

INVITED ARTICLE

# Translanguaging and Literacies

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**ABSTRACT**

The authors trace the development of the concept of translanguaging, focusing on its relation to literacies. The authors describe its connection to literacy studies, with particular attention to bi/multilingual reading and writing. Then, the authors present the development of translanguaging as a sociolinguistic theory, discuss its formulations, and describe what is unique about translanguaging: its beginnings and grounding in educational practice and attention to the performances of multilinguals. The authors argue that multilingualism and bi/multiliteracies cannot be fully understood as simply the use of separate conventionally named languages or separate modes. Instead, translanguaging in literacies focuses on the actions of multilingual readers and writers, which go beyond traditional understandings of language, literacy, and other concepts, such as bi/multilingualism and bi/multilingual literacy. The authors show how multilinguals do language and literacy and how they do so in school. The authors review case studies that demonstrate how a translanguaging literacies framework is used to deepen multilingual students' understandings of texts, generate students' more diverse texts, develop students' sense of *confianza* (confidence) in performing literacies, and foster critical metalinguistic awareness. The authors end by discussing implications for literacy pedagogy, as well as literacy research, that centers multilingual students.

Almost a quarter century ago, the New London Group (1996) published what has become a manifesto of transformed literacy pedagogy—a pedagogy of multiliteracies consisting of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. The scholars associated with the New London Group (see also Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) argued that the multiplicity of new communication channels, as well as the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world, meant that literacy had to be viewed in ways that went beyond traditional language-based approaches. It is significant, however, that despite the authors' emphases on linguistic and cultural differences, and the impact that this has had in the field of literacy in general, little subsequent work by researchers and educators has addressed the multilingual<sup>1</sup> aspect of multiliteracies. Instead, research has focused on the shift from studying literacy to literacies and from the linguistic modes alone to an increased preoccupation in the age of new media with other meaning-making modes, such as vision, sound, and gesture. Despite the New London Group's support for learners' multiple languages, subsequent research and pedagogy has turned its gaze away from multilingual readers, writers, and texts. The multilingual was largely excluded from the multimodal (Kleifgen, 2013). Although work quickly

followed that attempted to address this silence (see, e.g., Lo Bianco, 2005), the scholarship on biliteracy coming from the United States (e.g., Hornberger, 1989, 1990; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) and on multilingual literacies coming mostly from Europe (e.g., Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000) has often taken a different direction, not always in interaction with the theoretical contributions and pedagogical practices introduced by the New London Group.

Taking up a translanguaging paradigm in thinking about literacy brings the practices of minoritized bi/multilingual people to center stage, as it draws on Bakhtinian theories of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), scholarship on critical sociolinguistics and multilingualism, and work on multimodalities. Studies using translanguaging also focus on the ways in which social, political, and economic contexts and power can have an effect on language and literacy performances of multilinguals. As we will see, translanguaging transforms our understandings of language, bi/multilingualism, and pedagogical approaches to support multilingual learners' use and further expansion of their unique meaning-making repertoire.

In this article, we focus on translanguaging and the literacies of multilinguals and on the impact of translanguaging theory for literacy research, as well as for literacy education. We trace the development of the concept of translanguaging, focusing on its relation to literacy, starting from its first use in Wales. We preface our discussion by reviewing the contributions of sociocultural studies of literacy and critical sociolinguistics, all of which have laid the groundwork for work on translanguaging literacy. Also, we describe what is unique about the work in translanguaging: its beginnings and grounding in education, in which the development of literacy is a central concern.

We argue that multilingualism and bi/multiliteracies cannot be fully understood as simply the use of separate conventionally named languages, such as English, Spanish, and Chinese. Instead, translanguaging focuses on the actions of multilingual speakers, signers, readers, and writers—actions that include the unbounded dynamic and fluid use of multilinguals' entire linguistic repertoire—a notion which goes beyond traditional understandings of language, literacy, and bilingualism. We conclude our discussion with a presentation of selected case studies of classrooms that took up translanguaging in developing literacies of bilingual students and offer recommendations for further practice and research.

## Literacies in Sociocultural Context

### Rethinking Literacy

Literacy has been shown to be more than a straightforward cognitive enterprise of skill building; literacy is

instead a complexity of actions that depend on varying social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (Gee, 1989; Street, 1984). For Street (1984, 2003) and scholars working in the field of New Literacy Studies, literacy is a social practice, which entails the recognition of multiple literacies that vary with spatial and temporal contexts and are bound up in relations of power. These political and ideological moorings in New Literacy Studies bring to mind the critical pedagogy work of Freire. When literacy programs engage people in reading the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987), it is possible to become socially and politically repositioned. For Freire (1970), the word (language) and the world (knowledge, history, and politics) are intricately bound; thus, becoming literate has political consequences.

### Biliteracy

Early work on biliteracy was based on the concept of bilinguals as simply having two languages, and texts being in two languages, so it was defined as reading and writing in two languages (Goodman, Goodman, & Flores, 1979) or as the use of two linguistic and cultural systems in decoding and encoding around print (Pérez & Torres-Guzmán, 2001; Reyes, 1992; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). Hornberger (1990), perhaps the most perceptive scholar of biliteracy, defined it as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (p. 213).

In many bilingual homes, children and adults participate in literacy practices that are different from those of school and the wider society. For children, this can mean that bi/multiliteracy begins to emerge before they enter the classroom (Gregory & Williams, 2000). For adults, it means that their existing literacy practices are being used to read their world, even when those practices seldom appear in public or are not legitimized by the dominant society (Kalmar, 2015).

Researchers have demonstrated the value of using what was claimed to be students' first (home) language (L1) as a resource for learning to read and write in a dominant second language (L2). The bilingual theories of Cummins (1979), which focus on the interdependence of two languages, spurred biliteracy scholarship that addressed what Heath (1986) called transferable generic literacies. This belief in transfer led to different positions: One was that L1 literacy ought to be acquired before literacy in an L2 (Wong-Fillmore & Valadez, 1986), leading to support for sequential acquisition of biliteracy in schools. At the same time, Cummins's concept that two languages have the same common underlying proficiency gave support to a position for simultaneous biliteracy. Some scholars began to consider the interaction between the two languages to make meaning (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez, 2001). Nevertheless, although more emphasis was placed

on the dynamic, interactive use of two languages, the idea of two separate languages corresponding to two psycholinguistic entities in the brain was upheld.

Hornberger (1989) theorized the continua of biliteracy, an integrated way of analyzing the complexity of biliteracy. In revising her model of the continua of biliteracy, Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) argued that biliteracy is better obtained when learners can draw on all points along the continua; for example, students would be best served by using their vernacular contextualized language at one end to support the attainment of literate decontextualized language at the other end. Biliteracy in Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester's model was seen as responding to the different relations of power within the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which the two languages were performed. The work on biliteracy was now squarely positioned within the sociocultural trend of New Literacy Studies, although the model continued to focus on the two languages of biliteracy: an L1 and an L2.

## **Multilingual Literacies and Pluriliteracies**

In their important edited book, Martin-Jones and Jones (2000) defined what they mean by multilingual literacies: “the multiple ways in which people draw on and combine the codes in their communicative repertoire when they speak and write” (p. 7). Taking as a starting point a social view of language and literacy in multilingual settings, the chapters in their book show how literacy attainment is bound up in asymmetrical relations of power between different groups. For Martin-Jones and Jones, multilingual literacies make use of a communicative repertoire that often uses “more than two spoken or written languages and language varieties” (p. 5) and, most important, that people combine when they speak and write. The combination or blending of codes seems to us to go a step beyond Hornberger's (1989; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) continua of biliteracy model, which held on to the notion of a separate L1 and L2, even if used differently.

