Remaking the Ground on which they Stand: Plurilingual Approaches Across the Curriculum

Saskia Van Viegen

Abstract Drawing on perspectives in critical applied linguistics, this chapter highlights how teachers in a multilingual, multicultural elementary school located in Ontario, Canada, integrated plurilingual pedagogies into literacy and curriculum learning activities. The purpose of the partnership was to support English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in implementing pedagogic strategies for engaging emergent bi/multilingual students in literacy activities. Teachers incorporated students' linguistic repertoires into teaching and learning tasks, as both a scaffold and a resource for ongoing learning and literacy engagement. Broadly, these efforts highlighted the value of multilingualism and the role that students' linguistic repertoire can play in language learning and biliteracy development: scaffolding new learning; promoting metalinguistic awareness; developing biliteracy; and valorizing students' cultural and linguistic identities. The chapter articulates key strategies that might comprise a plurilingual approach to pedagogy, offering an expansive view of students' linguistic capabilities and inviting students' translanguaging practices into the learning context.

Keywords Translanguaging · Elementary education · Children · Multilingualism · ESL · Social studies · Digital literacies

1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how teachers in a multilingual, multicultural elementary school located in Ontario, Canada, integrated plurilingual pedagogies into literacy and curriculum learning activities. Specifically, teachers aimed to incorporate students' linguistic repertoires into teaching and learning tasks, as both a scaffold and a resource for ongoing learning and literacy engagement. The prov-

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ince of Ontario is highly multilingual and multicultural. For example, among the 2.1 million students in the province of Ontario, over 25% are identified as English language learners. Some schools, particularly in urban areas, have a majority of students who speak languages other than English or French at home. Within this context, educators are developing expertise in addressing the teaching and learning needs of a multilingual student population. Significant research in both the Ontario context and other jurisdictions highlights the positive contributions that multilingualism can bring to education, raising critical questions about the limitations of excluding the full range of students' linguistic repertoires from the classroom.

Engaging with the linguistic and cultural resources present in Ontario classrooms and communities, the purpose of this study was to explore what might comprise a plurilingual approach to pedagogy that offers a more expansive view of students' linguistic capabilities and that invites students' translanguaging practices into the learning context. Ministries of Education and school districts across Canada have enhanced the services and programs provided for newcomer students, including policies for newcomer student orientation, language assessment, differentiated instruction, assessment and reporting processes, and curriculum for a wide variety of English as a Second (ESL) and English for Literacy Development (ELD) classes (See for instance Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, 2007b). These policy changes and their implementation go a long way toward building capacity to meet the needs of students who are learning English at school. However, embedded within a monolingual, monocultural paradigm, these policies and related practices tend to emphasize an English-speaking norm, potentially excluding the cultural and linguistic competences possessed by the actual population of learners in our communities.

Recent student data from both the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Vancouver School District shows that while some newcomer students perform as well or better than Canadian-born English-speaking students, some newcomer and second-generation students perform below their same-age peers and are more at risk of disappearing from academic subject courses and leaving school early (Coelho, 2003; see also Gunderson, D'Silva, & Odo, 2012; McAndrew et al., 2009; Toohey & Derwing, 2008; Watt & Roessingh, 2001). These circumstances raise significant concerns about equity, inclusion, and social justice for these learners, their families, and our communities, which provided a rationale and motivation for this project.

2 Engaging with the Multilingual Turn

Against the backdrop of critical scholarship in applied linguistics, powerful discursive conceptualizations of language, diversity, and social difference have shaped approaches to addressing the language learning needs of immigrant students. As Makoni and Pennycook (2005, 2007) have argued, the concept of multilingualism only superficially overcomes monolingual perspectives: "discourses of multilingualism reinforce the ways of thinking about language that we need to get beyond"

(Pennycook, 2010, p. 12). Education has tended not to acknowledge or respond to recent epistemological shifts in applied linguistics that have contributed to the "multilingual turn" (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2013) in the field. Educators working in classrooms that are richly multilingual and multicultural have much to gain from these understandings, to inform a culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy that both supports students who are in the process of learning the language of instruction while learning content curriculum, and that develops every student's language awareness and intercultural abilities.

As the content of this volume illustrates, research in applied linguistics has highlighted the value of multilingualism and the role that students' linguistic repertoires can play as resources for language learning and biliteracy development: scaffolding new learning; promoting metalinguistic awareness; developing biliteracy; and valorizing students' cultural and linguistic identities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014; Van Der Wildt, Van Avermaet, & Van Houtte, 2017). Recent research highlights the multiple ways in which students' linguistic repertoires can serve as resources for content curriculum learning (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Dagenais, Walsh, Armand, & Maraillet, 2008; García, Bartlett, & Kleifgen, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Stille & Cummins, 2013). This body of research demonstrates that instruction that draws on students' cultural and linguistic skills and abilities, which comprise students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), supports academic achievement, affirms students' identities, and promotes connections between home and school communities. Related to this work, literacy researchers have articulated the value in understanding students' out of school literacies so that teachers can build upon these literacy practices in school (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Heath, 1983; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Marsh, 2006; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). For instance, Jiménez, Smith, and Teague (2009) suggested that "minority students are more likely to make progress in school when teachers understand and incorporate their home and community literacy practices as opposed to attempting to simply impose school-like practice (e.g., book reading)" (p. 18). Understanding language and multilingualism through these lenses can fundamentally change approaches to language teaching and learning. Importantly, these perspectives provide educators with a rationale for drawing upon other languages in the classroom, not simply to scaffold English language learning, but to transform learning such that students can use their full linguistic resources without being restricted by institutional or policy-driven limitations on language use.

