

Professors' and Students' Conflicting Beliefs about Translanguaging in the EFL Classroom: Dismantling the Monolingual Bias

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Abstract

In this article, we discuss the views about bi/multilingualism that have caused the discursive practice of *linguaging bilingually* to be criticized in formal schooling systems, and we also advocate for a more just and inclusive Applied Linguistics that studies L2 learning and bilingualism from a heteroglossic and multilingual perspective. Next, we venture into examining the beliefs of instructors and learners from the English Department at a public university in Costa Rica, regarding English-Spanish translanguaging in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Finally, we call for the initiation of dialogue within EFL departments that critically dismantles the assumptions, beliefs and practices that fuel the monolingual bias.

Key words: translanguaging, L2 learning, bilingualism, English as a foreign language

Resumen

En este artículo, discutimos las perspectivas sobre bi/multilingüismo que han causado que la práctica discursiva de *linguaging bilingually* sea censurada en sistemas educativos formales, por lo cual proponemos la construcción de una lingüística aplicada más justa e inclusiva que estudie el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua y el bilingüismo desde una perspectiva heteroglósica y multilingüe. Seguidamente, examinamos las opiniones y creencias de profesores y estudiantes del departamento de inglés en una universidad pública en Costa Rica con respecto a *translanguaging* en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Finalmente, hacemos un llamado a empezar un diálogo dentro de los departamentos de EFL que cuestione los supuestos que sustentan la práctica actual de tomar al hablante monolingüe de la lengua meta como modelo en contextos de bilingüismo emergente.

Palabras claves: translanguaging, aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, bilingüismo, inglés como lengua extranjera

Introduction

When bilingualism and languaging bilingually are taken as the normal mode of communication, it is difficult to identify a first or a second language, as bilingualism becomes the heart of the matter.
(Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, p. 143)

The blurring of political boundaries, driven by the availability of exponentially more rapid communication and transportation technologies, has multiplied the bi/multilingual nature of societies around the world. Whereas some individuals are bi/multilingual from childhood, others find themselves learning an additional language later in life, pulled by socioeconomic and geopolitical forces that draw them into this rapidly growing bi/multilingual cohort (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, pp. 140-141). As bi/multilingualism becomes more widespread, so does bi/multilingual speakers' discursive practice of mixing elements of multiple languages when communicating with interlocutors who share a similar linguistic repertoire. Also known as *translanguaging*, *bilingual languaging* has triggered diverse positions ranging from those who maintain that the practice is detrimental, to those who agree that it is a natural part of being and becoming bi/multilingual (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, p. 141). In the educational context particularly, *translanguaging* has been stigmatized based on widespread beliefs about the nature of L2 learning and bilingualism. More recently, however, increasing numbers of scholars concur that *translanguaging* should be examined from a perspective beyond the

monolingual bias that has long characterized the field of Applied Linguistics.

Theoretical considerations

The monolingual bias

The field of Applied Linguistics has largely operated upon the premise that monolingualism is the default for human communication and that the learning of additional languages later in life is to be examined vis-à-vis monolinguals' communicative competence. Under such a premise, the language competence of emerging bilinguals is thus compared not against that of *other multilinguals*, but instead, against *idealized native speakers* whose monolingual upbringing granted them "a superior language competence": *native-ness*. These second language (L2) learners, thus, permanently inhabit a place defined by incompleteness, inadequacy, and deficit. As Ortega (2014) puts it:

When an impossible idealized native speaker competence is elevated to benchmark and arbiter of learning, the monolingual speaker norm not only frames and clouds data and interpretations (a validity threat), but it casts a deficit light on the people doing the learning (an ethical challenge) who are permanently defined and characterized by their second-rate ownership of the new language, their less pure form of linguistic competence (i.e., one that betrays their bi/multilingualism), and their forever lesser rather than perfect monolingual ability. (p. 37)

This assumption that bi/multilingualism is a double monolingualism

has created the belief that for bi/multilingual speakers, each language works as an entirely separate system, this despite the fact that bi/multilingual speakers' ability to translanguage disproves the disconnected role each language is believed to play. This double monolingualism approach to L2 learning has spread over to bilingual education all over the world, causing L1 to be pitted against L2, a practice that contradicts the sociolinguistic reality of students who naturally language bilingually in and outside of the classroom. This language separation has been favored because it emulates the one-parent-one-language practice (believed to nurture effective bilingualism) and also because translanguaging is still thought to reveal "laziness and lack of education" (Sayer, 2013, pp. 67-68). Unfortunately, educational systems which demand that learners separate L1 and L2 in both learning and communication are engaging in the imposition of "...monolingual and monoglossic language ideologies, policies and practices..." that "...silenc[e] the ways in which bilingual children language, thus limiting their educational and life opportunities" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, p. 141).

In similar fashion, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs have discouraged translanguaging under the belief that an L2-only classroom policy maximizes language-learning opportunities. Learners in these programs are to leave their L1 outside the door in order to venture into acquiring their L2. By preventing the L1 from entering the classroom, teachers believe, cross-linguistic contamination is avoided and the stage is set for easier acquisition of the new linguistic sys-

tem. The alleged effectiveness of this practice has been taken to be so self-evident that no research has been required to prove it. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of monolingual instructional practices is also partially nested in the assumption that bringing students' L1 into the classroom constitutes a return to the now demonized grammar/translation method (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105). And so, rather than modeling instruction after the organic, dynamic mix of languages that characterizes multilingual speakers, foreign language education still today, "...traces the language practices of a monolingual individual, simply by multiplying them by two," and fails to portray "the communicative complexity of the 21st century," within which "the concept of a first and a second language has also begun to unravel" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, pp. 142-143).

Sadly, "... moving between languages has traditionally been frowned upon in educational settings, with teachers and students often feeling guilty about its practice. Research shows that codeswitching is rarely institutionally endorsed or pedagogically underpinned. Rather, when it is used, it becomes a pragmatic response to the local classroom context" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105). In fact, teachers often make clear their moral disapproval of language mixing in the classroom, and bilinguals themselves feel embarrassed about their translanguaging, describing it as resulting from carelessness. The strong belief that the practice is evidence of semi-bilingualism has led students to believe that languaging bilingually is detrimental to their learning of L2 and teachers to implement restrictive L2-only policies

that only prevent students from leveraging their L1 and deprive them of potentially enriching learning and communication opportunities.

A history of struggle against the monolingual bias

The stigmatization of translanguaging has also coincided with a heated debate around whether or not (and to what extent) L1 should be allowed in the L2 classroom. On one side, some scholars have advocated for the maximization of L2 use, based on the assumption that extended L2 exposure brings about language learning gains in the form of accurate and fluent language use. On the other side, other scholars have joined efforts to build a case for the role of L1 use in foreign/second language classrooms, by conducting studies grounded in two of the Vygotsky's most important claims: (1) that language is not only a communication device but also a powerful tool that mediates cognition and affectivity and (2) that learning/development is not created in the individual minds alone but also fashioned in the social realm through interaction. Nested in the view of L1 as an asset rather than an impediment, these scholars have shed light on the functions L1 plays for the learners when engaged in complex and cognitively demanding L2 tasks, thus making way for a new way of seeing L2 classrooms as spaces of linguistic hybridity where students' multilingual skills can be accentuated. We summarize the findings of these experts below.

In 1995, Tarone and Swain challenged monolingual instructional assumptions regarding L1 and L2 in a

study they conducted on immersion students in the USA and Canada. In their study, they found that the learners resorted to their L2 for academic and task related purposes and to their L1 for social and interactional purposes; diglossia that became sharper as the students moved along the immersion program (pp. 166-178). Later in 2000, Swain and Lapkin studied 22 pairs of grade 8 students who were asked to complete one of two different tasks: a dictogloss and a jigsaw. They found that the students used their L1 for three main purposes: (1) moving the task along, (2) focusing attention, and (3) interpersonal interaction. Based on their findings, they asserted that L1 usage should not be banned from the class and sustained that *judicious* use of L1 can indeed support L2 learning/use. They closed their study by stating that, "To insist that no use be made of the L1 in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex is to deny the use of an important cognitive tool" (Swain & Lapkin, 2000, pp. 251-74). The results reported by these three scholars set the stage for many others to conduct research around this L1 and L2 debate.

Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) studied the role of L1 in ESL settings by examining if 24 university students in an ESL setting used their L1 as a mediating tool to perform complex and cognitively demanding tasks. The students were formed into twelve pairs (six shared a common L1 and the other six did not) and were asked to perform two tasks: a text reconstruction and a short joint composition task. The results presented in their paper were based on the 6 pairs that shared a common L1, who were also interviewed later to examine

their opinions and perceptions about the functions that their L1 usage fulfilled. At the end, the study yielded four L1 functions that are similar but not identical to those encountered by Swain and Lapkin (2000): (1) task management (talking about how the task was to be completed), (2) task clarifications (talking about task prompt and instructions), (3) vocabulary and meaning (talking about lexical choice and the meaning of words), and (4) grammar (deliberations about grammatical points). Despite the fact that the use of L1 differed from pair to pair and that some of them did not resort to their L1 and reported to be reluctant to it, they all stated that L1 could be a useful tool for gaining control over the task and working at a higher cognitive level. In their conclusions, these scholars clarified that their point was not about encouraging students to use L1 instead of L2 when working on tasks but about L1 usage not being prohibited altogether, as it can be an efficacious tool that allows learners to initiate and sustain verbal interaction (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2004, pp. 760-769).

Gánem Gutiérrez (2007) conducted a study of collaborative activity in a Spanish as a foreign language classroom, based on Vygotsky's construct of 'microgenesis', and in which she conceived interaction as enabling individuals to achieve learning/development. To gain insight into L1 as a mediational tool in the co-construction of learning opportunities, she audio-recorded pairs/trios of students collaborating to complete three language tasks. Despite the uniqueness of each microgenesis instance she examined, she managed to detect patterns and to establish connections between what the students brought to the interaction

and what was constructed in the collaboration. She was able to prove that collaborative activity provided learners with language related episodes and created moments of awareness, which, if followed by linguistic modification, constituted microgenesis affordances leading to language learning. Her results resonated with Vygotsky's claim that cognitive development first appears in the interpsychological planes and then, through social interaction, is internalized by the individual in the intrapsychological plane (Gánem Gutiérrez, 2006).

In 2008, Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney conducted a study, with first year students taking a beginners French course, to examine their views on L1/L2 usage. What stands out about this study is that it was conducted in a context where instructors were being encouraged to use L2 only in class. Their study confirmed findings from previous studies in that although students reported believing that exposure to L2 was necessary and that L1 may be detrimental to aspects of their language development such as pronunciation and fluency, they also admitted that the L1 helps them gain explicit knowledge of linguistic features (grammar and vocabulary) (Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney, 2008). In the same year, Scott and de la Fuente completed a study that shed light on the role of L1 when pairs of intermediate-level learners of French and Spanish engaged in form-focused grammar tasks aimed at raising awareness of linguistic structures. After using conversation analysis to examine videotaped interactions and stimulated recall sessions about the students' L1 use when solving grammar problems in the L2 classroom,

they reported finding that in group 1 (not allowed to use L1) the learners interacted in fragmented and incoherent ways whereas in group 2 (allowed to use L1) the students interacted in a fluent and coherent manner (Scott & de la Fuente, 2008, pp. 110-113).

In 2009, Alegría de la Colina and García Mayo embarked on a study in which they criticized the long-held position that L1 is a source of cross-linguistic influence in L2 classrooms and emphasized the role of L1 as a mediating tool that allows for higher order thinking skills in cognitively demanding L2 tasks. For this purpose, they studied the oral interactions of twelve pairs of undergraduate EFL students with low L2 proficiency when engaged in three collaborative tasks: jigsaw, text reconstruction, and dictogloss. All in all, they found that their subjects used their L1 for metacognition (talking about the task) to a greater extent and for metatalk (talking about the talk) to a lesser extent. The former function included: (1) clarifying task procedures, (2) clarifying content and meaning, (3) understanding information, (4) managing the task, (5) refocusing attention, (6) guiding/planning/monitoring work, (7) developing strategies for dealing with the task, and (8) managing affectivity and releasing stress. The latter function comprised grammar and vocabulary searches and corrections. Overall, they concluded that L1 plays an important role for L2 learners (especially beginners) because it allows them to successfully complete cognitively demanding tasks (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009, pp. 325-345).

More recently, Inbar-Lourie tackled a similar enterprise but from a different

perspective: they examined the L1 use of six teachers with varying linguistic backgrounds teaching English to young learners in Hebrew and Arabic medium schools. In their study, they departed from a well-known reality, namely that “language teaching pedagogy has tended to ignore or even suppress bilingual or multilingual options endorsing a predominantly monolingual policy, one which equates ‘good teaching’ with exclusive or nearly exclusive target language use.” By using classroom observations, teachers’ self-reports and semi-structured interviews, they were able to find that teachers’ instructional practices ranged from mostly L1 usage, to a combination of L1 and L2 usage, to mostly L2 usage. Overall, the purposes that these teachers used L1 for were: (1) instructional: facilitating comprehension, explaining grammar, new words and concepts, (2) managerial: classroom management and providing feedback, and (3) affective: encouraging and comforting students. These scholars reported that the differences in L1 usage among teachers were attributed to their personal pedagogical beliefs and assumptions regarding the program goals and the role of L1 use in the L2 classroom (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, pp. 351-367).

As reported in the studies summarized in this section, there is evidence to believe that L1 plays an important role in mediating the cognition and affectivity that allow students to successfully engage in complex tasks and further develop their L2 proficiency. By and large, these studies have contributed to challenging the monolingual bias and to advocating for the use of multiple languages in ESL, EFL and Language immersion programs.

However, they also seem to operate within assumptions put forth by the very thing they aim to criticize. First, most of these studies were grounded in Vygotsky's postulate of language as a mediating tool that allows for higher order thinking, which the researchers used to validate the occurrences of L1. As much as we agree with the intention of repositioning L1 as a resource for L2 learning, we must also clarify that our point goes beyond this utilitarian view of L1. The way the argument has been developed in the literature herein discussed, the only reason L1 occurrences can be justifiable in the L2 classroom is if these lead to some form of L2 learning. However, we sustain that L1 is more than simply something at the service of L2, and more than just a crutch in additional language learning. Here, we advocate that emerging multilinguals use the totality of their linguistic repertoire in ways that transcend learning and we criticize the practice of suppressing bilinguals' ability and potential to be, exist and operate in multiples languages. Granted, we concede that the fact that L1 serves L2 learning purposes is a good reason to allow for L1 use in the classroom but it should not constitute the only reason. Another point we want to raise is that most of these studies were conducted with novice groups, reflecting the assumption that L1 is a crutch that is most needed at beginning levels of L2 learning. However, to accomplish a fuller understanding of bilinguals and their communication practices, more research should be conducted with advanced levels as well, so that we can get a rounder picture of the true functions and nature of L1 usage in L2 contexts.

By and large, we agree with Chavez (2003) when she calls for EFL classrooms to be seen as sites where use of both L1 and L2 is the result of multi-competence, diglossia, and the emergence of bilingual identities, rather than the outcome of interference, laziness, and lack of language proficiency. As she sustains, the learners' personae are rooted in their L1 and L1 reduces anxiety and validates L2 learners as complete and articulate speakers. Just like her, we wonder how teachers can expect learners to "believe in a truly communicative classroom when communication takes a backseat to the strictures of language policy" (Chavez, 2003, p. 194). To reiterate, given that "[...] there is no empirical basis that can back up the supposition that exclusive TL use correlates with improved learning gains" (Inbar-Lourie, 2010, p. 353) and that "It may well be futile to ask students not to use their L1 when working through cognitively/emotionally complex ideas, as they will do so covertly if not allowed to do so overtly," it becomes imperative that scholars continue to join efforts to disrupt the monolingual bias that still guides instructional choices as to whether or not and to what extent the L1 should be allowed in the L2 classroom (Swain & Lapkin, 2013, p.113).

