karina L. Agbisit

May 16, 2023

Abstract

This study analyzed online consumer reviews of children's picture books published by three small, independent presses focused on providing representation of Latinx people and culture. Reviews showed an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the use of bilingual text. Reactions to the use of illustrations support research indicating a preference for bright, colorful images. Additional themes that emerged in reviews include the timeliness of a bilingual book about expressing feelings in the first year of the Covid pandemic; the importance of personal connections to expressions of culture and traditions in the text; the pros and cons of using photographs instead of illustrations; a strong desire for positive representation of Latinx people and culture; and the potential for readers to connect with localized narratives.

Research Question: How are consumers of Latinx children's picture books published by small, independent presses reacting to these books?

Keywords:

consumer-sentiment;consumer-insights;online-reviews;Amazon;Goodreads;small-presses;independent-publisher;indie;Latinx;Hispanic;bilingual-English-Spanish;childrens-picture-books;educators;classrooms;parents

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The Book I Can't Forget

My family and I have always eaten tortillas this way: tear the tortilla into bite size pieces, scoop up the beans and rice and meat, eat it, and repeat. As an adult living a city with a population that is only 10.3% Hispanic or Latino as of the 2020 US Census¹ I've received questions about why I don't eat with all of the ingredients wrapped up inside the entire tortilla. "I've never seen someone eat a tortilla like that," many have told me.

Such moments take me back to a picture book read to me in my elementary school library — *A Spoon for Every Bite* by Jay Hayes. Hayes's book depicts a poor couple with a wealthy neighbor who sells everything he has to prove he is as rich as a friend of the couple's that can purportedly use a new spoon for every bite. The big reveal: the friend is of meager means but eats with tortillas, tearing off a small piece for every bite of food, thereby using "a spoon for every bite".

A Spoon for Every Bite has stayed with me all these years not only because it validates a cultural norm but because it stood out by way of its representation of Latinx people and culture. When you don't see something very often, you remember when you do see it.

Latinx Representation: A Longtime Need

While some progress has been made, Latinx kids of today still face challenges similar to the ones I faced growing up finding books depicting Latinx characters, community, and culture. Access to books that reflect one's culture is not just a preference, or a nice thing to have. Culturally relevant texts can stick in the memory of young readers and ignite an emotional connection.² Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's 1990 article "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass

¹ "U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Portland City, Oregon." United States Census Bureau. Accessed March 1, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/portlandcityoregon>.

² Flores-Dueñas, Leila, Cynthia H Brock, and Mary S Rozendal. "Reader Response, Culturally Familiar Literature and Reading Comprehension: The Case of Four Latina(o) Students." Essay. In *Multicultural and*

Doors" put to words what many readers have felt since childhood: diversity of identities and experiences in children's books is critical. Historically, nonwhite children have been denied access to books that serve as mirrors — books that reflect their experiences, which turn reading into “a means of self-affirmation.”³

Diverse BookFinder has analyzed all children's trade picture books published or distributed in the U.S. since 2002. As of March 2023, only 11% of the over 3,000 picture books analyzed by Diverse BookFinder feature Latinx/Hispanic/Latin American characters.⁴ Educators also recognize the lack of diversity in children's books. On February 18, 2015, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) released a statement titled “Resolution on the Need for Diverse Children's and Young Adult Books” in which they asserted “now is the time for NCTE to advocate for increased publication of culturally diverse literature that reflects human, cultural, linguistic, and family diversity.”⁵

Parents and children themselves want to see more diversity in books. Scholastic's 2018 Kids & Family Reading Report concluded that parents and children themselves want to see more diversity in books. According to the report, “the desire for more diverse books is strongest among Black children and their families, followed by Hispanic families.”⁶

Multilingual Literacy and Language Contexts and Practices, edited by Fenice B Boyd, 180–206. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2004.

³ Bishop, Rudine Sims. “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.” *Perspectives: Using and Choosing Books for the Classroom* 6, no. 3 (1990). <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>.

