

Biliteracy and Translanguaging in Dual-Language Bilingual Education



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Abstract Using translanguaging as a resource has the potential to transform biliteracy instruction in dual-language bilingual education (DLBE). In a flexible model of biliteracy, the students' full repertoire of resources is used to interact with texts that are written in different named languages as they think discuss, interact with, and produce written texts (García O. *Bilingual education in the 21st century: a global perspective*. Malden/Oxford, Wiley/Blackwell, 2009). In this article, we provide an example of this flexible model of biliteracy from a case study involving a third-grade dual-language bilingual teacher. The teacher designed a translanguaging space to create more holistic ways of doing biliteracy that allowed students to use their full linguistic repertoire for literacy performances. To do this, the teacher's *stance* about keeping the two languages in her DLBE class separate first had to change. She started consciously integrating what students were learning to do during English literacy and social studies instruction into her Spanish literacy instruction. She then designed a translanguaging instructional and assessment space she called *Los círculos*. In that space bilingual students take what they have learned across other content areas in instructional spaces dedicated to English and Spanish and do biliteracy juntos.

Keywords Biliteracy *juntos* · Translanguaging pedagogy · Dual-language bilingual education · *Corriente* · Emergent bilinguals · Assessment

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D. E. DeMatthews, E. Izquierdo (eds.), *Dual Language Education: Teaching and Leading in Two Languages*, Language Policy 18,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-10831-1_8

1 Introduction

Imagine a river that serves as the fluid border between two riverbanks; on one side is the riverbank of English language life and instruction, on the other side is that of Spanish language life and instruction. The teacher in our case study, Marisol, knew that providing an equitable education to her students needed to involve the two riverbanks. That is precisely why she was happy being a dual language bilingual education teacher. However, the dual language allocation policy followed in her school in New Mexico demanded that English and Spanish be kept completely separate at all times. In fact, Marisol who taught in Spanish was paired with another teacher who taught in English only, Tammy. Little by little, however, Marisol became disillusioned with the strict language allocation policy followed in her school. She wasn't completely satisfied with having students hop from one riverbank to the other without being immersed in the energy of the dynamic bilingual corriente of their own language practices.

During her instruction in Spanish, Marisol often would experience what she called the corriente, the river current produced by students' energy and engagement when their dynamic and fluid bilingualism was allowed to flow. The students' dynamic bilingual practices would dissolve the shape and strict separation of the riverbanks (one language on one side and the other language on the other) and allowed the positive power of students' bilingualism to surge beyond the two riverbanks. On those occasions, Marisol glimpsed the power of the corriente and started thinking that the two riverbanks (the language and literacy practices in English and those in Spanish) were not so separate as her DLBE's language allocation policy indicated. Perhaps, she thought, it would be important to capture the students' energy that flowed through the corriente so that the separate riverbanks would disappear and *bilingual* students' lived realities would be put at the center of instruction. Marisol started learning about translanguaging theory in relationship to bilingualism and decided to design a translanguaging space (Li Wei, 2011) for biliteracy instruction.

This chapter, based on research conducted by Susana Ibarra Johnson (2013), describes how Marisol's stance toward literacy instruction shifted from a language separation model where the Spanish literacy activities always occurred separately from those in English to a literacy juntos model. Reading to learn relies on a juntos model, integrating the students' full language and semiotic resources, that is, all the resources human beings have to make meaning (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). Marisol eventually developed a *translanguaging stance* towards language practices. This enabled her to adopt a flexible model of biliteracy by designing a translanguaging instructional and assessment space within her DLBE classroom that opened up the potential to make use of all the students' linguistic and meaning-making features. In that space, she leveraged a translanguaging pedagogy that consists of strategies to both support and scaffold instruction when one language is being used, as well as go beyond the named languages of the instructional spaces and transform the hierarchical power relationship in which English and Spanish are held in the United States.

Marisol is a *transladora/translatora*, a teacher able to merge both lados/sides of the riverbanks, of students' lived experiences, so as to create equitable instruction for all. As we will see, Marisol's translanguaging pedagogy for biliteracy instruction leveraged the translanguaging corriente produced by students and transformed their subjectivities. Before we describe Marisol's translanguaging pedagogy for biliteracy in a DLBE program, it is important to consider how this work rests on and extends the theoretical frameworks of many scholars of bilingualism and biliteracy.

