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Transformative Translanguaging Espacios

Latinx Students and their Teachers
Rompiendo Fronteras sin Miedo

Edited by

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1 The Making of the Language of US Latinxs: Translanguaging Tejidos

Ofelia García and Maite T. Sánchez

Why does this book focus on US Latinx bilingual students? And what has been the role of language in drawing fronteras that have kept Latinx students from privilege and that have racialized them and enregistered them as deficient? How was the language of US Latinxs made and discursively constructed? These are the first questions that we attempt to answer in this chapter. We do so by reviewing the history of Latinx communities in the United States and their education, as we focus on the relations between the making of language, race, and power. We argue that raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015) have worked to produce Latinx people and their language as ‘mixed’ and ‘deficient’ in what Alim *et al.* (2016: 9) call ‘the White American imaginary.’

This chapter then goes on to analyze how the concept of translanguaging might be able to crack the many fronteras y muros that have been raised in US schools through language. In the lips and hands of bilingual Latinx children and youth, a different story of potential and renewal is weaved. This process is facilitated by teachers who understand and trust the bilingual Latinx students, and who *sin miedo* are now remaking Latinx language and freeing students from the strictures and muros to which their voices and bodies have been subjected.

We point in this chapter to how translanguaging weaves new stories, opening up holes and spaces in the traditional narrative of Latinx failure, their ‘word gaps’ and ‘achievement gaps.’ In the *entrelazados* of the translanguaging tejidos/weaves, a different story emerges. Through the translanguaging tejidos, able Latinx voices and bodies with full human dignity reconfigure power, disrupt established narratives and knowledge, develop a critical consciousness, and push back the structural racism they have faced.

Why Focus on Latinx Bilingual Students?

Our readers might wonder why the opening of translanguaging espacios in this book focuses on US Latinx bilingual students. After all, the

espacios for translanguaging in education have been shown to be good for all minoritized students, as de los Ríos and Seltzer claim in their chapter in this book. We focus on Latinx students, first of all, because of their sheer numbers – 17.9 million students in 2016, making up 23% of all school-aged children and youth in the United States (Mather & Foxen, 2016). We also center Latinx students because of Latinx people’s long history in the United States. Along with Native Americans, many Spanish speakers were original settlers who were then conquered and colonized. Despite the rising number of Latinx immigrants in the adult population, 95% of the ‘Hispanic’ population under 18 years of age were born in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2018), and so they are ‘native speakers’ of English, and often also of Spanish. Finally, we focus on Latinx students because of the racialization processes to which they have been subjected, a process in which language has played an important part.

The subjugation, oppression and murder of US Latinx people have been made more vivid than ever in recent years. We have seen images of Latinx children and youth in cages at the US/Mexico frontera, as they are separated from their familias. We have heard the 45th President of the United States call Mexicans ‘rapists.’ We have also watched the rampage at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, where the shooter went to ‘kill Hispanics’ and murdered 23 of them. And we have witnessed the devastating effect that COVID-19 has had among Latinx families.

From the very beginning, Latinx people have not enjoyed ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,’ as the US Declaration of Independence states, in the same ways as the white population. Language, and especially *language in education*, has been the material from which other muros and fronteras have been built to keep Latinx communities dominated. We start by narrating the history of how Latinx language has been ‘made’ and used in that domination. We follow here the work of other sociolinguists who have looked at how language has been discursively constructed as a political artifact, and how these language representations are then used in society for domination (Del Valle, 2013; Joseph, 2006).

The Making of Spanish for Colonization

US Latinx people are most often identified as speakers of Spanish. But what is meant by Spanish? And what have been the constructions of what we know today as Spanish? We draw on the early history of the Spanish language to remind our readers that despite the many material effects that ‘named languages’ have had in our lives, and their usefulness for identity purposes, they are sociopolitical constructions that have been instrumental in colonization and nation-building (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) and that continue to be used today in the same processes. By the ‘making of Spanish’ we refer to how its representation was discursively constructed as a single and autonomous

entity and how this portrayal was then used to perform the political function of colonization.

Although today we think of the language of the conquistadores as ‘Spanish,’ it is important to remember the high degree of multilingualism and the great linguistic heterogeneity in the Iberian Peninsula at the time of the encounter. The language practices in the peninsula included local Hispano-Romances, a continuum of Arabic-influenced local Romances known as Mozarabic, the speech of those speaking local Romances in contact with Celts, with Southern Gauls and with Basques (López García, 1985; Tuten, 2003). It was not until 1492, as the Moorish Kingdom of Granada surrendered to the Reyes Católicos Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, that Antonio de Nebrija published his *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana*. Nebrija understood that a single Spanish language, ‘la lengua castellana,’ was needed for conquest and empire, and in his dedication to Queen Isabella he stated: ‘Siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio’ (for more on the history of the construction of Castilian Spanish, see Del Valle, 2013; García, 2007; García & Otheguy, 2015).

It was this constructed ‘Castilian’ that was then promoted to evangelize and castellanizar/hispanicize Indigenous Americans (Briceño Perozo, 1987). As the linguistic/evangelization work of missionaries advanced, missionaries started standardizing what were called *lenguas generales indígenas*, to be used in catechisms. Named as Nahuatl, Quechua, Chibcha and Guarani, these ‘lenguas’ corresponded to the great empires that the conquistadores encountered, and they were written down as the missionaries heard them. These *lenguas generales* also contributed to making invisible the heterogeneous ways of speaking of Indigenous Americans throughout the Spanish Empire (Moreno-Fernández, 2007).

In 1713, the Real Académica Española (RAE) was founded on the instructions of Philip VI, the first Bourbon ruler of Spain, to enthrone Castilian as the norm that ‘limpia, fija y da esplendor’ throughout a highly multilingual empire on both sides of the Atlantic. When in 1782 Charles III ordered that only ‘Castilian’ be used in evangelization efforts in the Spanish Empire, there were only 8000 Spaniards and more than two million Indigenous Americans (García, 1999).

