

TRANSLANGUAGING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: 2

Remaking Multilingualism

A Translanguaging Approach

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15 Reimagining Language Policy through the Lived Realities of Bilingual Youth

Sarah Hesson

Pre-Reading Discussion Questions

- (1) How was the language policy determined in different spaces you have been part of, such as school or work? Were you part of the decision-making process?
- (2) Does the kind of language you use change in different contexts or with different people? If so, how do you choose your language practices?

Introduction

This chapter foregrounds the perspectives of bilingual Latinx adolescent youth in reimagining school and classroom-level language allocation policy in ways that center the language practices and lived realities of youth. At the core, this approach is grounded in Dr Ofelia García's conception of translanguaging and dynamic bilingualism (2009), and our shared belief that children's and communities' language practices must be at the center of pedagogical and policy decisions. The data from this chapter draws from my dissertation research study, which sought to explore bilingual Latinx middle schoolers' experiences of language as a means of generating individual and collective critical understandings of the connections between language, race, ethnicity and power. The study took place in an after-school program at a K-8 dual language bilingual school in New York City in 2015, and Dr García guided my work as my dissertation advisor. Data collection methods centered on interactive activities during the after-school sessions, as well as individual interviews before and after program participation.

Using García's theory of dynamic bilingualism, I outline four lessons from youth based on their reported language use and perspectives on

bilingualism and translanguaging, then consider the implications of these lessons for language allocation policy, suggesting an approach to language policy that is grounded in both dynamic bilingualism and youth's lived realities. The first two sections focus on bilingualism, including youth's views on translanguaging and the ways youth describe using language, noting the use of qualifiers such as 'mostly' and 'usually' that suggest the use of translanguaging in many contexts. The third section focuses on youth's reported difficulty in speaking monolingual Spanish and notes that most refer to instances of speaking only Spanish as 'having' to do so, in contrast to monolingual English, where the qualifier 'have to' is absent and they simply 'speak'. The fourth section examines youth perspectives of the language dynamics within the after-school program itself, and theorizes on what might have shifted the dynamics, and to what effect. These findings carry important implications for school and classroom language policies for multilingual youth.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging provides a theoretical framework to understand the flexible and dynamic language practices used by transnational, multilingual US communities. The theoretical basis for translanguaging moves away from an understanding of language as a system of structures, to consider instead how language emerges from use. Rather than 'language', which implies a fixed, static body of knowledge, the term 'language practices' highlights the way in which speakers shape and define language through use, and how language itself is embodied in the users of those practices (García & Li, 2014). When speakers engage in language practices, they are languaging; they are actively creating and recreating language as they use it. Translanguaging, then, can be understood as this process of communication and meaning-making between speakers who use multiple language practices.

García (2009) writes, 'For us, translanguagings are *multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*' (2009: 45, emphasis in original). Thus, for bilinguals, dynamic bilingual interactions, in which speakers use multiple languages to communicate, are natural and often essential to sense-making. Rather than seeing the separation between languages as natural and inevitable, and seeing languages as self-contained systems that individuals possess, García's concept of translanguaging recognizes that bilinguals do not *have* separate languages, but rather *use* multiple language practices in dynamic ways. Though for purposes that range from practical to political, societies label languages such as 'English' or 'Spanish' as distinct, static entities, in practice, bilinguals use language fluidly and dynamically (García, 2009; Mignolo, 2012).

To speak of languaging is not just to be descriptive of the reality of multilingual communities, it is also to speak back to hegemonic linguistic and cultural practices. Mignolo writes:

The celebration of bi or pluri languaging is precisely the celebration of the crack in the global process between local histories and global designs ... and a critique of the idea that civilization is linked to the 'purity' of colonial and national monolingualism. (2012: 250)

Thus, Mignolo asserts the rightful place of translanguaging, or bi or pluri languaging as he calls it, in the nation-state, as well as challenges the elevated status of 'pure' colonial languages such as standard English or Spanish.