Dismantling the monolingual bias: translanguaging

In the face of the ever-increasing bi/multilingual nature of modern society, other studies have been conducted to better understand the discursive practices of bi/multilingual speakers beyond the prevalent dichotomization of L1 and L2. In recent years, bilinguals

have started to be regarded “not so much as the sum of two (or more) complete or incomplete monolinguals but rather as specific and fully competent speaker-hearers who have developed a communicative competence that is equal, but different in nature, to that of monolinguals” (Grosjean, 1996, p.2). As several scholars have proven, languaging bilingually is a well-governed practice that communicates linguistic and social information. This new outlook on bilingual languaging allows for the study of bilingual speakers’ communication practices beyond the perspective of codeswitching; this contributes to the eradication of the myth that translanguaging reflects speakers’ poor language proficiency, semi-bilingualism or laziness.

Unlike the prevailing practice of focusing on discrete languages, research on translanguaging centers on bilingual speakers’ observable practice of using the totality of their linguistic repertoire to make sense of their bilingual/cultural worlds. Positioning translanguaging at the heart of L2 learning implies the realization that for bilinguals languages are neither compartmentalized nor random. This shift also presupposes that L2 learning requires flexible spaces that allow for smoother communication and more empowered and equal participation. In educational programs that acknowledge the validity of languaging bilingually, “... translanguaging is then a responsible communicative practice that offers communicative and educational possibilities to all”, a practice in which “speakers are seen to occupy different points in the bilingual continua instead of starting from a monolingual totality” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, pp. 140-148).

Keeping these beliefs in mind, translanguaging (and bi/multilanguaging) must be addressed from a broader perspective to allow the inherent advantages of the translanguaging approach to combat the pervasive monolingual bias in bilingual and foreign language education. The negative characterization of L2 learners/users as speakers of interlanguages, and as failed monolinguals, must be problematized in ways that inform curriculum design, reorganize instructional practices, and eradicate the persistent L1/L2 dichotomization and “the related pathologizing of language transfer, mixed systems, convergence, and the interpenetration of systems, which are all central to language interaction in the ecology of multilingualism” (May, 2014, p. 8). In the following sections, we take on a multilingual mindset to examine the perspectives, beliefs and opinions of both instructors and students at a public university in Costa Rica regarding the practice of languaging bilingually in English and Spanish. Here, we problematize the stigma that translanguaging has accrued and discuss the opportunities and challenges that creating spaces for languaging bilingually in EFL classes can pose for teachers and learners.

Unpacking our intentions and difficulties

Once upon a time scholars assumed that the knowing subject in the disciplines is transparent, disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geo-political configurations of the world in which people are racially ranked and regions are racially configured. – Walter Mignolo

From the beginning, when we resolved to embark on this endeavor, our intention was to challenge the existing “detached, objective, and neutral” knowledge that scholars have advanced regarding L2 learning and bilingual education. In our discussions prior to the drafting of this article, we converged on the fact that the vast majority of SLA research originates in monolingual, typically English-speaking countries. This was an upsetting realization given that, as Mignolo puts it, although all knowledges are situated both geographically and politically, only some have historically been taken to be applicable at worldwide scales: those coming from the Euro-center. These Eurocentric academic spheres, he further explains, have managed to hide the geo-political origins and self-serving interests of the knowledge they generate and have propagated epistemic silences by rendering other alternative knowledges produced elsewhere as only applicable locally and by classifying these knowledges as particularistic:

[...] if you ‘come’ from Latin America you have to ‘talk about’ Latin America; that in such a case you have to be a token of your culture. Such expectation will not arise if the author ‘comes’ from Germany, France, England or the US. In such cases it is not assumed that you have to be talking about your culture but can function as a theoretically minded person. (Mignolo, 2009, p. 2)

An Applied Linguistics that bases entirely on research coming from typically English-speaking monolingual countries is that the conclusions therein can, at best, only provide a partial picture of the nature of L2 learning

and bilingualism in places outside the euro-center. In conducting research, Mignolo (2009) explains, one should be aware of that fact that “the knower is always implicated [...] in the known” and that there is no such thing as a “[...] detached observer, a neutral seeker of truth and objectivity who [...] controls the disciplinary rules and puts himself or herself in a privileged position to evaluate and dictate” (p. 4). That is why it becomes imperative that more diverse geographically and politically situated knowledges be incorporated at the core of the discipline (what Mignolo calls the de-colonial option). And therefore, we intend to challenge the current globally-applied knowledge around L2 learning and bilingualism by unveiling its geo-political origins and by creating alternative knowledges. In doing so, however, we *do not* claim to be writing from an ahistorical or apolitical position; on the contrary, we do explicitly aim to disrupt the romanticized figure of the “objective, detached, and neutral” theoretically-minded Eurocentric expert. Herein we acknowledge that (1) we are writing from geo-historical marked spaces and departing from a particular standpoint: the combined perspective of a researcher from the center (USA) and another from the periphery (Costa Rica) and that (2) we are writing about the monolingual bias within a Costa Rican context. Furthermore, it also goes without saying that we do not claim originality in this enterprise. Instead, writing from a mutual concern about the monolingual bias currently guiding the work of both scholars and practitioners alike, our intention is to join the efforts of a growing number of scholars who intend to create a fairer more inclusive Applied

Linguistics that listens to diverse voices, embraces non-Eurocentric realities of bi/multilingualism, and studies L2 learning and teaching from a multilingual perspective.

Also worthy of mention here are the hardships we encountered in this pursuit. As one may foresee, embracing the de-colonial option required that we attempt to de-colonize our own minds from the discourses of the monolingual bias before critiquing the popular beliefs about L1 and L2 that have made their way into teachers and students' pedagogical practices. But as much as we tried, we found it challenging to conduct data collection without resorting to the very terms that perpetuate the monolingual bias. Throughout the interviews, Author 1 found himself using the terms 'native speaker' and 'nonnative speaker' repeatedly. In using these terms, the researcher engaged in two damaging semantic actions: (1) the construction of "[...] archetypal native speaker [who] is imagined to possess a superior kind of linguistic competence, one whose purity proves itself in the absence of detectable traces of any other languages during (natural or elicited) language use" (Ortega, 2014, p. 35) and (2) the portrayal of the bilingual speaker as a person who acquired communicative competence in an additional language later in life and who "...is imagined as possessing (or striving to possess) a derivative and approximate kind of linguistic competence, one that betrays itself in detectable traces of other languages during (natural or elicited) language use" (Ortega, 2014, p. 35).

Also, as this same researcher asked the respondents to think of potential learning outcomes of using L1 in class,

he was met with puzzled reactions that challenged the logic and validity of the question. When faced with this question, the informants either openly said that the question did not make sense at all, displayed expressions of puzzlement and confusion, or took a few seconds to process a question that they thought was irrational, unreasonable and absurd. At times, the researcher even found it difficult to get respondents to seriously consider the question and provide an answer. Needless to say, it was in this encounter of two colonized minds that the researcher often fell back on the very terminology constituting the discourses of the monolingual bias that the study aimed at dismantling. Clearly, these pointed reactions, coupled with the researchers' inevitable use of the terminology that is the focus of discussion, reveal the difficulty in ridding Applied Linguistics and foreign/bilingual education programs of the pervasive monolingual bias. Attaining a critical and open-minded dialogue about the implications of taking a monoglossic and monolingual viewpoint to additional language learning has already proven not to be an easy task.

Methodology and data analysis

To get a broad sample of the assumptions held by both students and instructors regarding translanguaging in the L2 classroom, we decided upon the following participant selection criteria. First, we resolved to work with students majoring in the B.A. in English and in the B.A. in English Teaching to collect a representative sample of the discourses that circulate in the entire EFL department. Out of the total sampled population we

selected ten students, seven of whom are majoring in English and three of whom are majoring in English Teaching. Out of this cohort, two students are in their second year, four are in their third year, and four more are in their fourth year, thus providing a sample of the ideas/opinions that the students hold/develop throughout the course of their four-year programs. We purposely did not include first-year students because interviews were conducted early in the school year, so these students would have only limited experience in the program. Regarding the five instructors participating in the study, we chose those representing the existing range of teaching experience at the institution, from the least experienced (9 years) to the most experienced (25 years). They are all full time instructors in the two B.A. programs under study.