Naming what bilingual individuals do with their linguistic resources, new terms and concepts encompass the epistemological shift of the multilingual turn, moving from monoglossic to heteroglossic multilingualism. Broadly, a heteroglossic perspective positions multilingualism as the norm and emphasizes the complex and dynamic language practices of multilingual speakers, characterized by a "multiplicity of multilingual discourses" (García, 2009, p. 53) as users draw upon their linguistic repertoire in unique and complex ways to interact and communicate with others. Recently, some scholars use the term translanguaging to describe the lan-

guage practices of multilingual speakers (Baker, 2011; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). Translanguaging refers to the hybrid uses of language as individuals make meaning, communicate, and engage in bilingual worlds (García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 45), emphasizing the dynamic and functional integration of bilingual language practices. Translanguaging encompasses the greater choices and wider range of expression available through the use and integration of diverse linguistic and cultural knowledge. Similarly, the term plurilingual has emerged out of sociological perspectives in the European context, referring to:

> …the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw. (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11)

The notion of plurilingualism makes space for practices and values that are not equivalent or even homologous in different languages, but that are integrated, variable, flexible, and changing (Coste, 2001, p. 15). Each of these languages may have different functions; and drawing upon these collective proficiencies, individuals assemble and use their language knowledge to produce the communication they need (Beacco & Byram, 2002). Underlying the perspective of plurilingualism is the notion of difference. Describing plurilingualism in A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures for the Council of Europe, Candelier et al. (2012) wrote: "It is clear that communication in a context of plurality and otherness – the very purpose of plurilingual and intercultural competence – requires that participants possess, to a marked degree, a competence of adaptation which implies a movement towards that which is other, different" (p. 12). From this perspective, recognition of and respect for linguistic and cultural pluralism entails not just acknowledgement of the multiplicity of languages and cultures, but also understanding that:

> …multilingualism and multiculturalism cannot consist in simply placing different communities side by side. The two phenomena are a product of exchange and mediation processes carried out in multiple forms and combinations, through the medium of actors who themselves have a foot in several languages and cultures. Talking about plurilingual and pluricultural competence therefore means taking an interest in the communicative competence of social actors capable of functioning in different languages and cultures, of acting as linguistic and cultural intermediaries and mediators, and of managing and reshaping this multiple competence as they proceed along their personal paths. (Coste et al., 2009, p. 9)

Sociolinguists use the term "linguistic repertoire" to describe all of the language resources upon which individuals can draw, attempting to dispense with a priori assumptions about the links between language and community of origin or upbringing. As Blommaert and Rampton (2012) write, linguistic repertoire refers to:

> …individuals' very variable (and often rather fragmentary) grasp of a plurality of differentially shared styles, registers and genres, which are picked up (and maybe then partially forgotten) within biographical trajectories that develop in actual histories and topographies. (p. 4)

Not all the resources in an individual's linguistic repertoire have the same value or range of operation. However, all of a person's linguistic resources are likely to be useful to them in some way. From this perspective, the traditional notion of language competence seems narrow and absolute in its assumptions about ability and alignment with a given way of speaking (Blommaert & Rampton, 2012, p. 5). Linguistic repertoires are not fixed or static, but dynamic and evolving along with the ever broadening of personal, academic, and language learning experiences; a collection of life-long skills and abilities which develop according to ongoing interaction with and experience of different cultures as a result of occupational, geographic, and family movements and changing personal interests (Coste et al., 2009, p. 13). As such, these repertoires are temporal and unfinished, ever expanding and incomplete.

The mobility of the present social condition affords an escalation of language practices and resources, and an accompanying escalation of social norms (Blommaert, 2013). Blommaert notes that with the escalation of normative systems that accompanies growing diversity and rapid technological change, individuals and communities adapt to and work with an expanding number of normative systems. The dynamics of these norms mean that linguistic repertoires continue to expand as people learn, negotiate, and move with and through systems and mobilities of power. For this project, understanding linguistic repertoires as dynamic, developed through a variety of trajectories, and involving diverse linguistic abilities that can change over time and based on social circumstances suggests that these repertoires are developed with and in dynamic, negotiated subjectivities and the symbolic and material dimensions of social life.

These shifts in understanding language, identity, and language use have implications for language and education. Conceiving of language as a social practice considers more than the role of language in context, it opens to the contingency and interactivity of context and relations in the production of language. Grounded in and emergent from social acts done in a particular time and space, language is a product of the embodied, contextualized, and political social practices that bring it about (Pennycook, 2010, p. 124). From this perspective, linguistic repertoires and identifications can be seen as products of social practices.

Taking a critical approach to what these practices look like in schools, Cummins (1996, 2001) has highlighted the influence of societal power relations in classroom interactions, particularly in the education of bilingual students. Cummins suggested that within a social context of unequal power relations, classroom interactions are never neutral, but located on a continuum ranging between the reinforcement of coercive relations of power and the promotion of collaborative relations of power. He explained that when students see their language, culture, and community reflected in and respected by school, this positively affects their engagement with learning. By contrast, when students perceive their language, culture or identity to be devalued or ignored at school, they are less likely to engage. Articulating this reciprocal relationship, Cummins (1996) wrote:

> The more students learn, the more their academic self-concept grows, and the more academically engaged they become. However, students will be reluctant to invest their identities in the learning process if they feel their teachers do not like them, respect them, and appreciate their experiences and talents. In the past, students from marginalized social groups have seldom felt this sense of affirmation and respect for language and culture from their teachers. Consequently their intellectual and personal talents rarely found expression in the classroom. (p. 126)

Cummins has presented several pedagogical frameworks and strategies to guide teachers in actively challenging conditions of inequity for bilingual students (i.e. Cummins, 2001, 2007, 2009; Cummins & Early, 2011). These approaches are based on the idea that identity plays a central role in the language learning processes. For instance, Norton and Toohey (2002) write, "Language learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a linguistic system of signs and symbols; it is also a complex social practice in which the value and meaning ascribed to an utterance are determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks" (p. 115). When students see their language, culture, and community reflected in and respected by school, this positively affects their engagement with learning, determining "who they are in their teacher's eyes and who they are capable of becoming" (Cummins, 2001). Working with the idea that classrooms interactions can therefore either constrain or enable students' identity constructions and learning, these theoretical perspectives provided the foundation for the fieldwork in this project.

