

THE DECOLONIALITY OF LANGUAGE AND TRANSLANGUAGING:
LATINX KNOWLEDGE-PRODUCTION¹

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1. INTRODUCTION. Our positionings on language and linguistics and on language education are linked to how we have lived and the relationships we have had. Chicana and black feminist scholars (Collins 1990, Moraga & Anzaldúa 1983), as well as many Latin American decolonial theorists (for example, Dussel 1994, Mignolo 2000), remind us that we always speak from our positions within the power structures. The purpose of this paper is to describe through our own positionalities how Latin American theories of decoloniality differ from those of post-colonialism and have shaped our concepts of language, and especially of the language and language education of U.S. Latinx.

We are a team of an older Latina scholar, born in Cuba but raised in New York, and a young Latino scholar, born in Barranquilla, Colombia, who came to New York three years ago to pursue a doctorate. We take the point of view of the Martinican scholar Frantz Fanon ([1952] 1986) and of the Chicana Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) that our epistemologies have to do with how we have experienced ourselves as racial/ethnic/sexual bodies, that is, with our BODY-POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE. It is by telling our stories jointly that we position ourselves with regards to language and language education. We begin here by sharing our lived experiences. We then describe the ways in which Latin American scholars have addressed coloniality/decoloniality. Although this scholarship addresses the invisibility of epistemologies other than those emanating from western/northern countries, it has said little about how language has operated in this silencing. We propose that the concept of translanguaging, emerging from these theories and our own-body politics fills this gap.

2. OUR STORIES. Ofelia's ways of using language has benefitted from acting entre mundos—the bilingual and English monolingual communities of New York City where she has lived from the age of 11, and the Spanish monolingual ones of her native Cuba and Puerto Rico where some family members live. Jorge's language had been mostly performed in different Spanish-speaking communities in Colombia until three years ago, when life took a turn and brought him into contact with the Latinx bilingual communities and the English monolingual ones in New York.

Ofelia started out her career as a teacher of bilingual Latinx students, studied with Joshua A. Fishman, and developed understandings of sociolinguistics that she drew from her studies and scholarly interactions, but also from her experience as a New York City Latina. Ofelia, living a bilingual life as a wife, mother, grandmother, and educator started questioning scholarly assumptions about language and bilingualism that had long been held to be

¹ The origins of the thinking for this paper was done in dialogue with Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza after his plenary on decolonial theory at the October 2018 meeting of ASOCOPI in Cartagena Colombia. We are grateful to Lynn Mario for his generosity in guiding us to sources.

venerable in the scholarly literature she had studied—languages as naturalized autonomous wholes; bilingualism as simply additive, that is, as the simple addition of an L1+L2; code-switching with structural constraints as characteristic of bilingual speech; diglossia or bilingualism with language compartmentalization as the only way to maintain a bilingual community. It took a very long time to finally shed and challenge those assumptions, and to trust what she was hearing and seeing in the lives of the minoritized bilingual Latinx communities in which she lived and the students she taught. In this act of detaching herself from traditional sociolinguistic assumptions, she credits mainly four events: 1) her early study of poetry and semiotics, as well as Latin American literature, philosophy, and hermeneutics, most significantly the work of the Argentinean semiotician, Walter Mignolo; 2) her partnership and married life with Ricardo Otheguy, a bilingual Latino linguist who studies language as a system of semiotic signals with meanings; 3) the reading of Makoni and Pennycook's *Disinventing Languages* (2007) for which she wrote the Foreword and which gave her permission to question named languages; and 4) her reflections on language questions with colleagues and doctoral students, and in particular with Nelson Flores, who taught her about raciolinguistics and pointed out that the work had to be critical not only of the language component of sociolinguistics, but also of societal structures that maintain inequalities (García et. al 2017).