2 Biliteracy and Translanguaging: A Juntos Theory

One of the most important goals of all types of developmental bilingual education is to develop biliteracy. Biliteracy, as defined by Hornberger (1989) is "any and all instances in which communication occurs in two or more languages in or around writing" (xii). All communication, oral or otherwise, around a written text, is considered literacy. Literacy is not an autonomous skill, but as Street (1985) has demonstrated, all literacy practices are influenced by social, cultural, political and economic factors. Literacy practices are not only associated with different cultural contexts and social structures, but are also multimodal, that is, meaning is bound up with other visual, audio, and spatial semiotic systems (Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996). García, Bartlett, and Kleifgen (2007) referred to pluriliteracy practices as moving "away from the dichotomy of the traditional L1/L2 pairing, emphasizing instead that language and literacy practices are interrelated and flexible, positing that all literacy practices have equal value, and acknowledging the agency involved in communicating around writing" (García, 2009, pp. 339–40; italics in original).

This pluriliteracy approach is not new. Gutiérrez and her colleagues (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez, 2001) and Reyes (1992, 2001) have demonstrated the diversity of, and interplay between, linguistic codes and literacy practices in multilingual classrooms. And yet, most dual language bilingual education programs adopt the concept of biliteracy as that of functional literacy in two separate named languages, that is, as an autonomous skill of reading and writing in two languages that can be measured by standardized forms of assessment. The model of biliteracy espoused by most DLBE programs is what García (2009) calls the *separation biliterate model*, ignoring the potential of a pluriliteracy approach. In a separation biliterate model, children and teachers match the language in which they are communicating around writing to the language of the written text.

This model of separation biliteracy corresponds in most DLBE programs with a sequential perspective on biliteracy, that is, the view that literacy in an additional language should not be introduced until a child has competence in speaking, reading, and writing in what is considered a first language (Wong-Fillmore & Valadez, 1986). The idea, following Jim Cummins (1979) is that what is learned in one language can then be transferred to the other because of a common underlying proficiency.

Recently, some scholars have argued that biliteracy does not need to be developed sequentially, and that paired literacy instruction works (Escamilla et al., 2014). Beeman and Urow (2013) have proposed the concept of the Bridge, or “the instructional moment when teachers purposefully bring the two languages together, guiding students to transfer the academic context they have learned in one language to the other language, engage in contrastive analysis of the two languages, and strengthen their knowledge of both languages” (p. v).

These perspectives on biliteracy provide ways of bringing the two named languages closer together, English and Spanish. However, the flexible model of biliteracy that Marisol enacts in this case study goes beyond providing a bridge between the two riverbanks of the language of power and prestige (English) and the language of Latinx homes and communities (Spanish). The flexible model of biliteracy is based on translanguaging theory, and thus does not start with the named languages of societies, but with the actual language repertoire and practices of bilingual speakers.

Translanguaging theory differentiates between named languages—English, Spanish, Chinese and others—as an important *social* construction that has had many real material effects, and the *internal* language of human beings (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015) with its potential to make meaning, to imagine, to construct, to liberate and generate ideas. This language of human beings is usually constrained by the notion that there are two riverbanks. But underneath the surface, where the human potential of the corriente lies, true language flows in torrents that disturb the riverbanks, that shape them differently, that show their true interrelationship as one territory. Herein lies the power of translanguaging, not constrained by social definitions of what is English and what is Spanish, but more flexible ways of doing language. It magnifies people’s ability to make meaning, to use their full linguistic repertoire, to imagine, to be creative and critical (García & Li Wei, 2014).

Anyone who has ever read a good book knows that all aspects of our meaning-making repertoire come to our assistance as we imagine colors, smells, and situations, as we visualize characters and events, and as we make our own meaning based on the verbal hints that authors give us in written texts. Oral dialogue around written text is always generative because it reveals the power of readers over authors, authors who can only give readers and listeners clues for constructing messages. And those messages that we derive from texts are always dependent on our individual background knowledge, our context, our situation, and our cultural and linguistic practices.