For Mignolo, bi or pluri languaging is also intimately tied with the fruitful border thinking that is generated by, and also generates, the unique positionality of 'the new mestiza' as conceived by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). Mignolo attributes Anzaldúa with the idea of 'bilanguaging as a fundamental condition of border thinking' (Mignolo, 2012: 253). In other words, translanguaging plays a key role in the development of the identity of the new mestiza, and the fruitful generation of ideas that accompany this unique positionality. Without translanguaging, it might be impossible to explore, name, embrace or resist aspects of life, and of self, in the borderlands.

Creating opportunities for multilingual youth to engage in the world multilingually and to develop multilingual voices is distinct from opportunities to develop multiple languages separately from each other. Further, situating multilingual language practices in the borderlands while elevating the status of these practices in school has the potential to transform school from a place to learn any given language, to a place where youth in the borderlands have opportunities to see who they are, where they are, why they are, and to fight injustice in their lives. Starting with the location of youth and their language practices rather than the abstract idea of language, school becomes a place ripe for critical analysis and change.

Translanguaging as resistance

Linking language practices to the agenda of the nation state, and recognizing which language practices are valued, upheld and officially sponsored, and which are deemed inadequate, is essential to viewing the act of translanguaging as transgressive, especially in the context of schooling. Mignolo (2012: 273) writes, 'While the nation-state promotes love toward national languages, bilanguaging love arises from and in the peripheries of national languages and in transnational experiences'. Mignolo goes on to describe bilanguaging love as 'love for being between languages, love for the disarticulation of the colonial language and for the subaltern ones, love for the impurity of national languages ...'

(2012: 274) and further connects the idea of bilanguaging love to Freire's idea that rebellion by the oppressed is an act of love and 'grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human' (Freire, 1993: 38 as cited in Mignolo, 2012: 274).

Mignolo's idea of bilanguaging love, Freire's assertion of basic human rights and Anzaldúa's description of the borderlands and the subjectivity that living in that space creates, all provide a useful frame for thinking about translanguaging as an act of resistance to cultural and linguistic domination and an assertion of self in the context of schooling. Pratt calls spaces of diverse cultural interaction 'contact zones', and recognizes that they often take place 'in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power ...' (Pratt, 1991: 34). Many dual language bilingual schools are contact zones in that they serve diverse student bodies including white and students of color. Further, US educators are disproportionately white. These two factors shape the context of schooling for multilingual youth of color. Using youth's full linguistic repertoires creates space for multilingual youth, as well as new opportunities to address unequal power relations and cultural and linguistic hegemony.

Further, 'all language learning is cultural learning' (Heath, 1983: 145–146); this relationship is critical to understanding the importance of the ways that schools ask youth to use, or not use, their language practices, and how these choices can lead to more or less liberatory educational spaces. Watson-Gegeo (2004) affirms this idea in two critical tenets of language socialization, that 'language and culture are mutually constitutive and socially constructed' and that further, 'all cultural activities across different contexts are socio-historically marked' (2004, as cited in Baquedano-López *et al.*, 2010: 342). Thus, there is more at stake when learning a new language than simply memorizing a new code of communication; as speakers acquire new ways of communicating, they do so in social contexts that further shape their identities and positions in varying contexts. Likewise, choosing which language practices to use in a given context carries greater significance than just practicing that language; the linguistic features chosen situate and contextualize the communication. A sentence said in English then repeated in Spanish does not communicate the same message twice, but rather each communication carries with it the weight and context of those language practices for both the speaker and the listener. The same sentence spoken using translanguaging practices communicates a different meaning still. In the classroom, this has implications for how children and adolescents are socialized into ways of languaging to 'generate culturally meaningful ways of thinking, feeling, and being in the world' that will afford them sociolinguistic interactions that dynamically resist the reproduction of social inequality (Watson-Gegeo, 2004, as cited in Baquedano-López *et al.*, 2010: 342).

'It's Not a Standard Language but It's Still a Language'

This section focuses on data collected in an after-school session aimed at exploring youth's articulated understandings of translanguaging, and their reflections on their own language practices. In this session, participants identified translanguaging as a common everyday practice in which they engaged, but did not view as appropriate for 'official' use.

I first asked youth to define 'standard English' or 'standard Spanish', then asked if they had heard of Spanglish (the word youth used to identify translanguaging), to which they responded yes. I followed up with the questions, 'Is Spanglish a valid way of talking? Is it just as acceptable as speaking standard English?'

