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## Sustaining Critical Approaches to Translanguaging in Education: A Contextual Framework

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# Sustaining Critical Approaches to Translanguaging in Education: A Contextual Framework

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# *Sustaining Critical Approaches to Translanguaging in Education: A Contextual Framework*

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## **Abstract**

Translanguaging remains a timely and important topic in bi/multilingual education. The most recent turn in translanguaging scholarship involves attention to translanguaging *in context* in response to

critiques of translanguaging as a universally empowering educational practice. In this paper, seven early career translanguaging scholars propose a framework for researching translanguaging “in context,” drawing on the Douglas Fir Group’s (2016) transdisciplinary framework for language acquisition. Examining translanguaging in context entails paying attention to who in a classroom wields power, as a result of their greater proficiency in societally valued languages, their more “standard” ways of speaking these languages, their greater familiarity with academic literacies valued at school, and/or their more “legitimate” forms of translanguaging. In our framework for researching translanguaging in context, we propose three principles. The first principle is obvious: (1) not to do so apolitically. The other two principles describe a synergy between ethnographic research and teacher-researcher collaborative research: (2) ethnographic research can assess macro-level language ideologies and enacted language hegemonies at the micro- and meso levels, and (3) teacher-researcher collaborations must create and sustain inclusive, equitable classroom social orders and alternative academic norms *different* from the ones documented to occur in context if left by chance.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Translanguaging* is a powerful lens for theorizing the communicative practices of bi/multilinguals. While originally describing the pedagogical practice of receiving information in one language and applying it in another (Williams, 1994), the term was broadened by García (2009) and others (Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Wei, 2018) to describe the flexible ways people leverage their full-linguistic repertoire to make meaning—the “*multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*” (García, 2009, p. 45, emphasis in original). Scholars have continued to redefine translanguaging as theory and methodology, arguing that a translanguaging lens transcends the boundaries of “named” languages, focuses on practice (“doing” bilingualism) over product (“having” bilingualism), and views a person’s holistic repertoire of language knowledge rather than distinct language systems (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015; Wei, 2018; Wei & Lin, 2019).

In education, scholars highlight the benefits of translanguaging for mediating learning, developing metalinguistic awareness, facilitating participation, promoting positive bi/multilingual identities, and cultivating a sense of belonging (Henderson & Ingram, 2018;

Mortimer & Dolsa, 2023; Paulsrud, Tian, & Toth, 2021; Sayer, 2013; Seltzer, 2020). Yet as translanguaging scholarship has proliferated, so too have its critics. While translanguaging aims at “liberating the voices of language minoritized students” (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200), Poza (2017) points out that some studies take up a translanguaging lens without the accompanying critical orientation to challenging and transforming language hierarchies. Some scholars, such as Jaspers (2018), caution against “inflated expectations about the effects of language learning” (p. 5), while others argue that translanguaging may not always be viewed by students as liberating (Charalambous, Charalambous, & Zembylas, 2016). Additionally, Block (2018) points out that education independent from socioeconomic redistribution may not be able to affect the kind of societal change advanced by translanguaging scholars.

Others have questioned the “adequacy” (Guerrero, 2021) or “sustainability” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017) of translanguaging for all educational situations, particularly those aimed at teaching or revitalizing minoritized languages. García and Kano (2014) define translanguaging as

a process by which all 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 and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality.

(cited in García & Wei, 2014, p. 121)

While this is a powerful sentiment, it fails to acknowledge that named languages do not enter classrooms on equal footing. Some scholars working in bilingual/immersion and language revitalization have cautioned against translanguaging pedagogies that may increase use of the dominant societal language in learning spaces designated for minoritized languages, thus counteracting justice-oriented goals (Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, & Genesee, 2017; Fortune & Tedick, 2019; Nicholas & McCarty, 2022; Wiley, 2022).

As early career translanguaging researchers, we have grappled with these concerns and their implications for our own scholarship. However, rather than see these critiques as cause to renounce translanguaging, we call for research to more deeply account for the complex, multilayered contexts in which languaging occurs—and the emancipatory struggles embedded within those contexts (Pontier & Tian, 2022). To that end, we draw from the Douglas Fir Group’s (2016) transdisciplinary framework to guide the study of translanguaging: *micro-interactional*, *meso-institutional*, and *macro-political/ideological* to propose

our own principles for researching translanguaging in context. The first principle is not to do so apolitically (Poza, 2017). The other two principles describe a synergy between ethnographic and interventionist approaches. In the second principle, classroom observation research (including multimodal conversation analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, linguistic ethnography, sociocultural discourse analysis, and other qualitative, non-interventionist approaches) can assess both macro-level language ideologies and enacted language hegemonies at the micro and meso levels. In the third principle, teacher-researcher collaborations (action research, critical pedagogies, and other participatory qualitative research methods) must create and sustain inclusive and equitable classroom social orders and alternative academic norms (e.g., Cummins, 2021; García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017) *different* from the ones documented to occur in context if left by chance. We close with implications for sustaining critical and contextualized understandings of translanguaging and its transformative capabilities.

