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Sustaining Latinx Bilingualism in New York's Schools: The CUNY- NYSIEB Project

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Topic: Sustaining Latinx Bilingualism in New York's Schools: The CUNY-NYSIEB Project

Abstract: In this report, we describe the work of CUNY-NYSIEB, the City University of New York – New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals, a research and professional development project that aims to improve the educational experiences of those students we refer to as emergent bilinguals across schools in New York State, most of whom are Latinx learners. First, we give an overview of the experiences of Latinx emergent bilinguals in the U.S. in general and New York in particular. Next, we introduce the CUNY-NYSIEB project, outlining its theoretical foundations, vision, and on-the-ground work in schools. We then describe this school-based work through three vignettes that demonstrate CUNY-NYSIEB's commitment to fostering Latinx students' bilingualism through *translanguaging*.

Keywords: Indigenous, bilingual education, bilingualism, emergent bilinguals, English as a Second Language, language education Latinx, *translanguaging*, New York, Spanish, Spanish bilingualism

Introduction

In classrooms across New York State, as in most other classroom contexts across the U.S. and internationally, teachers are tasked with educating multilingual learners. And though New York, and in particular New York City, has traditionally been a haven for immigrants and transnational people, schools continue to struggle to educate children in ways that support and extend their bilingualism. For Latinx students, who make up 26.5% of New York State's K-12 student population and 40% of New York City's K-12 student population (<https://data.nysed.gov>), their educational experiences have been characterized by contradiction. In New York City in particular, the realities of multiculturalism and multilingualism stand in stark contrast to the subtractive educational experiences of its emergent bilingual youth, and of Latinx emergent bilinguals in particular (García 2011). And abutting the proud history of the Latinx community's political and educational activism on behalf of its children is the continued segregation in New York, where many Latinx students learn in under-resourced schools, and in classrooms that silence their bilingual voices and experiences (García & Kleifgen 2018).

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The City University of New York – New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals¹ (CUNY-NYSIEB) project aligns itself with this strong history of activism for bilingual education and educational equity within the Latinx community and works to counteract the subtractive schooling experienced by many bilingual Latinx learners across the state. This report details that work, focusing namely on the project’s theoretical foundations and its work with Latinx students and their teachers in New York State’s public schools. First, we give an overview of the experiences of Latinx emergent bilinguals² in the U.S. in general and New York in particular. Next, we outline CUNY-NYSIEB’s theoretical foundations, vision, and work in schools. We then describe this school-based work through three vignettes that demonstrate CUNY-NYSIEB’s commitment to fostering Latinx students’ bilingualism through *translanguaging*², particularly by leveraging students’ linguistic and other semiotic Spanish resources in order to access content and texts, engage in activities that draw on and expand their metalinguistic awareness, and develop pride in their bilingual, bicultural language practices and identities. These vignettes demonstrate how translanguaging is integral to educating Latinx students no matter their instructional program. Given that most Latinx students today are educated monolingually in English, we show how

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¹ In 2017-2018, the CUNY-NYSIEB project is under the direction of Kate Seltzer. Ricardo Otheguy is the Principal Investigator and Ofelia García and Kate Menken are Co-Principal Investigators. María Teresa (Maite) Sánchez serves as Project Advisor. Past and present Associate Investigators and Research Assistants on the project include: Gladys Aponte, Laura Ascenzi-Moreno, Katherine Carpenter, Brian Collins, Ivana Espinet, Cecilia Espinosa, Luz Herrera, Meral Kaya, Erin Kearney, Tatyana Kleyn, Dina López, Kate Mahoney, Zoila Morrell, María Cioè Peña, Vanessa Pérez, Luis Guzmán Valerio, Sara Vogel, and Heather Woodley.

² See section “The Theoretical Foundations of the CUNY-NYSIEB Project: Translanguaging”, pp. 12-15 of this report for a definition and explanation of this term.

translanguaging can help sustain Spanish language performance and disrupt the English-only context to allow for students' uses of Spanish. Translanguaging is also the tool that helps Latinx students in bilingual education classrooms understand the relationship between the two languages of instruction—English and Spanish—so that they can sustain bilingual practices and develop a Latinx bilingual subjectivity.

Latinx learners in the U.S.

