

Grappling with translanguaging for teaching and assessment in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts: Teacher perspectives from Oaxaca, Mexico

Abstract

Multilingual practices of translanguaging—fluid, complex, and dynamic processes of using one’s complete linguistic repertoire—have been increasingly embraced by researchers and educators in bilingual education. Applying this perspective within the field of assessment has proven more challenging. In this project, we explore the role of multilingualism in teaching and classroom assessment design and practice, drawing upon the concept of translanguaging as a lens through which to explore the perceptions and practices of teachers. Working from assumptions that multilingualism in classrooms is an important tool to enhance the learning of linguistic minority students, we examined how teachers perceive and practice translanguaging in classroom language assessments through an action research case study with 40 language teachers in the linguistically and culturally diverse state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Their reflections ranged from the pressure to train students to produce monolingual-like language in order to pass international standardized tests to the potential to validate students’ linguistic repertoires and multicultural identities through increased use of translanguaging. Our analysis of this action research study and discussion of the potentials and limitations of translanguaging in teaching and assessments aims to contribute to the development of more equitable and effective multilingual education environments in the future.

Keywords: Assessment, bilingualism, classroom assessment, multilingualism, translanguaging

Introduction

Most global populations are multilingual—speaking more than one language—because of longstanding language practices *within* communities and migration *into* communities (Canagarajah 2013). This sociolinguistic reality contrasts with the one-nation, one-language ideology that is prevalent in European and post-colonial nation-states (Gal and Irvine 1995), and which promotes monolingual societies and schools. The support for national, dominant languages and erasure of other languages in education policies and curriculum has been linked to low achievement levels among linguistic minority students (Flores 2013; Lewis, Jones and Baker 2012; Otheguy, García, and Reid 2015). Linguistic minority students, such as speakers of Indigenous languages and immigrants, may face additional challenges in terms of their histories of marginalization or economic status, which are exacerbated by inequalities in the language

hierarchies of the classroom. In response to this, a growing body of research from different parts of the world is showing how incorporating multilingual practices into the classroom can improve the long-term educational achievement of minority students (Blackledge and Creese 2010; Cummins 2007; Flores and García 2013; Flores and Schissel 2014; Lin 2006; López-Gopar and Sughrua 2014; López-Gopar, Núñez-Méndez, Sughrua, and Clemente 2013; Palmer, Mateus, Martínez, and Henderson 2014; Sayer 2013; Turner, 2017; Vaish and Subhan 2015). While this orientation has gained widespread acceptance among scholars, it is not always taken up by teachers or the education systems that they work in.

Additionally, applying this perspective within the field of assessment has proven even more challenging. The contrast between the expanding use of multilingual practices in pedagogy, and the absence of multilingual approaches in assessment and evaluation measures is striking. In connecting multilinguals practices *from* communities *to* teaching and assessment, we draw from the long-standing practice in education of aligning teaching methods with assessment practices (Popham 1987; Sheppard 1990, 1993; Wiggins and McTighe 2005). Such alignment positions teaching and assessment as overlapping practices which reflect the standards or learning objectives from the classroom, and ensure that the score inferences reflect what is intended to be measured. Importantly, this alignment tries to mitigate differences between teaching and assessment approaches. In multilingual communities, the lack of multilingual practices in classroom assessments thus go against these well-accepted practices.

In this project, we explore the role of multilingualism in classroom assessment design and practice, drawing upon the concept of translanguaging as a lens through which to explore the perceptions and practices of teachers. Working from the assumptions that multilingualism in classrooms is an important tool to enhance the learning of linguistic minority students that needs

to be further developed in teaching, and by extension, in assessments, this project examines how teachers in a multilingual context perceive and practice *translanguaging* in language classrooms. Through an action research case study with 40 language teachers in the linguistically and culturally diverse state of Oaxaca, Mexico, participants were asked to draw from existing translanguaging practices in their classrooms and to extend these strategies for integrating translanguaging into classroom assessments. The participating teachers shared their insights into the opportunities and constraints of the contexts in which they work, and produced and piloted assessment tools designed to be used in those contexts. Their reflections ranged from the potential to validate students' communicative repertoires and multicultural identities through increased use of translanguaging, to the pressure to train students to produce monolingual-like language in order to pass international standardized tests. Through an analysis of this action research study and discussion of the potentials and limitations of connecting translanguaging pedagogies with assessments, we hope to contribute to the development of more equitable and effective multilingual education environments in the future.

Conceptual framework: Translanguaging and classroom assessment

The multilingual turn in applied linguistics (Conteh and Meier 2014; May 2013; Ortega 2013, 2014) has implications for translanguaging in teaching and assessment. Translanguaging refers to a dynamic approach to multilingualism that “allows the simultaneous coexistence of different languages in communication” and “supports the development of multiple linguistic identities” (García 2009, 119). Several terms have been introduced that attempt to conceptualize this viewpoint on multilingualism as *linguaging* or a fluid, complex, and dynamic process, including translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013) and polylinguaging (Jørgensen, 2008). In presenting and integrating translanguaging within language teacher education, two key aspects are

important to emphasize: (1) translanguaging as a sociolinguistic phenomenon in multilingual communities and (2) translanguaging as pedagogical practices i.e., the process teachers and students use to make meaning in the classroom and negotiate different language practices, such as those that students bring with them, and those which are desired in formal school settings. In the classroom, Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) have synthesized multiple ways in which translanguaging can and has been employed as a pedagogical practice. Translanguaging can be both student and teacher directed, varying by modality, interactional schemas, and subject matter, as well as by the nature of the broader socio-political language context.

