

## Translanguaging and teacher authority

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Résumé de l'article

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## *Translanguaging and teacher authority*

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### *Abstract*

The purpose of the paper is to understand the connection between teacher authority and children's language use. The data presented here was pulled from two large data sources: a set of case-studies in Grades 4 to 6 classrooms with multilingual children who were new to Canada and learning to read and write for the first time and qualitative research in a teacher education program preparing teacher candidates to educate multilingual students. Findings suggest that children translanguage in liminal spaces outside of the teachers' authority and that multilingual students that were asked to translanguage in English authority classrooms had negative experiences.

*Keywords:* translanguaging, dialogue, Freire, peer support, liminal spaces

### *Introduction*

Central to a teacher's authority in the classroom is how language is used, taught, engaged with, and corrected. Formal schooling has a long history of managing language and pushing towards standardization and monolingualism (Bourdieu, 2001; Dicker, 2003). The idea of separate bounded languages is wrapped up in a colonial purpose for schooling. Translanguaging, on the other hand, is a theoretical approach to understanding language that "disrupts the naturalized stable boundaries of what are traditionally understood as languages, bilingualism, language education, and language learners" (García & Kleifgen, 2020, p. 556). Translanguaging asks us to decolonize our understanding of multilingual and especially racialized speakers by moving away from a carefully defined boundary between languages. The purpose of this paper is to explore the connection between teacher authority and translanguaging in classroom settings with multilingual students where the teacher may not have knowledge of all of the named languages influencing the students' linguistic repertoire.

Formal schooling, as we understand and use it today, has had a powerful impact on education throughout the world. Formally learning to read and write in a language that is controlled by the teacher is a deeply understood norm of schooling. Farrell (2008) finds that there is a standard set of practices for formal schooling that were created in the West and have spread throughout the world in the forms of colonization and modernization. He lists a number of criteria for formal schooling which he calls the *forms of schooling*, which include a standard curriculum, set by an authority level much beyond the individual school, and a student being expected to repeat back to teachers what they have been taught. In these ways, government and teacher authority are very ingrained in our collective understanding over how curriculum gets enacted, which includes how language is understood and taught.

Often teacher authority relates to student behaviour. The giving up of teacher authority can

be equated with dangerous, unruly classrooms or poor peer interaction. This same fear can manifest in how language can be assessed and corrected when structures and words unknown to the teacher creep into children's literacy practices in the classroom (Khote, 2023; Pontier & Tian, 2023). However, Tai (2023) writes about how translanguaging can work towards encouraging student engagement and "manage unexpected student misbehaviours that transgress the classroom order and disrupt the flow of classroom tasks" (p. 2). Translanguaging can also be a useful tool for students to use when solving each other's problems (Bozbıyık & Balaman, 2023). In these ways, translanguaging supports the teacher in creating a classroom with strong peer interactions, not poor behaviour. As the teacher gives up authority over language, they are given a new tool towards encouraging student engagement and peer support (Khote, 2023).

Translanguaging and teacher authority also connect with assessment. Plata and Macawile (2022) found that teachers are willing to incorporate translanguaging into their formative (initial, explorative) but not summative (final, mark-based) assessments. Jaspers (2018) tells us that regardless of how much we embrace translanguaging, students continue to be formally assessed based on monolingualism and academic language. However, García and Kleifgen (2020) find that researchers are beginning to examine how translanguaging can be utilized in all forms of assessment including both formative and summative. Regardless, how translanguaging is employed in instruction and assessment reflects the authority teachers have given over to their students' linguistic repertoires in their classrooms (Khote, 2023).