It is a difficult time for Latinx learners in the U.S., a time in which they hear they are unwelcome, foreign, undocumented, criminals, speakers only of Spanish. And yet, most Latinx learners have been born in the U.S., consider the U.S. their country, are citizens, and are bilingual. More than ever, Latinx students in the U.S. learn in the shadows, hiding their bilingual potential and true identities. Many Latinx youth hide the fact that they speak Spanish, and try to “pass.” Others resist and claim their right to be different, but their bilingual abilities are hidden behind the walls that schools often erect, responding only to standardized versions of English.

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In 2015, the Latinx population in the United States was 58 million, making up 18% of the total population of the United States. Of these, 38 million were born in the U.S., and only 19 million were born in other countries (Flores 2015). The Latinx population in the U.S. is increasingly U.S.-born, with the proportion of

foreign-born Latinx having decreased over the years (Flores 2017). The Latinx population is young (one in four students in the U.S. is Latinx), and in three states—California, New Mexico and Texas— they make up one half of *all* students (Gándara 2017). Although California has the most Latinx students, Texas has experienced the greatest growth in their Latinx population (Flores 2017). Most Latinx students live in the aforementioned states, as well as in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York. And yet, the fastest growth of Latinx students is in Georgia, a state in what is considered the deep South and not a traditional Latinx state (Flores 2017).

Of the 51 million Latinx people aged 5 and over in 2015, 37 million spoke Spanish at home, and only 14 million spoke English only (Flores 2017). That is, three-fourths of the people who identify as Latinx in the U.S. speak Spanish at home. In 2011, over 95% of Latinx surveyed in a Pew Research Center study felt that Spanish was most important for the next generation (Taylor *et al.* 2012). Of those who spoke Spanish at home in 2015, 21 million were English proficient, meaning that 57% of the Latinx population is functionally bilingual. That is, more than half of the Latinx population speak Spanish at home, although they speak English very well. We can then say that although all Latinx students fall along many different points of the bilingual continuum, most could be considered experienced bilinguals, rather than learners of English or Spanish.

In addition to their different linguistic profiles, Latinx students come with different cultural and economic capital. Although most come to the United States to seek better economic conditions, many were middle class in their country of origin and come to escape violence and oppressive political systems. This is the case, for example, of the influx of Venezuelans during the Chávez/Maduro regime to south Florida. It is also the case of many middle-class Mexicans from Monterey who have settled in places like Mac Allen in southern Texas and have established businesses in the area. Latinx communities are most often mixed socioeconomically, with many living in poverty, and others leading middle-class lives, many times through Spanish.

The socioeconomic status of Latinx students often determines their educational trajectory. For example, many Latinx students who come from poor, rural backgrounds have attended schools sporadically, where they had few educational resources and inexperienced teachers. These students often fall behind in U.S. schools, for they have had little experience in using their home language to engage in academic tasks. Others, however, come with a solid education in Spanish, and have strong literacies in Spanish, which can make it easier for them to develop English language proficiency and literacies.

Although the U.S. Latinx population is highly diverse, it is the Spanish language that binds them together and that U.S. society uses to racialize them as the Other. Although many are U.S.-born and highly bilingual, U.S. schools erase these characteristics, focusing instead only on those who are categorized as “English language learners.” That is, the complexity of bilingualism is ignored, and the semiotic processes well identified by Irvine and Gal (2000) —erasure, iconization and fractal recursivity— play an important role in how Latinx students are perceived. Spanish, along with lack of English, serves to iconize being Latinx, ignoring the fact that most Latinx students use Spanish *with* English. Spanish *plus* a lack of English then serves to iconize Latinx as foreign, immigrant, poor, non-educated, brown or black. The fact that most Latinx students are simultaneous bilinguals and born in the U.S. is completely erased, as only sequential bilinguals (i.e.: English learners) are given social reality. Finally, it is the way in which these Spanish-speakers who are said to lack English are constructed that is then fractally and recursively assigned to all Latinx students. Thus, all Latinx students, regardless of socioeconomic status or language proficiency, are constructed as being limited, learners, immigrants, brown or black, the Other.

This process of racialization and othering, among other factors, has led to the striking differences in Latinx students’ educational performances in to their white English-speaking counterparts, even in subjects that are not language-specific. In

2015, 26% of Latinx students were proficient in fourth-grade mathematics, compared to 51% of white students and 65% of Asian students. By 8th grade, the difference was even more profound, with only 19% of Latinx students scoring proficient compared to 43% of white students and 61% of Asian students (Gándara 2017). The graduation rate of Latinx students also lags behind, although it has significantly improved. In 2014, the graduation rate for Latinx students was 76%, compared to 87% for white students and 89% for Asian students (Gándara 2017). Though Latinx students are also making inroads in college enrollment, they lag behind other groups in obtaining four year college degrees (Krogstad 2016).

