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Transformative pedagogy for inclusion and social justice through translanguaging, co-learning, and transpositioning

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Abstract

The idea of translanguaging has disrupted much of the thinking in bilingual education. A common misunderstanding, however, is that translanguaging was intended to be a language teaching strategy. This article seeks to explore what a translanguaging approach to language teaching entails, with specific reference to the education of minoritized and racialized bilingual and multilingual learners in the school systems in English-dominant countries such as the UK. In particular, I highlight the connections with and contributions to the inclusion and social justice agenda that the translanguaging project aims to make. Translanguaging takes one step further from multilingualism in challenging the raciolinguistic ideologies that view bilingual learners as having separate languages and languaging lives. It instead views their racial/ethnic identities and linguistic practices together, that is, their translanguaging being. My main argument here is that to use translanguaging as a pedagogy for inclusion and social justice requires a change of mindset, not just practice – that is, translanguaging pedagogy rather than pedagogical translanguaging – which can be achieved through processes of 'co-learning' and 'transpositioning'.

1. Introduction

The coinage of the term and the introduction of the idea of 'translanguaging' by Colin Baker (2001), based on Cen Williams' (1994) observations in Welsh revitalization classrooms, has disrupted much of the thinking in bilingual education. The publication of our book *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education* (García & Li, 2014) has led to an explosion of studies of translanguaging practices in various educational contexts and beyond. With the amount of work that now exists in the public domain, confusions and misunderstandings are inevitable. One common misassumption is that translanguaging was intended to be a LANGUAGE teaching strategy. This has been compounded by an elevated interest in various plurilingual approaches to language pedagogy. In this article, I explore what a translanguaging approach to language teaching entails, with specific reference to the education of minoritized and racialized bilingual and multilingual learners in the school systems in English-dominant countries such as the UK. In particular, I highlight the connections with and contributions to the inclusion and social justice agenda that the translanguaging project aims to make. Translanguaging takes one step further from multilingualism in challenging the raciolinguistic ideologies that view bilingual learners as having separate languages and languaging lives. It instead views their racial/ethnic identities and linguistic practices together, that is, their translanguaging being.

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My main argument here is that to use translanguaging as a pedagogy for inclusion and social justice requires a change of mindset, not just practice – that is, translanguaging pedagogy rather than pedagogical translanguaging – which can be achieved through processes of 'co-learning' and 'transpositioning': two concepts that I will discuss and develop further in this article.

Let me start by framing my perspective within two common concerns shared by teachers in the talks, seminars, workshops, and public engagement events that I have done in different parts of the world. The first concern regards the use of multilingualism as a resource in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, and how school policies might not support these practices. As such, I often get asked by language professionals questions such as:

> I teach a linguistically and socially very diverse group of students. I want to encourage them to use their first language or first languages in the classroom, as the principles of translanguaging seem to be suggesting. But the other pupils in the same class, and myself as the teacher, don't know these languages and it doesn't appear to be a particularly efficient and effective way of teaching, with all the time and resource constraints, and of course school language of instruction policies don't always encourage the use of multiple languages.

The second concern often comes from modern foreign language teachers who are also keen to use translanguaging as a pedagogical practice. In these contexts, teachers know that the role of first language (L1) in second language (L2) learning has been debated for decades and they accept the principle that L2 learning can be more effective if the learners' L1s are used more optimally. However, a very practical issue is:

> As a teacher, I have only 40–50 minutes a session in a secondary school. I need to get through the syllabus, have a lot to cover and a target to achieve. I can't possibly allow all the students to exercise their L1s in class and compare the intricate details between their L1s and the target language. Crucially, I need to get them over a specific threshold in the target language, so that they can pass their exams and get the grades they need; just like in the teaching of EAL (English as an additional language) students who need to be over a particular threshold in English in order to learn and communicate in class.

These genuine questions reveal real concerns by our professional colleagues in the field. The straightforward answer, that translanguaging is not simply allowing the learners to use their L1s in the classroom, does not seem to have convinced many people or to help them understand what translanguaging (as a) pedagogy really entails. This article seeks to address these concerns. To that end, I begin by briefly revisiting the origins of the concept of translanguaging and the theoretical assumptions that underpin the practices. I will then focus on translanguaging pedagogy, with an emphasis on its applications for inclusion and social justice and explore its foundational requirements. I will, then, return to the concerns outlined above with an alternative framing of key issues that require our attention as language teachers and researchers. I conclude by introducing the notion of transpositioning, and presenting two examples of how translanguaging pedagogy through co-learning leads to transpositioning, a fundamental shift in the teacher's, and the learner's, subjectivity.