When a translanguaging stance and pedagogy (García et al., 2017) are taken up by teachers, multilingual students tend to do better in skills such as making new friends on the playground, becoming a confident contributor to a classroom learning community, or, of course, gaining escalating mastery of the dominant language in the area (Liu & Fang, 2022). A key component of this is students' full linguistic repertoire being employed to navigate and shape the learning environment (Donely, 2023; Flynn et al, 2021; Wei & García, 2022). Theoretical discussions around translanguaging emerge from explorations of how schools can facilitate or impede bilingual language development (Wei & Garcia, 2022, p. 319), sociolinguistics (Martin-Rojo & Molina, 2017), sociocultural learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978), and, more recently, the roles of texts, signs, and non-verbal language in building the linguistic repertoire (Adami & Pinto, 2019).

Translanguaging is not without its critics. Jaspers (2018) warns that at times "translanguaging may cause a decrease in well-being, and that pupils may not find it liberating at all" (p. 7). He provides an example of where the students' language is associated with an identity that is discriminated against. The child then refuses to speak the language that is associated with that identity in class. He suggests that translanguaging is not a panacea for well-being. Likewise, Cummins (2020) has questioned the idea that separate named languages do not exist and the notion of language as a social practice, as it is "impossible to engage in any discussion of language education without making reference to the realities of English-only programs" (p. 207). He furthers this point by stating that it is not useful for instructors to think of languages as not existing. Despite this, with multilingual students who are learning to read and write, translanguaging leads to more collaboration and playfulness with writing (Brubacher, 2022). Likewise, Van Viegen (2020) has found that translanguaging can be an excellent resource for learning with youth with refugee backgrounds. Literacy that honours a multiplicity of language backgrounds has the power to elevate a variety of languages, cultures, and world views, complimenting anti-discriminatory work (i.e., Friere & Macedo, 1987). Although we may agree with Jaspers that there are times when asking students to use a non-dominant, named language in the classroom cannot be liberating, we would instead suggest that the class take time to engage students in anti-racism/discriminatory

work in the classroom instead of accepting racist, problematic structures and forgoing a translanguaging approach.

### *Theories*

Two theoretical concepts inform this research: the *translanguaging corriente* (García et al., 2017) and *dialogue* (Freire, 2011). First, translanguaging disrupts the notion that languages have clear boundaries and acknowledges that categories like race influence how listeners perceive, understand and label multilingual speakers (García & Kleifgen, 2020). Moreover, language is not an objective set of rules and discourses of appropriateness “conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 150). A person’s language usage is a complex interconnected system that pulls from a linguistic repertoire. What and who are accepted as normal “tend, often uncritically, to be those that reflect the dominant ‘Western’ concepts of language, culture, and knowledge” (De Souza, 2017, p. 266). Translanguaging, on the other hand, holds the potential to transform how teachers and students relate and interact with each other (Anwaruddin, 2018).

The translanguaging *corriente*, more specifically, asks: are students’ languages hidden? How can language be heard and felt in the classroom? (García et al., 2017). The *corriente* is a metaphor “to refer to the current or flow students’” (p. 21) linguistic repertoires in classrooms. Classrooms with a strong *corriente* can build subject knowledge while creating empowering moments for multilingual identity development (Maldonado Rodríguez & Krause, 2020). They are also places full of laughter and word play (Ingram, 2023; Khote, 2023). García et al. (2017) write that the *translanguaging corriente* is fluid language practices in the classroom. It is not still water, but is constantly changing through different landscapes and spaces. Like river banks, named languages may appear to be separate, but at the river bottom, they come together as one. This is where the flow of language in the classroom sits, moves, plays, and exists.

As soon as we start thinking about teacher authority, our minds wander to Paulo Freire’s (2011) work in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Here, Freire tells us that “Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content” (p. 72). Connecting this to language, the teacher then fills the students with the correct way to use a language under their authority. The teacher deposits knowledge about how to use alphabetic writing into the empty repository that is the student’s linguistic repertoire. De Souza (2017) critiques this authoritative and linear idea of language, reflecting that through colonization people’s Indigenous languages became associated with ignorance. Indigenous peoples then had a colonial alphabetic literacy imposed upon them to the detriment of preexisting oral, syllabic, local alphabetic and pictographic literacies and further separating— rather than clarifying the parallels with— local cultural knowledges (De Souza, 2017; Khote, 2023). When working with oppressed students, the goal becomes to transform these oppressive structures, in this case, language and the teacher’s authority in that language.