In daily life, translanguaging may occur spontaneously and/or planned, consciously and/or unconsciously across modalities that reflect the dynamic linguistic repertoires of each global-local context. For example, one day in the life of an adolescent in Oaxaca may include communicating with their grandparents orally in an Indigenous language, reading English advertisements in the city, hearing formal Spanish in school, and writing texts to their peers that may include all three languages as well as textspeak (e.g., thx u r gr8) and images. In order to be a competent communicator in their multilingual speech community, they develop a translanguaging repertoire. Translanguaging scholarship positions these types of communication practices as assets, while also pointing out the linguistic heterogeneity within what are often perceived and defined as autonomous language varieties (e.g., English, French, Swahili; Canagarajah 2013). Yet, in accepting how natural this communication is within communities, we also understand that translanguaging practices have a complicated reception by different individuals.

Translanguaging additionally implies a shift in power dynamics, with more attention given to the practices of speakers than to idealized linguistic forms such as standard language varieties. As García (2012) wrote in a publication which we used as a discussion point with

project participants, translanguaging is “*el conjunto de prácticas discursivas complejas de todas y todos los bilingües y las estrategias pedagógicas que utilizan esas prácticas discursivas para liberar las maneras de hablar, ser y conocer de comunidades bilingües subalternas*” (the collection of complex discursive practices of all bilingual people, and the pedagogical strategies that use these discursive practices to liberate subaltern bilingual community’s ways of speaking, being, and knowing) (translation ours, 354).

Validating the language practices of minority students is not the norm in most education contexts. Language ideologies about different named language varieties, for example the stigmatization of Indigenous languages, often carry over into views of translanguaging practices. For example, language minority students are sometimes portrayed as devoid of language skills at all (i.e., *languagelessness*, (Rosa 2016), speakers of ‘dialectos’ in Mexico (López-Gopar 2007)) or remain indefinitely categorized as not knowing enough of the dominate language (i.e., long-term English learners in the United States (Flores and Rosa 2015)). Indigenous minorities in Oaxaca, and throughout Mexico, have been viewed through a discriminatory lens and their linguistic repertoires have been erased in largely monolingual Spanish education contexts where use of Indigenous languages is discouraged (Garcia and Velasco, 2012; Maldonado Alvarado, 2002). In contrast, multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies have contributed to challenging such ideologies that privilege monolingual and standard language norms, and have supported instruction better tailored to the needs of linguistic minority learners (García, Flores, and Woodley 2012; García and Leiva, 2014). Promoting such practices in schools can thus serve to push back against deficit views of bilingualism (Hornberger and Link 2012), and to combat discrimination against linguistic minority students. Integrating translanguaging in teaching and assessment, and achieving this shift in power dynamics, is not simple however; changes are

required in ideologies, teachers' beliefs and practices, and in educational systems.

In interviews of head teachers in the Alsace region of France, Young (2014) explored the connection between personal beliefs or ideologies with reported perspectives about how to teach and use multilingual practices in the classroom. To move toward educational situations that are inclusive of multilingualism, Young called for teacher educators to work directly to explore how to include translanguaging practices in the classroom by explaining not only "*how* to do this, but also *why* this is important" (168, emphasis in original). Teachers have the ability to be language policy makers (Johnson 2013; Menken and García 2010), although contextual constraints greatly limit what they can achieve. In her work with younger learners in Luxembourg, Kirsch (2018) has pointed to the importance of teachers developing a multilingual learning environment to support learning tasks and curriculum that allow students to engage in translanguaging as part of their learning process. In the United States, Allard (2017) illustrated how translanguaging practices performed by teachers and students in the classroom were viewed in relation to other institutional or contextual structures. In the high school classrooms that she studied, Allard noted that the translanguaging practices that were incorporated to create access to content area learning fell short of facilitating such goals due to overarching "inhospitable policies" (127) stretching from school-level institutional restrictions to district, state, and national structural barriers. Whether in France, Luxembourg, the US, or Mexico, teachers are uniquely positioned to navigate these different levels of policies and ideologies, and thus their perspectives provide important insights for creating a clearer picture of the ways in which translanguaging is received in schools and can contribute to learning opportunities for linguistic minority students.

Assessments have historically served part of overarching contexts that restrict choices around language by promoting monolingual, standard language use, and therefore are often

explicitly anti-translanguaging. Shohamy (2001, 2006, 2011) has argued that all tests are language tests and function as mechanisms of (often monolingual) ideologies. They are all inherently tests of language because of the ways in which language mediates test administration, content, instructions, or responses, and function between ideologies and practice. In connecting the language of the tests with the conceptualization of tests as mechanisms of ideology, Shohamy (2006) notes

when tests are given in certain languages, those tested are not aware that even the very fact of using one language and not another as the language in which the test is administered sends a direct message as to the de facto priority of one language over another. (55)

Additionally, McNamara (2012) has emphasized how such use of tests and interpretations of test scores serve as reflections of social values within a given social-political context. He wrote “there is however another kind of meaning, and another kind of ambiguity, in test scores, and that is the meaning expressed by the *values* that are implied in the test construct” (572, emphasis in original). The values transmitted through the language choices made by teachers for assessments and the (in)congruency of language use in assessments with translanguaging in instruction (Popham 1987; Sheppard 1990, 1993; Wiggins and McTighe 2005) are central concerns for our research project. Although bilingual versions of standardized tests exist, they are often developed within a paradigm that privileges monolingual standard language varieties in both test construction and responses (Shohamy, 2011). Most commonly, these bilingual options or test accommodations such as word-for-word dictionaries or qualified interpreters are limited to content area exams (e.g., mathematics, science) and continue to position learners’ multilingualism as potentially contributing to measurement errors (Schissel 2014, 2015; Rea-