Isabel responded,

Not like at school and stuff, no In school they're trying to teach you like how to correctly speak these two languages, like let's say, they're trying to teach you how to speak Spanish correctly, and then English correctly, but when you mix those together, it's not correct but it's still a language; it's not standard, it's not a standard language, but it's still a language. (Field notes, 8 June 2015)

Isabel explained the practice of translanguaging as a valid way to communicate, but that it was limited in the context of school. Her description of the school 'trying to teach you like how to correctly speak these two languages' demonstrated her understanding of the school's focus on standardized language forms, rather than the socioculturally situated practices that she recognized may not be standard, but are nonetheless still a language. Monica responded to the same question,

Ok, so my mom says that Spanglish is nothing, that it's the wrong way to say it ... so whenever my mom says, whenever I speak like Spanglish ... my mom says no, you cannot tell me like that, either you're speaking Spanish or English. (Field notes, 8 June 2015)

Monica's home experiences mirrored Isabel's school experiences; while both participants used translanguaging, they both received the message that the practice was not as acceptable as using a standard language form.

I followed up by asking why they thought others had a negative view of mixed language practices. Isabel theorized,

Well I'm pretty sure they have that negative view because ... to some people it's not a language, so then to that person, that says it, they're just like oh yeah you know what, they're just speaking like that cause they don't know the language. Like let's say you go to like Brazil or

something, and you know a little bit, you know a little bit of Portuguese, and then you're from here, so then you'll, you know you'll stick in some English words, and then they'll be like oh yeah they just don't know how to speak it, but then you still know it, you just you're so comfortable with English, that when you're speaking Portuguese it just comes naturally. (Field notes, 8 June 2015)

Isabel emphasized how natural it is for multilingual people to use their full linguistic repertoires when they communicate.

The data from the session above shows, on the one hand, the insecure place of translanguaging in institutional or official capacities, and on the other, the very secure and real place that translanguaging had in youth's lives. Despite official messages from home or school, youth recognized that while translanguaging may not be standard, it was 'still a language'. This finding carries important implications for dual language bilingual programs; while these programs strive to build on the language practices of their students, the findings here suggest that strict language policies that separate the two languages are not consistent with the way youth typically use language. Further, the way youth describe translanguaging practices as 'nothing', 'not a language' or 'not correct' based on their own or others' views demonstrates their understanding that socially, translanguaging is viewed as inferior to standard language forms. Bilingual programs, then, must consider the messaging to youth and the impact on youth's sense of self and belonging when considering the policy on using translanguaging in school.

Translanguaging Is Not a Balanced Act

The findings above are further corroborated in the following section, in which participants described their language practices using qualifiers such as 'mostly' or 'usually', showing a measure of linguistic flexibility in their interactions. When asked how participants used language, many reported using both English and Spanish with other bilinguals, including family, friends and classmates, usually with an emphasis on one language or the other.

Monica reported that with her sister, 'we usually speak English and Spanish' with an emphasis on English, while with her parents, she spoke '... mostly in Spanish but like my dad is usually we speak both', and with her friends 'we'll usually speak both languages' with an emphasis on English, except when they make a concerted effort to practice Spanish (Entry interview, 27 May 2015). At Sunday school, Monica reported usually speaking Spanish, while in school there was a greater emphasis on English, though,

... we will usually speak both languages. And either Spanish or English, but when it's like English, English week, we speak English but when it's

Spanish week, we usually speak a little bit English, cause like sometimes we don't know the words in Spanish so we say it in English. (Entry interview, 27 May 2015)

Joanna also reported speaking a mix of English and Spanish at home, with an emphasis on Spanish. 'I speak a lot of Spanish. Um I sometimes speak English with my mom, when it's like about what we're gonna eat' (Entry interview, 13 May 2015). Conversely, she reported mostly speaking English with her friends, but using Spanish in certain scenarios,

With Angie when I argue with her and she gets like really annoying I would scream at her in Spanish With Yanetsy I would like not really scream at her because then she would pretend to cry. So I'll just like say really annoying stuff to her in Spanish. (Entry interview, 13 May 2015)

Diana similarly described using 'mostly' English with her brother, '... with my brother we mostly talk English because he understands more English than Spanish' (Entry interview, May 27, 2015). When asked how she used language with friends, Diana said, 'With my friends I just use English because since our domain language is English and we understand more than Spanish we talk mostly that' while with her father, 'I speak more Spanish with him because since he's still learning [English] ...' (Entry interview, 27 May 2015).