Jorge comes from an underprivileged neighborhood in a port city of a country that has lived decades of political violence as well as increasing threats from drug traffickers and terrorists. His education has been wholesale state-subsidized. And he is currently pursuing his Ph.D. thanks to a scholarship from The City University of New York. Education has been for Jorge a pathway not only to think but to live otherwise. Jorge started out in Colombia studying linguistics and philosophy of language and became a copy-editor, attentive to the norms of Spanish. When Jorge came to New York City he was confronted with other ideas about language, race, and education, experiencing what it was to be a dark-skin Latino with long hair. Jorge entered a doctoral program in which the study of the politics of language, and especially of the Spanish language, was central. The work of *glotopolítica*, the focus of Jorge's doctoral studies led by José del Valle (2017), analyzes language in relation to power, taking up a historical perspective that allows for understanding how social differences are established and justified through language ideologies. One of the goals of *glotopolítica* is uncovering the ways in which language has been shaped and manipulated to exert control over populations. What is interesting about *glotopolítica* is that it is a field that was developed in the South through the work of Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux (2014) and spread to the North through the Americas and in Spanish. *Gltopolítica* is not only critical; it is militant in its ideological distance from Anglo-American constructions about language and society and traditional language policy.

Our positioning for this paper emerges from dialogue about language with each other and with doctoral students at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, most of whom were Latinx, and who had different disciplinary foci: sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, and educational linguistics. City University of New York is a public institution of higher education historically recognized as a source of critical and progressive cutting-edge thinking put at the service of the less privileged in the city. We all have had different sets of lived experiences, although most of us have had experience

teaching at the elementary, secondary or college levels. Some have been ESL teachers; others bilingual teachers; yet others teachers of Spanish as a foreign language or as a heritage language. In particular, our positioning stems from a dialogue that attempts to put alongside each other concepts about language and society that have emerged from the U.S. and other northern countries, mostly in English (even if they have traveled South) with those that have started in Latin America, mostly in Spanish (even if they have traveled North and were the work of indigenous scholars). It is in this dynamic traveling, merging ideas of English-speaking scholars with those of Spanish-speaking scholars and of bilingual English-Spanish-indigenous languages scholars, and working always *entre mundos*, that our positionalities as bilingual Latinx critical sociolinguists are made evident. And it is in blending voices that come from different geographical, historical and generational positions, and that are heard differently because of who the two of us are age-wise and professionally, that enables us to take a slightly different position *vis à vis* what some call post-colonial linguistics and that we now describe as a **SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF DECOLONIALITY**. We write as sociolinguists situated in what the Argentinean semiotician Walter Mignolo (1999, 2002) has called ‘the colonial difference’, for our epistemology cannot be detached from the politics of our location *entre dos mundos*, but developed in a city that José Martí, the late 19th century Cuban patriot, referred to as ‘*las entrañas del monstruo*’ [the bowels of the monster]—New York City.

We acknowledge the privilege we have as scholars working in the United States, and specifically in New York City, and writing in standard English. However, global powers are not **MONADES**, all nucleus, without periphery. Living and working in the U.S. doesn't exempt one from labor exploitation, institutional racism, misogyny and being the subject of prejudice or bias. As researchers with cultural roots in Latin-American and Caribbean countries, we inscribe ourselves in an institutional scholarly world where hierarchies and power dynamics reflect extended and socially-ingrained patterns of exclusion. In this regard, our scholarship on language and language education diverge from theoretical approaches that lay the grounds to naturalize differences between racialized, classed and sexed bodies, and facilitates their political and social subordination to economic and intellectual elites.

We write from New York City, a highly populated megalopolis where the promises of global capitalism have shown its greatest contradictions. A large urban setting shaped by racial and economic segregation, New York City remains the epitome of the clash between affluence and dispossession. We think and write from the very center of this urban space, but inhabiting *la frontera*, *la periferia*. We claim our position in/from the borderlands not as a gesture of self-inflected subalternity, nor as tactic of voluntary self-exclusion, but as a way of reclaiming different points of departure, that is, personal experiences, places and cultures of origins, affects and emotions, ideologies and set of beliefs. We also write to reclaim different points of arrival in the intellectually committed enterprise of thinking language **OTHERWISE**.

We write in standardized language to decolonize language. As we will see, decolonization is neither just an intellectual operation nor a mere language game of hyphenated words. Decolonization is aimed at the cultural transformation of the colonial mindset. In this context, language is one of the theaters of operations. As decolonial scholars, each of us would claim with bell hooks: ‘I know that it is not the English language

that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it' (hooks 1994: 223). Our expectations are not to promote the imperial expansion of any language across countries and communities, but to bridge people, ideas and experiences from the many internal and external borderlands of the Western world that can find out in this language a common ground to share and strengthen their epistemologies.

