Translanguaging for Critical Bi-Literacy: English and French Teachers' Collaboration in Transgressive Pedagogy

Sunny Man Chu Lau

Abstract Based on the framework of plurilingualism and pluriliteracies, this chapter showcases two teachers' collaborative efforts in creating a dynamic bilingual environment in their Grades 4–6 multiage classroom in a Québec English elementary. Through strategic cross- language and curricular connections between English Language Arts and French Second Language, the two teachers read children's stories with their students in the two languages on topics connected to social justice and equity to promote students' critical biliteracy development and to foster an appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity. Elaborating on some important plurilingual practices, this chapter explores particularly the teachers' and the children's creative use of translanguaging and resemiotization from one lingual and/or modal way of meaning-making to another in their collaborative critical inquiry into the topic of racism and slavery. These hybrid literacy practices facilitated and reconfigured their collective and individual knowledge construction, as well as their instantiation of critical biliteracy learning and identity negotiation. The study demonstrates new possibilities for dynamic and integrated plurilingual learning that goes beyond surface language functions to meaningful cross-language connections, conceptual coherence and clarity as well as depth of understanding.

Keywords Critical literacy · Translanguaging · Resemiotization · Plurilingualism · Bilingual education · English language arts · French second language · Language and literacy

1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to showcase how two elementary school teachers, Mrs. Smith and Madame Desbiens, created a flexible bi/plurilingual environment in their Grades 4–6 multiage classroom through strategic cross- language and curricular connections between English and French to promote students' critical biliteracy

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development and to foster an appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity. Reading English and French children's literature that was connected to social justice and equity, students leveraged their entire semiolinguistic repertoire for collaborative critical inquiry of issues such as poverty, homelessness and racial discrimination. These hybrid literacy practices offer new possibilities for a more integrated, dynamic and fluid approach to language learning that goes beyond surface language functions to meaningful cross-language connections, conceptual coherence and clarity as well as depth of understanding. This chapter aims to explore some important plurilingual practices, particularly, the creative and critical resemiotization of multi-lingual and multimodal resources by both the teachers and the children in their collaborative critical inquiry of social issues and complex language learning that most would think beyond their young age. It points to the educational potential of plurilingual pedagogies and translanguaging spaces to challenge academic monolingualism which delegitimizes minority students' use their plurilingual resources in knowledge construction and language performance and has for so long normalized a deficit language learner identity. The study also transgresses the linguistic boundaries set by ideologies and histories which compartmentalize and hierarchize languages, particularly the English and French solitudes[1] in Québec and in Canada.

2   Plurilingualism—Fluid Mutuality of Languages

Recent research on bilingualism articulates a more dynamic and permeable view of language learning, highlighting a heteroglossic notion of languages, treating them as a coherent whole, rather than separate, as they interact in complex, fluid and integrated ways in learning and in use (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011b; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Lin, 2017; García & Sylvan, 2011). Some scholars (cf. Flores & Rosa, 2015) challenge the notion of *additive bilingualism*—learning a second language while continuing to maintain and develop one's first language (Cummins, 2001)—as having inadvertently reinforced first and second language distinctions and delegitimizing students' multilingual practices for learning; what Flores and Rosa call the imposition of "raciolinguistic ideologies" (2015). Responding to the argument, Cummins (2017) reiterates that additive bilingualism aims to promote instruction that valorizes students' multilingual repertoires and leverages fluid transfer across languages for conceptual clarity and understanding. To make explicit such dynamism, Cummins endorses the term *active bilingualism* to underscore the complex intersections of languages as well as the political stance against raciolinguistic ideologies that minoritized immigrant or plurilingual learners. The perspective of dynamic bilingualism resonates with Cook's concept of

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[1] The term "two solitudes" originated from a novel written by the Canadian author, Hugh MacClennan (1945) and is now widely used to mean the deep-seated tension between the French and English communities.

multicompetence (1995), the interconnected knowledge and resources of more than one language as an entirety within a single mind. He postulates that the very presence of more than one language changes all languages in the individual: "Neither of the two languages of a bilingual can be expected to resemble that of a native monolingual" (p. 12). He has lately modified the concept to extend its psychological construct of the mind to the sociological construct of the community, i.e., *multicompetence* as "the total system for all languages in a single mind or community and their inter-relationships" (2016, p. 7). All languages together form "an ecosystem of mutual interdependence" (ibid) not just within a single mind but also within communities which function through multiple languages.

These recent theoretical articulations all denote that bi/plurilinguals are more than the sum of their parts and they possess and utilize different linguistic features in their entire repertoire to attain certain communicative functions at different moments in time and in different social contexts. *Plurilingualism* as proposed by the Council of Europe (2000) shares a similar view on the fluid mutuality of languages—languages are not learned in isolation and have reciprocal influences in their learning and in use. Plurilinguals draw on their repertoire of languages and language varieties as "a complex or even composite competence" rather than a "superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 8). Plurilingual pedagogies adopt a dynamic and integrated approach to study languages, aiming to promote more meaningful, complex learning as flexible and strategic use of linguistic and cultural resources is encouraged. This approach also helps foster a respect for the cultural values and identities embodied in languages. Translanguaging (García & Li, 2014), a hybrid but purposeful and strategic use of languages in the classroom for meaning-making, is regarded as one important plurilingual pedagogies (despite their historic and paradigmatic differences) to which I will now turn.