3 Research Context and Methodology

The project was embedded within a school-university research partnership in a large urban school district in Canada. The purpose of the partnership was to support English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in implementing pedagogical strategies for engaging emergent bi/multilingual students in literacy activities. To meet the objectives of the partnership, I, as part of a team of university-based researchers, worked collaboratively with teachers and students to assist them in using digital technology for teaching and learning activities, and to encourage students to recognize and draw upon their linguistic repertoires and cultural knowledge as resources for learning. The research component of the study documented students' perceptions and feelings about the process of getting engaged with literacy in this way, and teachers' observations about the effects of the project on students' self-efficacy and literacy accomplishments. We anticipated that the project would enhance the students' engagement with literacy, and generate positive feelings towards using students' home language(s) and technology for literacy activities in the classroom. Underlying the approach to the work was the idea that insight into effective forms of pedagogy will be gained only by means of equitable collaboration with teachers and students. Involving research as critical praxis (Lather, 2007), this approach to inquiry begins with interest in and collaborative action toward addressing challenges

or problems faced by a group or community. Critical praxis is based on the idea that experience is open to change, and that individuals and communities possess the capacity to produce change. A fundamental aspect praxis-oriented scholarly research is that it is constituted within a relationship of mutual trust with people and communities, developing understandings through involvement with, not for, people to address issues and challenges relevant to their lives (Freire, 1970).

The research design started from a basic initial plan that evolved as I entered the field and began to work with and get to know the teachers and students. Together, we determined the goals of our collaboration and created pedagogic activities based on our collective needs and interests. I used ethnographic methods to guide this research. However, the imperative of doing school-based ethnographic work meant that I was not just a researcher, but a 'doer' in the classrooms (Gallagher, 2008). Gallagher (2007) calls this approach a porous methodology that is driven by the explicit and immediate needs of the field (p. 55). My presence in the classrooms week after week, and my need to talk to teachers and students, meant that I had to involve myself in the routines and work of classroom life. The teachers and I created a plan and timeline for the pedagogic and research activities, and we shared these plans with the students. We also invited the students to contribute their thoughts and ideas to these plans, talking to the students about university-based research. Overall, data sources included researcher field notes, audio- and video-recorded observations and interviews, multimodal artifacts of student work, digital photographs, and survey data. These dimensions of the research process aimed to bridge the traditional university/school divide (Denos, Toohey, Neilson, & Waterstone, 2009) and create a dialectic between theory and practice (Freire, 2006). Moreover, the collaborative involvement of the teachers and students grounded the research findings in the practice of education and the experiences of the teachers, students, and I in their school.

The fieldwork took place over three school terms with one third grade class, two fourth grade classes, and two fifth grade classes. Every new term involved a different teaching context, different students, and different pedagogic activities. Each collaboration built upon what was learned in the last, entailing a cumulative progression and refinement of our processes and understandings. The school board delivery model for supporting early-stage English Language Learners was to integrate the students into their mainstream class for half of the school day, and to withdraw the students into self-contained ESL or ELD classes for the other half of the school day. Students at higher levels of English language proficiency received support in their classrooms from an ESL teacher who visited the class once or twice per week for approximately 30–45 min at a time.

The school had no clear language policy, and teachers were on their own to understand and experiment with ways to draw upon students' linguistic repertoires in the classroom. Working together, the teachers and I co-constructed pedagogic practices for incorporating students' linguistic repertoires into teaching and learning activities (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). To guide this work, we used Cummins' (2011) Literacy Engagement framework. The Literacy Engagement framework suggests that in order to teach emergent bilingual students effectively, teachers need to

maximize students' opportunities to become actively engaged with reading and writing: "Literacy engagement will be enhanced when (a) students' ability to understand and use academic language is supported through specific instructional strategies, (b) their prior experience and current knowledge are activated, (c) their identities are affirmed, and (d) their knowledge of, and control over, language is extended across the curriculum" (Cummins, Early, & Stille, 2011, p. 35).

4 Rich Linguistic Repertoires, Broadened Resources for Learning

Like other research examining the nature of plurilingual competence, I found that students' language knowledge had developed through "family experience and learning, history and contacts between generations, travel, expatriation, emigration, and more generally belonging to a multilingual and multicultural environment or moving from one environment to another, but also through reading, and through the media" (Coste et al., 2009, p. 32). Understanding students' linguistic repertoires as developed through a variety of trajectories and involving diverse linguistic abilities that can change over time and based on social circumstances (Blommaert & Rampton, 2012), students' language practices were developed with and in their dynamic, negotiated subjectivities. Moreover, students' diverse experiences and backgrounds meant that associating language with particular speech communities was insufficient to reflect the diversity of their linguistic knowledge. The teachers and I needed to get to know students to learn the whole range of their language practices and experiences. School information about students' language profiles was not sufficiently rich to capture the full extent of students' language skills and abilities or their home language context. Reflecting the experiences and the circumstances of their lives, students' linguistic capabilities varied across languages and language skill areas (oral communication, reading and writing). Most of the students spoke fluently in one or two languages, and had partial oral fluency in one or two other languages in addition to English, particularly students from rural areas where the local language was different from the language in education or official national or provincial languages in their home country. Asra's[1] information about her language knowledge reflects this complexity:

Asra: I know Urdu, a little bit of Arabic. I know Urdu, English, Arabic, and just one or two words in Pashto. And that's it.
Saskia: Fantastic. And I bet you are learning French now too.
Asra: I will start next year.
Saskia: Which languages can you read and write in?