A translanguaging space in which a flexible model of biliteracy is enacted liberates readers, writers and speakers from the constraints imposed by the standardized named languages of nation-states and their schools. Even when we define the language of a written or oral text as being English or being Spanish, we know that it contains within it many voices, the heteroglossia that Bakhtin (1981) taught us to recognize in texts so long ago. Here is where translanguaging dwells, in the understanding that for biliteracy to develop we must let go of our conception of autonomous named languages that mean denotatively, and instead recognize that languages are made up of features, linguistic and otherwise, that the speaker or

writer selects as best they can to communicate a message to the reader (Otheguy et al., 2015). But in the *selection* of some linguistic features by the writer (and the inhibition of others that may not be socially acceptable for the particular situation), and also in the ways in which the features are interpreted by the reader, there are differences, openings and interstices through which different meanings are made. Translanguaging works then within these interstices, as teachers and bilingual students construct meanings with their own resources of texts that are said to be in one or another language or even both.

Dual language bilingual education classrooms should potentialize the meaning-making performances of bilingual students, allowing them maximum freedom in *selecting* features from their unitary repertoire, in being *agentive* learners, speakers, readers, writers, scholars. Instead, many DLBE classrooms, following strict language allocation policies, do not allow students this freedom to imagine, to construct meaning, because they are seen as incapable of making meaning of all their features in interrelationship. True, bilingual students must be given practice selecting certain features and not others in specific situations, and an instructional space in one named language or another is important to make this possible. But alongside these instructional spaces in different named languages, translanguaging spaces where students are given agency over the selection of the linguistic features with which they want to construct messages is a most important learning endeavor for bilingual students.

Only when bilingual teachers become aware of the meaning-making potential of translanguaging, beyond it being simply a scaffold, can a flexible model of biliteracy become possible within a DLBE classroom. The case study that we introduce next shows how Marisol, the teacher, changed her *stance* towards translanguaging while working within a dual language framework of language separation. She was able to *design* a translanguaging space that she called Los Círculos, and also was liberated to *shift* her language use to tend to individual students who needed support at times. Together, the translanguaging stance, design and shifts make up the three strands of translanguaging pedagogy as defined by García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017).

3 The Case Study

Data for this case study were drawn from a qualitative case study of a third grade DLBE teacher conducted by Susana Ibarra Johnson (2013). The study took place during a 5-month period of participant observation.

Marisol, a Latina teacher, grew up speaking Spanish, having been born in Barranquilla, Colombia. She first learned English in a dual language bilingual secondary school in Colombia where language separation was strictly implemented. She began her teaching career 17 years ago in Colombia as an English as a second language teacher for adults. In the United States, Marisol became the Spanish language arts teacher in a middle school dual language bilingual program. We meet her

at Vista del Sol Elementary School, where she has been teaching for 7 years as a third-grade dual-language bilingual teacher, responsible for instruction in Spanish.

Vista del Sol Elementary School is located in an older section of a large urban city in New Mexico. The students and their families are from the neighborhood and the majority have resided in this community for many years. The school is inspired by the work of a native New Mexican who was often referred to as *La doctora* (the professor). A long-time pioneer in bilingual education, *La doctora* believed strongly in the “importance of bilingual education and that children should learn both Spanish and English so that their culture, history, traditions and most importantly, the Spanish language would be preserved” (Program Brochure, 2010). *La doctora*’s legacy in bilingual/multicultural education continues in this school. The majority of the students in the school are Spanish-speaking Latinx, about half of whom are designated as “English learners.”

In the 1990s, many immigrants arrived from Mexico. In order to meet the linguistic and cultural needs brought about by the shift in demographics, the school established a 50/50 Spanish/English dual-language bilingual education strand kindergarten through fifth grade. In the third grade, two teachers distribute the content areas (language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics) by language and teach for an entire theme or unit in that selected language and content area. Marisol is team-teaching with Tammy. Marisol teaches language arts and science instruction in Spanish, whereas Tammy teaches social studies and mathematics instruction in English year around. This case study is about Marisol; however, in this work we also include Tammy since one of the examples we draw from includes Tammy’s instruction which prompted Marisol’s concerns of her students learning. Thus, Tammy will be mentioned in several sections given that she team-taught with Marisol and needed to be included in this work to fully explain how both classrooms were connected and changed even though they taught within a DLBE language separation model.