3   Transgressive Translanguaging: Resemiotization of Critical Learning

Translanguaging, first coined by Cen Williams and Dafydd Whittall from a Welsh word "trawsiethu", refers to a pedagogical practice of switching languages in the same lesson (e.g., teacher reads a book in one language and students answer or write in another) (Baker, 2011). The concept was further developed and theorized by García (2009) and other scholars such as Li (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2011), Hornberger and Link (2012), and García and Lin (2017). Translanguaging refers to a systematic interconnected use of two (or more) languages for construction of meaning among interactants, as a discursive practice common among bi/plurilinguals and as a dynamic classroom pedagogy. It is built on the concept of *languaging* which posits language as an ongoing process (verb), as opposed to a mere product (noun), which mediates and gives shape to our thoughts and experiences as they are

articulated and negotiated through language itself (Swain & Lapkin, 2011). Language is a mediator, rather than a mere conveyor, of thoughts through which we form, transform, create, remember, talk and write about our thoughts and ideas within sociohistorical and sociocultural contexts which give meaning, value and frameworks for the thinking. The dynamic language-thought reciprocity is well captured by Vygotsky (1986) who says, "[t]hought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (p. 218). Translanguaging in this sense refers to the agentive practice of bi/plurlilinguals to flexibly "soft assemble" (García, 2009) features from their multiple languages to (trans)form and (re)mediate meaning and social positionings in different communicative and learning situations. Jørgensen (2008) uses the term *polylingual languaging* (p. 169) to refer a similar concept whereby individuals often with their uneven competence in multiple languages strategically employ linguistic features from these languages to realize specific communicative intentions. Linguistic features at the levels of morphology, syntax and pronunciation are drawn on and integrated based on particular semantic content or structural characteristics. Translanguaging in this sense is more than code-switching (alternating from one set of linguistic features to another) as it involves a more fluid and dynamic mixing of elements from multiple languages to achieve communicative goals without adherence to the boundaries of named languages as code-switching does (Otheguy et al., 2015). Particularly, it articulates an explicit political stance against academic monolingualism as an act of social justice to fight for the rights of the minoritized students in using their multiple languages as a legitimate means of meaning-making (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). Translanguaging has shown to facilitate a deeper and fuller understanding of content knowledge, development of the weaker language (Esquinca, Araujo, & de la Piedra, 2014; Hopewell, 2013; Sayer, 2013). It also allows bi/plurilinguals to achieve a range of sociolinguistic functions such as negotiation of social positionings, playful resistance against certain cultural and linguistic norms, and/or signification of a certain social or situated identity or group membership (Li, 2011, 2014).

Translanguaging is also about interconnections and intersections with and among languages and modalities. Communication has always been multimodal in nature (Leung, 2014), even in print-based reading and writing considering the use of space, colour, visual marks, font or style and images (Jewitt, 2005). Multimodal ways of meaning-making have existed for centuries in some communities but have been dismissed as irrelevant under the hegemony of lingualism (Block, 2014)—giving preference to verbal literacy-- and the autonomous view of literacy (Street, 2012) (see López-Gopar, 2007 for an example of Mexican Indigenous people's use of codices on Triqui garment as multiple represenational and communication mode). Technological advancements in communications have prompted increasing recognition in the importance and affordances of multiple literacies for different ways of meaning-making. The interconnection and enmeshing of language and other semiotic modes have been labelled differently by scholars such as *plurilingual and pluriliteracies practices* (García, Bartlett, & Kleifgen, 2009) or *code-meshing* (Canagarajah, 2011a). They all attend to the dynamic interplay between and among multiple languages, scripts, dialects, and registers as well as the multiple modes and

semiotic systems of communication (e.g., Childs, 2016; Velasco & García, 2014). Translanguaging using plurilingual and pluriliterate resources involves processes of *resemiotization* whereby one discourse or semiotic resource is transformed into another mode or a mixture of modes in space and time, mobilizing and rendering transformed ways of knowing, being and acting (García & Li, 2014; Iedema, 2001, 2003). Research in communication studies supports such an understanding of meaning production as a process of continuous moments of *fixing* and *framing* to make and remake signs from semiolinguistic as well as embodied resources (e.g., gestures, voice, facial expressions) to instantiate re-contextualized knowledge and meaning (Kress, 2010).

The purpose of this chapter is to trace some key resemiotization process in the translanguaging practices in this French-English multiage classroom as they read children's stories in alternate languages. In particular, important themes and implications are drawn about how the hybridity and fluidity of the assemblage of lingual and modal resources support young learners in complex, critical inquiry of social issues and their construction of bilingual identities and academic competence.

4   Research Context and Methodology

The two collaborating teachers in this research, Mrs. Smith and Madame Desbiens, worked in an English elementary school in a small town in Eastern Québec, Canada. Public schools in Québec were de-confessionalized and reorganised into Francophone and Anglophone school boards in 1998 (McGlynn, Lamarre, Laperrière, & Montgomery, 2009). The introduction of *The Charter of the French Language* in 1977 made French the official language of the province and required immigrant children to attend French schools, all confirming the increasing sociopolitical importance of the French language (Oakes & Warren, 2007). Increasingly, Anglophone parents, though having the English language right to send their children to English-medium schools, choose to send their children to French schools. This shift has led to the drastic dwindling of the size and number of English schools. In order to bolster student retention, many English school districts deliver a range of immersion or enriched programs in French that offer more French instruction time than that required by the Ministry (Lamarre, 2008). The participating school for the present study, for example, offered 30 minutes over the normal requirement in daily French second language (FSL) instruction (a total of 90 minutes, same as English Language Arts-ELA) and an extra 45 minutes per week of Music/Visual Arts in French. However, Smith and Desbiens were the only two language teachers in the school who attempted cross-language collaborations; inter-disciplinary collaboration between French and English teachers is rare in Québec where language separation is still the norm (see Horst, White, & Bell, 2010).