In 2007, García, Bartlett, and Kleifgen proposed the concept of pluriliteracies, an approach to literacy that privileges the acts of multilinguals, and attempted to capture not only the literacy continua with different interrelated axes but also an emphasis on literacy practices in sociocultural contexts, the fluidity of literacy practices especially afforded by new technologies, and the interrelation of languages and other semiotic resources. Pluriliteracies moved away from the dichotomy of the traditional L1/L2 separate pairing, emphasizing instead that languages and literacies are interrelated and flexible and positing that all literacy practices have equal value. Yet, even though the pluriliteracies approach was focused on multilingualism and literacy, it was not centered on the minoritized multilingual learner.

For example, it did not address the raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017) that continue to uphold some linguistic practices as standard and correct and others as abnormal and deficient, based on the speaker's racial positioning in society. Work on pluriliteracies did not propose alternative approaches to the ways in which minoritized multilingual people's literacy could be leveraged for study or work. By then, a term had emerged that viewed language and bilingualism with an epistemology that differs from that produced and normalized by the processes of nation building and colonialism. That term is *translanguaging*. In the discussion that follows, we show how translanguaging lays aside the focus on two or more languages as bounded entities. Translanguaging clarifies the notion that multilinguals act with a unitary semiotic repertoire. In so doing, translanguaging begins to change the terms by which bilingualism and literacy are studied and taught.

## **Advances in Translanguaging The Beginnings**

The first fissures to the separate-languages approach that characterized the bilingual education of minoritized groups in the 20th century was felt in Wales. The Welsh had claimed some measure of success in revitalizing the use of Welsh, a language that had been in decline for years, and attributed part of their success to the growth of bilingual or Welsh-medium schools in the second part of the 20th century. Such schools had typically followed an instructional model that required strict language separation to avoid interference. Teachers in bilingual education programs were expected to serve as monolingual models, and there was to be equal time exposure to each separate language. Bilingualism was said to be additive (Lambert, 1974), as if one autonomous language entity with explicit boundaries could be added to another. The two languages, corresponding to nation-states' sociopolitical construction, were never to meet or interact in the language of bilinguals. Bilinguals were simply expected to use language as if they were two monolinguals in one (Grosjean, 1982), avoiding the unbounded dynamic and fluid use of their entire multilingual repertoire.

Yet, to some Welsh educators, this model of bilingualism, and the one-language-at-a-time pedagogy, started to feel irrelevant to their bilingual identity and lives. It was a Welsh educator, Cen Williams (1994), who coined the term *trawsieithu* to talk about the use of Welsh and English during the same literacy lesson, where one language was used for input (e.g., for reading) and the other one for output (e.g., for speaking). Baker (2003) subsequently translated the term into English and argued that translanguaging is about an arrangement that normalizes bilingualism

without domain-based, diglossic functional separation, claimed by many sociolinguists as the only way to maintain stable bilingual societies (Fishman, 1967). Baker claimed that a translanguaging pedagogical approach deepened understandings, increased bilingual development, and developed a Welsh bilingual identity. Williams and Baker together opened up the possibility of disrupting traditional understandings of bilingualism that had been developed from a monoglossic ideology. Welsh educators started to realize that separate language arrangements suppressed the highly heteroglossic language practices of bilinguals and exacerbated their minoritization (García, 2009).

Bi/multilingual scholarship began to shift its locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2000), making room for minoritized bilingual groups' ways of knowing and being. Increasingly, the role that language played in processes of racialization and marginalization of bilingual minoritized speakers was made visible. Turning the spotlight away from language as a thing and bilingualism as being two things, scholarship on bilingualism and multilingualism focused on multilingual people as speakers/signers/readers/writers. Translanguaging scholarship started to emerge (e.g., Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Li Wei, 2011, 2017; Pennycook, 2018). Over time, translanguaging theory has transformed our understandings of the language and literacy practices of multilingual people, as well as our vision of literacy pedagogy.

## **The Sociolinguistics of Translanguaging**

Translanguaging has its roots in the work of many who had combated monoglot ideas of language and literacy. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the scholars making up the Bakhtin Circle argued that language is dialogic, bound to the context in which it exists and formed in the process of social interaction with people who may have distinct perspectives and ideological positionings (Bakhtin, 1981).

Translanguaging also owes much to the work of two Chilean biologists, Maturana and Varela (1984, 1987), who introduced the concept of *lenguajear*. They proposed that what makes human interaction different from that of other living organisms is the ongoing process not only of interactions and practices but also of observation, reflection, and description of interactions. This process of *lenguajear/languaging* engages the social, the histories, the cognitive, the emotional, the affective, and the lived ethnographies of all interlocutors in the interaction. Languaging was also the term used by the U.S. linguist Becker (1995), a specialist in Southeast Asian languages, to refer to the ongoing process of social interaction that is always being created as we interact with the word lingually. Meaning, claimed

Becker, is not in language as a linguistic structure that expresses, represents, or encodes; languaging as a process can never be fully accomplished, and it both shapes and is shaped by context.

In studying the sociolinguistics of globalization, Blommaert (2010) interrogated an artefactual image of language:

the image developed in modern linguistics, of language as a bounded, nameable and countable unit, often reduced to grammatical structures and vocabulary and called by names such as 'English,' 'French' and so on (p. 4)

Critical approaches in sociolinguistics (see, e.g., Errington, 2008; García, Flores, & Spotti, 2017; Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Pennycook, 2010, 2018) have also shown how named languages were, and continue to be, constructs of nation-state building and colonial expansion to support an ideology of racial, class, and gender superiority in multilingual societies.

Recently, many terms have been used to examine the more dynamic use of multiple resources by multilinguals to communicate beyond the adherence to named languages. These terms include *polylanguaging/polylingual languaging* (Jørgensen, 2008), *metrolingualism* (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), *translingual practices* (Canagarajah, 2013), *translanguaging* (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014; Li Wei, 2011, 2017; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015, 2018). They all reject the notion of separate, bounded languages as defined by nation-states and their institutions and instead capture the meaning-making potential of the fluid semiotic practices of multilinguals.

We prefer the term *translanguaging* because, as Flores (2014) noted, translanguaging is a political act focused on reinterpreting language as a decolonizing process and liberating the language practices of bilingual minoritized populations. We also prefer the term translanguaging because it centers the attention on bilingual minoritized people and their actions, especially in schools. We maintain that translanguaging holds the potential to transform the structural inequalities perpetuated by schools who sort students as nonlearners (or not) based on race, class, and language differences (McDermott, 2015).

## **Translanguaging: Multilinguals Doing Language and Literacy**

Focusing on the etymology of *trans-* (across), as in the word *transcend* (go beyond), translanguaging disrupts the naturalized stable boundaries of what are traditionally understood as languages, bilingualism, language education, and language learners. Here, we discuss how translanguaging transforms the (mis)understandings of

bilingualism as simply two separate language systems, as well as of language as exclusively made up of bounded linguistic features. We describe how translanguaging shifts the emphasis to the actions of multilinguals and their spontaneous performances, always emergent, as they engage in assemblages of the forms of semiosis that are made available. Also, we consider how translanguaging acknowledges the role of social categories, specifically race, in how others listen to and read minoritized bilinguals.

The emergence of translanguaging as a construct dislodged the monoglossic monolingual ideologies present in the concept of additive bilingualism: the idea that people have a bounded and autonomous L1 that corresponds to the dominant language of the nation-state, so schools can simply add another L2 as if it were another language entity, another thing. Instead, language is used by people to interact, as an extension of their own humanity, not always according to the rules and definitions of language by political and social institutions. Translanguaging privileges the unbounded and agentive dynamic and fluid use of bilinguals' entire linguistic repertoire.

Translanguaging also liberates multilingual communities from the strictures around language use that had been advanced when Fishman (1967) expanded the term *diglossia*, based on Ferguson's (1959) work, to describe how stable bilingual communities use unrelated languages. Bilingual communities were then described as using their two languages according to strict compartmentalized functional and domain boundaries, with one language used for high functions in domains with more power and the other language for low functions, often having to do with intimacy and home. Bilinguals were said to speak L1s and L2s as separate linguistic systems in separate domains. In describing the language use of bilingual communities in diglossic ways, nondominant communities were subjected to a process of linguistic minoritization, assigning higher power to the dominant language used in official institutions.