Marisol’s third grade classroom is full of print in Spanish. For example, the school schedule and homework assignments for the week appears on a whiteboard, as does “Lo que vamos aprender...” (What we will learn...). There are shelves with leveled books and chapter books in Spanish used for literature circles that were done twice a week. Marisol has a rug at the center of the classroom. This space allows the students to sit next to their peers and listen to a book being read aloud by the teacher or discuss *el dicho del día* (the saying of the day), which is one of the students’ favorite activities. In Marisol’s classroom, there is a poster depicting a Columbian scene with flowers and mountains in the background. Marisol often speaks to the students about her own dual language schooling experience, and following the bilingual approach she learned in Colombia, she has always insisted that her students use only Spanish during her Spanish instructional period.

Marisol and Tammy often plan lessons together, developing theme studies that connect concepts and ideas across content areas, but never across the languages in which they teach during their instructional time. Occasionally, Marisol and Tammy combine the two classes of about 36 students and teach them together, but always in either English or Spanish. It was during one of these joint classroom lessons, a lesson about historical figures from the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, that

Marisol had her “aha moment” about the inadequacy of the strict language separation. The next section describes why and how the walls between languages came tumbling down, as Marisol and her students used the *corriente* to surge forward.

4 The “Aha Moment”: Developing a Translanguaging Stance

It was during instruction led by Tammy in English that Marisol was first explicitly confronted with her “aha moment.” Tammy had been trained in the Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) model that consisted of many differentiated strategies to integrate instruction in English and grade-level content. Project GLAD is a K-12 instructional model consisting of 35 strategies (Bretchel, 2005). Tammy was introducing a unit about the history of race relations in the United States and important historical figures. She used a Project GLAD comparative input chart activity that depicted President Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Tammy began by introducing key concepts or vocabulary about the Civil War and Civil Rights Movement (i.e.: presidency, American Civil War, access, North, South, campaign, battlefield, slavery, Civil Rights Movement, integration, nonviolence, boycott, and preacher). Tammy placed pictures of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. on a timeline located in the front of the classroom and explained the similarities of these two historical figures. She emphasized that both Lincoln and King had fought for the rights of African Americans in the U.S. and sought to unite the nation. As students shared what they knew about the two figures, Tammy continued adding information to the comparative input chart. She then asked students to talk to an elbow partner in English about two new ideas or vocabulary words that they learned about Abraham Lincoln or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

As she observed, Marisol became concerned. Although some students were participating, especially her emergent bilingual students were silent. She had seen these students be vivacious and smart during her Spanish language instruction. She wondered whether they were making sense of what was going on. She then heard a student say, “*¿No estoy seguro de lo que tengo que hacer?* (I am not sure what to do?)” At this point, Marisol decided to pull out a small group of five students who had remained silent and disengaged. When she asked them yes or no questions like: “Was Abraham Lincoln our 16th president?” the students were able to answer correctly. But when she asked opinion questions like: “Why do you think Lincoln and Martin Luther King were important historical figures?” the students were unable to say much more than: “He was a good person” or “He was for black people.”

Marisol was alarmed. She understood that although the strict content and language separation was a good division of labor for the two teachers, it was not working for all students. She read, thought and discussed with other teachers the potential of translanguaging. She argued with some teachers in the school who did not think that introducing a translanguaging space was a good idea, for they were

convinced that to develop Spanish literacy, the Spanish language had to be protected. But Marisol wanted to protect her students, not simply the Spanish language of which she had been given charge. Marisol wanted to make sure that her students were learning at all times, whether they were immersed in the English language space or the Spanish language space. Furthermore, she wanted to recognize and leverage their own bilingual practices that made up who they were and to develop a bilingual subjectivity that was firm and strong.

She started realizing that teaching bilingually in Colombia was not the same as teaching bilingually in the United States. Unlike in Colombia, these U.S. Latinx students were minoritized, rendered voiceless and powerless, forced to live a bilingual life in a society that was determined to construct them as illegal, poor, and criminal. By observing her students intently, Marisol developed a committed translanguaging stance, a view of the students as whole, a view of the students' linguistic repertoire as unitary. She determined that her responsibility would have to be to help students select the appropriate linguistic features for the task at hand, and leverage their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning at all times, and not simply keep the two languages apart.