[1] All student and teacher names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect privacy and confidentiality.

Asra: I can write in Urdu, only if I see someone write the word first, or if they tell me the spelling. Or some words, I know how to write by myself. And I can read a little bit in Urdu. I can read Arabic and I can read English.

Saskia: Oh, you can read Arabic. And you learned that in school?

Asra: I have Arabic classes now after school. My mom has a friend, Zoha's mom, and I go to her house and I do Arabic. My mom said that we are thinking of going back to Saudi Arabia. When we go to Pakistan, my father will work there. If we like it, after we return to Canada, we might go back to Saudi Arabia to live. We are going to live at my cousin's house [in Pakistan], and you need to know Urdu too, so I am practicing.

Each student had a unique language profile, and even students from the same cultural background had different linguistic repertoires (i.e. Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Similarly, students' language capabilities differed from those of other members of their families. For instance, the following quote from Hisham, a third grade student, illustrates:

> I speak Urdu and English. When I first came to Canada, I couldn't speak English. My little brother speaks only English, [he was] born in Canada. I spoke Urdu when I was four or three. When I was two I only knew car, Spiderman, and my name in Urdu. I speak Urdu now when I go home and talk to my parents and my friends. I don't know how to read Urdu, because I have never studied Urdu, I haven't been to Pakistan for a long time. I came to Canada when I was 3, then when I was 6, I went back to Pakistan, and in Grade 2, when I was 7, I went there again.

Newcomer students hadn't yet absorbed the dominant perspective that they don't really "know" all the languages that they thought, because they could not communicate meaning in each of these languages; it might be more accurate to say that they knew "about" some of these languages (Blommaert, 2013). For example, I asked Monira about the languages that she spoke. "I know lots of languages," she said. "Dari, Pashto, Urdu, English, Hungarian, French, Spanish. I know lots of languages!" Monira's response was typical of many students that I spoke with. Each student proudly listed at least three languages that he or she knew, and often five or six. The students' lists were part biographical, part indexical, both real and imagined at once. Responding perhaps to the recent expansion of experience in their lives; their developing English language abilities, their encounters with children from countries that they had never heard of before, the French class that the students had just begun, the students were discovering what linguistic diversity meant in their school and community context. The list of languages that the students provided reflected their experience of this diversity, their curiosity and interest in the languages that they were encountering, and the words they were learning from their teachers and their friends.

As the students developed their English language knowledge, particularly academic vocabulary, it became apparent that the students knew some concepts only in English. As the language of instruction, English was the language in which students developed curricular concepts and academic literacy skills. For instance, one teacher shared, "for a lot of them [the students] it's the English only that they make [curricular] connections with. It seems that English is where they are making the connection and not so much the first language." For instance, working with Sorosh, who spoke Dari and English, it quickly became apparent that his curricular concepts were

being developed only in English. Sorosh had been to school in Afghanistan up to second grade. I invited Sorosh to write some of the science vocabulary words in Dari language. Sorosh was able to write ‘life’ and ‘earth’ in Dari, which are higher frequency vocabulary words. However, Sorosh was unable to write the words ‘atmosphere’ and ‘needs’, he couldn’t identify these concepts in Dari but he was in the process of learning them in English.

Students’ experiences from different global locations shaped their situated understandings of conceptual knowledge and highlighted the inadequacy of binary understandings of particular curriculum concepts. For instance, we found that the definition of urban and rural communities in the school textbooks bore little reality to some students’ lived experience. Students asked whether Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, would be classified as either an urban or rural community since it had some unpaved roads and few high-rise buildings. A discussion about community needs and wants revealed different understandings about energy use. Talking about electricity, students from rural areas in Central Asia described that electricity was only available for particular hours in their home communities, and often went off several times a day. The students shared that they liked to “go for walks in the fresh air” when there was no electricity, particularly because they couldn’t watch television when the electricity was off. Discussing pets as either a community want or a community need, some students argued that dogs were a need rather than a want, as dogs were critical to protecting farm animals from predators. Finally, one student struggled with understanding the idea that government sets rules for communities. The student thought only village leaders made community decisions. These differences highlighted the situated nature of conceptual knowledge. Moreover, these differences pointed to the opportunities available for teachers to draw upon students’ cultural perspectives and experiences to develop rich, nuanced, and globalized understandings of curricular concepts.

When I first started working at the school, one of the teachers said, “A few of them [the students] do speak their first language constantly in class and I am trying to get them to shift over to English.” The teacher’s comment was not surprising, as neither the school nor the school district explicitly supported the use of students’ linguistic repertoires for curriculum learning. Although the school district gathered information from families about students’ first language, it did not articulate a pedagogic rationale for using students’ linguistic repertoires in the classroom. The implicit message to teachers was that students’ linguistic repertoires were peripheral to school-based learning. As a result, students’ linguistic repertoires were treated with “benign neglect” (Stille & Cummins, 2013). At the beginning of the project, I observed that students moved easily between the languages that they spoke, using English in class and switching language during recess and after being dismissed from school. As students poured out of the school building, their voices grew louder and their laughter and play was interspersed with shouts and calls to their parents, siblings, or friends in both English and their home languages. Seldom were these same lively voices heard using their home languages in school. For instance, one teacher noted, “This was the first time I gave them [the students] free

reign over their first language to use it in class on the projects and everybody refused!"