⁴ “Identify & Explore Multicultural Picture Books.” Diverse BookFinder, December 10, 2018. <https://diversebookfinder.org/>.

⁵ “Resolution on the Need for Diverse Children's and Young Adult Books.” National Council of Teachers of English, October 27, 2017. <https://ncte.org/statement/diverse-books/>.

⁶ “Kids & Family Reading Report: Finding Their Story.” Finding Their Story: Our Diverse World, 2019. <https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/our-diverse-world.html>.

Indie Presses: Small but Mighty

While the publishing industry overall still has much work to do to include stories that represent the over 60 million people in the US that identify as Hispanic or Latino⁷ small independent presses are answering the call. This study analyzed consumer reviews of children's picture books from three small, independent presses specializing in Latinx children's books: Con Todo Press, Del Alma Publications, and Veoleo Press. Consumer reviews came from the press's own website, Amazon, and/or Goodreads, and I analyzed them for subject and sentiment. These presses began publishing their titles around the same time period — Con Todo Press in 2018 and Veoleo in late 2018/early 2019. Del Alma was formed as a business in 2008 but its first publication was not until 2016. All three presses were created by Latinas.

In their March 2020 interviews for Forbes, the co-founder of Veoleo Alexi Ruginis and the founder of Con Todo Press Naibe Reynoso expressed how the lack of Latinx representation children's books fueled the creation of their businesses.

“Veoleo Press was born to address the lack of Latinx representation we felt across all traditional and digital mediums,” shared Ruginis. “As a bicultural Latinx indie press, we have a moral conviction to offer Latinx families books that reflect their heritage and the diverse community that falls under the Latinx umbrella. It is critical, particularly in our current political climate, to foster a positive sense of bicultural identity from a young age.”⁸

⁷ Jones, Nicholas, Rachel Marks, Roberto Ramirez, and Merarys RÍOS-VARGAS. “2020 Census Illuminates Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Country.” Census.gov, June 10, 2022. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html#:~:text=The%20Hispanic%20or%20Latino%20population,origin%20grew%204.3%25%20since%202010.>

⁸ Nunez, Vivian. “3 Latina Publishing Founders on How They’re Helping Parents during the Coronavirus Pandemic.” Forbes, March 19, 2020. [https://www.forbes.com/sites/viviannunez/2020/03/19/3-latina-publishing-founders-on-how-theyre-helping-parents-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/?sh=35b1631b7eb7.](https://www.forbes.com/sites/viviannunez/2020/03/19/3-latina-publishing-founders-on-how-theyre-helping-parents-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/?sh=35b1631b7eb7)

Reynoso expressed hope “that the next generation of Latinx kids will see a positive portrayal of our community and see themselves reflected in the books that Con Todo Press publishes. Our community has been marginalized in many ways, including having a lack of representation of important Latinx figures in children’s books.”⁹

Dr. María Alma González Pérez, founder of Del Alma Publications, has over forty years of experience as an educator. Decades of observing a distinct lack of bilingual English/Spanish books in classrooms led to her creating a bilingual book library. After retiring, Dr. Pérez created Del Alma Publications with the goals of making available “more of these bilingual books and to promote more Hispanic authors and illustrators”.¹⁰

This analysis of consumer reviews can help not only these three presses but other small, independent presses in their work to provide children with books that serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. By better understanding what consumers of Latinx children’s picture books like and do not like to see in these books, publishers can consider how to pivot or how to stay the course in order to meet consumer expectations.

Research Limitations

Coming from a background of working at and learning from independent presses, this type of publisher is near and dear to my heart. At the same time, analyzing reviews of books from independent presses, especially ones so recently formed with a relatively small front and back list, limits the breadth of my analysis of consumer reviews. These presses simply don’t have the hundreds to thousands of reviews not uncommon for titles from large publishing houses.

