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1 TRANSLANGUAGING IN DIVERSE MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS IN ENGLAND: OASIS OR A MIRAGE?

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ABSTRACT

This article takes the idea of multiple language use in classroom settings, also known as pedagogical translanguaging, as its starting point and a) proposes a framework that illustrates to teachers the power of pedagogical translanguaging, b) highlights its strengths drawing on empirical classroom data (namely, learner performance data, teacher and learner interview data), c) investigates factors that can hinder the effective use of pedagogical translanguaging in mainstream classrooms, and d) proposes classroom practices that encourage the use of translanguaging in educational contexts where teachers are largely monolingual, that is speak only the language of mainstream instruction.

KEYWORDS

English language learners, translanguaging, multilingual classrooms, monolingual teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In England, the most recent national school census data reveals that about 20.1 per cent of pupils in mainstream primary and 15.7 per cent in mainstream secondary schools speak languages besides English at home (DfE, School Census, 2016). In 2012 these numbers were 18.6 per cent and 13.6 per cent respectively (DfE, School Census, 2013), demonstrating an increase of nearly 2 per cent over a short period of 3 years. To date 75 per cent of primary and 100 per cent of secondary schools across the country have children who speak languages besides English at home. In England these children are known as children with English as an additional language. In the rest of the world the term English language learners (ELLs) is commonly used. Between themselves, ELLs in England speak approximately 350 different languages (BBC, 2007). Many of them carry "understandings and expectations of education, language and learning" (NALDIC, 2017) that are different from those routinely practised in the UK, and that are shaped by learners' "cultural backgrounds and community [practices]". Unfortunately, this diversity of practices and beliefs is currently under-recognised in many contemporary mainstream

classes as they are largely taught by English native speaking teachers, who often either do not share or know very little about ELLs' alternative language and cultural practices. National data reveals that only 4 per cent of teachers practising in mainstream classrooms are bilingual and/or ethnic minority in origin (PLASC, 2013).

In a situation where teachers share neither the learners' understandings and expectations of education nor their common community language, they face a significant challenge in helping these learners access the National Curriculum fully and as quickly and effectively as possible. Despite the various difficulties that this educational context poses to teachers and learners, there are ways to overcome them. In the following section I introduce a framework that demonstrates to teachers how various types of classroom-based instruction can enhance or restrict learning opportunities for ELLs.

2. THE FRAMEWORK

This framework (Figure 1) draws on Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

The green area in the framework represents learners' actual developmental level. Both ELLs and English native speakers (ENSs) of similar age who have been exposed to uninterrupted formal education either within or outside the UK are likely to have similar levels of actual cognitive development in core subject areas of the school curriculum. The purple area represents learners' level of potential development, or their ZPD. The blue area represents the developmental area that is beyond learners' current and potential levels of development, despite the amount of support or scaffolding provided to them by more capable peers or teachers. The area beyond learners' ZPD is also similar for both ENSs and ELLs, assuming that they are at a similar level of current cognitive development.

Of most interest to us in this framework is the purple area – the area that represents levels of learners' potential cognitive development, their ZPD. When teachers present new material to their learners they use a wide range of universally recognised learning support strategies and techniques. Here belong such strategies as context-embedded instruction, demonstration, eliciting questioning, formative assessment, and others. While these strategies are very effective in helping ENSs reach their full learning potential (the

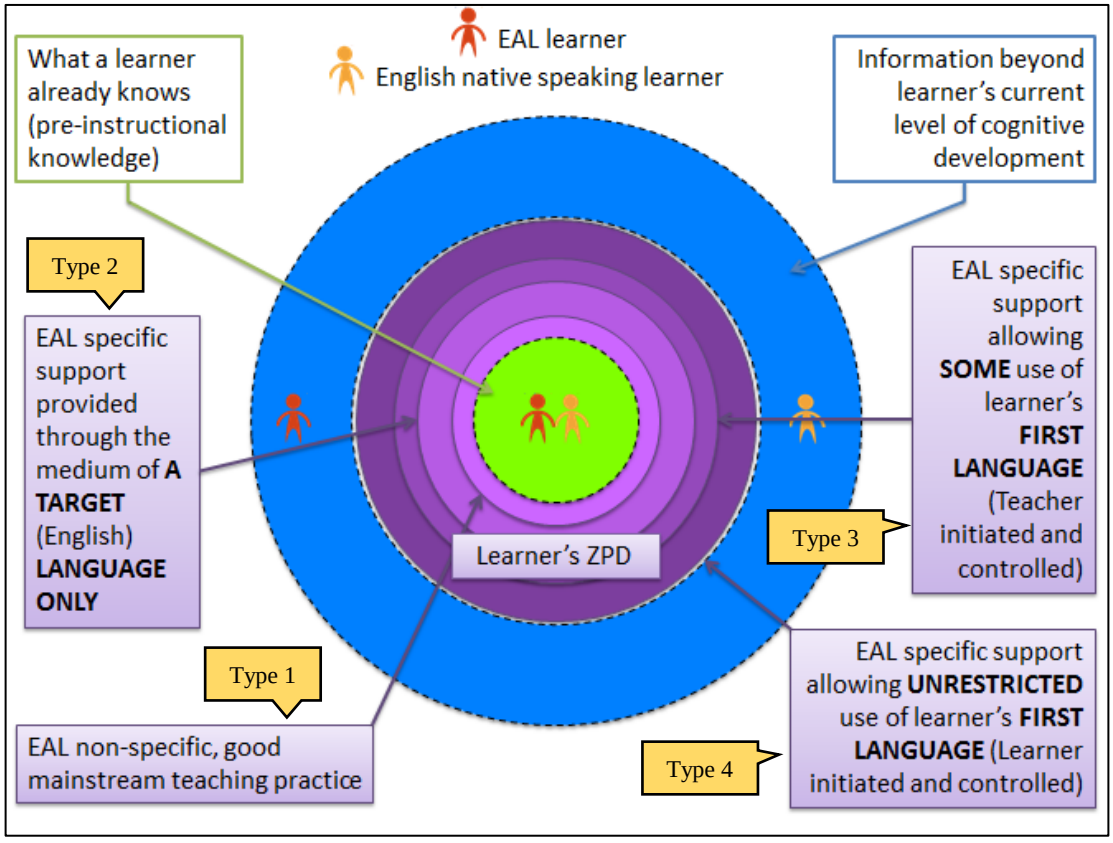


Figure 1: A framework for supporting learning of English language learners in mainstream classrooms.

entire purple area of the framework), they are generally less effective in supporting the cognitive development of ELLs (the first purple sphere of the framework, adjacent to the green sphere). I will refer to this type of scaffolding as Type 1. The reason for this is that ELLs have to process the instructional strategies as well as the content of the curriculum itself through the medium of a language that is unfamiliar or only partly familiar to them. Garcia and Sylvan (2011, p. 398) warn that "imposing one school standardized language without any flexibility of norms and practices will always mean that those students whose home language practices show the greatest distance from the school norm will always be disadvantaged".