Translanguaging decolonizes these understandings about language, literacy, and bilingualism and incorporates thinking from, and being/listening with, racialized/minoritized multilingual bodies. Giving room to translanguaging constructs a legitimate in-between space, a *nepantla* or *tierra entre medio*, which Anzaldúa described in her 1987 translingual text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. The potential of what Li Wei (2011) called a translanguaging space was captured by Anzaldúa (2002): "Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries" (p. 1).

Otheguy and his colleagues (2015) defined 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 (and usually national and state) languages" (p. 283). Named languages have sociopolitical reality, and they have had, and continue to have, much real and material effects in the lives of people; yet, bilinguals do language with a unitary repertoire that in no way reflects dual/separate linguistic systems or has a dual psycholinguistic correspondence (Otheguy et al., 2018). This is an important difference from the way in which bilingualism had been viewed in the past (see, e.g., Jiménez, García, & Pearson (1995, 1996).

The translanguaging behavior of bilinguals is externally manifested when they do what some scholars have called code-switching (e.g., Auer, 1999, in press; MacSwan, 2017). Scholars who describe the performances of bilinguals as code-switching—the act of shifting from one linguistic code to another—uphold named languages as bounded and separate linguistic systems and continue to see bilingual behavior as double monolingualism. Translanguaging scholars, in contrast, focus on the actions of multilinguals as they deploy a unitary repertoire of linguistic features, regardless of whether these are said to be defined sociopolitically as belonging to one language or another. Translanguaging emerges from privileging the actions of multilingual speakers with their own repertoire, not from viewing the named language as prescribed by dictionaries, grammars, and institutions such as schools. From a translanguaging perspective, bilinguals are behaving as legitimate semiotic actors, capable of using their full unitary repertoire to maximize their meaning-making potential.

The unitary conception of the repertoire of bi/multilingual people put forth by Otheguy et al. (2015, 2018) also moves us to conceptualize translanguaging in terms of the whole person acting, using linguistic and other embodied forms of meaning making together with relevant objects, including technology, within social processes. Situating translanguaging within this broader, semiotic framework, a multimodal framework (e.g., Goodwin, 2000; Kleifgen, 2006; Kress, 2003; van Leeuwen, 1999) allows us to account for all modes—words, gestures, images, sounds, and so forth—that are used as elements to make meaning. Translanguaging brings multilingualism "back into the multimodal research fold" (Kleifgen, 2013, p. 170).

By foregrounding the actions of multilinguals, translanguaging takes into account participants' simultaneous use of multiple semiotic resources that mutually elaborate each other, including the historically shaped material and social environment (Goodwin, 2000). Lin (2019) referred to the trans-semiotizing aspects of translanguaging, a way to broaden the focus to analyze language as intertwined with many other semiotic resources (e.g., visuals, gestures, bodily movement) in meaning making, as a whole-body sense-making process (see also Sherris & Adami, 2019). Also assuming this perspective, Hua, Li Wei, and

Jankowicz-Pytel (2019) explored embodied teaching and learning in a multilingual karate club in London, England.

Taking up the concept of assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), Pennycook (2017) espoused translanguaging as a process of semiotic assemblage by which multilingual people bring together their entire repertoire, including their linguistic ethnographies, their bodies, places, and things. He emphasized that translanguaging is a process of grasping the relations among a range of forms of semiosis, including the multisensorial nature of our worlds. Texts do not simply represent; that is, they are not only about the world but also participants in the world, capable of “generating intensity and the excitement of emergence” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 26). That is, texts are not self-enclosed systems with a priori meanings; their meaning emerges in the interaction of objects, places, and linguistic resources, particularly social spaces.

In describing translanguaging, Li Wei (2011) emphasized the “spontaneous, impromptu, and momentary actions and performances” (p. 1224) of multilinguals as they engage with the world. That is, translanguaging as action is always in a state of constant and moment-by-moment unfolding, in emergence (Li Wei, 2017; Li Wei & Lin, in press). The work of Blackledge and Creese (2010) and of their collaborators in a project on linguistic and cultural transformations in four U.K. cities (see, e.g., Moore, Bradley, & Simpson, in press) focused on translanguaging as the actions of multilinguals that are always in emergence, in a way that is not preestablished or linear, as they make meaning with others.

Translanguaging practices are conditioned by the sociopolitical and economic structures within which speakers of minoritized languages are positioned. Flores and Rosa (2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017) argued that it is not language itself but the social categories (white/nonwhite, monolingual/bilingual, native/nonnative, or immigrant) that produce the perception of signs that are in turn evaluated by the white monolingual listening subject. As Rosa and Flores (2017) said, “no language variety is objectively distinctive or nondistinctive, but rather comes to be enregistered as such in particular historical, political, and economic circumstances” (p. 632). Because translanguaging focuses on the ways in which minoritized bilinguals do languaging, it takes on a critical interactive perspective. Scholars guided by translanguaging theory in studying minoritized multilinguals foreground the ways in which they speak or sign and are listened/responded to, write and read and are read by others, and make meaning and are understood by others, without comparing these acts with those of monolingual white middle-class speakers.

When literacies performances of multilinguals are viewed through translanguaging, an emphasis on restricting the language used to engage with written texts no longer exists. Translanguaging in the literacy actions of

multilinguals happens even when interacting with and producing what are perceived as monolingual texts. Leveraging the translanguaging literacy potential of multilinguals means encouraging readers and writers to interrogate and create plural texts with diverse language and literacy practices. It deepens multilingual readers’ and writers’ connections across what are perceived as named languages, also “forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 26).

A translanguaging approach to doing literacy acknowledges what Heath (1982) called the protean shapes of literacy events, in which spoken and written literacies are always intertwined and shifting, surrounded by other modes in mutual elaboration. Translanguaging recognizes the mutual elaboration not only of different modes but also of what are viewed as different named languages. Furthermore, a translanguaging literacies approach considers the social space not as a slice through time, as a single event, but reimagined as an activity or process that is always emerging (Leander & Boldt, 2013).

Translanguaging in literacy refers to the process by which multilingual readers and writers leverage their entire semiotic repertoire, as we said before, “without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283). In many ways, this translanguaging literacy approach is related to what Stornaiuolo, Smith, and Phillips (2017) called transliteracies, with a focus on the “the dynamic and material nature of meaning making in activity” (p. 68); “meaning bubbles up in interactions among people, texts, and things” (p. 77). Also, because the act of literacy itself is also shaped by a community of interpretation that legitimizes (or not) what is enacted, a translanguaging literacies approach has the potential to open bilingual students’ conscientização (Freire, 1970) of the ways in which society legitimates some literacies and not others, as well as the reasons for doing so.

Translanguaging privileges the meaning-making process of multilingual people as they leverage their linguistic and multimodal repertoire in “spontaneous, impromptu, and momentary actions and performances” (Li Wei, 2011, p. 1224) with people, objects, places, and spaces. This means that the unit of analysis for researchers now becomes the complex performances and human activities enacted by multilinguals within social space, rather than solely what happens within the minds of individuals or even groups. Instead of studying how bilinguals are deficient as compared with monolinguals in their engagement with literacies (a result precisely of restricting bilinguals to perform with less than half of the linguistic repertoire that is available to them), a translanguaging lens in literacy research could result in learning more about the complex process by which multilinguals assemble their meaning-making

resources and form relations among a range of forms of semiosis to interpret and produce texts. Research would then begin to explore students' expertise and ability to successfully achieve these goals. Research on translanguaging and literacy would engage not only with literacy and the word but also simultaneously with the world, in a transdisciplinarity that would open up the study of literacy.