Instead, Freire asks that teachers engage in *dialogue* and *co-construction* rather than the mere transmissions of knowledge. Through *dialogue*: “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but the one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (Freire, 2011, p. 80). When engaged in dialogue together, the teacher and students are involved in problem solving where together they create. Freire asserts that such dialogue promotes critical thinking, places participants in discussions on equal footing with one another, and encourages thinking through new or challenging ideas without fear of risk. In connection with language, instead of dictating how the student uses language, the teacher dialogues

with the students back and forth across and through language structures releasing authority over language in the classroom.

### *Methods*

The data from which this paper is drawn from two qualitative research projects including a set of case studies with children in Grades 4 to 6 in three different schools and a large-scale Ontario-based study in teacher education about preparing teacher candidates to work with multilingual classrooms. The Grades 4 to 6 research was with children who were new to Canada and learning to read and write for the first time in any language (Brubacher, 2022). We describe this group of children as having emerging print literacy with many of them coming from a refugee background.

The elementary classroom-based data is from my dissertation, which is a set of three case studies in classrooms with children in Grades 4 to 6 who were new to Canada and learning to read and write in any language for the first time. Each of the three case studies took place at a different school site. The case study that we include here today was in a Grade 5 classroom designed specifically for newcomers with emerging print literacy. The student participants had arrived from Syria and Afghanistan. Sixteen percent of the students in the school are designated as English Language Learners (ELLs) with 91% of the students speaking a language other than English at home (Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO, 2019). The school has many students, which means that it can offer a Grade 5 specialized half-day program for newcomer children with emerging print literacy. The students are with a mainstream class for the other half of the day. The specialized half-day program is for students who are in the English Literacy Development (ELD) program in Ontario, which is designed specifically for newcomer students who they consider as having limited or interrupted prior schooling (OME, 2008).

Data included transcriptions of the students' multimodal literacy profiles, fieldnotes, photos of students' work, focus-group interviews, and teacher interviews. As the data presented here is all connected to the multimodal literacy profiles, I will describe that data collection tool in detail. Lucas et al. (2008) suggest that linguistic profiles are tools that can be used to familiarize oneself with the backgrounds of the students. However, my profiles build on Lucas et al.'s idea to present a profile of the students' literacy backgrounds as well as language.

The Flipgrid (<https://info.flip.com/en-us.html>) application that I used in this research allowed the students to have choice and incorporate their oral literacies in their responses. Students were required to complete the grids having to do with background information on topics like *What's Important to You*, *Places You Have Lived*; and *Linguistic Portraits*. However, throughout the research process students chose to respond to prompts from other areas including *Learning Outside of School*, *My Teachers*, *My Schools*, *Reading*, *Writing*, *Media*, *Internet*, *Stories*, and *Poems*. These prompts are somewhat open-ended in nature, allowing students to talk about what they want and allowing students to guide the research in directions that are important to them. The students were also given the option to watch each other's videos and comment on them in writing or through video responses. Throughout the activities, I encouraged the students to speak using any part of their linguistic repertoire.