We understand that highly standardized English used to convey counter-hegemonic ideas and beliefs on language and language education is revulsive. It is unpleasant to read about anti-capitalism in English from two Latinx scholars, as it disarranges the taken-for-granted linkage between the language of the masters and the oppression they continue exerting over people around the world. This revulsive sense of non-matching fertilizes our attempts to outline a decoloniality of language. Instead of reclaiming property upon English as our language also, we prefer to take a different approach. We do language, we translanguaje, as we will show after discussing first the concept of decoloniality.

3. DECOLONIALITY. Decoloniality, emerging mostly from the work of Latin American scholars, has been positioned as interacting with the work of postcolonial theorists in different ways. Both postcolonial and decolonial theorists insist that bodies that have been positioned as subalternate have been instrumental in the development of modernity. However, as the Argentine-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel (2000) has said, a theory of decoloniality emerges from a PUNTO DE PARTIDA DIFERENTE [a different starting point]. Postcolonial theory emerged mostly from Indian scholars and the group known as South Asian Subaltern Studies. This group took up the position of subalterns who suffered the indignities of colonialism and the exploitation and domination that came with the colonial administration. Theorists who assume what the Puerto Rican decolonial theorist Maldonado-Torres (2008) has called a 'decolonial attitude' assume a slightly different position.

What distinguishes Latin American theory of decoloniality from postcolonial theory is its insistence that the critique of Eurocentrism cannot simply rely on European thinkers, such as Foucault, Derrida and Gramsci, but instead must carry out its critique from 'silenced knowledges' (Grosfoguel 2007, Mignolo 2002). Whereas postcolonial critique continues to be rooted in the binary opposition between subject and structure, decolonial theorists insist that subject, culture and the political economy are always intertwined. That is, a theory of decoloniality focuses on the DECOLONIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE, and in THINKING FROM AND WITH SUBALTERN RACIAL/ETHNIC/SEXUAL BODIES. The political economy cannot be detached from our subjectivities, for they are one and the same. In addition to fighting the effects of the exploitation and the domination that came with colonialism, decolonial theory insists on contesting the production of knowledge and subjectivities that remained after the elimination of the colonial administration (Grosfoguel 2007).

The Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1991, 1998, 2000) introduced the concept of COLONIALITY which has been central in a theory of decoloniality, drawing differences between coloniality and colonialism. Coloniality did not end with colonialism. Quijano (2000) explains that the concept of coloniality is centered on a 'colonial power matrix' that was not simply about exploitation of labor and domination by authority, but also about race, sexuality, spirituality, subjectivity, epistemology and knowledge. For Quijano (1993) race and racism became the organizing principle that structured all the hierarchies of people into

superior and inferior, and dismissed others' knowledge as folklore or magic. The maintenance of what Grosfoguel calls 'the European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system' (2002:217) has relied not only on economic and political domination, but especially on the silencing of the intellectual knowledges of many (Fals-Borda 2003). The expansion of western capitalism happened alongside the expansion of western knowledge. And to suppress other knowledge, women, the disabled, as well as black and brown people were rendered subhuman (Wynter 1992). A theory of coloniality of gender (Lugones 2008) has been developed by other women scholars with Latin American roots. The work of the Jamaican Sylvia Wynter and the Argentinean María Lugones has been richly complemented by that of other Latinas, for example, the Afro-Dominican Yuderlys Espinosa-Miñoso (2014), as well as Audren Lorde (1979), born in New York City of immigrant parents from Jamaica. Lorde famously said:

[T]hose of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. (Lorde 1979: n.p)

Theories of decoloniality all focus on using knowledge that the masters have rendered invisible through what the Portuguese scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007, 2014, 2018) has called 'abyssal thinking'. Santos proposes 'a new common sense', one that makes other knowledges visible and accepts a simultaneity of visions in which southern intellectual and political trajectories of resistance lead to an ecology of epistemes where 'knowledge is interknowledge' (2007:16). For Santos, to know the world means to be in dialogue as equals with all the different visions of the world that exist.