## WHAT IS “CONTEXT” IN TRANSLANGUAGING RESEARCH?

In this paper, we evoke the transdisciplinary framework proposed by the Douglas Fir Group (2016), who drew on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) to theorize future directions for language education research. Bronfenbrenner argued that there are multiple layers of environment that have an influence on child development, which he termed an ecological theory of human development. Similarly, the Douglas Fir Group recognized three levels of mutually dependent influence in language acquisition: the micro level of social activity between individuals, the meso level of institutions and communities, and the macro level of ideological structures in the wider society. They contend that language research(ers) in classrooms and schools must account for the intersecting dimensions of context, even when foregrounding one aspect over another:

- *Micro-interactional context* (moment-to-moment interactions including semiotic resources: linguistic, interactional, nonverbal, pictorial; see Alberto Mora, Tian, & Harman, 2022; Ho, 2022; Ho & Tai, 2020, 2021)
- *Meso-institutional context* (the “small culture” of schools and classrooms, shaped by educational policies, programmatic goals/design, and agency/power in classroom interactions; see Hamman, 2018a, 2018b; Hamman-Ortiz, 2020; Mendoza, 2022; Sah & Li, 2018, 2022)

- *Macro-political/ideological context* (language discourses, policies, ideologies, prejudices, belief systems and values in the wider society; see Rajendram, 2019, 2021a, 2021b; Sah & Li, 2018, 2022)

Below, we provide conceptual grounding for translanguaging scholarship in education, using these three levels of analysis.

## Micro-Interactional Context

The *micro-interactional* context is constructed through moment-to-moment interactions. Auer (1996) proposed that anything can become a context in interaction, but not everything that has the potential to be a recognized aspect of context will do so: “The more interesting question surely is **how** this *becoming-a-context-for-something* is accomplished” (p. 20). Communication, verbal and nonverbal, must make relevant or invoke contextual factors: in some cases, physical surroundings are recognized while in others they are not; sometimes, age, gender, race, class, or linguistic differences between participants are salient and sometimes they are not. Auer points to John Gumperz’s work on *contextualization* (Gumperz, 1982) as key to understanding how people make contexts/identities jointly recognized through contextualization cues, linguistic or paralinguistic, with varying degrees of explicitness.

Herein lies the difference between *brought along* identities that pre-exist the conversation and *brought about* identities negotiated in the conversation (Zimmerman, 1998). Even if participants have shared knowledge of brought-about identities (e.g., teacher, student, “(non-) native” speaker of Language X, African-American, Muslim, indigenous, Latinx), these identities must still be evoked for social purposes, no matter how implicitly: “turned from invisible (and interactionally irrelevant) dispositions (potentialities) into commonly available grounds on which to conduct the interaction” (Auer, 1996, p. 20).

To relate *contextualization* to the topic of translanguaging, it is not enough to promote any language policy, including a bi/multilingual or translingual one, without seeing how people deploy language to stake, affirm, or reject identity claims and negotiate similarity, difference, or (dis)alignment in interactions. We cannot claim whether a linguistic act that evokes a particular identity is empowering or oppressive, and for whom, in the micro-interactional context, simply by the fact that it is monolingual, bi/multilingual, or translingual. Instead, we need to explore what brought-about identities and social relations are mutually recognized in micro-level interactions.

## Meso-Institutional Context

The second level of context is *meso-institutional*. School leaders and teachers create their own *small cultures* (Holliday, 1999), serving as “engaged mediators between policy and practice” (Cohen & Hill, 2001, p. 70) as they interpret federal/state/district policies and societal discourses (Johnson, 2009). Teachers and students also act as language policymakers in curriculum implementation (Bonacina-Pugh, 2020; Menken & García, 2010). There are school- and classroom-specific language norms, standards, and inequalities that may or may not resemble those in the wider society (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005). Critical meso-institutional questions, therefore, include: in a particular setting, who is recognized as a valued model of bi/multilingualism? What counts as a legitimate instantiation of English or any other language? What are the social processes through which these understandings are mutually constructed? Verily, it is through repeated recognition/legitimization (or lack thereof) within the norms and structures of a meso-institutional context that individual and group identities and ideologies of language are negotiated and re-negotiated.