With an increase of ELL population in schools in recent years, more and more mainstream teachers have become aware of the specific linguistic (not to be confused with special educational) needs of these learners. In order to assist their learners in

comprehending the content of the national curriculum, and later in demonstrating their knowledge of it more effectively, these teachers have started using various extra comprehension support strategies. These include such strategies as use of visuals and gestures, use of synonyms and repetition, use of glossaries and key terms, modeling of sentence starters, use of speaking frames and modeling of language samples, eliciting language from learners and encouraging longer utterances, practicing reciprocal reading, mixing ELLs with ENSs during group and peer work activities. This type of medium of instruction sensitive scaffolding is shown in the diagram as the second purple sphere, adjacent to the first purple sphere. I will refer to this type of scaffolding as Type 2. This scaffolding can arguably support ELLs' cognitive development a little bit more effectively and take them a little bit further into the area of their potential cognitive development than routine mainstream type of scaffolding alone oriented to ENSs. However, scaffolding of type 2 is also limited in its educational potential for ELLs as it is restricted to the sole use of English, a language which is unfamiliar or only partly familiar to ELLs.

I argue in this paper that ELLs are most likely to achieve their full educational potential when in addition to being exposed to more traditional scaffolding methods (Types 1 and 2) they are also exposed to further scaffolding methods that encourage use of their home language/s to support learning. I refer to these types of scaffolding as Types 3 and 4. When scaffolding of type 3 occurs (third purple sphere in the diagram) mainstream teachers allow some use of ELLs' home languages for learning but continue to control how and when during the lessons these languages are used. Type 3 scaffolding includes such pedagogical strategies as: provision of bilingual dictionaries to find definitions of the terms specified by the teacher, teacher-initiated translation from English into ELLs' first language/s of key terms and definitions, and grouping ELLs by their common first language to support understanding via translation.

However, when scaffolding of type 4 occurs (fourth purple sphere in the diagram) the freedom of controlling when and how ELLs' primary language/s are used for learning is given back to the learners. It is in this learning environment that ELLs become most able to comprehend and discuss subject-specific terms, concepts and ideas and experience most inclusive degree of integration of their unique linguistic identities, cultural and educational expertise into mainstream classrooms. Indeed, research by Innacci (2008, cited in Song, 2016, p. 88) demonstrated that "code-switching was a tool for bilingual children in a monolingual classroom to acquire what they needed in their learning and to express their linguistic and cultural identities". This type of integration is best achieved

during small-group practical and discussion sessions that (may) lead to whole class plenary sessions. When describing pedagogical practices in well-functioning international high school classrooms, Garcia and Sylvan (2011, p. 393) point out that in them "students talk in small groups, use bilingual dictionaries (both electronic and paper), and switch between English and home languages as needed to complete complex cognitive tasks and put together collaborative projects […]". Unfortunately to date only very few mainstream teachers in contemporary English primary classrooms use scaffolding of Type 4 in their lessons.

In recent years it has become common to use the term 'translanguaging' to refer to speakers' simultaneous and unrestricted use of multiple languages for various communicative purposes. This term can be also applied with some reservations to the fourth type of educational scaffolding described in the above framework. The term 'translanguaging' is a relatively new term and there is still some uncertainty in academic literature and among scholars as to how it is different from well-established notions of 'code-switching' and 'code-mixing'. In the section below I address these points.

3. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

3.1. DEFINING KEY TERMS

The term "translanguaging" was originally used by Williams in 1994 to refer to "pedagogical practice which switches the language mode in bilingual classrooms – for example, reading is done in one language and writing in another" (Williams, 1994, cited in Baker, 2001, p. 281). The term was later modified by Garcia and Wei (2014) to include not only bilingual, but also multilingual users and expanded beyond the walls of the classroom. The authors define translanguaging, in its broad sense, as "the dynamic process whereby multilingual language users mediate complex social and cognitive activities through strategic employment of multiple semiotic resources to act, to know and to be" (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 12). Garcia and Wei have also modified the definition of translanguaging for the classroom setting. They define translanguaging in the classroom as "a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include all the language practices of all students in a class in order to develop new language practices (*i.e. target language*) and sustain old ones (*i.e. first/native language*), communicate and appropriate knowledge (*i.e. subject matter*) and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality" (Garcia &

Wei, 2014, p. 121; italicized text in brackets represents my interpretation of the quote). Creese and Blackledge (2010) cited in Song (2016, p. 86) define translanguaging as "pedagogical practices in bilingual classrooms in which two languages are purposefully and strategically used to support children's literacy development in both languages as children use their stronger language as scaffolding to understand a text in their weaker language".

When compared to "code-mixing", which is defined as "the practice of combining elements from each language because the speaker does not know how to differentiate between them' (Meisel, 1989, p. 13), translanguaging comes across as a clearly distinct, independent construct. Translanguaging does not rely on replacing some language elements by others due to the gaps in a speaker's linguistic proficiency in one of the languages, whereas code-mixing does. Code-mixing can be easily seen in the language samples of very young bilingual or multilingual children as they learn to speak.

Code-switching, defined as "the bilingual's ability to select the language in response to external cues and according to the properties of the linguistic system" (Meisel, 1989, p. 13), seems to be much more similar to translanguaging in its properties. Translanguaging, however, allows the speaker a much greater freedom in their choice of linguistic means that are not necessarily determined or guided by externa stimuli, such as linguistic preference of interlocutor. Translanguaging is not a conversation saving strategy, which code-switching seems to be. It is rather a way of thinking and being. It is a natural state of the linguistic repertoire of any bi- or multilingual individual. People communicate not only verbally, they also make sense of the world around them in their heads, by means of self-talk, for example. When people self-talk, no one instructs or restricts them in their innate linguistic choices. When people write notes for their private use they pick and mix languages, as they like, because in their linguistic repertoire all languages have equal status – the status of a linguistic norm that is used for routine communication and sense-making purposes. As Celic and Seltzer (2011, p. 1) put it: "translanguaging posits that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively. [In other words], translanguaging takes as its starting point the language practices of bilingual people as the norm, and not the language of monolinguals". This idea will become particularly important to us when we talk about the use of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms taught by monolingual teachers later in this paper.

3.2. CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLANGUAGING

Not all tasks and activities during subject lessons can be seen as promoting translanguaging. In order to be called a translanguaging-friendly activity the tasks have firstly to support the development (or at least maintenance) of the learners' first language and stretch the development of their target language. Secondly, during translanguaging-friendly activities learners must engage with both languages in order to complete the task. Thirdly, in translanguaging-friendly tasks meaning is always constructed by learners, and not by teachers for learners. Garcia and Wei (2014) give several representative examples of translanguaging in their book. Two of them are quoted below.

> **Example 1:** *A teacher has students look at a series of pictures and asks students to discuss in small groups what they see and what they can infer. They can discuss in any language they wish but are asked to share with the whole class in English (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 124).*

It is clearly seen from this example that this activity 1) maintains and develops learners' proficiency in their home language and mainstream language, 2) requires use of both languages for successful completion of the task, and 3) and puts learners into the core of the activity as active meaning-makers, rather than passive information-absorbers. In this example the teacher is not required to be proficient in any languages other than the language of instruction – English. In this sense this translanguaging activity can be safely applied to many English mainstream classrooms, where class teachers are largely monolingual. It is also equally effective for use in diverse multilingual classrooms (which many English mainstream classrooms are), as learners can be grouped according to their minority languages into several distinct groups, where at least some of them will also be at least adequately proficient in the main language of instruction.