Informants participated in semi-structured interviews that ranged from twenty to forty-five minutes. Interviews were held in an office that provided the necessary privacy and freedom to give honest answers. All participants were promised anonymity and invited to speak in either English or Spanish in their responses to the questions. Instructions for the interview were given in both English and Spanish to make sure procedures were clear before proceeding with the interview. The interview consisted of two parts, the first addressing the nature of bilingualism and the second referencing the practice of translanguaging in L2 learning contexts. Throughout the entire interview, the word *translanguaging* was intentionally avoided by the interviewer; interestingly, it was never mentioned by interviewees as well. It is important

to clarify that the questions evolved as the interviewer gained experience getting the participants to discuss certain matters. All variations of the original question can be viewed in Appendix 1.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data were analyzed inductively, in order to maximize our understanding of how participants viewed translanguaging. This is as opposed to beginning with categories predefined by the literature or our own pre-conceptions (though, inevitably, our own understandings of and perspectives on translanguaging colored our understanding of the data). We used NVivo software to organize and code the interviews, and to make the overarching themes more salient.

Discussion of findings

Analysis of the interview data revealed three overlapping and contradictory perspectives on translanguaging. In the sections that follow, we take each of these perspectives in turn. Overwhelmingly, interviewees' statements showed that they considered translanguaging to be an ineffective practice. In fact, interviewees often expressed confusion and/or misunderstanding regarding the interview questions themselves. Why were they being asked to consider the possible utility of L1, when *common wisdom holds* that L2 learning is most effective in an L2-only environment? The facial expressions and general body language of interviewees suggested that they had not considered the possible salience of a multilingual classroom.

Interviewees argued against the use of L1 in the classroom for three interconnected reasons: (1) L1 use would hinder cognitive processes necessary for L2 learning, (2) L1 use would create a habit of laziness, deadening both conscious and sub-conscious processes of learning, and finally, (3) L1 use in the classroom too closely resembles translation and would detract from the methods of communicative language teaching. Some interviewees expressed limited support for translanguaging, stating that it would be permissible, but only in certain situations. For example, there was some acceptance around the idea of using L1 in the L2 classroom of *beginners*. However, it was clearly stated that this should be transitional and limited. Others, especially those training to be teachers, talked about how the L1 might be used “as a last resort,” but then only when all other methods for communication had been exhausted. Finally, there were moments where interviewees spoke of translanguaging as a natural form of communication for multilinguals. Of the ten students and five professors interviewed, *none* expressed unabashed support for translanguaging. Although five students made comments about the naturalness of translanguaging, or the potential benefits of using L1 in an L2 classroom, nearly all of these comments were hedged, contingent, and hesitant.

Theme 1: L1 use in the classroom is ineffective

In this section we discuss the various arguments made against translanguaging. In particular, we focus on how L1 use in the L2 classroom was viewed as an ineffective practice.

L1 use as act of laziness that hinders cognitive processes. Among the reasons given for the superiority of an L2-only classroom environment was the belief that cognitive processes of acquisition only worked when all input and output was entirely in the L2. Professors and students alike claimed that the presence of the L1, in this case Spanish, caused their brains to become “lazy,” and that it was only when instruction was completely in the L2 that “you stimulate something in the brain.” In Excerpt 1 below, the interviewer (Author 1) was asking the professor’s opinion on language of instruction in an English course: should the instructor speak in Spanish, English, or a combination of the two?

Excerpt 1: “You stimulate something in the brain” (Professor Nerita)¹

- ¹ *Prof Nerita:* Not at all... Only in English..
- ² (*Author 1*): Why?
- ³ *Prof. Nerita:* Because... uhhmmm.... when you teach only in English, you motivate, you
- ⁴ stimulate something in the brain, uhhh.... brain processes, to be able to address,
- ⁵ to decode English.... When you’re speaking in Spanish and in English, what
- ⁶ happens is that the students, they will always be waiting for your explanations
- ⁷ in Spanish, they don’t make the effort to decode what you’re saying in
- ⁸ English... because they know that the Spanish version will come at some point...
- ⁹ and when you’re speaking only in Spanish, well then that’s not an English class at
- ¹⁰ all... So... uhhhhh... if it’s an English class, it has to be taught in English, totally...
- ¹¹ and... in my experience, in so many years teaching, it does work... the students at
- ¹² some point begin to decode, they pay attention...uhhh... they try to understand

¹³ what you're saying... uhhhh... they're
 more interested in looking up for the
¹⁴ meaning of words... doing their own job,
 not only the teachers... uhmmmm... and
¹⁵ I, I, I remember that when I was a stu-
 dent, I was always checking the cognitive
¹⁶ process, my own cognitive processes as
 well, and it's really like that, it's like, if
¹⁷ you teach in Spanish, something that has
 to be translated or, or transformed into
¹⁸ English, then like the message has to go
 like, through a way that is very long, it's
¹⁹ like go to different places, the informa-
 tion goes through different places, in your
²⁰ brain, to finally be able to understand a
 word, so it takes a lot of time and it's
²¹ confusing... When you have, when the
 input, the input, is in English, and you
²² have to try to think in English and decode
 in English, it's faster and it's much more
²³ meaningful... So I always teach in Eng-
 lish and I have always been success-
 ful... and
²⁴ the, the, the case that I have just...
 the example that I gave you about
 this student, is
²⁵ one of those, he couldn't understand, he
 could understand like a 15%, 10% of what I
²⁶ said, when we began the course, and we
 have like what, a month and a half
²⁷ teaching? And he, I believe that he under-
 stands like 70% right now, but the classes
²⁸ are only in English, and he's produc-
 ing... he's producing when he was able to
²⁹ produce nothing at all at the begin-
 ning... So I know it's like that... ..
³⁴ in fact, most of the students do not
 speak English at all once they, well, the
 class is
³⁵ over.. that time of the class has to... uhh-
 hh... be used in the most efficient way, and
³⁶ that's using English...

As discussed earlier, the idea that bilingualism is a double monolingual-

ism has created the belief that L1 and L2 are entirely different systems, and thus a blended use of these two disconnected systems is bound to render negative effects on L2 learning. As stated by Nerita, lines 3-5, it is only by staying in the L2 *alone* that the students will be able to ignite the "cognitive processes" necessary to decode the target language, illustrating the bilingualism-through-monolingualism trend we see elsewhere. Her belief that L2-only exposure leads to better L2 proficiency and learning habits (lines 11-14) mirrors the long-held assumption that L2 learning implies becoming monolingual a second time around, and reflects, by extension, the idea that a monolingual upbringing leads to a superior and more pure form of the L2. In lines 5-8 she goes on to connect staying in the L2 to motivation and suggests that the students can only decode the L2 if they rely on L2 exclusively. In addition, she warns that using L1 in class may trigger laziness and implies that learning L2 by way of L1 is a time consuming route that may confuse students because input in Spanish has to be translated into English (16-23), revealing her belief that L1 and L2 are separate systems. To this she adds that, as a language instructor, she has been successful at keeping her students in the L2, hinting that her success is also the students' success. This professors' belief that using L1 for building learning/understanding is an act of 'laziness' leaves out of the equation the fact that in L2 learning classes students are becoming bilinguals whose use of L1 and L2 is not as clear cut as some wish it would be. Another important aspect is that in Nerita's opinion, an English class where Spanish is used is not an English class at all.

Students also made statements connecting beliefs about cognitive processes of language learning with feelings of laziness. For example, Julian, a third year student, argued that although Spanish could be used to give grammar examples, English should be used for all other purposes. Using Spanish, even to resolve a confusion, was counterproductive to learning.