Wortham and Reyes (2020) argue that the evolution of the small culture (e.g., a school or classroom) must be studied through ethnography and cross-event discourse analysis to see how ideologies and identities emerge across linked events, which span different timescales from a school day to a course unit to an academic year to a student’s educational career to group histories of educational and sociohistorical oppression (see also Mortimer & Wortham, 2015; Wortham, 2008). The key, therefore, is to identify the linguistic forms that participants find meaningful markers of identity, as they are shared and evolve within the small culture, with each use of a linguistic form solidifying or destabilizing prior identities and uptake of macro-level discourses.

To relate *small cultures* to the topic of translanguaging, we note that the meso-level context of schools and classrooms in English-dominant societies can reflect societal views hostile to bi/multilingualism. Contributing factors include cutbacks to federally funded bilingual education and support for learning English as an additional language, as part of a larger anti-immigration movement, which is propelled by well-funded lobbyists (for a historical overview, see Wiley, 2022). In other countries, such as Nepal (Sah, 2022a, 2022b), certain forms of bi/multilingualism, such as English-Nepali bilingualism, are promoted over others due to the confluence of nationalist and neoliberal ideologies (Phyak, 2016; Sah, 2021). Some translanguaging scholars have responded to such policies and ideologies through professional



development based on García, Ibarra Johnson, and Seltzer's (2017) translanguaging *stance, design, and shifts*. This framework asserts that teachers need to develop positive attitudes toward ALL forms of multilingualism in their society (stance), create lessons and materials designed to use students' multilingualism in teaching and learning even if teachers do not speak the language(s) of students' families and communities (design), particularly those that are not seen as having much of a place in academic domains, and make spontaneous decisions while teaching to adjust plans based on learner reactions and needs (shifts). Tian and Shepard-Carey (2020) extend this framework to describe how researchers and teachers must engage in *co-stance, co-design, and co-shifts* as they negotiate equitable partnerships in response to learner and community needs that can further realize the critical potential of translanguaging.

We return to these concepts later in the article. For the moment, we highlight the necessity of shaping meso-level school cultures so that they develop *alternative* norms and practices to those promoted by macro-level discourses. These should not just be a reproduction of the macro-level discourse on a smaller scale (e.g., the class majority's English being more "standard" than the class minority's) but effectively dismantle such relations of power (e.g., a growing critical consciousness and questioning of English monolingual classroom interaction orders and/or "standard" English).

## Macro-Political/Ideological Context

"Small cultures" do not carry the clout of governments and mass media when it comes to shaping public discourse. These powerful entities often select one particular view that exists among many stakeholders, which is then used to silence dissenting voices (Tsui & Tollefson, 2004). Moreover, teachers and school leaders do not have full freedom to create the "small culture" of their choosing. Meso-level contexts are shaped (and sometimes constrained) by larger macro-political/ideological contexts (Kibler, Valdés, & Walqui, 2014). Valdés (2020) highlights that all language programs must be aligned with educational policies and graduation or credit requirements at the regional, national, or international level, such as high school exit examinations or standardized tests for globally prestigious languages. Teachers and local curriculum designers are not free to simply respond to (perceived) student needs but are constrained by these large-scale forces—and by ideologies of language, race, class, and identity, including theories and conceptualizations of language, bi/multilingualism, and first/additional language acquisition.

As these macro-level factors impact translanguaging, we recognize that there will be underutilized resources in the classroom: whether these are languages, dialects, cultural forms of knowledge or forms of literacy (e.g., more/less valued forms of language and literacy on the *continua of biliteracy*, such as decontextualized over contextualized knowledge or print versus oral literacy; Hornberger & Link, 2012), or even more/less “accepted” forms of translanguaging, such as those between English and the national language versus those involving immigrant, regional, or indigenous languages (Beiler, 2021). The reason certain resources are underutilized often has to do with macro-level societal ideologies and discourses. We illustrate through our own studies in different geographic locations, with diverse participants, in different types of educational settings, how identifying and bringing these underutilized resources to bear on learning is the crux of critical approaches to translanguaging pedagogy and research. We further explain why it is important to document and then act upon the classroom setting to implement critical approaches to translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2021), *in context* (Hamman-Ortiz, Tian, Dougherty, Palmer, & Poza, 2023).