Isabel described usually speaking English with her mom and brother,

So I usually speak English with my mom and my brother, but my mom wants me to speak more Spanish with her, but I speak a lot of Spanish when I'm with my father because a lot of them don't know English so I have to speak Spanish. (Entry interview, 20 May 2015)

She further reported mixing the languages more in contexts that required more Spanish than English, including speaking to a Spanish-dominant friend and when completing a lesson in Spanish (Entry interview, 20 May 2015).

Edwin likewise described bilingual language practices with friends and family, explaining that he used 'Spanish ... and English too' at home, while with friends, he used 'English ... with Spanish' (Entry interview, June 3, 2015). Talking about school, Jorge reported, 'I get to speak both languages, not only English or Spanish, but both. Like in my house I speak both languages too' (Entry interview, 18 May 2015).

The findings above demonstrate that translanguaging is not a balanced act. Qualifiers such as 'usually', 'mostly', 'sometimes', 'both' and 'too' indicate that youth use translanguaging to communicate, usually with an emphasis on one language or the other depending on

the context. The youth consistently describe language practices that are language-dominant ('mostly English', 'usually in Spanish') rather than monolingual. This finding suggests that translanguaging is not a balanced act composed of 50% linguistic features of one language and 50% from another. Instead, translanguaging happens with shifting emphases, and for shifting purposes. Which language was emphasized depended on the given context, not just their own linguistic ability; youth described making linguistic choices based on factors such as audience (e.g. English-dominant siblings), place (e.g. church) and purpose (e.g. conveying feelings). Some youth reported using both languages with people who also knew both languages, such as siblings, though in many of these instances they identified an emphasis on one language or the other. Other youth reported using translanguaging to aid communication in Spanish-dominant contexts where they felt less comfortable. In other instances, youth made deliberate shifts in their language emphasis because parents requested that they practice Spanish, or to practice Spanish with friends.

In these contexts, Spanish or English was not spoken exclusively, but rather was the language of emphasis. Just as subway passengers shift their weight from one foot to the other to maintain their equilibrium while standing on a moving train, we might think about youth shifting their linguistic 'weight' from one set of language practices to the other based on contextual factors; and yet just as the whole body is engaged in the act of standing, so is one's entire linguistic repertoire engaged in communication even as the emphasis may shift from one 'language' to another. Further, maintaining equal weight on both feet would not allow for necessary movement, but shifting weight as needed creates flexibility, and in this imbalance is where youth report finding their linguistic equilibrium. Designing school language policy that offers youth opportunities to use and hone these practices could have a powerful impact on the ways multilingual youth engage with school, and the ways schools support multilingual youth and community language practices.

On 'Having to' Speak Spanish

In this section, I examine youth's articulated attitudes towards Spanish-dominant versus English-dominant contexts. Most participants expressed difficulty in speaking predominantly in Spanish and referred to these instances as 'having to' speak Spanish, in contrast to English-dominant contexts, where the qualifier 'have to' was absent and they simply 'spoke'. Six of 11 participants, in the entry interview, described *having to* speak Spanish in certain contexts, in contrast to simply *speaking* English. Three additional youth described challenges they had in completing their work during 'Spanish time'. At the same time, many participants expressed enthusiasm for these challenging pedagogical

spaces, and saw the structured school policy that mandated Spanish use as creating more opportunities for them to develop Spanish language skills. However, nearly all participants described using both languages in these Spanish-dominant spaces in school, challenging the notion that they are Spanish-monolingual spaces as the school's language policy intended.

Table 15.1 outlines the instances in which participants described 'having to' speak Spanish (bold emphasis mine).