The second source of data, teacher education research, was from in the Masters of Teaching program at OISE/University of Toronto focusing specifically on a new required course that prepared all mainstream classroom teachers to teach the multilingual children in their classrooms was a larger five year SSHRC-funded study (Bale et al., 2023). Data collection tools with the

teacher education research on preparing mainstream classroom teachers to work with multilingual students in their classrooms included observations, interviews, and the collection of course work. Although there were nine cohorts of teacher education students that became part of the overall study led by Drs. Jeff Bale, Antoinette Gagné, and Julie Kerkes. Two cohorts where I worked as a graduate research assistant are presented in this article. The first cohort was with a group of teacher candidates preparing to teach in Grades 4 to 10 classrooms. The second cohort was with an elementary (Grades K to 6) group of teacher candidates. As a graduate research assistant, I spent approximately 12 hours in each cohort observing the teacher candidates and building relationships. I then collected their coursework including unit plans, reflections, posts, profiles of multilingual students, and their own linguistic portraits. The data I present here predominantly comes from a conversation that took place in the Grade 4 to 10 cohort classroom where I was observing, but also includes a post from the K to 6 cohort.

We brought these two research projects together, as they were spaces where Katie was researching and beginning to grow her understanding of translanguaging at the same time. What became interesting was how teacher authority was intersecting with language. Both data sources were analyzed thematically and deductively (Creswell, 2012). Using our theoretical framework, we used concepts to understand the data including translanguaging and teacher authority. This rearranging of both data sources into categories allowed for the facilitation of “comparison between things in the same category [aiding] in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 107). For the teacher education research, the data was organized and analyzed in the following categories: course content, linguistic profile, course connections, and future goals. For this research, we pulled data from the categories of linguistic profile and course connections. Emergent themes within these categories included teacher authority, practicum, and translanguaging. For the classroom-based research with the children, the two categories relevant to this paper were social positions and literacy practices. The specific emerging codes about translanguaging and liminal spaces were brought together for this analysis.

### *Findings*

#### *Teacher candidates discussing institutional and teacher authority*

According to García and Wei (2014), there is a process of giving up authority when using translanguaging in the classroom. The teacher’s identity changes to become that of a facilitator who uses collaborative groups or project-based learning.

Students engaged with group learning activities take up shared authority during collaborative work, furthering the shift in teacher authority from classroom management towards shared responsibilities in building a supportive learning environment. Even seemingly off-task behaviours such as off-topic discussions and squabbling can serve important functions, including bringing in participants and defending intellectual positions during problem solving (Langer-Osuna et al, 2020). Moreover, teacher candidates may find their positions and thinking further shift when exposed to insider perspectives from students’ cultures through families, communities, and media (Puzio et al., 2017); thereby, participating in true dialogue by incorporating their students’ perspectives.

In the following example we see Alexander, an English only teacher candidate from the K to 6 cohort, discussing teacher authority. Note: EQAO is provincial testing on literacy and numeracy:

Both of my former associate teachers found it difficult to ensure that all the important content like EQAO got covered while also helping the ELL students keep pace with the rest of the

class. In fact, during my second practicum, my associate teacher asked me to work exclusively with the two ELL students in her class because she did not have the time or resources to interact with them. I think this inability to help ELL students creates an environment where the students do not feel comfortable to ask for clarification or ask for additional help limits their zone of proximal development which, as stated in the readings, will ultimately limit their ability to acquire a new language. (Alexander, *Reflection*)

In Alexander's written reflection, the teacher's knowledge is seen as the authority in the classroom, and the multilingual students are seen as a burden on valuable resources. We wonder how not 'the teacher's inability to help the student' but the incorporation of the *translanguaging corriente* where all students feel comfortable overtly using all parts of their linguistic repertoire in the classroom would create an environment where the students self-advocated and worked on material that recognized their previous experiences. Considering a student's use of their home languages and English together may also influence teachers to view the student's overall language skills more favorably (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). The teacher gives up some authority, as the students' multilingualism becomes the expert in the classroom. Giving up some authority in the classroom results in gaining discursive and linguistic inroads with students as they feel welcomed to engage with ideas, interests, and new connections they form between home knowledges and English curriculum (Khote, 2023).