## POSITIONALITY AND PROCESS

The authors of this paper share an interest in exploring translanguaging as critical pedagogy and a desire to walk alongside teachers and students, through teacher-researcher collaborations (e.g., Pauls-rud, Tian, & Toth, 2021; Tian, Aghai, Sayer, & Schissel, 2020) or classroom observation research (e.g., Hamman, 2018a; Rajendram, 2021b), as they navigate the complex and contradictory imperatives of formal education (e.g., Jaspers, 2022; Mathew, 2018).

All of us are bi/multilinguals who are committed to social justice in education. We research translanguaging in various settings including K-12 education (English as a medium of instruction or bi/multilingual education), teacher education, and higher education. We are all also committed to exploring and applying translanguaging as an equity-oriented pedagogical framework. All of us are middle-class multilingual individuals with academic proficiency in oral and written English, as well as knowledge of Cantonese, French, Malay, Mandarin, Nepali, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, and/or Tamil. Some of us are from the dominant racial group in our countries of origin (Han, Tagalog, White-Anglo), but Tian is from an ethnically minoritized group, Manchu (满族) in China, Rajendram is a Malaysian of Indian descent, and Sah is from an ethnically minoritized group, Madhesi, in Nepal. All of us have many years of professional experience in the field of

education as elementary and/or secondary teachers (Hamman, Rajendram, Sah, Tai), language education teachers (Ho, Rajendram, Sah), shadow education teachers (Mendoza, Sah, Tian), or higher education teachers (all authors). We use a range of qualitative methods in teacher-researcher professional learning partnerships to support critical language awareness (Hélot & Young, 2002) and to co-design and implement equity-oriented translanguaging pedagogies (García & Leiva, 2014). Ho and Tai also seek to bridge translanguaging and multimodality, for example, in digital language teaching and learning.

To write this article, the authors met twice as a whole group and negotiated duties through email correspondence. Hamman and Tian also met together to write the introduction on García and colleagues' seminal work on translanguaging. Mendoza and Hamman corresponded asynchronously to write the conceptual framing defining the levels of context, drawing on the Douglas Fir Group's (2016) framework for language learning and use. We apply these principles to researching translanguaging in context in our own studies, to show what it means to research translanguaging *critically* and *in context*. Our research has never ignored the political struggles pointed out by Poza (2017) and García et al. (2021), so the first principle (1) is not to research translanguaging apolitically. The subsequent two principles describe a synergy of approaches: (2) classroom observation research (including multimodal conversation analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, linguistic ethnography, sociocultural discourse analysis, and other qualitative observational approaches) can assess macro-level language ideologies and enacted language hegemonies at the micro and meso levels. Additionally, (3) teacher-researcher collaborations must create and sustain inclusive, equitable classroom social orders and alternative academic norms *different* from the ones that are documented to occur in context if left by chance.

In the following sections, we illustrate not only how the principles of this framework were applied in our research, but how they can be applied in future scholarship.

## **PRINCIPLE 1. REJECT APOLITICAL APPROACHES TO TRANSLANGUAGING RESEARCH**

The first principle of our framework is to recognize translanguaging pedagogy as rooted in a *political stance* that is “reconstitutive of power relations between groups of language users with differentiated access to symbolic capital through entitlement/non-entitlement” to “different named languages, language varieties, or genres” (Wei, 2022, p. 175).

Ofelia García and Li Wei's conceptualization of translanguaging pedagogy is thus political (e.g., García et al., 2021), aiming to promote language practices of linguistically minoritized students that have been rendered invisible by "abyssal thinking" (see also Rajendram, 2022). However, this stance does not characterize *all* translanguaging research in education. Poza (2017) conducted a systematic literature review on translanguaging research in education, cautioning that "a rich, multi-modal array of bilingual languaging practices beyond simple oral alternation of languages... does not, by itself, point to a significant reorientation of values with respect to language practices allowed and supported in classrooms, *nor to a subversion of oppressive language ideologies*" (p. 117, our italics).

Therefore, the first principle of our framework for researching translanguaging with attention to context is (1) not to do so apolitically. For example, Rajendram's (2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022) study highlighted how language policies and race politics influenced the languaging of fifth-grade Malaysian-Indian students in two English classrooms in Malaysia. Although at least 137 languages are spoken in Malaysia, Rajendram analyzed how certain forms of bi/multilingualism (e.g., bilingualism in English and Malay, the national language) were privileged over others, even in the "bottom up" interactions of the students themselves. Drawing on Duarte's (Duarte, 2016) *translanguaging constellations* as a unit of analysis, Rajendram analyzed which combinations of named languages students used while translanguaging, and the factors that enabled or constrained the use of their entire repertoires. Building on Wei and Ho's (2018) work showing that languages "play different roles and interact with one another in complex and dynamic ways for different purposes and under different conditions" (p. 36), Rajendram was interested in identifying whether there were differences between the cognitive, linguistic, social, and pragmatic functions accomplished through translanguaging constellations (e.g., Tamil-English, Malay-Tamil, etc.), with the aim of better understanding how teachers might expand students' translanguaging to include *all* the named languages in their repertoires.