When Marisol questioned Tammy about her ability to assess their students' progress, Tammy confessed that she really couldn't do so in English only. When students seemed not to understand a reading, Tammy shared that she didn't know whether students did not understand the English language itself, or they didn't understand how to make meaning from written texts. She also admitted that she had no idea whether students who performed poorly in writing had ideas they wanted to share in writing, since they couldn't express them in Spanish. As she and Marisol talked, Tammy was also developing a translanguaging stance, understanding that she was instructing and assessing these bilingual students monolingually, acknowledging only part their linguistic and semiotic repertoire. Tammy realized that she rarely made use of other students' bilingual capacities, or of those of her fellow teachers, or of technology and electronic translation. Tammy came to see that more was needed.

In talking with Tammy, Marisol came to see that she controlled the Spanish language intently, only allowing multimodal or English texts, when scaffolds were necessary. Now she wanted to understand how she would be able to "re-see" this translanguaging corriente as one that could flow unbridled across the surface of the classroom, rather than covertly beneath it. The teachers' stances regarding the potential of leveraging the translanguaging corriente in teaching had been transformed. But now it was necessary to design instruction and assessment in ways that made sense for a dual language bilingual program.

5 Biliteracy and a Translanguaging Juntos Design

Marisol and Tammy decided they were going to integrate the English and Spanish language instruction river banks because they needed to focus on their bilingual and biliteracy development juntos, not separately. They started slowly, with Marisol leading the instruction. Together they developed Los círculos, a biliteracy juntos activity adapted from Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002). They selected bilingual, English and Spanish texts related to historical figures to make connections between what was learned during the students' English social studies work and their biliteracy work.

Marisol shared that doing biliteracy juntos supports the stance that “*la voz del estudiante es necesario siempre.*” (the students' voice is always necessary) During this biliteracy translanguaging space Marisol's design was based on how these bilingual students were experiencing their lives, not as speakers of English and speakers of Spanish, but as bilingual Americans, with pride and recognition of their bilingual subjectivities. The students' language performances fell at multiple points along the bilingual continua, with all being emergent bilinguals of one type or another, that is, for some students some features said to be English had to be developed for some tasks, for other students it was features said to be Spanish.

The first thing that the translanguaging design allowed was the ability of the teachers to document and assess seriously what it was that students knew content-wise and language-wise, in what García, Sánchez and Solorza (2018), call the *translanguaging documentation space*. The books that Marisol and Tammy gathered for Los círculos consisted of texts in English only, Spanish only, those that had bilingual translations in the same text, and those that used translanguaging at times, but no translations. Marisol led the instruction in Los círculos.

Los círculos book baskets the teachers set up provided an opportunity for students to select a text that met their literacy interests and that responded to the way that they wanted language to be represented in the text. This gave Marisol a better idea of the students' preferences, as well as reading abilities. Conferencing with students about their individual reading often consisted of questions such as:

- Why did you select this particular book?
- ¿Qué te gusta o no de este libro? [What do you like or not from this book?]
- Which parts did you enjoy, y ¿cuáles no disfrutaste? ¿Por qué? and Why?
- Tell me what is happening in this picture in English. Ahora dímelo en español [Now tell me in Spanish].

By asking some questions in English, some in Spanish, some in both, and allowing students to select whichever features of their repertoire (either those said to be from English or those said to be from Spanish) in most instances, but not in all (as in the last question), Marisol was able to assess the content knowledge and linguistic knowledge that the student had about the topic.

Once Marisol had a better assessment of the students' understandings and ability to use language to make meaning, she proceeded with the translanguaging design of

Los Círculos. In these small groups, the students first read for 20 min with a partner. Half the students read the book *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (1994) in English, whereas the other half read the Spanish version, *Pink y Say*. The story, about Say, a white soldier injured during the American Civil War saved by Pink, a former slave, was linked to their study of racism and slavery in the social studies lesson conducted in English by Tammy. Marisol carefully selected the student pairs, as well as the language in which students read, ensuring that a strong reader in that particular language was paired off with a reader who needed more support. The pair of students read in one language, stopped often to ask each other questions, and discussed the book with a torrent of language and ideas.