However, authority in the classroom is something that is constantly in negotiation and when not given over with care and thought can add extra burdens to students. During an observation of a classroom discussion with the Grades 4 to 10 cohort, teacher candidates began to problematize the notion of multilingual peer support, finding that it often puts an extra burden on students. Jennifer, a Mandarin speaking candidate who grew up within the Ontario education system, recalls how she was the perpetual buddy for all the Chinese kids in her middle school. She tells the other teacher candidates to not always have the same person being the buddy. In these ways, Jennifer felt forced to translate for her teachers and use Mandarin with new immigrants. Jennifer's words suggest that the classrooms she attended as a child in Ontario were not ones where translanguaging was the norm but instead used as a crutch to support beginner English students. The teacher had not given up authority over language, but instead used Jennifer as an extension of that authority. Instead, a classroom where Mandarin held authority and was incorporated in meaningful ways into pedagogical learning experiences may have empowered Jennifer to feel pride in bringing her language repertoire into the classroom. One could presume as well that there was not a dialogue between Jennifer and the teacher where she felt comfortable expressing her own wishes to no longer be the translator buddy for newcomers.

As the whole class continues to talk during my observation, Luciana, another candidate who speaks a range of Spanishes and is a new immigrant herself, returns to Jennifer's point later in the discussion stating that both of her children are currently being used as translator buddies in the school system. Furthermore, she wonders why parents are not contacted, questioning the consent process for this extra work that is being placed on her child. Neither of her children were asked, but just assigned this translator buddy role even though they did not necessarily get along with the two new Spanish speaking immigrants that they were translating for. Again, we can see how the teacher is not giving authority over to the multilingual students or their parents' linguistic repertoires but instead using them as a crutch for her English-only programming. Dialogue between the parents and teacher is thwarted as well with the teacher using the children as unpaid translators without the parents' permission.

Another candidate, Prisha, who grew up speaking English in the Ontario English system

with some Hindi through her Trinidadian family, recalls how on her practicum Arabic speaking students from different grade levels, Grade 1 and 8, are paired up as buddies on the playground so that they have someone to reach out to for help. In this case, the older children become the authority on the playground translanguaging and supporting the younger children through their problems and concerns. Prisha frames this as a positive experience at her school. The students seemed to like translanguaging and the responsibility that came with it. However, this was a playground space and not a classroom space where the children inherently have more authority and there is less teacher presence. All of the candidates present us with varying ways authority can be given over or forced upon students. The teacher candidates through their written reflections and in class discussions demonstrate how their thinking about translanguaging and teacher authority are evolving. When translanguaging is taken up as a set of strategies and not as an overall stance, multilingual students can become further stigmatized. Like Jaspers (2017) who finds that translanguaging can decrease student well-being, I found that the teacher candidates provided examples of where translanguaging that did not incorporate dialogue but instead held onto teacher authority only led to student and parent frustration. Instead, one would wonder what true dialogue and the resurgence of the *translanguaging corriente* could add to the classroom.

#### *Newcomers with Emerging Print Literacy Translanguaging on Flipgrid*

Turning now to the Grade 4 to 6 classroom-based research, when I asked the students at one of my school sites to use their entire linguistic repertoires when responding to the multimodal literacy profiles on *Flipgrid* at the beginning there was much hesitation. The teacher, Alexandra, reinforced an English-only policy and students were not permitted to use Arabic and Pashto during class. Alexandra used her teacher authority to silence the *translanguaging corriente*. For the first response for the multimodal literacy profile prompts, *What's Important to You*, the other educators in the room actually took the students aside, wrote out their responses in English, had them practice, and corrected their English. It's of no surprise then that the students did not want to incorporate the Arabic and Pashto components of their linguistic repertoire into their videos at first. My experience of students wanting to only use English for the multimodal literacy profile responses changed throughout my time in the classroom. As the children became more accustomed to me and my request for multilingual videos, Arabic and Pashto began to appear more and more at specific times. Interestingly, later in the research process, Fatima tells us a different story of her feelings towards authority and schools when she decides to speak in Arabic when she responds to the *My Schools* prompt:

واحد، اتنين، ثلاثة، انطلق! و فجرو 'لايكات' عندي. و حطولي 'كومنتز'. طيب، ايه ، امم...طيب ايه... المدارس كلها بايخة بايخة بايخة. ما بتلاقي اي مدرسة حلوة. حتى الأنسات بايخات. شو... قال بس شاطرينلي بشو ، قال شو شاطرينلي بس يقولو للطلاب درسو و درسو، و شو هم؟ شغلتن شو يعني؟ هم ما بدرسو بس نحنا شاطرين ندرس؟ و قال شو بس تسألها سؤال بتزعل، قال وشو 'ما تسألني حدا!' اكل المدارس مثل بعضها بايخة. و حتى هي المدرسة الي فيها نحنا، بايخة. حتى هي المدرسة، ليكوها [تلف الكاميرا لنرى المدرسة] ليكو ليكو المدرسة، هي كلها المدرسة. هاد حمام الولاد و هاد حمام البنات. بتعرفو بايخة بايخة كله بايخ. في شغلة حلوة بس، فلكم شو هي؟ البيت. الشغلة الوحيدة الحلوة هي البيت، بس. طيب هلا فجرولي الكومنتزو يالله لنروح عرفكم على طلاب الصفوف [الأول و الثاني]. هاي... [تدير الكاميرا] و هلا باي (Arabic)

(Arabic transliteration) Wahed, tnen, tlate, go! O fajro likat andi! O hetoli comment. Tayeb, eh, umm... tayeb, eh.. Elmadares kela baykha, baykha, baykha, Ma betla'i aya madrase helwe. Hata el ansat baykhat. Sho... Al bas shatrenli be sho, al sho shatreenli



bas yo'olo lal telab dreso o dreso, o sho homme? Shaghleton sho ya'ni? Homme ma bederso bas ehna shatreen nedros? O al sho...bas tesa'ala elso'al bteza'al; al sho 'ma tesa'ali hada'! Kel el madares metel ba'ada baykha. O hata hay el madrase eli feha nehna, baykha. Hata el madrase, lekoha [turning the camera to show the school] leko leko el madrase; hay kela el madrase. Had hammam el wlad, o had hammam el banat. Bta'erfo, baykha, baykha. Kelo bayekh. Fe shghle helwe bas, elkon sho heye? El bet. El shaghle el wahde el 7elwe heye el bet, bas. Tayeb hal'a fajro el comments o y'allah la nrooh ala arefkom ala tolab grade [two and one??] Hii! [turning the camera] o hal'a Byeeee

(English translation) One, two, three, go! Lots of 'likes' for me, and put comments! OK, eh, ummm... Ok, eh... Schools are all boring, boring, boring. You can't find any 'beautiful' school. Even teachers are boring. They are just good at telling students to study and study, but what about them? I mean, what do they do? They don't study themselves; we are the only ones who should study? And guess what... when you ask her a question, she gets upset. Guess what she says 'don't ask anyone!' All schools are the same, boring. Even this schools in which we are, boring. Even this school, look at it [turning the camera] look look at this school, this all of it. This is the boys' washroom and this is the girls' washroom. You know, boring boring. Everything is boring. There is only one beautiful thing; shall I tell you what it is? Home! The only lovely thing is home, that's it. Now, lots of comments, and let's go to introduce you to students in grades [two and one?]. Hiiii! [turning the camera]. And now, bye! (Fatima, *My Schools*)

Here we see that Fatima is beginning to break away from the English-only authority of her classroom and feeling freer to critique her schooling experiences and teachers. This movement back towards her literacy practices seems to be embedded in a challenge to authority in Canadian schools. This is not to say that many of the children did not feel happy in their classrooms and love living in Canada, but instead highlights how immigrant children can feel forced to use English in classroom spaces and perform as the grateful and ideal immigrant. However, interestingly, Fatima recorded this video in the hallway away from the confines of an English-only authority and not in her classroom. She was still in a liminal space. As our teacher candidate, Prisha, had noted on her practicum, these spaces such as playgrounds and hallways were places where the translinguaging *corriente* was more likely to emerge.