Observing the class over 6 months, Rajendram found that students' translanguaging was highly contextualized and dependent on micro- and meso-level factors such as *needs of group members* (e.g., using Tamil and Malay to explain difficult concepts and vocabulary to peers who requested for help), *group dynamics* (e.g., using English-only when a dominant member of the group enforced an English-only rule), and *domain of language learning* (e.g., more liberal use of translanguaging while speaking but not in writing). Although students were proficient in all three named languages, they accessed and deployed different features of their repertoires strategically:

- Students used Tamil and English to fulfill cognitive and conceptual functions, such as talking through complex concepts and working out answers that required a high level of cognitive engagement.
- Students used Tamil, English, and Malay during reading and writing tasks that were linguistically focused (e.g., writing sentences using specific linguistic structures, vocabulary work, grammar exercises, reading comprehension), as they needed to actively apply their metalinguistic knowledge in Tamil and Malay to their English learning.
- Tamil, which students identified as the “language of their hearts,” was used primarily for social and affective purposes such as expressing emotions, empathizing with peers, building rapport, and resolving conflict.

Rajendram related these findings about translanguaging constellations to macro-level language policy and planning—for example, which languages students have developed for academic purposes due to prior schooling. Moreover, Rajendram analyzed how institutional norms and expectations from administrators placed pressure on teachers to enforce the school’s English-only policy, thereby confining many students to doing the above translanguaging surreptitiously. Students’ socioeconomic background was another factor influencing their language use. Those from middle-class families used more English due to pressure from parents who believed that English would pave the path to higher education, reputable careers, and socioeconomic mobility. Students from low-income families used English, Tamil, and Malay more widely as they lived in linguistically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods and translanguaging was a regular part of their daily life. Moreover, inequitable power relations and political conflicts between Indian and Malay ethnic groups in Malaysia resulted in Malay being an under-accessed resource by many students in the class, who resisted Malay use despite their proficiency in it, except for use in grammar-oriented tasks.

In another ethnographic study that analyzed the classroom in light of macro-level ideologies, Sah (2021) investigated how Medium of Instruction (MoI) policy in Nepal has historically been guided by nationalism and neoliberalism. In a school located in an Indigenous Newari community in Kathmandu valley, there was no instance of using the Indigenous students’ mother tongue (i.e., Nepal Bhasa) even though students and teachers used various forms of Nepali-English translanguaging to teach and learn academic content and vocabulary. Similarly, in a critical ethnographic study on EMI policy creation and implementation in a public school in a Madhesi ethnic

minority community, Sah (2022a) found that English-Nepali bilingualism was likewise the dominant medium of instruction and classroom interactions. Most Madhesi teachers and students not only rejected the use of their mother tongue (Bhojpuri), but they also looked down on it. Teachers and students deliberately complemented EMI with Nepali use and non-linguistic or multimodal translanguaging (e.g., letter cues, high/low tones, gestures) in a flexible way to facilitate increased content comprehension and classroom discussion, which might be called “trans-semiotizing” (Lin, 2019). Nevertheless, in another study, Sah and Li (2018, 2022) noted that the teachers’ mixing of Nepali and English was not always intelligible because of their lack of translanguaging competence (Canagarajah, 2014), the ability to draw upon *all* students’ languages meaningfully and effectively to perform pedagogic tasks.

Sah (2022a) concluded that the national-level MoI policy and its embedded language ideologies can influence the school-level policy arbiters’ agency to recognize certain language(s) at the cost of other language(s). Although mother tongue is allowed to be used at all levels of education, the National Curriculum Framework (MoE, 2007) identified “Nepali, English, or Nepali and English” as the MoI in basic education, which led the school administrators to translate “Nepali-English” bilingualism as the only medium of instruction. This shaped the teachers’ and students’ perception that any languages other than English and Nepali were not academic languages. Additionally, most students in public schools in Nepal are from low socioeconomic status families that perceive English as linguistic capital that can be leveraged against their socioeconomic marginalization. Sah and Kubota (2022) call this elite bilingualism “liberal translanguaging,” in which the use of languages in the classroom is guided by neoliberal and nationalist ideology, “rather than acknowledging the fullest linguistic repertoire of students” (p. 142). They alternatively propose “critical translanguaging” that resists “ideologies that position languages and their users unequally, [to] instead protect the language, culture, and identity of those who have historically received marginalization” (Sah & Kubota, 2022, p. 132). English-Nepali translanguaging “still does not guarantee equity and equality in the MoI policy given an unlawful positioning of students’ home languages in the discourse of *school languages*” (Sah, 2022a, p. 63, emphasis in original). The question arises how translanguaging pedagogies can be harnessed to ensure that local/Indigenous languages gain ground in the sphere of formal education, as such systemic exclusion perpetuates the unequal power relations between “official” and minoritized languages in education (Sah & Kubota, 2022; Sah & Li, 2018, 2022).