...if you say something someone didn't understand, you can explain it in English, and you, and everybody is going to get used to that, to the English, if you explain something, if you say something someone didn't understand and you explain and you say "Well, you didn't understand, this is this, esto es esto, and you explain in Spanish...uhhhh.... *that's not good, your brain, your brain is getting lazy because it is not learning....* (Julian, *emphasis added*)

Another student, Graciela, argued that language learning required "persistence and commitment," and that allowing Spanish in the classroom cancelled out that effort, substituting it with laziness. When asked what the language of instruction should be, she stated that it should be "...just English..." and went on to explain that "if you keep translating... if you keep asking the professor to translate that or what's the meaning of that... you won't learn because your brain will say, "Oh, this is the easiest part, the way to go" ... So, my brain won't ... uhmmm... be... uhmmm able to, to put pressure.... that you need to learn that word... because no one is going to tell you..." In her view, L2 learners need to immerse into this artificially-created monolingual world where the L1 is cancelled out

'for the sake of L2 learning' and where absence of the L1 calls for their persistence and commitment to communicate in the L2 only. This pervasive idea that exclusive use of L2 in the L2 classroom is the ideal condition for learning, and that resorting to L1 is an act of laziness that hinders learning, was found across all interviews.

Translanguaging is simply translation. When met with questions about whether or not L1 should have a place in the L2 classroom, participants had a difficult time visualizing what that would look like in practice. Without a single exception, they all assumed that using multiple languages in the classroom meant both teachers and students would be translating back and forth, which they deem to be detrimental and counterproductive to L2 learning. This translating practice, as they visualize it, is a crutch that both teachers and students rely on to make up for lack of proficiency in the L2. In their responses, there seems to be neither awareness of nor openness to the use of multiple languages as pedagogically appropriate. Besides evidence from the excerpts above indicating that several participants equate translanguaging with translating (e.g., see lines 5-8 in excerpt 1), Graciela provides some interesting insights as she juxtaposes her experiences as an L2 learner herself to her experiences as an EFL teacher. When met with a question around the use of both English and Spanish in class, she responded:

**Excerpt 2: Oh, now I get it!
(Graciela - 4th year student)**

- ¹ Graciela: uhmmm... I would say just in English... like in my experience... learning so far in

² these four years... I would say just English... I want everything in English, all
³ professors talking in English and if I don't know a word... it's my commitment go and
⁴ look for that word... google or whatever... however, I have the experience of being a
⁵ teacher and how that may affect us because they... the little kids, they don't know a
⁶ word that may be the clue to understand what we are talking about... so there's when
⁷ you can say that we may need a combination of both... because there are kids that
⁸ won't look up the word in the dictionary... cuz they don't know how to read... so
⁹ sometimes you do... uhmmm... like mimics and draw and you try to do everything...
¹⁰ to... for them to understand but it's really hard... so sometimes I, I have used
¹¹ Spanish... So they are like "Oh", "Oh"... "Now I get it"... But just a word and that's it...
¹² But if I keep the, the whole class in Spanish... or a combination of both, it might affect
¹³ because they might be waiting for my translation so that they can understand... So I
¹⁴ first try to do like everything that is in my hands to help them to understand...
¹⁵ however, not giving like easy for them... like they need to really think what I'm talking
¹⁶ about, what is that they need to do, and if they don't get, if there's no possibility than
¹⁷ just saying it in Spanish. Like I will give the word, just the word and that would be it...

Interestingly, she has opposing opinions regarding the use of multiple languages in class. As a student she favors the exclusive use of L2 in class,

but as a teacher herself, she acknowledges that at times L1 use is necessary for the purpose of learning and understanding. However, she instantly clarifies that this translanguaging, which takes the form of translation in class, is to be kept to a minimum. She explains that she first does everything she can to stay in the L2 - even drawing and using pantomime - and that she uses L1 (only a word) as her last resort. As she maintains, overuse of L1 in the form of translation is counterproductive because it fosters the students' bad habit of always waiting for a translation. As evident in her response, the only way she can visualize L1 in class is in the form of translations, a trend that was corroborated in all of the interviews. In the face of this, Author 1 began presenting the interviewees with hypothetical scenarios of L1 and L2 blended use that did not take the form of translation. But still, respondents totally opposed it or were hesitant about it. In the following excerpt, Julian discusses and evaluates pedagogical examples brought by the interviewer to illustrate what a multilingual classroom might look like, urging him to expand his notion of L1 as merely a medium for translation in the L2 classroom.

Excerpt 3: Translating is not part of your life! (Julian - 3rd year student)

¹ *Author 1:* Ok, uhhhhh..... I'll give you a few scenarios and you tell me what you think.... what if a
² professor walks into the class and brings a newspaper article from La Nación and the
³ professor asks the students to read the text in class and then discuss it in English... Is

4 that a good or a bad practice? In your opinion...

5 *Julian:* Uhhhh.... I think is a bad practice...

6 *Author 1:* Why is it a bad practice?

7 *Julian:* Uhhh... because...uhhhh... what you are doing is translating and translating is not part

8 of your life, you will not always translate things... and if it....uhh.... let's say that this

9 newspaper is in English, you'll find vocabulary, you'll find, uhhhh, expressions, you

10 don't have any Spanish, if it's in Spanish you have that but you think how to say it in

11 English, but I don't know why, American speakers, they don't say what we say sometimes, they have a different, a different way of thinking, and differ, you know, since the language is different, they think different, I think so... I think it shouldn't be a

14 newspaper in Spanish...

15 *Author 1:* What if the professor brings into the class a text in Spanish and asks the students to

16 translate into English... ? Let's say the text is about a medical procedure or

17 something, something technical, and then the professor uses that for the students to

18 translate into English... Is that a good or a bad practice?

19 *Julian:* Uhhh, well, it depends of the purpose of the practice...

20 *Author 1:* Can you, can you possibly see a teaching/learning purpose in that activity? A

21 beneficial one, purpose...

22 *Julian:* Purpose... uhhhh... that's translating.... Well, I don't think translating makes sense...

23 *Author 1:* Why not?

24 *Julian:* Because..... (Silence).... Oh, well, maybe it does, sometimes we want to say

25 something and we know what is in Spanish and we have to know, and we want to

26 know how to say something, something similar in English, yeah, maybe it makes

27 sense to have some idea how to say different things we have in Spanish,

28 expressions, we can find some expressions..... yeah, maybe it makes sense...

For Julian, even discussing a Spanish text in English comprised an example of the stigmatized translation exercise. In lines 7-14, he defends his point by saying that translating is not a part of life and by explaining that English and Spanish are very different languages that have no point of comparison. However, in lines 24-28, as he is prompted to consider a translation exercise on a technical text, he admits that he would agree with that activity because of its clear pedagogical purpose and seems to start to find value in being exposed to activities in which both English and Spanish are brought to the floor. As is evident in the excerpt, he agrees with the translation exercise but with stark hesitation. His response suggests that Julian has never given mindful consideration to the possibility of using multiple languages in class and that he has been influenced by the dominant discourse of seeing the occurrence of L1 in the L2 classroom as a pedagogical reversion to the long-stigmatized grammar-translation approach.

However, not all students considered translanguaging in the classroom to be a delegitimate experience that is evidence of lack of proficiency in the L2 and that only leads to semi-bilingualism in the form of cross-linguistic contamination. Take Belita, a 3rd year student, as an example. In the beginning

of the interview her responses were not remarkable, and indeed were typical of the other interviewees. She argued that the more English that was used in the classroom, the better, and she seemed to be an advocate of primarily L2 usage in the classroom. However, as Excerpt 4 shows, her thinking changes as she considers some of the hypothetical situations brought to the floor.