Dickens et al. 2011; Stansfield 2011) rather than as integral to the assessment design (Solano-Flores, 2011). Within language assessment, researchers have called for the integration of translanguaging or multilingualism in the design of the test and in learners' responses (Otheguy, García, and Reid 2015; Shohamy 2011), but such efforts remain few (Heugh, Prinsloo, Makgamatha, Diedericks, and Winnaar 2017; Schissel, Leung, López-Gopar, and Davis 2018).

In this paper we build on the scholarship which promotes pedagogical translanguaging, and extend this into classroom assessment. Beginning with a better understanding of Oaxacan teachers' general view of translanguaging in the classroom, we further explore the role of teachers' perspectives and decision-making processes within the overlap of language classroom teaching and assessment approaches. Issues arising from teachers' perceptions of language use during teaching and for assessments were ever-present in our study, as we explored the potential of a pro-translanguaging perspective in a context where standard Spanish and English are the socially dominant codes. While investigating how translanguaging could be leveraged for teaching in general and for assessment specifically, the political and ideological underpinnings that surround translanguaging in educational contexts were ever-present in participants' discussions. In the following section, we briefly describe the context in which the participating teachers work before presenting an analysis of the potentials and pressures which characterize teachers' perceptions of translanguaging in pedagogy and assessment.

Study context: Language teaching in Oaxaca

The context for this project, Oaxaca, Mexico, is uniquely situated to provide insights and new directions in the theory and practice of multilingual teaching, learning, and assessment. Oaxaca state is among the most linguistically and culturally diverse areas in the country, with 16 ethnic groups and numerous Indigenous languages such as Zapotec, Mixtec, Chatino, Triqui, and Mixe

among others (Barabas and Bartolomé 1999). Since 2003, the Mexican government formally recognizes the linguistic rights of Indigenous people, including the rights to educational and juridical services (Ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas, 2003). The *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* (National Institute for Indigenous Languages), which was founded on the basis of the 2003 law and began operation in 2005, has recognized 364 Indigenous languages whose speakers should be protected under the law (López-Gopar, Núñez-Méndez, Sughrua, and Clemente 2013).

Indigenous languages in Oaxaca are used to varying degrees in each community, with some communities using an Indigenous language and very little Spanish, while others are bilingual in an Indigenous language and Spanish, and still others have shifted towards predominantly Spanish communication (López Gopar, Jiménez Morales and Delgado Jiménez 2014). Communication practices also vary considerably across generations in rural and urban communities. Urban centers are home to speakers of many different languages who have migrated for work (Acevedo Conde 2007). Both rural and urban communities are also influenced by the return of local residents who have spent a significant amount of time in the United States, including children who are English-dominant. Within this context it is common for public school classrooms to contain students who have multilingual repertoires and varying degrees of competence.

Despite the fact that multilingual practices are common in Oaxaca, most teachers receive no training on linguistic diversity or techniques for working with multilingual students. In Oaxaca, as in many contexts of language diversity, more knowledge is needed about how to prepare teachers to best serve multilingual student populations, including how to incorporate new understandings of flexible multilingualism or translanguaging into instruction and assessment

practices (Clemente and Higgins 2008). Work is currently being done to document the translanguaging practices that are being promoted in a few schools and other education spaces and to find ways to include the newly-legitimated Indigenous languages (López-Gopar 2016; López-Gopar, Núñez-Méndez, Sughrua, and Clemente 2013).

One context where teachers are receiving new training to work with multilingual students is the *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca* (hereafter UABJO), the setting of this study. The *Facultad de Idiomas* (Faculty of Languages, hereafter FI) at the UABJO offers a Bachelor's degree in "Language Teaching", and in 2014 opened a Master's degree (MA) in "Critical Language Education." As an institution which prepares future language teachers from across the state, the members of the FI have taken multiple steps to integrate critical and multilingual approaches into the educational trajectory of their students at all levels (Clemente and Higgins 2008).

In our project, we have foregrounded an explicitly asset-based view of translanguaging, which we acknowledge is not shared by everyone who participates in multilingual communication. In working with teachers to design assessments that include translanguaging, conflicts arose in articulating or arguing for the value of translanguaging when the teachers' experiences with testing—and the experiences their students would face in other classrooms—overwhelmingly focused on standardized languages. Engaging in these discussions allowed us to learn from teachers' perspectives on the utility and value of translanguaging in various contexts and for differing purposes.

Participants

The study was conducted with 22 teachers in 2015, and with a second cohort of 12 teachers in 2017, and occurred within the context of an optional class offered within the third semester of

the 4-semester MA program. Students who participate in the MA program are all practicing teachers and/ or practicing educational professionals. While many are teachers of English or Spanish, several teach Indigenous languages and/ or other European languages such as French and Italian. Several of the participants teach multiple languages. Some of the MA students are young teachers with only a few years of experience, while others have been teaching for many years prior to undertaking the program.