2. The idea of translanguaging

The idea of translanguaging originated in the Welsh revitalization programmes, where the medium of instruction was supposedly Welsh and the content of the teaching was not language *per se* but other subject matters – that is, Welsh medium schools and classes. It is important to remind ourselves that Welsh monolingualism does not exist in the community. The pupils and the teachers in the Welsh medium schools and classes are bilingual in Welsh and English and many, especially the pupils, feel more proficient and comfortable in English. Cen Williams, an experienced teacher and teacher

trainer, who was doing a doctorate at the University of Bangor, observed a commonly occurring class-room situation where the teacher would give instructions and ask questions in Welsh, as the school policy expected, but the bilingual pupils would respond in English, naturally. Occasionally they would read something in English, and discuss it in Welsh. So listening, speaking, reading, and writing were done alternatively in either Welsh or English and sometimes a mixture of the two. To the eyes of school administrators these practices were not desirable, as to revitalize a minoritized language through schooling, the assumption often was (and continues to be) to insist on using the target lan-guage monolingually to maximize both input and output in the target language.

Cen Williams, however, had a different view and made a different argument. Rather than seeing this alternating between the two languages as a problem or barrier to learning, he viewed it as a way of maximizing the bilingual potential in learning. Thus, as an AGENTIVE LEARNER STRATEGY to start with, translanguaging was initiated by the learners, rather than the teachers. Cen Williams was suggesting to respect the fact that the pupils were bilingual, not monolingual, and they lived in a bilin-gual environment. The idea of translanguaging was, therefore, developed out of considering the stu-dents' bilingualism as integral to the students' lives. And in this respect, weaving these lives into classroom practice became the bedrock of translanguaging pedagogy.

As translanguaging scholars, we build on Cen Williams' (1994) early ideas of *trawsieithu* (as he originally coined it in Welsh), and Colin Baker's (2001) TRANSLANGUAGING, which invoked the extensive scholarship on LANGUAGING. Critically, the most important point is that it was a learner initiative that emerged out of their natural instinct as bilinguals to resist the imposition of monolingual instructional policies. The question then is, and that was precisely the question Cen Williams wanted to address: should teaching be aimed at encouraging and facilitating positive (in the sense of 'productive' and 'beneficial') use of what comes naturally to the learner, or imposing some other behavioural norms on them? This is a genuine question because the classroom, whether it is a language or a content class-room, is a specific, socially constructed space, often divorced from the everyday social realities of the students'– and indeed the teachers' too. Home schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic reminded us of that very vividly. And we must not forget that not all learners in the world have the privilege of having access to what we in the Global North understand as 'the classroom'. To what extent should we try to bring a bit of the social and sociolinguistic reality of the community in which our learners live into the classroom is a question about inclusion and social justice to me.

For an exploration of the development of the concept of translanguaging, see Lewis et al. (2012a, 2012b). Cenoz and Gorter (2021) present an up-to-date account of the work that follows the original conceptualization of pedagogical translanguaging. Key landmark works that expand the concept of translanguaging beyond pedagogical practices include García and her colleagues' work (2009) in the US on the education of minoritized and racialized bilingual learners in a decolonizing education through an equity and social justice agenda (García, 2009; CUNY-NYSIEB project: https://www.cuny-nysieb.org). In the UK, Angela Creese, Adrian Blackledge, and others have led major research projects on translanguaging, not only in various educational contexts including complementary schools for ethnic minority pupils, but also in the community and everyday social contexts (e.g. 2015; see also: https://tlang.org.uk/). There are many other applications of the concept in a variety of fields such as: visual arts, music, gender studies, and so forth. A very important contribution of such studies to the translanguaging scholarship is taking the concept beyond language to embrace a wide variety of semiotics and modalities for meaning-making. Language, as in the conventional sense of speech and writing, is but one of many meaning-making resources human beings can deploy. There is now a great deal of discussion of translanguaging creativity and the linguistic and semiotic innovations multilinguals produce through translanguaging (Baynham & Lee, 2019; Bradley et al., 2018; Zhu & Li, 2022; Li, 2020). What seems to be clear is that the very term, translanguaging, has caught the imagination of people from very different disciplinary backgrounds with diverse research and professional interests.

