

How English-Speaking Teachers Can Create a Welcoming Environment that Allows Students to Maintain and Utilize their Language through Translanguaging: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract

This study analyzed how English-speaking teachers created a welcoming environment to allow students to maintain and utilize their first language through translanguaging in a high school class of English-language learners. This case study applied funds of knowledge as a theoretical framework to focus on how a ninth-grade class with two qualified English language arts teachers acquired new knowledge using five types of funds of knowledge: academic and personal background knowledge, accumulated life experiences, world views, and skills in an Urban-Multicultural Classroom. In a year-long effort, the researcher interviewed teachers and students, took field notes, collected instructional planning documents, and photographed students' artifacts. The findings show that students grew in their construction of self-identity, developed their proficiency in two languages, and flourished in their multicultural competency while earning good grades.

Keywords: translanguaging, funds of knowledge, English learners

Introduction

The movement to make English the only official language in the United States emerged around the turn of the twentieth century as a reaction to the massive influx of immigrants from non-English speaking parts of Europe (Darder & Torres, 2014; Nieto, 2009). This development occurred alongside new restrictive immigration policies and the rise of free and compulsory public schooling. A central purpose of the new "common" schools was to "Americanize" students and assimilate new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (Apple, 2019; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). From the 1920–1960s, English immersion "sink or swim" policies were dominant methods of instruction for language-minority children. There were few or no remedial services provided, and students generally remained in the same grade level until enough English was mastered to advance in subject matter understanding (Garcia, 2005).

According to Nieto (2009), in order to ensure linguistic and cultural control of the new territories on the Southwest, the federal government adopted two different strategies. The first one entailed delimiting state borders to favor an English-speaking majority by splitting Spanish-speaking communities. And the second strategy involved no recognition of statehood until English-speaking settlers had become the majority in the new territories. In addition, the Nationality Act of 1906, required all immigrants to speak English in order to be eligible to start their process of naturalization (Buchanan, 2006). This entailed the explicit connection between English language and U.S. national identity.

The hostile climate against languages other than English resulted in the drastic reduction of any type of bilingual instruction in the U.S. According to Lopez and Lopez (2010), the restriction of language use had two intentions. Firstly, to deprive minorities of their individual rights in order to frustrate worker solidarity. And secondly, to institute a perception of the United States as an exclusive Anglo community. Subsequently, there was resistance from non-English speaking immigrants and their struggles against the push to “Americanize” them remained a dominant theme during the first half of the twentieth century (Garcia, 2005). The passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 marked a shift toward bilingual education. The law did not force school districts to offer bilingual programs, but it encouraged them to experiment with new instructional methodologies by funding programs that targeted low-income and non-English speaking populations (Garcia, 2005). Through Title VII, the first bilingual and bicultural education program that was approved at the federal level offered supplemental funding for those districts that developed special programs to meet the needs of students whose English was not proficient (Hakuta, 2011). Since bilingual education involves the use of two languages for the purpose of instruction, in English language schools, instruction was in both English and the student’s home language. The goal was to provide part of the instruction in the student’s L1 in order to ease their transition into the mainstream, thus known as “transitional bilingual education” (García, 2010). This was a big step forward for English language learners. Significant as it was, being the first federal law in the United States that dealt with issues of language, the funding however of that legislation was often premised on a negative view of bilingual students (Blanton, 2005).

In 1974, the Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* brought hope as it required educators to address the special needs of their emerging bilingual populations. Failure to do so would place them in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Gollnick & Chinn, 2020). The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 mandated that each local school agency take action to overcome language barriers that impede students’ equal participation in its instructional programs. The government did not mandate bilingual education for non-English speaking students or those with limited English-speaking ability. However, it stipulated that special programs were necessary if school districts were to provide an equal educational opportunity for such students. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court legitimized bilingual education without spelling out specific remedies including providing an impetus to English as the Second Language (ESL) programs.

In 1975, the Office of Civil Rights released a series of guidelines for school districts to follow in order to comply with the Supreme Court decision known as the ‘Lau Remedies’. These remedies prescribed transitional bilingual education, rejected ESL as the appropriate methodology for elementary students, and acknowledged that multicultural programs may need L1 support (Gollnick & Chinn, 2020). The Lau Remedies had three goals: to improve

students' English proficiency, to safeguard core curriculum in primary languages, and to maintain students' cultural identity. This essentially promoted transitional bilingual education programs because emphasis was placed to making transition from L1 to English as quickly as possible. The primary goal now was to move from a language most commonly used in the home to the mainstream of the U.S language and culture. This assimilationist approach gradually phased out the L1; and all other language programs began to adopt this approach.