All educational contexts are represented among the professional settings where MA students work, from primary level to higher education, and from community programs to public and private schools. These educational contexts differ drastically in terms of linguistic practices, socio-economic status, and educational goals. For instance, teachers working in rural public secondary schools must comply with a federal-mandated English curriculum which is not appropriate to the contexts and language capacities of their students (López-Gopar 2016). Having students at different levels of English (from students in Indigenous communities who have limited interaction with English, to Mexican children raised in the United States and back in Mexico), teaching large classes (40+ students), and dealing with behavioral issues and family problems, these teachers regard it as an enormous achievement if their students produce five sentences in English. Other teachers in this MA program work in elite bilingual (English-Spanish) elementary and secondary schools. They are expected to teach fully in English while demanding the same from their students and work with textbooks designed for so-called native speakers of English (López-Gopar and Sughrua 2014). Other teachers, who work with high-school students in public schools, face similar issues than the ones teaching in public secondary schools. However, these teachers must deliver an English curriculum which assumes that the secondary English curriculum was completed, and deal with the pressure of preparing their

students for tests created at the national level. Finally, in the MA program, there also teachers who work with undergraduate students enrolled in language teacher preparation programs. These teachers must ensure that all undergraduate students reach a high level of English proficiency (e.g., 500+ on the paper-based TOEFL exam) regardless of their entry level of English.

Methodology

We chose to explore our question about translanguaging in assessment through an action research case study with the teachers who are studying as MA students in the UABJO.

Conducting this project with this group allowed us to work with teachers who have experience teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms, and who are motivated to pursue innovative approaches to meet the needs of their students. Our aim in this project has been to engage teachers in discussions, reflections, and production of assessment tools relevant for multilingual contexts. Their opinions and reactions to the tools developed are based on their experience and awareness of working in linguistically diverse settings. As such they have valuable insights and ideas for what might work and what might not work, and have contributed to co-constructing advances in the use of translanguaging with assessments.

In understanding the scope of experiences of our participants, we aim to emphasize the importance of the teachers' perspectives and the collective classroom space where we worked together to advance teachers' development of new assessment approaches that were grounded in the translanguaging classroom practices. As such, our work begins to branch from action research case study methodologies to participatory action research (PAR). PAR is research *with* participants, rather than *for* (Whyte, 1991). Within these action research methodologies is the ontological assumption that the participants' knowledge is intrinsic to the production of the work and thus involvement of participants in key aspects of the research process is crucial (Borda,

2001; McIntyre, 2008).

As instructors in the MA program, all authors are also insiders and participants in the case study. One of the authors (López-Gopar) is a core member of the FI and has been closely involved in curriculum planning and instruction across the Faculty; one of the authors (De Korne) has served as an adjunct instructor and supervisor in the MA program, and collaborated in the BA program since 2014; one of the authors (Schissel) co-taught a course in the MA program in 2015 and is collaborating with members of the FI in on-going research into multilingual assessment. The 2015 class was co-taught by López-Gopar and Schissel, with assistance from De Korne, and the 2017 class was taught by De Korne. All of the authors collaborated closely in the planning and decision-making for procedures and made changes to course plans based on the responses of participants. Classes were taught in six four-hour blocks. During the class the participants discussed translanguaging as a theoretical lens, and worked in groups to develop assessment tools that would incorporate awareness of multilingualism and/or translanguaging in some way and which would be relevant for the contexts in which they teach. Subsequently, they piloted their tools in their own classrooms, and reported on the results.

The data for this study consist of the interactions and discussions during the class (recorded in video, audio, and field notes), surveys on attitudes towards multilingualism administered at the start of the class, documentation of work artefacts (group presentations and assessment tools), concluding focus groups (2015) and concluding written reflections (2015, 2017). Throughout the course, the researchers and participants used translanguaging in Spanish, English, French, Ayuuk (Mixe), Diidxazá (Isthmus Zapotec), and other languages in order to put into practice the theories with which they were working. Despite the diversity in the different languages used in our course and taught by the teachers, the majority of the small group projects

centered around the two most commonly shared languages across teachers and students of Spanish and English, and creating assessments for English language classrooms for secondary schools or university settings.

In facilitating this course we attempted to avoid a prescriptive approach to translanguaging, which might suggest that it is the new so-called best practice or ideal method that everyone should apply. Rather, we aimed to convey the idea that the question of whether and how to integrate translanguaging into classroom assessment is ultimately one that must be resolved through the contextual understanding of the teacher. In the class, we worked to engineer an assessment-design process that teachers could use to create and justify the use of translanguaging. We introduced a table format for planning the assessment, and guided teachers to use the table (1) to pre-plan the assessment or (2) to clarify/revise the methods and objectives of an existing assessment. During the class, we had more active engagement when we had teachers bring in existing assessments that could then be analyzed, rather than trying to create new assessments. In working to engineer assessments to be pro-translanguaging, we drew from Hughes' (2003) assessment design cycle, and content and language objective writing from the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP, Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2004). Table 1 shows the guidelines we presented to the class. We provided examples of completed tables and assessments throughout the course and workshopped developing and implementing assessments and rubrics.

[Table 1 near here]

After completion of the course, data sources including field notes, participant reflections, focus group interviews, and participant final projects samples have been coded using initial themes that emerged during the teaching of the course and meetings among the researchers,

including different perspectives on translanguaging, and different strategies for incorporating translanguaging into assessment. Several tensions around the use of translanguaging in assessment emerged during the class, and have been further examined through the process of coding the data. A principal tension is that while most participants view translanguaging as a positive, valuable attribute for their students, they differ in the role that they think translanguaging should have in the classroom and in the learning and assessment process. In the following sections we draw on excerpts of participants' work to explore their attitudes towards translanguaging in the classroom and in assessment practices.