At the same time, the concept of translanguaging has raised some very important, indeed funda-mental questions about language, bilingualism, and education (Li, 2018). I want to comment on two of

them briefly before I move onto pedagogy. The first comment concerns the nature of language. Building on the extensive and well-established research on the notion of languaging (Becker, 1988, 1991; Thibault, 2020a, 2020b), a key argument in translanguaging scholarship regards language as a meaning-potential. What people do when they make sense and meaning should, therefore, be the main focus of linguistic research. Michael Halliday made that very point in the 1980s in his work on language as social semiotic when he said, 'Language is a "meaning potential", and linguistics is the study of how people exchange meanings by *languaging*' (Halliday, 1985, p. 193).

Named languages and language labels are socio-politically constructed. Linguists today have inherited named languages from the colonial projects that politically and ideologically constructed languages and gave them names and labels to manipulate them, including categorizing some as dialects and others as languages, and indeed some as standard and others as vernacular, with serious social consequences. These names and labels are being used as tools to categorize individuals, communities, and nations, way beyond describing sounds, words, and sentences.

To illustrate what I mean by named languages are socially constructed, let me retell a story that I was told by a field linguist in China in the 1980s. He and a team of language documentation researchers were tasked to help non-Han minority ethnic groups in remote mountain villages in Yunnan province in the southwest of China to (re)construct their languages by designing writing systems, compiling dictionaries, and writing grammar books. They recorded some chants from the elders of one of the ethnic minority communities and tried to construct a lexicon and the grammatical rules for that language. In analysing the data, this field linguist noticed words and phrases that did not seem to belong to the language that he was studying – some had known origins in other named languages, so they were classified as 'borrowings', but others had no known origin, not to this linguist at least. So he asked the community elders, 'What language is that?', referring to transcribed words and phrases. The people just looked at him, and said, 'You tell us; we thought you were the linguist.' So, the linguist asked, 'What does it mean?' 'Ah, that's a different question,' the people said. 'We know exactly what they mean.' But it was clearly not their job to know and even to care about which language the words and phrases belonged to and what name the language should have. To repeat: named languages are socio-politico-ideological constructs.

That brings me to the second point: bilinguals and multilinguals do not think in a named language, one at a time. They think beyond named languages, and that is one of the very important senses of the notion of TRANS in translanguaging: transcending the artificial boundaries of named languages. To me, it is inconceivable that when a multilingual person is engaged in producing utterances, like the following, that they are switching between different frames of mind or ways of thinking, that are determined by the named languages:

> **ああそうそうそうそう** (*ah so so so so* 'Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah), sorry, <u>我给</u> (*wo g*ei 'I get') confused/<u>的了</u> (*de la* – aspect marker. 'I got them confused/mixed up.'). **あの** (*ano* – discourse marker), <u>我明天</u>(*wo mingtian* 'I tomorrow) bring you <u>啦</u> (*la* - utterance particle. 'I will bring it to you tomorrow.'), okay <u>好吗</u> (*hao ma* 'okay')？
> (**bold:** Japanese; <u>underlined</u>: Chinese)

If we were to follow the 'we think in the language we speak' logic, then we think in an individual's idiolect, not a named language as Otheguy et al. (2015) pointed out. Indeed, distributed and embodied cognition scholars have argued that thinking does not need (named) language at all. This is, of course, still a controversial point and some of the colleagues working on bilingual cognition and intercultural communication would disagree. But lots of the so-called cognitive advantages of bilingualism are owing to the fact that bilinguals are capable of distancing objects and concepts from the linguistic labels in phonological forms that may be given in different communities to describe the objects or concepts. It seems to me that a potentially very useful benefit of a translanguaging pedagogy is to enhance bilingual learners' distancing and dissociation capabilities by encouraging them to think beyond named languages. Much of the traditional literature on intercultural communication assumes

that speakers of different languages from different cultures have naturally different patterns of thought, causing communication barriers between languages and cultures. The apparent different ways of articulating thought are just that: different ways of articulating thought, from the 'thinking for speaking' (Slobin, 1996) theoretical standpoint, and they are an outcome of socialization within specific communities. Human beings are very capable of adapting themselves to different ways of expressing their thought in different languages so long as the social conditions allow. But that assumes a universal base for human thought; otherwise, people will never be able to learn to understand each other. I am making these points because they are directly relevant to the idea of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice, which to me must go beyond named language and the use of multiple named languages.