Having argued that critical translanguaging research cannot be apolitical, and that it must acknowledge the impact of macro-level ideologies in classrooms and schools, we now turn to methodological approaches for studying the reproduction or renegotiation of these ideologies at the meso and micro levels.

## **PRINCIPLE 2. ANALYZE HOW MACRO-LEVEL LANGUAGE HEGEMONIES ARE ENACTED, SUPPLANTED, OR RESISTED AT THE MICRO AND MESO LEVELS**

Collectively, we have used a number of methods for analyzing micro- and meso-level interactions in the classroom, including interpretive phenomenological analysis (Ho & Tai, 2020), multimodal conversation analysis (Tai & Wei, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c), digital multimodal composing (Ho, 2022), sociocultural discourse analysis (Rajendram, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022), and linguistic ethnography (Hamman, 2018a, 2018b; Hamman-Ortiz, 2020, 2023; Mendoza, 2023). In what follows, we discuss each of these approaches in turn. What they all have in common is that they investigate how macro-level language ideologies are enacted, supplanted, or resisted by teachers and students operating at micro and meso levels.

Using multimodal conversation analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis, Tai and Wei (2021a, 2021b) studied translanguaging in a secondary English-medium mathematics classroom in Hong Kong where instruction was officially in English only. However, the teacher did not adhere strictly to this policy for both pedagogical and affective reasons, and even used language resources that he was less proficient in than the students. For example, when some Mandarin first language (L1) students evaluated their Cantonese L1 teacher's Mandarin pronunciation, this contributed to a moment of teaching the teacher pronunciation (Tai & Wei, 2021a). On the other hand, this temporary overturning of the classroom hierarchy was replaced by enactment of other hierarchies, such as the linguistic authority of first language (L1) over second language (L2) speakers, and "standard" Mandarin in Hong Kong. Micro-level interactions can thus be studied to see how individuals like this teacher and his students invite, correct, legitimize, idealize, correct, or dismiss the ways others use language, thereby shaping classroom norms and identities. It is an issue that requires more consideration when researching different languages, dialects, registers, styles of speaking, and strategic orchestration of multimodal resources (Ho & Tai, 2020, 2021).

Tai and Wei (2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c) also illuminated what happens when the teacher brings in different kinds of knowledge to creatively facilitate content learning and promote meaningful communication. They argue that translanguaging creates a space that allows the teacher and students to learn from each other, which encourages reciprocity in knowledge construction and recognizes students' knowledge in the classroom. For example, they showed how an EMI mathematics teacher's use of an iPad extended his semiotic and spatial repertoire for constructing a technology-mediated space for multilingual ethnic minority students (Tai & Wei, 2021c). Tai (2022) connects translanguaging to inclusive practices, which require EMI mathematics and science teachers to mobilize various available resources and draw on what students know collectively to build bridges between students' funds of knowledge and the cultures of school science and mathematics.

Another approach, linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese, 2015) can be used to study a classroom setting to track the small culture's norms and practices over an academic year. Emic approaches to analyzing language use in unfolding interaction can show what language forms are noticed by individuals in identity positioning, solidifying or destabilizing previous identities, social categorizations, and discourses over time (Mortimer & Wortham, 2015).

For example, Mendoza (2022, 2023) studied two secondary English classes in Hawai'i, one with an Ilokano-speaking majority, the other with a majority that spoke Filipino (lingua franca Tagalog) but were ethnically Ilokano, Tagalog, Ilonggo, and/or Cebuano. Mendoza found that although translanguaging was valued and encouraged in the two classes, the translanguaging of the numeric majority in each class impacted the translanguaging of other students who spoke Cantonese, Chuukese, Mandarin, Marshallese, Samoan, or Vietnamese. In one class, the more freely some Filipino-speaking boys translanguaged in both small group and whole class talk, the more inhibited quieter Filipino boys, Filipino girls, and linguistic minority (e.g., Marshallese, Chinese) students seemed to become, preventing them not only from translanguaging but from speaking altogether. In the other class, the productive use of Ilokano to do academic work in English among the academic "keeners" caused two students—an English-dominant Ilokano student and an academically strong Samoan "singleton" (the only speaker of their language in the class)—to support a "speak English" classroom language policy that ostensibly would give them more access and less minoritized linguistic identity positionings.