## Translanguaging: Multilinguals Engaging With Language and Literacy in Schools

Here, we turn our attention to the need for and benefits of a translanguaging literacies pedagogy in schools. A translanguaging space where minoritized bi/multilingual students can use all of their resources creatively and critically (Li Wei, 2011) can be present in any classroom, whether mainstream monolingual, monolingual with special assistance for language learners, or bilingual. Yet, educational institutions, and even bilingual education programs, have been slow to embrace translanguaging, chiefly because of adherence not only to standardized norms of language but also to the mistaken idea that bilinguals have two separate language systems.

Because translanguaging goes against many prevailing language-in-education policies, enacting translanguaging in education calls for a teacher able to open up a translanguaging space. This teacher need not be bilingual (see, e.g., Pacheco, Daniel, Pray, & Jiménez, 2019) but must understand how language is much more than the linguistic code reified in school, as well as how school epistemologies about language are related to power. That is, in disrupting established monolingual and monoglossic language and literacy understandings to make room for translanguaging, a teacher engages in acts of social justice, providing marginalized multilingual learners opportunities to act as literate multilingual learners, able to use their entire semiotic repertoire.

García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) identified three strands to a translanguaging pedagogy: a translanguaging stance, a translanguaging design, and translanguaging shifts. First, to construct a translanguaging classroom, a translanguaging *juntos* stance is necessary. Teachers must have a deep belief that multilingual students' actions toward making meaning cannot be dichotomized and bounded by, on the one hand, two or more named languages and, on the other hand, by separate multimodal signs, objects, and bodies, but must be joined. Additionally, teachers' translanguaging stance encompasses critical understandings about why named languages have been invented (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) as a result of processes of nation building and colonialism, and the role that standard language varieties and the hierarchical

relations between named languages have had in the racialization and minoritization process of multilingual students. Second, teachers' translanguaging instructional design engages multilingual students as active learners assembling the different forms of semiosis that make up their entire repertoire. When they redesign the learning environment in this way, teachers also open the way to more student agency to interrogate traditional language practices and ideologies that impede their education. Third, because a translanguaging pedagogy ultimately "stems from the speaker up and not from the language down" (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 23), teachers enact translanguaging shifts, adjusting to a fluid translanguaging *corriente* (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017) of multilingual learners and acknowledging the spontaneous and impromptu performances and the emergent quality of translanguaging. These shifts entail negotiating with multilingual students whose actions precisely give rise to the translanguaging *corriente*. An educator who is able to shift in response to bilingual students' dynamic translanguaging transforms traditional standards and curricula into a pedagogy that liberates students' languaging to think, imagine, feel, and learn.

A translanguaging pedagogy aims to support learners' subjectivities and ways of knowing as active, agentive bilingual subjects. This pedagogy positions translanguaging as a right of learners to bring themselves with their linguistic repertoires fully into the classroom so as to grow and thrive academically, and it also transforms them from being positioned as inferior learners to being recognized as having valuable language and literacy practices and ways of knowing that extend beyond mandated curricula and standardized exams. In Canagarajah's (2011b) words, "translanguaging helps us adopt orientations specific to multilinguals and appreciate their competence in their own terms" (p. 3). A learning environment that supports translanguaging has the potential to be transformative because, as Li Wei (2011) explained,

it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience. (p. 1223)

A translanguaging pedagogy goes beyond what some have identified as being culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) or culturally responsive (Gay, 2010; Jiménez, 2013) or even culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017). As with these pedagogical models, translanguaging pedagogy leverages students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), but in doing so, it does not restrict itself to the existing knowledge systems about language and bilingualism in schools. Instead, a translanguaging pedagogy goes beyond them, questioning prevailing epistemologies

about language and bilingualism as systems of domination. To liberate the meaning-making potential of minoritized bilinguals, a translanguaging pedagogy privileges emergence of meaning making, feeling, intensity, and excitement, as it moves the imaginaries of students to make connections across what are perceived and encoded as separate sign systems. Multilinguals can experience a transformation “when they realize the artificial and constructed nature of the categories imposed on them” (Kramsch, 2012, p. 498), and they can then coordinate their own performances without the strictures of external categories.

School has an important place in literacy studies because students are legitimated (or not) as literate beings in classroom instruction and through literacy assessments. Yet, school literacy has been based on epistemological presuppositions that are, as de Souza (2017) wrote, “embedded in traditions of knowledge and unequal power relations” (p. 263). For example, de Souza described how certain nonalphabetic forms of literacy in marginalized indigenous communities are not perceived as literacy. Likewise, it is frequently the case that literacy in any language other than the dominant one of a given society is not acknowledged, making many multilingual learners’ literate work invisible when it is performed using language practices other than those legitimated in school. Literacy education for multilingual students typically has focused on obligating them to use only the language practices authenticated by schools and school texts, even if these texts appear to be culturally relevant/responsive/sustaining.

Traditional literacy approaches in the education of multilingual students have adhered to the principle of the one-named language as input and the same-named language as output. In monolingual classrooms, including L2 classrooms, language-minoritized students are asked to make meaning only with the authorized language of the written text, ignoring more than half of their linguistic and semiotic repertoire, which is then rendered invisible. In bilingual classrooms, language-minoritized students also are compelled to make meaning only with the authorized written language and are often prevented from bringing to bear their whole meaning-making repertoire to engage in literacy in one named language and/or another. These approaches to literacy education for multilinguals are simply unjust; they restrict rather than liberate students’ meaning-making potential and often result in failure in school.

A translanguaging literacy pedagogy would transform the literacy education of multilingual students. It would reorganize time and space in schools so the entire repertoire of forms of semiosis are available to students at all times. Rather than keeping language arts separate from other content areas, the arts separate from the sciences, and English language arts separate from Spanish language arts or the study of additional languages, it would bring

what are seen as separate languages and separate disciplines together, juxtaposed, simultaneously, in the same space. Rather than keeping the spoken/written/signed/linguistic modes separate from other meaning-making modes, including technology, a translanguaging literacy pedagogy would bring down these barriers. A literacy education based on translanguaging would also give its proper place to the body and the affect of the learner, focusing on how the body interacts with an ever-changing literacy environment. It would also disrupt the linearity of curricula and the uniformity of ages and levels in instruction. A translanguaging literacy education would then engage the creativity and criticality of multilingual learners as they perform literacy, rather than simply their ability to conform to tradition and be dependent on static texts that are said to have predetermined meanings representing the world, a world from which they are often excluded.

Traditional assessment of literacy practices most often castigates bilingual students’ translanguaging. Yet, leveraging students’ translanguaging to assess their literacy performances has the potential for educators and researchers to truly understand what students know and how they know it. For example, Ascenzi-Moreno (2018) explored how making room for students’ translanguaging during informal reading inventories and running records gives teachers a better sense of students’ developing metalinguistic awareness as readers. Schissel, De Korne, and López-Gopar (2018) explored how translanguaging in formative assessments in Oaxaca, Mexico, reveals students as dynamic learners engaged in actively constructing meaning. Also, López, Guzmán-Orth, and Turkan (2019) at Educational Testing Service designed a math assessment for bilingual students in which they can show what they know in English, in Spanish, orally, in writing, or in any combination thereof. The purpose is to assess bilingual students’ math knowledge without the impediment of a named written language restricting how they access their knowledge. Although new technologies are making it possible to design summative assessments that leverage bilingual students’ translanguaging, there is still lack of progress in developing more translanguaging assessments due to national monolingual/monoglossic ideologies that only validate certain types of language and knowledge.

Although progressively more educators and scholars are taking up a translanguaging lens to study and educate multilingual learners, disproportionate numbers of educational authorities and schools still resist opening up more space for translanguaging literacies in schools. For this reason, we consider it instructive and imperative to present next some of the growing literature on translanguaging literacies, which has demonstrated the value of implementing these practices in multilingual classrooms and how researchers have documented these practices.