Linking named languages and thinking together is always a tricky business. The strong form of the linguistic relativity hypothesis, otherwise known as linguistic determinism, that suggests that linguistic categories and structures limit and determine cognitive categories and processes, can also lead to erroneous and dangerous assumptions that speakers of some languages are cognitively superior than others. Considering the above, it is crucial to repeat that when I say that named languages are a by-product of ongoing languaging activities, and that bilinguals do not think unilingually or indeed only linguistically, we do not say or mean that named languages do not exist; nor that bilinguals and multilinguals are not aware of the differences between named languages. The strawman argument that translanguaging scholars uphold that named languages do not exist is very problematic, and it appears to me that we have had enough opportunities to educate ourselves on this key issue. That named languages exist is a truism. Our emphasis, though, is on named languages as political constructs, and the naming of sets of linguistic features as language, or dialect, or something else has serious social, political, and of course, educational consequences – wars have been fought and blood has been shed over the naming and categorization of languages. Bilinguals and multilinguals are absolutely aware of the socially constructed differences between named languages because the development of language awareness is an integral part of one's socialization experience. It is a crucial part of bilinguals' sociolinguistic sensitivities. Translanguaging is about transcending and breaking such boundaries and differences.

Drawing upon the above argument, I now move onto translanguaging as a pedagogy. Translanguaging pedagogy can help to maximize the bilingual learner's learning potential by making good use of their awareness and knowledge of different named languages, and their sociolinguistic and socio-political sensitivities, or Critical Language Awareness as elaborated by some (Clark et al., 1990). To advance the idea of translanguaging pedagogy, in the remainder of this article, I focus on two aspects: co-learning and transpositioning.

3. Co-learning

As said earlier, to use translanguaging as pedagogy for inclusion and social justice requires a different mindset on behalf of the teachers, and a different discourse from researchers and practitioners alike. For me, that different mindset is best captured through the notion of CO-LEARNING.

I first wrote about co-learning in 2014 in the context of heritage language education in complementary schools in the UK, which has been my main research base in bilingual education (Li, 2014a). It was inspired by Edward Brantmeier's work. The concept of co-learning came not from education but from other disciplines ranging from artificial intelligence and computer simulation to global security systems and business information management. In essence, co-learning is a process in which several agents simultaneously try to adapt to one another's behaviour so as to produce desirable global outcomes that would be shared by the contributing agents. In the classroom context, co-learning changes the role sets of teachers and learners from what Brantmeier calls (2013, p. 97) 'dispensers and receptacles of knowledge' to 'joint sojourners' on the quest for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. In particular, the teacher would become 'a learning facilitator', 'a scaffolder', and 'a critical reflection enhancer', while the learner becomes 'an empowered explorer', 'a meaning maker', and 'a responsible knowledge constructor'.

In Brantmeier's words, a FACILITATOR 'guides the process of student learning' and 'does not get in the way of learning by imposing information'. A SCAFFOLDER 'assesses the learner's knowledge and builds scaffolding to extend that knowledge to a broader and deeper understanding'. And a CRITICAL REFLECTION ENHANCER asks the learner to 'reflect on what is being learned and the process of learning (meta-reflection about process)'. At the same time, an EMPOWERED EXPLORER is 'an independent or collective explorer of knowledge through disciplined means'. And a MEANING MAKER and RESPONSIBLE KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTOR is 'one who engages in meaningful knowledge construction that promotes relevancy to their own life'. In co-learning, MUTUAL ADAPTATION OF BEHAVIOUR is the key. In order to achieve desirable learning outcomes, all co-participants need to constantly monitor and adapt their actions and learn from each other. Brantmeier was writing about and to those of us in the teaching profession.

It is very important to emphasize that co-learning in the classroom does not simply involve the teacher's developing strategies to allow equitable participation for all; co-learning requires much UNLEARNING of cultural conditioning because, as Brantmeier points out, 'it challenges the traditional authoritative, dominant and subordinate role sets in schooling environments and the unequal power relationships in wider spheres of our world' (Brantmeier, n.d., n.p.). It aims to build a genuine community of practice, by overcoming the teacher and the learner dichotomy or divide, moving towards a more 'dynamic and participatory engagement' in knowledge construction. According to Brantmeier (2013), the characteristics of a co-learning relationship include: (i) all knowledge is valued; (ii) reciprocal value of knowledge sharers; (iii) care for each other as people and co-learners; (iv) trust; and (v) learning from one another. Additionally, the characteristics of a co-learning classroom environment include: (i) shared power among co-learners; (ii) social and individualized learning; (iii) collective and individual meaning making and identity exploration; (iv) community of practice with situated learning; and (v) real-world engagement and action.