It is this highly multilingual people that then constituted the Latin America that we know today. At the beginning of the 19th century, 89% of the population of what was the Spanish Empire was Indigenous (Cifuentes & Ross, 1993). Millions of enslaved people were brought from the western coast of Africa, 2 million alone to Cuba, where slavery perdured until 1886. And yet, it was mostly Spanish speaking white criollos (born in America, of parents born in Spain) who led independence movements between 1810 and 1820s and came into power. When in 1847 Andrés Bello published his *Gramática de la lengua castellana destinada al uso de los americanos*, he defended only the language ‘uniforme y auténtica de la gente educada’ (cited in García & Otheguy, 2015: 642). By

1898, when Spain lost its last colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico, only 17% of the entire Latin American population were monolingual speakers of Indigenous languages (García, 1999). In 100 years, Spanish had gone from being the minority language of the powerful white elite to being constructed as the *only* language of Latin American identity (for more on this history, see García *et al.*, 2010).

The Making of the Language of Colonized and Racialized US Latinxs

At the same time, throughout the 19th century, the Anglo-Protestant power to the North was consolidating its hegemony. Since the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish Empire had been shrouded in what became known as *La Leyenda Negra*, which constructed the Spanish Empire as cruel and degenerate (Ibañez, 2019). The belief in US Manifest Destiny, said to be given by God, to expand what were said to be its ‘special virtues’ – a racial, cultural-religious and linguistic superiority that included being white, having Protestant values and speaking English – took hold in the 19th century United States (Greenberg, 2017). It was this ideology that justified the murder and removal of Native Americans as their territories were occupied and annexed. And it was also this ideology of racial and linguistic superiority that justified the US war with Mexico which resulted in the annexation of much of Mexico’s territory in 1848, and of the US war with Spain which resulted in the gain of the colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico.

As a result of the Mexican American War in 1848, the United States annexed all or parts of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Utah, and small sections of Oklahoma, Kansas and Wyoming (Menchaca, 1999). The US military conquest was followed by a colonizing project in which a process of racialization, linked to language and brought about through a race-based language education policy, played an important part. The language of those described as ‘Mexicans,’ as we will see, was represented as a ‘mixed jargon.’ This discursive construction of the language of Mexicans was then used to perform the political function of colonization, segregation and exclusion.

The racial prejudice toward Mexicans¹ was evidenced immediately after the military conquest. Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina said in 1848:

We have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race – the free white race. To incorporate Mexicans would be the very first instance of the kind of incorporating an Indian race; for more than half of the Mexicans are *Indian*, and the other is composed chiefly of *mixed* tribes. (Weber, 1973: 135, emphasis added)

The idea of impurity and mixture was associated not only with a Mexican American race, but also with their language. In 1902, a

congressional delegation conducted hearings to assess whether New Mexico and other territories should be admitted as a state (for more on the politics of Spanish and English in territorial New Mexico, see Fernández-Gibert, 2013). When H.S. Wooster, a Justice of the Peace, gave his testimony, he explained that ‘they speak the Spanish language, or try to; but I understand that *it is not pure Castilian*; it is a sort of *jargon of their own*’ (cited in Nieto-Phillips, 2004: 88, emphasis added). A process of separating the Spanish language of white Europeans from that of Mexicans became essential to the process of racialization that hierarchized them as inferior and segregated them. As J. Del Valle and García (2013: 256) say: ‘Language became the defining factor and all Spanish speakers, whether they looked white or not, became the object of exclusion.’

The espacio for the language practices of Mexican Americans considered ‘Indian,’ ‘mixed,’ ‘non-white’ and said to speak a Spanish ‘jargon’ was shut tight. English was made the sole official language of school instruction in California by 1855, in Texas by 1858 and in New Mexico by 1921 (Hernández-Chávez, 1995). Mexican American students were segregated in English-only classrooms with substandard educational resources and practices.

Mexican American Spanish was said to be very distant from the ‘Spanish’ that had been taught since 1816 at Harvard for what was called ‘polite accomplishment,’ which included the literature of Spain, but not of Latin America. Spanish language education was only introduced into high schools as a result of the exclusion of German, the language of the enemy, during World War I. Aurelio Espinosa, the first editor of the journal of the newly founded American Association of Teachers of Spanish, *Hispania*, established what was to be the Spanish language norm taught in US high schools – that of ‘the educated people of Old and New Castile’ (for more on this history, see García, 1993).

By the mid-20th century, schools in the Northeast, and particularly in New York City, were also experiencing an influx of Spanish speakers, this time from the US colony of Puerto Rico. The imposition of English as the language of instruction in 1903 in the island had been a failure and was reversed in 1948 (Negrón-Muntaner, 1997; Pousada, 1996). When these Spanish speakers, who had been granted US citizenship through the Jones Act in 1917, started arriving in New York City, the schools did not make any accommodations. Puerto Ricans were seen as mixed-race people speaking a language that was not that of ‘educated people of Old and New Castile.’ Schools continued to teach in English only, as if Puerto Rican children did not exist, relegating them to schools and classrooms in which to ‘remediate’ their language (Del Valle, 1998).