The whole class then came together to discuss the book with Marisol. Rather than direct students to answer questions in the language that they have just read or in one language only, Marisol made *translanguaging shifts*, appropriate moment-by-moment decisions that deepened the conversation. For example, student said: “*Mejor parte es Pink le dijo a Say que lo toque porque el tocó a Abraham Lincoln,*” to which Marisol replied, *¿Por qué?* Marisol continued her discussion about Pink saving Say after getting wounded from battle and then abandoning his unit. Pink and his family took Say in and nursed him back to health. Another student soon says: “*A mí me gustó esta historia porque Pink rescató a Say y le ayudó bastante.*” (I like this part because Pink saved Say and helped him alot) To which Marisol adds: “*¿Piensas que Say hubiera hecho lo mismo para Pink? Es decir, rescatarlo y ayudarle siendo que él era un esclavo.*” (Do you think Say would have done the same for Pink?) The student who had the first reaction then says: “*No creo porque es por eso que tenían The Civil War unos querían esclavos, the south, y otros no, the north. Y donde Pink estaba en Georgia no podían ayudarles a los esclavos.*” (I don’t think so because this is why we have The Civil War some want slaves, the south, and others do not, the north) Marisol doesn’t provide the students now with the lexical items for Civil War, south, north. What is important is to deepen the conversation about slavery and to get others involved in the conversation. “*Why?*” Marisol asks, “*what did you learn in social studies que pueden compartir conmigo ahora.*” The effect is immediate. Many students’ trip over each others’ words to participate. One says: “*Say no podía rescatar a Pink porque tenía miedo que lo arrestaran por ayudar a un esclavo.*” (Say could not save Pink because he would be afraid to get caught helping a slave.) Yet another one says: “*Say lo hubiera ayudado porque él peleaba por for the North.*” (Say would help him out since he was fighting for the North.) After which Marisol asks: “*Y ¿por qué, durante la Guerra Civil, Say peleaba por el norte y no el sur?*” (Why during The Civil War, did Say fight for the north and not the south.) Marisol has become aware that the students need the lexical item norte y sur, but she doesn’t interrupt them. She merely introduces the lexical items in her own discourse. In this way, the students are adding new lexical features to their repertoire, while nor marking them as “we speak Spanish here, not English.” At the same time language is used to learn, to make sense, to infer, to deepen connections, rather than simply adding structures.

Using the flexible biliteracy approach of *Los círculos* students found *sus voces* to make sense, to make connections, and to make inferences of the text in their own

words, thus improving their reading comprehension. These students were able to discuss their understandings about slavery and the division between North and the South during the Civil War, on a deeper level than when Tammy insisted English only.

In the flexible model of biliteracy, students are engaged in using all their language resources to read texts in different languages, think, discuss, interact with, and produce written texts. If students are to have deeper levels of comprehension while they read or discuss a text, teachers must ask reflective questions in *both* languages that prompt students to interact with the text. To facilitate this, Marisol developed a Círculos Wheel, as appears in Fig. 1. Marisol changed the prompt questions throughout the year to keep the activity interesting and to generate a rich dialogue. She provided the questions in Spanish and English in order for students to use as a prompt as they got started in their discussions. Sometimes a student would begin with a question in Spanish other times in English. Marisol often provided texts in both languages and students selected the text they wanted to read and discuss in during Los círculos activity.

Los Círculos opened up a space for deeper levels of comprehension which resulted in students leveraging their translanguaging to make meaning of the texts.

Because Marisol and Tammy were now aware that the school and the home/community needed to be included in their instruction they drew from their student's funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and planned assignments that involved community and family participants. For example, Marisol and Tammy asked their students to interview people at home or in the community about