## Case Studies: Translanguaging and Multilingual Learners in Acts of Literacy<sup>2</sup>

The literature on translanguaging in literacy classrooms with bilingual students, where the goal is engagement with written texts, has lagged behind that of oral translanguaging as a way to make meaning of school content (see, e.g., Cenoz, 2017; García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016; Poza, 2018). Yet, literacy scholars are just beginning to recognize that the multilingual process of reading and writing transcends language borders (Kabuto, 2017). In this section, we review selected studies in which educators incorporated translanguaging into their schools' literacy practices for multilingual students with positive effects.

These case studies used primarily qualitative research frameworks in order to gain understandings from the participants' (students, teachers, families, and communities) perspectives; moreover, they are essential for close observation of the emergence of meaning making as multilinguals engage in acts of literacy. These studies provide a robust foundation for larger impact studies in translanguaging literacies to demonstrate student outcomes (see Jiménez, 2013).

Case study research has demonstrated that students with diverse language and literacy experiences take up translanguaging in distinctive ways to do literacy. For bilingual students who may not have received many opportunities for extensive language and literacy practice in the school language, those whom we called emergent bilinguals (García & Kleifgen, 2018), translanguaging may be used as a simple scaffold to achieve the goals legitimated as school language and literacy. Yet, translanguaging can also be, for all minoritized bilingual students, a way to transform and generate texts that take into account their different ways of knowing and language/literacies practices, thus transforming school literacy and knowledge.

The case studies that we review here show teachers and multilingual students engaged in translanguaging to do literacy. The students represent many different ages and types, and their practices are diverse. It is not possible to regulate strategies used in a translanguaging pedagogical approach, because they respond to the momentary actions and performances of multilinguals. Nevertheless, these case studies show the adoption of translanguaging literacy strategies that go beyond traditional definitions of named languages and focus on the emergent actions of multilingual learners as they engage with literacy. By examining translanguaging literacies practiced in classrooms within the regular school schedule rather than in special after-school or weekend sessions, these studies document how it is possible to open up a translanguaging space for multilingual students in traditional school programs. When educators incorporate translanguaging in

this way, they show their recognition of the sociopolitical construct of named languages, legitimized in school texts and the means through which students are ultimately evaluated with standardized assessments. Yet, these educators also acknowledge that to learn and develop literacies, multilinguals must engage in a process that leverages all of their repertoires of practice. Translanguaging is a process that takes into account the sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and multimodal dimensions of learning. Above all, these case studies show that it is through translanguaging that multilingual students can engage in literacy in ways that deepen their understanding of texts, generate more diverse texts, develop students' *confianza* in performing literacies, and foster their critical metalinguistic awareness. Together, these four interrelated purposes (discussed in this section separately) support an understanding of literacy that is not simply about individual student success with texts encoded in one or two named languages. Instead, by encouraging students to bring their whole beings into engagement with texts, translanguaging has the potential to reposition minoritized learners as literate beings, transform them socially and politically, and advance social justice.

### Deepening Student Understanding of Texts

Different translanguaging strategies have been shown to shore up multilingual students' understanding of texts. One such strategy is the use of translanguaging in oral discussions during pre-read-aloud, read-aloud, and post-read-aloud, even when the text is in one named language and the language of instruction has been determined by the curriculum and school authorities. Many scholars have documented how this translanguaging strategy helps multilingual learners bring their differentiated background and linguistic, cultural, and historical knowledges to written texts (see, e.g., García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016; see also García & Li Wei, 2014, Part II). When the classroom is linguistically heterogeneous, students of the same language background are grouped or paired so they are free to access their full semiotic repertoire to discuss aspects of the text.

Another translanguaging strategy to deepen multilingual students' understandings of written texts is to invite students to annotate the texts with their own words and images. Espinosa and Herrera (2016) showed, for example, how they adapted a gist strategy to include translanguaging in a bilingual classroom during the reading of a science text written in Spanish. Espinosa and Herrera provided students with sticky notes and told them to use their entire linguistic repertoire to state the main idea from their reading. The researchers showed how students drew from all of their language resources, albeit in different ways. Some used English, others Spanish, and yet

others both English and Spanish; some used drawings and others not. Yet, regardless of the resources they leveraged, all of the students claimed that they were using language to understand the most and to support their thinking.

To strengthen multilingual students' understandings of written texts, another translanguaging strategy is to provide bilingual versions of texts or side-by-side translations. For example, Stephanie, a teacher of high school emergent bilinguals portrayed in García, Johnson, and Seltzer's (2017) study, encouraged students to use the internet to access the content of their English-language school text by finding written texts or videos in other languages. Not only were students' understandings of the original text deepened, but students also developed a consciousness of how different languages expressed the same idea in various ways, and they explored the subtlety of these differences (see also Pacheco & Miller, 2016).

A frequent strategy to open up translanguaging spaces in classrooms to deepen understandings of written texts is the exposure of bilingual students to what are called mentor texts, which exemplify rich writing, authored by bilingual writers who use translanguaging in ways that connect to students' worlds and experiences. For example, Espinosa and Lehner-Quam (2019) documented how the selection of a bilingual book, such as *Marta! Big and Small* by Jen Arena, enabled emergent bilingual kindergartners to engage with authentic translanguaging in a written text. The students joined in a spirited discussion of why the elephant says "hello" in English in the text, but the beetle says "hola" (n.p.) in Spanish. The kindergartners became aware that the author of the text is bilingual and that they themselves are bilingual and able to use language freely to express themselves. Modeled after the bilingual text they read together, the students drew their texts and then performed them while the teacher wrote their words. One example was a student drawing of a horse with a child, accompanied by the text transcribed by the teacher: "To a horse, Camila is lenta. Slow, very slow."

Just as they deepen students' understanding of texts in K–12 settings, translanguaging instructional practices have also been found to be effective at the university level. For example, the case studies presented in Mazak and Carroll's (2017) edited volume describe how university students in countries as far-reaching as Hong Kong, India, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Basque Country, Ukraine, and Sweden, along with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, have benefited from instructional practices that leverage their translanguaging and encourage the use of their entire semiotic repertoire to make sense of texts used in different disciplines. Books of advanced science study all over the world are commonly available only in English. The chapters in Mazak and Carroll's book demonstrate how university instructors working in different national contexts with distinct language policies, and

using different strategies, encourage students' translanguaging in discussion to deepen their understanding of written texts in other languages.

Opening a translanguaging space does not have to be limited to bilingual contexts or even to classrooms in which the teacher is bilingual. Describing translanguaging spaces in South African classrooms where students are multilingual and written texts are most often in English, Makalela (2018) proposed what he calls an ubuntu translanguaging, a restoration of the precolonial African value system where languages were used cooperatively to make meaning across humanity. Makalela observed elders in a South African community sharing stories and performing local literacy practices. Their performances revealed how they used language without clear boundaries, reflecting communal ways of knowing and an ubuntu philosophy. This ubuntu translanguaging, however, is different from the educational practices in present-day multilingual South Africa. Makalela proposed that literacy education in South Africa should not define the language of interaction with the text a priori but should value the learner's language—a language in which signs, voices, and knowledge systems are interdependent and equally valued.

Across all the classroom settings portrayed in García and Kleyn's (2016) edited volume, as well as García, Johnson, and Seltzer's (2017) work, instructors encouraged students' translanguaging in discussions about texts. Teachers urged students to annotate texts written in one language by deploying all of their language and multimodal resources. Teachers also supported students' searches on the internet for texts that related to or paraphrased the content they were reading, often in another language, or for sites that offered visual support, including images and video.

To deepen their understanding of texts, students' literacy actions must draw on and assemble any available semiotic resources through concerted and collaborative action. The role of the literacy teacher is then to ensure that the repertoire that students have available to make meaning is extensive and rich, not constrained by the classroom structure, language of instruction, and/or subject matter.

