Taking Space Through Language: Multilingual People of Color's Perspective Informing Translingual Practices in a Monolingual Education System

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Abstract

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This paper hopes to add to the great and always growing work put forth by the many contributors to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Alim & Paris, 2017), critical translingual approach (Seltzer, 2019), and refusal (Simpson, 2016). From these ideas, I began to speculate about the ability of translingual teaching practices to be an act of refusal against the continued coloniality in the U.S. public education system and as a step toward enacting CSP in the classroom. In order to genuinely enact refusal and CSP in the classroom, one has to learn and understand the practices of the populations for whom these philosophies seek to improve schools. To better understand translanguaging and its practices outside of the White gaze, I interviewed multilingual people of color in the Seattle area. Their experiences revealed missing pieces they felt not only in their education but also in their identities. By centering the perspectives of multilingual people of color, this paper seeks to provide insights for educators who serve multilingual students and communities. It is through understanding the practices of multilingual people of color that educators can transform schools into democratic spaces that reflect the communities they serve.

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This paper hopes to add to the great and always growing work put forth by the many contributors to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Alim & Paris, 2017), critical translingual approach (Seltzer, 2019), and refusal (Simpson, 2016). From these ideas, I began to speculate about the ability of translingual teaching practices to be an act of refusal against the continued coloniality in the U.S. public education system and as a step toward enacting CSP in the classroom. In order to genuinely enact refusal and CSP in the classroom, one has to learn and understand the practices of the populations for whom these philosophies seek to improve schools. To better understand translanguaging and its practices outside of the White gaze, I interviewed multilingual people of color in the Seattle area. Their experiences revealed missing pieces they felt not only in their education but also in their identities. By centering the perspectives of multilingual people of color, this paper seeks to provide insights for educators who serve multilingual students and communities. It is through understanding the practices of multilingual people of color that educators can transform schools into democratic spaces that reflect the communities they serve.

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Introduction

Purpose

In recent years within the field of education, there has been a lot more talk of what translingualism is and how teaching practices can incorporate this view of language input and output. Through translingual approaches in the classroom, the hope is to move away from the monolingual ideologies of Whiteness that have formed the U.S. education system and to embrace the multilingual reality of our society. In order to incorporate translingualism in the classroom with fidelity, I believe it is important to learn how multilingual people perform these practices in their daily lives. The purpose of this study is to better understand translingual practices through the perspective of those who these new linguistically inclusive pedagogies are meant to benefit. I will focus particularly on the linguistic choices multilingual people of color have had to make in educational spaces. By looking into their perspective, I hope to better ascertain how the critical translingual approach can enact Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) so as to refuse the underlying Whiteness in our education system and to improve our schools for those whom they have ignored or even oppressed. We cannot seek to transform our classrooms and our ideas around language without first understanding the linguistic practices that multilingual people of color already use and perform in their daily lives as well as the environmental or societal conditions that they believe support their linguistic practices.

Rationale

In the fall of 2015, the United States public school system saw some major shifts in student demographics. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, White students no longer make up the majority in U.S. public schools, dropping to 49% of the total population, while the percentage of students labeled English Language Learners (ELLs) is also slowly

climbing (2019). Despite increased cultural and linguistic diversity in our classrooms, these differences are seen as deficits or as bridges to be used in the hopes of reaching standards derived from White colonial ideals that remain in teaching practices to this day. Many language minority immigrants in the United States lose their language typically within two generations (Motha, 2014). Language policies in education are ignoring the reality of student populations causing the loss of the linguistic richness of our communities.

While student populations become more and more diverse, the curricularization, teaching, and assessment of English remains fairly the same. The "standard" English that reigns throughout the education system in the United States carries a colonial history that denies other versions of English and other languages inside classroom walls in the name of "academic success". Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) is a counter to this "standard" in hopes of sustaining diverse and heterogenous practices (Alim & Paris, 2017). As CSP seeks to perpetuate linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism, critical translingual practice can help in this endeavor and refuse notions of a linguistic standard. Translingualism, itself, is a move away from the idea that languages exist separately and an acceptance and celebration of the creative evolution of communication that takes place in communities every day (Canagarajah, 2013).