Santos (2009) argues that the South is not geographical, but epistemological; el Sur stands as a metaphor of human suffering. Mignolo (2007) entices scholars who want to decolonize their understandings to DE-LINK from the colonial matrix of power, bringing to the foreground other epistemologies so as to de-center universal emancipating claims. Mignolo & Walsh (2018) describe decoloniality as:

[A] form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice—most especially by colonized and racialized subjects—against the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and for the possibilities of an otherwise. (Mignolo & Walsh 2018: 17)

4. U.S. LATINX IN THE BORDERLANDS. Latinx people in the United States include people who originally hailed from Latin America or the Caribbean and others who have been in the U.S. in what was once Mexican territory. Historically, the political discourses that underpin debates on the triad race-culture-ethnicity have differed from country to country and sometimes even from region to region. Because Latin American and Caribbean nations are not culturally nor linguistically homogeneous, U.S. Latinx have had different experiences and trajectories, ranging from those of dispossessed indigenous people or of enslaved African ancestry, to white, privileged, capitalist elites.

Latinx in the United States do not just dwell in Latin America or in the United States, but struggle within the colonial matrix of power. In Latin America, race and language have been always used to control access to social and educational opportunities. And so, many of those who immigrate to the U.S. seeking a better life have been racialized and have experienced the silencing of their indigenous languages and voices. But even elite Latin Americans who were considered white in their countries of origin experience racialization when they arrive in the United States. Despite years and even generations of living in the United States, Latinx are racialized as foreigners, immigrants, second language speakers, ignorant, dark, and even criminals. Once they have lived in the United States, Latinx in Latin America are rendered as ‘impuros’, with ways of being that are seen as impolite and brash, and ways of speaking that are considered improper ‘Spanish’, as well as improper ‘English’.

U.S. Latinx have always been situated in what the Chicana Gloria Anzaldúa (1987, 2002) called ‘borderlands’. Anzaldúa uses a Nahuatl word, *Nepantla*, to situate these borderlands, these worlds in between. She says:

Nepantla is a Nahuatl word meaning *tierra entre medio*. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. *Nepantla es tierra desconocida*, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in *Nepantla* so much of the time it’s become a sort of ‘home’. (Anzaldúa 2002: 1)

Latinx people in the United States have been positioned in what Mignolo (2000: 152) calls ‘a groundless ground from which to think and speak’, one that is not validated or recognized, but that exists in counterhegemonic tension and resistance. Despite the lack of recognition of the cultural and linguistic practices of Latinx people, Latinx people think and speak, although they do so not simply translating concepts drawn from North American/Anglo traditions, but by taking up their own ‘locus of enunciation’ (Mignolo, 2000, 2002, 2009). It is in this *Nepantla* locus of enunciation, where, as Mignolo (2000:5) says, ‘different ways of knowing and individual and collective expression mingle’.

By transcending the intellectual borders that have been created in the interest of the western world, the border-thinking that is transcended in the notion of *Nepantla* decolonizes the territorial epistemologies that have been complicit with the formation of nation-states, of fixed national identities, and of national named languages. As Mignolo says:

‘An other tongue’ is the necessary condition for ‘an other thinking’ and for the possibility of moving beyond the defense of national languages and national ideologies—both of which have been operating in complicity with imperial powers and imperial conflicts. (Mignolo 2000:249)

It is precisely this other thinking that is at the center of the concept of TRANSLANGUAGING, a theory that brings simultaneously into play epistemologies about language that have been previously silenced. We trace the origins of translanguaging by first looking at the concept of languaging, and then what the *-trans* has meant for Latin American scholars. We then describe how translanguaging operates as decoloniality of language.

5. FROM LANGUAGE TO LANGUAGING AND U.S. LATINX. The shift from the concept of language to the process of languaging has enveloped much of the sociolinguistic literature of the 21st century, as sociolinguists have started to focus on the process of interaction, instead of on a system of grammatical structures (Blommaert 2010, Joseph 2006, Pennycook 2010, Shohamy 2006). Many ascribe the term LANGUAGING to Swain (2006) who understands it as the cognitive process of negotiating and producing meaningful language. We, however, take up another perspective of languaging, proposed by two Chilean biologists, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. According to Maturana & Varela (1984, translated into English in 1987), what makes human interaction different from that of other living organisms is what they call languaging, the ONGOING PROCESS by which human living organisms interact, are observers of domains of interactions, and are able to describe those behaviors. LENGUAJEAR, the Spanish original term, was not simply limited to social interaction and practices on the one hand (as privileged in, for example, Blommaert 2010 or Pennycook 2010) or the cognitive (as in Swain 2006). All living organisms interact, but human beings engage in a PROCESS that involves interaction and practices, as well as observation, reflection and description of the interactions. The languaging process of human beings engages the social, the histories, the cognitive, the emotional, the affective, and the lived ethnographies of all interlocutors in the interaction, all in a dynamism that involves the subjectivities of speakers.