Unlike example 1, example 2 below presents a translanguaging activity that will become problematic if applied in English classrooms. It is an essential feature of this activity that the class teacher speaks two languages – the language of instruction and a minority language. As was stated above, this situation is not representative of the educational context in England and therefore somewhat restricts how effectively pedagogical translanguaging can be practised in English schools.

> **Example 2:** *A teacher has students listen to a song in Spanish about the topic of the day. She then has them answer a series of questions about the song in English (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 124).*

However, like Celic and Seltzer (2011, p. 5) I believe that "both bilingual and monolingual teachers can carry out translanguaging strategies if they consider the bilingualism of their students a resource for teaching and learning" (see implications for practice section for further elaboration of this point). Finally, in their book Garcia and Wei (2014) give an example of what the authors believe to be a non-translanguaging activity (Example 3 below).

> **Example 3:** *Students are given a reading that is chunked into paragraphs. The paragraphs alternate between one in English and an exact translation in their home language (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 124).*

The authors' argument here is that since the learners do not need to engage with two languages in order to complete this activity successfully (i.e. they may choose to read one version of the text only: the one that is written in their strongest language), this activity cannot be considered as promoting translanguaging. My argument here, however, is that although the above statement is generally true, some learners may still choose to engage with both versions of the text in order to assist their better comprehension of the text and develop their linguistic knowledge of a weaker language. In this sense, I treat this activity as being potentially able to promote translanguaging practices in the classroom. Arguably, this type of activity can also be quite successfully applied to the context of English multilingual classrooms with monolingual teachers. Activities like this, if practised at the early stages of minority learners' integration into a new educational system, may allow ELLs comprehend the content of the national curriculum better, since they draw on language/s that the learners are proficient in and that make most sense to them. Hornberger (2005, p. 607) asserts that "bi/multilinguals' learning is maximized when [learners] are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in two+ languages), rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices". Similarly, Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 106) argue "for a release from monolingual instructional approaches [in schools]" and advocate "teaching bilingual children by means of bilingual instructional strategies, in which two or more languages are used alongside each other".

4. REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON TRANSLANGUAGING

A considerable number of theoretical and research studies on translanguaging conducted over the last couple of decades suggests that translanguaging can 1) contribute to the development of bi/multilingual learners' literacy skills and to the enhancement of their metalinguistic awareness, 2) support the creation and negotiation of meaning in social and academic contexts, and 3) be used as an effective pedagogical tool in assessment. Below I present an overview of some of the most recent of these studies.

Garcia and Sylvan (2011) examined a network of U.S. secondary schools for newcomer immigrants, the International High Schools, in order to investigate how students' plurilingual abilities were built through seven principles that supported dynamic plurilingual practices in instruction. The researchers found that in these schools the teachers were "encouraged to plan curricula and projects to involve students in active learning, [learning, where] students and teachers relied on each other and [where] students utilized English and their home languages to make meaning of their learning of rigorous content and new language practices, and to complete projects by building on their existing knowledge (both content and linguistic)" (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011, p. 394).

Lewis, Jones and Baker's (2012a) theoretical paper analysed the development and extension of the term translanguaging over time. Drawing on the work of Baker (2011) and neuroscientist Guillaume Thierry, the authors revealed that translanguaging practices "allowed more effective learning due to cross-language semantic remapping that occurred when the encoded information in one language was retrieved to enable production in the other language" (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012a, p. 10). Furthermore, the authors also declared that "translanguaging could help students to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter" (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012a, p. 5) and that "In the Welsh context, [this practice] was seen as a natural way of simultaneously developing and extending a child's bilingualism within a curriculum context whilst also deepening [their] understanding of the subject area" (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012a, pp. 4-5). In their subsequent paper, drawing on the findings of another Welsh translanguaging study that involved statistical and qualitative analysis of 100 lessons, the authors noted that translanguaging practices were more likely to be used in "primary classrooms in the age range 7 to 11 more than secondary classrooms'" (Lewis, Jones & Baker 2012a, p. 11) and that they were "predominantly found in arts and humanities lessons rather than in the teaching of mathematics, science, and the more practical areas of the curriculum" (Lewis, Jones & Baker 2012b, p. 663).

Poza's (2018) ethnographic study that investigated language ideologies, language attitudes, and languaging practices within a DI bilingual education program in a K-5 school in a suburban school district of the San Francisco Bay Area, revealed that "students frequently pulled resources from their entire linguistic repertoire to assist them in the construction of meaning" (Poza, 2018, p. 3) and used "translanguaging practices to develop the academic skills […] such as the acquisition of technical vocabulary, the ability to extract information from complex texts with visual supports, and the ability to categorize objects by similar characteristics" (Poza, 2018, p. 14). Drawing on her findings the author recommends that students be allowed and encouraged "to use their own languaging to govern meaning-making in the classroom" (Poza, 2018, p. 5).

In their guide document theorizing translanguaging practices for educators, Celic and Seltzer (2011, p. 5) highlight the fact that emergent bilinguals are unable to understand instruction in another language as they are still at the initial points of the continuum of bilingualism. The authors strongly recommend that a translanguaging approach be used with these learners as it "facilitates comprehension and allows emergent bilinguals to tackle challenging academic tasks in a language they are yet developing" (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, p. 5). Research evidence also suggests that it is not emergent bilinguals alone who benefit from translanguaging practices in the classroom. Ethnographic research conducted by Martin-Beltrán (2014, p. 224) in a culturally and linguistically diverse high school in the Washington D.C. greater metropolitan area, reveals that more advanced bilingual learners also effectively "used translanguaging practices as a way to meet halfway between their diverse linguistic expertise when they were unsure how to express their meaning fully in one language alone".

In his qualitative study that aimed to explore the nature of the translanguaging practices of four Korean bilingual children and their families in home literacy events, Song (2016) found out that during these literacy events the parents used both languages with their children as "tools […] to construct and negotiate meanings, to monitor their children's understanding and to scaffold their learning in conversations" (Song, 2016, p. 101). The author argued that "such uses of languages allowed the children to become aware of potential meaning connections across their two languages and to learn unfamiliar words and expressions in their other language with the help of stronger or more familiar language" (Song, 2016, p. 101).

Gort and Pontier's (2013, p. 231) study that analysed the language practices of four Spanish/English dual language preschool teachers, focusing on the ways in which the teachers mediated bilingual interactions with students and distributed Spanish and

English across different classroom discourse functions, revealed that among other practices "teachers used codeswitching to assess student knowledge and to provide academic vocabulary in the target language".

Makalela's (2015) study investigated 60 multilingual pre-service teachers from various African backgrounds with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of a "translanguaging component" of a teacher-training program. A mixed method approach was used. The pre- and post-achievement tests revealed that in the examined context "translanguaging strategies [were] effective in increasing the vocabulary pool of multilingual speakers" (Makalela, 2015, p. 200).

In his critical review of research on emergent bilingual students in secondary schools, Menken (2013, p. 448) points out that where "emergent bilinguals are able to develop and maintain their home languages in school through bilingual education [they] typically outperform their peers in monolingual programs and experience greater academic success (Thomas & Collier 1997, 2002; Krashen & McField 2005; Baker 2011)". However, accessible classroom practices are not the only obstacle to bilingual learners' success in education. The language of assessment and exams often poses major difficulties for them as well. This is evidenced from the findings reported in the author's earlier study (Menken, 2010). This study involved a word frequency analysis of high school exit exams used in New York for mathematics and English language arts. The findings revealed that "the exams in both subjects were linguistically complex, involving uncommon words in English that would be incomprehensible to emergent bilinguals, in accordance with Nation's (2006) argument that 98 per cent of the words in a given text must be the most frequent English words for them to be comprehensible to an emergent bilingual (Menken, 2013, p. 442)".