Connecting translanguaging in teaching and assessment

The participants in this study all have experience working in multilingual education environments; however, they also have diverse personal trajectories and work in settings ranging from universities to informal community programs. It is therefore not surprising that they express a wide range of views on translanguaging, both as a practice in social life and in education.

Through the discussions and development of assessment tasks that transpired during the course, it became clear that participants' views on translanguaging are nuanced in relation to the context of use, and are strongly influenced by the pressures and expectations in their environment. While some teachers feel that they have extensive freedom in the classroom, others are working with specified curricula and pre-made tests. Furthermore, while context has a strong influence on teachers' perception of their ability to integrate translanguaging into assessment, we observed that participants' individual perspectives were sometimes more significant, with several participants working in fairly rigid settings finding some of the most ambitious ways to incorporate translanguaging.

In extending translanguaging teaching practices into assessment tools, teachers adopted

difference approaches, with some being very reticent to deviate from a monolingual, standard approach, while others envisioned giving substantial weight to multilingual competence in their classroom evaluations. Some assessment tools presented translanguaging in very subtle ways, while others worked to reframe their current multilingual practices as responsive to students' translanguaging while also creating space for translanguaging in student responses. Our analysis groups the comments about and practices of translanguaging in assessments into the themes of 1) pressures to produce monolingual-like language and 2), the potential to validate students' multilingualism. We envision these themes as a continuum, and the various perspectives and examples from the class occupy flexible positions on this continuum rather than presenting the themes as fixed, binary categories. We conclude with further discussion about the politics of translanguaging in the Oaxacan context.

Pressure to produce monolingual-like language

Teachers expressed how translanguaging has traditionally been viewed as a problem or a barrier to overcome in Mexican classrooms. Many teachers see their role as helping students to acquire a so-called native competence in the target language and avoid so-called interference from other languages. As a secondary school English teacher wrote in a final reflection, “One of the elements that I had never considered as positive in what my students produce is the use of words in Spanish” (Participant reflection 11, 2017, translation¹). This sentiment is shared by many teachers. The use of Spanish is considered a failure because if students are unable to produce a monolingual register of English in particular, teachers fear they will not succeed on the standardized, monolingual tests that are crucial to academic achievement both within and beyond Mexico. A university teacher commented, “Let’s hope that in the future standardized exams, for

¹ Due to word restrictions, we have provided the English translations. The original Spanish versions are available upon request.

example TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), Cambridge, and others, can be adapted thinking of all the global cultures. For now, these exams come to be a very big obstacle for some students” (Final reflection 2, 2015, translation). As long as the exams are an obstacle in students’ academic trajectories, the multilingual practices which are forbidden in exams are understandably seen as problematic as well.

A focus on helping students to pass standardized tests influences both teaching and classroom assessment practices in Oaxaca. In discussing current classroom assessment practices, one teacher described how he designs his classroom assessments to resemble the TOEFL with the intention of helping his students to prepare for encountering this test in the future, although he agrees that the test itself is a limited and rigid tool for evaluating language learning (Field notes March 25, 2017). During the course, when participants were asked to create assessment tools that might incorporate multilingual practices as appropriate to the context of their classroom, the first draft of the assessment tools often remained within the monolingual norms that they have been trained in or had personally experienced. While many participants engaged readily in discussions about the value of translanguaging and a focus on communication in the language classroom, when asked to produce a usable assessment tool many groups at first created a tool to measure a grammatical construct through a written medium, remaining within a monoglossic and text-centric approach to language teaching.

The presence of standardized exams is not the only pressure which discourages teachers from allowing translanguaging in the classroom. A participant who teaches English in the continuing education program at the UABJO commented in her final reflection about the priority and pressure to teach monolingually in order to prepare “good English teachers”:

I have been strict with my students in the classroom by asking them to speak in English

almost all the time. Translanguaging is a little difficult for me to accept not because I am stubborn but because the context of my students is different. They do not have many opportunities for practicing the target language, one hour a day is not enough. And this added to the lack of their own effort is not good for their process of learning [...] In the case of the students who are majoring in teaching languages, I think it is my responsibility to prepare good English teachers. (Participant reflection 6, 2015, original in English)

This concern with the contextual realities of students leads teachers to prioritize use of the target language, in this case English, and to discourage use of other languages.

Some participants expressed views that are more favorable towards translanguaging, yet which continue to reflect monolingual pressures. For some, translanguaging is seen as valuable for helping to achieve the long-standing goal of “learning a new language.” The teacher who wrote about feeling an obligation to force students to use English also commented on the potential usefulness of translanguaging. However, she makes it clear that it remains an aid which should eventually be discarded as part of a process with other goals, describing how if students receive adequate exposure to the target language “they will not have the necessity of translanguaging someday.” She concludes, “I am conscious of the great help of allowing translanguaging in the students’ performance but without going too far” (Participant reflection 6, 2015, original in English). Such a use of translanguaging in assessment is akin to test accommodations that privilege a monolingual standard or goal rather than seeing the inherent value of multilingual competencies within the classroom.

In the assessment tools created during the course, some reflected this limited integration of translanguaging. The assessment project shown in Table 2 uses translanguaging to model the

assessment instructions, that is to say for clarification purposes. The use of translanguaging has been put in bold and italics.