Through the perspectives of multilingual persons of color, the role of critical translingual practices in refusing to perpetuate the White middle-class monolingual norms in our education system can be better understood. Educators should learn from the translingual practices of those who navigate a system not built for them. Insight into the when, where, and how of people's translingual practices could better inform our knowledge of language use and improve the strategies teachers implement in their classrooms. In order to truly refuse an educational system

that has oppressed many students, one mode being through language, and to transform the system into one that engages in CSP, teachers, administrators, and policy makers need to be aware of how the system has been perceived by students of color and how they have navigated their language use within this system.

Organization of Study

This paper will look into the role that the English language has played in education within the United States and in the lives of multilingual people of color who have experienced schooling in this country. A review of literature will seek to display how translanguaging can become a driving force for Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, established by Alim and Paris, through its ability to be an act of refusal, a concept proposed by Simpson and Grande, to live under the curricularization of English and the White gaze. The tenants of refusal have inspired how I envision translingualism as an alternative to current language policies to be implemented in schools.

However, as a White multilingual person, I cannot fully comprehend the effects of coloniality or raciolinguistics in schools or even how to imagine a new system involving translingual practices on my own. In order to properly understand the possibilities of translingualism, I sought out the perspectives of multilingual persons of color. An analysis and discussion of the interviews of multilingual people of color will attempt to reveal authentic translingual practices that can be encouraged within classrooms as well as reveal any missing pieces within the educational experiences of the participants that should be addressed.

Literature Review

Coloniality and the Curricularization of English

A language is more than just the letters and sounds that make words in order to communicate. Each language has a history; each one has a cultural identity. English may have one of the most far-reaching histories and influences across the planet at the expense of other languages. As the British Empire expanded during colonialism (1500s-1900s) so did the English language. The teaching of English became a tool for dominance as White British colonists killed, displaced, or controlled people for land, imposing their language and culture on the people who remained. Although the era most people think of as colonialism is over, coloniality (the political, ideological, and psychological effects of colonialism) continues on (Motha, 2014). Coloniality survives through books, ideas of academic success, and our self-images (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). While there may no longer be one source of power that drives the dominance of the English language, colonial ideologies have followed English instruction into the U.S. school system which consequently reproduces the inequalities set in motion during the colonial era.

Language instruction calls for the curricularization of a language which removes it from its natural and contextual environment. Curricularizing a language means determining an agreed upon set of standards and functions as well as requirements for what is to be considered proficient (Brooks, 2017). Standards and requirements remove any neutrality in a language as the curriculum now creates the expectation that a language be spoken a certain way. Through colonialism, the English language is linked to Whiteness and the appropriate way to speak English is considered that of a White middle-class person (Motha, 2014; Seltzer, 2019). This narrow view of racial and cultural superiority through language drives the principles that have

formed the instruction and use of English is U.S. schools as well as the education system as a whole (Motha, 2014). The curricularized form of English becomes that of the White middle-class population and excludes other languages and other forms of English from being associated with academic settings (Valdés, 2015). English, and thus Whiteness, becomes the standard of success in the classroom.

The curricularization of English created a dichotomy between the "standard or school" language and "home or social" language, hiding the raciolinguistic ideologies that feed these distinctions. As the version of English associated with the White middle-class is taught and used by teachers, they are communicating to students who do not look, act, or speak in the same way that their forms of communication are not academic and are therefore lacking (Seltzer, 2019). Language instruction becomes racialized with the implementation of linguistic standards because White students often fit what is considered "the norm" and do not have to prove their English proficiency when entering a school (Brooks, 2017). Schools frequently then become places where being or sounding White is invisibly normal while speaking or acting outside of this norm is seen as different or disorderly (Hill, 1998). Students of color are deemed deficient because their linguistic practices are misheard and devalued as compared to the curricularized version of English (Rosa & Flores, 2017).

The American classroom through the rigid use and expectations of the English language comes to be an extension of the White gaze or White listener where students of color are constantly judged. For students of color, the purpose of education becomes to act and sound like the White middle-class, who through colonialism have been granted ownership of the English language (Motha, 2014; Rosa & Flores, 2017). Because these students of color are often only

heard through the White listener, the linguistic practices they carry from home and their communities are interpreted as insufficient or inappropriate for school (Rosa & Flores, 2017; Brooks, 2017). Even despite students of color's efforts to conform to "standard" English, the White gaze will still see and hear them, as Motha states it, an inadequate imitation (2014). By rejecting students' use of their languages and often causing them to lose these languages in the name of academic achievement, schools maintain coloniality and assimilation to White culture (Alim & Paris, 2017). The English language becomes a tool to remove linguistic diversity to begin whitewashing students' cultures and identities.