Finally, García, Woodley, Flores and Chu (2012, p. 819) in a study that aimed to examine the teaching and learning practices of Latino youth in seven New York City public high schools, found that "in content area classrooms, teachers were interested in assessing content mastery as opposed to English language proficiency, and therefore, encouraged students to use all of their language resources to demonstrate content knowledge. […] This on-going assessment process allowed for assessment to be used in ways that improved the education of Latino emergent bilinguals, as opposed to being used to penalize and fail these students for not having mastered the skills being assessed".

In England to date, research on translanguaging in the context of mainstream classrooms as opposed to that in complementary classrooms (Creese & Blackledge 2010, Wei 2014) or in non-educational contexts (Song, 2016) is close to non-existent. The study

reported in this paper makes initial attempts to investigate multiple linguistic practices in mainstream classrooms, find reasons for their absence or limited use, and suggest recommendations for better practice.

5. THE STUDY

The data presented in this study was collected as part of a larger quasi-experimental, mixed methods, classroom-based research project in 2013-2015 academic years. The project was a collaborative initiative between the University of Sheffield and Sheffield City Council and involved the collection of data from four schools in the Sheffield area. All schools had medium (35-80%) to high (85-100%) density of ELLs and were primary in their educational phase. According to the original research design, one class of each year group at Key Stage 2 was targeted in each school, with one teacher and two (occasionally three) learners being interviewed per class. Learners were selected following the class teachers' advice but all had to be ELLs with intermediate or advanced proficiency in English language, so that they could understand the researchers and communicate to them more or less effectively their points of view on various questions. The final research sample was as follows (Table 1 below).

Density of ELLs in school	School code	Class, Year group	General teaching experience of class teacher	ELL training	Experience in teaching ELLs	Number of ELLs in class	ELLs' English language proficiency[1]	Learner test data[2]	Number of inter-viewed learners
85-100%	FPS1	Y3	< 10 years	Yes	< 3 years	6-15	B, I	Yes	-
		Y4	> 1 year	Yes	> 1 year	16-30	B, I, A	Yes	2
		Y5	5-10 years	Yes	< 3 years	16-30	A	Yes	-
		Y6	1-5 years	Yes	1-3 years	16-30	I, A	Yes	2
	TPS2	Y3	5-10 years	Yes	< 3 years	16-30	I, A	Yes	2
		Y4	5-10 years	Yes	< 3 years	16-30	I	Yes	2
		Y5	1-5 years	No	< 3 years	6-15	I	Yes	2
		Y6	< 10 years	Yes	< 3 years	16-30	A	Yes	2
35-80%	PPS3	Y3	1-5 years	Yes	< 3 years	16-30	I, A	Yes	2
		Y4	5-10 years	Yes	1-3 years	16-30	I, A	Yes	-
		Y5	< 10 years	No	< 3 years	16-30	I	Yes	2
		Y6	1-5 years	No	1-3 years	6-15	A	Yes	2
	LPS4	Y4	< 10 years	No	< 3 years	1-5	I	Yes	3
		Y5	< 10 years	No	< 3 years	6-15	A	Yes	2
		Y6	< 10 years	Yes	< 3 years	6-15	A	Yes	2

[1] Beginner (B), Intermediate (I), Advanced (A).
[2] Samples of learner tests as well as the procedures behind their construction are detailed in Afitska & Heaton (2019).

Table 1: The research sample

This paper aimed to address the following two research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What evidence of translanguaging, if any, is there in ELLs' written work in mainstream classrooms?
RQ2: What are the teacher and learner beliefs about use of home/minority languages in the classrooms?

The findings from these questions were used to develop an argument in favour of using pedagogical translanguaging in mainstream classrooms and to explain why in some contexts pedagogical translanguaging may be used more effectively than in others.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLANGUAGING

Drawing on the data from this study and on the evidence from other published research several points in support of the use of non-mainstream languages for educational purposes can be made.

Firstly, pedagogical translanguaging allows learners to *engage* with and *comprehend* the content of the school curriculum better (Poza 2018, Song 2016, Martin-Beltrán 2014, Menken 2013, Gort and Pontier 2013, Lewis, Jones & Baker 2012a and 2012b, Celic & Seltzer 2011, Garcia, and Sylvan 2011). Conteh (2015), for instance, demonstrates this point by giving an example of how an 8-year old child from Pakistan was drawing on her knowledge of home language (Punjabi) in order to complete a numeracy task, set by the mainstream teacher. The child said: "We had to count in fives, so I did it in my head in Punjabi then I said it out in English …. eek, do, teen, cha … twenty-five … chey, saat, aat, nor …. thirty …. eek, do, teen, cha ….. thirty-five …" (Conteh, 2015, p. 50). This example is representative of what many bilingual children do in their heads anyway to help them stay in step with the rest of the class rather than fall behind because they are not quite catching up with the language assumed by the activity.

Let me hypothesise what could have happened if this child had attempted to do all her counting in her head in English (her second language). She could have got stuck at any number and, while searching for the right word for it, might have fallen behind the rest of the class and, therefore, could have not completed this task successfully. Teacher interview data from present research study also supports the idea of using mainstream and home languages in conjunction to better support comprehension of the lesson material by ELLs. The Year 4 teacher said:

> T: I think it'd be beneficial to have both languages, because obviously they can read it in their own language, but they can also see what it is in English, which I think would be very beneficial (TI-Y4-H-FPS-21.10.2013).

This teacher's idea links well to the idea that was expressed earlier in this paper that bilingual and multilingual learners benefit from one and the same piece of information being presented to them in two languages – one familiar and one unfamiliar or partly familiar. This is due to the fact that learners can make comparisons between the two languages in order both to better support their comprehension of subject-specific content expressed through the medium of an unfamiliar mainstream language and also to notice and acquire the lexical and grammatical ways of correctly expressing ideas and concepts through the medium of the target language. In relation to the latter point Celic and Seltzer (2011, p. 3) state that "putting language practices alongside each other makes it possible for students to explicitly notice language features, an awareness needed to develop linguistic abilities". Similarly, Song (2016, p. 86) proclaims that "the use of two languages supports bilingual children's learning of English and their acquisition of academic language".