The attempt to annihilate the language and histories of Latinx people was carried out through a race-based language education policy meant to maintain the existing socioeconomic order of white Anglo supremacy in

jobs, education and housing (González, 1990; San Miguel, 1999). Policies against ‘Spanish’ did not grant those said to be ‘Hispanics’ full access to what was considered the language of culture, education and Anglo-Saxon values – ‘English.’ And raciolinguistic ideologies prevented white listening subjects (Flores & Rosa, 2015) from hearing the English of Latinx people as appropriate. In school, the education of these Latinx US citizens was focused on remediating Latinx English, which had been constructed with Anglo-monolingual norms and which by definition would always be out of their reach. The result of these race-based language education policies for US Latinx bilinguals resulted in much educational failure. As of 1960, roughly 80% of Mexican Americans were American born (Sung, 2017), and yet only 13% of adults had a high school diploma and only 6% attended college (García & Sung, 2018). As of 1966, 87% of all Puerto Ricans adults 25 years of age and older had dropped out without graduating from high school, and the dropout rate for Puerto Rican students in the eighth grade was 53% (García, 2011).

As Latinx students and their communities became increasingly bilingual, they were better able to advocate for their rights, which included language, but also employment, housing and voting rights. When the civil rights movement gained strength in the 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican American and Puerto Rican communities engaged in their own *movimientos*, moving some of the guardrails and *muros* that had kept them confined to a limiting educational and socioeconomic space (García & Sung, 2018; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Sung, 2018).

Mexican American and Puerto Rican communities started to assert a political consciousness that recognized their histories as a colonized people who had been minoritized through processes of racialization and linguistic oppression (Ortiz, 2018). Reclaiming their own Spanish language in bilingual education efforts became an important instrument to crack the *muros* that had kept them segregated in substandard classrooms and schools with poor English-only instruction (Donato & Hanson, 2012; Macías, 1985).

In the 1960s, Cubans fleeing the Castro regime started arriving in the south of Florida. Welcomed as refugees from what was said to be ‘Communism,’ they also clamored for bilingual education. Their purpose, however, was to guarantee their children’s education in Spanish for their eventual return to Cuba.

Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans had different purposes in supporting bilingual education, but their bilingual education ‘experiments’ paved the way for what became the institutionalization of bilingual education policy in the United States. *The Bilingual Education Act* was passed by Congress in 1968. Despite the growth of bilingual education programs throughout the country in the 1970s, the program became politicized with every reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act (García & Sung, 2018). From efforts by Latinx communities to educate their children bilingually and leveraging the communities’ knowledge

systems, poems, stories, songs and dreams, bilingual education became politically redefined as ‘*transitional*’ and available only for a limited time for ‘Limited English speakers.’

‘Away Re-makings’ of US Latinx Language: Sociopolitical Camouflaging

After Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, the Latinx community’s enactment of bilingual education came under increased attack (Otheguy, 1982). The arrival of many more Latinx immigrants hailing from different countries, after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, meant that the diversity, and thus the language and racial heterogeneity, of the Latinx community was more visible. Many were long-standing citizens, but others had recently arrived. Some were speakers of American Indigenous languages. Their histories, national origins, race, cultural practices, religion and socioeconomic status were very different. US Latinx communities now also exhibited an array of language practices that started disrupting the notion of Spanish as taught in US schools.

By the time the new century rolled around, the die had been cast. The goal of institutionalized bilingual education policy became even more narrowly focused on teaching English to the growing population of immigrants and recent arrivals. When *No Child Left Behind* was passed in 2002, the education goal was made explicitly clear – the acquisition of English for ‘English language learners’ (García & Kleifgen, 2018).

From the ashes of the bilingual education tragedy emerged support for a ‘model’ of bilingual education now called ‘*dual language*’ or ‘*two-way immersion*,’ which was said to teach English to ‘English language learners’ in ways that would not segregate Latinx students, and that would at the same time educate them alongside English speakers who would then learn Spanish (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Latinx language was discursively constructed as ‘dual languages,’ moving bilingual education programs further from the bilingual practices of the Latinx community in a process that we call ‘away re-makings.’ By ‘away re-makings’ we point not only to the remaking of ‘Spanish’ once more *away* from the Latinx community that uses it, but also to how this process of distancing is now *hidden*, promoted as being of benefit to the Latinx community. Bilingualism is recognized, but it is accompanied by what Povinelli (2011) has called ‘camouflage.’ Povinelli explains that camouflage has become a tool of liberal governmentality to quell social movements – in our case, the struggles over employment, housing and self-determination that had accompanied the early bilingual education movimiento of Latinx communities.

Camouflaged as a type of bilingual education, the intent of ‘dual language’ programs was to hide their sociopolitical purpose of redefining bilingual education and language *away* from the Latinx community. The bilingual Latinx communities’ ways of doing language were not validated.

Judged against what schools constructed as ‘Spanish’ and ‘English,’ the Latinx community’s Spanish was perceived only as a ‘home language,’ spoken poorly with interference from English or Indigenous languages, whereas English was simply perceived as the Latinx community’s ‘second language.’

By proposing that these two ‘dual languages,’ especially in forms now called ‘academic,’ were not in any way what Latinx communities ‘had,’ racialized *bilingual* Latinx language and communities were now re-made as not falling within the initial design of the bilingual education program. ‘Dual language’ programs were conceived as having a double purpose – to teach English to ‘English language learners,’ and to teach Spanish to white ‘Spanish language learners.’

For Spanish to be considered a possible resource for Anglo-monolingual students, Spanish could not be associated with those enregistered (Agha, 2005) as poor Brown and Black people and undocumented non-citizens. The teaching of Spanish once more became focused on what Mena and García (2020) have called a ‘Spanish from nowhere,’ distanced from the Spanish spoken in US Latinx communities.

Many two-way ‘dual language’ programs became tools of gentrification, as white English speakers took the place of Latinx students who were pushed out of their communities (see Chapters 2 and 3, this volume). And these constructions of language according to the norms of white monolingual speakers have meant that these ‘dual language’ programs have often engaged in what may be considered anti-Blackness (Flores, 2016; Malsbary, 2014). Across the nation there are very few African American students in two-way dual language classrooms (Valdés, 1997a). The emphasis of these ‘dual language’ programs in the acquisition of two separate languages has also meant that they have paid scant attention to racism and the subjugation of Afro-Latinx people and Indigenous people both in Latin America and in the United States (Chávez-Moreno, 2019).