Latinx learners in New York

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In New York State, where CUNY-NYSIEB operates, 27% of the student body is Latinx. And in New York City, 40% of students are Latinx. In contrast to the Latinx population in the whole of the U.S., most Latinx students in New York State and New York City are of Caribbean descent. In 2013-2014, most Latinx students in New York City born outside of the United States were Dominicans (37,000), followed by Mexicans (8,000 students), and then Puerto Ricans (7,000 students) (NYC Independent Budget Office 2015). In the same period in New York City, 15% of the student population were classified as “English language learners,” and in kindergarten and first grade, one in five students were “English language learners” (NYC Independent Budget Office 2015).

Despite the fact that over one-fourth of students in New York State and almost one-half of students in New York City are Latinx, the majority of Latinx students are educated in English-only classrooms where they experience rapid rates of language shift to English. Even students who are classified as “English language learners” are mostly educated in English only. In 2016-2017, 83% of all students so classified were in English as a Second Language (called English as a New Language in NYS), with only 16% in bilingual education programs (NYCDOE 2016-2017). Of those in bilingual education programs, 11% were in transitional bilingual education programs where the language other than English is used only temporarily, while only 5% were in dual language bilingual education programs that develop bilingualism and biliteracy. As we will see, with the vast majority of Latinx students educated in English-only settings, translanguaging can both sustain their bilingualism and crack the monolingual ethos in U.S. schools.

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As initiated by the New York State Education Department and drawing on many of the alarming statistics listed earlier in this report, the CUNY-NYSIEB project was originally conceived with the idea that Latinx English Language Learners had tremendous academic and language gaps that had to be remediated. However, because of the vision of the project’s principal investigators and directors, Latinx students were instead framed as *emergent bilinguals*, blurring the lines between categories of Latinx students and engaging the entire school staff in transforming their education so as to educate them through their strength—their

translanguaging. Before we explain this important foundation of the project, we explore briefly the vision that led us to posit translanguaging as our theoretical lens.

The Vision of the CUNY-NYSIEB Project: Emergence, Bilingualism, Dynamism

We began the CUNY-NYSIEB project in 2011 with a vision of bilingualism, bilingual students, and their education, and especially about Spanish-English bilingualism and Latinx bilingual students. This vision disrupted many of the common assumptions about bilingualism, which were promoted by early scholars of bilingualism who viewed it through a monolingual lens. The CUNY-NYSIEB project developed a vision of bilingualism that was more *heteroglossic* (Bakhtin, 1981) in nature. This was based on our experiences with Spanish-English bilingualism in Latinx communities, as well as involvement in bilingual and English as a Second/New Language programs. Our vision included three elements: emergence, dynamic bilingualism and dynamic development.³

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³ For the entire CUNY-NYSIEB Vision statement, visit <https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/our-vision/>

Our first commitment was to *emergence*, the idea that bilingualism could never be “attained.” Instead, as the literature on complex dynamic systems (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008) has helped us discern, English and Spanish had to be “done.” This concept of emergence meant that although the project focused on those New York State had classified as “English Language Learners,” we took a more expansive view, considering bilingualism as “the desired norm for all American students and not as the exceptional quality of a few.”⁴ In focusing on the emergence of bilingualism – “depending on the relationship of students with other people and texts, as well as with the learning environment”— we took the focus off the “needs” of Latinx students, and targeted instead the opportunities afforded to Latinx students, especially through the use of Spanish. The concept of emergence is related to our second vision principle, that of *dynamic bilingualism*. New language practices, we hold, “only emerge in interrelationship with old language practices.” It was with this principle that we introduced translanguaging referring to “the use of a learner’s full linguistic repertoire to make sense of the rich content that is being communicated.” That is, for Latinx students to perform in English, Spanish had to be leveraged in ways that recognize their bilingual lives in the United States. Finally, through our third vision principle of *dynamic development*, we call for an education that engages Latinx bilingual children “with their entire range of language practices,” and we insist that schools “support a

⁴ All the quotations in this paragraph correspond to CUNY-NYSIEB Vision statement previously referred.

multilingual context that recognizes the language and cultural practices of bilingual children as an important part of the school’s learning community.”