⁹ Nunez, Vivian. March 19, 2020.

¹⁰ “About Us.” Del Alma Publications. Accessed March 2, 2023.
<https://delalmapublications.com/pages/about-us>.

This analysis is also limited by the lack of background information about reviewers, particularly if they identify as Latinx. Some reviews either stated or implied the reviewer is Latinx, while the racial/ethnic identity of other reviewers is unknown. Future research exploring how consumers who identify as Latinx review a variety of Latinx children's picture books would further the publishing industry's understanding of what ideas, images, stories, etc. our community yearns to share with the children in our lives.

Con Todo Press

Book titles analyzed:

- *Be Bold! Be Brave! / ¡Sé audaz, sé valiente! 11 Latinas who made US History*
- *Be Bold! Be Brave! Chiquitos* (board book version)
- *Fearless Trailblazers: 11 Latinos who made U.S. History*
- *Courageous History Makers: 11 Women from Latin America Who Changed the World*
- *How to Fold a Taco*
- *El Cucuy...and other Spooky Legends from Latin American Folklore*

Themes

Illustrations

Reviewers typically referred to illustrations as colorful, indicating an overall preference for illustrations with lots of color.

Be Bold

“The fun and rhyming wording and colourful illustrations create an enjoyable learning experience for kids.”

Be Bold board book version

"The illustrations are as bold and brave as the women themselves. Beautifully constructed and bright and colorful pages that will keep your kids interested with each page turn."

"I love this book! The illustrations are fresh and fun."

El Cucuy

"Cute and creepy illustrations accompany a description of various spooky beings from across Latin America."

How to Fold a Taco

"Colorful illustrations bring out the joy and fun and universal appeal of tacos."

"what a sweet read. great illustrations. well done. so colorful and happy. must read."

Child participants in the 2002 study by Jayme Brookshire, Lauren F.V. Scharff and Laurie E. Moses preferred bright, realistic illustrations over dark illustrations and abstract illustrations. The researchers posited that a child's preference for a certain style of illustration can influence the child's "motivation to approach a book" and subsequently influence how well the child would comprehend the book's story.¹¹ The positive reactions in the consumer reviews further supports the importance of using bright, colorful illustrations in children's books, including those featuring Latinx stories.

¹¹ Brookshire, Jamye, Lauren F. Scharff, and Laurie E. Moses. "The Influence of Illustrations on Children's Book Preferences and Comprehension." *Reading Psychology* 23, no. 4 (June 21, 2002): 323–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713775287>.

Bilingual Text

Reviews overall responded positively to the use of English and Spanish text. Reviews about the use of bilingual text also highlight how educators can be a key consumer of these children's books. The historical lack of bilingual children's books is also indicated in reviews.

How to Fold a Taco

"It's so hard to find books that give both languages equity! I teach Pre-K Dual Language and I would love a copy in my hands and can't wait to purchase!"

"I teach English learners and this is a fun topic and is bilingual. I especially love the rhyming scheme in both English and Spanish."

"My son is bilingual, but showing a preference for English ever since starting school.

Dual-language books like *How to Fold a Taco/Cómo doblar un taco* have been key to maintaining his biliteracy skills. The side-by-side English and Spanish format elevates Spanish as the minority language and empowers him as a bilingual student. Thank you, Naibe, for giving parents and educators beautiful (and funny! and interesting!) books to share with our bilingual kids."

Be Bold

"Being a dual-language book, I think it's great how the author weaves language learning into storytelling."

"I really enjoy that this book also includes both English and Spanish in the same book, and that it is factual and well illustrated."

Fearless Trailblazers

“I teach US History and I wanted my classroom to represent people of all cultures and ethnicities in America. This book is in Spanish and English, perfect for ELD-Spanish speaking learners to feel comfortable. Highly recommend the purchase of this book!”

The use of English and Spanish text was not without criticism though. Reviews with negative, or less than fully positive, sentiments about the bilingual text point out discrepancies in the translation between English and Spanish.