As more high school and college bilingual Latinx students took a subject named ‘Spanish,’ Guadalupe Valdés rightly advocated that Spanish for these bilingual Latinx students was not a foreign language and could not be taught as such (Valdés *et al.*, 1977). But what later became the teaching of ‘Spanish as heritage language’ was sometimes turned into a program to identify and eradicate the many features of what was considered the ‘incorrect’ Spanish of bilingual Latinx students (Lynch, 2014). That is, the space for Latinx bilinguals that Valdés initially imagined was also co-opted, camouflaging its role of re-making language *away* from the Latinx community.

The desires of many white US parents in the 21st century for a ‘pure’ Spanish has been part of a global neoliberal design. In an effort to consolidate power over the growing Spanish speaking market in the Americas and especially in the United States – a market that represented more than three times the consumer power of the rest of the Spanish speaking world

(Carreira, 2002) – the government of Spain gave lip service to recognizing the many different ways of speaking Spanish. Spanish became projected as ‘global,’ ‘fashionable’ and ‘chic’ (García, 2008). However, it was ‘Castilian’ that continued to be the norm promoted by the Instituto Cervantes, established by the government of Spain in 1991 to promote the teaching of Spanish all over the world. The Instituto’s Aula Virtual clarifies that the model of language used is ‘el español central peninsular’ (cited in García & Mason, 2009: 166). This, of course, still refers to ‘Castilian,’ now appropriately named as being limited only to the central region of Spain. The reasons given by the Instituto Cervantes for this norm selection were the ‘importancia demográfica’ of central peninsular Spanish, and its domination over ‘manifestaciones culturales.’ We know, however, that Spanish speakers whose speech demonstrates features associated with Castilian make up a very small proportion of the Spanish speaking world. And we also know that the ‘manifestaciones culturales’ produced in Latin America and US Latinx communities have been many. What is being camouflaged here? Hidden is the power dimension of the language of white Europeans with a long history of colonizing and dominating the spaces of Others, now with a different economic imperative.

As in many ‘dual language’ programs in PK-12 and ‘Spanish as heritage language programs’ in high schools and universities, there has been a remaking of language *away* from the bilingual Latinx community. Valdés (2015) has called attention to how this has been carried out through the increased ‘curricularization of language.’ The language of the Latinx communities has been put into strictures in schools, as programs supposed to educate them camouflage the continued exclusion of Latinx students from educational success.

Looking ‘into’ Latinx Students Doing Language, as Others Look ‘Away’

Latinx student bilingualism is seldom understood in schools, with many educators looking away from their actual language practices. We present here the case of a Latina mother doing language at home, and the educators’ representations of the family’s languaging. We then consider the academic scholarship that has contributed to the making of Latinx language and their bilingualism as outside of the bounds of what is considered ‘right’ and ‘appropriate.’ We show the irrelevance of traditional academic scholarship to the lives and practices of this Latinx mother and her families. In so doing, we focus on the continuing processes of *looking away* from Latinx languaging and suggest the reasons why this process persists. This case is not representative of the language practices of *all* Latinx families, with some speaking what is considered Spanish or English exclusively. But we describe it here because the case of bilingual practices in Latinx homes is often not recognized and is least understood.

Recently we witnessed a Latina mother, born in the United States of Cuban-born parents, speaking on the phone to her son's principal about his progress. Because one of the children was interrupting, the mother turned to the child and spoke in Spanish. The principal immediately asked, 'Remind me, is X an English Language Learner?' The Latina mother, flustered and surprised by the question, responded first, 'Of course he isn't. His father is American.' She then realized what she had said, and added: 'Wait, I'm American too.' When she hung up, she was angry that an educator in charge of a school in which there were many Latinx children would have such misunderstandings of bilingualism. It was as if being bilingual meant you were not American, always limited. She also struggled with the complexities of identities. Indeed, her husband was white and had grown up in a monolingual English-speaking home. But she was as American as her husband, despite identifying strongly as Latina, and having grown up in a bilingual home. And her son was also American, despite his Latinx identity and the bilingualism of the home, which both parents nurtured.

Despite the longstanding presence of bilinguals in the United States, bilingualism is celebrated only if it is considered additive, learned sequentially by white bodies in school. The more natural bilingualism of US Latinx students ('circumstantial bilinguals,' as Valdés and Figueroa described them in 1994), developed through community socialization, continues to be denigrated. These misconstructions continue to uphold an existing socioeconomic order of white/English/monolingual supremacy.

The formulations of bilingualism that were introduced into US education in the late 1960s and early 1970s owe much to the work of Canadian scholars, especially those at McGill University (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). But the conceptualizations of these early Canadian scholars had to do with accommodating the bilingualism of two white settler communities in Canada – the Anglophone and the Francophone (Haque, 2012). Excluded from the paradigm of additive bilingualism and immersion education that Canadian scholars developed in the 1960s were Indigenous peoples. In the United States, scholars of bilingualism imported these constructions of bilingualism and 'models' of immersion education without questioning their relevance for racialized Latinx bilinguals and without addressing the concept of power.

The most influential scholar of bilingualism and bilingual education, Jim Cummins, appealed to psycholinguistic concepts that, although demonstrating the interdependence of languages (Cummins, 1979), reinforced the idea of a first language (L1) and a second language (L2). Although Cummins' work eventually recognized the dimension of power in thinking about bilingualism and bilingual children (Cummins, 2000), his concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins, 1979) are still often used to show how bilingual Latinx students 'have' BICS, but not CALP,

rendering them deficient. Without an analysis that includes power, this distinction has now been elaborated into the concept of *academic language* that is hailed as the panacea for academic and economic success (Cummins, 2014; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). The efforts to define the features of academic language have occupied many scholars in the last two decades (see, for example, Schleppegrell, 2004, 2012; Snow & Uccelli, 2009; Uccelli *et al.*, 2015, among others), based on the speech habits and literacy practices of cultural elites and some aspects of written language, without naming it thus. The imposed strictures around ‘academic language’ disregards and *looks away* from the full language architecture upon which racialized bilingual Latinx students perform their lives (Flores, 2019).