In an interview with Delgado & Romero in 2000, Walter Mignolo warns that unlike the complex languaging process of human beings referred to by Maturana & Varela, empires and nation-states have supported the writing of grammars to convert the process (languaging) into an object (language) by which they can dominate. Mignolo (in Delgado et al. 2000: 17) adds that this constructed language then ‘becomes the point of reference to measure and rank languaging practices that do not comply with the regulatory force of language’.

From this perspective, the languaging process of Latinx bilingual communities does not simply consist of two or more named languages (English AND Spanish AND/OR an indigenous language) that respond to different grammatical systems that are kept separate and are whole and autonomous, as the traditional literature on bilingualism and multilingualism had led us to believe (see, for example, Lambert 1974). In the borderlands in which they live, Latinx DO language with a repertoire that transcends fronteras, that responds to their social interactions with those who have many different language practices, and that thus is often perceived as unstable and unpredictable. And yet, it is in this in-between languaging space, in this Nепantla, that a transformation occurs, a transformation that takes us beyond the binaries and enumeration of languages that continue to occupy prominent positions on bi/multilingualism, nationhood and schooling. A coloniality of language is responsible for much exclusion of Latinx people. A Nепantla/translanguaging space (Li Wei 2011) might open up possibilities by giving voice to other ways of languaging and bringing forth other understandings of language and bilingualism.

6. THE TRANS- IN U.S. LATINX LANGUAGING. Although other terms have been proposed to address the increased recognition of a heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) of language practices, we prefer the term TRANSLANGUAGING to describe the language practices of many bilingual

Latinx people, as well as the pedagogical practices that can work against the regulatory force of language imposed by nation-states and their educational systems. We prefer translanguaging because of the emphasis on the *trans*- and its relationship to two other Latin American scholars who have shown us the value of the *trans*—the Cuban ethnologist Fernando Ortiz who coined the concept of TRANSCULTURACIÓN in the 1940s, and the Argentinean-Mexican Enrique Dussel who introduced the concept of TRANSMODERNITY tied to decolonial theory in the 1990s. Many scholars (for example, Makoni & Pennycook 2007) have argued that a new term such as translanguaging is not needed, with languaging being sufficient. We, however, maintain that it is important to focus on the *trans*- aspects which emanate from a decolonial reading of language and bilingualism.

Speaking of what happens when people with different cultures and histories interact, Ortiz proposes his concept of TRANSCULTURACIÓN ([1940] 1978). Malinowski explains transculturación in the prologue to Ortiz's study, *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y del azúcar* as:

A process in which a new reality emerges, compounded and complex; a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of characters, not even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent. (Ortiz [1940] 1978: 4, cited in García & Li Wei 2014)

In the same way, translanguaging refers to the new languaging of bilinguals as they liberate language features that had previously been constrained by geographical and linguistic borders created by nations and written grammars.

Dussel (1995:137) proposes the concept of TRANSMODERNITY in opposition 'to modernity's irrational violence based on the reason of the Other'. Transmodernity espouses a set of liberating practices and what Dussel calls a 'pluriversal dialogue', an entanglement of several cosmologies that are acknowledged as equal and are not covered up by discourse of modernity. These liberating pluriversal practices have the potential to create new knowledge and propose solutions because they draw from a place other than the institutionally-dominated western world, and beyond structures validated in that world. In so doing, there must be SELF-VALORIZATION of those stigmatized cultural and linguistic practices that are said to be found in the exteriority of modernity. The critical thought and liberating actions cannot possibly come from the interior of modernity, argues Dussel, but from those who are positioned in the borderlands. For us then, as we will see, translanguaging is deeply tied to decoloniality, for as Mignolo & Walsh say, translanguaging,

seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis and thought. (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:17)