Be Bold

“What I don't love as much is the rhyming couplets and what that meant for the translations. To match the rhyme scheme, some of the mini-biographies had different information in each language, and in a couple the sentence structure felt off. I'm sure the author made sure it was accurate in both languages, and I imagine the editors have a much better grasp of Spanish grammar than I do, but it left me with a small worry about whether the quality of information and readability in the Spanish version had been compromised in a form over function type of way. The structure also really restricted the amount of information that could be included. I'm rating it highly because the positive message and language accessibility are important and we need more books like this. Thank you to the author for writing it.”

How to Fold a Taco

“If you're reading this to learn either English or Spanish, you should be aware that the two translations on the same page convey the same general idea but aren't necessarily using equivalent words to do it.”

This criticism may be particularly relevant given that reviews indicate the use of these books for learning Spanish. Given the intended audience for these books are of preschool and elementary school age, the reviewers may have concerns about the potential disruption to language learning for these children.

Representation & Inspiration

Representation of Latinx people was another theme reviewers responded to positively, often extending the idea of representation to ideas of inspiration, motivation, and validation. This supports the research and my personal observations that Latinx representation in children's books has been lacking.

Fearless Trailblazers

“The illustrations are lovely. Especially great if your family is Latino and the children can identify real life heroes that look like them!!”

“It’s very important for me that my kids can see themselves reflected in the books they read and can see themselves in the positions that they dream to become one day. Every teacher and parent should own a copy. It represents diversion, inclusion, and that it doesn’t matter where you come from, you can achieve great things too.”

“The representation of Latinos and how they have contributed to the fabric of our American History was refreshing.”

Be Bold

“As a Spanish teacher, I find it an powerful resource to validate my students and help them learn about these icons.”

“Wish there were more when I was younger but so happy to pass on to the next generation”

“It's important for all kids to learn about the contributions that Latinas have made in our society because it's not something typically taught in school.”

Some reviews reacted negatively to the exclusive focus on males in *Fearless Trailblazers*. One reviewer's reaction was so strong they decided not to give the book intended as a gift:

“I was going to buy for friend who just had a daughter and was disappointed when I read there were no Latinas featured. What? There are so many. Delores Huerta, Frieda Kahlo, Justice Sotamayor. I could not give this to my friend and have his daughter think only Latino men have made contributions.”

Fearless Trailblazers is book number 2 in the trilogy Little Biographies for Bright Minds. Books 1 (*Be Bold! Be Brave!*) and 3 (*Courageous History Makers*) exclusively feature Latinas and in their reviews, the lack of male representation is never mentioned. The negative reactions to *Fearless Trailblazers*' sole focus on male figures indicates a desire not only for representation of Latinx people but for gender diversity within this representation.

Del Alma Publications

Book titles analyzed:

- *Hello, Zapata! ¡Hola!*
- *Abuela's Fideo: A Story of a Grandma's Love*
- *Glove for a Lady*
- *¡Todos a comer! A Mexican Food Alphabet Book*
- *¡Todos ¡Todos al rodeo! A Vaquero Alphabet Book* *Celebrar! A Hispanic Customs & Traditions Alphabet Book*
- *An Angel from Above / Un ángel desde arriba*

Themes

Illustrations v. Photographs

Reviews about illustrations were mostly found in reviews for *Abuela's Fideo*. Overall reviewers responded positively to this book's illustrations. However, two reviews point out the potential for child safety issues in the kitchen given the actions depicted in the book.

"I probably would've not had the child holding a butcher knife while cooking for safety reasons. Otherwise greatly recommend the book & also Fideo"

"The child attempts to cook at one point though... and I was concerned about the casual knife usage lolol.. maybe as a parent, this would be a good spot to advocate for kitchen safety lol. Overall great with really expressive illustrations and good topics of discussion."