**Excerpt 4: If we're bilingual,
we cannot ignore the other language
(Belita, 3 year student)**

- 1 *Author 1:* But you're telling me that the more you use English the better, so I would assume that
- 2 bringing English with you outside of the classroom would be even better than better...
- 3 *Belita:* Yeah, it would be even better... yeah, that's why... it's better there, but bringing
- 4 Spanish to the classroom is not, is not good....
- 5 *Author 1:* It's not good....Why?
- 6 *Belita:* ...(Laughter)... Because, that's a good... (Laughter)... a good question... Because,
- 7 well, I don't know why, because probably we are more in contact to the language,
- 8 when we are with the professor, because the professor can provide us information,
- 9 and I think that it's a way to respect others, respect others, I don't know, I don't know...
- 10 *Author 1:* Ok, ok... What if the professor....? I'll give you a few hypothetical situations and you'll
- 11 tell me if it's right or wrong.... What if the professor comes to class and, and brings
- 12 you a newspaper article from La Nación, you know La Nación is written in Spanish,
- 14 and it's about a very important event from that week and the professor has you read
- 15 that and talk about it in English... Is that a good practice or a bad practice?
- 16 *Belita:* No, it's a good practice...
- 17 *Author 1:* Why is it a good practice?
- 18 *Belita:* Cuz....uhhh.... we live in a place in which, in which the, the, the language is Spanish,
- 19 and we have to be upda, updated, and of course that we cannot ignore the other
- 20 languages and the whole world, we cannot think that if we are English class that
- 21 everything is gonna happen in a place where the main language is English...
- 22 *Author 1:* So written Spanish is okay but spoken Spanish is wrong?
- 23 *Belita:* No, it's not wrong.... (Laughter)... It's not wrong.....
- 24 *Author 1:* Let me change it then... What if the professor doesn't bring... uhh..... a newspaper
- 25 article but brings an audio, a, a segment from 7 Días...
- 26 *Belita:* But we're gonna discuss it in English...
- 27 *Author 1:* You're going to discuss it in English... So is it a good practice or a bad practice?
- 28 *Belita:* No, for me it's not a bad practice because, because we are gonna discuss it in
- 29 English... If we are going to discuss it in Spanish, so it would be weird....
- 30 *Author 1:* And what if the professor brings instead a technical, a very technical text about
- 31 technology or science or law, and the professor requires that you translate that into
- 32 English...Is that a good practice or bad practice?
- 33 *Belita:* No, that's a good practice....

³⁴ *Author 1*: And if the text is in English and the professor requires you to translate it into Spanish.... Is that a good practice or a bad practice...?

³⁶ *Belita*: Still being a good practice... because it forces us to, to think in both languages, at the

³⁷ same time, that's something that a bilingual person has to do sometimes, no? If we

³⁸ are bilingual, we cannot ignore one language, I think that I changed my opinion...

³⁹ (Laughter).... during the whole conversation...

Belita's transition seems to begin in line 6, as she laughs in response to Author 1's questioning of her statement that "... bringing Spanish to the classroom is not, is not good..." As Author 1 prompts her with various hypothetical situations - for example reading *La Nación* in Spanish, but discussing it in English - her statements shift from confusion in being asked to form her own opinion to realization that bilingual speakers naturally blend L1 and L2 in both speaking and learning. In lines 18-21, she seems to become aware of how using multiple languages in the classroom might be not only tolerable, but relevant. She says, "...we live in a place in which, in which the, the, the language is Spanish, and we have to be upda, updated, and of course that we cannot ignore the other languages and the whole world, we cannot think that if we are English class that everything is gonna happen in a place where the main language is English..." This statement displays a keen understanding of her place in the geopolitical reality of the global 21st century. As the interview progresses, she seems to build to the understanding that as a bilingual living in a Spanish-speaking country,

her reality is that she will naturally need to use both languages as one unified repertoire.

Her transformation continues in lines 28-29, as she responds to Author 1's hypothetical situation of students watching "7 Días" in Spanish, but then discussing it in English. She says, "No, for me it's not a bad practice because, because we are gonna discuss it in English... If we are going to discuss it in Spanish, so it would be weird..." Ultimately, she decides that the various hypothetical situations proposed by Author 1 are all good practices, "because it forces us to, to think in both languages, at the same time, that's something that a bilingual person has to do sometimes, no? If we are bilingual, we cannot ignore one language, I think that I changed my opinion... (Laughter).... during the whole conversation..." Here we see her burgeoning understanding of *what it means to be bilingual*. Rather than two monolinguals trapped in the same body, a user of L1 and L2, she begins to see herself as the possessor of a unified repertoire, a single L. This epiphany brings with it the realization that her initial views on L1 use have not been shaped by research, but rather through academic socialization. By the end, we see a shift both in how she views Spanish and how she views herself.

Theme 2: Acceptability of L1 use is conditional

Whenever the respondents agreed to the use of multiple languages in class, they established an array of conditions under which this is justifiable. Similar to studies conducted around L1 use in foreign, second and immersion

language programs, (discussed in the literature review in this paper) the respondents report very specific uses for L1 in L2 contexts. It is noteworthy that both instructors and students are careful to explain that blended use of L1 and L2 is only legitimate and reasonable as a last resort, at the beginning levels of language proficiency, and only for limited purposes.

**Excerpt 5: L1 only with beginners
(Professor Alicia)**

¹ *Author 1:* Ok... In your opinion... question number six.... In your opinion, what would
² probably foster or facilitate language learning, using only English in class, allowing
³ Spanish in class....you know.... Only Spanish... or allowing a combination of both?
⁴ What probably fosters/ facilitates learning?
⁵ *Prof. Alicia:* At different levels, like I mentioned in question number four... if it's beginners... like
⁶ then you can use a combination cuz if not they're gonna be frustrated... and you're
⁷ not gonna see results, positive results... the idea here is not to... to have negative
⁸ backwash... from them... like if you're... if everything you do is gonna generate
⁹ negative, negative results.... And reactions from them... So I would say for very
¹⁰ beginners, a combination of both.... Depending on the way they (inaudible) in the
¹¹ language....And for the other levels then... I think that for them it would be only
¹² English...and I think that would help them be better language performance
¹³ because they're gonna be pushed to use it... they will start thinking in that

¹⁴ language... They would see it as their... as something natural in the class and not
¹⁵ as a language that we switch to when we're doing a task...

For Professor Alicia, it is important that students be pushed to use the L2 but also clarifies that L1 use can be necessary with beginners to avoid frustration. She also connects exclusive use of L2 with helping students to start thinking in English, and seems to deem switching back and forth from L1 to L2 as only tolerable with beginning students. Likewise, Alejandro provides a rationale that sets clear boundaries for L1 as a resource:

**Excerpt 5: Spanish is useful but
it has to have restrictions!
(Alejandro, 3rd year student)**

¹ *Alejandro:* Ok, maybe in a discussion activity... I would say that.... uhhhh... in discussion activity
² you might do the brainstorm with your classmates or the group you're working with,
³ you might talk in Spanish to clarify your ideas, and exchan... exchange the ideas
⁴ more fluent, more rapidly... so once you have to start talking in English in front of the
⁵ wholeclass,youmightavelike...uhhh... a bunch of ideas in your head so you
⁶ might feel comfortable, so maybe in a discussion activity...uhhh... Spanish is useful,
⁷ but it has to have restrictions like, just, guys, ok, you're allowed to use Spanish for 5
⁸ minutes, just to do the brainstorm, then go ahead and move to, like a second stage in
⁹ which you talk in English or something... I have done that in the past, in which I talk in

¹⁰ Spanish what I know about a certain topic... uhhh... so once I do have to speak in

¹¹ English, I feel comfortable....

In his response, ‘maybe’ clearly marks his stance regarding the topic under discussion. Although he allows that Spanish may be useful for brainstorming and collecting ideas prior to a discussion activity and that this may help students feel more comfortable in terms of readiness for participation, he clarifies that such reversal to L1 required time restrictions: no more than five minutes. Using L1, he reports, would allow for faster and more fluent exchange of ideas in preparing for a later L2 use activity. Another student, Julian, refers to another restriction: the type of course. He states that “if it’s grammar, sometimes it’s good to know the examples in Spanish, but if it’s oral expression, you don’t, you don’t have to say like examples in Spanish, I think so... uhhhh...” Interestingly, he believes that L1 use is acceptable in a grammar course but not in an oral communication course, revealing his assumption that in L2 contexts, L1 is useful for learning but not for extended communication. In similar fashion, Prof. Margarita offers a set of conditions that legitimize the use of L1 in the L2 classroom:

***Excerpt 6: Spanish is useful
but it has to have restrictions!
(Margarita, professor)***

¹ *Prof. Margarita:* To understand a grammar structure, for example... because sometimes
² students are not able to, to... understand a grammar structure in English, so if
³ there’s a way to compare that to Spanish, then they get it, for example this