Separating students' linguistic resources, perhaps inadvertently, potentially constructs students' home language as irrelevant for academic learning (Gutiérrez, Zepeda, & Castro, 2010). Students seemed to pick up on the construction of their home language as unnecessary for school learning. Students' comments about their language use indicated divides between home and school language use:

> Saskia: Do you ever use your [home] language at school?
> Bashir: Yes.
> Hussein: Sometimes.
> Akash: When some people know our language.
> Saskia: But I hear most kids speak in English.
> Hussein: Yes, but sometimes when I am walking home with friends I use my language.
> Saskia: What is your language?
> Akash: Gujarati.
> Bashir: Urdu - I speak Urdu with my brother when we go home together.
> Similarly, Hassam explained that he was unwilling to use his home language for school activities:
> Hassam: Talk to anyone at school, [I speak Arabic with] only my friends who speak Arabic.
> Saskia: Why?
> Hassam: Because I don't know. My mum said to the police, "I don't let my son talk to anyone at school who doesn't speak my language."
> Saskia: Do you know why she said that?
> Hassam: [Shakes head no] I was only one year old.
> …
> Saskia: Are you sure that maybe your parents wouldn't like you to speak Arabic [at school]? They might want you to now.
> Hassam: No.

Though moving between languages according to different contexts constitutes normal translanguaging practice, this distribution points to the assumptions about normativity that underlie the practice of separating home languages from the educational context. As García (2009) writes, "Given the changing ways in which languages now function and in which people translanguage, complete compartmentalization between languages of instruction may not always be appropriate" (p. 79). One of the teacher's comments echoed this perspective:

> "It's a little bit counter-intuitive using a language that excludes most people. So it seems illogical to speak in Urdu when out of a class of 20 there might be only 8 kids who understand you. But I think that the benefit of it [is] people speak other languages all around the world; it's the global perspective thing. We hear different languages, so why shouldn't the classroom reflect the world? The answer is yes, it should reflect the world; all the different languages. Even if it doesn't transmit actual meaning the meta message is everybody's important."

5 Designing Plurilingual Tasks and Engaging Translanguaging Practices

Building on our learning about students' rich linguistic and conceptual knowledge, the teachers and I decided to encourage students to use the full range of their language resources for culminating curricular tasks, including PowerPoint presentations about social studies topics, and short personal stories. Many students first wrote texts in English, then translated them into their first or home languages. This aspect of the project extended our work beyond the classroom as the students collaborated with their families to work on their translations. Apart from the identity-affirming nature of this work, the activity raised students' meta-linguistic awareness. Parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings assisted in this task, helping students with translating and selecting words and spelling them correctly. When students returned to school with the work translated, we spent time as a class discussing who had helped them and how they had worked together with their families. The images in Fig. 1 show sample slides from students' PowerPoint presentations from each class.

The teachers planned a class presentation to showcase this work, inviting families and school administrators to attend. All presentations were bilingual, written in both English and the students' home languages, except for two. Two students' families were unable to help them with writing in their home languages, and because the teachers and I did not speak the languages, the students only felt comfortable writing in English.

Our ability to encourage students to use additional languages in the classroom met with differing levels of success at each phase of the project, and we reflected on what we had learned at each phase to improve upon the next time. The first time that the teachers and I encouraged students to create dual-language presentations, most of the students did use both English and their home language to write. However, when the students presented their work orally in front of parents and school administrators, many of them chose to deliver their presentations only in English,

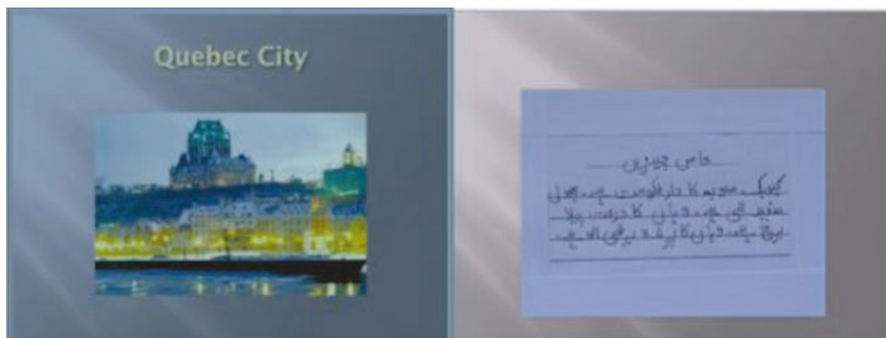

Fig. 1 Sample slides from student presentations in English and in Urdu

preferring instead just to show the slides that were written in their home languages. Mrs. Gopal discussed the students' choices:

> I really loved that he [Hossein] spoke in his first language. Unfortunately, nobody else did; I was disappointed by that. I didn't think all of them would, but I thought Ibrahim might and Jayani might, because Jayani's got both languages down pretty good. So I thought she would be willing to do both languages. And Ibrahim, until actually the moment he got up to present, he told me he was going to do it in a second language. But I guess he just chickened out! But it was very nice that Hossein did; I think he was more comfortable in his first language rather than English giving the presentation. When he took off to give that [first language] part of it, he looked relaxed; as opposed to the other part of it when he was giving the English, he was tense.