Furthermore, the Year 3 teacher noted:

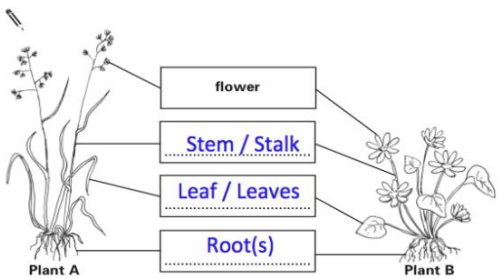
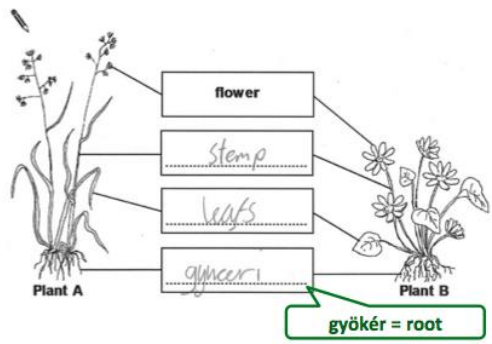
> T: Sometimes giving it to them [children] in their own language and English does make it a little bit more [sic.] easier because if a child let's say is completely new to English and you said 'Where is the head?' they do not have a clue; but if it was a person who spoke in Slovak, for example, and he said in Slovak 'Where is the head?' and if you pointed to it then and said in English 'head', so you got that link you know, that would make life a little bit more [sic.] easier (TI-Y3-H-TPS-18.10.2013)

This example demonstrates how learners can benefit not only from written bilingual input, but also from verbal bilingual input. However, one must be alerted here to the fact that if verbal bilingual input is longer than a single word, a phrase or a short sentence in a string

of utterances, than ELLs may simply switch off from comprehending mainstream language and will start relying on translation alone. Garcia and Wei (2014, p. 131) give an example of such activity: "The teacher speaks in English and then translates what she just said into Spanish after every few sentences". It must be noted here that while continuous translation of verbal input is likely to be restricting to the learners' development of mainstream language, written continuous translation that involves alternation of paragraphs between mainstream and home languages (as opposed to plain presentation of the entire text in mainstream and in home languages) is likely to be beneficial to them. Written alternating translation gives learners space and time to register, comprehend, and internalise newly noticed linguistic information. The learners are virtually denied this opportunity if they are asked to process longer strings of alternating translations provided by means of spoken, momentum-driven, language.

A second beneficial factor of using translanguaging in mainstream classrooms is that it allows learners to *demonstrate* their conceptual, subject-specific knowledge and understanding, as is evident in two examples presented below; both taken from this study's data. In the first example (Example 4), a Hungarian child who has spent between 3 and 5 years in the UK completes part of the task by using her home language.

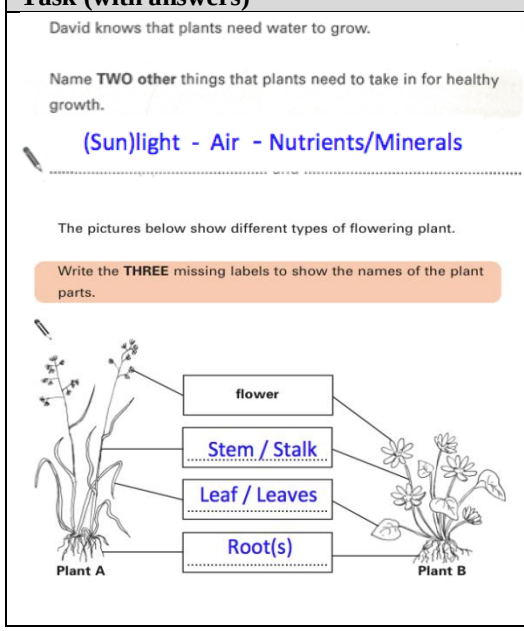
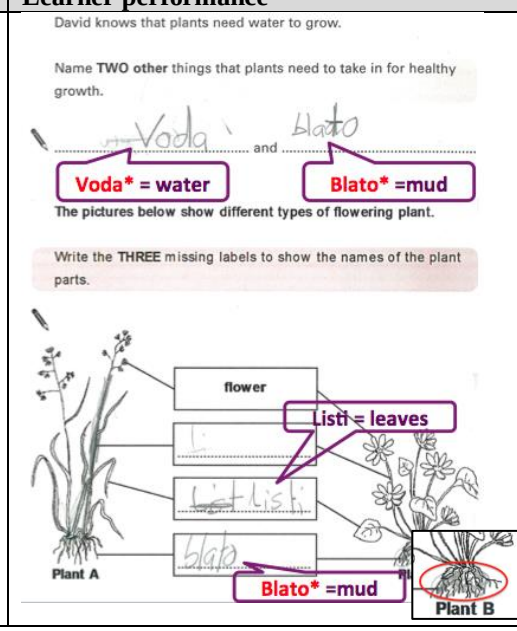
Example 4: Hungarian speaker's performance

Task (with answers)	Learner performance
The pictures below show different types of flowering plant. Write the **THREE** missing labels to show the names of the plant parts.  Plants absorb rain water from the soil. Name the **TWO** parts of the plant the water must travel through to get from the soil to the leaves. 1. Root(s) 2. Stem / Stalk	The pictures below show different types of flowering plant. Write the **THREE** missing labels to show the names of the plant parts.  Name the **TWO** parts of the plant the water must travel through to get from the soil to the leaves. 1. gyökeri 2.

The task is completed successfully on two grounds. Firstly, by drawing on her home language the learner was able to demonstrate to the teacher her scientific knowledge of the parts of a plant. Initially, she attempted the task in the mainstream language but once the gap in lexical knowledge in the mainstream language was identified the learner was able to fill it in with an appropriate lexical item from her home language. Without this linguistic flexibility the child would have failed to demonstrate her subject-specific knowledge, and had she been taking a formal test, would have lost her mark for this task. According to the Key Stage 2 marking scheme the successful naming of all three parts of the plant was required for a mark to be awarded for this task. Moreover, by relying on her knowledge in the home language, this learner was also able to demonstrate her partial knowledge of the scientific phenomenon required by the second task.

Example 5 below illustrates the work of a Slovakian speaking learner who has also spent between 3 and 5 years in the UK, and who has self-reported that he speaks English "not very well". This learner, having read the task instructions through the medium of English, his mainstream language, has chosen to complete the task entirely through the medium of his home language.

Example 5: Slovakian speaker's performance

Task (with answers)	Learner performance
	

Although the learner has answered this question wrongly, from his performance we can clearly see that 1) he has comprehended the task instructions correctly, and 2) in his answer he has in fact talked about relevant scientific data (e.g. 'water' and 'mud', rather than 'atoms' or 'particles'), even though the question required something slightly different. Use of the learner's home language plays a crucial role here as it is by this means that the learner was able to demonstrate to the teacher his comprehension of the question *and* indicate his lines of thinking, as opposed to showing a complete absence of relevant scientific knowledge. A similar situation is observed in this learner's performance on the second question. Here, however, in addition to simply naming the concepts (listi – leaves: correct response; blato – mud: incorrect response), the learner has also visually presented one of them to the teacher, by putting scribbles all over the roots of the plant to represent 'mud'.

It must be noted here that both ELLs and ENSs can use visual presentation as part of their routine classroom practices either to better support their own understanding of the concepts or assist their teachers in better interpreting their subject-specific knowledge. ELLs, however, in addition to the above, may also use drawing to help their teachers interpret their subject-specific knowledge that is presented in a non-mainstream language.

Thirdly, translanguaging allows the *maintenance* and *development* of learners' target (i.e. mainstream) and home languages. Conteh (2012) describes a situation where learners, as part of their routine literacy lessons, have successfully produced trilingual books. She gives the example of a 9-year old learner from Bangladesh with no proficiency in English language who was able not only to contribute to the activity, but was also able to demonstrate a high level of literacy in his home language, Bengali, and significant mastery of fine motor skills for his age. Had the learner's first language not been allowed in the classroom, several erroneous assumptions could have been made about his knowledge, practical skills and competence in literacy (such as, for example, his ability to construct sentences or to successfully use the written genres of narration and story-telling). Moreover, those ELLs who do have some proficiency in the mainstream language can, through this type of activity, also increase their lexical and syntactical competence in the mainstream language.