Mendoza (2022, 2023) also found that individuals in each class who had a lot of linguistic capital in academic literacies in English *and* in the majority non-English language *and* in peer-group codes (e.g.,



K-pop words among the Filipino students) had the fewest linguistic vulnerabilities, and thus the most authority to determine relevant language standards in the classroom ecology—which Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck (2005) call the “order of indexicality” or setting-specific norms against which people’s language production is implicitly or explicitly evaluated. Mendoza argues that teachers need to attend to the linguistic identity positioning and self-esteem of these central language brokers and the class language majority, dominant though they may seem, because if they can largely determine the language standards and interactional norms in the small culture and have a substantial effect on others’ positioning, whether they do so inclusively or exclusively largely depends on their own sense of security (Jaspers, 2011; Talmy, 2008), in a class where members are not part of a single bi/multilingual community, unless it be the class community (Faltis, 2001).

In another linguistic ethnography exploring translanguaging in Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE), Hamman (Hamman, 2018a, 2018b; Hamman-Ortiz, 2020, 2023) found that language dynamics within the small culture of the classroom mirrored macro-level inequalities between English and Spanish. Bilingual education is a unique setting for exploring translanguaging pedagogy, as there is ongoing debate about the “adequacy” (Guerrero, 2021) of its use, with translanguaging alternatively presented as an affirming pedagogical practice that validates the lived bilingual practices of minoritized students (García et al., 2021) or a potential “threat” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017) to the minoritized language(s) being taught within such spaces (Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, & Genesee, 2017). Engaging with this debate, Hamman was interested in the ways that different students in the classroom positioned themselves within a more flexible translanguaging space, recognizing that language practices are intimately tied to students’ evolving identities (Hawkins, 2004; Norton, 2010). To do this, she followed a second-grade teacher and her students over half of a school year in a Spanish/English dual language immersion classroom in a Midwestern U.S. city.

At the micro-interactional level, Hamman (2018a) revealed that translanguaging served a range of communicative and pedagogical functions. Students drew upon their full linguistic repertoire to convey different parts of the same message, as when Mónica turned to her partner and said, “*Yo quiero medir un lápiz* (I want to measure a pencil). It’s much easier!” Translanguaging also was employed to repeat (accentuate) a point, as during a science activity when Miguel shared, “There’s nothing there. *No hay nada*.” Similar micro-level examples of the range of purposes for translanguaging have been documented by other scholars (Bengochea & Gort, 2022; Hopewell &

Abril-Gonzalez, 2019; Sayer, 2013) and offer evidence of translanguaging as an authentic bilingual practice, a way of “doing” bilingualism (e.g., Baker, 2011; García, 2009). Translanguaging was also leveraged by the classroom teacher to actively scaffold (language) learning. For example, when Derrick proposed, “If you have too much *sol* [sun], they [the pumpkins] will burn”—using mostly English to participate during science, a content area taught in Spanish—the teacher prompted him to repeat his idea using more Spanish, resulting in Derrick sharing: “*Si tu tienes* too much *sol*, the *calabaza* . . . they will burn.”

While these findings were positive, the micro-interactional analysis within the study also revealed that students were not translanguaging equally between Spanish and English. Specifically, Hamman found that so-called “native” English speakers were often translanguaging to claim the “right to speak” (Darvin & Norton, 2015), bringing their home language (English) into Spanish instructional time to ensure that their views were acknowledged whereas “native” Spanish speakers rarely used Spanish during English time, especially during whole class discussions. Moreover, after conducting an in-depth comparison of two lessons (one in Spanish, the other in English), Hamman noted that the translanguaging was occurring in qualitatively different ways: Spanish use during the English lesson consisted of individual words (which were quickly translated), whereas English use during the Spanish lesson consisted of generative utterances that allowed students, regardless of their degree of bilingualism, “to display expertise and to delve more deeply into the content learning” (Hamman, 2018b, p. 36). This finding led Hamman to recommend that bilingual/dual language classrooms become *critical translanguaging spaces*, defined as “a dialogic classroom environment that encourages students to experiment with language and draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire for meaning-making, while also prioritizing the minority language and minority language speakers” (p. 38).