## **Generating Students' Diverse Texts**

In a translanguaging space, multilingual learners are not asked to simply re-present, orally or in writing, the imaginaries of texts that have little to do with their own words and worlds. Literacy scholars have studied how opening up space for translanguaging in literacy acts results in more diverse texts generated by students, as multilingual learners draw on their full linguistic repertoire to re-present things that matter to them. This has been documented by scholars working in different settings with various age

groups: early childhood (Gort, 2015; Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Pacheco & Miller, 2016), elementary and middle schools (Fu, 2003, 2009; Martínez, 2010; Pacheco et al., 2019; Velasco & García, 2014), high schools (de los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017; Martin-Beltrán, 2014; Seltzer, 2019; Seltzer & Collins, 2016; Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016), and especially universities (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011).

Research on what is known as translingual writing (Horner et al., 2011) has been developed by scholars working at the university level in the field of rhetoric and composition. One of its most perceptive scholars, Canagarajah (2011a), described what he called codemeshing by a bilingual undergraduate student from Saudi Arabia who used Arabic words and script, emoticons, elongations of words for auditory effects, italics, Islamic art, and creative turns of phrase to expand her expression and generate texts that reflect all of her literacy practices. Canagarajah, and other writing scholars, argued that the demanding activity of writing can be mediated by the writer's full linguistic repertoire. Following Canagarajah's concept of codemeshing, Michael-Luna and Canagarajah (2007) followed two first-grade students in a bilingual classroom as they developed literacy. Their teacher supported students' translanguaging by using multilingual books and acknowledging oral and written texts in languages other than that of the classroom.

Working with bilingual preschoolers, Gort and her colleagues (Gort, 2015; Gort & Sembiante, 2015) showed how translanguaging operates to enable the children's two languages to remain activated throughout the writing process to carry out writing-related tasks. At the elementary and middle school levels, Fu's (2003, 2009) writing research demonstrated how emergent bilingual students leverage translanguaging to write in English. In her early work, Fu demonstrated how Chinese emergent bilingual students in U.S. elementary classrooms were able to write more complex texts in English when they drew on their full linguistic repertoire to think, reason, imagine, and organize ideas. She said, "I believe thinking (reasoning and imagination) and the ability to organize ideas are equally, or even more, important than language skills in learning to write" (Fu, 2003, p. 74). In more recent work, Fu, Hadjioannou, and Zhou (2019) presented several vignettes showing how translanguaging helps emergent bilingual writers. For example, when a student, Amira, got stuck while writing a personal essay, the teacher reminded her that one of the mentor texts that she and her peers studied includes translanguaging in writing. Amira then began adding dialogue to her story, writing in Arabic and providing explanations in English. Another student in the class wrote a translanguaged poem about her neighborhood in English and Spanish to better express her ideas, to voice richer shades of meanings, and thereby to describe her neighborhood authentically.

Velasco and García (2014) analyzed five written texts produced by young bilingual writers in which translanguaging was used in the planning, drafting, and production stages of writing. The researchers showed how bilingual writers use translanguaging to write agentively and independently, depending on students' language repertoire and the tasks in which they are engaged. Bilingual students leverage their translanguaging whether they are writing in English or another language, although they are cognizant of the writing norms of the classroom. For example, a fourth grader writing in Korean in an English-Korean bilingual classroom explained the metamorphosis process. After drawing a butterfly, he wrote in the Korean hangul script, "There are 4 butterflies in our class. How? Why butterflies?" (p. 19). Then, the writer asked permission of the assumed reader to use English for the technical vocabulary that he had learned in English: "Let me speak in English for a second" (p. 19). These English words were written in Roman script but showed clearly how they were the student's interpretation of English words: "For example, 'eg' stands for *egg*; 'lvvav' for *larva*; 'cargil' for *caterpillar* (*sic*). Only 'butterfly' seems to be a recognizable English word" (p. 19). To communicate his knowledge about butterflies in Korean, this writer made use of his entire language repertoire, knowing that it consists of signs that are said to belong to different named languages, but which he used agentively to show what he knew. By doing so, the student took it upon himself to transform language, discourse, and the power dynamics and linguistic hierarchies in which languages are held.

Mentor texts used as models that display the translanguaging of authors, as well as families and communities, have been shown to motivate emergent bilingual students to produce their own translanguaged texts in writing. Durán and Henderson (2018) documented how a first-grade teacher of English as a Second Language used the work of the bilingual Chicana author Carmen Tafolla as a mentor text with her students. The students, following Tafolla's question of "*What can you do with a paleta ?/¿Qué puedes hacer con una paleta?* (2009)" (Durán & Henderson, 2018, p. 80) then produced their own texts as replies. For example, one first grader drew a fan accompanied with translanguaged writing: "You can make a fan wit a palita" (p. 81).

At the secondary level, de los Ríos and Seltzer (2017) used Mexican corridos in one case and spoken-word performances and poetry in the other as mentor texts to help high school students in English classrooms explore their own language practices, make sense of how these connect to their identities, and write different types of texts. After watching a spoken-word performance by poet Melissa Lozada-Oliva entitled "My Spanish" and doing a close reading of the poem, students in one English classroom wrote their own poems, as in this example:

My English is good enough, yet...  
Mi ingles a veces se cambia,  
it's okay, you'll get the idea, no es  
muy complicado. Understand? No... OK.  
Doesn't matter! (de los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017, p. 67)

The Latina student who produced this poem had become self-assured about her own voice in writing. She communicated that her translanguaging is not complicated, despite the fact that others do not understand. She had developed a sense of efficacy and agency, a way of expressing herself freely, without always having to compare her voice with that of monolinguals.

A translanguaging space is especially important for bilingual students to generate written texts. Ascenzi-Moreno and Espinosa (2018) summarized the reasons why translanguaging in writing is an important tool:

- Writing is a tool for thinking....
- Writing is writing regardless of language....
- Writers need agency to draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to produce complex texts....
- Writers need to capitalize on their entire linguistic repertoire throughout the writing process regardless of the language the final product will be in. Emergent bilinguals benefit from engaging in literacy practices in their home language, such as reading, taking notes, conferencing and sharing, and translating to reach the goals of the final written product. (p. 14)

## ***Developing Students' Confianza in Performing Literacies***

Racialized bilingual students rarely have the opportunity to gain *confianza* in the school system and have confidence in themselves as literate beings. Translanguaging has been shown to give minoritized emergent bilingual students the *confianza* to discuss, perform, and exhibit their agentive roles. We first describe here three case studies that showed how immigrant emergent bilinguals, and those considered students with interrupted or incomplete formal education, leveraged their translanguaging to perform their literacies with *confianza*. We end by highlighting a case study that showed how emergent bilinguals acquired *confianza* with computer science through a translanguaging approach.

In a secondary English language arts classroom where all the Latinx students were recent immigrants and emergent bilinguals, García and Leiva (2014) documented the use of hip-hop translanguaged videos not only to present alternative histories and understandings about sociopolitical topics, such as immigration and family separation, but also to crack the English-language bubble of these classrooms. After viewing a music video, the students engaged in a heated discussion, using their varied translanguaging practices. Once students felt confident as thinkers about the topic of immigration,

the teacher asked them to form groups to translate some fragments of the music video, which she had transcribed as written text. Some student texts were in English and others in Spanish. In small groups, students discussed their individual translations, which evidenced their very different repertoires, as some students had distinct ways of expressing themselves using translanguaging practices. Instead of debating whether one language or another could be used or was correct, students discussed the extent to which their ideas were well communicated. The groups next selected and revised one text and role-played it for the entire class. Through translanguaging, the students became comfortable in their literacy acts.

In a Canadian classroom described by Lau (2019), the use of translanguaging enabled emergent bilingual Chinese students learning English to participate in a collaborative inquiry about bullying without feeling inhibition or shame about their linguistic identities. Students shared incidents about being disparaged or snubbed by their English-speaking peers. In groups, these emergent bilingual students collaboratively revised written versions of their bullying experiences and created posters for specific target audiences as part of an antibullying campaign.