7. TRANSLANGUAGING AS DECOLONIALITY OF LANGUAGE. It is now well known that the term translanguaging was coined in Welsh as TRAWSIETHU by an educator, Cen Williams (1994), and translated into English by Colin Baker (2001). In its beginnings the term was used to describe a pedagogy that simply used one language for input and another for output within the same lesson. This in itself was revolutionary, for it began to disrupt traditional

language education pedagogy which had always insisted in isolating the TARGET LANGUAGE and maintaining a diglossic compartmentalized arrangement between languages. Ofelia's early scholarship repeated other bilingual education scholars' position that the two languages needed to be used in separate places, content or time or by different people in order to develop bilingualism. However, her dialogue with Colin Baker about Cen Williams' approach led her to validate the practices she was observing in bilingual education classrooms in New York City, where teachers and students regularly violated the language separation principle, and yet were developing bilingual learners (García 2009). The imaginary walls between languages, as the focus of a bilingual pedagogy, had started to crumble.

Translanguaging is then a term of RESISTANCE. It was coined in what some consider the borderlands of the United Kingdom, Wales, to make space for bilingual identities in learning bilingually. In using a different logic, a logic that stems from what were considered unstable linguistic and cultural borderlands and not static and sure monolingual geographical spaces, translanguaging allows us to make visible what had been previously rendered invisible and to turn intelligible what had remained mute or unheard — the language practices of bilingual minoritized learners whose language is not simply what has been constituted as English and Welsh or English and Spanish, or Spanish and a Mayan language, et cetera.

Even though the term translanguaging originally was coined to name pedagogical practices, it soon became used to describe how bilinguals DO language (see, for example, Blackledge & Creese 2010, García 2009, García & Li Wei 2014). If named languages were INVENTED (Makoni & Pennycook 2004), the walls between named languages in describing bilingual behavior must have also been fabricated. The body-politics of knowledge of bilingual minoritized and racialized peoples started to alter the knowledge-power structure that had been concocted in the 20th century mostly by white male sociolinguists. For example, in the 1970s, the Canadian Wallace Lambert (1974) explained the difference between the school bilingualism of language majorities and language minoritized groups, by proposing that the bilingualism of language majorities was additive, and that of the others, subtractive. But female scholars of color started describing bilingualism by taking up a decolonial logic that made visible the practices in the borderlands, and bilingualism was rendered DYNAMIC (García 2009). In 1967 Joshua A. Fishman, the Yiddish-speaking father of the sociology of language, had argued that only societies that had a diglossic arrangement of functional compartmentalization could maintain two languages. But even in the 1980s, sociolinguists from the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños working in the Puerto Rican community of East Harlem pointed out that the community had a non-diglossic pattern of language use, and yet, it showed no signs of language shift (Pedraza et al. 1980). Instead of language maintenance, bilingual sociolinguists of color started advocating for a transglossic process (García 2014) in which language practices were SUSTAINED (García 2011) that is, NOT MAINTAINED as static objects. Language practices were then said to be in ecological relationship to the context in which they were used (Van Lier 2004). Diglossia, it was then claimed, was just a description of how named languages in a bilingual community were used as a mechanism to maintain the power structure, that is, the unequal relationships of power between two raciolinguistic groups (García 2011, Martín-Rojo 2017).

In the 1950s Einar Haugen (1953) and Uriel Weinreich ([1953] 1974) had pioneered the study of bilingualism and what they termed LANGUAGE CONTACT. Weinreich ([1953] 1974: 1) was the first to define INTERFERENCE as ‘the rearrangement of patterns that result from the introduction of foreign elements into the more highly structured domain of language’. In an effort to structure bilingual ways of using language, Haugen came up with different categories— loans or borrowings, when words from one language were used in the other; loan shifts/translations or calques, when a word or phrase was used with the meaning of the other; and code-switching, when speakers alternate languages in a stretch of discourse. Scholars, eager to uphold bilingual speech as structured and norm-like, came up with the idea that there were structural constraints to code-switching (Sankoff & Poplack 1981). The concept of code-switching maintains that each language corresponds to two different mental grammars (MacSwan 2017). Scholars who studied code-switching advanced the notion that this was the norm in bilingual communities, and that it corresponded to ordered and structured language use. Translanguaging makes the opposite claim. That is, translanguaging poses that bilinguals construct one unitary language repertoire through socio-cognitive interaction, and that there are no so-called STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS (Otheguy et al. 2015, 2018). In the 2018 response to MacSwan (2017), Otheguy and colleagues show how the basis for the structural constraints to code-switching is not empirically supported, for language-minoritized bilingual communities violate these all the time, just as Pedraza and colleagues had described in the 1980s for the Puerto Rican bilingual community. The difference has been that code-switching analyses have been often conducted with bilingual communities associated with dominant groups and have not taken into account the body-politics of knowledge of racialized bilingual communities.