Before this federal government-funded research project, both teachers had attempted some form of cross-curricular collaboration before participating in a two-year pilot study with Sunny to formally inquire into the educational potential in

promoting students' critical biliteracy development through year-long social justice themes. Encouraged by the results and eager to engage students in critical work in upper grades, we obtained a research grant to continue our inquiry into the ways in which strategic curricular collaborations helped build meaningful bridges across content and languages deepened students' critical understanding of social issues and promote their (emergent) bilingual identities of competence. The two teachers also seek approval from the school board to co-teach a Grade 4–6 multiage class, which was well received and granted with support. Before September of that school year, part of the wall separating two classrooms was taken down to create a wide open passage between the two rooms. The conjoined classroom now had a big carpet area on one side (perfect for whole-class reading and discussion activities) and big round tables on the other designated for group/desk work. The breaking down of the classroom wall did not only mark the removal of the physical and timetable boundaries that hindered their cross-curricular collaborations, but also, more importantly, signaled a beginning of a general willingness at a broader level to recognize the interconnectedness of language resources in bi/plurlilingual minds.

There were 47 student participants and the language environment at home and in the broader community was somewhat bilingual. 43 students filled in a year-end questionnaire and among them, 21 reported speaking English only to both parents (49%), 16 used both English and French with *either* parent (37%), 4 had *both* bilingual parents (9.3%), and 2 had both Francophone parents (4.7%). Around 40% of the students reported using both English and French with their siblings and their extended families while about 26% of them spoke the two languages with friends at school and outside school. Only 3 students mentioned using a language other than English and French (i.e., Spanish, German & Dutch) to communicate with siblings, extended family or friends outside school.

Mrs. Smith, the ELA teacher, had almost 20 years' teaching experience while Madame Desbiens had less than 10 but both were passionate about language teaching, particularly social justice education. Both believed linking the two languages would allow students to make meaningful connections to explore more complex topics and deepen their understanding. We adopted a *collaborative action research* methodology to create a synergy between research and practice for dialogic theory building and knowledge co-construction (Lather, 1986; Park, 2006). Using classroom ethnography (Bloome, 2012), we collected different sets of qualitative data, including detailed fieldnotes, class video-recordings (around 20 h), an end-of-year student questionnaire, teachers and focal students' interviews (pre and post) and student work samples. There were 9 focal students; three from each grade level who represented a high, average and low bilingual proficiency level based on the two teachers' initial assessment and class observation. The teachers and I met every other month to review ongoing data in light of the literature and theories we studied and reflected on together as a learning community. We focused particularly on students' written reading responses as a reference to their emerging critical understanding of social issues discussed orally in class and their development of academic competence in both languages, which in turn informed our ongoing co-development of instructional strategies to meet students' evolving learning needs.

To examine the plurilingual and pluriliterate translanguaging practices, I adopted Li's (2011) *Moment Analysis* in examining individuals' spontaneous momentary actions and performances as their draw on their semiolinguistic repertoires to translanguage in creative and critical ways to index meaning and positioning within the local and wider contexts. The focus of such an analysis is to seek not primarily patterns but rather critical moments in naturally occurring interactions whereby spontaneous and impromptu plurilingual and pluriliterate practices and performances occur. While Li's study (2011) included both data from observations and participants' reflections on their metalanguaging performances, the analysis of this study was based mainly on observations and recordings of class interactions as well as work samples, although interview data from teachers and students' reflections on their global translanguaging experiences but not on specific lessons was included.

5   Translanguaging for Literature-Based Critical Inquiry

To anchor language learning in meaningful social issues, the two teachers employed a literature-based curriculum, reading stories in French and English to promote students' biliteracy skills as well as their critical and reflective stance (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008) on issues such as discrimination, racism, and poverty, all related to the chosen year-long theme of *Respect for Diversity*. Both teachers were bilingual, although Desbiens might be more comfortable in using English (since she taught the class Math in English) than Smith in French. They adhered to their respective language most of the time to provide a language model for students. When studying an English text, Mrs. Smith would lead the class discussion in English (and vice versa when a French story was read) while Madame Desbiens worked alongside to pose further questions and comments in French to deepen the dialogues, which would excite students' responses in French and/or a mixture of both languages. Since most students were stronger in English, we usually studied the English story first to discuss and clarify important concepts and provide a background of the topic on which students could build and develop a nuanced understanding when they read the French story on a similar topic but at a lower language level. To facilitate students' interdisciplinary connections and discussions, we also put up a research wall, a concept similar to Vasquez's (2004) *audit trail*, to post artefacts and photos of class activities as a visual trail of their collaborative learning experience. Similarly, a big concept map was posted on another wall to show visibly how the stories under study were interconnected in terms of their themes and main messages (see Lau, Juby-Smith, & Desbiens, 2016). In this chapter, I focus on a series of lessons on two story books about racism and slavery that they studied back to back: *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) and *Libre: le long voyage d'Henri- une histoire vraie* (Levine, 2008) to examine some important translanguaging practices adopted in class discussions and in a student's written work, in particular, how the processes of resemiotization from one lingual and/or modal way of meaning-making to another facilitated and reconfigured their collective as well as individual knowledge construction and instantiation of critical biliteracy learning and identity negotiation.