Identity in the Classroom

Learning and development are not devoid of culture. Often when walking into a classroom, it is expected of students to shed the outside world because education should be objective and neutral. Learning is a fundamentally cultural process, however, that can involve overlapping, complementary, and even conflicting cultures (Nasir et al., 2014). People develop within a cultural community through participation in practices and traditions that can evolve and change over time (Rogoff, 2003). Learning and development are not the same for everyone because the communities in which each of us interact are different. When a teacher or a student enters a school, the cultural practices and traditions that have informed their previous learning come along with them.

To understand a child's learning and development, one has to understand and honor their culture and language. Culture shapes our experiences, providing meaning, practices, and values. These cultural experiences are primarily produced through language (Bucholtz et al., 2017). As language is the mode through which culture shapes our learning and development, it is

inextricably linked to identity (Bucholtz et al., 2017; Reagan, 2016). Language is where we construct our sense of selves, and because the languages and cultures that influence us can be multiple and changing, the identity that students choose to express through language is not going to be simple or static (Norton Pierce, 1995). The languages and evolutions associated with many students' identity does not fit the White middle-class student that coloniality has perpetuated as the norm.

The curricularization of English in the U.S. public education system has created a space where not all students are able to enter and exist in the classroom with their own cultural or linguistic practices. The raciolinguistic ideologies behind "standard" English expectations do not impact all students in the same way (Brooks, 2017). White students whose culture and language fit the curriculum become invisibly normal (Haviland, 2008; Rosa & Flores, 2017). They are not asked to change how they act or speak to fit the "standard", and their linguistic practices are not seen as deficient. In contrast, students of color are seen as visibly marginal because they do not "fit in" and so their language must be monitored and remedied (Hill, 1998). Students of color must learn to manage their own cultural learning while also managing the stress of the stigmatization by schools of their cultures and languages because they are seen as outside the curriculum (Nasir et al., 2014).

The stigmatization of students of color's linguistic practices by schools denies these students their identity in academic spaces. Even if a student considers themselves an English speaker, a teacher and/or school may reject this identity because of their interpretation of the student's linguistic abilities through the White gaze (Brooks, 2017; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Rejecting students' languages in favor of one communicates to students the need to change their

linguistic practices in order to reach educational achievement (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Expecting students to change the way they speak is asking them to also change who they are, their identity. Abiding by a "standard" English devalues the resource that is students of color's languages and ignores their different pathways of development.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Translanguaging

In response to the way in which schools remain a functional part of the colonial project, culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) aims to perpetuate and foster- to sustain- linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation (Alim & Paris, 2017). CSP reimagines schools are places where diverse, heterogenous practices are not just valued but also sustained (Alim & Paris, 2017). CSP rejects the curricularized or "standard" English that coloniality has maintained through schooling. The diverse linguistic practices within and among students must be embraced in classrooms but also used and encouraged in any form of communication.

Translingualism and the critical translingual approach are pathways in which teachers can begin to enact CSP through language in their classroom. Translingualism is a newer viewpoint that does not see communication through individual separate languages but as shuttling between languages and using a range of diverse linguistic resources (Canagarajah, 2013). Terms like multilingualism or bilingualism usually keep languages and competences in these languages separate without influencing another. In the translingual orientation, languages are always in contact (Zapata & Laman, 2016). Languages evolve, and there is not one that lacks a grammar or syntax (Reagan, 2016). Translingualism is not a new literacy but is the communication that has been happening every day in communities for ages (Canagarajah, 2013). Although a new term in

academia, translingualism sheds light on the realities of communicative practices that many students bring to the classroom.

A critical translingual approach in the classroom seeks to mirror how people and communities truly communicate. Students' language repertoires are a complex system of communicative resources from which they can choose to use (Seltzer, 2019). Their day-to-day languages can function as composing resources and compositions can creatively move across or within languages (Zapata & Laman, 2016). Language is taken away from colonial constructs and put back into the hands of the students. The critical translingual approach does not just simply mean the allowance for all languages inside the classroom. This approach also includes unearthing and questioning the deeply rooted coloniality and raciolinguistics that have driven language and literacy teaching practices in schools (Seltzer, 2019). To move forward in utilizing the translingual practices of our communities, teachers and students must understand the ideologies that have been proliferated as normal to undermine the practices of racialized populations.

