

# Managing Diversity in Education

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*NEW PERSPECTIVES*  
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# 14 Linguistic Third Spaces in Education: Teachers' Translanguaging across the Bilingual Continuum

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Controlling the use of language is a primary way of managing diversity in our current era. Indeed, in current US society, language may be one of the few areas where overt discrimination is still permissible. While it would be considered uncouth to insist that somebody hide their cultural background when interacting with others, it continues to be common for people to insist that only Standard English be used in order to participate in US public life. It is equally common for bilingual American students to receive messages of the inappropriateness of their language practices in US society.

Well-meaning educators, aware of the difficulties experienced especially by *emergent bilingual students*; that is, those students in the US who are still developing English (García & Kleifgen, 2010), insist on teaching Standard American English. Unfortunately, most efforts at doing this come in the form of delegitimizing the students' home language practices. In this chapter, we propose an alternative pedagogical approach that embraces the fluid language practices of bilingual and multilingual students. Building on the concept of third space as articulated by Bhabha (1994), we argue that such an approach makes classrooms into a *linguistic third space* capable of transforming traditional views of language in the US, as well as American ethnolinguistic subjectivities.

This chapter starts with an exploration of the origins of current US language ideologies, connecting them to the development of nation states that was part of the European colonial project. It then examines shifts in critical applied linguistics that have attempted to deconstruct these language ideologies and reconstruct new ones outside of these colonial relations of power. Focusing then on the alternative language practices of two English teachers at a newcomer school for Spanish-speaking immigrants in New York City, the chapter argues that the linguistic third spaces that these teachers construct transcend current hegemonic language ideologies that emerged within the nation state paradigm. We begin by tracing the nature of our current language ideologies in the US.

## The Origins of National/Colonial Language Ideologies

The origin of current language ideologies lies with the invention of the printing press. Moved by the emerging capitalist economic system, codified vernacular languages were needed to increase the size of the markets so that the printing press would be profitable (Anderson, 1991). Linguistically heterogeneous speakers had to be moulded into a homogeneous linguistic group.

This creation of homogeneous linguistic groups also had to do with the consolidation of power of the newly emerging European bourgeoisie as part of the development of nation states. Bonfiglio (2010) argues that the codification of a particular grammar and a particular pronunciation produced the bourgeois subject as the speaker of 'the norm', a more correct and perfect language than that of the inferior Other. This creation of a standardized language shifted the focus of language from its communicative aspects toward a focus on correct form as an expression of a static superior national identity. In other words, whether a message was understood was less relevant than whether one articulated the message within the proper form as articulated by nationalist grammarians.

This ideology of the superiority of one language 'norm' was an integral component of the European colonial project. For example, Mühlhäusler (1996) looks at the imposition of a modernist conception of homogeneous and enumerable languages on the Pacific Rim as part of a larger process of colonization. Colonial grammarians sought to codify and name the languages of the Pacific Rim, thus ignoring the fluid language practices that made communication possible in this linguistically heterogeneous setting.

To Mühlhäusler, the categorization of language practices into enumerable and autonomous 'languages' was a form of epistemic violence that did not represent the actual language practices of people.

In summary, the nationalist/colonial language ideology saw language as a tool for the unification of a people under one standard language living in the borders of one territory. This standardization was part of the creation of a bourgeois subject differentiated from the lower classes of Europe and colonial subjects abroad. Language became a tool for managing the lower classes and people of colour all over the world through the imposition of static language forms and an erasure of linguistic heterogeneity.

## Critique of Nation State/Colonial Language Ideologies

A critique of nation state/colonial language ideologies has emerged in critical applied linguistics that seeks to excavate subaltern knowledge and challenge the colonizing tendencies in current language ideologies (Canagarajah, 2005; Cummins, 2007; Makoni & Makoni, 2010; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Pennycook, 2010). Critical scholars are creating theoretical frameworks that treat language as a contested space – as tools that are re-appropriated by actual language users. Ultimately, the goal of these critiques is to break out of static conceptions of language that keep power in the hands of the few, thus embracing the fluid nature of actual and local language practices of all speakers.