5.1   Critical Bilingual Reading of the Visual and Textual Narratives

Both *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) and *Libre* (Levine, 2008) are illustrated picture books. *The Other Side* is about an African-American girl, Clover, who notices a free-spirited white girl, Annie, one summer day on the other side of the fence that segregates the town. Both are eager to strike up a friendship despite the warning from their mothers not to go over the fence. They eventually sit *on* the fence, turning what is originally a barrier into a perch where they spend the summer peacefully together. *Libre*, on the other hand, is based on a true story in nineteenth century United States about a slave, Henry Brown, who with the help of his friend James and a white abolitionist, Mr. Smith, successfully mails himself to Philadelphia to escape the slavery system. The two books were chosen as it coincided with the Black History Month and students had been reading related books about Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, for example, in their own literature circles.

Mrs. Smith started *The Other Side* by inviting students to make inferences about the story based on the illustration on the cover, drawing their attention to the meaning constructed by the visual narrative in conjunction and juxtaposition with the title. Visual analysis had been a common practice in this class for English and French texts they read as it allowed students' pluriliterate ways of meaning-making and platforms for discussions and reflections (Mallan, 1999). The cover illustration shows a black girl in the foreground sitting on a tire-swing while a white girl is in the background up on the side of a fence that stretches across the page. When Mrs. Smith asked the class what the story was about, Lanely (all student names are pseudonyms) was the first one to suggest that it was about "segregation", and she explained, "because it's a little black girl on this side and on the other side it's a fence to split them, and it is white girl on the other side." Mike agreed, adding that the two girls were "separate like in two different parts of the world". And April conjectured that the two girls would go over the fence and do something together.

Students' pre-reading predictions, drawing on their reading from the literature circle and the visual positionings of the black and white girls and the symbol of a fence on the cover, collaboratively recontextualized their meanings within a specific sociohistorical period to make inferences about the relationship of the two girls and to situate them within a broader social context where segregation was practiced, even before they had started reading the book.

As they started reading the story, one question brought up was whether the two girls reacted in the same way to the rule of not climbing over the fence and why. It is Annie, the white girl who first introduces herself to Clover and suggests that "a fence like this was made to sit on". And it takes Clover a while before she feels brave to do so. Here is an excerpt of the class discussion on this matter:

> Smith: … Do you think it's leading to something? She [Clover] said that she feels brave and she feels free. Calvin?
> Calvin: Maybe she will go over the fence because she has more confidence in herself because before she was like scared of the other side…

[…]

Desbiens: Moi, j'aime beaucoup la question de Mrs. Smith et on ne lui a pas vraiment répondu. La petite fille noire, la page juste avant, elle dit qu'elle se sent brave et coura-geuse et elle est allée proche de la clôture. Avant elle se tenait où?

(I really like Mrs. Smith's question that we haven't really addressed yet. The little black girl in the previous page, she says she feels brave that day and got close to the fence. Where was she before?)

Students: Plus loin. *(Very far away.)*

Desbiens: Elle était très loin, dans sa maison ou dans l'arbre. La petite fille blanche depuis de début de l'histoire où est-ce qu'elle est? *(She was far away, in her house or in the wood. Where is the little white girl since the beginning of the story?)*

Students: Proche. *(Near.)*

Desbiens: Elle est proche de la clôture ou même sur la clôture. Est-ce que vous voyez une différence entre les deux petites filles?

(She is close to the fence or even on the fence? Do you see a difference between the two girls?)

Smith: Amy?

Amy: Well, it looks like the white girl is a little more brave. She is like braver than the darker girl. Because she is always close to the fence or on the top of the fence, but the darker girl is always hidden.

Desbiens: Qu'est-ce que tu penses qui fait ça? […] Qu'est-ce que tu penses qui peut faire ça? D'où est-ce que tu penses que ça peut venir? Laure? *(Who do you think does that? Who do you think can do that? Where do you think this could come from?)*

Laure: Well, maybe like the white girl went over, it wouldn't matter as much as the black girl.

Smith: Why?

Desbiens: Je pense que tu as compris quelque chose d'important. (*I think you have under-stood something important.)*

Lily: It was against the black people.

Desbiens: La ségrégation, la séparation c'était pour protéger qui contre qui?

(The segregation, the separation, it was to protect whom against whom?)

Lily: The white people because they didn't want the black people in their world.

Desbiens: Ok, alors c'est important de comprendre ça aussi pour comprendre les points de vue…(*Ok, so it's important to understand that as well in order to comprehend the points of view…)*

Here is another example of how students' multi- lingual and modal resources were solicited to foster a more layered and critical understanding of the two main characters. There are references in the text itself that indicate Annie, the white girl, who often climbs up on the side of the fence or stays close to it. But in some of those instances, it doesn't mention where Clover is. For example, in the second spread of the book (which has the same image as the book cover), the text mentions that Annie climbed up on the fence each morning, but nothing is said about Clover. However, it is from the illustrations that we see Clover being far away from Annie on the other side of the fence. Further, on the third spread, the text indicates that Clover is play-ing jump rope with her friends and Annie asks if she can join them. Again, there is no specific mentioning of where these two parties are in the text but the illustration fills in the gaps: Annie is shown up on the side of the fence while Clover and her friends, farther away on the other side, stopped playing the game to respond to Annie's invitation. The explicit textual remarks of Annie's closeness to the fence together with Clover's visual distance from it in the illustrations point to the apparent

difference between the two girls' reactions to this social boundary reinforced by their parents. In the excerpt above, Mme Desbiens asked students if they noticed the difference and if so what it implied. Amy took it to mean an indication of Annie's brave character and by contrast, Clover's timidity. Prompting students to go beyond the surface, Mme Desbiens reminded students to not overlook who Annie is and what has enabled her to act the way she does. Laure answered that it might not have mattered as much for a white girl to cross over the fence as compared to a black girl. Laure's response was followed by a question from Mrs. Smith and a comment from Mme Desbiens, both served to prompt Laure (and other students) to view the characters' actions from a broader sociopolitical lens and to connect their observations to the important concepts (i.e., segregation or racism) they had been learning. While Mrs. Smith posed the simple question "Why?" in English to Laure (and other students), Mme Desbiens prompted a more elaborate answer by reassuring that Laure was on the right track. Lily then jumped in to add in English that the fence was built to set boundaries against the blacks. Mme Desbiens then re-voiced Lily's answer in a more formal, academic way using terms that share similar cognates in English, for example "la ségrégation" "la séparation", and "protéger". She also wrapped up this discussion by reminding students the importance of grounding the character analysis in the broader sociopolitical environment and viewing from multiple perspectives (i.e., Why do Annie and Clover act differently towards the warning and whose protection is the fence really for?).