From this experience, the teachers and I learned that incorporating students' home languages is not just a technical activity. We needed to actively challenge the devaluation of students' identities and home languages in the classroom. The following school term, the teachers and I endeavored to more explicitly incorporate students' funds of knowledge into everyday classroom practice. Hornberger (2002) has theorized that students' language use is embedded within a range of intersecting language and literacy practices that exist along a "continua of biliteracy" according to different levels of support for bilingual language use. Hornberger suggests that a change at one point in the continua will result in change along other dimensions of the continua, reconfiguring opportunities for bilingual language use and reshaping the language ecology of the classroom. Drawing on this idea, the teachers and I sought to move our existing practices along the continua, and to add additional practices and supports. We incorporated far more strategies than we had previously used, including: asking students to speak in their home language in class, translating new vocabulary words into students' home languages, talking about students' feelings and perceptions about learning a new language, encouraging students to work with same language peers during class activities so that students could choose to speak in either English or their home language during curriculum learning, using students' home languages for pre-writing activities, having students bring in artifacts from home, and reading dual-language books in class. After making these changes, Mrs. Gopal reflected how they compared with our work the previous term with the fourth and fifth grade ESL/ELD classes:

> I think it helped make more connection to what they are doing. I think they felt good to be able to use both languages, to just be themselves. When they got up yesterday and they were talking, [like] I can say this in English or whatever, Pashto, Bulgarian, Spanish, whatever. They did excellent. This is what I wanted last year in a way with using two languages. But I could not get it. Last year, I don't know if they [could have] gone beyond [what we did in class] using their first language. I mean they [the students] knew it, they knew their first language. But not going beyond, not using in it in a public sense.

Mrs. Gopal shared her perception that the students seemed to be more willing to use their home language(s) because home languages were included purposefully as part of instructional strategies from the first day of school. For instance, Khadija came to the school in the middle of our project, wherein she experienced from her first day of class the integration of her home language into the learning environment:

> We caught them early. I think maybe from now these kids would do both languages. For example, Khadija, she got to use something she already learned. That was good. That was kind of reinforcing to build some of her words over again. You know she's got what those words mean. But particularly with her, I am finding she is just like jumping in her language. I mean she is doing translation from Dari now. Obviously, she understood everything I am saying. Whatever is going on the class, she is able to translate back in her language, which totally amazes me.

From these experiences, the teachers and I determined that we had a long way to go to encourage students to tap into the full range of their linguistic repertoire in the classroom on a regular basis, and to counter the separation or "two solitudes" between home and school language use (Cummins, 2008). The students seemed to know that the school is an English-only zone, and that the other language(s) that they speak should be put aside when it comes time to learn. The teachers and I discussed that we can't just say, 'today we're using home languages now'. The language ecology of the classroom must "move acceptable practice away from language separation" (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 659). We wondered if the students in the Newcomer class used their home languages more readily because they had recently arrived and perhaps hadn't yet absorbed the dominant perspective that their home language doesn't belong.

In most cases, neither the teachers nor I spoke students' home languages, and we were unable to develop students' knowledge of their home languages in school. Responsibility for this development fell on parents' shoulders. Parents played an important role in supporting us to use home languages for curriculum learning by assisting their children to read and write in their home language. In the ESL/ELD and Newcomer classes, the teachers promoted this idea by encouraging students to ask their family members to help them. The need for this strategy provided evidence that teachers alone cannot provide the language and social experiences that are representative of multilingual communities; students need interactions with others who, "enrich this learning context as they embody, construct, reflect, and re-create the social communities from which language emerges" (Martin–Beltrán, 2010, p. 272). One student's description of his dual language writing process was typical, "I did some of it. My mom did some of it, the hard words". Another student reported, "My mom didn't know some words, so we called her cousin and she helped." Some students faced challenges getting help to write their projects in their home language. For instance, Malia, a student in the Newcomer class, shared, "I wanted to [write it in Pashto], but there was no time." She explained that her mother was busy with her little sister who was sick, and her father had to work a lot when she was preparing her project. Similarly, after seeing the presentations of all the students in the Newcomer class, Samira's father went to Mrs. Gopal to apologize for not having done more to help Samira with writing in her home language. Mrs. Gopal said, "He said, 'if I knew what this project was going to be, I would help her more. I had no time to help because I am always working.'" In the third grade class, we discussed with the students how we could use their home languages for writing up their research on communities. Brainstorming how we could get assistance with other

languages, one student suggested, “If we want to use our language we can ask our parents and other family members.”

Arising from this work, the children recognized the value of their parents’ bilingual and biliterate capabilities to the school. Students expressed their enthusiasm and enjoyment for learning new vocabulary and improving their ability to read and write in their home languages. They showed pride in their work by sharing or emailing their work with their parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. These behaviours seemed to support students’ self-efficacy and interest in maintaining their home language skills. This evidence suggests that families play a critical role in home language maintenance, positioning them as valuable to learning and education. Parents or caregivers are children’s first teachers, and their partnership in maintaining and developing children’s home language skills is needed. When school activities facilitate this assistance, children’s bilingual resources are given space to grow, and family language practices are valued. Furthermore, engaging parents in this way challenged dominant practices wherein parents who didn’t speak the school language tended not to play a significant role in the school.

Using students’ home languages for writing activities assisted students to develop new vocabulary in their home language. For instance, one student said, “It was interesting, to learn new words in our languages. First we learned the words, and then put it into sentences.” Moreover, students often assisted one another to learn new vocabulary in their home language without the help of the teacher or me. As one student observed, “It’s really neat to speak it [my home language] at school, because other kids at school can learn it too.” These examples illustrate how teachers might connect students’ home languages with curriculum learning, promoting the development of conceptual and subject-area knowledge in students’ home language(s), what Cummins (2008) has called teaching for cross-linguistic transfer. Encouraging students to tap into their plurilingual resources also promoted the development of language awareness among students in the class. Not only did students learn new words in their own language, they learned that these concepts existed in other languages.