Despite an emphasis on testing and English development in this era of accountability, our vision of emergence, bilingualism and dynamism helped us see the schools we worked with through what Myles Horton referred to as “his two eyes.” In *The Long Haul*, Horton, the civil rights activist and co-founder of the Highlander Folk School, writes that with one eye he sees where people are, and with the other he sees “where I’d like to see people moving” (Horton 1997: 131). From the beginning, CUNY-NYSIEB has had one eye on where our partner principals and teachers were, and always another eye on where we wanted them to move. The more we worked with schools, the more our visionary eye moved forward as the people involved in the schools moved forward. In the next section we describe translanguaging theory, which provides the lens for *both* our eyes to see CUNY-NYSIEB’s work in schools.

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The Theoretical Foundations of the CUNY-NYSIEB Project:

Translanguaging

Our theoretical lens has been shaped by the work of many educators and sociolinguists who have questioned the existence of named languages (Makoni &

Pennycook 2007), engaged with the mobility of a globalized world (Blommaert, 2010) and adopted a more post-structuralist critical perspective (García, Flores & Spotti 2017). Though we borrowed the term *translanguaging* from the work of Welsh educator Cen Williams (1994), as translated into English by Colin Baker (2001), it was a Latinx perspective that enabled us to develop a theory of translanguaging focusing on a *transcendence* that takes into account three “beyonds” (García & Li Wei 2014; Li Wei 2011, 2018; Otheguy, García & Reid 2015; Otheguy, García & Reid 2018): *beyond* named languages, *beyond* the linguistic system, and *beyond* a simply “additive” approach to the education of bilinguals in order to engage their entire dynamic semiotic system. Because we focus this report on what CUNY-NYSIEB has meant for Latinx students, it is important to explore these “beyonds” —the theoretical foundation of translanguaging— through the work of several Latin American scholars: Fernando Ortiz, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, and Walter Mignolo.

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In 1940, Fernando Ortiz, a Cuban ethnologist, published his *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940/1978) in which he develops his theory of *transculturación*. In contrast to the North American concept of acculturation, *transculturación* refers to the process by which a new cultural phenomenon emerges which is original and independent of those from which it arises. For us, *transculturación* offered the idea that when languages that had previously been enacted in different geographical spaces come together, they form a new whole.

And when *transculturación* is applied to language, there is translanguaging, the *going beyond named languages*. In order to sustain Spanish for the Latinx population, a flexible perspective on its use and of the linguistic performances of Latinx students had to be developed. Translanguaging enabled us to go beyond conventions of Spanish and English, affirming Latinx students' unique bilingual performances.

The Chilean biologists Maturana and Varela posited their theory of autopoiesis in 1973, arguing that we cannot separate our biological and social history of actions from the ways in which we perceive the world. What is known, they argue, is brought forth through action and practice, and is not simply by acquiring the relevant features of a pre-given world that can be decomposed into significant fragments. For us, this offered the idea that it is languaging, the action and practice of language, *going beyond language as a static system of structures*, that is important in bilingual development. For Latinx students to perceive education as inclusive of their needs, their social history of actions as enacted in their translanguaging has to be included. Translanguaging goes beyond English or Spanish as simply linguistic features that can be isolated from the interaction itself in a bilingual context.

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Finally, Walter Mignolo (2000), an Argentinean semiotician, helped us understand how languaging can be oppressive or liberating, depending on the positioning of speakers and their agency. In reminding us that all languaging is enmeshed in systems of power, Mignolo reminds us to translanguaging as a political act (Flores 2014). That is, Mignolo (2000: 231) reminds us that translanguaging refers not only to the language fluidity of interactions, but to its potential to redress “the asymmetry of languages and denouncing the coloniality of power and knowledge”.

In summary, translanguaging gives priority not to the two “named languages” of Latinx students, but to their *unitary language system*. Language is then seen as Latinx students “doing language” with their own unitary language system and not simply adhering to the social external conventions of Spanish and English. In translanguaging, the linguistic cognition of bilinguals is seen as unitary, that is, there is only one lexicon, one phonology, one morphosyntax. Bilinguals then select from this single aggregation of features, and this selection is based on communicative needs and social conventions. Thus, Otheguy, García and Reid (2015: 281) define translanguaging as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages.”