Guiding Theoretical Framework

Translingualism as an Act of Refusal

In order to truly enact CSP and foster translingual practices within classroom walls, there must first be a refusal to act as part of the system that has continued to oppress students of color. Refusal, according to Audra Simpson, is a stance and a theory. It is a deliberate action made in the face of expectations to consent to existing systems with the knowledge that there are other political orders and possibilities (Simpson, 2016). While Simpson's idea of refusal more closely pertains to political systems and research, schools are spaces influenced by politics. Asset-based

pedagogies within schools sometimes resemble recognition, not refusal. Recognition attempts to satisfy oppressed communities while not actually changing the underlying power structure (Grande, 2018). Asset-based pedagogy occasionally uses students' languages as a bridge to learning "standard" English without questioning the underlying ideologies that determine language instruction (Motha, 2014; Rosa & Flores, 2017).

Sandy Grande (2018) furthers this stance of refusal specifically speaking of refusing the university as it is an extension of colonial project. By refusing the university, there is an understanding that there is another mode of being and doing (Grande, 2018). Grande (2018) evokes Tuck and Yang's decolonial framework from their piece, *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, in which they make the distinction that decolonization pursues "a change in the order of the world" not recognition within colonial systems. If teachers and schools wish to sustain cultures and their ways of knowing and communicating that have been oppressed or under threat of being erased, there must be a refusal to participate and to perpetuate racist systems and ideologies within the education system. There must be a fight for decolonization toward a new educational order.

The ways in which communities have been able to sustain themselves through language practices in spite of colonial structures and institutions may shed light on how to leverage these practices for learning while also refusing to continue the coloniality within K-12 schools. The multilingual student population is growing in our public schools. While languages other than English are threatened every day in classrooms, the persistence of Indigenous languages as well as the emergence of Spanglish and Chinglish reveal the strength, influence, and creativity of languages within communities of color. Translanguaging, in and of itself, could be a refusal of

the curricularization of English that carries with it coloniality. While Grande wishes to refuse the university, translingual practices could be a medium in which to carry out refusal within K-12 schools as well.

Procedure

To gather more insight into the possibilities of refusing to participate under the White gaze or the curricularization of English through the use of translingual practices within the classroom, I interviewed two multilingual persons of color who have experienced all or some of their schooling in the United States. One participant is of Mexican descent who grew up in the United States with her immigrant parents who speak Spanish and an indigenous language of Michoacán Mexico. She lived in a predominantly Latinx community and attended a bilingual elementary school, but as she progressed to middle and high school, English became the predominant language of academics. Her languages are Spanish, English, and P'urépecha. The other participant is of Chinese descent who grew up in Panama with her Chinese parents and then attended high school and further education in the United States. Her languages are Spanish, English, and Cantonese. Both participants are graduate students studying education and are familiar with the term, translanguaging, which helped guide the interview process.

The interview questions centered around two themes: personal perspectives on language use and space/environment influence on language choices. The following were guiding questions for the researcher while meeting with each participant:

Personal:

- How do multilingual persons of color view their language practices?

- What choices do they make about their language practices?
- How would they describe the languages that they speak?
- How do they prefer to speak if they could choose/what language(s) would they prefer to speak?
- Do any of their languages hold positive or negative feelings for them?

Spaces:

- How does the space or environment they are in influence their language practices?
- What language practices do they make in certain spaces? Why?
- How have they made linguistic choices in educational spaces?
- Have they felt linguistic freedom in educational spaces? Or have they felt limited in their choices to use their languages in educational spaces?
- Where have they felt most free to make their own choices on language practices?
- Have they made choices to use languages or language styles in spaces that have not welcomed those before?

The interviews were done individually in spaces chosen by the participants. Since the questions during the interview process could become very personal, a familiar or comfortable space for the participant was important for the researcher. Both interviews were done primarily in English because this was the one language that the researcher shared with the participants. Each interview was audio recorded on a cellphone and then transcribed onto a computer. The researcher also took down brief notes during each interview as well as wrote down any lasting or poignant thoughts after the interviews.

The transcripts and notes were analyzed through coding guided by the work of Miles & Huberman (1994) and Saldaña (2009). While coding, a thematic analysis was applied to interview transcripts seeking patterns between participants' experiences, perceptions, and spaces in which they made choices about their linguistic practices. The notes taken during and after the interviews helped guide possible themes among the participants' words. Using my notes, I read the transcripts multiple times writing down observations of experiences or words that had come up for both participants. From these observations, a series of similar circumstances began to appear in the participants' experiences with language and in the formation of their identities.