Translanguaging and co-learning share a great deal of common values. In particular, both translanguaging and co-learning emphasize that all knowledge, acquired through all languages and in all cultural contexts, should be valued. For instance, refugee children have acquired knowledge through languages other than English before they ended up in the UK and entered schools and classrooms in the country, just like some children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds will have acquired knowledge in their own communities through what are classified as non-standard English. In an inclusive classroom, co-learning is to show reciprocal value of knowledge sharers, and care for each other as people and as co-learners. Their mutual trust is essential in order to learn from one another. In what he describes as 'Pedagogy of Vulnerability', Brantmeier (2013) urges the instructors to open themselves up and contextualize that self or selves in societal constructs and systems. For him, co-learning entails admitting one does not know everything and be human. It also entails taking risks: risks of self-disclosure, of change, of not knowing, of failing. Whilst translanguaging focuses on respecting all languages and promotes the learning of each other's languages and perspectives on the world, co-learning advocates respecting the knowledge, values, and insights of all involved. Both advocate creating opportunities of different ways of learning and different ways of talking about learning, and both point to the need to unlearn cultural conditioning and to dismantle asymmetrical power relationships.

In Britain, it is commonplace for language classes, and indeed all classes, to have learners with very different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, some having very complex migration and language-learning experiences. They bring with them 'funds of knowledge' – 'the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households and individual functioning and well-being' (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133; see also Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). Such funds of knowledge contain rich cultural and cognitive resources that can be used in the classroom in order to provide culturally responsive, meaningful, and effective teaching. Teachers, as well as the learners, have much to gain from using these funds of knowledge in the classroom as co-learners, not only to make the classrooms more inclusive, but also to engage in real-world meaning making and identity exploration, which are crucial yet often neglected aspects of learning.

Let us look at an example (from Li, 2014b, p. 167):

- T: 曲奇(quqi). 一种饼干，知道吗？
- *Quqi. A kind of cookie, you know*?
- G1: What?
- T: 曲奇 (quqi).
- G2: *kuk-kei. kuk-kei.*
- T: Yes.
- G1: So why did you say *qiu*…something *qiu*…
- T: 曲奇(quqi).
- G2: No. *kuk-kei.*
- G1: 广东话是 *kuk-kei*。
-   *In Cantonese it is kuk-kei.*
- G2: It's Cantonese. *kuk-kei* is Cantonese.
- T: 是吗？
-   *Is it?*
- G2: 係啦！
-   *Yes.*

As discussed in Li (2014b, pp. 167–8), this was recorded in a Mandarin class in a Chinese complementary school in Manchester, UK. The children are mainly British-born Chinese of Cantonese-speaking parents. The Mandarin teacher is from mainland China and does not speak Cantonese. She mentions a term for *biscuits* or *cookie*s in Mandarin, 曲奇 (quqi). It is, in fact, a Cantonese transliteration of the English word *cookie*, but the teacher does not seem to know this historical sociolinguistic fact. In Cantonese it is pronounced as *kuk-kei*, which sounds similar to the English word *cookie*. But in Mandarin, it is pronounced as *quqi*, which has nothing to do with the English pronunciation, but it is written with the same two Chinese characters. This is where the fun starts. The pupils from Cantonese-speaking families know what it means and where the term came from, but the teacher actually does not – she knows the meaning, as the textbook tells her, but she does not know the origin because she does not know Cantonese. And the whole social, colonial history behind this simple term is absolutely fascinating, except that the teacher does not know it. If the pupils did not query it and if they did not collectively contribute to the discussion – the sharing of knowledge that is clearly gained outside the classroom, then a great deal of knowledge and understanding will have got lost, a real missed opportunity.

Of course, the transcript of this short episode of classroom interaction merely points to the need for co-learning and how co-learning could take place in class. The teacher did tell us in our post-observation conversations with her that she found the exchange extremely interesting and checked out the history of the term and how it got transliterated herself. More importantly, she learned that she needed to give the pupils more opportunities to teach her what they know of the Chinese language from their point of view and she ended up actively pursuing a comparison between Mandarin and Cantonese in her own postgraduate studies.

4. Transformative translanguaging pedagogy for inclusion and social justice: Two examples

So, what does a translanguaging pedagogy entail in practice? I explore this question by recounting the experiences of two teachers with whom I have worked in the last couple of years to show how they transformed their pedagogical practices as well as their subjectivities and positioning through co-learning. Both teachers are based in state secondary schools in London. One is an EAL teacher (teacher of pupils with English as an additional language) and the other is a MFL (Modern Foreign Language) teacher teaching Mandarin and German.