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The CUNY-NYSIEB Project Work

In its first four years, the project partnered with 67 schools over four cohorts, and, though the scope of the project shifted in 2015, it continues to do work in schools across New York State, most of them located in New York City. Working as a team, faculty members from the City University of New York (CUNY) system and graduate students from the CUNY Graduate Center's Urban Education program were assigned to CUNY-NYSIEB's partner schools and determined the needs of the schools as well as helped set the scope of work and determined the schools' goals. The project's work with schools occurred both on the CUNY Graduate Center campus and in the participating schools themselves. In the first year of partnership with the project, principals and other school leaders attended CUNY-NYSIEB seminars at the Graduate Center. During these seminars, the school leaders were introduced to the project's non-negotiable principles and developed their knowledge of the theoretical foundations of the project, and, in particular, their knowledge of translanguaging. The seminars also provided school leaders with the time and space needed to apply their new ideas to their own contexts and work with members of the CUNY-NYSIEB team to set their own goals.

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Of utmost importance to CUNY-NYSIEB's school-based work is its emphasis on classroom teaching. The team conducts professional development sessions with

teachers and administrators, focusing on how taking up translanguaging in instruction can help emergent bilinguals to access complex content and texts, develop their language practices for academic purposes, make space for their uniquely bilingual ways of knowing, and support their bilingual identities and work towards social justice (García, Johnson, & Seltzer 2017). In addition, the team supports teachers as they translate their professional learning into practice. Members of the team model translanguaging, co-plan and even co-teach with teachers who are piloting translanguaging strategies, and observe and provide feedback to teachers at the beginning stages of shifting their practice in ways that benefit emergent bilinguals.

In order to support teachers as they take up translanguaging and leverage students' bilingualism as a resource, the CUNY-NYSIEB project has produced many publications and resources, all of which are free of charge and accessible via our website, www.cuny-nysieb.org. These publications and resources, in particular the *Translanguaging Guide* (Celic & Seltzer 2012, which has also been translated into Spanish), provide teachers with translanguaging theory and tangible examples of how to bring that theory to life in the classroom. CUNY-NYSIEB's resources have not only been useful to the teachers who work with the project; they have been accessed by educators and scholars nationally and internationally who wish to support emergent bilingual students.

To highlight CUNY-NYSIEB’s school-based work, we now turn to three examples of teacher development and student learning. In particular, we focus on how three different teachers adapted their pedagogy so that their Latinx students could build on their Spanish resources to access content and texts in English, develop their metalinguistic awareness, and cultivate a sense of pride in their bilingual, bicultural Latinx identities. These vignettes show how translanguaging introduced Spanish bilingualism into English-only instruction *and* transformed the separate spaces for English and Spanish constructed in dual language bilingual classrooms.

CUNY-NYSIEB Latinx students and Spanish

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Building on Spanish resources to access English content and texts

In the first vignette, we step inside Hulda Yau’s second grade transitional bilingual education classroom in a suburb of Western New York State. Hulda’s small group of emergent bilingual Latinx students – whom she calls the “grupito” – is learning about Greek mythology. The issue facing the *grupito* – and many of Hulda’s Latinx students— is that the texts, questions, and activities included in the mythology unit are in English only, and members of the *grupito* vary greatly in their comprehension of and ability to produce English. For this reason, Hulda draws on her students’ Spanish resources in order to make the English content and texts more comprehensible.

Though the goal of the transitional bilingual education program in which Hulda teaches is proficiency in English, Hulda knows that Spanish is one of her students' most powerful resources. Thus, with Tatyana Kleyn, a member of the CUNY-NYSIEB team, Hulda adapted and modified the unit on Greek mythology for her *grupito*, particularly her approach to the read-alouds of English texts. The text of the myth may be in English only, but Hulda's reading of it is not. As she reads, she pauses to translate or explain the story in Spanish. These moments in which Hulda engages in translanguaging provide a home language summary of the English text and help to clarify difficult new language. For example, when Hulda reads this line from the text —“It's Hercules!!!” a boy shouted. His father stopped in the middle of plowing...” — she stops and says the following to the *grupito*:

Estaba arando, that is, when you turn the dirt so it gets ready to put the seeds there. (*Demonstrates using her hands*) Ok? (Kleyn 2016: 110).