Findings

After analyzing the transcripts, it appeared that both interviews could be broken down into the participants' childhood experiences and their current practices. The two participants come from different backgrounds and grew up in very different places. Yet,a their interviews revealed commonalities in how languages are used and positioned in schools. Across their experiences, both had encountered a sharp transition in language use at school, a lack of mirroring in their classrooms, and a sense of implicit messaging from adults. While talking about their translingual practices, the following themes were found: comfort, consciousness, intent, identity, and idea vs. practice.

Experiences

In middle school, both participants noticed an explicit shift in language. One participant attended a Spanish/English bilingual elementary school in Oregon; the other attended a traditional elementary school in Panama of which the language was Spanish. During their transition to middle school, English became the majority language for classroom learning and

discussion. The participant from Oregon was placed in the English track during middle school while her friend had been placed in the English Language Learner (ELL) track. In Panama, the participant's middle school was labeled bilingual but English was required while on campus. From then on, both participants' schooling was mainly carried out in English.

Neither participant described their schools as places where they saw their cultures mirrored. School and culture felt like very different entities; things that did not mix together. Neither one remembered hearing their home languages at school or really seeing their cultural identities displayed there. One participant commented on how she did not know that some of her classmates spoke the same indigenous language as her at their homes because there was such a focus on learning the "standard" English and the "standard" Spanish. Reflecting on whether her family's indigenous language was ever present at school the participant stated, "No! And it's so funny cuz a lot of people from the same places in Mexico that speak that same language- I went to school with. And there could have been that conversation like, "Oh do you speak that language at home?" "We do too!"" She felt that students do not get the opportunities to talk about their backgrounds or to learn about each other and believed there was this feeling that they shouldn't talk about their home languages.

Through the increasing demand to use English and the lack of mirroring between school and home, both participants spoke of the implicit messages around language that they felt they received as a child. Each person began to sense a different value placed on the languages in their lives even though the adults never said anything out right. Both believed a higher regard was placed on the English language. As one participant spoke of being placed in the English track during middle school, she said, "I had somehow internalized this idea that- Oh I'm on this track

[English] and that means that I'm on track, right? And it's sad how it continues to happen today because then there is that idea behind the [Spanish] language that it is less than English for that reason." The contrast between views of English and Spanish also became much more apparent when the other participant moved from Panama to the United States for boarding school as a teenager. As she described her transition to the United States, the participant revealed:

> *"But um coming to America the view of Mexico is very different. I did not know Mexico is such a poor country actually until I came here. In that way too, I just Spanish…because in Panama to us like Spanish is the language, it's the most dominant language. It's what we speak and we don't think, like we don't have that view? It was never something like…Spanish was never something negative in our view. But then coming here, I saw a little more of that…like Oh, all of a sudden Spanish is this language that is…has some negative or it has some like, I don't know like people think that it's not beautiful or [it's] spoken by people who are poor…"*

There was even a sense of superiority given to English from their families but for different reasons. For the participant who grew up in the United States with her immigrant parents, she believed, "if I learned a certain level of English and got good grades and behaved, that once I was older that would somehow help me be able to like have my mom gain citizenship". For the participant whose family is Chinese, English was seen as a path to success because it is the language used around the world. Citizenship and success were never linked to Spanish, Chinese, or P'urépecha. These languages were not explicitly looked down upon by their families, but they also were not positioned in the same way.

Practice

As the participants began to reflect on their linguistic practices, both mentioned comfort when thinking about when they do translanguage. As a child, they did not particularly remember translanguaging as part of their lives but believed they probably did as they were exposed to and were learning multiple languages. As they progressed through school which became strict in

following English only policies, there was a growing fear of speaking correctly. When the participants think of times when they feel comfortable to translanguage freely, they think of their family, friends, and community groups. One participant described her church community as a place where translanguaging happens a lot:

"Like for example, there's in Korean, and I don't speak a word of Korean, but um there's this word that means embarrassing or shameful- and it's like "chingpi" (phonetic spelling) and then because I go to, I'm part of a church that is very Korean- like most of our staff is Korean and I've learned a lot of those terms I guess. And we use that a lot even though I don't speak Korean at all."

These groups that the participants described as practicing translanguaging are often made up of people who speak languages other than English or share multiple languages. Among multilingual people, they felt a greater level of comfort to express themselves using their full linguistic repertoire through translanguaging. There seemed to be less worry of being corrected for their linguistic practices among these groups because the other members would also mix their languages while communicating.