Latinx bilingualism is a lot more complex and dynamic than the concept of additive bilingualism that reflects a process by which language majority children acquire a ‘second language,’ usually sequentially (García, 2009a). In the bilingual home of the mother in the case presented above, it is difficult to identify when anyone is using one named language or another. The father learned Spanish in high school and uses it flexibly to talk to his children who are six and three years old. The mother acquired Spanish, but also English, in her bilingual home. The babysitter uses mostly Spanish. The father’s parents speak English only; the mother’s parents, Cuban-born and having come to New York as children, are bilingual. The school-aged child is in an English-only program, and his friends speak mostly English. When the two children play with each other, the three-year-old uses what we would call Spanish more than English, whereas the six-year-old uses what we would call English more than Spanish. The six-year-old is learning to read in English in school, but he also reads books in Spanish that his parents and abuelos have read to him. Often, he reads those Spanish-language books out loud to his sister, but then laughs and narrates them in English. When the children play ‘Zingo’ with different adults, the words are sometimes read from the print in English, but other times said in Spanish following the pictures. In short, one cannot say which is the ‘home language’ of this family. What one can say is that in this home the family performs their bilingualism all the time. It is this home bilingualism that schools do not recognize and where instruction ought to start.

Of course, as we have said, not every Latinx family languages in this way. Some Latinx families see themselves as monolingual speakers of Spanish or monolingual speakers of English. Some insist that at home only Spanish be spoken, or only an Indigenous language, or even only English. There are Latinx families that are more Spanish speaking, such as those living along the Mexico-US border. Latinx communities are diverse not only in history and context of settlement, national origin, race, cultural practices, religion and socioeconomic status, but also linguistically. But regardless of locality, race, speaker generation, socioeconomic status or ideological convictions, Latinx families’ language goes beyond what schools call ‘English’ or ‘Spanish.’ Even when parents speak Spanish at

home, children often reply in English; and when parents insist that only Spanish be spoken at home, television, radio and social media, besides friends and neighbors, bring English into the mix. In Latinx families that are said to be ‘English speaking,’ there are relatives who speak Spanish. There is a continuum of bilingual practices in all Latinx families, regardless of experiences and ideologies, that needs to be recognized.

This complex and dynamic language of Latinx families has been made more evident than ever at the time of COVID-19 and remote teaching. In Latinx homes during the pandemic, parents sit with children and negotiate screen-based instruction given in English, often with language practices that go well beyond what we might call English. Latinx parents have always understood that to *educar* their children they must use all their multimodal bilingual practices, as they engage in play, singing, telling stories, sharing sueños, communicating meaningfully. But now, with remote learning during a pandemic, the process of *educar bilingually*, long considered ‘invalid’ school learning, has, at least temporarily, become essential.

The bilingualism of Latinx families does not simply consist of the addition of an L1 to an L2, for it would be difficult to say what this would be for parents or children. In the example of the Latinx family given above, if an L1 is determined by which language was learned first, perhaps one can say that the mother’s L1 is Spanish, spoken first at home. When the mother is in Cuba or Puerto Rico, where the rest of the extended family lives, the mother is perceived as being English speaking, but when she is at home in the United States, she is described as being Spanish speaking. She herself would have a difficult time saying which is the language with which she identifies. And depending on the context, and the interlocutors, she might have different answers as to which language she speaks best. In short, among bilinguals, the construct of an L1 or a mother tongue or a native language, concepts on which the whole field of ‘second language acquisition’ has been built, is impossible to define.

Latinx bilingual people engage in *translanguaging* (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2011, 2018). Translanguaging for us posits that bilinguals draw from a unitary repertoire, a single network of meanings, rather than from dual and separate language systems of an L1 and an L2. As with all children and youth, Latinx bilinguals acquire new linguistic features as they *do* language, incorporating these features into a network of expanded signs and meanings that is different from that of monolingual English speakers or Spanish speakers. Looking ‘into’ Latinx bilingual practices, instead of looking ‘away’ from them, re-makes the narratives and representations of Latinx students, as we perceive their full potential.

Translanguaging: Looking ‘into’ Latinx Languageing

Translanguaging theory engages with language and bilingualism not as simple boxes of L1s and L2s, as one named language or another, as

oral/written/signed language and other modes, but as an *emergent network* of meaning that is constructed as speakers and signers assemble and orchestrate different features and resources to do language. The degree to which speakers are successful in developing this emergent network is a product of the affordances and opportunities they have in society, as well as in schools, to use their entire repertoire.

We use the word ‘emergent’ as in the understanding of ‘emergence’ in the work of the Chilean biologist, Francisco Varela. We have used it before to talk about emergent bilinguals (García, 2009b). Emergence refers to the *interrelationships* and interdependence of psychological, biological, physical, social, cultural and language phenomena which emerge as a network (Varela *et al.*, 1991) and is used to participate in life. Language consists of an emergent network of meanings, and it is not only made up of what is conceived as ‘the linguistic.’ It is also part of the social, cultural, political, economic and racial cogwheels that enable the network to move or to change the speed or direction of the transmitted motion, or that can slow the network down to a halt. We argue that translanguaging keeps the cogwheels in motion, whereas considering language as two separate L1 and L2 entities brings the cogwheels to a halt.