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In her use of Spanish during the English read-aloud, Hulda not only helps students understand a new word in English (“plowing”) but also appeals to their prior knowledge. Like most of her students, Hulda is of Puerto Rican descent. Because she knows that her students “come from the Caribbean [where] many people have a finca (farm)” (Kleyn 2016: 110), her choice to translate this particular word also helps her students make connections between the story and their own experiences in rural parts of Puerto Rico.

Hulda's read-aloud also asks students to draw on their own Spanish resources to actively make meaning of the English text. For example, Hulda pauses in her reading to ask students to summarize in Spanish what they heard in English or to "turn and talk" to a partner in Spanish to make connections and relate to the story. Importantly, Hulda also engages students in discussion about the story bilingually. Though the story is in English, she asks questions and accepts students' answers in both English and Spanish. When she asked students to tell her what they knew about the story so far, two students shared:

Sonia: Porque era fuerte [Because he was strong.]

Pricilla: Porque él, cuando él se pusía, when he was getting angry, él se, he uhm, he uhm, he pushed the, uhm, the houses (Kleyn 2016: 109).

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Hulda is interested in ensuring that all students make sense of the written text and develop their literacies. But as with all bilingual classrooms, her students are at different points on the bilingual continuum. For Sonia, a newcomer from Puerto Rico, Hulda's translanguaging allows her a voice she would not have if Hulda had insisted on using English, the language of the text. For Pricilla, who was born in the U.S. but comes from a Spanish-speaking home, her answer shows her use of all her language resources simultaneously. Her translanguaging is encouraged, as she is given experience using Spanish, without judgment of "interference" from English. "Pusía" is not seen as an ill-formed verb, but as a creative bilingual use that could result, through increased experience, in the more standard form

(“ponía”). Eventually, through the support of Pricilla’s dynamic bilingualism, she will be given more opportunities to use Spanish, extending her repertoire. Hulda’s own translanguaging and her explicit invitation for students to translanguague offers them opportunities to “do” language, expanding their linguistic repertoire and sustaining their diverse Spanish language practices.

Language sharing and metalinguistic awareness

Andy Brown’s fifth grade classroom contains all the students labeled “English Language Learners” in the grade. Despite the designation they have in common, the students in Andy’s class are highly diverse. They speak eight home languages, the most common being Spanish, Arabic, and Polish, and hail from home countries ranging from Bolivia to Yemen (Woodley 2016). After his school partnered with CUNY-NYSIEB, Andy began to make changes to his classroom. He shifted the multilingual ecology of his classroom so that it reflected the many languages of his students, which led to larger shifts in his instruction from simply teaching English to creating opportunities for his students to share their different language practices and develop their metalinguistic awareness. For the Spanish-speaking Latinx students in the classroom, this meant that their home language was put into conversation not only with English, but also with other languages. As a result, their awareness of their own multilingualism and that of their classroom deepened.

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An example of this growing metalinguistic awareness occurred during a reading of “Heart and Soul” by Kadir Nelson, a text that explores slavery in the American South. Like Hulda, Andy took time before the students read the story to preview some of the English vocabulary that might not be known to his students, including the word “plantation.” Andy put the word up on the board in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Polish. All students said the words aloud in the four languages and talked about the term, making connections to what they already knew about plantations both in the U.S. and in their countries of origin. One of the Latinx students from Colombia commented that in his view, “plantación” was different from the sense of “plantation” in the book. He said that in Colombia, there are “plantaciones de café,” but there are no slaves. This resulted in the realization that the meaning of words was not static—different historical periods and diverse local contexts change their meanings.

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To continue their exposure to the new vocabulary in the story, Andy shared an excerpt of the story translated into students’ home languages that contained the word “ragged.” Andy asked students if the translations of the word “ragged” were correct, which sparked discussions among the students. The Spanish-speaking students offered a few different translations, including “andrajosa,” “desigual,” and “harapiento” (Woodley 2016: 89). Students in other home language groups did the same. To help students understand this and other vocabulary words even further, Andy partnered students who spoke the same language and asked them

to create and then share out cards that featured home language synonyms and antonyms for the English words. By making space for the Latinx students to inquire into Spanish as well as learn about the other languages in the classroom, Andy was raising *all* students' metalinguistic awareness as well as their sense of pride in being part of a multilingual, multicultural community. Rather than viewing students through a deficit lens, so common for Latinx students in schools, Andy's translanguaging approach helped position them and all the language minority students as experts.