It wasn't until their higher education that both participants became aware of the term, translanguaging, and really became conscious of how they use their languages. For one participant, a college professor stood out as he modelled how to use translanguaging in writing. Once she saw how the professor used both Spanish and English in poetry, she said,

"But then I began to see it as beautiful- to combine languages- and... interesting because like there's an element of incomprehensibleness [laughs]…mysterious and mystery. Ya, it was I don't know… my perspective changed a lot so I use that (translanguaging) a lot more like both consciously and subconsciously- like deliberately when I want to make something cuz I think it's more beautiful/interesting. "

For the other participant, her increasing number of graduate courses involving indigenous pedagogy and having a professor who also speaks the indigenous language, P'urépecha, has pushed her to seek and learn more of the language outside of the classroom.

"It's funny because I've been taking a lot of indigenous courses lately and I'm talking to my mom about them and I'm taking one now where the professor is from the same state as my mom and even from the same area and his family also speaks the same language which is really cool. And so, my mom is like "See you need to start picking it up!" and I'm like "Ok mom!" So, I've been like, I've downloaded this app to help me cuz there's an app for that language."

Witnessing professors use translanguaging seemed to help the participants be aware of the possibilities of their own language use. Today, they both spoke of being more intentional about the languages they choose to use. Both try to make the conscious choice of enacting translanguaging in their daily lives. Word and phrases in different languages weaved into the majority language being used in the moment was how the participants described their translanguaging today.

One aspect that really stood out as a result of their new found knowledge of translanguaging and comfort in using the entirety of their linguistic repertoire was that each participant felt they were able to truly explore their identities all over again. Their identity had felt disjointed or partially lost because they were not afforded the chance to develop all their languages together as children. The participant from Oregon described how she felt she had learned English well but at the cost of learning her home's indigenous language of P'urépecha which she is now returning to and trying to learn. The participant who grew up in Panama and the United States had felt she was always trying to find her identity in one language causing a disconnect in her identity for a long time.

"So, I had this like identity crisis for most of my life. Then coming here [U.S.] too, I was like this is obviously not even my country and not, I'm not even! I have no ties like I'm a foreign person in this country. So, I was like I don't fit anywhere. As opposed to now, that I've learned more about translanguaging- it's like actually not- I do not like- I cannot say that just this is the language that I most… well…that I most identify with? Sure. But that I… completely that's my thing; I cannot say that. So, I'm more of a mix of all these things."

Now she's able to see herself as a combination of all the languages she grew up with and the ones she is still learning today. While talking to both of them, there seemed to be a feeling of greater connection to their identity, their languages, and their cultures after learning and seeing translingual practices in their higher education courses.

As we neared the end of the interview and talked about their future teaching practices, both voiced their concerns of properly implementing translingual practices in educational spaces. One participant is currently a TA for a college level Spanish course, and even though she believes her students should be able to translanguage in the classroom, her supervisor is against it. The other participant talked about how she fears pushback on translanguaging from future administrators to the point that being fired is a genuine concern. Their anxieties of not being able to enact translingual practices where they teach reveals the disconnect between education research and actual practice in traditional school settings.

Discussion

As I reflect on the interviews, I think about Durán's statement in *Audience and Young Bilingual Writers: Building on Strengths*, "…the problem is not children's multilingualism, but rather the lack of pedagogies to build on these unique insights. (p.93)" The experiences shared by the participants exposed the lack of attention given to their languages and thus their identities in the name of academics. Through their perspective, one can better understand the toll of Whiteness through the curricularization of English in the United States. On the other hand, what

was also revealed is the power of naming, the practices in which one can translanguage, and the power translanguaging has in developing identity.

The United States positions English at a higher value than other languages. An idea that seeps not just into the minds of monolingual English speakers but also the minds of multilingual people around the world. Each participants' set of parents pushed them to learn English in order to succeed in this country and in the world. In school, those implicit messages continued while at the same time their own cultures were not present in the classroom despite attending bilingual schools or international schools where the majority of the population spoke languages other than English. Their experiences show the toll English language policies in education have on our multilingual students. Even in Panama where one participant learned English and Spanish, these languages were often kept separate and her Chinese culture was never mirrored in school. As teachers, we need to understand the effect our language choices have in positioning, separating, and even losing languages when real world linguistic practices have shown that languages can not only intermingle and be mixed through translanguaging but can also survive and thrive through these practices. Languages are not lost through translanguaging but through strict separation that often leads to English maintaining dominance in schools and society of the United States.