[Table 2 near here]

For this assessment, translanguaging is peripheral, though acknowledged. The use of “could” further indicates the limited use of translanguaging. Translanguaging is treated as unnecessary for this assessment, a support which may or may not be useful.

Other teachers reframed their current practices of using Spanish and English in an assessment as useful scaffolds, rather than viewing such practices as the result of students as having a deficit in the target language. This assessment has a traditional construction, offering instructions in Spanish and then the task items in English. Figure 1 is a picture of the assessment created by the class.

[Figure 1 near here]

In this assessment, it may not seem remarkable to have the directions in Spanish for responses in English. Yet, in the rubric (Table 3), we note how the test objective values translanguaging, and is further supported by including translanguaging in the evaluation scale of the final open-response writing portion in part three.

[Table 3 near here]

In describing their choice to use Spanish and English with the assessments, the group of participants explain how translanguaging was seen as a strategy or skill that they purposefully used to help students understand the requirements of the assessment:

Since this is a beginner level, there could be some difficulties by the students on following instructions to complete the task (written evaluation). In this case, the teachers are going to explain the activity in Spanish and the test will have written instructions in

Spanish too. This process was established by the teachers who designed the test so students are able to answer it accurately. From our perspective we understand that translanguaging in its original sense refers to the purposeful pedagogical alternation of languages in spoken and written, receptive and productive modes (Participant reflection 8, 2015).

These teachers are using translanguaging as a scaffold with their beginning level students to facilitate language learning. In moving from monolingual biases in test accommodations that often present use of non-target languages as a deficit positioning of learners, they have integrated translanguaging in order to enhance performance on the assessment. By enhance, we mean that the student taking the test is able to devote more time and cognitive energy to complete the tasks that are being evaluated than to parse the instructions. The addition of giving points for translanguaging in the rubric for the open-response writing gives the student the opportunity to create a text that reflects their linguistic repertoire, and one that is appropriate for a multilingual context such as Oaxaca, where translanguaging is a common communicative practice.

Potential to validate students' communicative repertoires and multicultural identities

Several participating teachers expressed a change in their attitudes towards translanguaging in their students' work, noting that they did not need to mark a student down for examples of non-standard English that show clear evidence of the influence of Spanish, but could rather view this as evidence of emerging competencies. As one participant wrote:

The main aspect in my theory of language that has changed is the assessment of the language and multimodality that characterize many of the texts that my students produce. I think that what I once considered only as simple ornamental elements in the work of my students now are unique elements with meaning as important as their own writing. [...] As for the use of Spanish and calques in the productions of my students, it has definitely changed my

perception. For me they used to be mistakes or interference of the mother tongue but now I consider that they are a reflection of the identity of the one who writes. (Participant Reflection 11, 2017, translation)

Some participants who adopted similar views chose to make translanguaging integral to the test design and student responses, thus highlighting it as essential to the teaching and assessment process. In creating an assessment for writing an autobiography in English, teachers discussed how this genre of writing lends itself well to the integration of translanguaging. Translanguaging was part of the learning objectives of the test, stating that “Students will write a short autobiography of at least 15 to 20 sentences, using regular and irregular verbs in simple past tense (was, were, born, etc.) [and show] evidence of multilingualism” (Group Final Project, 2015). In the rubric used to evaluate the autobiography (Table 4), the integration of translanguaging was further clarified as *linguistic resources*.

[Table 4 near here]

This group not only integrated translanguaging, but also weighted the translanguaging elements of their exam to comprise 30% of the student’s total score. Translanguaging in this assessment rubric was specified as well. Here, we see two descriptions for using translanguaging. First, the rubric calls for students to write in multiple languages in order to address coherence in writing. In terms of an autobiography, the use of multiple languages seems particularly important, as trying to explain certain aspects of one’s life (e.g., places, common sayings) may benefit from being written in the original language rather than being translated into English. Secondly in the assessment procedure, the scaffolding element of the assessment includes teacher-created models of an autobiography that students can edit to create their own autobiography.

Another example where a team created an assessment to elicit translanguaging focused on the production of narrative texts, in this case describing events that happened in the past. The

team adapted a grading rubric commonly used in their secondary school system which ranks competencies from “developed” to “not yet developed”, with a corresponding scale of points. They included “*Uso de Translenguaje*” (Use of translanguaging) as category five within which students could receive points. The rubric is shown in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 near here]

The presentation of this approach by the team generated extensive classroom discussion about how to value or accord points to translanguaging practices, and what would be considered “not yet developed” translanguaging practices, following the prescribed categories of the rubric. Many of the participating teachers agreed that multimodal expression (use of images, drawings, or pictures) could be valued as productive translanguaging. Others discussed the use of idioms translated from Spanish into English (whose meaning is generally understandable, albeit not standard in English) as an acceptable way to transfer linguistic knowledge across languages, and as something which should not be punished in grading. Whether and how to identify and award points to translanguaging, beyond accepting and not punishing it, remained a topic of uncertainty and debate however. Many participating teachers continued to consider that standard use of the target language must be the predominant focus of assessment activities (Field notes, April 2017).

Other teachers enthusiastically embraced the potential of translanguaging as an orientation in the classroom, as well as a communicative practice, and strove to encourage translanguaging due to the paradigmatic shift it represents for multilingual students. For example, one participant wrote elegantly about the positive potentials of this approach:

Considering the phenomenon of “translanguaging” as a manifestation of bilingualism and not as some kind of deficiency in managing two or more languages—and in turn to reflect this vision about translanguaging in the classroom evaluations—would be an

impetus for change, that although gradual, can have a great impact on us as teachers in our teaching practice and with our students.