4.1 The EAL teacher

The EAL teacher has a great deal of experience teaching refugees and immigrants, both children and adults. Her initial position was that EAL pupils needed help with their English language; their English needed to

be over a particular threshold, or they would fail in the school systems. In fact, she believed that equality and social justice could not be achieved without 'good proficiency' in the English language. To help these emergent bilingual pupils, she believed that using some words and phrases in their L1s would be beneficial. So she always tried to speak some other languages to her students and used digital dictionaries and Google translate in teaching. She herself is a polyglot and a very keen learner of languages. For example, she decided to learn Albanian because the school she teaches in has a large number of Kosovo Albanians. Unlike many other EAL teachers, this EAL teacher did not blame the errors her students made in English on negative transfer from their L1s and described these errors as 'cute'. For example, she told us that her students said 'put up hat and put down shoes' (both meaning 'put on') and she thought it actually 'made sense'; and 'open the electric bulb' (meaning, 'switch on the light') was rather 'poetic'.

She told us that she first heard about translanguaging through reading. She believes that translanguaging is 'enabling' and 'empowering', words she uses to describe it. But her initial understanding was that she should not only try to use more of her pupils' L1s, but also allow them to use more of their L1s themselves. So she gave space and time for the pupils to translate and say things in 'their own languages', again her words to describe what she understood as the pupils' languages other than English. But soon she realized that many of the pupils of refugee and immigrant background do not know much of their 'own languages', because many of them were, in fact, born in London, or came to the UK when they were very young and their families use quite a bit of English, as well as other languages, in their daily interaction and also encouraged the children to speak more English. Many of the pupils do not have the confidence in speaking their 'own languages'. After attending an online event on pedagogical translanguaging where it was simplistically and erroneously understood as mixing languages in teaching, the teacher became seriously worried that translanguaging would lead to 'semilingualism' or not having sufficient knowledge in any of the languages. This was quite a setback in her journey of exploration of translanguaging, as she felt disappointed that translanguaging could not help with improving her students' English proficiency.

Interestingly, it was the COVID-19 pandemic that changed her views fundamentally. Because of home schooling, the EAL teacher had the opportunity to get a glimpse of her pupils' lives outside the school. The biggest revelation, as she told us, was that her EAL pupils used a great deal of English at home. In fact, she realized that English was also one of their 'own languages'. She started to think beyond language(s); she started exploring other ways of including, enabling, and empowering her pupils not just through all the languages they know, but also other aspects of their lived experience; their other funds of knowledge. For instance, she realized there were a couple of 'real artists', as she called them, amongst her EAL pupils and she decided to encourage them to use art to talked about their lived experiences outside the school and connect that knowledge with their school learning. She also learned more of the linguistic and racial discriminations her pupils families encountered – she went from 'I was horrified to hear it, because in school we really treat them equal' to 'let's do something together about it'. She even started questioning the term EAL as appropriate for her pupils and preferred the long-existing alternative term 'bilingual/multilingual learners'. She invited the 'real artists' amongst her pupils to create a collage showing their experiences, their understandings of conflicts, of discrimination, of equity and social justice. When some of the pupils asked whether they should include different 'languages', through different scriptal representations and colour schemes, she said: 'Only if they add to the meaning; what you want to say; that is meaningful to you; that helps you to express your feeling. Not tokens, I'm not interested in tokens here.'

Her statement reflects an emerging understanding of translanguaging pedagogy as teaching beyond the confines of named languages. She began to shift her teaching objective from a sole focus on improving the students English language proficiency to meaning making through dynamic use of all linguistic and semiotic resources.

4.2 The MFL teacher

The MFL teacher's starting position was a little different from the EAL teacher's. She was, in fact, a former student of ours, having done a modern foreign language PGCE (Post-Graduate Certificate

in Education) at UCL's Institute of Education. She is of Italian heritage with a university degree in Chinese. She did not like the idea of translanguaging at all when she learned about it during her course. She claimed to be a keen supporter of multilingualism, but her understanding of multilingualism was simply having different languages side by side. She believed that the more languages one knew, the easier it would be to learn new languages. She was very focused on improving the students' language proficiency, which in her view was composed primarily of pronunciation and intonation, vocabulary size, grammar, and fluency. She had a strong belief that to improve proficiency she must maximize input in the target language in the classroom. There was no time to allow any other language to be used. In fact, she believed that the learners' L1 would interfere with their learning of the target foreign language in a negative way.