García's (2009) critique of the current state of bilingual education is demonstrative of this resistance toward nation state/colonial language ideologies. At the core of her argument is a challenge to the homogeneous language constructs at the centre of most language education policy, including those dealing with bilingualism in education. Nation state language ideologies continue to treat bilingualism as the mastery over two separate and distinct languages; that is, from a *monoglossic perspective*. To replace this type of thinking, García argues for adopting a *heteroglossic perspective*, with languages not seen as separable and countable, or associated with nation states. Instead, a heteroglossic perspective acknowledges multilingual speakers' fluid language practices in their full complexity. An education that would respond to this heteroglossic ideology would then leverage multilingual students' complex discursive practices, their dynamic multilingualism, in order to make meaning. García (2009) refers to the dynamic meaning-making discursive processes of bilingual and multilingual populations as (following Cen Williams, 1997) *translanguaging*. In education, translanguaging offers an

important alternative to current monoglossic language ideologies, monolingual practices and traditional pedagogies. Translanguaging in education not only creates the possibility that young bilinguals could use their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning, but also that teachers would 'take it up' as a legitimate pedagogical practice in educating those who are linguistically different.

In what follows, a heteroglossic perspective will be taken to describe the fluid language practices of English teachers working with Latino emergent bilinguals in a special high school for newcomer immigrants. Through embracing translanguaging as pedagogy, these teachers are facilitating the development of new subjectivities in their classrooms that defy ethnolinguistic identities defined by a nation state/colonial paradigm.

## Creating Linguistic Third Spaces at Pan American International High School

The Pan American International High School (PAIHS) is located in Queens, New York, and serves recently arrived Spanish-speaking immigrant adolescents. The school is part of a network of public government-funded secondary schools that use progressive approaches to educate emergent bilingual students (García & Sylvan, 2011). The school's pedagogical approaches include utilizing all of the students' language practices as tools in the learning of academic English. The use of bilingualism in education doesn't then emerge from structures of language allocation or curriculum, but rather 'from the students up'. Although English is the language of instruction according to plans submitted to government officials, the schools' collaborative group learning structures facilitate students' use of their home language practices when meaning-making in the classroom. How teachers, supposedly teaching 'in English' respond to these fluid language practices and 'take them up' to educate is the subject of this chapter.

During 2010–2011, we conducted observations of all teachers of 9th and 10th graders, and more intensively of Math and English teachers, to attempt to answer our overarching research question: *How does Spanish support English language development in a school where all students speak Spanish, but not all teachers do?* (García & Flores, 2011). In this chapter we focus on the language practices of two of the teachers of 'English' who are at different points on the bilingual continuum. Whereas one is a fluent bilingual who speaks English and Spanish, the other is 'picking up' Spanish language practices from her students. Specifically, we look here at how these two teachers, with different bilingual proficiency, use translanguaging as a pedagogy to educate these students for whom translanguaging is also a common language practice at home and in the community.

The snapshots that are offered here are based on audio-recordings of lessons conducted by these two teachers, as well as field notes written by us as we observed the teachers in their interactions with students. All actual quotations are from transcriptions of the audio-recordings. While we are very aware of the fact that linguistic third spaces are not only created by teachers, the nature of our data only allows us to analyse the creation of linguistic third spaces from the teachers' perspectives.

The first teacher, who will be referred to as Ms C, is a Chilean-American born in the US who grew up using English and Spanish. We will focus on the ways that she systematically incorporated translanguaging strategies to facilitate the development of linguistic and cultural third spaces in her classroom. In particular, we will analyse one observation we conducted of a weekly event that she called 'Hip-Hop Monday'.

The second teacher, who will be referred to as Ms S, is an Indian-American whose language practices include Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, English and (now) Spanish. She reported taking Spanish in high school, but not using it on a regular basis until working at PAIHS. While Ms S planned translanguaging in ways that facilitated the creation of linguistic third spaces, her planning was less systematic and more spontaneous. We will focus here primarily on her interactions with students during her 'English' lessons in the course of our observations. Putting these two teacher snapshots together allows us to illustrate the ways that teachers at different points on the continuum of bilingualism create linguistic third spaces through translanguaging. In addition, we look at the effects of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice.

## Ms C's Classroom

As mentioned above, Ms C has a special session of her 'English' class every Monday that she calls 'Hip-Hop Monday'. This section describes the overall structure of Hip-Hop Monday and demonstrates how it is structured in such a way as to create linguistic third spaces. In addition, one session of Hip-Hop Monday will be described to illustrate how linguistic third spaces look in practice as translanguaging is consciously incorporated into a lesson plan. We will demonstrate how Hip-Hop Monday undermines nation state/colonial language ideologies and facilitates the development of fluid ethno-linguistic identities that are culturally and linguistically transformative for both Ms C and her students.