The above excerpt shows how the two teachers collaborated fluidly, helping each other to further a discussion point and to incite more critical analyses of the character behaviours and their sociopolitical implications. The teachers engaged in a *collaborative dual language brokering* and *recasting* (rather than direct translation) to scaffold students' meaning-driven discussions. Students too responded flexibly in French or English to jointly make meaning based on their reading of the textual and visual narratives that the teacher solicited in furthering their critical understanding of inequitable situations faced by the two different characters.

5.2 Resemiotization of Class Talk and Visual Concept Maps in Written Reading Responses

After the class discussions on *The Other Side*, Mrs. Smith started a big concept map on the board, bringing together key ideas that had been explored and debated about the characters, illustrations, use of symbols in the book. She started the process and then asked students to finish the rest of the map individually on their own, which was revisited and further synthesized in the next class. Based on the collective web, students then wrote their individual reading responses. The recursive process not only allowed them multiple opportunities to revisit and reorganize pertinent ideas but also to collaboratively reconstruct meaning using a different mode. Figure 1 shows a mind map drawn by Ike, a Grade 6 student, based on the collective effort of the class:
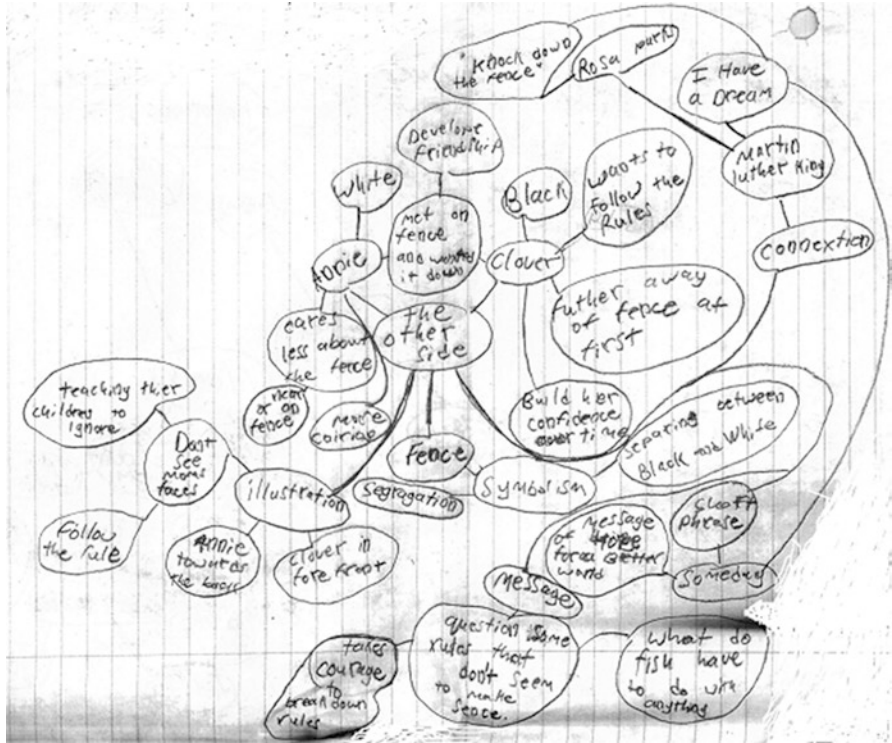
Fig. 1 Ike's mind map for *The Other Side*

The mind map shows the relationships of the key aspects in the story: characters (Annie and Clover), the use of symbolism (i.e., the fence) and illustrations, the main message as well as the meaningful connections made with other texts. Ike's reading response was 3-page long, the longest he had written so far, which had included almost all the ideas shown in the diagram with some personal connections of his own not found in the map. Ike's parents took him to see the movie *Selma* which happened to be playing during the time they were doing this unit on racism. The excerpt below is a small passage taken from his work (original spelling and punctuation kept):

> …So this lead me to what the author was trying to tell us. Its okay to question some rules/ laws that don't make sense and thats separating two deferent kinds of people or putting people in deferent groups. and to have a better world. I guess Martin luther King had tons of guts to do the marches and protest and even with the Missisipy state police whacking them to almost death. So we need to be like Martin luther King and Rosa Parks and all the other people that stop racism and have lots of courage and break the chains of segregation and Hatred between each other and also ignorance and the murders between "whites" and "blacks". So lets be friends like Clover and Annie….