As a result of the above changes, educators in the US have encouraged first-language attrition among emerging bilingual populations (subtractive bilingualism), an approach that, according to research, has led to feelings of delusion, negativity, self-hate, and inferiority among students (Darder & Torres, 2014). In brief, subtractive bilingualism is when a student learns a second language at the expense of their first language (L1) (García, 2010). In this case, the child usually loses the ability to speak their L1 over time. Nevertheless, children who develop subtractive bilingualism may not have opportunities to practice their L1 and may even feel like their L1 or culture is unwelcome in class. In contrast, translanguaging is when students' L1 continues to be developed while they are learning their second language (Gollnick & Chinn, 2020). Students often have opportunities to use both languages inside and outside of school and have a desire to maintain both. As pedagogy, translanguaging allows students to use their full linguistic repertoire which values their home language. Garcia, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) contended that translanguaging is a normal practice of helping students draw on all their linguistic resources as they read, write, and discuss academic subjects in a new language. While recent debates have been centered on the relationships between the students' L1 and how the language is treated in the process of learning, translanguaging uses L1 as a scaffold in the process of acquiring additional languages and even for learning academic content in a new language. That implies that teaching and learning are based on the knowledge and expertise that students and their families already have as members of their respective communities and cultures.

The rationale for this study was to explore how two English language teachers, one bilingual and the other monolingual, created a welcoming environment that allowed students to maintain and utilize their language through translanguaging in a high school class of English-language learners. This study employed a funds of knowledge framework and focused on how a ninth-grade class, under two qualified language arts teachers in an Urban-Multicultural Classroom acquired new knowledge using their five funds of knowledge namely, their academic and personal background, accumulated life experiences, world views, and skills. In a year-long effort, the researcher interviewed teachers and students, took field notes, collected instructional planning documents, and photographed students' artifacts. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How did the teachers create a welcoming environment that allowed students to maintain and utilize their language through translanguaging?
2. Do these approaches impact students in their learning process?

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative inquiry is guided by a funds of knowledge theoretical framework. As a theoretical framework, funds of knowledge is a way of looking at the historical accumulation of abilities, bodies of knowledge, assets, and cultural ways of interacting as resources to enhance ELL students' academic progress (Rodríguez, 2013). González, Moll, and Amanti's (2005), funds

of knowledge framework encourages teachers to develop an inventory of knowledge and abilities from students accumulated over time from community/home visits and integrate them in academic settings. Especially in this urban-multicultural context, this approach embraces the urgency and significance of empowering learning contexts for all students because the accumulation of abilities, bodies of knowledge, assets, and cultural ways of interacting humanize learning for all. Thus, integrating students' funds of knowledge into classroom activities create a richer and more relevant learning experience for students. Additionally, a funds of knowledge framework creates a much-needed pedagogical partnership between teachers and students because both learn from one another in the process.

English language learners in this research were not viewed as empty vessels filled with knowledge, concepts, and ideas. They were active participants with much knowledge to contribute. Thus, the theory of constructivism added an additional layer to this work because human learning is constructed, and learners build new knowledge upon their foundation of previous learning (Vygotsky, 1978). During the teaching and learning process, students actively constructed or made their own knowledge, and that reality was determined by their own experiences. On the other hand, the role of the two teachers in a constructivist classroom was to facilitate the learning process grounded on respect, dignity, and inclusivity. Consequently, this aligned well with translanguaging pedagogies because the teachers carefully planned their lessons by drawing on students' linguistic repertoires and found ways to use students' cognitive and linguistic resources to learn academic English while building their bilingual identities (Rodriquez, 2013). Similarly, this approach and attitude allowed ELLs to learn and develop proficiency in the home language and to appreciate their families and their roles in society. In their classroom, teachers were aware of their pedagogical goals of creating a collaborative problem-solving environment where ELLs become active participants in their own learning while scaffolding them to their individual level of performance (Rodriquez, 2013). They encouraged ownership and voice in the learning process and embedded learning in their individual social experience.

Setting

Data for this study was collected at a large urban high school that followed a traditional calendar. The school is located within five miles of a downtown area. The district serves mostly people living in poverty with limited access to affordable housing. However, the southern and northern boundaries of the district articulate with more affluent wealthy suburban districts. At the time of the study, the school served students from grades 7 to 12 with an enrolment of 1,210 students. Of these, 60% identified as Black, 20% identified as Hispanic, 13% identified as White, 4% identified as Multiracial, and 3% identified as Asian. Among this group of students, 13% identified as ELLs, and 71% of the total student population was eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (State Department of Education, 2015).