A stronger and louder translinguaging *corriente* also appeared a lot in the comments feature of *Flipgrid* where students can leave video feedback for each other's multimodal literacy profiles. This feature served as a place where much Arabic was used by the students of Syrian background. In one example, when responding to Yara's, a Syrian student's videos, Amira and Fatima use Arabic:

**Fatima and Amara:** (English) Hi Yara.

**Fatima:** (Arabic) **و كثير حل! Like it up! الفيديو تبعك بجنن القلب! انشاء الله يفجرولك الايكات**

(Arabic transliteration) El video taba'ek bejanen el'aleb! Enshallah yfajrolek 'likat'! Like it up! **O helo kteer**

(English translation) You video is amazing! By God's will, you'll get lots of 'Likes'. Like it up! And very beautiful!

**Amira:** (Arabic) !نحننا لاج نحللك كليل 'لايك' و لاج نساويلك 'شير' بليجن

(Arabic transliteration) Nehna lah nhetelek ktreer 'likes' o lah nsawelek 'shares' betjanen

(English translation) We will put lots of 'Likes' for you, and amazing 'Shares'

**Fatima:** (Arabic) ايه بس ما لرقصي !

(Arabic transliteration) Eeh bas ma tere'esi!

(English translation) Yah, but don't dance! (Fatima and Amira, *Places I Have Lived Comment*)

Here, the digital environment provides opportunities for students to build relationships with peers and learn with humor and affect (Tragant et al, 2021). Not surprisingly the students desire to have approval from their classmates and feel like they belong. They do so with a strong translanguaging *corriente* occurring in the liminal space of the comments feature. The comments feature then becomes a space where the students feel free to use their literacy practices and not perform English usage for the teachers' authority to scrutinize and critique. Most of the comments left by students in the *Flipgrid* application at this school were done so in Arabic. This was particularly true of Karam, another student from Syria, when he provides feedback to Amira's *My Languages* response to one of the literacy profile questions:

**Karam:**

(Arabic) !بالله بالله بالله Your name is Amira?

(Arabic transliteration) B'allah, b'allah, b'allah! Your name is Amira?

(English translation) Really, really, really! Your name is Amira?

Then again, when Karam uses Arabic when responding to Yara's *Language* response as part of her literacy profile:

**Karam:**

(Arabic) ما شاء الله عليك

(Arabic transliteration) Masha'allah aleki!

(English translation) 'God bless you' = Wow!

Karam even responds to his own English-only Flipgrid video on *My Languages* asking for approval from his peers in Arabic:

**Karam:**

(Arabic) !الفديو تبلي بجنن، مو

(Arabic transliteration) El video taba'i bejanen, mo?

(English translation) *My video is amazing, right?*

In these comments sections of the *Flipgrid* application, the students felt free to bring forward their Arabic as well as use humor, discuss religion and express a need to belong. This was done so away from the English-only authority of the teacher that they perceived to be present in their main *Flipgrid* responses where they generally spoke in English-only. In these collaborative moments, building friendship and being liked by peers are combined with humor and religion reflecting the students' desires.

Another reason that educators give for not taking up translanguaging in their classroom is that they do not know the children's languages. However, with another teacher participant, Gina, that was not true. Gina shows us how we can at least begin to bring together the two riverbanks of the translanguaging *corriente* in the classroom. She freely translanguaged, overtly going back and forth between Greek and English with other colleagues and students of Greek background. Gina both explicitly and implicitly modelled translanguaging and encouraged students to translanguage themselves. The students sat in same-language groups so that they could translanguage with each other to complete their classwork. The translanguaging *corriente* was strong in Gina's classroom. The teacher gave up some authority as the students learned to collaborate with each other in resolving conflict, building friendship, and supporting each other academically. In Gina's classroom, the students relied on each other asking questions and motivating each other to complete their work. Through English only policies, schools continue to communicate to students that it is the teacher's authority over language that is important and that true dialogue between teacher and student is not.