These reviews indicate how adults expect children to potentially emulate what they not only read in books but what they see visually depicted in books. This can serve as a reminder to publishers to use caution in what actions they depict in otherwise well illustrated children's picture books.

The books in the "Todos" Original Bilingual Alphabet Book trilogy utilize photographs in lieu of illustrations, and reactions were overall positive toward the photographs.

Todos a comer

"I liked how the pictures were all colorful and when we stumbled over a word we could find the translation pretty easily."

"this book is very cute has really interesting content. Has pics of the food and it's really colorful and eye catching. I highly recommend!"

Todos al rodeo

“My kids really liked seeing the pictures of other kids who look like them and are riding horses, feeding the cows, and going to rodeos.”

Two reviews of the books in this trilogy included criticism of the photographs.

Todos a comer

“We were looking forward to introducing this book to our son, but the narrative is rather dull. While I understand it can be challenging to always be creative, this book reminded me of a school textbook with the not so great quality of photos and dull dialogue.”

Todos a celebrar

“Some of the images (like the cover) in this book are very nice and they look professional, but many are not. With the availability of high quality stock photos that could more clearly demonstrate many of the concepts, it makes you wonder why they used amateur photos that are off center and/or blurry...I really wanted to like it but I was disappointed by the photography and design choices.”

These reviews demonstrate the risk in utilizing photographs. While Del Alma Publications’ books are relatively recent, as time passes, books with photographs run the risk of potentially being seen as outdated and low quality as advancements in technology enable the everyday person to take high quality photos with a cellphone.

Representation & Cultural Connections

Like Con Todo Press, Del Alma’s books were acknowledged in consumer reviews as providing positive representation for Latinx people. Reviewers shared how the books connected to their own experiences and how these books support the continuation of culture and traditions.

Abuela's Fideo

“I appreciate the gentleness of this story! The love we have for the every day things we miss about our loved ones is so sweetly written in this book! The title is what sold me because I too had a grandma who made fideo! Her fideo was the best! I am 56 years old and still make it when I need comfort food ! You will love this story if there is something that someone special has left behind that will forever stay in your heart!”

“This book hits so close to home!! My grandma made amazing Fideo and so does my mom. One of the things about Mexicans is that we do not use recipes. We just do what we feel and make it with love (a nod to the book). ...Food is such a huge part of my culture.”

Todos al celebrar

“The children on each photo represent our Hispanic culture in the US very accurately...Each page discusses a Hispanic custom/tradition. Many of these are the ones that may get forgotten so this is a wonderful way to introduce and expose our kids to some of the traditions that may have been lost through the years. This book is a gem for our children to keep learning about their culture.”

Todos a comer

“ I am a Mexican-American and I grew up eating these foods (still do!), but I have never seen them showcased in such a beautiful book!”

“This wonderful book brings back my personal nostalgia and pride of my bilingual border culture. This book is a must have if you want to learn or to teach the Hispanic culture and its language, or if you simply want to have an Hispanic treasure in your hands!”

Positive depictions of Latinx culture that consumers can personally relate to as well seems to be highly valued by consumers.

Bilingual Text

Reviewers noted the use of Spanish and English text but this theme was not as prominent as in the reviews for books from Con Tod Press. Additionally, reviews about the use of bilingual text were more descriptive in nature, detailing how the text is presented on the page.

Todos a comer

“The design of this bilingual children's book makes it an alphabet book that will get read and re-read many times over. Dr. Gonzalez Perez centers a precise photograph of a Mexican dish in the middle of 25 pages plus a picture glossary of Mexican cooking utensils. Descriptive text in Spanish is on top of the page, with the English translation on the bottom of the page. Each paragraph of text ends with a question for the reader or listener... This book informs readers of any age about the great variety of Mexican food. it is culturally empowering and authored by a professor of education. This book will also make you hungry. Strongly recommended for libraries, schools, homes, and community centers.”