For many years, this urban school had been trying to cope with typical urban problems such as discipline, high dropout, bullying and very low academic achievement of students especially ELLs. According to the State Department of Education (2015), only 37% of students from the school enrolled in college immediately after high school graduation when compared to the state average of 64%. Additionally, this school had 69% of graduates who needed remediation while the state average was 31%. In order to graduate, every student at this school had to take a state-required test after completing English 10. In the four years before this study,

as few as one in ten students passed this end-of-course test and the pass rate was lower for ELLs. The school administration tried to disrupt this pattern by implementing a pacing guide, prescribed curriculum, and multiple practice tests. These measures had been largely ineffective. At the beginning of the school year of this study, the school administration decided to try something new, translanguaging as a teaching arrangement for English 10.

Data and Method

In order to capture how English language teachers created a welcoming environment that allowed students to maintain and utilize their language through translanguaging, a qualitative case study design was used. This design helped frame a foundation of what it means for teachers to gather funds of knowledge in the form of accumulation of abilities, bodies of knowledge, assets and cultural ways of interactions evident in ELLs, and use them as resources to enhance students' academic purpose (Rodriguez, 2013). Similarly, from a more practical perspective, although the two teachers were not very fluent in some of students' target language (TL), their positive mindset, pedagogical tools, and professional initiatives helped students maintain a positive mindset towards their L1. This mindset continued to develop while they were engaged in TL learning.

By nature, qualitative research operates with the paradigm that "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). I observed the processes of how the ELLs interact and were engaged in a classroom, and asked questions aligned to understanding their lived experiences and how instruction supported learning in this setting. As a qualitative case study, each case drew from experiences of six ELLs and two teachers as participants. Data collection occurred intensively during a full year of classroom observations. As an inquiry, case study makes it easier to have an in-depth exploration of the individual teachers in a classroom observing activities, interviewing them, and at the same time situating myself in the context to get details from the authentic viewpoints of the participants (Merriam, 2009).

Furthermore, there are three characteristics that define case studies that were central and relevant to this inquiry: (1) looking at a particular situation, (2) having a set of detailed description, and (3) thorough explorations of a situation in order to bring about new meaning and new understanding on the part of the readers (Merriam, 2009). In this case, I was thoroughly involved in examining minute events in detail and documenting both the complex interactive teacher-student characteristics and assessment strategies used from the planning stage.

Teacher Participants

Purposive sampling of participants was conducted due to my interest in analyzing how English language teachers can create a welcoming environment that allow students to maintain and utilize their language through translanguaging. First, I wanted participant teachers to have the following qualities: (1) a good grasp of translanguaging pedagogy, (2) an educational background in the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom, (3) knowledge of how to identify ELLs' funds of knowledge and apply them to teaching and learning, and (4) state certification in ESL or Language Arts with experience in culturally, linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse classrooms. Below is a description of the two

teachers who met these criteria and agreed to participate in this study through the process of informed consent. To preserve anonymity, all names used throughout this study are pseudonyms.

Ms. Goodwin

Ms. Goodwin is bilingual/biliterate in English and Spanish. She lived in a suburb about ten miles from the High School. She graduated from the Midwestern urban university in Spanish and earned her Masters' degree with ESL certification. While studying Spanish, she began a full-time internship as a Language and Cultural Orientation Instructor for an immigration support center. There she taught English to recently arrived adults by tending to their unique needs and seeing how their knowledge directly translated to a more successful life for them and their families. She moved to South Korea to teach English in a low-income school. Ms. Goodwin is a language teacher who spoke and learned other languages. She was in her third year of teaching at Jerome High School as an ELL teacher for grades 7 to 12. When I asked her what strategy made her a successful teacher, she said:

When students enter my room at the beginning of the year, they see a room of firm expectations, deep commitment to their success, and overwhelming enthusiasm. What I give my students is more than a lesson. I show them I care. I reach out to each and every one of their families. I call to celebrate their successes. When I am feeling particularly proud of them or having a ponderous moment about how happy I am to see them, I tell them they are why I get out of bed. I give teaching everything I have but have learned to take care of myself in the process as well. I am sweet as pie to all and known as being firm in my expectations and not budging with things like inappropriate language and cell phone use. (Interview Transcript, November, 2015)

Additionally, Ms. Goodwin expressed that her proudest moments and contributions to education are steeped in student work and are a reflection of her students' success. She was very proud of having a highly functioning classroom, including a behavioral management plan, and a clear, organized, transparent way of grading, providing her students with make-up work, and communicating with feedback when there were errors.