The first step for teachers to take is to learn what the White gaze and translanguaging actually are. Once the participants were taught about the extent of coloniality in the U.S. education system and of the practices that make up translanguaging in their college and/or graduate courses, they started to develop a new outlook on education and a new sense of self. There is a power in naming. Once a concept is revealed, then one understands the places in

which it has manifested in one's daily life, previously invisible. In the case of the White gaze, being invisible gave it power because one did not know how it controlled the way we perceive language. In the case of translanguaging, once understood and seen, the participants intentionally used it more and became aware of how they've been translanguaging for a long time. As teachers, we have the power to help our students become conscious of the White gaze and conscious of their own translanguaging as a valuable practice. Through knowledge of these terms and modelling of translanguaging in classrooms, teachers can create spaces of comfort for multilingual students as well as spaces of intentional learning outside of the White gaze. To transform our teaching and our schools, we must call out oppressive systems, such as English only policies or curriculums, and not only promote but also use translingual practices.

Through the perspectives of the multilingual participants as well as the interviews themselves, the practice of translanguaging was shown to be a quite manageable. The participants described how they often will mix in words or phrases from another language and the conversation won't skip a beat. Even during these interviews for this paper, the participants would sometimes use words from languages other than English even though I did not always know the language or the word, but this translingual practice did not hinder our communication. In fact, I believe it helped share further insight into their cultures, communities, and ways of being. I even learned some new words along the way. If the participants had been forced to only use English, then I, as a researcher, may not have been able to hear their full story. Translingual practices can change the power dynamic in a classroom where the teacher may no longer understand everything, but these practices can also help teachers see and learn their students' full story. For students, these translingual practices allow their full selves to live and perform inside the classroom.

One of the most important aspects that translanguaging had to offer the participants seemed to be the ability to explore their true identities that had not been afforded to them while growing up. The implementation of translingual practices in schools and the classroom could mean that multilingual students in the United States can fully create their sense of self at a younger age and not have to recuperate their complete identity later on in life as the interview participants are doing today. For teachers, this means shifting our thoughts from just academic standards to the whole child. More classroom lessons and projects could not only involve students' languages but also involve avenues to explore their identities, their cultures, their histories.

Because only two interviews were able to be completed, the patterns found may not reflect all multilingual people who attended school in the United States. Both participants also attended schools with fairly large populations of multilingual students so their perspectives cannot be compared to multilingual people of color who attended schools where they were the minority. The participants have also attended education courses that discussed CSP and translingual practices. Knowledge of these terms may influence their retelling of childhood experiences. Whereas, it would be interesting to discuss translingual practices with those who do not know the term yet since many K-12 students would probably not know this terminology.

If further time was available, a greater pool of participants varying in school experiences and languages would provide even greater insights into how teachers can truly implement translingual practices outside of the White gaze. There is far more to learn from multilingual communities and people of color to better understand and implement their sustaining lifeways to transform schools into spaces that truly allow students to thrive where they have previously been

held back by the coloniality that still lingers today. This paper provides one small window into the possibilities translingualism can provide our multilingual students of color.

Conclusion

Thinking of translingual teaching practices in a public-school classroom is by no means the be-all and end-all of a teacher's part in the act of refusal to the coloniality that lingers in U.S. educational policies and expectations. There are many other aspects besides language in which the U.S. school system places a higher value on White middle-class norms and oppresses multilingual students of color. Translanguaging as a valued form of communication and learning within the classroom can be a starting point for teachers who want to help make a change in the way we educate our children. In my previous years teaching, as well as for one of the participants, we did not know what translanguaging was, but we did see the light in students' eyes when their languages were encouraged, asked about, or incorporated in our classrooms.

If practiced with fidelity and openness by a teacher, the allowance of students' true forms of communication can open pathways for their identities and cultures to flourish in school. Translanguaging in the classroom provides the opportunity to prevent a disconnected identity and the chance to form a complete sense of self from a young age. While there may be a fear that translanguaging will exclude monolingual students, the practices of the participants and even the interviews with them for this paper demonstrate that mixing words and phrases from different languages does not hinder communication. In fact, translingual practices expose students to and may lead them to learn new languages and new forms of communicating. Adopting the translingual ideas and practices found, thanks to interviewing two multilingual people of color, may not be easy because mandated standards and assessments still hold a lot of power in this

country's schools. However, it is hoped that the possibilities put forth in this paper help shed some light on translingual practices for teachers who are looking for ways to improve in order to better serve their multilingual students and for ways to start having conversations with coworkers or administration on these topics.