After commenting on symbolic meaning of the fence and some illustrations, Ike made a textual and personal connection to the stories of Martin Luther King (MLK)
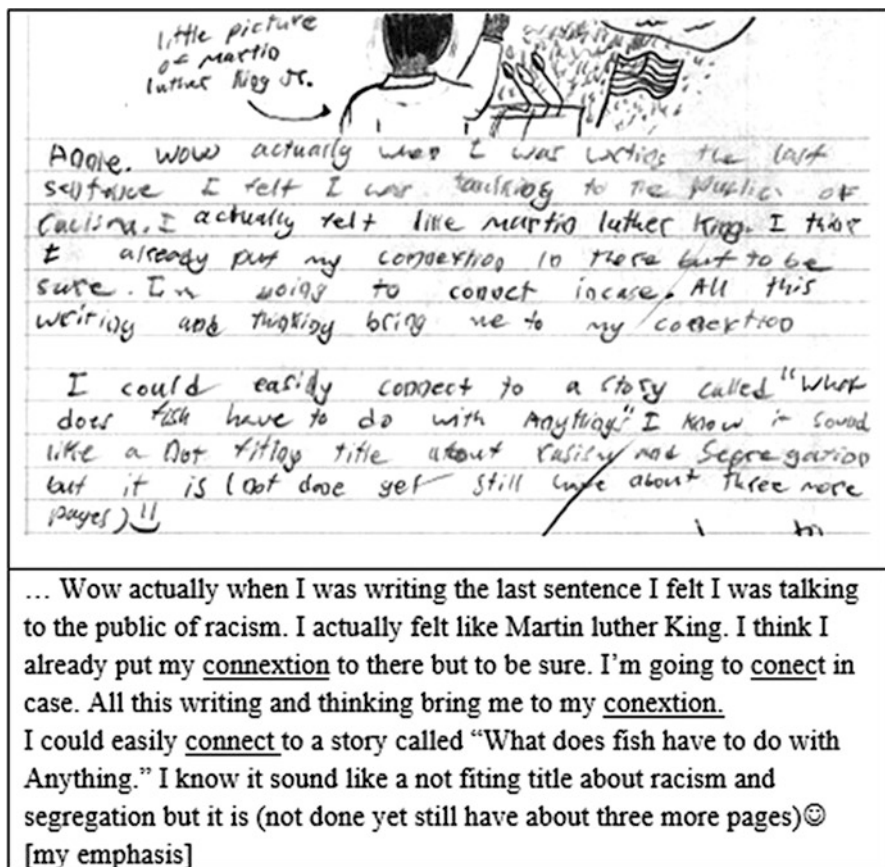
Fig. 2 Ike's reading response (last page)

and Rosa Parks he read in the literature circle in articulating the main theme of the book: the importance of stopping racism, segregation and hatred. Of great interest is what follows on the next page of his response.

Figure 2 shows Ike's original writing (and drawing) and the typed-up paragraphs on that page. Ike's work is highly interesting on many levels. First of all, Ike started with a side comment, saying, *"Wow actually when I was writing the last sentence I felt I was talking to the public of racism. I actually felt like Martin luther King."* This aside, departing from the academic discourse of a reading response, is the author's sudden realization of his momentarily inhabitation of the role of MLK and his channeling of the social leader's voice and beliefs. The drawing he did on the top of page, however, reveals something more—it shows us the *relationship* between MLK and the audience, which is not pointed out in the writing. In the foreground is a close-up of the back of the main participant (presum-

ably MLK himself), showing a point of view from behind him, which offers a wide *depth of field* (Janks, 2010, p. 90) that allows us to see the relationship between this participant in the foreground and the others in the background. The main participant's right hand is up in the air in front of a lectern with three microphones, suggesting that he is addressing the public which is represented by some erratic strokes in the background, indicating a dynamic (rather than static) crowd, most probably cheering and getting excited by the speech. Both the *compositional* (how the visual elements are organized spatially) and the *representational structures* (what's happening between the objects and participants) (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) are showing the salience of the impact of the speaker on the audience. The fact that the point of view is from behind the speaker positions the reader as an observer. The small caption on the side of the drawing specifying that it is a picture of MLK creates a more distant *interpersonal* relationship. Ike positions himself (and the reader) as an observer, observing MLK (or even better, observing himself performing the role of MLK) and his impact on the audience, just as he is writing about noticing himself becoming MLK, with the visual adding much salience to his powerful influence on the crowd. What follows this meta-reference to MLK is that Ike reverted back to himself as a student. And even though what he has done so far is an excellent job making text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connections (Trehearne, 2006), he was worried that these connections weren't explicit enough. He wrote, "I'm going to connect [just] in case." What he did in the last paragraph is a public display of his academic competence demanded by this specific task and genre of writing: "I could easily connect to a story called 'What does fish have to do with Anything'. I know it sounds like a not fiting title about racism and segregation but it is." Unfortunately, he didn't have time to finish but at the end he added one sentence in parenthesis indicating that he had more to write and left a smiling emoji at the very end.

In this small excerpt of Ike's writing, we see how he creatively leveraged his semiolinguistic repertoire, acquired both outside and inside class, to construct meaning and perform identities he negotiated for himself along the process. The oral discussions and the recursive ways of organizing and reconfiguring meanings in multiple ways through collective and individual mind maps enabled him to synthesize the ideas not only in a very effective way but also with depth of understanding toward the importance of peace and justice. His enthusiasm and critical knowledge of the subject matter is shown by his meta-reflections of his momentary embodiment of MLK's spirit and belief, which is echoed by the compositions and point of view of the picture he drew, most probably a remediation based on images of MLK seen in the media (e.g., *Selma*, the movie). Ike also responded to the academic demands of response writing by overtly performing the task of making textual and social connections in the last paragraph. Although this might show his inexperience in weaving textual and personal connections in a more organic manner with his analysis, the extent of his genuine interest in the topic could be seen in the last aside when he wrote: "not done yet still have about three more pages", and ended it with a smiling emoji.