Mr. Woods

Mr. Woods was raised in a rural community in the Midwest. He was also a graduate of an urban Midwest university with a bachelor's degree in Language Arts. During his training, he worked as the poetry editor at the same urban university literary magazine for a year. After that, he found a job as a supplementary instructor at the community college in the same urban city for two years. Mr. Woods taught reading, writing, and English 111 at the college. After his successful certification process with the state, Mr. Woods started working with an urban school district, teaching English Language Arts (ELA) at Jerome High School, grades 7 to 12. During our first interview, Mr. Woods expressed how thrilled he was to come back to this school where he was now in his third year working in a linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse classroom. When I asked him what strategy made him a successful teacher, he said:

Apart from genuine interaction with students, I like to assign homework on weekly basis. I give my students a packet which includes a writing prompt, grammar review, and vocabulary each Monday that is due the following Friday. At the beginning of the year, I do have high expectations for students. I tell them to attend class on time and be

prepared to learn. Students who practice good work habits, do their personal best, and fully participate in class are rewarded. If a student is absent or tardy, I encourage them to make-up missed work. I encourage them to take responsibility for their learning and know what work has been assigned. (Interview Transcript, November, 2015)

Participating Students

Similarly, purposive sampling was conducted to sample student participants. I wanted to select student participants who were ELLs and who were new to the school district because per district policy, all new ELLs had to undergo English language proficiency ACCESS test called WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment-WIDA Scale) to determine their language proficiency for proper placement. According to WIDA Scale, there are six performance definitions for the K-12 English language proficiency standards: (1) entering phase, (2) beginning-proficiency, (3) developing, (4) expanding-proficiency, (5) bridging, and (6) reaching phase (WIDA, 2013). All students sampled in this project had scores ranging from 1 to 4, thus entering to expanding stage in order to fit in the state-mandated 9th grade placement. Secondly, students needed to meet the enrollment and availability criteria (attendance). Thirdly, students should be from a variety of home languages, cultures, educational backgrounds, and educational needs in order to cover wider complexities of translanguaging. Once individuals met all study inclusion criteria, they and their parents or guardians were given informed consent forms and agreed to participate in the study by signing and dating the consent form. Additionally, students were also aware that they can withdraw from this research anytime. Below is a description of the student participants in this study.

Carlos

Carlos came to the United States from Mexico four years before the study. His L1 was Spanish, and he was 17. He qualified for free lunches. In appearance, Carlos was a clean-cut young man, short and thin, with stylish hair. During the first focus interview, Carlos explained that he wanted to work as a cashier or anything to get by. He was not sure about going to college. According to the WIDA access test, his ELL proficiency level was 1.8 (between entering and beginning proficiency). Carlos seemed resistant to learning English. The teachers shared that he had never spoken a word of English to them even though they expected this during many graded activities in class. He copied notes in class and interacted with teachers and his classmates if he could do so in Spanish directly or through others. Carlos lived with his mother, his cousin, and his aunt.

Julissa

Julissa was born in Honduras. She moved to this Midwestern city almost two years before the study. Aged sixteen, she was fluent in Honduran Spanish and Garifuna (a L1). She resided in public housing and qualified for free lunches. In appearance, Julissa was thin with long brown hair and dark eyes. During the first focus group interview, Julissa expressed that she wanted to work at the amusement park as the attendant and she was not very sure of going to college. At the beginning of the semester, Julissa had been skipping her English class a lot but after the teachers' consultation with her parents, her attendance improved. According to the WIDA access test, her ELL proficiency level was 1.9 (entering phase and nearly to beginning proficiency). Her teachers and friends described her as quiet, slow paced and very shy. During

her spare time, she liked to listen to Reggae music. Julissa had a job as a cashier which kept her out until midnight three days per week.

Arturo

Arturo was born in the United States, but his parents were from Mexico. At a young age Arturo went back to Mexico with his father and mother and came back about eleven years ago. When he came back, Arturo was held back in first grade because he was diagnosed with a cognitive disability and put in special education. At 19, Arturo is tall with facial hair. His L1 is Spanish. During our interview sessions, Arturo shared that he was the only child who lived with his father who spoke only Spanish. His mother died two years earlier from cancer and Arturo admitted that things had been different since then.