Every Hip-Hop Monday centres around two songs on a particular topic, usually a topic dealing with social justice around US Latino/Latin American issues – one in Spanish, and one in English. It is this juxtaposition of two songs on a related topic but in different languages that lies at the core of the

linguistic third spaces created every Hip-Hop Monday. Students are introduced to the topic through listening to the Spanish song, which connects to their Latin American national identities. They analyse the song with a critical socio-political, as well as language/literary lens, using language practices that incorporate Spanish features as well as English features in order to provide a deep critical and creative analysis. They then translate a section of the song into English in writing using their full linguistic repertoire, sometimes incorporating Spanish features, sometimes English features, always both. They do so using dictionaries, asking each other questions and always collaboratively in heterogeneous groups that consist of students at different levels of English language development. As we will see, putting Spanish and English alongside each other, many times with features that are 'trans' – blends of both – starts to construct an ethnolinguistic identity that is not solely Latin American and Spanish monolingual, and not solely Anglo US and English monolingual, but a US Latino bilingual identity. Students are then exposed to the same topic again through listening to an English song and orally analysing the song using the translanguaging of their evolving discourse. They then translate in writing a section of the song into Spanish, translanguaging actively and constructing their discourse not solely from an English-language perspective, but through the use of complex bilingualism that does not separate English from Spanish. As will be seen in the description of one Hip-Hop Monday below, this constant going back and forth between seemingly static languages and ethnolinguistic identities allows for the emergence of fluid border identities that transcend national borders and challenge homogeneous language constructs.

In one session, Ms C is teaching the students about '*los desaparecidos*' ['the disappeared'] in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Ms C begins the lesson by presenting a PowerPoint with images to build background knowledge on the US-backed coup in Chile that brought Pinochet to power. While the PowerPoint is written in English, key terms are written in Spanish. In addition, both Ms C and the students interact with the PowerPoint in linguistically fluid ways. One exchange between Ms C and a group of students demonstrates what this sounds like.

- Ms C:** Well I don't know where they were from, but they got money from the United States. But they came and they bombed it. The President Allende was inside.
- Student:** ¿Murió?
- Ms C:** And he died *y murió*.

Ms C begins the exchange in English. A student indicates her understanding of what Ms C says by posing a question in Spanish. Ms C responds to her

question in English, but then reiterates it in Spanish. This repetition in Spanish not only acknowledges the original language of the question, but also emphasizes the point for the entire class. There could be no misunderstanding. President Allende died and the language in which it was expressed did not change the tragic nature of it.

Ms C continues with this exchange and enlarges the linguistic third space through sharing her own personal connection with the death of President Allende, as a Chilean-American.

**Ms C:** And my uncle who I told you about, right? Didn't I tell you?

**Students:** Yeah.

**Ms C:** He was inside also because he worked in the government.

**Student:** ¿Y se murió también?

**Ms C:** No, he didn't die that day. He was taken then to the concentration camp. So Allende died. *La gente no sabe si se suicidió o lo mataron. Es como un misterio histórico en Chile.* But then who took over? The picture of him is right there.

**Student:** Pinochet.

Ms C develops a linguistic and cultural third space by permitting and participating in fluid language practices in her interactions with students, as well as by sharing her experiences as a Chilean American. First, a student expresses his interest in knowing more about her uncle in Spanish. Ms C acknowledges his interest, though she answers in English. However, she then uses Spanish to emphasize the key point that she wants students to take away from the presentation – namely that Allende died and it is unclear whether he committed suicide or was murdered.

This linguistic third space culminates in Ms C emphasizing in Spanish the connection between the military coup in Chile and the experiences of other Latin American countries:

**Ms C:** *Hay gente desaparecida todavía en la Republica Dominicana, Haití, Peru* (says it with an American pronunciation).

**Student:** (mockingly exaggerating an American accent) Peru.

**Ms C:** Peru. *Perú.*

**Students:** (continuing to mock) Peru, Peru.

**Ms C:** (laughs) *Perú.* Alright. So this is not only Chile. There are many places that this has happened.

**Student:** *México.*

**Ms C:** *México.* Yeah.