Finally, the use of pedagogical translanguaging allows the *equalising* of social and educational power of both target and minority languages in the classroom thus promoting inclusion, recognition, diversity and cross-national equality. Wei (2014, p. 173) posits that "translanguaging has a transformative effect on […] [children's] sense of belonging, position and identity". Furthermore, Makalela (2015, p. 200) emphasises that "breaking

boundaries between a range of linguistic resources in multilingual classrooms affords the students a positive schooling experience and affirms their multilingual identities". Finally, MacSwan (2017, p. 190), drawing on work by Smith and Murillo (2015) states that "translanguaging invites children to use language in school as they do in their community […] and [therefore] permits children and families to develop forms of human capital".

Many schools across England now have "Welcome" posters written in many different languages in their lobby areas. Some schools also have examples of learners' work and drawings in particular, usually celebrating-diversity-related topics, in multiple languages displayed for everyone's enjoyment. But, unfortunately, more often than not this type of work is not integrated as a matter of principle into the day-to-day routine of the school. A closer look into the classrooms will reveal that, unfortunately, at present not much use of the learners' first languages is made on a daily basis to support routine, mainstream teaching and learning activities. This leads me to look more closely at the factors that may, and indeed do, hinder the use of pedagogical translanguaging in many contemporary multilingual classrooms in England.

6.2. PRACTICES HINDERING PEDAGOGICAL TRANSLANGUAGING

Firstly, in order for learners to be able to make effective use of their home language for learning they have to be literate in that language. Many ELLs at the time of entry to mainstream schools are either completely *illiterate* or are *poorly literate* in their home languages. A Year 3 teacher comments:

> T: Many of these children have never been to school in their own countries before, so they won't be able to read or write in their first language. (TI-Y3-H-FPS-21.10.2013)

Not being able to read or write in the language makes it impossible for these learners either to make any independent use of teacher-provided translated definitions of core terms, concepts and ideas, or to use their home language for taking notes, recording facts or ideas. Where there are other speakers of the same language in the classroom, they can help a struggling learner make sense of teacher-provided content or record ideas. However, in situations like this, ELLs are always extremely dependent on external help, which often is simply not available.

Secondly, while ELLs may be sufficiently literate in their home language they may still *lack* the *knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary* in that language. This is not

surprising – a lot of subject-specific, particularly technical, vocabulary is acquired in the classroom. Therefore, while learners may be able to maintain overall proficiency and ability to communicate in their first language, gradually, as they progress through the education system in a new country, they start developing gaps in their subject-specific lexical knowledge in the home language, as this lexis is simply no longer taught to them. For this reason, teachers' and parents' attempts to explain subject-specific content drawing on subject-specific lexis to the learners in their home language often confuse rather than help. The teachers say:

> T: Sometimes giving them something in their home language makes it easier if the children know what that concept is or what language means in their home language (TI-Y3-H-TPS-18.10.2013)

> T: …the trouble with this is that sometimes you do not know how secure they are with their home language; the concepts in home language often cause more confusion than help (TI-Y4-H-TPS-18.10.2013)

Similarly, learners note:

> P1, Year 4: I speak English because sometimes I forget to speak Hungarian because it is confusing
> Interviewer: what exactly is confusing?
> P1: first I speak in Slovakian at home in Slovakia and then I came here and I started learn English so I forgot some of the Slovakian words and Hungarian words so sometimes it is complicated
> Interviewer: so is it everyday words that you have forgotten in Hungarian or is it science words that you have forgotten?
> P1: yeah, science words (Int-HTJS-12.11.2013-Y4/P1)

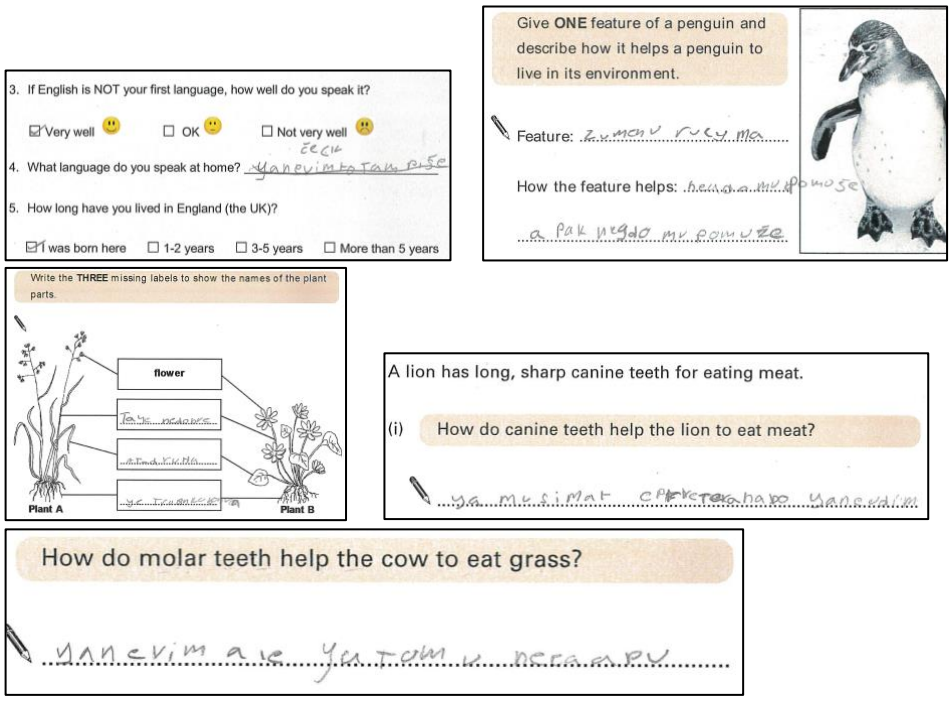
> Interviewer: You said you do homework in English, why?
> P2, Year 4: because sometimes it is confusing in Urdu because then you have to use scientific words (Int-HTJS-12.11.2013-Y4/P2)

> P1, Year 5: I normally like to speak Punjabi but I get like mixed up with the words, not all of it a little bit of it
> Interviewer: Do you know how scientific words are said in your home language?
> P1: no, I do not (Int-HTJS-13.11.2013-Y5/P1)

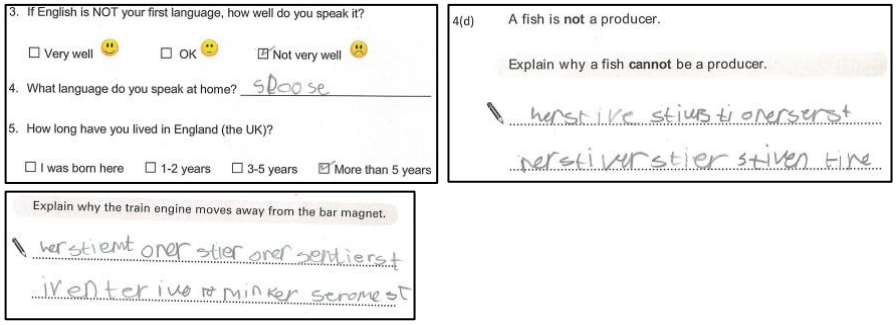
It may be argued that the biggest obstacle to allowing translanguaging in the classrooms is that teachers, who are monolingual speakers of mainstream languages only, often *feel professionally incompetent* and helpless when it comes to *making judgments about the quality of learners' work* produced in their home languages. Indeed when learners translanguage, monolingual teachers do not know what is being discussed, or how

accurate learners' discussions and ways of thinking about subject-specific matters are. The same problem applies when it comes to making judgments about the quality of learners' written work produced in home or mixed languages. Meaningful and accurate interpretation or assessment of this type of work, particularly where learners have low levels of literacy in home languages, becomes very difficult, at times impractical and sometimes impossible, as is evident from the two examples below:

Example 6: Czech speaker's performance



Example 7: Unidentified language speaker's performance



The best that monolingual teachers can do when attempting to interpret and assess the translanguaging work of their ELLs, is to rely on help of dictionaries, software or the linguistic expertise of bilingual teaching assistants to help them. However, none of these sources of support are going to help if the language produced by a child is incomprehensible. Therefore, although it was possible to identify the learner's first language in example 6, it was not possible to interpret his/her performance, as the child's literacy level in Czech was very low. In example 7 it was not even possible to identify the child's home language, not to mention interpret his/her performance. Of course, in a normal classroom situation, the teacher would know the child's first language and would be able to refer to the right dictionary. However, if the language is incomprehensible no dictionary will help.

Moreover, having to work with electronic translators or dictionaries inevitably has time and effort implications for teachers' already very tight and busy working schedules. Furthermore, no software can provide wholly accurate translation, although some programmes are progressing in that direction. Nevertheless, I would argue that despite all these difficulties, it is better for teachers to have in front of them translated versions of their ELLs' performance which they can interpret with at least some degree of confidence, rather than not to have any idea about the child's knowledge, understanding or progression in a particular subject area of the curriculum as it appears in the home language.

In contexts where bilingual teaching assistants are still available, they could sit with the learners concerned and go through their writing together reconstructing it sentence by sentence to a meaningful level. This is a common practice in early years monolingual classrooms, where learners can easily read back their original writing, which might be fairly difficult for an adult to comprehend.

Furthermore, inaccurate assessment of ELLs' academic abilities, hindered by their low proficiency in the language of instruction and poor literacy skills in their home language/s, may occasionally lead to them being placed into SEN learner ability groups or even put on the school's special needs register. In Cable's (2004) study a bilingual teaching assistant speaks about negative long-term effects which this type of misplacement may have on ELLs' academic performance and social integration. The assistant comments: "[…] once you are in there [i.e. on the SEN register] it's very hard to break away, very, very hard. You have to really fight to bring a child out of SEN [special educational needs] and by that point they've usually few friendships (Cable, 2004: 216).

The final reason why pedagogical translanguaging is not commonly practised in contemporary mainstream classrooms is that although schools do seem to be recognizing and celebrating diversity and multilingualism, they often do so outside classrooms, as extra-curricular activities, rather than inside classrooms as part of routine classroom practices, as was mentioned earlier in this paper. Because teachers are inadequately informed about the benefits of (and trained in using) translanguaging for learning, they do not allow this method of learning support in their classrooms and feel uneasy about it. Learners' behaviours are, to a large extent, reflections of their immediate surroundings - home, school, teachers - and their beliefs and attitudes. If home, school and teachers do not encourage learners to use their first languages for learning, where appropriate, they are unlikely to do so. It is evident from the excerpts below how teachers despite believing in benefits of using learners' home languages for learning at early stages of their acquisition of the mainstream language, consider this practice as unnecessary, once the learners have mastered their mainstream language beyond the survival stage.

> T: For the majority of pupils (whose English language proficiency is either intermediate or advanced) I do not think it would hurt, I think they would like it […] but they would not really need it (TI-Y6-H-FPS-21.10.2013)

> T: I think it is alright if they are completely brand new but that is not appropriate later - they do not need that (TI-Y5-H-TPS-18.10.2013)

It is then not surprising that two ELLs, whose perceptions are quoted in the excerpt below, come across as rather reluctant users of their home languages when it comes to the classroom environment, but as eager users when it comes to informal, non-educational environments outside the classroom. In response to the interviewer's questions, the learners say:

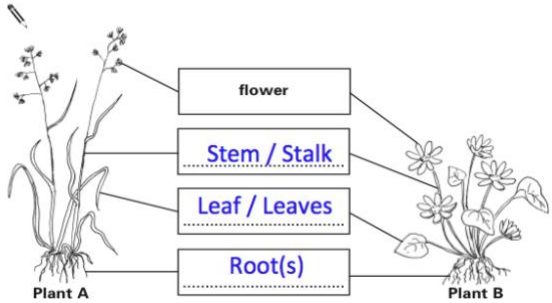
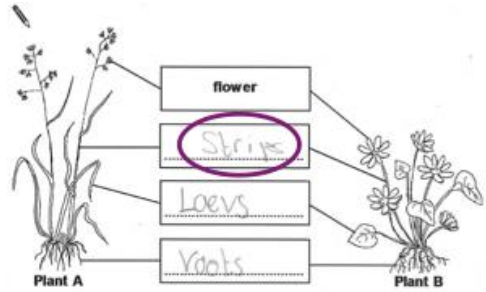
> Interviewer: Do you use your first language in pair and group work?
> Y6/P1&P2: not that much, no
> Interviewer: On the playground?
> Y6/P1&P2: yeah! (Int-HTJS-06.11.2013-Y6/P1&P2)

The rest of learners in the present study seemed to have had similar attitudes towards use of home languages in the classroom. From a cohort of nearly 220 ELLs only a handful chose to use their first language in their work. This finding is strongly reinforced by a study conducted by Shin (2005). She found that bilingual learners' attitudes to code switching, an aspect of translanguaging, were largely negative; learners were prone to

"feel embarrassed about their code switching and [were likely to] attribute it to careless language habits" (Shin, 2005, p. 18). Along similar lines Garcia (2009, p. 308) notes that"too often bilingual students who translanguage suffer linguistic shame because they have been burdened with monoglossic ideologies that value only monolingualism".

Yet another limitation of not utilising translanguaging in the classroom is evident in the work of an Urdu speaking child who has spent between 3 and 5 years in the UK, presented below. It can be seen from this example that the learner chose to answer the question entirely through the medium of English, his mainstream language. While he named the last two parts of the plant correctly (even though the word 'leaves' is misspelt in the learner's paper, one may argue that the learner did mean 'leaves'), he used an inappropriate lexical item to define the first part of the plant. In so doing, however, he used a word similar in its denotative meaning to the shape of the stem (strips). Arguably, had the learner have drawn on his lexical knowledge in his home language to name this part of the plant, he would not have needed to look for a word similar in meaning to the shape of a stem, but would have named it straight away and would, most likely, have got it right. Should this question been completed in a situation of a formal test, the learner would have not scored a mark for it (as one of the items was named incorrectly), despite the fact that incorrect nature of response is likely to have come from a linguistic rather than a conceptual gap in knowledge.

Example 8: Urdu speaker's performance

Task (with answers)	Learner performance
The pictures below show different types of flowering plant. Write the **THREE** missing labels to show the names of the plant parts.  	The pictures below show different types of flowering plant. Write the **THREE** missing labels to show the names of the plant parts. 

