**Jennifer Gadbow**

**Writing Sample**

**Journal Article**

**Before**

The ethnolinguistic diversity of students in schools in the United States and around the world not only presents challenges but more important, presents an extraordinary opportunity for educators and scholars across disciplines for creatively developing educational programs that build on such diversity. In the United States, there have been a variety of responses to linguistic diversity in schools, from systematic efforts to erase the languages of minoritized[[1]](#footnote-1) communities (Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans and others), imposing English-only language policies in schools or transitional bilingual programs, to the development of various strong forms of bilingual education, such as dual language programs, also called two-way immersion schools. These have been described as “enrichment education programs that foster language equity and are organized with the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy for all children” (Torres-Guzmán, 2007, p. 50). Such programs educate students through the use of two languages, and those described as One-way developmental bilingual programs, support the students’ home-base language while adding English. While some states still privilege English-only educational programs, in New York City, for example, more than 200 new bilingual programs have been created during the last two years. Within this context, scholars are revisiting the language practices of bilingual learners and educational programs that can build on those practices.

One such practice is the fluid and dynamic alternation of languages that characterizes language use among bilingual students and communities. Such practices have been described as code switching (Poplack, 1980), hybrid language practices (Gutiérrez, 2008), Spanglish (Zentella, 1997), and translanguaging (García, 2009), each term capturing different nuances within these dynamic uses of two languages.

This article focuses on the concept of translanguaging as proposed by García (2009) and García and Wei (2014) and explores, from a cultural-historical activity perspective as proposed in Expansive Learning theory, some of its implications for bilingual education. From this perspective, I will pay attention to socio-cultural and historical factors that could affect discursive practices mediating the learning and use of languages in an after-school program in a bilingual elementary school. Translanguaging refers to “the *multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*” (García, 2009, p. 45, emphasis in original). This term, as used in this article, does not merely refer to the alternation of two languages such as Spanish and English but it refers to the complex ways in which students combine different modes and media across social contexts and negotiate social identities in ways that challenge the ‘one language only’ or ‘one language at a time’ ideologies of monolingual and traditional bilingual classrooms” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 67). While it is not a method, translanguaging also refers to pedagogy that supports flexible language arrangements to “building on bilingual students’ language practices flexibly in order to develop new understandings and new language practices” (Garcia & Wei, p. 92), rejecting the "policy of strict language separation" commonly used in two way bilingual education programs in the United States.

The critique of the “one language at a time” and rejection of the "strict language separation" policies embedded in this definition of translanguaging as pedagogy deserves attention as it has implications for bilingual educators working in programs aimed at supporting bilingualism and biliteracy, most of which are organized around rules for the separation of languages. The call to incorporate translanguaging pedagogy in mainstream classrooms aligns well with earlier calls done by language and literacy researchers respect the need to value and use students’ linguistic resources in their teaching and learning. However, the application of translanguaging pedagogy to bilingual education programs that serve minoritized students poses challenges to these programs which uses separation of languages as they are seeking to support and protect the minoritized language (against the hegemony of English), leaving bilingual teachers and teacher educators with the task to sort out how to harmonize translanguaging practices with language policy rules that support the minoritized language.

The aim of this article is to elucidate potential pedagogical implications of the concept of translanguaging in bilingual programs serving minoritized children. This analysis is grounded on an empirical study conducted at a public school in the Southwest over an academic year, which documented the learning and interactions of a group of primary-grade bilingual Latino students and the bilingual teacher candidates (TCs) who participated in a bilingual after-school program. The program included the reading of Latino literature and the use of computer games, aimed at supporting the minoritized language while promoting bilingualism and biliteracy. The program had no explicit rules of distribution of languages but created a context for fluid and dynamic uses of the languages spoken by these bilingual children: Spanish and English.

In a previous analysis of the data, it was salient that the line between experts and learners was blurred in the students’ and teacher candidates' (TCs) interactions around digital games (Martínez-Roldán, 2011). It was also evident the fluid use of Spanish and English mediating the participants’ interactions; however, the findings also pointed to tensions around the TCs’ overt concerns regarding the children’s preference of Spanish over English for reading and speaking, which contrary to the goal of the after-school program, often led to emphasize the need for English. Such tension led me to use Expansive Learning theory, based on cultural historical activity perspectives and its concept of “contradictions” as a guiding principle of empirical research (Engeström, 2001), to revisit the study, this time zooming in the participants’ use of language in relationship to the concept of translanguaging. The new analysis was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do emergent bilingual students benefit from the fluid use of language characterized as translanguaging in an after-school bilingual program where there is no explicit rule for language separation?
2. What does an analysis of contradictions around the tensions teacher candidates experience concerning the language learning of bilingual students reveal about the potential benefits or limitations of the concept of translanguaging?