Seltzer and Collins (2016) demonstrated how translanguaging supported the literacy performances of a group of high school immigrant students from Spanish-speaking countries who, because of their newcomer status and their low literacy in Spanish, were categorized as SIFE (students with interrupted or incomplete formal education). The creation of a space to use translanguaging enabled these youths to navigate both the academic and the socioemotional context, as they were able to express the thoughts and feelings that arose out of interactions with texts that were relevant for them: poems in English about the way learners of English are treated in the United States. The results of their translanguaging discussions showed that the students gained a feeling of *confianza* in their literacy acts.

Emergent bilingual students are often left out of curricula that are considered enriching, so very few of these students are exposed to computer science. Teachers and researchers affiliated with the project *Participating in Literacies and Computer Science* (Vogel, Hoadley, Ascenzi-Moreno, & Menken, 2019) demonstrated how leveraging translanguaging helps Latinx students engage with computational literacies using Scratch, a block-based visual programming language. To foster the *confianza* of the Latinx middle schoolers with whom they worked, Vogel and her associates developed a unit around telenovelas, a soap opera genre that is familiar to Latinx students. The classroom space became one in which students were encouraged to use any language—verbally, visually, or bodily—to work with one another. Students first acted out a Spanish-language telenovela scene without restricting their language and actions; they then identified the

components of a telenovela set—dialogue, movement, and sounds—and how those components were used in Scratch along with code to produce an animated telenovela scene. By being encouraged to engage with the telenovela text and the Scratch code with all of their meaning-making repertoires, students developed the *confianza* to remix the project to depict their own dramatic scenes with Scratch. Translanguaging transformed the language arts, the computer science, and the subject curricula and enabled Latinx students to develop the *confianza* to program with Scratch and develop their computer literacies.

### **Fostering Critical Metalinguistic Awareness**

A translanguaging literacies approach also includes strategies such as translation and cross-linguistic study of syntax, vocabulary, word choice, cognates, and discourse structure to advance students' metalinguistic awareness of their own bilingual practices, thus heightening their engagement with texts. These strategies guide bilingual students in acknowledging the sociopolitical reality of their named languages and, at the same time, help them understand how to deploy their complex yet flexible semiotic repertoire. In sum, these translanguaging strategies foster not only students' metalinguistic awareness of named languages but also a critical awareness of how translanguaging holds a meaning-making potential for them, even when schools do not acknowledge it.

Jiménez and his colleagues (2015) showed how translation tasks with middle school emergent bilinguals supported the development of their reading comprehension, as they strengthened their understandings about features of the named languages. Yet, the work did not consist of simple exercises of translations per se; instead, students came together in animated discussion to defend their choices, consider alternatives, and summarize their new understandings, through translanguaging.

Building on the work of Gutiérrez and her colleagues (2001), who demonstrated the interplay between linguistic codes and literacy practices, Escamilla and her colleagues (2013) used translanguaging strategies to make cross-language connections, this time to develop biliteracy. For example, using a strategy called “*Así se dice*” (p. 75), students collaboratively interpreted and translated a chosen text and discussed the translation, thus deepening text comprehension while further developing a critical metalinguistic awareness of their own bilingualism.

### **Lessons From Case Studies**

The case studies we just presented give us a glimpse of the pedagogical strategies used to leverage translanguaging in schools and its effects on multilingual students. Lee (2018) pointed out that a translanguaging pedagogy cannot be dictated but must be continually reimaged from within

the local ecology in which it functions. As we have said, translanguaging depends on the “spontaneous, impromptu, and momentary actions and performances” (Li Wei, 2011, p. 1224) of multilinguals as they engage with the world, people, and texts. Translanguaging literacy strategies share one principle: Multilingual learners are free to use their full semiotic repertoire to make meaning. How this occurs, however, must remain flexible and localized, for it must respond to the specific interaction, in the specific place, and with the specific interlocutors and objects in which the spontaneous performance happens, as the translanguaging corriente shifts and turns. In the next section, based on the case study research that we have described and on our own on-the-ground experiences with emergent bilingual students and their families, we consider the implications of translanguaging for literacy education and multilingual students.

## **Translanguaging: Implications for Literacy Pedagogy and Multilingual Students**

A translanguaging literacy approach focuses on the concerted interactions between and among bilingual students, their linguistic and multimodal repertoires, their bodies, objects, and the texts they generate when they listen, sign, speak, read, or write. Following the three strands of a translanguaging pedagogy that we identified earlier (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017), we develop here some of the moves of a translanguaging pedagogy to deepen the literacy actions of multilingual students.

### **Developing a Translanguaging Stance**

Classroom activities support multilingual students and their teachers to read the world jointly by critically reflecting on the ways in which language and literacy are used in their classroom as compared with their home and community uses. Together, teachers and students explore the meanings of language and the language practices that they observe in their schools, homes, and communities.

Students are encouraged to raise questions about the books available to them, how they are used in lessons, and how characters are portrayed as they listen, sign, speak, read, or write, as well as what it is they say. Teachers leverage translanguaging not only in literacy instruction but also in assessment, allowing multilingual students to show what they know with any element of their semiotic repertoire that displays their understandings. Although often subjected to standardized assessments that negate their translanguaging, students are engaged in critically thinking of why this might be so and what aspects of their knowledge and of themselves are not manifested in those assessments.

In most literacy classrooms, students are individually assigned to a reading level and expected to read books only at that given level. In translanguaging classrooms, students of all ages engage in questioning the reading levels and what the letter with which the reading level is designated says about them and others. Students are encouraged to think of what texts in their lives are not present in their classroom. They reflect together on which literacies are displayed in the texts that they use and which are excluded, and the reasons why this might be so. Students also consider the actions that they might take to include other texts in the classroom, and act on this knowledge.

## **Developing a Translanguaging Design**

A translanguaging literacies approach follows students' languaging corrientes, and the teacher takes the role of co-learner; however, as we have said, it is also important for teachers to open up a translanguaging space by designing instruction and assessment that provide opportunities for translanguaging. Specifically, teachers can engage in the following five activities:

1. *Translanguaging affordances*: Teachers provide bilingual students with extended resources: print, video/audio, new media technologies, and their own bodies; teachers welcome families and communities that support their work with other ways of languaging and other literacies. Students take up model translanguaged texts (both written and oral) produced by recognized authors and by families and communities.
2. *Translanguaging co-labor*: Teachers encourage bilingual students' collaborative work, actions that take them beyond individual meaning making. By laboring and working in collaborative groups in which all voices and means of production are heard and acknowledged, meaning making is taken from the individual level to a social level, acknowledging that the different positions of their bodies within the racialized sociopolitical structures of the school community produce different meanings that must be taken into account.
3. *Translanguaging production*: Teachers mobilize students to leverage their translanguaging as they engage with spoken, written, gestural, and other meaningful resources and tools at hand, producing new texts as they do so. Teachers encourage students to discuss the meanings of multilingual spoken and written texts and to read and write texts with different language and literacy conventions that reflect different worlds and genres. By encouraging translanguaged writing, teachers empower students to see their translanguaging represented in academic

work in schools, and legitimize translanguaging practices as important to knowledge production.

4. *Translanguaging assessments*: Teachers develop formative and summative assessments designed to observe multilingual students' literacy acts more closely. Multilingual students are encouraged to express what they know by deploying their entire semiotic repertoire, regardless of whether features used are the ones legitimated in school.
5. *Translanguaging reflection*: To activate a critical multilingual awareness, teachers give students license to reflect on their own bilingualism and biliteracy and on their meaning-making resources in comparison with the repertoires of others. Teachers involve students in cross-linguistic comparisons, acknowledging the components of named language(s) as an important sociopolitical reality that also needs attention and reflection, while also empowering students to deploy their repertoire of meaning-making resources to do literacy.