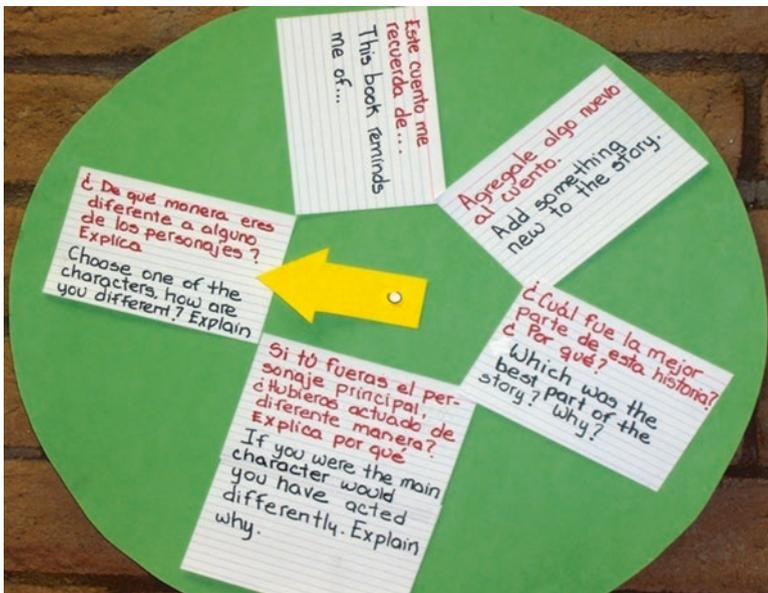


Fig. 1 Los Círculos wheel

what they knew about racism, civil rights, and historical figures that fought for liberation and civil rights. They explicitly told them that they could interview whomever in English, Spanish or both. Students came back with stories that went beyond Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Civil rights activists César Chavez and Dolores Huerta received much mention, but also Benito Juárez, Miguel Hidalgo and Emiliano Zapata. Beyond Mexican historical figures, the family narratives also included mention of those considered the liberators of Latin America from Spain, Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín, and also included was José Martí and Che Guevara. Not only did individual students learn from each other but the teachers themselves extended their understandings of Latin American and Latinx histories. Little by little the borders not only between languages and subject matter content, but also home and school, past and present, Latin America and the United States began to crumble. Students began to see their language practices as important and useful, regardless of where those language performances fell along the bilingual continuum.

6 Conclusion: Merging Borders to Take Up Students' Translanguaging Corriente

Marisol shifted towards a more flexible model of biliteracy during her Spanish literacy instruction because she came to realize after observing Tammy's lesson about historical figures from the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement the inadequacy of the strict language separation. Her "aha moment" was that students needed to use their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning of texts. By creating *Los Círculos*, a unit organized around biliteracy *juntos* activities, she drew from her student's bilingualism and understandings as they connected what they learned about historical figures in social studies in English to the bilingual texts presented to them during Spanish literacy, as well as to their families and communities. The separate riverbanks dissolved as the students' translanguaging capacity flooded the translanguaging space. Marisol was a *transladora*, a linguistic and worlds merger, able to understand the students' experiences holistically and drawing on them *juntos*.

Planning and enacting a flexible model of biliteracy is necessary if bilingual educators are to sustain the rich ways that bilingual students do literacy. Taking up a flexible model of biliteracy has the potential to connect with bilingual students' translanguaging and transcend the borders that keep them hopping from one riverbank to the other without rest. It allows teachers to document their linguistic performances holistically, and to assess fairly.

Marisol and Tammy developed a translanguaging stance that led them to design a translanguaging space design for instruction and assessment. In particular, Marisol was a *transladora* who was able to understand the difference between the *social* importance of named languages, English and/or Spanish, and the *internal* language capacity of human beings. As such, Marisol and Tammy maintained the separate

instructional spaces for English and Spanish, but opened up the translanguaging space of Los Círculos that enabled the two riverbanks to come together, integrating bilingual students' language practices in ways that gave rise to their thinking, imagination, creativity, and criticality without the social constraint of doing so only with certain language features. Just as making space for English and space for Spanish is important in a dual language bilingual education programs, making space for *translanguaging* is equally important. This space is not simply to scaffold instruction, but to transform the hierarchical positions of the social power of the named languages. The edges of riverbanks are softened as linguistic features are recognized for their potential to make meaning, rather than simply whether they fit the appropriate conventions demanded at certain times.

In the United States, strict models of dual language bilingual education substituted the developmental maintenance bilingual education programs supported by minoritized communities in the civil rights era. And although the strict language separation supported by DLBE programs might work for language majorities students for whom Spanish is just a commodity, it simply is inappropriate for language minoritized students, unless translanguaging spaces are designed. Though bilingual teachers have always been certain that for bilingual students to learn they must draw from their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), they have too often fallen prey to these strict language separations and conventional understandings of language and bilingualism that exist precisely to keep the power in the hands of the powerful majority.

This article shows how a dual language bilingual teacher and her teaching partner became aware of the potential of translanguaging and designed a flexible biliteracy space where students' translanguaging was leveraged. In that space, students learned to select the features of their linguistic repertoires in ways that put them in control of language use and learning, rather than following language allocation policies that will always leave out their bilingual capacities and exclude their ways of languaging and knowing.

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