Rather than seeing students as two monolinguals in one body (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), translanguaging can be seen as having pedagogic legitimacy. Students used their home languages and translanguaging to develop vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, generate ideas, write, and support collaborative learning processes. In the ESL/ELD classes, the teachers also asked students to use their home languages to interpret and translate words for other students at earlier stages of English learning. Students often used translanguaging as they communicated the teachers’ instructions or curricular concepts to one another. Evidence from students’ classwork and artifacts suggests that translanguaging was a tool for mediation, supporting thinking processes and helping students to make and negotiate meaning with their peers as they tried to understand concepts or solve learning problems. Further, students gained language awareness as they analyzed language differences and selected appropriate word choices. As García (2009) writes, translanguaging is “a powerful mechanism to construct understandings, to include others, and to mediate understandings across language groups” (p. 307).

Students had the opportunity to develop meta-linguistic awareness of how to use their linguistic repertoires to support learning, particularly for concept development and pre-writing strategies. This opportunity can be illustrated by Khadija's story writing process. Khadija was a student in the fourth grade Newcomer class. She came to the class halfway through the first term of school from Kabul, Afghanistan. Khadija spoke Dari and Afghani Pashto when she came to the school, and was silent during all English-medium whole-class activities. One other student in the class spoke Dari, and Khadija stuck close to this new friend. During small group or individual work, her new friend translated instructions into Dari and helped Khadija to understand what was happening in the class. Including Khadija in our story-writing activities, I asked the class what we should do to get Khadija started. Eagerly, the students suggested that she write her story entirely in Pahsto, and they said that they were willing to explain to Khadija what to do. So, Khadija set about making her story, working hard to catch up to her classmates who were already 2 weeks ahead of her. In just 2 days, her draft and illustrations were nearly complete. With detailed drawings and neat script, Khadija soon filled ten pages of her storybook. Figure 2 shows a sample page from Khadija's story.

Throughout this activity, Khadija's teachers provided encouragement for her progress, showing their expectation that she could do the work, and supporting her same-language peers in helping her. The teachers used Khadija's story to scaffold her English language acquisition, assisting her to add labels to her illustrations in English such as "He is my father" which can be seen in Fig. 2 Translating or creating labels can be used to scaffold translanguaging practice for emergent bilinguals, though it may emphasize that one language is preferred academically (Lewis et al., 2012).

The content of Khadija's text described religious traditions important to Khadija's family. She drew intricate borders around several pages in her story, which are details that signify and embellish important texts in Afghanistan. Because Khadija spoke no English when she made this story, her teachers were unable to communicate with her about what to include in her story. Instead, the activity and expectations were interpreted and translated to Khadija through her peers who had also come from Afghanistan. The students provided her with suggestions and examples of what to write and draw. Khadija's story contained many cultural and religious symbols, far more than other students in the class. This difference might reflect the students' conceptualization of what constitutes appropriate content for a text of this topic, which appeared to be a broad and culturally relevant conception.

Writing a story almost entirely in Pashto, Khadija's story was quantitatively longer than it would have been in English but, more importantly, it was qualitatively much richer and more representative of her experience than text she could have written in English at this time. The teachers reflected that encouraging Khadija to write her story in her first language promoted her literacy engagement and participation in the classroom. The teachers also decided that they were able to assess this activity as part of their understanding of Khadija's literacy development, although this was contrary to their initial expectations of the activity, in which students were to write a dual language (L1 + English) version of their text.

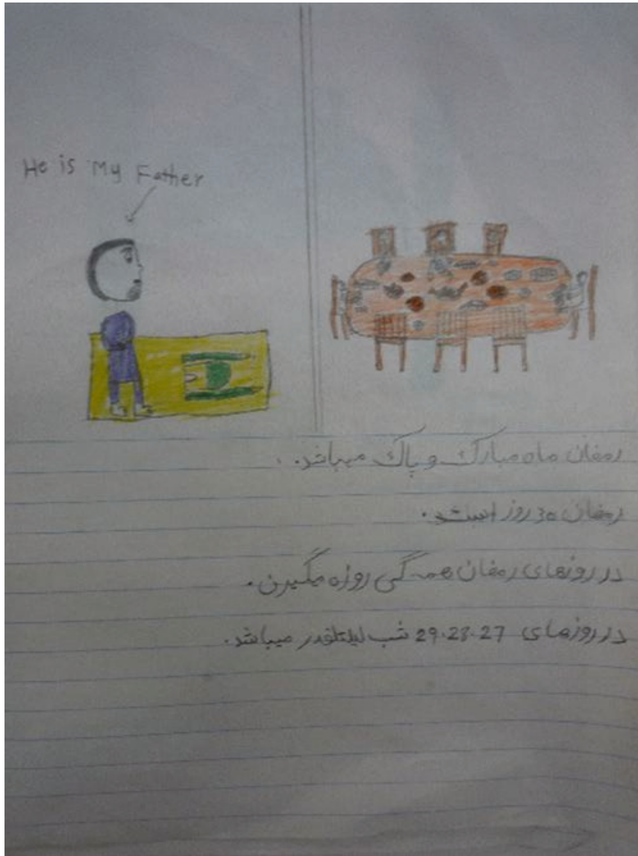

Fig. 2 Sample page from Khadija's story called My Home Country, written in Dari with English labels

Translanguaging practices have the potential to bridge the traditional divide between home and school languages. As the project progressed, students began using different languages in the classroom not only to scaffold learning, but also for culminating curriculum tasks such as written work, digital media productions, and public presentations. With teacher encouragement, students created new norms for language use in the context of curriculum learning. We could not predict whether and how students would use their home languages. The kinds of language use that the teachers and I observed were unique to individual learners, who switched between and mixed languages across forms and domains according to their capabilities, interests, and motivations. As Hornberger and Swinehart (2012) point out, these kinds of flexible language practices focus attention on the agency of individuals who determine how to use their linguistic resources to communicate with multilingual audiences. Importantly, these practices constituted a dynamic bilingualism

(García, 2009) wherein students bridged the separation of home and school language use.