“This book is awesome for both bilingual and monolingual children who want to learn more about the Hispanic culture. The illustrations are beautiful and the language is engaging and kid-friendly. Each page teaches about a different type of food and then asks a question to engage the children in conversation. Would be the perfect addition to a classroom or at-home library.”

Todos al rodeo

“A fun and interesting bilingual alphabet book for kids. We learn not only our letters, but about the lives and history of vaqueros, including lots of things about rodeos. Perfect for immersion and dual-language classrooms.”

“This bilingual (Spanish and English) alphabet book introduces young readers to not only the alphabet but to the life of a vaquero (cowboy). Each page has a photograph to illustrate the letter. Children will enjoy seeing young vaqueros and vaqueras in many of the photos. The book points out the origins of many English words that come from the rich vaquero heritage of Mexico.”

Due to the recommendations for use of these books in classrooms, libraries, etc., it is implied these reviewers come from an educational background and are attempting to help other adults in educational roles understand how these books can be used with young readers.

Localization

The book *Hello, Zapata! ¡Hola!* only had one consumer review but this review offers insight into the potential for the localization of a narrative to positively impact a reader. According to the publisher’s Amazon description, the book *Hello, Zapata! ¡Hola!*

is a bilingual children's book that features 29 places of interest in Zapata County, Texas. It offers a brief but thought provoking reflection of each place along with a corresponding photograph. Its purpose is to encourage children and young people to take note and take pride in their own communities and learn as much as they can about their history, their people, and their places of interest. Some suggested classroom activities to develop different language skills also complement this work.

The singular review gave the book 5 out of 5 stars and described it as “an excellent book about Zapata, TX. It is perfect to teach my kids all about where I grew up also while teaching them in Spanish as well.” Given that reviewers react positively to representation of Latinx people, places, and culture in the children’s picture books from *Del Alma* and *Con Todo*, combining representation with the unique setting of communities near the Mexico/U.S. border has the potential to resonate strongly with readers from these communities.

Veoleo

Book titles analyzed:

- *¿Dónde está el coquí? Un cuento sobre la ranita cantante*
- *Pensamientos: Un cuento sobre las emociones*

Themes

Illustrations

Reviewers for both books responded positively to the illustrations, with the exception of one review for *Coqui* that expressed the illustrations being better suited for an older audience than the size of the book implies.

¿Dónde está el coquí?

“I also find her gravitating towards this book due to the vibrant colors and complex illustrations.”

“The text is very age appropriate and illustrations are vivid and grabbed his attention immediately.”

“I really like the illustrations and language of the book, but I think they're better suited to a larger format aimed at slightly older kids. I'd love a version for my 6-year-old to read by herself or with an adult nearby to assist with pronunciation.”

Reviews for *Pensamientos* also respond positively to how the book's illustrations reinforce the book's lesson. Such reviews demonstrate that reviewers recognize a use for

illustrations beyond being aesthetically pleasing, understanding the illustrations to be key to educating the child.

“Este libro está hermosamente ilustrado, en el que cada color representa un sentimiento diferente, es fácil de entender y utilizar para que los niños expresen cómo se sienten.”

English translation: This book is beautifully illustrated, in that each color represents a different emotion, it's easy for kids to understand and use to express how they feel.

“Let the beautiful illustrations and colors take you and your children through the journey of not only identifying colors but also emotions! I loved how the authors tied each emotion to a color and wrote about it as a power we have within ourselves.”

“Stunning illustrations to match beautifully written Spanish text.... The book cues the child to tune in to one emotion at a time by associating it to a color and using vivid imagery to describe the emotion (i.e., “Es la tristeza que te arrulla para que tus lágrimas fluyan”). This book is the perfect resource to help bilingüitos start to understand and celebrate the many ways they may feel.”

The importance of children learning from *Pensamientos* is further highlighted in the reviews by expressions of the timeliness of kids learning how to identify and express emotions.