In line with my argument, MacSwan (2017, p. 170) affirms that "…if teachers [of bilingual children] believe that code switching relates to an inherent disability in children that might be remedied by instruction, then children's perceptions of the funds of knowledge they bring to school [including their linguistics knowledge], as conveyed by classroom teachers, will likely have a negative impact on their [children's] success in school". He then continues: "Conversely, if teachers recognize that code switching is richly structured and evidence of linguistic talent, […], then children's bilingual ability is more likely to be viewed as a resource rather than a deficit in educational setting" (MacSwan, 2017, p. 170). Research suggests that once this condition is satisfied, bi/multilingual children start "recognising the advantages of translanguaging as a means of enabling them 'to make sense' of the tasks undertaken in class" (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012b, p. 666; see also Jones & Lewis, in press).

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Translanguaging is used effectively in many contexts in America and in several other countries where both teachers and learners share the same minority or second official language, for example Spanish (in America) or Arabic (in Israel). In these classrooms a wider range of translanguaging activities can be carried out with teachers being both actively engaged in these activities and in charge of what is being done. In England teachers are largely monolingual, so a good proportion of high-quality translanguaging activities proposed in Garcia and Wei (2014), for example, will not work, as these activities require teacher proficiency in at least one home language of the minority language learners in the class. For example, Garcia and Wei (2014, p. 131) suggest the following teacher actions for writing and speaking activities involving translanguaging: 1) "write on the board in one language [i.e. non-mainstream language] or the other [i.e. mainstream language], as student(s) give ideas in any [i.e. either of the two] language" (writing activity), and 2) "conduct individual conferences with students using translanguaging to ensure understanding, to make language connections (in grammar, vocabulary, etc.), and to model translanguaging" (speaking activity).

Without adjustments these activities cannot be used in English classrooms with monolingual teachers. What can be done however, is that where there are at least two non-native English speaking children who share the same home language and one of whom has at least lower-intermediate proficiency in English, one child can translate to the teacher and the class the ideas of his/her peer that are being expressed through the

medium of a minority language. This practice can be performed with an unlimited number of minority languages in the classroom, as long as the two conditions stated above are satisfied. Understandably, if implemented too often this practice may become too obstructive and time-consuming, so it needs to be planned carefully.

Another peculiarity of some English multilingual classrooms is that they tend to have ethnic minority children who are not predominantly from one ethnic background speaking the same minority language, but from a range of ethnic backgrounds speaking several different languages. In situations like this, shared oral translanguaging (that is, peer to peer or student to teacher) becomes impossible. However, independent translanguaging (i.e. student self-initiated translanguaging) can still be practised, as long as the learner has at least some proficiency in the mainstream language. I would argue that allowing learners to use whatever means are available to them for learning is better than restraining them from using these means just because teachers cannot make sense or use of them as well. This argument is firmly reinforced in works of other scholars (Garcia, 2007; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011; Garcia & Sylvan, 2011; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014; Garrity, Aquino-Sterling & Day, 2015). Drawing on the work of Williams (2003) in Welsh bilingual classrooms, Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012a, p. 4) state that pupil-directed translanguaging "focuses more on the pupils' use of two languages (and what they are able to achieve by using both languages) than on the teachers' role within the classroom, although it may be engineered by the teacher", and assumes that "pupils work independently [on activity] and usually choose [themselves] how to complete [it]" (Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012b, p. 665).

One good way of encouraging learners to use self-sufficient translanguaging is by providing learners with learning resources that would prompt them to do so (see, for example, Afitska 2015, Garcia & Sylvan 2011). By prompting here I mean actual physical spaces in the worksheets and handouts that allow learners to take notes, write extended pieces of text or draw and label within the worksheets in dedicated areas without having to jot down ideas, translations and comments on the worksheet's margins or elsewhere, between the lines, of primary material.

Generally speaking, in educational contexts similar to those in England, translanguaging practices are likely to be most common in secondary (11+ years old), and maybe upper-primary (9-11 years old), than in lower-primary (5-9 years old) classrooms. This is due to the fact that in order for translanguaging to thrive, learners need to have 1) good, or at least adequate, literacy skills in their home language(s), 2) sufficient understanding of the subject matter under discussion and, preferably, the lexis needed for

it, 3) well developed general study skills, including autonomous learning. Because secondary school learners have been through the education system for longer and have achieved higher levels of proficiency in all of the above respects compared to their primary school peers, they become more likely and better able to engage in what I call higher-order translanguaging practices. Higher-order translanguaging practices are practices where learners are responsible for translating concepts, discussing ideas, developing understanding and constructing meaning largely by themselves. Lower-order translanguaging practices are more likely to happen in primary classrooms where, due to learners' limited skills in the above, teachers have to provide them with pre-translated terms, and pre-translated texts to facilitate basic comprehension rather than active construction of meaning.

Moreover, translanguaging practices are more likely to be sustained in classrooms with higher numbers of ELLs who share same home language/s, as well as in classrooms where teachers encourage the use of multiple languages for learning rather than restrain it. Garcia (2009, p. 308) sees right to the core of this problem and comments: "too often bilingual teachers hide their natural translanguaging practices from administrators and others because they have been taught to believe that only monolingual ways of speaking are 'good' and valuable. Yet, they know that to teach effectively in bilingual classrooms, they must translanguage".

Finally, it seems difficult to justify why assessment work cannot be done using translanguaging. At present in America, learners can sit tests in either English, their mainstream language, or in their home, minority, language (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Marking papers in learners' home languages would take a similar amount of time and resources as would marking learner papers produced in two/or more languages, i.e. using translanguaging practice. However this practice is not currently used in any educational context, including England, despite researchers' continuous warnings that "national policy context[s] - where standardized tests dominate curriculum and instruction and first language literacy is discouraged and undervalued - pose unusual challenges for learners whose communicative repertoires encompass translanguaging practices" (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 261).

8. CONCLUSION

So, what is the place and future of translanguaging in contemporary mainstream multilingual classrooms in England? Is it an oasis – a magic practice that can be

effectively adapted in mainstream multilingual classrooms for the benefit of effective teaching and learning; a practice that will resolve many problems that ELLs face while acquiring the subject content of the national curriculum through the medium of a new language? Or is it a mirage – a magic but illusory practice that cannot work in English multilingual classrooms due to the specificity of England's educational context: large numbers of ELLs within one and the same classroom, the majority of whom speak different languages and who are largely taught by monolingual teachers? Based on the empirical data presented in this paper, I have grounds to believe that, despite England's specific educational context, translanguaging can find its way into English classrooms and can be used effectively to support the learning of bi- and multilingual learners. To date, this area of educational enquiry is severely under-researched in the country. More evidence and better understanding of 1) how translanguaging works in English mainstream classrooms, 2) what practices work best, and 3) how partially successful practices can be further improved, is needed. Research can inform practice; research-informed practice can make a significant difference to the educational and social experiences of many ELLs. Simply assuming "that translanguaging does not have to be taught" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 402) and that teachers will find their own way into it is wrong. As Garcia and Sylvan (2011, p. 398) put it: "without teachers who truly understand how to use students' home language practices to make sense of new language practices and academic content, translanguaging could become random, not sense-making".

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