5.3 Translanguaging Critical Understanding – From English to French Literary Discussions

Connecting students' learning in English to French, the class went on to Libre (Levine, 2008), a true story about Henry Brown who escaped slavery by mailing himself to Philadelphia in a box, with the help from his friend James and a white abolitionist, Mr. Smith. To provide students with the sociohistorical background and embed FSL learning in an organic way in critical reading lessons, Mme Desbiens started a pre-reading activity about the rights of a slave: asking students to decide in groups whether a slave had the right to perform certain social activities, such as "connaître sa date de naissance" (to know his date of birth); "choisir quand aller travailler" (to choose when to work); "avoir des enfants" (to have children), "faire une erreur" (to make a mistake"), etc. We found some students having difficulty in grasping the life of slaves in the Nineteenth Century American South and processing the idea of their not having the freedom to do some of these simple day-to-day activities. Below is an excerpt of the discussion when students were trying to understand the consequences for a slave in making mistakes:

> George : Ben c'est parce que les maîtres, ils n'aimaient pas les erreurs à cause que… ben c'est que du…gaspille mon temps!
> *(Well, it's because the masters, they did not like mistakes because … well … it's like … waste my time!)*
> Desbiens: […] c'est parce que s'ils faisaient une erreur, il y avait des conséquences très très grave. Mais c'est ça. Maintenant de nos jours rendu en 2015, ça n'a plus aucun sens dans notre tête, mais tant mieux.
> *([…] it is because if they made a mistake there were very very serious consequences. But that's it. Now in 2015, it makes no sense in our mind, but still.)*
> John: Then …. they would get killed?
> Desbiens: Exactement, John. Et il en a eu des centaines et des centaines d'esclaves qui ont été tué parce qu'ils ont fait des erreurs. Ok?
> *(Exactly, John. And there were hundreds and hundreds of slaves who were killed because they made mistakes. OK?)*
> Smith: It didn't make sense, John! You are right!
> Desbiens: C'est tout à fait illogique et tout à fait insensé. (*It is completely illogical and utterly insane.*)

In the excerpt above, George, explained in French to his fellow classmates why slaves were not allowed to make mistakes since the masters would not like to have their time wasted due to mistakes. Mme Desbiens added that it was a practice quite difficult to fathom in present day. John, still puzzled, raised a question about a possible consequence in English, wondering if mistakes would cause slaves their lives. Mme Desbiens and Mrs. Smith again collaboratively used the two languages to help John process the insensible behaviours done by one human being to another within the context of slavery, which was beyond anyone's comprehension. The connected usage of the two languages in a meaning-focused discussions facilitated knowledge building in a composite and coherent rather than a fragmented manner. With the fluid bilingual practices, English- or French-dominant students like George and John could equally participate in critical discussions and in grappling with such an important human rights issue.

For *Libre*, apart from understanding what slavery and racism meant, we would really like to foster students' critical ability to consider different perspectives and move away from a binary mind set. One important character in this story is Mr. Smith, an abolitionist, without whose help, Henry would not have been able to escape slavery. A large part of the class discussions were about the main characters such as Henry and Mr. Smith and their personality shone through their choices. We repeated almost the same process we did with *The Other Side*—class discussions followed by a mind map done individually and then collectively as a class, except this time Desbiens encouraged students to use different colours for the mind map to further facilitate their organization and retrieval of ideas. Figure 3 shows Ike's mind map and below are two paragraphs from his reading response, with arrows showing which part of the mind map they each refer to.

(The slaves don't have human rights, not liberty and certainly not choices. The slaves like Henri don't have the choice of jobs and they were not paid and the slaves were not treated correctly, and that's why Henir escaped to the north. Not all whites are okay with slavery like Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith did not agree with the slavery. He helped Henri to ecape to the North.)

Fig. 3 Ike's mind map and two paragraphs from his French reading response

Ike's French writing in general reflects an early *conventional stage* (DeVries, 2015) that most patterned words were spelt correctly but phonetic spelling was used for advanced words. He used code-switching when he did not know a certain word in French, a strategy the teachers encouraged so as not to deter any fluid expression of ideas due to a gap in vocabulary knowledge. The words "cerntenly [certainly]", "treated" and "escape" in this excerpt were circled by the student, so that he could look them up and revise later accordingly. The objective was to get students focused on their fluid articulation of ideas and not mere language accuracy.

Apart from code-switching, we also find Ike's creative employment of translanguaging skills, especially in the second paragraph which is about Mr. Smith who did not agree with slavery and had offered help to Henry to make his escape possible. In this paragraph, Ike creatively used the adjective "correct" ("correcte"- feminine) as a main *verb* in the verb phrase "son était corrected". "Correct(e)" is commonly used in everyday colloquial Québecois French to describe that something agreeable, sufficient, or appropriate. Here Ike synthesized an important idea discussed in class that not all White people were discriminatory. Ike creatively turned the adjective "correct" into a verb and used it in a past passive form. In French, the passive is formed by *être* with the main verb in past participle. The past passive form is "avoir *été* + past participle" and is appropriately used here, albeit the phonetic spelling:

Ike's sentence (with phonetic spelling)   **Conventional form**
Pas tout les blanc son etait corrected.   *Pas tous les blancs ont été <u>correctés</u>.*