## **Translanguaging Shifts and Moves**

As a co-learner, the teacher's translanguaging design is not static but always in movement, as openings are created and meanings emerge that transform both texts, as well as practices of engagement with texts. These translanguaging shifts and moves are manifested in two ways:

1. *Translanguaging co-learning*: The teacher and students acquire habits of co-learning and conjoint inquiry, with everyone attuned to the interests and the practices of others, so the learning is no longer unidirectional from teacher and curriculum to students.
2. *Translanguaging openings and movement*: A translanguaging literacies approach requires that educators and students remain open to multiple ways of knowing, languaging, and experiencing. In addition, texts, both read and written by students, remain open; their meanings are not constituted a priori, because meaning emerges in interactions with other people, texts, and other artifacts that may be available as activity unfolds.

## **A Translanguaging Literacies Approach: A Summary**

Translanguaging in literacy problematizes the notion of separations that have long been prevalent in literacy education: separation of oracy and literacy, of one named language and the other, of the verbal and other modes, of cognition and practice. The translanguaging literacies approach described in this section represents a step forward compared with the traditional literacy approaches

by which bilingual students typically have been educated. At the same time, it reveals the constraints imposed by formulations of literacy still being used in schools. The translanguaging spaces described here were opened by brave teachers, often in conflict with the monolingual monomodal ethos of schooling institutions, which reproduce structures of inequality. To educate minoritized bilingual learners justly and fairly, a translanguaging literacies approach will have to go beyond the ways in which schools presently define literacy, of what they consider to be valid texts, and especially beyond what counts as academic literacies.

In the next section, we consider the type of literacy research that would be needed to support a translanguaging literacies approach for multilingual students.

## **Translanguaging: Implications for Literacy Research and Multilingual Students**

As McDermott (2009) reminded us, research explanations for school failure start with the wrong assumptions and are an apology for the present educational system. Likewise, much scholarship on literacy and bilingualism has ended up comparing outcomes in English standardized tests of monolingual English-speaking students with those who are bilingual. Yet, this comparison ignores that bilingual students are being evaluated on a performance that prevents them from using more than half of their linguistic repertoire, thus rendering them deficient. Also, they are being evaluated with assessment instruments that only validate the language practices of dominant monolingual groups. Taking up translanguaging in literacy research would mean that multilingual literacy performances would have to be described in their rich complexity without reference to those of monolinguals. That is, literacy scholars working with translanguaging theory would follow a different logic, making room for a different epistemology about language, literacy, and bilingualism. Instead of seeing language as a bounded linguistic structure, they would focus on the continuous and emergent process of languaging without the boundaries imposed by institutions that effectively restrict access to opportunities for minoritized bilingual students. Instead of confining the literacy act to mechanical aspects of engaging with a printed static text, scholars would be comfortable with texts and bodies in movement, in the moment-by-moment interaction with multiple signs and objects in unexpected ways, and in ways that go beyond the restricted ways in which institutions have defined them.

In addition, literacy scholarship would have to engage in a decolonization process, one that would recognize what Mignolo (2002) called silenced knowledges. Quijano (2000) argued that colonialism has been replaced by a

process of coloniality by which domination is produced through the imposition of a knowledge system that has dismissed the knowledge of races deemed inferior as simply folklore, magic, or just plain deficient. Literacy scholars would be compelled to consider what it would mean to be in dialogue as equals with all the different visions of the word and the world that exist but have been silenced. Whereas many literacy researchers have begun to investigate the words of many, that is, the multilingualism of learners, there are few literacy researchers who are exploring the literacy acts of people who, having been positioned differently, inhabit different worlds. Because words and texts do not simply represent one worldview, it is incumbent upon literacy researchers to investigate how the acts of literacy and different worlds interact.

Taking up a translanguaging framework would mean that the work of literacy scholars would shift its focus so as to bring to the foreground other epistemologies, other imaginaries of the world, other sign systems. Literacy scholars would then decenter the claim that literacy in a dominant language done in the ways of schools is the only key to success. Instead, literacy scholars would give equal voice to all literacy performances, releasing students' imagination, creativity, and criticality to learn deeply.

Literacy would be conceived not simply as a preestablished end point toward which multilingual learners need to move, always within the knowledge system of white dominant middle-class speakers. Researchers would move beyond defining the process of literacy linearly and its products as being monolingual and monomodal. Researchers would open up and reveal what is in actuality the entwined process of literacy as a dynamic interaction of signs, objects, worlds, and bodies. Leander and Boldt (2013) documented this process for a young boy, Lee, reading manga at home. This is indeed the process by which multilingual students, participants in many worlds and words, do literacies at school. Yet, literacy researchers, intent on restricting the literacy act to a named language, have often failed to capture its complexity.

In their description of the literate actions of the young boy, Lee, Leander and Boldt (2013) carried out a different type of literacy research: "Rather than naming preferred outcomes, we follow the emergence of activity, including the relations among texts and bodies in activity and the affective intensities of these relations" (p. 34). They added, "Unless as researchers we begin traveling in the unbounded circles that literacy travels in, we will miss literacy's ability to participate in unruly ways because we only see its proprieties" (p. 41). Multilingual literate acts are messy because elements such as named languages or modes, which have been accepted as being different and separate, are in actuality mutually elaborated. Yet, these translanguaging literacy acts produce an intensity of emotion, feeling, and meaning that is the spark for imagination, creativity, criticality, and especially freedom for

multilingual learners to act in a socially just space and partake of a rich education. In the translanguaging case studies described in this article, literacy researchers went beyond a named language or a single mode to capture learners' capacity for creativity and criticality, which are important aspects of literate beings. The researchers in these case studies understand that for minoritized learners to become socially and politically repositioned, they must be released from the restrictive understandings of language as simply a named oral and written language, preferably in Roman script, which has monopolized much of the literacy research in the past.

## Conclusions

We have attempted to lay out an argument for translanguaging, a dynamic multilingual/multimodal framework designed to support a massive group of bilingual learners, many of whom historically have been failed by misguided language education policies and practices that are the result of raciolinguistic ideologies and legacies and structures of coloniality. We described how translanguaging had its beginnings in classroom settings where enlightened bilingual educators saw bilingual students' ways of speaking, reading, and writing not as a barrier to but as a resource for learning, literacy development, and educational attainment. We reviewed the sociolinguistics of translanguaging, which entails the notion of multilinguals' languaging as an action rather than an object—indeed, as a complex part of a unitary repertoire of multiple semiotic resources that mutually elaborate each other in practice. Set free from the view of compartmentalized elements for meaning making, translanguaging allows us to see communicative actions more clearly from a perspective of integrated semiotic resources.

A translanguaging literacies approach entails the concerted actions of multilingual readers and writers as they talk about writing and reading and negotiate how to create and interpret texts, drawing on the multiple semiotic modes at their disposal: using their entire linguistic repertoire, embodied actions, and other artifacts to interpret or design texts. We suggested that a translanguaging literacies approach holds much promise to provide minoritized bilingual students, especially those who are emergent bilinguals, with ways to deepen understandings of texts, generate more diverse texts, enjoy more confianza as literate beings, and experience a deeper critical multilingual awareness. Yet, for that to occur, literacy researchers will have to explore the silenced translanguaging that takes place today in many classrooms and open up a legitimate translanguaging space in literacy instruction. Translanguaging literacies are beneficial to the growing numbers of people who live in borderlands or have moved across borders,

bringing along their experiences, hopes, and bilingual resources for learning.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>We use the terms *bilingual/bilingualism* and *multilingual/multilingualism* interchangeably, generally in keeping with their historical use by scholars cited in this article. We also sometimes refer to students as either *bilinguals* or *emergent bilinguals*; the latter term is meant to call attention to minoritized students who are becoming bilingual and whose education is often neglected by educational policymakers.

<sup>2</sup>For actual examples of literacy work produced by students in translanguaging classrooms, see the case studies cited in this article. Additional examples can be found on the City University of New York–New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals (CUNY–NYSIEB) (<https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/>).

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