Arturo had trouble reading and writing and worked very hard to improve his skills. Like the others, he qualified for free and/or reduced priced lunch and his ELL-WIDA proficiency was leveled at 2.4 (beginning-proficiency). After high school, Arturo expressed that he wanted to do anything to support his family even as a farm worker and laborer.

Sabeen

Sabeen came from Iraq and had been at the school about two years ago. Aged eighteen, her L1 was Arabic. She and her family were staunch Muslims who practiced their faith meticulously. Sabeen qualified for free and reduced lunch. In appearance, she was short, thin, and wore a scarf most of the times. During the first focus interview, Sabeen expressed that she was not sure what she would do after high school, although she was interested to work as a home health aide or even a nurse assistant. Regarding attending college, Sabeen expressed that possibility. For example, this was her reply during our focus group interview: "Going to college is a great idea and lucrative possibility. I am always thinking about that although in my culture women are not encouraged to go further than high school." According to the WIDA access test, her ELL proficiency level was 2.1 (beginning-proficiency).

Sabeen loved sharing Arabic words with teachers and others. She and her siblings missed school occasionally for Muslim celebrations. She often talked about her culture, her learning experiences, and what school meant to her.

Quang

Quang lived in Vietnam prior to moving to the Midwest three years ago. He relocated with his mom. His mother was a single mom with two jobs and also enrolled at a local community college for English classes while taking some accounting courses. According to our last focus interview, Quang spoke Vietnamese with a thick dialect of Hue since he hailed from the central part of his native country. He also qualified for free/reduced lunch. In appearance, he was short with moderately dark hair, callous hands, with dark eyes. At eighteen, his English access level was 2.1 (beginning-proficiency). Quang often talked about his faith, Catholicism and how Catholics were prosecuted in the 1798's in Vietnam. In his free time, he spent time with his mother, as her was very close with her.

Liz

Liz was from Mexico. According to school records, she made her first entry into United States schools about two years before the study. Aged fifteen, she was fluent in Spanish (L2)

and Nahuatl (L1). She qualified for free or reduced lunch. In appearance, Liz was short and heavier with shoulder-length hair. During the first interview, Liz expressed that she was not sure what she would do after high school rather she was considering either carpentry or home health aide. About going to college, she expressed that possibility with less patience in this way:

Going to college is a possibility, you know what, but let us wait and see. It is important to cross one river then rest and look forward to what is next. At the same time, parents, and siblings need help to pay rent and live life. That's why I have two jobs currently.

According to the WIDA access test, her ELL proficiency level was 4.2 (expanding-proficiency).

Data Collection

I included many data sources to ensure I had different forms of evidence and multiple data sets for triangulation (Mertens, 2012). My data collection included 15 class observations in ELA classrooms, three focus group interviews with students, collection of instructional documents from teachers, three semi-structured interviews with teachers, six informal interviews with teachers and classroom audio-recordings. I triangulated this data across and within cases in order to establish the reliability of the study.

Observations

I observed 15 hour-long English class periods in order to understand the nature of targeted students and their learning experiences, teacher and student interactions and assessments. For each observation, I collected field notes, made an audio recording, and completed an observation rubric which focused on translanguaging practices and their impact. These different data sources enabled me to reconstruct any rich dialogue or meaningful interactions that could shed light on my research questions.

Interviews

Soon after observing and audio recording, I held an informal fifteen-minute interview with the teachers. In this interview, we discussed the observations and field notes in order to conceptualize the experiences of students in the classroom, clarify any unanticipated events, and double-check assessment methods and students' reactions. I also held individual, semi-structured interviews with teachers that lasted approximately 90 minutes. These interview questions focused on classroom instruction, interactive patterns, and students' responses as related to the research questions. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed within 24 hours. Then, I sent transcripts to each participant via email to verify the accuracy of the transcripts.

Focus Group Interviews

I held three focus-group interviews with students on three separate dates. These interviews lasted 60 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed within 24 hours. I used pre-set questions about the impact of translanguaging in their learning process in order to guide conversations and clarify themes that emerged. The nature of the questions focused on how they felt about both the classroom and school climate in line with the research questions. These transcripts were then made available to the students in order to verify the conversations.

Documents, Curriculum Resources, and Physical Artifacts

The final set of data comprised documents and physical artifacts that were given to me by the two participating teachers. These documents included lesson plans, curricular resources, emails responses from classes, “aha” moments,” progress grades, and their own reflections. Both teachers confirmed the accuracy of these documents prior to their inclusion in this study.