Notice that the word, "correctés" above is underlined because this verb does not exist in French (the verb "correct" in French is "corriger"). It is an invented word by Ike, with the auxiliary verb "avoir etre" conforming to the French past passive structure followed by the past participle ending '~ed' taken from English. By using the word "correct" as a verb here suggests a process of change in opinion, i.e., not all white people had come to agree with slavery. Compare this invented usage to its normal use as an adjective, as shown in Ike's second sentence in that excerpt: "M. Smith etais [etait] pas correct de esclavage." Using it as an adjective would suggest a more factual and static sense, while in contrast, as a verb, it suggests an ongoing change. Ike looking at the whole issue of slavery from the vantage point of the present time, especially after he had read MLK and Rosa Parks, he knew that change was to happen and that there would be more white people who were to become supporters of the abolitionist movement. Ike's resemiotizing of the adjective-turned-verb "correct(e)" and the creative phonetic and invented spellings reflect not only his creativity but also determination to overcome his developing knowledge in French vocabulary and orthography to articulate and (re)construct some rich meaning that goes beyond the boundaries of the languages, thereby negotiating for himself an academically competent and socially conscious individual. The last paragraph of his reading response reads like this:

Martin luther King etait courageux et brave comme Henri et aussi Rosa Parks, le "Other Side" est connecté parce que les enfant a role pour arreté la segreation et esclavage.
(Marin Luther King was courageous and brave like Henry and also Rosa Parks. The Other Side is connected because the children have the role to stop the segregation and slavery.)

In this last paragraph, apart from the creative use of translanguaging (e.g., "le Other Side" as in "*The Other Side*" and "est connecté" in present passive as in "one can connect this story to *The Other Side*"), Ike conveys some effective textual connections and a powerful message – that he found Henri courageous and brave just like MLK and Rosa Parks and that he can also connect the story to *The Other Side*, the English story the class just read, to point out the role of children in stopping segregation and slavery. It is evident that Ike was able to make meaningful links and transference of knowledge gained in the bilingual discussions of the English text into the critical reading of the French text, and through another series of individual and collective mind-mapping and synthesizing, he was able to remediate and reconstruct his knowledge through creative code-switching and meshing and present it in writing in an effective and academic way. Without the translanguaging space, students' writing like Ike's would have been dismissed as inaccurate and their ideas be misunderstood and misrecognised as worthless.

6   Conclusions and Implications

Using (2011) *Moment Analysis* (Li, 2011), this chapter has shown some important translanguaging practices adopted in this multiage bilingual classroom and how the translanguage space has allowed students like Ike to mobilize his repertoire of languages and multimodal resources to engage in complex language tasks and social inquiry about racism.

Mrs. Smith and Mme Desbiens' focus on building students' critical visual literacy in reading children's literature afforded pluriliterate ways of meaning-making in both languages. The teachers' co-presence in the classroom and careful orchestration of the extended class discussions interchangeably in English and French helped not only create bridges between the two language subjects but also helped foster deep critical understanding of social diversity. Although adhering mostly to their respective language to provide a language model for students, both teachers strategically used the two languages in *brokering* and *recasting* discussions to facilitate students' articulation of ideas and to scaffold the meaning-driven discussions. Their step-by-step guidance in engaging students in exploring the broader social implications of character action and choices demonstrates that young and inexperienced language learners are more than capable in critical and complex learning.

The use of the mind map with differentiated colours offered a valuable visual aid to synthesize, clarify and concretize the ideas generated collaboratively by the

whole class, which in turn assisted students' writing of the reading responses. The visual modality helped the class reconstruct meaning derived from their oral inquiry, which was then resemiotized into an organised written reading response as a meaningful academic exercise.

Ike's creativity and criticality were well captured in his reflections of his learning from reading *The Other Side*. His writing with the corresponding graphic of Martin Luther King demonstrates his resourceful ability to mobilize his semiolinguistic repertoire, acquired from inside and outside of class, to convey his critical understanding of social discrimination as well as to perform an identity of a capable language user and a change agent. The safe and inclusive translanguaging space that Mrs. Smith and Mme Desbiens collaboratively created in this multiage classroom also allowed Ike to feel secure to take risks to "soft assemble" features from languages and multimodalities to articulate his developing critical literacy. His skilful languaging practices as shown in the adjective-turned-verb "correct(e)", the use of code-switching/meshing, and the phonetic and invented spellings allowed him to articulate and demonstrate his understanding despite of his developing French proficiency. A classroom steeped in academic monolingualism would have prevented him from attempting to express his ideas in ways that defy language boundaries and teachers of such classrooms would have dismissed his work as sloppy, inaccurate and sub-standard. However, careful examination of his momentary translanguaging practices has shown creative indexation of critical meaning through resourceful employment of his semiolinguistic repertoires. No doubt, precision and accuracy are important; however an additional language classroom focusing solely on mechanical accuracies and standards will have missed a great opportunity to recognise Ike's learning and to choose the right strategies in advancing his understanding and language mastery.

Focusing on the writing samples from one particular student participant, this chapter does not aim to argue for the generalizability of the research but rather for the educational possibilities that plurilingual approaches offer. When language is taught in a connected and integrated manner, deeper understanding occurs (Hopewell, 2013; Sayer, 2013). The fluid translanguaging space in Mrs. Smith and Mme Desbiens' conjoined classroom opened up possibilities for students to draw on their bi/ plurilingual and pluriliterate resources to make sense of their learning and to negotiate for themselves an identity of an academically competent and socially conscious individual. The study points to the need to rethink the theory and practice regarding bi/plurilinguals and to negotiate an inclusive translanguaging environment conducive to complex language and literacy learning anchored in socially meaningful topics. As much as the wall between the two classrooms was taken down to defy physical boundaries for cross-language and -curricular collaborations, educators and teachers need to transgress the arbitrary constraints posed by academic monolingualism and lingualism in order to valorize and mobilize students' multiple language and modal resources for knowledge construction. It is imperative to recognize students' creativity and resourcefulness in their momentary plurilingual and pluriliterate practices to construct, reconfigure, and demonstrate their knowledge.

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