However, in her Mandarin class at school, there were two ethnic Chinese students: one British-born and one who came from Hong Kong with her parents when she was six years old. At the beginning, the MFL teacher found it 'awkward' (her words) to have these Chinese students in the class and questioned their motivations for learning Mandarin. But she assumed that since they were ethnic Chinese, some form of Chinese must have been spoken at home. The British-born Chinese student comes from a multilingual family. The mother speaks Sichuan dialect as her L1 but is fluent in Mandarin and English. The father is from Wuhan and speaks Wuhan dialect as his L1, which is not mutually intelligible to either Sichuan dialect or Mandarin. He also speaks fluent Mandarin and English and understands Shanghainese because he studied in Shanghai for four years and some German because he spent a year as a visiting scholar in a German university. Because of his father's connection with Germany, this student also studies German at school. The girl student from the Hong Kong family understands Cantonese well, the language of the parents, which is also mutually unintelligible to Mandarin. She attended a weekend Cantonese school and had a good literacy level although it is the traditional characters she learned in the weekend Cantonese school, not the simplified characters that the school teaches in the Mandarin class. Her parents know some Mandarin and want the daughter to learn it properly at school because they believe that it is a useful language for the future. She was doing French at school as well.

A conscientious professional as she is, the MFL teacher found out quite a bit of the two students' linguistic backgrounds. She thought that it would be quite easy for them to learn Mandarin with her and achieve good examination results. She tried to encourage them to use what they knew of the Chinese languages in the Mandarin class. However, she soon realized that they had the 'wrong' knowledge – the various regional dialects they knew and the traditional characters the girl student, in particular, knew were interfering with the pronunciation and writing of Mandarin. She contacted me and asked for advice on how to induce 'positive transfer' from what these students knew of other varieties of Chinese to Mandarin. After a long discussion, during which I casted my doubts over the concept of 'transfer' and tried to move her away from a sole focus on language, she agreed to explore alternatives, starting by not treating these students as learners of foreign languages but bilinguals and multilinguals who have Chinese in their linguistic repertoire already.

It was entirely the MFL teacher's own initiative rather than any formal professional development opportunity that she took time to find out more about the two students' languaging lives: the boy considers English as his 'best language' and 'not really a Chinese speaker' (words and phrases in quotation marks are the students' own) because he could not read or write Chinese – a sentiment shared many Chinese immigrants that one cannot be a legitimate Chinese speaker without being able to read or write Chinese characters (Li & Zhu, 2010); he mixes a lot of English words and phrases when speaking Chinese with his parents but can speak English 'fluently' without using any Chinese words; his understands his mother's Sichuan dialect but does not understand his father's Wuhan dialect; and he finds German more 'logical' and 'systematic' as a language than English. The girl, on the other hand, feels very comfortable in Cantonese and speaks it with her parents at home. But she also considers English as her primary language because outside home, she has very limited opportunity to use Cantonese. She finds the written Chinese characters hard despite the fact that she learned quite a lot in the weekend Cantonese school. She thinks the simplified characters that are taught in the Mandarin class in school

even more 'abstract' and 'not easier' to learn. The teacher read about Brantmeier's 'pedagogy of vulnerability (2013), and admitted that as a heritage speaker of Italian, she did not always get the pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar right in Italian. So she empathized with heritage language speakers. And as a 'non-native-speaker' (sic) teacher, her own writing of Chinese characters was 'not much better than x's (the girl student)'.

In the meantime, the teacher started exploring the connections between language learning and other aspects of the students' lives at school. Both these students are talented musicians, playing a number of instruments and both western and Chinese music. In addition, the boy is an aspiring composer and experiments in combining a range of different styles in his composition. The girl is a good singer and often leads in the school choir and musical productions. The teacher is a good musician herself and sings in a choir outside the school. So she decided to ask the boy to compose a song, with the lyrics she co-created with the Mandarin class, and the girl to sing the lead. The lyrics were about the fun of learning Mandarin and included bilingual puns and expressions that were produced by the students in class that the teacher previously regarded as 'errors' but now as creative translingual idioms. This particular experience led to a step change: she started to reposition herself as a co-learner by actively listening to the students' stories. She connected her students' lived experiences with her own lived experience as an Italian heritage speaker in Britain. She began to break the ethnolinguistic categories that do not reflect the complexities of her students', and her own, lives. She started correcting her colleagues at staff meeting when they used labels such as 'the Indian girl' or 'the Brazilian boy', and encouraged her students to highlight their complex multilingual lives in school assignments, in creative writing and through music, drama, and arts events. Like the EAL teacher, she is now feeling confident to give space to her students by encouraging them to bring their own voices and their symbolic and semiotic selves into the classroom.