The *trans-* in translanguaging is NOT simply about going *across* named languages, as some educators have misinterpreted it to be. It rejects the ‘language contact’ constructs that have resulted in scholars simply describing the linguistic ‘interferences’ of bilinguals (Weinreich, 1953). And it discards the concept of ‘incomplete acquisition’ with which some scholars have described the Spanish of Latinx bilinguals (see, for example, Montrul, 2008). Instead, it builds on the pioneering studies of Latina scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Guadalupe Valdés (see, for example, 1997b) and Ana Celia Zentella (1996), to affirm the complex bilingualism of Latinx communities in relationship to their political economies.

Translanguaging also pushes back against the concept of code-switching, which even when conceived as rule-governed by well-meaning scholars (MacSwan, 2017; Poplack, 1980) reinforces the idea of the named languages that US Latinxs are said to switch across. Otheguy *et al.* (2019) have described how in Latinx homes and communities these so-called rules are violated all the time, pointing then to practices that go beyond linguistic fronteras.

Translanguaging is about going *beyond* the traditional understandings of named language as discrete entities that have been reified by countries, schools and prescriptive grammar books (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2011, 2018; Otheguy *et al.*, 2015, 2019). As Otheguy *et al.* (2015: 281) have said: ‘Translanguaging is the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages.’

Angel Lin (2019) points to the *trans-semiotizing* aspects of translanguaging, as the verbal is intertwined with many other semiotic resources

(e.g. visuals, gestures, bodily movement) that mutually elaborate each other. Translanguaging, Lin (2019) points out, is a *whole-body sense-making process*. As many other scholars have pointed out, translanguaging includes the sights, the sounds, the gestures, the objects and instruments, and how these are deployed (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; Fu *et al.*, 2019; Hua *et al.*, 2019; Li, 2018; Lin, 2019; Moore *et al.*, 2020; Sherris & Adami, 2019).

For Latinx bilinguals, translanguaging is going beyond the named languages that have been assigned to them – Spanish and English. As we have seen, these have been discursively constructed with norms that exclude the linguistic heterogeneity of all speakers, and that render US Latinxs as deficient in either ‘made’ language. Translanguaging asks us to *look into* Latinx bilingual languaging (Becker, 1995; Maturana & Varela, 1984). It engages with Latinx people’s languaging as the basis for an alternative and more just conception of language and bilingualism, pushing back on the existing socioeconomic order of white supremacy, whether an Anglo one or one constructed as only ‘Hispanic.’ Translanguaging, as Flores (2014) has said, is a political act, and it works against the raciolinguistic ideologies that have racialized US Latinxs through language (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017).

When Latinx bilinguals interact with each other, in homes and communities, they often use more or less their entire linguistic repertoire, without being bound by what society considers to be English or Spanish. In the monolingual classrooms and the ‘dual language’ education classrooms in the United States today, racialized Latinx bilinguals are often restricted to using half or less of their linguistic repertoire, and only draw from a white-European-centric knowledge system. By expecting Latinx students to behave linguistically as if they were monolinguals, always comparing their linguistic performances to those of white monolingual English speaking or Spanish speaking students, Latinx bilinguals are unjustly assessed, and enregistered as having ‘incomplete’ acquisition and ‘lacking’ language.

The chapters included in this book show how critical educators are opening up translanguaging spaces in actual classrooms with different groups of Latinx students studying in various contexts, transforming, as we will see, ‘dual language’ classrooms into true ‘dual language *bilingual*’ classrooms (Sánchez *et al.*, 2018). In those spaces, all Latinx students, including those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or who have been labeled as having a disability, are given the freedom to act with all their resources, as they pry the threads and release the notches of the stories that have made them into incapacitated and inappropriate language users.

Cioè-Peña and Linares remind us in Chapter 11 that unless the students’ language practices are validated, children will never understand that their mothers, families and community are important sources of learning. With remote teaching and learning during the time of

COVID-19, the school space and the home space have become more integrated. Forced to enter bilingual homes through computer screens, many teachers are now witnessing the value of translanguaging, as they depend on Latinx bilingual parents and caregivers to truly collaborate in the education of the children (Kleyn, 2020). This means that many teachers are, for the first time, understanding and validating the role that translanguaging has in the education of bilingual students, transforming at the same time how Latinx children and youth view their own parents and understand their lives.

Translanguaging Tejidos/Weaves Desde Adentro

It was Li Wei (2011) who first described how translanguaging

creates a *social space* for the multilingual 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. (Li, 2011: 1223, emphasis added)

We view the opening up of translanguaging spaces in education not only as a *political* act. It is also a way of *caring* for the Latinx communities by validating their own knowledges and practices and leveraging them in their education. Translanguaging provides a space where uncomfortable conversations about language, race, gender, sexuality, deafness, disability, nation and citizenship can be enacted and new tejidos weaved.

As many of the chapters in this book advance, making space for translanguaging in instruction requires a teacher with what García *et al.* (2017) call a ‘translanguaging stance.’ This refers to a deep belief in the generative effects of languaging as an emergent network that is constituted *juntos/ together*, including Latinx students’ histories, ethnographies and all knowledge systems. As Herrera and España describe in Chapter 9, the three Ts – translanguaging, textos and temas – have to work *juntos*. It is not enough simply to open up a translanguaging space where students can use their full repertoire. Translanguaging has to be used with textos that explore critical temas generated through Latinxs’ own epistemologies. This *juntos* use is what opens up spaces to view other visions in a Latinx tejido.