It seems simple to recognize and include different possible manifestations of varieties of languages in our classrooms. This change of perspective of language provides a wide variety of benefits, and leads us to create educational spaces with a different classroom climate by giving our students the possibility of showing pride in their identity and culture. This helps the teacher to recognize the potential of their students, which encourages recognition of students' linguistic repertoires and the cultural capital of the students during the evaluation process. In turn [using translanguaging in assessment] reduces the punitive nature of evaluation, which little by little generates change in educational practices in classrooms by ending beliefs that the monolingual classroom is the ideal learning environment, and finally helping to recognize the existence of multiculturalism in the classroom. (Participant reflection 7, 2015, translation)

Many participants commented on the possible positive results of translanguaging in pedagogy and assessment, including raising students' confidence and changing the biased norms in the educational system.

Discussion and future directions: The politics of translanguaging in educational contexts

As illustrated in our data, tensions around using translanguaging approaches in language teaching were often amplified when the teachers in this study worked to integrate translanguaging into assessments. Yet our approach of taking an explicitly pro-translanguaging role, we argue, meant that we *were* able to move forward to apply translanguaging in classroom assessment approaches with varying degrees of integration, which was in we attribute at least in part to our use of action research case study and PAR methodologies. Translanguaging in

assessment has received little attention in language teacher education, however, and this study provides empirical support for methods to facilitate potential shifts away from the privileging of monolingual language ideologies that have historically been entrenched in assessments (Shohamy, 2011).

Through the discussions and activities in the course we were able to confront teachers' concerns about the use of translanguaging with a particular emphasis on using translanguaging in assessments. By first recognizing translanguaging in their classrooms, teachers were able to frame their assessment approaches as an extension of their pedagogies. On a personal level, many participants discussed shifts in their perspectives on translanguaging and on assessment, generally demonstrating a more positive view of the former and a desire to work more flexibly with the latter. As one of the participants wrote after the completion of the class,

There is a strong belief with respect to the idea that foreign languages should be taught without falling back on the mother tongue of the students. Personally, I think that sometimes it is necessary that the teaching of English happens partially in Spanish, especially in communities like the one I work in, in particular when it is evident that there are problems with learning, behavior and school dropouts. It's for that reason that I usually use instructions in English and after I translate them to Spanish and allow my students to use their language to understand the activities and to agree amongst themselves. In spite of this, I note that my practice and my evaluation criteria are not congruent, because I permit the use of Spanish in the class but I penalize it in the evaluation. (Participant Reflection 11, 2017 translation).

Regardless of teachers' perspectives, the language politics in their education contexts remained central to whether translanguaging could be taken up in classroom assessments.

Encouraging teachers to claim and use this kind of technique as a productive resource was a central goal of the class; however, it became clear that this was not easily accomplished when it runs contrary to well-established practices and school power dynamics. For some teachers, the lack of support from other colleagues undermines their potential interest in trying such an approach. As a participant discussed in a focus group:

If we are working in the same [school] context and five of the teachers aren't in agreement and only two of us are going to work on it [e.g. a translanguaging project], and even if they adopt it if they don't believe in this essential—if they don't like believe in this initiative it won't generate the same effect. (Focus group 1, 2015 translation)

Considering the many pressures that teachers work under, including political turmoil, natural disasters, and impoverished students, they are aware that the participation of the entire school team is necessary to ensure that a new initiative can succeed. In the same focus group conversation participants discussed how to possibly get more colleagues on board with this kind of approach.

The issue of changing the ideologies of the authorities, of the policies, of the coordinators etc., well... this is a very difficult part because they are governed more by... politics that are already in place and it's the hardest part, to try to convince them, maybe I would try...to convince them with results. (Focus group 1, 2015 translation)

Participating teachers noted that it is not just necessary to convince their managers and colleagues, but also their students, if they want to attempt a new approach in the classroom. A participant teaching an Indigenous language to adults mentioned that they were able to use translanguaging successfully in teaching and assessment because the students had agreed on the use of this approach:

The classes happen in Mixe and Spanish, and so does the evaluation. This is because through an agreement in an assembly the students said that the class should be bilingual. (Assessment tool 3, 2015, translation).

In a role play activity where participants were asked to argue for or against the use of translanguaging from the positions of different social actors, they were successful in forming arguments in favor of translanguaging approaches, but they also had no difficulty bringing out arguments against them. For example, in one scenario a participant took on the role of a student and argued to the teacher that their main goal was to pass the TOEFL test, and so the class should prepare them to do that through using similar monolingual assessments (Field notes, April 2017). For teachers working with humanist and critical pedagogies, as this MA program promotes, attending to students' expectations and interests is a clear priority. In some cases this may give added validation to translanguaging approaches, while in others they may not be appropriate if students object to them.

In integrating translanguaging into assessments, the participants in this study and the researchers confronted tensions around supporting translanguaging within institutions and societies that value monolingual proficiency norms. The negotiation between these expectations and the ideals of a translanguaging approach to language teaching and assessment led the teachers to question the types of consequences that students and teachers may face if using this untraditional assessment approach. In trying to decide what type of test to use, we continued to readdress the question: *Would taking a pro-translanguaging view in assessments (and instruction) benefit student learning given the societal and institutional pressures?* Taken as a whole, the participants in this study actively engaged with the tensions around the use of translanguaging in their classrooms. They brought to light not only the potential for using

translanguaging as a pedagogical tool to support learning and the potential for translanguaging in assessments in a post-colonial multilingual context like Oaxaca, but also the societal and institutional barriers that constrict such decisions with implications for other multilingual contexts.