Developing Latinx students' identities and bilingual pride

In Gladys Aponte's 4th grade dual language bilingual classroom, Spanish is used one day, and English is used the next. However, through her participation in the CUNY-NYSIEB project, Gladys also opened up a translanguaging space that transforms the "dual" nature of the bilingual classroom, and reflects the dynamic bilingualism of her Latinx students. No matter the official language of the day, Gladys finds time during both English- and Spanish-literacy time to read texts in which bilingual authors use translanguaging creatively. For example, during a poetry unit, Gladys chose to read the book *My Name is Jorge: On Both Sides of the River* by Jane Medina. Through a series of poems, the book tells the story of Jorge, a newly arrived immigrant from Mexico, as he adjusts to his new life in the

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U.S. The book's themes were highly relevant to many of Gladys's students, as was the author's fluid use of English and Spanish in the poems.

Gladys knew that a major literacy skill in fourth grade was analyzing an author's word choice, and leveraged her Latinx students' bilingualism to do just that. While they read *My Name is Jorge*, they engaged in conversations about why the author chose to use English and/or Spanish at certain points in the poems and how those choices revealed things about the character of Jorge. For example, during one lesson, Gladys did a read aloud of one poem that featured a line in English that ended in the Spanish phrase, "con mi gente" [with my people]. She asked, "why do you think the author used Spanish there?" One Latinx student in the class answered that the author wanted to show how Jorge was always thinking in Spanish and loved thinking in Spanish. Gladys agreed, adding, "and that's the whole point of the poem!" (Field notes, Classroom Observation).

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In addition to analyzing Jane Medina's use of translanguaging in the book, Gladys also made space for students to demonstrate their own translanguaging through poetry writing. Inspired by her work with CUNY-NYSIEB, she planned a project that centered on the question, "What does it mean to be bilingual?" The project asked students to work in pairs to write and then perform a poem about what it meant to them to be bilingual. Because Gladys, like Andy, was highly interested in

developing her students' metalinguistic awareness, she asked them to decide what they wanted to write in Spanish and what they wanted to write in English and to explain the choices they made. She also created strategic student partnerships, pairing students who were more experienced writers and speakers of Spanish with those who were more experienced in English. Thus, when it came to culminating performances of students' poems, they brought together their different strengths.

Two students who were partnered together for the project had never worked together before. Though both students were Latinx, they had very different profiles. One had been born in the U.S. and was developing her Spanish language practices, and the other was a recently arrived student labeled an "English Language Learner" by the state. In their poem, which they performed together for the class, with the more English-dominant student reading mostly in English and the Spanish-dominant student reading mostly in Spanish, they explored their "bilingual powers." They told the story of using their Spanish to help a woman on the bus who did not speak English. Acting as translators, they communicated the woman's questions in Spanish to the English-speaking bus driver, eventually helping her find her destination.

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The poem, written using translanguaging and expressing the pride students felt in their bilingualism, was a powerful representation of a translanguaging space. By using translingual mentor texts and designing opportunities for students to use their dynamic bilingualism creatively and critically (Li Wei 2012), Gladys pushed the boundaries of “English” and “Spanish” language education. She normalized translanguaging and fostered students’ bilingual identities, as well as sustaining their bilingual performances that included Spanish language features.

Conclusion

To redress the inequities that surround the education of Latinx bilingual students, the CUNY-NYSIEB project has introduced translanguaging as a way to foster the bilingualism of Latinx students and cultivate pride in their bilingual, bicultural identities. The foundations of CUNY-NYSIEB’s vision are the concepts that underlie translanguaging: emergence, dynamic bilingualism and dynamic development. Through work in schools and classrooms, we have gained greater clarity about the theory of translanguaging as going *beyond* named languages, *beyond* the linguistic system, and *beyond* the education of bilingual students as monolinguals (in English-only classrooms) or two as two monolinguals in one (in bilingual classrooms). By positioning ourselves in the borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987) in which Latinx students live and study, CUNY-NYSIEB has made great strides in developing not only an understanding of Latinx bilingual practices, but

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also of a pedagogy that leverages these practices while developing Latinx ability to “do” what is understood as “English” and also “Spanish” in *all* classrooms. Only by paying attention to the ways in which bilinguals themselves use language, independently of the named languages that are said to constitute their bilingualism, will we be able to educate Latinx students to fulfill their potential. CUNY-NYSIEB hopes that in taking up translanguaging, it has contributed to the sustainability of bilingual performances in English and Spanish of the growing Latinx population in the United States.

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