The chapters in this book do not simply contain a list of pedagogical translanguaging strategies; rather, they show how teachers open up spaces to *look into* Latinx bilingual students’ lives and realities as they language with their entire network of meanings. But in combining the *critical* aspects of translanguaging with what the authors call *humanizing* ones, the translanguaging here is more than simply a look ‘into’; it is a *production ‘desde adentro.’* Latinx students are presented here in their full *human dignity*. The mature scholars who have authored the chapters are not simply being critical of the social and educational practices to which

Latinxs have been subjected. They are also *producing, sin miedo, a different knowledge* from that generated by educational authorities and scholars who have not viewed Latinx students *desde adentro*. As Latinx students are viewed *desde adentro*, through what we all perceive when their translanguaging is leveraged, a ‘critical consciousness’ is developed (Cervantes-Soon *et al.*, 2017; Palmer *et al.*, 2019: Ch. 2) which disrupts traditional knowledge about language and bilingualism and reconfigures power.

Tejiendo the Bilingual into the Dual Language Desde Adentro

Many of the chapters in this book question the wisdom of ‘dual language’ programs as presently constituted. Sánchez *et al.* (2018) have described how translanguaging can transform ‘dual language’ classrooms into true dual language *bilingual* classrooms. It is possible to open up translanguaging spaces within language-based instructional spaces to ensure that Latinx bilingual children are observed using their entire repertoire and assessed appropriately (*translanguaging documentation space*), to support and scaffold instruction for individual Latinx children to expand their Zone of Proximal Development when appropriate (*translanguaging rings, that is, as a scaffold space*), and especially to transform the students’ ideologies about the nature of their language and bilingualism and value their own practices for their sociopolitical value and potential to transform their lives (*translanguaging transformation space*). Many of the chapters in the book focus precisely on how translanguaging transforms the ‘dual language’ classroom so as to release the tight ‘puntos’ of the two linguistic solid telas that have been separated into two separate entities, benefitting mostly the white English-speaking students in these programs.

As we said before, the chapters in Part 2 (Heiman, Cervantes-Soon & Hurie and Poza & Stites) discuss how translanguaging enabled the difficult discussion of the power of white English-speaking students over the Latinx students in dual language classrooms. But most importantly, translanguaging makes possible the dialogue about the relationship of the dual language program to the gentrification of neighborhoods that were previously communities of color.

The chapters in Part 3 (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) also demonstrate how translanguaging tejidos bring together all the network of signs and meanings that traditional dual language structures disrupt. Instead of offering affordances for learning in solely the language designated for instruction in one room, at one time, with one teacher, the instructional translanguaging spaces opened up by teachers in these cases offer Latinx students *all* the language and semiotic resources available, and encourage them to leverage them with pride.

Translanguaging in ‘dual language’ programs turns programs that originally turned ‘away’ from the Latinx bilingual community into true

‘dual language *bilingual*’ programs (Sánchez *et al.*, 2018). Whether programs are labeled as ‘two-way’ or ‘one-way,’ translanguaging enables a view desde adentro of the entire continuum of bilingual practices of student communities. Rather than keeping the community’s translanguaging at bay, the dual language bilingual classrooms portrayed in Parts 2 and 3 brings it in as part of the community’s cultural wealth (Yosso, 2006). Translanguaging enables the muros and fronteras that schools have erected around language to come down. Tejiendo with translanguaging enables teachers not only to view desde adentro, but also to produce knowledge desde adentro, where the linguistic and conceptual virtuosity of Latinx bilingual students is witnessed and leveraged.

Lest we be misunderstood, we believe strongly that bilingual education is essential for Latinx bilingual students because it offers the only opportunity to develop positive bilingual and biliterate performances. In the case of Deaf bilingual Latinxs in Chapter 10, for example, Gárate-Estes, Lawyer and García-Fernández argue that for Deaf bilingual Latinx students, a space must be carved for the teaching of a Signed Language, for without that space, Deaf Latinx children would be deprived of an accessible language which is key to their cognitive development and important for their community. In the same way, translanguaging in bilingual education for hearing students does not dismiss the importance of developing Latinx students’ performances in what is seen as Spanish and English. Translanguaging, however, enables Latinx students’ own language and literacy constructions desde adentro, and not simply those imposed from the outside as external standards, which always excludes their own practices and minoritizes them.

Instructional spaces where Latinx children and youth are sometimes asked to produce oral and written *products* in English or Spanish or Signed Language are important. But in the *process* of educating Latinx bilingual students, Latinx children need to be encouraged to put to work their entire network of meanings, making them conscious not only of their language practices, but also of their histories, the political economies and racialization processes that have *looked away* from their practices and lives.

Translanguaging as a scaffold in the education of emergent bilinguals (the translanguaging rings in Sánchez *et al.*, 2018) is seldom questioned by educators and scholars. However, it has been the transformative potential of translanguaging that has been met with resistance. In this book we witness how a group of young mature scholars, teachers and students have transformed ‘dual language’ education policies that have been handed down in ways that are detrimental to Latinx communities. Working desde adentro, they have weaved a different tejido that tells a different story not only about dual language education, but about much more. We insist that only when translanguaging promotes re-makings and transformations, is it worth pursuing.

Translanguaging Otros Tejidos

As minoritized and Latinx scholars have started exploring translanguaging for its potential in the education of racialized bilinguals, some scholars have raised alarms about claims of its transformative potential (Block, 2018; Jaspers, 2018). Some say it has become a popular term, little understood as anything more than heteroglossic practices (Jaspers, 2015, 2018, 2019). Canagarajah (2019: 3) has warned that it has become a ‘a fashionable academic idea’ and that its popularity is producing what Jaspers (2018) calls a ‘discursive drift’ of any political consciousness intended in its original conceptualizations (Leung & Valdés, 2019). We agree that many educators and scholars do not understand translanguaging as anything more than either the use of an ‘L1’ or the fluidity of language practices. And, as Flores (2013) has warned, viewing translanguaging as simple fluid language practices means that it can be easily incorporated into neoliberal processes. But as we have argued in this chapter, opening up translanguaging spaces in education can resist the processes of colonization and racialization to which US Latinx students have been subjected because it re-makes their language and opens up spaces to weave another tejido.