Data Analysis

Each data set was analyzed separately and, in keeping with the nature of the data collected, analyzed in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework. Then, I coded them and labeled a description on them and developed categories direct from raw data using an inductive coding approach (Mertens, 2012). Afterwards, I assigned codes to those pieces of data (open codes). From there, I continued to revise the categories on continual basis and gave them codes. For example, from the interviews from the teacher and students, I read the transcripts several times side by side and identified similarities and differences (Merriam, 2009). In this phase, significant patterns were noted. Then, each sentence or group of sentences was examined and given a label with a descriptive name. Data was simplified further in the second phase. In this level, the first-level descriptive codes were merged into similar coded units to form categories which were then given a pertinent label (Merriam, 2009). I further simplified the data in the third phase in which similar conceptual themes were further merged and given a more abstract conceptual label. Then, I identified key themes from each interview, developed patterns, and merged them. In the final phase of coding, I drew merged concluding themes from interviews, compared them across, and offered propositions from the themes that emerged. I used NVivo9 to organize and synthesize emerging themes.

Positionality

My positionality toward translanguaging is rooted in my belief that exclusion and non-accommodation of languages in education denies equality of opportunity to learn. Through my Ph.D. studies in teacher education and urban education studies, I have learned that the U.S. population has more than 400 different language background with 70 to 80% Spanish speakers, 12 % from Asia and Pacific Island background and the rest elsewhere (Gollnick & Chinn, 2020). One-fourth of students national-wide fail to make progress toward English language proficiency and subsequently have lower graduation rates. As the result, ELLs are often at a socioeconomic disadvantage compared to their non-ELL counterparts (Gollnick & Chinn, 2020).

Additionally, I identify myself as a bilingual individual, first generation college graduate and a faculty of color who did not lose L1. As a faculty teaching preservice teachers and at the same time want to improve my multicultural competence in applied settings, I revitalized this research as I continue to reexamine my teaching practices and share with both preservice and practicing teachers on how to create a welcoming environment that is effective through translanguaging. Although I had these shared experiences with participants, I worked to separate my assumptions and biases of translanguaging identity from data by de-identifying the data three months before reading and analyzing it. Thus, I can assure scholars that the presented data and findings are as close to their own words.

Results

The researcher found that teachers enacted a variety of translanguaging practices that allowed students to maintain and utilize their language. This was manifested in several ways throughout their instructional practices. For example, they began the school year by identifying ELL's funds of knowledge by asking students to write essays about their background, bringing pictures about their family in the classroom and share with others their heritage. They also did presentations about their interests. These types of assignments were very meaningful and helped teachers learn more about their students and their families.

Additionally, the teachers tried throughout the year to engage their families through home and community visits. In that way, they were able to connect their student's funds of knowledge to classroom content with specific experiences the students have had or currently involved. For example, during their home visits, teachers found Liz's mother cooking. She was in the process of making *platanos con frijoles y cremo* which was their favorite recipes. In the classroom, teachers worked on procedural vocabulary by having students work with their parents to write their favorite recipes. Then, they asked students to present in class. Furthermore, when they visited Julissa's home teachers found out that Spanish was the dominant language. Her mother spoke a bit of English while her brothers spoke English fluently. In one of the photos of her mother it had a heading which says "Mi Familia". Most of the posters in the home were in Spanish. Her mother explained to the teachers that the accent or dialect in Honduran was different from the usual Mexican accent. In the classroom, teachers prepared a project of comparing different dialects of Spanish and asked students to read texts from their different regions of Latin America to see how those dialects were represented to facilitate plurilingual competence. Julissa's mom was invited and came to talk about Honduras and her experience with Spanish in the U.S.

The Nature of Teachers' Instruction

Teachers included culturally relevant learning resources and experiences in class by contextualizing lessons to reflect culture. They incorporated students' language into the learning environment and voiced cultural affirmation and relevant cultural artifacts. In fact, teachers emphasized literacy autobiography to inspire students to explore the linguistic and cultural repertoire that embodies their identities. During the second interview, Ms. Goodwin explained why using cultural references both in verbal and non-verbal forms to communicate instructional demands was motivating to students and boosts their self-esteem. She explained the reasoning as follows:

I like the group aspect of class discussion. In groups, students learn to cooperate and not act as competitors, and when I go around listening to them, I feel humbled to hear many stories they discuss and share with one another. I think they learn better among themselves than me acting like pouring knowledge in their heads. I encourage them not to feel ashamed to draw inferences from their native languages (e.g. Spanish, Arabic, Dinka) so that they feel welcome and accepted. I also ask them personally to tell me statements or words of cultural affirmation in their native language and use them in encouraging them to contribute to classroom discussion. (Focus group transcript, March, 2016).