Table 15.1 Participant descriptions of speaking Spanish

Participant	Response in entry interview
Isabel	<p>With family: '... I speak a lot of Spanish when I'm with my father because um a lot of them don't know English so I have to speak Spanish'.</p> <p>With friends (corrects herself when describing speaking English): 'Um with Julia, I have to speak Spanish sometimes, but with most of my other friends, I have to speak -I speak English ...' (20 May 2015).</p>
Diana	<p>With her mom: '... since she doesn't know that much English, I have to translate to, for her, when it's some business, or when she doesn't, when she needs me to translate it for her'.</p> <p>With family in general: 'Well they um mostly use Spanish so when they talk Spanish, I also have to talk Spanish because they don't know that much English' (27 May 2015).</p>
Monica	<p>With friends, 'try to' and also 'have to' speak Spanish: '... we always try to speak Spanish, like because Susana wants to get better in her Spanish, and Niya, so we always have this like week that we always have to speak Spanish, so yeah, so we help each other'.</p> <p>With her mom: '... with our mom, we have to speak Spanish so yeah' (27 May 2015).</p>
Luz	<p>At home, at the dinner table: '... the people that are there talk Spanish, so we have to talk in Spanish or sometimes me and my sister like to talk by ourselves and talk English' (20 May 2015).</p>
Yanetsy	<p>In school during 'Spanish time': '... you would have to speak ... well not, like when the teacher is leaving everyone speaks English, but like in class like when you answer questions you have to ... say it in Spanish' (27 May 2015).</p>
Chris	<p>In school: 'Sarah: How do you use language at school? Like in the classroom. Chris: Uhh, it depends, like. When we have to talk Spanish, we talk, or if it's English week then we talk' (18 May 2015).</p>
Jorge	<p>Not of his own speech, but when speaking of teachers: 'Sarah: ... when it's Spanish time, do people sometimes speak in English at the tables? Jorge: Yeah, to each other. But when the teacher's asking them, they speak Spanish, cause the teachers all have to, the teachers also have to speak Spanish' (18 May 2015).</p>

Seven of 11 participants referenced 'having to' speak Spanish, six of them in reference to themselves, and one (Jorge) in reference to teachers. The other four participants in the program did not use the construction 'have to', but three reported difficulties in completing schoolwork during 'Spanish time'. Tyler reported that he must respond in Spanish at times during the school day:

Sarah: And how do you like use language in school, will you always follow the rules of the language?

Tyler: No. [A bit emphatically]. [Sarah laughs]. Like in Spanish like if I'm speaking to my friend I'll speak English, but if the teacher asks me a question in Spanish I must respond *in* Spanish (Entry interview, 11 May 2015).

Tyler also explained that his vocabulary is smaller in Spanish than in English, 'Yeah cause English it's like I can use so many words, then in Spanish, I have like not a small vocabulary, but not as big as English' (Entry interview, 11 May 2015).

When asked if she found language harder in certain situations, Joanna responded, 'When I'm explaining a Math problem, it's like really hard in Spanish 'cause I don't know what to say and I barely speak Spanish, I rarely say Math stuff in Spanish, like um saying equations and stuff' (Entry interview, 13 May 2015). Angie also reported a tendency to speak more English than Spanish amongst peers, including during 'Spanish time':

Sarah: And how about in school, do you use the language according to the day or the class?

Angie: Um no. Well what what we used to do for like years like for example let's say it's writing and uh and it's English time ... and everybody speaks English, but when it's Spanish time, people speak English to themselves, but when but when the teacher's like oh this kid come up and show this, the kid's speaking in Spanish, and explaining everything, translating the thing that they said in English to the teachers, but in Spanish. (Entry interview, 20 May 2015)

When asked if the same happened during 'English time', Angie reported that students stuck to English. When asked why she thought that was, she responded,

Because um a lot of these people were born in the English people environment, New York, and a lot of people wanna learn English, sometimes, some people, so they just speak English so they can train about it. And people who already know English just wanna speak English just because. They just feel like it. It's more comfortable for them. (Entry interview, 20 May 2015)

The only participant who did not use the language described above or report difficulties during 'Spanish time' was Edwin, who was the only participant in the after-school program from the self-contained special education classroom. Significantly, in that class, the teacher did not follow the same strict language policy that the general education classes in the school followed. When describing his language practices in school, Edwin simply reported using both languages in all his interactions—at school, with family and with friends.