Raciolinguistic ideologies have been sanctioned in the United States for too long, with language constructed as standardized entities based on language practices of white monolinguals and away from the practices of bilingual Latinx populations. One of the functions of schools has always been that of ideological normalization (Popkewitz, 2006). Curricula, learning standards, pedagogy and assessments ensure that teachers believe that ‘standard academic English,’ associated with white middle-class students, is most important for educational success, inadvertently creating Latinx failure. Disrupting these raciolinguistic ideologies and enabling Latinx students to language their whole body-sense into being can be transformative in itself. Through their own language practices, Latinx young people resist the racial and linguistic oppression that they have endured.

We disagree with Block (2018) and Jaspers (2019) that some of our translanguaging work has obscured the material dimensions of inequality by focusing on language. For US Latinx people, language, race and inequality have been mutually constituted and have produced the inequities that persist. By calling attention to the translanguaging of Latinx students, and the ways in which it could be leveraged in classrooms, the authors of the book are precisely resisting the processes of stratification that the co-construction of language and race has produced for Latinx students. Besides, as Latinx editors and authors, we are claiming our right to produce other knowledges and other narratives with new tejidos. We base our knowledge and scholarship of the translanguaging of bilingual Latinxs not on the values of scholars external to the community, but on our existing knowledge and cultural systems desde adentro.

We, of course agree that translanguaging in education does not by itself hold the potential to transform the unequal relations of power and structural racism that exist in US society. But unlike Jürgen Jaspers (2019), we argue that to educate racialized US Latinx students, translanguaging is indeed a *moral imperative* and must be anti-racist. As Li Wei has said, ‘Translanguaging transforms lives, not just classroom learning of facts and figures’ (personal communication to García, July 2019).

The criticality of translanguaging in opening up spaces for racialized and minoritized Latinxs is recognized by García and Li (2014) when they say:

[A]s new configurations of language and education are generated, old understandings and structures are released, thus transforming not only subjectivities, but also cognitive and *social structures*. In so doing, orders of discourses shift and the voices of Others come to the forefront, relating then translanguaging to *criticality, critical pedagogy, social justice and the linguistic human rights agenda*. (García & Li, 2014: 3, emphasis added)

It is true that translanguaging is not new, and that these complex language practices have always characterized multilingual speakers, especially those in low-income countries and those in the global South. The translanguaging view we hold, along with the authors of these chapters, has to do with the intent of denaturalizing the dominance of named normed languages and their hierarchies, of dismantling what Audre Lorde (1979) called ‘the master’s house’ with our own tools, as we turn our linguistic, cultural and knowledge differences into strengths.

The Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1987, 2002) has situated US Latinxs in what she has called ‘borderlands,’ a ‘tierra entre medio,’ a ‘nepantla’. Anzaldúa says:

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)

What is important then is for scholars and teachers to shake Latinx students *sin miedo* out of the comfort of that home, so that we become critically conscious of the precarious nature of the spaces in which Latinx students have been confined in US classrooms. By taking up translanguaging, Latinx students are invited to take up their own ‘locus of enunciation’ (Mignolo, 2000), as the scholars in this book have done. 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)

We see translanguaging as a form of what Mignolo (2009) has called ‘epistemic disobedience,’ a way to revoke the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) to which Latinx people have been subjected. By coloniality of power, Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist, refers to the legacies of colonialism that legitimize European knowledge and cultural systems exclusively. Quijano calls attention to three forms of coloniality of power: (1) *systems of hierarchies* based on racial categories; (2) *systems of knowledge* based on European knowledge production; and (3) *cultural systems* based on Eurocentric ideas of modernity, such as the rational and the scientific.

White Europeans, white North Americans and white Latin Americans have been given the authority to ‘make’ language and impose these discursive constructions on US Latinxs. Not only have US Latinxs been unable to engage in their own knowledge production about their language, but the use of constructed language(s) to establish racial hierarchies has then created a racial division of labor that has had profound consequences in their economies. Translanguaging is a way of opening up spaces for weaving otros tejidos and other lives.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have reviewed the history of Latinx people in the United States to understand how language and race have operated in the process of minoritization to which they have been subjected. Looking into translanguaging theory from the perspective of Latinx children and youth enables us to understand why translanguaging in education has to be understood as much more than the simple use of an ‘L1’ or fluid language practices.

Latinx children and youth embody translanguaging spaces, a result of their lives ‘entre mundos’ – physical geographical ones, as well as social, political, cultural, linguistic, emotional, cognitive and spiritual. Translanguaging spaces in education take the Latino students’ entire selves into account, rather than only the part that corresponds to a white Euro-centric Anglo ideario encoded in English only, or in Spanish only. Like all educative processes, the transformations may be subtle, but releasing Latinx language, histories, imaginations, may indeed create the actions that are needed to understand the new world order that Latinx bilingual children are constructing every day in classrooms.

The translanguaging spaces in education may still be small, but they are pushing fronteras, expanding the spaces where Latinx children and youth and their teachers are weaving other tejidos. As Rosa (2019) has said, it is important to open up *the present* for Latinx children and youth. By bringing down the fronteras y muros sin miedo in which many Latinx students are kept today, even in programs that are supposed to be ‘for them,’ the teachers and students in this book are producing knowledge

desde adentro. Through their translanguaging-tejiendo acts, teachers and students are poking holes and opening up spaces in the stories of incapacidad held in the solid tela or separate telas of the education to which Latinx students have been subjected. Translanguaging teje otro tejido which shows the holes in the historical constructions of Latinx language and school language. At the same time the holes of the tejido permit us to truly look in, desde adentro, perceiving Latinx students con capacidad e inteligencia as they engage in a just education.

Note

- (1) Our use here of Mexicans and Mexican Americans reflects the historical context. However, we acknowledge that the history of Mexican Americans in the Southwest is highly complex, resulting in different identity labels beyond these two.

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