To reiterate the major findings for teachers to keep in mind while trying to refuse oppressive systems and practice CSP through translanguaging:

- The power of naming systems and modeling practices such as coloniality, Whiteness, the White gaze, translingual practices
- Becoming conscious of the implicit bias that underlies the maintenance of English only policies
- Translanguaging is not exclusionary and can be done when not all languages are shared by participants
- Translanguaging may prevent gaps or disconnect in multilingual identity

The research done in this paper is far from finished. There is still a lot of work to be done in transforming our schools into a system that works for multilinguals and for students of color. This paper provides a baby step into understanding the translingual practices of multilingual people of color so that these practices can be better implemented inside classrooms. Moving forward after hearing about the actions of one participant's nephew who attends her former high school, I believe it would be very insightful to conduct interviews with high school students and children of "Generation Z". This nephew's current acts of refusal to act or speak White were very interesting. The following is one excerpt describing an instance of refusal by the nephew:

Participant: …so I think especially now [when I think of high school], I see the way my nephews act and what kind of music they like, and the way they dress and I can see where teachers may misread that and see that as not interested and you know just them being terrible kids and I'm like "They're not terrible kids!" And one of them actually gets really good grades and then the way he dresses, the way he talks I think mirrors a lot of students' experiences in schools and may be misread.

Researcher: I guess talking about your nephews, do they do a lot of social media and use languages through that?

Participant: Oh ya! My, one of my nephews specifically is in 9th grade, he just started high school and he is very much about not acting White. And so, the way he dresses and the music he listens to I think unique.
…So, for homecoming, bringing it back to that, he actually wore a typical Mexican cowboy outfit rather than the typical tie, you know just a more formal um wearing, and he wore that for the parade and I was like "Oh wow! Like you did it." cuz that's him, that's what he's gonna do and he's not gonna shy away from himself but then you know its funny cuz later on that night, they had to go to the football game where they present with their parents and they get all this like flower or roses or whatever and he wore a tie. And I asked him, "Oh that's interesting. Why didn't you wear what you were wearing for the parade the day before?" And he was like "Oh, well this is gonna be more people and I think..." And I'm like "Well, you should've just worn what you wore" And even then, I still saw like that even though he is all about disrupting like what it means to be Mexican or like a student at school, he's still like …

Researcher: still trying to fit in?

This younger generation grew up in a much more connected world with the internet and social media, and they appear to refuse more and more of the strict molds that my generation grew up with. The opportunity to interview the participant's nephew and his multilingual peers could lead to learning about more instances where they are currently refusing to adhere to White norms in school and the why and how they chose to do so. Their perspective on refusal and on language use could help further improve how we use translanguaging in the classroom and how we refuse to adhere to colonial ideologies. Incorporating interviews with elders who have sustained their languages despite English-only policies would also provide and interesting comparison on acts of refusal and on sustainable practices that could inform teachers on their further use of translingualism in schools.

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Appendix

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Introduction: My project is kind of a continuation of my CSP paper on translanguaging and refusal. I'm interviewing people about their translanguaging practices or language practices to better understand how you can really use translanguaging as transformation outside of the White gaze in the classroom. I want to see what people have done with their own languages, how they've seen their languages over the years, and kind of ask you about different experiences or places in your life and go from there.

Possible Questions:

- Thinking back to your childhood, can you tell me about the languages you used or heard?
- Can you tell me about any instances where you remember translanguaging as a child?
- How did your family use their languages?
    - How did your family perceive their languages? English?
- How were languages used at your schools?
    - Did other students speak languages other than English? Teachers?
    - Were your languages ever used or celebrated? Or forbidden/punished?

  - What was the language education available?
  - How did you navigate school with your languages?
  - Did you speak your languages with other students at school? Outside of school?
  - Can you tell me how your languages played out in social settings with your school friends?

- Can you tell me about any places outside of school where you particularly used your home languages? Extracurriculars? Church?
- How would you describe how languages were talked about as a child?
- How do you use your languages today?
- Where have you felt most free to use your languages the way you want to?
  - Why do you think this place or person makes it more comfortable to speak that way?
- What or who do you think has helped you develop your languages the most?
- Do you believe anything has hindered your languages?
- What do you wish your teachers knew while you were in school?
- What would you tell teachers today?
- What do you feel was missing and could be added today?