To support these practices, teachers created opportunities for students to play with their language use. The students came up with their own solutions for resisting ideas how languages should be used in school, experimenting with ways to draw upon the multiple languages that they knew. This experimentation resulted in a hybrid use of language that was not always limited by boundedness between languages, which is illustrated in the following example. Rifat, a boy in the third grade class, worked with a classmate, Hassam, to research and write a PowerPoint presentation called Traditional Foods in India and Turkey. Hassam prepared his part of the presentation only in English, and Rifat chose to prepare his part of the presentation in Turkish and English. Rifat reported that he could speak English, Kurdish, and Turkish, but he had only learned to write in English because he had come to Canada before first grade. Rifat was unable to get help from other students or family members to write his presentation in Turkish, so he worked by himself to sound out the Turkish words that he wanted to say, transcribing them phonetically. Figure 3 shows a sample slide from Rifat's presentation in Turkish.

Rifat said, "I am going to read it in English, but I will write in Turkish. I will look at the word in English, and then if I know it I will say it." In this way Rifat wrote his entire presentation in Turkish and English, demonstrating the functional integration of his linguistic capacities. Rifat delivered his presentation orally in both languages when we practiced the presentation and did the presentation for another third grade class. However, when the students did their presentations in the school library for parents and school administrators, Rifat delivered his presentation only in English. When I asked him about this choice, he said, "When we did the presentation in Turkish in the library, I couldn't do it, I couldn't read the Turkish. I felt shy and there were butterflies in my stomach." In another example, Asad, a boy in the fourth grade Newcomer class, prepared his language experience story called My Journey to Canada in English and Urdu. When it came time to present his story, Asad asked if

Fig. 3 Sample slide from Rifat's presentation about Traditional Foods in India and Turkey in English and Turkish

he could present the story in English and in Pashto. Asad wanted to feature all the languages that he felt confident using, and though he could not write in Pashto, he wanted to incorporate his Pashto oral language abilities into his presentation. These examples illustrate that the students influenced and shaped the flexible language practices in the classroom (Baker, 2011). The explicit acknowledgement and incorporation of these practices sent the message to students that they had an advantage by being multilingual, and their linguistic knowledge and flexibility was an asset to learning. As Li (2011) writes, "The act of translanguaging then is transformative in nature; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, beliefs and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and makes it into a lived experience" (p. 1223). Allowing and supporting students to express themselves using the full range of their linguistic repertoire created a teaching and learning context that validated the students' language practices, and affirmed their plurilingual identities as legitimate and appropriate in the classroom context.

6 Conclusions and Implications

Lack of engagement with students' home languages and the maintenance of an English-only language ecology send a powerful message to students that their home languages do not constitute acceptable school-based language practices. When operating from this perspective, schools have a narrow understanding of students' repertoires of practice, and disregard language knowledge as a resource for teaching and learning (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as "based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives...The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion" (www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education). To me, inclusive education needs to go further than these aims to address the power relations that pattern across and within global locations and ensure the value and maintenance of difference in multilingual, multicultural societies. The notions of plurilingual and "culturally sustaining pedagogies" (Paris, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995) can potentially support and develop the plurality of languages, literacies, and cultural practices that students bring with them to school, particularly for students from minoritized or non-dominant social backgrounds. Moreover, these approaches to pedagogy can assist teachers to make use of and build on students' linguistic repertoires to support their language development, literacy, and learning in English-medium schools. These purposes of plurilingual and culturally sustaining pedagogies are critical to support all students in developing plurilingual and intercultural competence.

Importantly, applying current theoretical perspectives from critical applied linguistics to current issues and challenges in education may help to move language

teaching from a technical or instrumental activity, solely for ESL teachers, toward a fundamentally humanistic endeavor for all educators. For instance, inviting students' translanguaging practice into the classroom has the potential to bridge the traditional divide between home and school languages. As illustrated by the cases described here, educators and students can use home languages and translanguaging to develop vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, generate ideas, and support writing processes. Students can also engage in translanguaging to work collaboratively or communicate classroom instructions or curricular concepts to their peers, negotiate meaning and solve learning problems. Educators can invite students to use their home languages to interpret and translate words for other students at earlier stages of English learning. García (2009) writes, translanguaging is "a powerful mechanism to construct understandings, to include others, and to mediate understandings across language groups" (p. 307). Rather than separate languages into L1 and L2, translanguaging entails dynamic language interactions that go both between and beyond different linguistic structures and systems to create language practices that are unique to individuals' personal histories, experiences, and environments. Translanguaging is thus a creative and critical language practice that is fluid, context-dependent, and personally meaningful.

As the cases described here suggest, migration has had a significant impact on some schools, enriching them with a more culturally and linguistically diverse student body. These circumstances have created complex teaching and learning needs, which teachers must address to ensure that students for whom English is an additional language have the opportunity to achieve academic success on an equal basis with their peers whose first language is English. Educators working in classrooms that are richly multilingual and multicultural have much to gain from current perspectives in critical applied linguistics, including the concepts of dynamic bilingualism, plurilingualism and translanguaging. These concepts may support educators to develop and support culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies that both attend to the language needs of students who are in the process of learning the language of instruction while learning content curriculum, and develop all students' critical language awareness and intercultural competence.

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