In sum, while most participants felt stretched by Spanish-dominant contexts, they simultaneously valued those contexts as opportunities to use Spanish-dominant language practices. In the context of this study, a middle school dual language bilingual setting in which the majority of youth were US-born or had been in the US since a very young age, most participants felt less comfortable in Spanish-dominant settings, as evidenced in their description of 'having to' speak Spanish while simply 'speaking' English. Despite this challenge, most participants reported valuing Spanish-dominant spaces in school, even though the strict language policy sometimes felt forced or stretched them beyond their comfort zone. These findings point to the need to rethink language policy in dual language bilingual programs (1) to meet the needs of youth, (2) to accurately reflect the language use in those spaces and (3) to more effectively counter English hegemony in bilingual schools.

Reflecting on Language Use in the After-School Program

The findings in the section above show that while youth sometimes found themselves in Spanish-dominant contexts that challenged them linguistically, many saw value in the practice of creating Spanish-dominant spaces. Youth reported learning more Spanish and being stretched to practice Spanish in a way they may not have otherwise.

It is in this context that I now turn to reflect on the language dynamics of the after-school program itself. I told participants at the beginning of the program that there was no official language policy during the after-school program, or rather, that the policy was that they could use whatever language practices they wanted. This was a point that I brought up throughout the program as well. However, while some participants used Spanish-dominant language throughout the program while talking in small groups and occasionally in whole group discussions or interviews, the space was decidedly English-dominant. In participants' exit interviews, I asked them (in English), 'How did you feel being able to use whatever language you wanted during the program?' As a follow-up question, I asked them how they would have liked a language policy that mirrored the stricter school language policy. In asking these questions, I was curious to know how participants felt about having greater linguistic freedom.

When asked about language use during the after-school program, Jorge responded that the open language policy of the program was 'good', but when asked if he thought alternating languages would have been better, he responded,

Yeah, that would be kind of better ... so like one week of English could be good, so then and one week of Spanish would be, too. So people can practice their, their like, they can pronounce the words correct in English or in Spanish. (Exit interview, 26 June 2015)

At the beginning of the program, when asked how he felt going to a bilingual school, Jorge responded, 'I get to speak both languages, not only English or Spanish, but both. Like in my house I speak both languages too' (Entry interview, 18 May 2015). Jorge was the only participant who described 'getting to' speak both languages. For Jorge, then, the free-form policy may have led to potentially missing out on the opportunity to participate in more Spanish-dominant spaces that could have been carved out through intentional policymaking.

Diana, when asked how she felt about the language policy in the after-school program, said, 'Well ... I talked mostly in English because well, English is my main language and um, and I was born here ... And also because most of us in the class also knew more English' (Exit interview, 25 June 2015). When asked if she would have preferred an alternating language policy in the after-school program, Diana said, 'Maybe because well, since I know a lot of Spanish and also English it might be preferable to me but for others it might not be' (Exit interview, 25 June 2015). Diana's responses suggest that linguistic proficiency ('English is my main language'), identity ('I was born here') and others' preferences ('it might be preferable to me but for others it might not be') were all factors she considered when making linguistic choices. In the case of the after-school program, Diana explained why the group spoke English in part by noting that most participants were more comfortable in English. In discussing an alternative, she recognized that using Spanish more may have been preferable to her but not to others. This complexity is indicative of the borderlands that Diana navigated as she made linguistic choices, and highlights that linguistic choices are not simply synonymous with linguistic ability.

Monica's response to the questions about the after-school program's language policy demonstrated her use of both languages, as well as her recognition that others may not be as dexterous in both languages. An excerpt of her exit interview transcript (25 June 2015) is below:

Sarah: How did you feel being able to use whatever language you wanted during the program?

Monica: It felt good. Like, mostly, like, Diana, she mostly speaks Spanish. So we will be like talking English and then talking Spanish, so it could be just like back and forth.

Sarah: Would you have felt different about the program, you think, if we were doing, like one day English, one day Spanish? Like that?