Not surprisingly when Katie asked the students in Gina's classroom to use their entire linguistic repertoires when responding to the multimodal Flipgrid responses, some of the students readily jumped into using one or two named languages in their responses.

(Hungarian) *Az en tanarom egy kedves volt. Ugy hivtak hogy Katika neni, ha meg emlekszem ra. Es meg egy uj tanar ment oda, csak meg nem emlekszem ara meg. Es utana be mentem a class-ba, utana mindig, mikor volt party, hozni kellett, uneploket, olyan chips eket hoztam, kolat, be raktunk zenet.*

(English translation) *My teacher was nice. Her name was Mrs. Kelso, if I remember her. And a new teacher went there, but I don't remember that still. And afterwards I went into the class, afterwards always, when there was a party, had to bring party-things, like chips I brought, colas, and we played music.*

(Hunor, *My Teachers*)

Hunor uses Hungarian with confidence in his videos inserting English words, bringing the roaring river bottom of the translanguaging *corriente* where the two named languages converge to the surface. His classroom is one where students and the teacher dialogue with each other, sharing power both in how language is used, but also over conflict, peer interactions, and learning. Likewise, Luis, a student from the same class combines the named languages of Spanish and English together in his response to a prompt asking him about reading:

(Translanguaging Response) A mí me gusta ver el libro de Sonic, porque es bonito y a mí me gusta leer el libro de Sonic porque trae muchas cosas, trae dibujos y ahí lees y le aparece

me like sonic is good

(English Translation of Luis' Spanish) I like to see the Sonic book because is pretty and I like to read the Sonic book because it has many things, like pictures and you read and it shows.

This is different from the previous classroom with Alexandra where the students predominantly used English or would translanguage only in the comments features or in the hallway. In these two examples, the students' linguistic repertoire does not emerge in liminal spaces but is central to their learning and work.

### *Implications*

According to García and Kleifgen (2020) “language is used by people to interact, as an extension of their own humanity, not always according to the rules and definitions of language by political and social institutions” (p. 557). The *translanguaging corriente* places the shared humanity of students, teachers, and cultures above institutional authority and colonial hierarchy, facilitating the flow of concepts, ideas, and interests that connect students to their new communities and new language (Friere, 2011; Khote, 2023). Translanguaging was a key component of the classroom where dialogue and the facilitating of learning was incorporated. Letting go of teacher authority involved the authority over how language was used and operationalized in the classrooms.

With our teacher candidates we saw a mother and former student critiquing how multilingual students can be used as translators too often and without parental permission. In these teacher candidates' classrooms, the students' languages were not a central component of learning but used as a crutch to get to English. The authority that the teacher held over language continued without true dialogue. Their comments also draw attention to ethical concerns about employing children as free labour for translation. However, another teacher candidate found that having students take on leadership roles and hold authority on the playground led to positive results where the students' dialogue and the *translanguaging corriente* was strong. When multilingualism is centred for the work in the classroom, the students become facilitators of learning instead of buddies or crutches for English. Both the Grades 4 to 6 case studies and the work with the teacher candidates demonstrate the importance of translanguaging in teachers, giving up some authority over language and embracing students as leaders and facilitators within schools.

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**Sarah Harper** is an artist, museum educator, and researcher focused on heritage museums and community arts institutions. She is a scholar from Arkansas. She attended the University of North Texas to study art and museum education and is currently pursuing a PhD with the University of Alberta. Her work has explored topics including how teaching challenging arts skills benefits low-income students and how the unique strengths-based hiring practices of smaller heritage museums can benefit larger arts institutions. Her current research examines how community arts programming that highlights language, communication and cultures can benefit newcomers to Canada.