Translanguaging is then different from what others simply term bilingualism/multilingualism, for these imply just named languages that are added to each other. And translanguaging is also different from the other European concept prevalent today— plurilingualism (for more on this difference, see García & Otheguy 2019). The European Commission in Brussels and the Council of Europe in Strasbourg upheld plurilingualism as a desideratum of all European citizens so as to encourage mobility and integration within Europe (Hélot & Cavalli 2017), as well as to turn it into profit in the global market (Duchêne & Heller 2012, Gal 2012). And although the concept of plurilingualism disrupted the traditional notion of bilingual speakers as being simply two monolinguals as one (Grosjean 1982), it still upholds the notion of named languages like French, English, Spanish, and so on. In contrast, translanguaging, in our view, denounces the coloniality of power and knowledge that is central to the concept of named languages, and bilingualism, multilingualism, and plurilingualism. Translanguaging is a way to confront the coloniality of those concepts and to decolonize them. It is a form of what Mignolo (2009) calls ‘epistemic disobedience’.

Recently there has been criticism of the spread of the term translanguaging because of the way that it has been taken up without a decolonial/political agenda, and because of its claim that it is transformative (Jaspers 2018, Jaspers & Madsen 2018). We insist that as Flores (2014) has said, ‘Translanguaging is a political act’. But translanguaging must be thought of from the colonial difference, and in this respect there are challenges when it becomes part of schooling. In asking the question, ‘Can the state think from the colonial

difference?’ Walter Mignolo (2000: 263) replied: ‘No, because coloniality of power is embedded in the state, and it reproduces the colonial difference and represses the possibilities of thinking from it’. This is the challenge that projects such as CUNY-NYSIEB has encountered as it has introduced the concept of translanguaging in schools (García & Kleyn 2016). Efforts to describe the translanguaging classroom have emerged (see, for example, García et. al 2017), pointing out that besides a design, what is important is for teachers to develop a translanguaging stance and to respond to the shifts and the translanguaging corriente in classrooms. But liberating educational systems from the colonial difference remains difficult. Desperate to pry open at least a space for translanguaging, Sánchez and colleagues (2017) have proposed that a transformative translanguaging space can be carved out even within traditional curricula.

Arguably, opening up a transformative translanguaging space within a traditional language classroom is not enough to achieve the decoloniality of language for which we have argued. But it gives us a glimpse of what could happen in that space, with racialized bilingual students able to language as themselves, and not as monolinguals; evaluated because of their creative and critical use of language, and not the language norms of standardized state tests. It is a way to start imagining the possibilities of thinking beyond the colonial difference, with the hope that a new generation of bilinguals will no longer accept the colonial difference as the only valid way of languaging, learning, and succeeding. Translanguaging offers us the hope of REMOVING THE MASK (Fanon [1952] 1986) or of LIFTING THE VEIL, in the words of the African American scholar W.E. Du Bois ([1903] 1994). In so doing, racialized bilingual/ multilingual bodies will be able to see themselves as valid languagers and knowers, and not simply through the eyes and tongues of white monolingual subjects. In removing the mask and lifting the veil, language minoritized bilinguals can finally listen, write and sign for themselves without reference to monolinguals. By doing so they can revoke the coloniality of power in which they have lived and been taught.

8. CONCLUSION. This article develops the connections between the concept of translanguaging and Latin American theories of decoloniality. It proposes that translanguaging has been developed through the body-politics of knowledge of language-minoritized bilingual subjects. In making visible the silenced language practices and knowledges of racialized bilingual communities, translanguaging has the potential to become transformative of the colonial difference by opening up, as Mignolo (2000, 2002) says, an other thinking through an other tongue.

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