Monica: Yeah, I'd feel different. Like, cause mostly, like everyone speaks English. So yeah, they mostly don't speak Spanish.

[In response to asking whether she spoke mostly English during the program]:

Monica: Like, we spoke with different, well, we mostly speak, spoke, um, English and Spanish, so yeah, but I will mainly speak with a group of like, Diana and, and my sister and Jorge we'll speak Spanish.

Sarah: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Monica: So yeah.

Sarah: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So in the program, you were finding like if you and Diana and Jorge and your sister were speaking, you would speak mostly in Spanish?

Monica: Yeah.

Monica's description of the way she and some of the other participants used Spanish during the program suggests that Spanish-dominant speech was marginalized by the flexible language policy, as they tended to use English-dominant speech in the large group, but preferred Spanish-dominant speech when working in a smaller group. This suggests that in this program, no language policy translated into a *de facto* English-dominant policy in part due to the perception that the group was more comfortable with English-dominant practices. This is an important factor in considering how to shift language policy towards more flexible practices while ensuring that English does not overpower minoritized language practices. Especially as programs are increasing in popularity among monolingual English-speaking families, the issue of English-dominant language practices overpowering Spanish-dominant ones needs further investigation and understanding.

At the same time, while the policy was *de facto* English-dominant, the flexibility built into the language policy of the program provided opportunities for Monica and others to use their full linguistic repertoires, particularly during small group work. This finding might guide larger conversations about language policy in bilingual schools; encouraging translanguaging more in English-dominant spaces within bilingual programs could be a powerful way to resist English hegemony and to ensure that Spanish-dominant and more balanced bilinguals have as many opportunities as possible to access their full linguistic repertoires.

In contrast to Monica, Diana and Jorge, who felt as comfortable in Spanish-dominant contexts as they did in English-dominant ones, Yanetsy reported feeling less comfortable in Spanish-dominant situations, but

nonetheless supported the idea of an alternating language policy rather than the open language policy that was enacted. First, Yanetsy explained that the open language policy, 'was pretty good because I don't really speak Spanish that much. Because I, like I don't really understand it that much anymore ...' (Exit interview, 26 June 2015). However, when asked how she would have felt if we had an alternating language policy like in school, she responded (Exit interview, 26 June 2015):

Yanetsy: I think it would've felt different because it's almost like, we're doing everything bilingual, so then it's like we have one whole week just English and then one week of Spanish, and then there's like there's more, probably more interesting things going on in different languages.

Sarah: Mmm, so in a way you think it would have been better to do one week English, one week Spanish?

Yanetsy: Yeah.

In reflecting that there are 'probably more interesting things going on in different languages', Yanetsy recognized the ways that cultural knowledge and understandings are inextricably bound to language practices (26 June 2015). Thus, her response points to the ways in which being an English-dominant space potentially limited the content of the conversation. Becker notes that learning a new language is tantamount to learning 'a new way of being in the world' (1995: 227). Likewise, Yanetsy's observation suggests that consciously creating Spanish-dominant spaces in school is a powerful way to connect to youth's cultural practices, family histories and ways of being in the world.

Some participants, like Yanetsy, felt that Spanish-dominant spaces in school were challenging but useful for reasons ranging from accessing culturally and linguistically embedded knowledge to developing their linguistic repertoires and providing them an important skill. Others reported feeling just as comfortable in Spanish-dominant spaces, and therefore reported that they would have preferred to have a language policy in the after-school program that mirrored the alternating model of the school. The fact that these participants chose English-dominant practices in the large group and that some switched to Spanish-dominant practices in the small group demonstrates youth's sophisticated and seamless ability to modulate their linguistic choices based on various contextual factors. School language policy that pushes educators and youth to use language in ways that stretches beyond the social context, for the purpose of developing and maintaining language practices, is valuable based on youth's responses outlined here, yet it will require thought, planning and flexibility to execute in a way that simultaneously values youth's linguistic and cultural practices and identities.