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Evaluación de Inglés del semestre Febrero- Julio 2015**Student Name:** _____ **Date** _____ **Score** _____**2. Complete el texto con los verbos que consideres adecuados a la Rutina de Oscar.**

Peter (1) _____ to school every weekday. He (2) _____ up at 7:00 o'clock. He (3) _____ a shower and then he (4) _____ up. After that, he (5) _____ breakfast. He (6) _____ the house at 7:30 and (7) _____ the bus to school. His classes (8) _____ at eight thirty in the morning. Peter and his friends (9) _____ basketball in the schoolyard for half an hour before they (10) _____ home.

3.- Escribe tu rutina incluyendo como mínimo diez actividades cotidianas

Figure 1. Excerpt from assessment of writing.

RUBRICA DE EVALUACION POR COMPETENCIAS				
Producto: Textos Narrativos (Short Narratives Stories)				
Competencias Genéricas.		4.1. Los estudiantes expresan ideas y conceptos mediante representaciones lingüísticas, matemáticas o gráficas. 4.4. Los estudiantes se comunican en una lengua extranjera en situaciones cotidianas.		
Competencias Disciplinarias.		11. Los estudiantes se comunican en una lengua extranjera mediante un discurso lógico, oral o escrito, congruente con la situación comunicativa.		
NIVEL DE DESEMPEÑO		DESARROLLADO 30-24	EN VIAS DE DESARROLLO 23-17	AUN NO DESARROLLADO 16-12
CATEGORIA				
1.COHERENCIA		Todas las oraciones expresadas son coherentes en relación a las ilustraciones.(6 puntos)	Medianamente las oraciones expresadas son coherentes en relación a las ilustraciones. (4 puntos)	Moderadamente las oraciones expresadas son coherentes en relación a las ilustraciones. (2 puntos)
2. CONTENIDO		Todo el contenido es en referencia hacia el pasado mediante un texto narrativo y multimodal. (6 puntos)	Medianamente el contenido es en referencia hacia el pasado mediante un texto narrativo y multimodal (4 puntos)	Moderadamente el contenido es en referencia hacia el pasado mediante un texto narrativo y multimodal. (2 puntos)
3. IDIOMA		El estudiante hace excelente uso de Ingles estándar en la redacción de su cuento o leyenda (8 puntos)	El estudiante hace buen uso de Ingles estándar en la redacción de su cuento o leyenda. (6 puntos)	El estudiante hace regular uso de Ingles estándar su cuento o leyenda en Ingles. (4 puntos)
4. EXTENSION		El alumno ilustra y redacta su cuento o leyenda en al menos 8 y/o 7 paginas. (4 puntos)	El alumno ilustra y redacta su cuento o leyenda en al menos 6 y/o 5 paginas. (3 puntos)	El alumno ilustra y redacta su cuento o leyenda solo en 4 paginas o menos (2 puntos)
5. USO DE TRANSLenguAJE		El alumno utiliza el "Translenguaje" a favor de su aprendizaje. (6 puntos)	El alumno utiliza medianamente el "Translenguaje" a favor de su aprendizaje.(4 puntos)	El alumno utiliza moderadamente el "Translenguaje" a favor de su aprendizaje. (2 puntos)

Figure 2. Evaluation rubric for narrative short stories (2017 tool 2)

Table 1.

Assessment design planning for translanguaging assessments.

Learning objectives: content and language	Evidence needed to show the objective has been met	Method for gathering that evidence
Content: SWBAT (verb) (goal) by/through (learning action).	Description of outcome/end goal for assessment	What will you provide to students
Language: Students will (verb, language mode specific) (goal) by/through using (specific, measurable action that matches the learning goal).	Focus on what is being measured Note: clarify what is not being measured.	Scaffolding possibilities:

Table 2.

Translanguaging in modeling (2015 tool 8, emphasis added)

Learning objectives: content and language	Evidence needed to show the objective has been met	Method for gathering that evidence
<p>Content: Students will be able to use specific vocabulary and grammar structure learned during the [lesson].</p> <p>Language: The students will introduce themselves sharing to the class personal information such as: name, age, [precedence], occupation, hobbies, likes and dislikes.</p>	A video that shows the students' level knowledge about the content worked during the [lesson].	<p>Provide students with different examples such as: teacher oral presentation, videos, modeling writing.</p> <p>Modeling could include translanguaging.</p>

Table 3.

Rubric inclusive of translanguaging

Objective: <i>Students will be able to write about their own routine and interpret other person's routine by using daily routines, translanguaging and written Standard American English.</i>	
Translanguaging	3
Verbs:	
Conjugation	5
Spelling	5
Punctuation	1
Capitalization	1
Spelling	1
Phrase Structure	1
Number agreement	1
Total (for section 3)	18
<i>Total exam points</i>	<i>50 (including parts one and two)</i>

Table 4.

Rubric emphasizing translanguaging

Rubric for secondary school 2nd grade students (ages 13-15), beginning level**Content (40%)**

General Idea

Date and place of birth

Meaningful events

Comprehensible text

Use of at least 15 to 20 sentences

Linguistic resources (30%)

Use of ideas or words in 1, 2 or more languages to get coherence

Scaffolding

Grammatical rules (30%)

Use of simple past tense of some regular and irregular verbs
Use of capital letters and Punctuation