⁴ present perfect (laughter) which is very hard for them to understand or, or if
⁵ you give an example of present perfect in Spanish... What I’ve seen is that,
⁶ that’s easier for them to understand... so it’s not like using Spanish and
⁷ then... you know like spending half of the class speaking in Spanish, but just
⁸ put an example... just with that example... uhmmmm.... It’s easier to move
⁹ on... like students understand better... or uhmmmm.... Expressions, for
¹⁰ example... idiomatic expressions... idioms ... if you do not translate... the
¹¹ idiom... of course... try to find the... uhhmm.... the similar one in their native
¹² language... it will be easy for them to understand... and also.... As I said... if
¹³ they really want to say something and they don’t know how to say it... it
¹⁴ could...they could use Spanish...maybe a word or short sentences... they
¹⁵ would feel motivated to keep on talking because they, they felt... I think they
¹⁶ would feel respected, and they would feel like they could say what they
¹⁷ wanted to say even though they used their native language

In this excerpt Professor Margarita articulates that not only should there be a limit on the quantity of time using the L1 (lines 6-8), but also on the amount of language used (e.g. line 14 - limited phrases, short sentences). After admitting that allowing the use of multiple language makes it “easier to move on,” she addresses the purposes for which L1 use may be reasonable. According to her, L2 can be used for explaining difficult grammar such as present perfect and for clarifying difficult vocabulary such as idiomatic expressions. In such contexts, searching for equivalents in the L1, the use of

Spanish can be exploited. What is noteworthy here is that she implies that L1 is brought into the class whenever understanding and comprehension seems to be jeopardized, thus revealing that, as seen with the other respondents, she finds it hard to see a place for L1 in the L2 classroom, other than the “crutch view” other participants also seem to hold. Her deficit view of the use of L1 in the classroom can be corroborated when she states that “they would feel motivated to keep on talking because they, they felt... I think they would feel respected, and they would feel like they could say what they wanted to say *even though they used their native language*” (emphasis added). Clearly, her use of ‘even though’ in reference to the use of their mother tongue reveals that she considers the use of L1 to be basically a failure at operating in the idealized monolingual mode of communication.

Theme 3: Translanguaging is natural for multilinguals

Although the overwhelming majority of participants expressed a preference for L2-only classroom policies and practices, they have contradictory thoughts about this as they also admit that translanguaging, or the mixing of English and Spanish as they call it, is something that comes naturally to them, mostly outside but also inside the classroom. When pushed to consider the idea of bringing this natural part of being bilingual into the classroom, however, they become more hesitant. Excerpt 7 below is an example of the contradictory ideas participants have about the value of translanguaging:

***Excerpt 7: I use Spanglish!* (Claudia, student)**

- 1 *Author 1:* If, if you were to place yourself somewhere in a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is
- 2 proficient in English and 1 is beginner... where would you put yourself?
- 3 *Claudia:* I’ve never wanted to ask... or.... myself that... because if I say 10 I feel like I’m
- 4 bragging and I don’t like that... and I’m not gonna say 1 because I’m not 1....
- 5 Maybe....uhmmmm... 9, reaching to 10, you know, almost uploading... to 10...
- 6 *Author 1:* And do you still use Spanish sometimes in class?
- 7 *Claudia:* Yes!
- 8 *Author 1:* If you’re a 9... and, or almost a 10... why do you sometimes use Spanish in class?
- 9 *Claudia:* Because I don’t.... You know it’s not like.... I use it to... talk to my classmates... when
- 10 something happened to me or something or to us, something to my classmates but
- 11 not to the professor... I use Spanish with the professors to, I don’t know, if I don’t
- 12 know a word in English or I wanna ask for something... But I think I use Spanish because, well, you’re used to speaking Spanish the whole day and you talk to your classmates mostly in English... I use Spanglish with my classmates, I... when I’m
- 15 texting someone that I know speaks English, I use a lot of words in English... and
- 16 sometimes is for, to me it’s really hard because I want to explain something to someone and I wanna use a word like “Oh my God” or, or “He was so freaked out”...
- 17 and they don’t understand what I’m saying or sometimes I, when I, when I’m with my

19 friends, my other friends, they don't speak
English, so we went out and, and, and I
20 said something in English, and they
were like "Spanish please!" and, and,
and I feel
21 limited... limited?...
22 *Author 1*: limited?
23 *Claudia*: Limited to speak some, to say
some words... because I have, I'm so
used to speaking
24 in Spanglish and use some words in my
regular Spanish in my, in my texts... that I
25 feel limited and they get mad...
26 *Author 1*: So you feel limited with your
friends...
27 *Claudia*: With my, with my cousins that
they, sometimes I use a word and they
are like
28 "Please, I don't know English!" and they get
mad because they think I'm bragging but
29 I'm not... it's because I'm so used to
speaking English the whole week...
30 *Author 1*: Can we say that you sometimes
may feel limited in English class as well?
31 *Claudia*: No.
32 *Author 1*: Why not?
33 *Author 1*: Because I, I really, I used to
feel limited, but I'm, I don't anymore be-
cause I think I can
34 explain myself and everything...

There are several aspects worth highlighting in this excerpt. In this section of the interview, Claudia was asked to give herself a number from one to ten on an imaginary bilingualism scale, with one representing 'not bilingual' and ten representing 'fully bilingual.' She decided she should be given a 9, almost a 10. Previously in this same interview, Claudia had said that L1 could be used in class only with beginners because they lacked the proficiency to remain in the L2 the entire class. And so, Author 1

used the information in this excerpt to further probe her beliefs about L1 in class and translanguaging in general. Upon being questioned about why she still used Spanish in class if she has achieved a high ranking on the imaginary bilingualism scale, she gives an interesting rationale. First, she says that she only uses it with her classmates and not the professor, in an attempt to make her in-class language choices more reasonable. Then she reports that she uses Spanish in class because she is used to speaking this language all day long, and additionally confesses to using *Spanglish* with her classmates and anybody who she knows is bilingual in English and Spanish. She explained that this practice has become so natural to her that she sometimes uses Spanglish with monolingual friends or family and that this, she reports, has raised eyebrows. And here, she brings an interesting belief to the table. She asserts that whenever she has used English with monolingual friends or family, they have read this practice as bragging. And so it seems that the mixing of L1 and L2 is marginalized outside the L2 classroom as much as inside it. Excerpts 8 and 9 below show further support for translanguaging as a natural practice.

Excerpt 8: I don't think she speaks Spanish on purpose! (Alejandro, third-year student)

1 *Author 1*: Why do you think your classmate resorted to Spanish?
2 *Alejandro*: Well, uh h h h h h..... Well, in that case, uh h h h h h.... I think that person believes that he has
3 mastered the language so there's no distinction between speaking Spanish and

⁴ English, so she believes... uhhhh... she can do it... uhhhhh... whenever she wants, so...

⁵ so...
⁶ *Author 1*: Do you think she did it on purpose?

⁷ Alejandro... I wouldn't say it was on purpose.... I would say that it was just natural...uhhhh...

⁸ but... uhhhh... then she replied in English the same words she said in Spanish, so...

⁹ *Author 1*: So there was translation....

¹⁰ *Alejandro*: Yeah, so it was weird...

Excerpt 9: It's natural...

It just goes there! (Alicia, professor)

¹ *Author 1*: Do bilingual and monolingual speakers use language in similar or different ways?

² How?

³ *Prof. Alicia*: In different... I think that when you learn another language.... That language

⁴ affects the way you use your first language... your mother tongue... somehow you become more aware of some features of your own language and... and....

⁶ That affects, and also, if I'm talking to someone who I know that that person also speaks English, then I might mix the two languages... If I don't remember... and it

⁸ happens sometimes I can't remember a word in Spanish but I know the word in English, so I use it... and it's just natural... it goes there... Like I... I substitute one

¹⁰ word for the other...the other person is going to understand, so it's fine for me...