Timeliness

Pensamientos was released in 2020, the first year of the Covid pandemic. During this year, families across the US faced school closures and transitions to online learning, stay at home orders, mask mandates, social distancing measures, an increasing death toll from the virus, rising unemployment, and an overall drastic change to their daily lives.¹² Four reviews express how teaching kids about naming and expressing emotions was crucial during this time.

¹² “CDC Museum Covid-19 Timeline.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 15, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html>.

“...it is being published at the perfect time. 2020 has been wild, and kids are feeling the effects of so much uncertainty. “Pensamientos” is a great tool for parents in aiding their children in naming their thoughts and feelings and then having open dialogue about them. There are few books available for kids, especially in Spanish, that discuss mental wellness, so I am extremely grateful for this book!”

“In these times when we all have all the feelings it’s nice to read a book that presents and Validates all theses feelings”

“At a time when our feelings are being tested by world events, it is comforting to have a book that can help our children learn and understand their own everyday feelings.”

“Pensamientos is a great book! It helps to explain kids about their feelings and guide them to mindfulness practice. Especially useful these days!”

Bilingual Text

Reviewers responded positively to the use of English and Spanish text. Veoleo’s use of bilingual text differs from Del Alma and Con Todo Press in that the books are in Spanish with the English translation at the end.

¿Dónde está el coquí?

“The translation is excellent and unobtrusive, since the entire English portion is covered in the last two pages.”

“Sometimes the bilingual books don't have great translations, but this one is great.”

“I'm a non-native Spanish speaker, and I appreciate this book because the language is relatively sophisticated and aimed at kids who hear Spanish regularly, as opposed to those who are just

starting to learn Spanish in an American school. Like, the main character is a coquí, not a rana or even ranita. There's a sentence that reads, "Está saltando al lado de dos delfines rosados," that is not exactly Spanish 1 in terms of construction and vocabulary.”

Two reviews for *Pensamientos* contextualize the use of bilingual text for educating kids on the healthy expression of feelings in light of an overall lack of such books.

“There are few books available for kids, especially in Spanish, that discuss mental wellness, so I am extremely grateful for this book!”

“I am HUGE on teaching my students how to identify their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, so that they can respond appropriately. Spanish resources on this topic are extremely hard to come by, so this book is a Godsend.”

These consumers value the ability to not only teach children this lesson but to teach the lesson in Spanish.

Representation & Localization

Reviewers responded positively to representation of Latinx culture by noting the use of the coqui in *¿Dónde está el coquí?*. The coqui is a frog species with a large population in Puerto Rico. The name is derived from the sound males make to attract females and “choruses of male coquis, which are beloved throughout Puerto Rico, can be heard from dusk until dawn all over the island.”¹³

“It is extra special as the coqui is such a symbol of Puerto Rico, where my husband is from. I love that I can give a thoughtful, beautifully designed book with personal meaning as well!”

¹³ “Puerto Rican Coqui,” National Wildlife Federation, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Amphibians/Puerto-Rican-Coqui>.

“I’m Puerto Rican and I love anything coqui related. I love being able to introduce to him the coqui at such a young age”

Like Del Alma’s book about Zapata, TX, *¿Dónde está el coquí?* demonstrates the positive connection readers can make with localized narratives.

Conclusion

This research set out to explore how consumers are reacting to Latinx children’s picture books published by three small, independent presses. By and large, consumers show a desire for bilingual English/Spanish text. Whether through illustrations or photographs, the visual element of these books can be just as important as the narratives, with consumers distinguishing what they do and do not like in the art accompanying texts. Books with a localized focus within the Latinx diaspora can be a point of positive connection for readers. The lessons taught in Latinx children’s picture books can resonate for the ways they positively represent people, places, and culture but also for the specific lessons they teach children. Overall the analysis supports what past research and my lived experiences have been signaling to the publishing industry for decades: consumers of children’s picture books want texts in which Latinx children can see their experiences reflected.

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