In this study, the teacher candidates’ language practices, including translanguaging, served as a space for validating students’ culture, language, and bicultural identities but also for reinstating the hegemony of English. From a sociocultural historical perspective, considering the historical and ideological context of struggle of bilingual education in the United States and the teacher candidates’ biographies as well, the findings invite to have caution regarding the use of translanguaging in bilingual classrooms. My discussion of translanguaging is anchored in views of language and literacy derived from sociocultural historical perspectives and critical sociolinguistic theories.

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**Writing Sample**

**Journal Article**

**After**

Reactions to linguistic diversity in U.S. classrooms have ranged from systematic attempts to erase the languages of minoritized (McCarty, 2002) communities to the development of various strong forms of bilingual education, such as dual-language programs (also called two-way immersion schools) and one-way developmental bilingual programs. These programs have been described as “enrichment education programs that foster language equity and are organized with the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy for all children” (Torres-Guzmán, 2007, p. 50). Although some states still privilege English-only educational programs, other locations are making changes, including New York City, which created 200 bilingual programs over the last two years.

Within this context, educators and scholars are revisiting the language practices of bilingual learners and developing creative educational programs that can incorporate those practices to enhance and support learning. One such practice is the fluid and dynamic alternation of languages that characterizes language use among bilingual students and communities. Such practices have been described as code-switching (Poplack, 1980), hybrid language practices (Gutiérrez, 2008), Spanglish (Zentella, 1997), and translanguaging (García, 2009), with each term capturing different nuances within these dynamic uses of two languages.

In this article, I focus on the concept of translanguaging, as proposed by García (2009) and García and Wei (2014), which refers to the complex ways that bilingual learners combine different modes and media across social contexts and negotiate social identities in ways that challenge the “one language only” or “one language at a time” ideologies of monolingual and traditional bilingual classrooms” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 67).

Drawing on expansive learning theory (Engeström, 1987), I explore translanguaging from a cultural–historical activity perspective to explain the potential pedagogical implications of translanguaging in bilingual programs that serve minoritized children, and I address how these factors may have affected the discursive practices that mediated the learning and use of languages in one particular after-school program in a bilingual elementary school.

My analysis is grounded in an empirical study that I conducted at a public, bilingual, elementary school in the southwestern United States over one academic year. For the study, I documented the learning and interactions of a group of teacher candidates (TCs) and primary-grade, Latino students who participated in a bilingual after-school program.

In my original analysis of the data, it was clear that the line between experts and learners was blurred in the students’ and TCs’ interactions around digital games (Martínez-Roldán & Smagorinsky, 2011). I also observed that the fluid uses of Spanish and English mediated the participants’ interactions. However, my findings pointed to tensions around the TCs’ overt concerns regarding the children’s preference of Spanish over English for reading and speaking, which, contrary to the goal of the after-school program, often led some of them to over emphasize the need for English.

My discoveries led me to revisit the study. This time, I focused on the concept of translanguaging. I used expansive learning theory (Engeström, 1987) as a guiding principle of empirical research because of its cultural historical activity perspectives and its concept of contradictions (Engeström, 2001). I wanted to know:

1.
2. In what ways did emergent bilingual students benefit from the fluid uses of languages, characterized as translanguaging, in an after-school bilingual program, when there were no explicit rules for language separation?
3. What does an analysis of the contradictions and tensions that the TCs experienced concerning the language learning of bilingual students reveal about the potential benefits or limitations of translanguaging?

The results of the new analysis indicated that, although the language practices of some of the TCs, including translanguaging, served as a space for validating students’ culture, language, and bicultural identities, they also inadvertently reinstated the hegemony of English. From a sociocultural historical perspective and considering the historical and ideological struggle of bilingual education in the United States, as well as the TCs’ own biographies, I must advise caution regarding the use of translanguaging in bilingual classrooms.

1. McCarty (2002) proposed that the word ‘minoritized’ would be more accurate than “minority” because it better reflects the numeric realities of the schools and communities and more accurately implicates how power relations serve to marginalize certain peoples. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)