In the interview with Alejandro, he reported that in his group his classmates occasionally use Spanish. And in reference to an episode in which a professor had become mad at a student and scolded her because she kept

falling back on Spanish, Alejandro explained that she did not do it on purpose, implying that the student was not even aware that she was using Spanish. He also explained that the student did not use Spanish because of lack of proficiency in the L2 as, upon being scolded, the student quickly said the same thing but in English. Similarly, Nina, a fourth-year student, reports that she sometimes uses Spanish in class but not to disobey her teachers' English-only classroom policy or due to poor L2 proficiency. She says, "I guess it just, it comes out naturally, you know.... cuz it's not like I cannot say it in English maybe... but that I'm used to using it, so sometimes I just forget... and then the professor says 'Please, use English!...' So I go like 'ok'... But it's not that I can't say it in English... It's just that I forgot or... I know I'm maybe too lazy... So I... But I do use Spanish." In excerpt 9, Professor Alicia refers to the naturalness of translanguaging when in the company of other bilingual fellows. In such contexts, she asserts, "it's just natural... it goes there... Like I... I substitute one word for the other... the other person is going to understand, so it's fine for me..." These opinions, though standing in contradiction to the same participants' advocacy for L2-only classroom practices, reveal that the participants do experience translanguaging as natural. In the classroom context, however, the naturalness of translanguaging is lost and L1 must be surrendered to the use of L2; any use of L1 can only be seen as a crutch. As Belita asserts, however, translanguaging is "something that a bilingual person has to do sometimes, no? If we are bilingual, we cannot ignore one language."

Conclusions

As evident in our findings, both the student and the teacher participants who participated in this study hold conflicting opinions regarding the role of translanguaging (the use of both L1 and L2) in the L2 classroom. On the one hand, they believe that translanguaging is ineffective because this communicative practice hinders the cognitive processes necessary for L2 acquisition, creates a habit of laziness on the part of the students, and consists solely of translating back and forth from L1 to L2. Their arguments reveal that they view translanguaging as resembling the long-stigmatized grammar-translation approach, and thus representing a backwards pedagogical move. On the other hand, some also admit that translanguaging is a natural part of being and becoming bilingual and that for full-fledged and emergent bilinguals both L1 and L2 have become so much a part of their lives that they resort to both fluidly. In light of the literature, what we know to be occurring is the use of a composite linguistics repertoire with little to no awareness of the constituent elements. And yet, in the middle of these two opposing opinions, there is also the belief that L1 can be brought into the L2 classroom under certain conditions and for very specific purposes, comprising the 'L1 as crutch view' that emerged from the data. These discrepant and divergent opinions are nothing but a reflection of two overlapping circumstances standing at odds: the respondents' (1) reproduction of circulating discourses that discourage translanguaging and (b) conclusions drawn from their own experience as both L2 learners and teachers.

The Circulating Discourse

The fact that the most common argument given was *against* translanguaging reveals that the prevailing, conventional wisdom - that is, that EFL classes must be conducted exclusively in the L2 - dominates in the EFL department of this university. In fact, this discourse was so entrenched that even questions regarding the role of L1 in the L2 classroom were deemed preposterous by the participants. Naturally, it follows that participant held that L1 should be avoided because it fosters laziness and leads to the 'bad habit of translating'. Interestingly, even when scenarios were provided about what translanguaging would look like in class (other than translating), the participants mostly continued to assert that this communicative practice only delays and hinders L2 learning. Furthermore, in saying that eliminating L1 from the equation gets learners closer to the goal of 'thinking in English', participants reveal their (sub)conscious alignment with the discourse that languages are and should be compartmentalized. This bilingualism-through-monolingualism discourse, however, seems to operate upon the assumption that the implementation of L2-only classroom practices leads to the development of better and purer L2 proficiency because then students will only speak and think in English. But how can we be so sure that the students are not thinking in Spanish? Or in both English and Spanish simultaneously? When analyzed in light of personal experiences as L2 learners and teachers, the strict application of the L2-only practices that this discourse disseminates

seems to be impossible and subject to exceptions.

The Respondents' Experiences

As quick as the respondents were to provide a rationale in favor of L2 exclusive use and against the practice of translanguaging, they also admitted that their experience proved otherwise. At different points in the interviews, participants found themselves at a crossroads, torn between what they believe to be correct in L2 contexts regarding the mixing of L1 and L2, what bilinguals naturally do outside classroom boundaries, and what actually happens in the classroom despite clear L2-only policies. Both teachers and students acknowledge that mixing both L1 and L2 is natural and that the L1 can be of use in the L2 classroom. Their rationales in favor of L1 use, however, reflect deficit and utilitarian views. On the one hand, they explain that L1 should only be used as a last resource at beginning levels of L2 proficiency, only when learning and comprehension is impaired. On the other, they sustain that L1 use in class is only reasonable to the extent that it helps L2 learning. Interestingly, however, although participants believe translanguaging to be a natural part of being bilingual out of the classroom, they fail to see the practice as a natural part of being and becoming bilingual within the realm of L2 learning. This reveals a disconnect - an artificially created dichotomy- between 'what happens out there in real life' and what 'should happen' in the L2 classroom. The circulating discourse around exclusive L2 use is so strong that not even personal experiences, especially with the difficul-

ties of applying strict L2-only practices in teaching and learning, served to provide sufficient evidence for teachers and students to consider translanguaging. The personal experiences seemed inadequate at convincing individuals that the role of L1 in the L2 classroom should be reconsidered under the light of arguments beyond deficit and utilitarian views.

By and large, why were the respondents' statements in favor of translanguaging always filled with hesitation? The bilingualism-through-monolingualism discourse has made its way into the participants' thoughts to the point that believing otherwise has become unthinkable. Even in light of their own experience, which suggests that a useful space exists for the L1 in the classroom, students and professors alike continue to adhere to the dominant discourses that view L1 use in the L2 classroom as unreasonable and to be avoided at any cost. The pervasiveness of these ideas fosters beliefs that limit L2 learners' ways of thinking, being and doing; a reality that calls for action to be taken so that L2 contexts can be seen as spaces where emergent bilinguals naturally rely on the totality of their linguistic repertoire, rather than as experimental laboratories where L1 can be removed for the sake of studying L2 alone. To this end, we call for the initiation of dialogue within EFL departments that critically dismantles the assumptions, beliefs and practices of instructors and scholars concerning the issues we have raised. Such a dialogue would depart from a unified-multilingual view rather than from a divided L1 versus L2 view. This discussion should not revolve around L1 at the service of L2, nor should it view

L1 as a crutch; rather, we hold that departments should see it as their responsibility to nurture the totality of the linguistic repertoire of emergent bilinguals. All in all, the naturalness of navigating the world in both L1 and L2 should actually lead us to consider the consequences of depriving the emergent bilinguals in our courses from opportunities to engage in the comparison of the linguistic codes comprising the totality of their linguistic repertoire.

Note

- 1 All names are pseudonyms.

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Appendix

ORIGINAL QUESTION	VARIATIONS/FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS
How is the language proficiency of 'native speakers' different from/similar to that of 'nonnative speakers'?	If you were sitting on a bus and suddenly two people started speaking English, would you be able to tell if they are native or nonnative speakers? How?
How would you define bilingualism? What makes a person fully bilingual? Do you consider yourself bilingual?	If you were to place yourself somewhere along a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not bilingual at all and 10 means bilingual, where would you place yourself? Why? Can you describe the language proficiency of a bilingual person?
Do bilingual and monolingual speakers use language (communicate) in different or similar ways? How?	
In effective BE/FL programs, should instruction be conducted in English only, Spanish only or both? Why?	In a program like the one you're in, should the professor speak English only, Spanish only or a combination of both? Can you think of situations in which it would be okay for the professor to use both English and Spanish in class? Do you ever speak English out of class? Why?

In effective BE/FL programs, should students be encouraged to use English only, Spanish only or both? Why?

In effective BE/FL programs, what would probably facilitate language/content learning: *Speaking English only? Speaking Spanish only? Or speaking both English and Spanish?*

In your own experience, has there ever been an occasion in class where switching back and forth from English to Spanish facilitated or hindered effective language/content learning? For example?

Do you ever speak Spanish in class? Why? Why not?

Why would students use Spanish in an English class?

Why is it okay to combine English and Spanish out of class but not in the class?

If a professor brings a video from a news program in Spanish and has the students discuss it in English, is that a good or a bad practice?

If a professor brings a written newspaper article to class and has the students discuss it in English, is that a good or a bad practice?

If a teacher has the students translate a text from Spanish to English or vice versa, is that a good or a bad practice?