Obviously, cultural references, group work, and the use of L1 played a supportive and facilitative role in the classroom. Additionally, teachers were welcoming, empathetic, and

established rapport with students. They designed lessons for diverse students to work together and shared their personal experiences. Ms. Goodwin expressed the rationale as follows:

Building a welcoming class community is an excellent litmus test for successful teaching. I like doing this with a firm belief that human connections are great for growth. We all need each other, and learning can't take place in a vacuum of human connections. Thus, why we try in this class to foster a reassuring sense of belongingness to all students, encourage them to work collaboratively and even resolve conflicts with fairness and peace (Focus group transcript, March, 2016).

Teachers scaffolded the development of self-efficacy, personal identity, and agency in their instructions and interactions. Julissa's comment illustrates this notion: "I have learned to respect others and have courage to say yes to my identity". Furthermore, teachers scaffolded students in developing a repertoire list which they practiced and gained a better understanding of grammar. Furthering on this, Carlos illustrated "teachers in this classroom are my mentors, and I feel like I identify myself with them so much. They help me become assertive and speak up for myself and improve in my grammar and above all opening up to career goals" (Focus group transcript, March, 2016).

Students' Learning Growth

Analysis revealed that translanguaging teaching approaches enacted growth in students as learners and in their construction of self and identity. They developed a set of beliefs and values and saw their environment in a new way with new prospects (sociocultural understanding). In fact, ELLs grew in their self-esteem and came to believe more in themselves and became determined visionaries (self-efficacy). During the third focus group interview, Arturo expressed the following sentiment, which echoed the general impression:

I feel like that I have grown and I am different this time. I am a dynamic individual. I have changed in my thinking about life, I have grown in knowledge and I now know that I have power to contribute something in this class, this school, the community around and even beyond. I think I now know myself better than before. My classmate, my teachers, and the school community have made me grow and believe more in myself. I was shy at the beginning of this year and had very few friends but now I have many friends and I feel happy. (Focus group transcript, January, 2016)

As individuals, the students made progress toward being fully effective students and future community members. They became more confident, and felt more capable of being successful and self-reliant. Julissa echoed this sentiment as follows:

I learned more about what I can do as a human being, my dignity, my human rights, my civil rights, and how I can step up for myself and for others. I gotten a new perspective on how to get what I want which I felt was not possible before. I have learned more from my teachers who are calm, compassionate, and confident in their abilities in dealing with me, sharing these values through personal reflections and assignment. I have learned more about American politics, values, and even world politics which have opened my eyes. (Transcript, March 2016) The statements above demonstrated growth not only in students' communicative competence but also in students' perception of self.

Increase in Students' Proficiency in Both Languages

The teachers prioritized proficiency in both English and the student's first language. This practice helped students translanguaging and develop their L1 while learning their TL. Teachers bought books and created a classroom library with books in their L1s. Students also had access to playing music, watching TV and movies, and reading books in their L1. For example, Sabeen's family had Direct TV so they got to watch news right from Iraq in Arabic. They even recorded the news so they would not miss it. The teachers used this opportunity to create an assignment to find a news story and share with the class. Sabeen's family visited the class to explain their home language and how to maintain it. During their last interview, this is what Sabeen said: "I am so thankful for this instructional methods. My oral proficiency in Arabic and English have improved and I can confidently say that I have attained strong communication skills in English and in my first language" (Interview transcript, March, 2016). Sabeen's views explicate how translanguaging maximizes learning from existing language skills.

Development in Multicultural Competency

English 10 class became a community of learners because everyone participated actively. During our last focus group interview, Liz said:

"This class has been precious to me and I am very thankful. I have developed awareness of my own cultural values and biases. I have learned to value others' worldviews and at the same time developed a set of culturally appropriate interpersonal skills. (Focus group transcript, March, 2016).

And also, during the same interview, Julissa also expressed the following sentiments about the climate: "I like the classroom climate. Teachers are very friendly and helpful to me. I have grown not to fear diversity but approach it with pride and I will advocate for others". It is amazing to see how the classroom was transformed in such a way that students became cooperative learners and not competitors.