We were impressed by the teacher's shifts of her positions. So we invited her to talk about her own journey with translanguaging to our trainee teachers on the PGCE course. This is what she said:

> Translanguaging pedagogy is about accepting and respecting bilingual learners as who they are, from their own lived experiences, their own identities, use of language, and ability to be creative and critical, and not from an external raciolinguistic perspective and categories.

5. Conclusion: Towards transpositioning

As Li Wei and García (2022) point out, translanguaging, especially the notion of 'pedagogical translanguaging', is often misinterpreted through a double monolingual and monoglossic ideology that is present in much of multilingualism scholarship. Whilst recognizing their multilingualism as having multiple named languages is an important first step in supporting learners of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which can go a long way towards resisting the monolingual ethos that still dominates the schools and education systems in Britain and elsewhere, it leaves intact the raciolinguistic ideologies that are behind the monolingual and monoglossic ethos, policies, and practices.

> It is essential to acknowledge how these named languages are important for identity and social purposes, but it is also important to understand how reifying them as separate entities will always leave out bilingual students whose lives are led in the entremundos/borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) that are neither one world nor the other. (Li & García, 2022, p. 317).

The journeys undertaken by the EAL teacher and the MFL teacher that I have described are a journey of TRANSPOSITIONING – a process where participants break from their preset or prescribed roles and switch perspectives with others, through communicative practices such as translanguaging and transmodalities and through co-learning, by releasing one's self from conventions and fostering a greater sense of possibility, freeing ourselves from habitual thinking, and building empathy for others involved in the process; or in Hawkins' words (2021: back cover) , 'the multiple and interwoven layers of

emplacements and positionings that are entailed in communications which cross and transcend the boundaries that have historically shaped our thinking about the world and its inhabitants'. The two exemplar teachers have transpositioned from simplistic understandings of translanguaging as allowing the mixing of named languages in the classroom to what García and colleagues have called a 'translanguaging *juntos* stance', a perspective that views bilingual learners' linguistic practices and their racial/ethnic identities together (García et al., 2017). They started viewing teaching as co-learning, because the process of teaching and learning are *juntos*/together. They realized that there would be a lot to learn from viewing the students from their own lived experiences and positionings and not from that of the British state and its schools. And they need to design pedagogy by turning the classroom into transformative translanguaging spaces, to facilitate their students' personal translanguaging journeys, to assemble pieces of their lives, cultures, and languages in creative wholes, and to ensure that all students' languaging lives are included in school and to transform the ways they view each other's languaging practices and experiences.

Returning to the two practical concerns that I outlined at the beginning of this article, the first concern was about bringing linguistic repertoires to bear in classrooms and countering monolingual policies including both one-language-only and one-language-at-a-time policies, and the second about having sound pedagogies to use time effectively and to achieve teaching and learning objectives. I have argued that a translanguaging pedagogy, as opposed to pedagogical translanguaging, is to create spaces to counter institutionalized monolingualism in linguistically diverse classrooms not only by introducing flexible translingual practices and complex transemiotic flows by design, but also more importantly by prioritizing the learners through bringing their personal trajectories, perspectives, and voices into classroom activities and into learning. By opening the space for everybody to engage in learning, teaching, and growing *juntos*/together, the classroom becomes socially responsive to the histories of the students. And by opening the classroom to the students' backgrounds and out-of-class lives, the curriculum becomes a rich space where every history and every identity can be presented and celebrated. Moreover, following Williams' (1994) recognition of students as agentive, teachers must learn to trust that students will take responsibility of their learning according to their own particularities and knowledge systems. The teaching and learning objectives should be jointly set by the teachers and learners together. The teachers must be prepared to unlearn and be 'vulnerable' in Brantmeier's (2013) terms and to become co-learners and joint sojourners on a journey that will transform their own lives, subjectivities and positionings. Co-learning and transpositioning, therefore, are two driving forces of inclusion and social justice in the classroom and in rejecting abyssal thinking in the language and education of racialized bilingual learners (García et al., 2021).

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