Though participants did not mention this as a factor contributing to their language choices, in reflecting on my own identity as an English-dominant white US-born woman, I also recognize that my identity, coupled with my own comfort in English and tendency to introduce activities in English more than Spanish, undoubtedly influenced youth's language use throughout the program. Teachers and other adults in positions of power or authority have the unique opportunity, and responsibility, to use that power in ways that will lead to more equitable educational opportunities for youth. In this case, had I consistently used both English and Spanish-dominant practices, the language dynamics may have shifted, but more importantly, the reflections and explorations of youth may have shifted as well.

In the data above, youth reported mostly English-dominant practices during the after-school program, and those who did use Spanish-dominant practices did so in a small group. At the same time, participants recognized the value of and expressed a desire for Spanish-dominant spaces, for many reasons ranging from the knowledge that might emerge in such spaces to their own comfort level. Thus, protecting 'Spanish time' in bilingual programs can be understood not as protecting the language, but as protecting youth's opportunities to engage with Spanish-dominant language practices, and in doing so to explore the knowledge and understandings that emerge from such a space. Further, understanding such a space as Spanish-dominant and not Spanish-only, opens up new possibilities for engaging all multilingual youth.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined youth's articulated understandings of translanguaging, their description of language-dominant rather than language-only spaces, and their qualification of 'having to' use Spanish in Spanish-dominant contexts, while at the same time expressing a desire to protect Spanish-dominant pedagogical spaces. Below I consider some implications of these findings, particularly for crafting language policy in bilingual programs.

First, findings indicate the need for school language policy to delineate 'language-dominant', rather than 'language-only' spaces. 'Language-dominant' spaces would provide the structure needed for students and teachers alike to engage meaningfully, plan accordingly, and protect minoritized language practices. Though it has been well established that bilinguals are not two monolinguals in one (Grosjean, 1989), many bilingual programs still approach language policy through the lens of teaching two languages rather than the lens of engaging multilingual youth while maintaining and building on community language practices. Engaging exclusively in monolingual spaces (in this case, either monolingual Spanish or monolingual English) potentially

impacts not only how educators and researchers think of multilingual youth, but how youth make sense of their own identities and language practices. A language-dominant, rather than language-only, policy would open new possibilities for engaging youth and institutionally recognizing and valuing youth's language practices.

Second, findings suggest the need for youth to be partners alongside educators in creating school and classroom language policy. Carol Boyce Davies said:

Taking space means moving out into areas not allowed ... *in which the dancer negotiates the road*, creating space, as in the Trinidad verbalized, 'give me room'. In this particular context, the dancer is able to negotiate among a variety of other dancers; his/her own particular dance space. (Davies, 1998, as cited in Henry, 2011: 274, emphasis in original)

Creating space as Davies described is as much about the process as the end result; it is a constitutive act that transforms the actor through participation. In this context, including youth in decision-making around school language policy not only improves language policy, but just as importantly, it recognizes youth as essential partners in this work, and gives youth the opportunity to create space and feel the power in doing so. Youth engagement in school and classroom language policy could include:

- Dialogue on existing language policy.
- Youth input on school language policy micro-structures to be used within already-decided macro-structures.
- Community forums throughout the school year to talk about language practices and to collectively commit to multilingualism.
- Space in the curriculum for the local history of bilingual education.
- Research projects in which youth study the multilingual histories of their own communities and articulate their own present and future desires for their community.

Lastly, creating a dedicated space to listen to multilingual youth and foster critical metalinguistic awareness should also be considered an essential component of a strong language policy and any program oriented towards educational equity. The findings of this study are significant because they are based on the experiences and analyses of multilingual youth. Any program serving multilingual youth would greatly benefit from the input of the youth it serves. Thus, a significant implication of this study is that creating and learning from spaces that center youth voices is essential to designing equitable and liberatory language policy. Just as Dr García conceived of translanguaging by studying the language practices of communities, the best way to serve

multilingual youth is by listening to youth themselves, and letting their perspectives, experiences and language practices guide the creation of more equitable language policy.

Post-Reading Discussion Questions

- (1) Reflect on a collaborative approach to language policy-making. How might you engage youth in creating and maintaining school and classroom-based language policies? What benefits and challenges might arise in the process?
- (2) In the school setting, what is the difference between a language-dominant space and a language-only space? What are some possible educational benefits of creating a school language policy with language-dominant rather than language-only spaces?

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