Growth in Students' Academic Competency

Translanguaging approaches bore fruits since students' academic growth became evident virtually across the spectrum through improvement in grades. For example, Arturo acknowledged that despite his struggles and disability status, he was progressing well. He worked hard and wanted to do well. With his job and ambition to go for heating, ventilation, and air cooling (HVAC) training, he knew that he needed to work hard and obtain a high school diploma. From mid semester, he began attending tutoring twice a week in order to improve his grades. His progress report showed improvement. He had an F in September, C- in October, C+ in November, and B in December. His overall grade including all submitted assignments was B. Similarly, Quang who started with B average and ended up with A, voiced a similar sentiment during our third focus group interview:

I want to improve my English. We have no ends meet and no relatives here and school is what can make me share the American dream. Thus why I am working hard and improving my English. I like math, science, and social studies and I want to go to college and become a pharmacist. (Interview transcript, March, 2016)

This was a good sign of progress in academic competency which was the fruit of hard work and resilience.

Discussion

To adopt a more responsive approach to facilitate translanguaging among ELLs, teachers should highlight students' linguistic and cultural resources in the classroom to inspire them to explore the linguistic and cultural repertoire that embodies their identities. In fact, where teachers express care, rapport, positive mindset and use inclusive strategies to create fair and equal opportunities to learn, ELLs experience rapid transformational growth that model their teachers' feelings and aspirations. Historical research tells us that ELLs have scored lower in achievement tests, been overrepresented in special education programs, had lower academic tracts and dropped out of school at a higher rate than their peers (Banks, 2019; Lambert & Tucker, 1972). In addition to translanguaging practices, ELLs in this study reported that their teachers treated them with dignity and respect, facilitated the classroom as a community of learners. Additionally, the teachers' use of a funds of knowledge approach, such as the vocabulary assignments, inventory matrix, immigration project, and Sabeen's tv project, provided evidence of growth in their academic achievement, self-esteem, sociocultural aspects and their continual development of L1 while they're learning TL.

Another noteworthy concept was the engagement of their families to support L1 and also sharing their home culture. This proved effective because it provided systemic support and acceptance of their L1 and overall learning experiences. By empowering students, they embraced diversity with dignity and pride. Students became aware that there were active agents in their learning process and shared this aspiration through community advocacy.

Recommendations and Limitations

The findings of this study indicate that translanguaging approaches capitalize on students' funds of knowledge and maximize the potential for teachers, students, and families to meaningfully engage in learning experiences. Based on the findings, one recommendation would be to inform the Education Department Officials and policymakers that translanguaging is a beneficial practice worthy of funding for further research. We therefore need comprehensive input from scholars, educators, parents, and community members to convince decision makers, especially legislators and school administrators that translanguaging is not a luxury. This approach can help educators, students, and families recognize their socio-linguistic and economic funds of knowledge, and how to help educators teach in a more equitable way. Certainly, the economic benefits of producing authentic biliteracy citizens out way any costs incurred. As Gollnick & Chinn (2020) expressed, with a global economy of more than 1.5 billion Chinese speakers and more than 400 million Spanish speakers, the United States certainly stands to benefit from other languages other than English.

On the other hand, although the results from this study are encouraging, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, despite of using multiple methods of data collection to increase the reliability of my study, I would be cautious about the transferability of the outcomes that emerged. Future research should be undertaken with a larger sample size and in a different geographical location other than the Midwest. And lastly, while the present study was specific to selected ELLs who were mostly immigrants, I did not specify their immigration statuses such as "refugee" or "HB-1 visa" as I was warned by the school district administration not to disclose or explore their status. Consequently, there is no analysis of the possible impact of students' immigration status which would be worthy exploring in future.

Conclusion

This research on how an English-speaking teacher can create a welcoming environment that allows students to maintain and utilize their language through translanguaging in an urban and multicultural and multilingual classroom is promising. Many teachers in urban and even suburban schools still struggle to address the unique needs of ELLs (Hakuta, 2011). As Darder & Torres (2014) contended, the rapid increase of ELLs has not been matched by sufficient growth of instructors' understanding and preparedness in how best to plan and carry out good instruction like this. Teacher educators, practicing teachers, and even policy makers would benefit from the successful teaching of the two teachers in this study. Even more important to fellow teacher educators, it is essential that learning to teach today embodies teaching values that support and strengthen individual uniqueness, cultural pluralism, language differences, and accepting ELLs and funds of knowledge as asserts to participate fully in the socioeconomic life of this nation.

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