Dual language programs have been critiqued as a “boutique” form of bilingual education (Flores & García, 2017) that can (and often does) privilege the needs of native English speakers and their families above those of minoritized speaking students (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Dorner, 2011; Palmer, 2009; Valdés, 1997, 2018). Most of the native English speakers in Hamman’s study were from White middle class families, while most of the native Spanish speakers were from Latinx working class families. Thus, the tendency for native English speakers to demonstrate more entitlement to use their home language in the classroom needs to be understood through the lenses of class and race, not only as a linguistic phenomenon (Chaparro, 2019; Palmer, 2009). The hesitancy of the Spanish-dominant students to translanguauge during English time is likely reflective of the perception

that English is the *de facto* language of power, reinforced by the many ways that English is privileged in formal education (e.g., standardized assessments that track English learners' progress in English but not Spanish learners' mastery of Spanish; Hamman-Ortiz, 2020; Menken & García, 2010). We might well ask if repeated recognition and legitimization of English and English speakers in these micro-level interactions, as well as in classroom participants' reported language preferences (e.g., Babino & Stewart, 2017), might contribute to the marginalization of minoritized students and languages.

In summary, when assessing how macro-level ideologies were enacted, replaced, or challenged at the meso and micro level, our findings range from the inclusive practices of teachers (e.g., Ho's and Tai's findings in Hong Kong) to alternative language hegemonies (e.g., Mendoza's findings in Hawai'i) to programmatic attempts at putting the majoritized and minoritized languages on equal footing, with mixed results (e.g., Hamman's findings in DLBE in the United States). It is necessary to assess what is happening to know where to take it next, which brings us to the third principle.

### **PRINCIPLE 3. PARTNER WITH TEACHERS TO ENACT TRANSLANGUAGING STANCES, DESIGNS, AND SHIFTS THAT FURTHER SHAPE WHAT NORMALLY HAPPENS IN CONTEXT**

Our third principle is to use participatory qualitative research methods, involving teacher-researchers or collaboration between teachers and researchers, to lead students to bring their whole communicative repertoires and selves (multilingual, multi-register, and multi-semiotic resources) to academic tasks rather than limiting themselves to those resources seen as "appropriate" for academic purposes due to the norms set by the middle-class cultural mainstream (MacSwan, 2000). In this way, teachers and researchers may be able to reflect more deeply on educational inequity and engage in difficult conversations (Tian, 2020). Future research must examine translanguaging as transformative pedagogy (Sánchez, García, & Solorza, 2018) to challenge oppressive language and literacy practices in schools and society. This, in turn, calls for close collaboration between teachers and researchers.

In their research in Hong Kong, Ho and Tai (2020, 2021) noted opportunities for teacher professional development alongside student empowerment. For example, they found that online videos used in English teaching by two online teachers could make visible language

attitudes (e.g., YouTube video comments regarding different varieties of English) that could be used as a springboard for discussion with other educators about language ideologies. This would raise awareness of macro-level discourses about “standard” language varieties, but it would also allow viewers to reflect on what normally happens in context, the domains in which these language standards are applied to varying degrees. As all public universities in Hong Kong are English-medium, Ho and Tai (2020, 2021) argue that digital multimodal composing (DMC) can be useful in English classrooms by changing what normally happens, enabling students to use their entire semiotic repertoires to make meaning when creating digital artifacts in place of academic essays (Smith, Pacheco, & de Almeida, 2017). This can be seen as a form of inclusive pedagogical practice, which draws on semiotic resources that are traditionally marginalized in EAP and general English classrooms. Ho and Tai argue that not only multilingual but also multimodal translanguaging spaces push back against what counts as legitimate academic language and literacy practices (Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003).

Moreover, Ho (2022) found that EAP students negotiated the artificial boundaries of registers, genre conventions and modalities when creating an instructional video as part of their course assessment. In doing so, students took the initiative to (re)invent new genre conventions that on the one hand showed them as novice EAP writers who are eager to transcend sociohistorical and ideological boundaries of academic genre, and on the other hand as experts in showcasing their disciplinary knowledge. DMC thus constructed a translanguaging space within a linguistically restricted EMI classroom, as students could draw on an enlarged set of semiotic resources to make meaning. Ho argues that more emphasis can be placed on encouraging students to make use of their enlarged multimodal repertoire for disciplinary and creative expressions. Moreover, the performative nature of DMC and the audiences it can afford within and beyond the scope of the class can further increase students’ investment in language learning (Jiang, 2018).

Researchers can partner with teachers to create translanguaging spaces in EAP classrooms by having conversations with teachers on they can make shifts like these in their teaching and assessment practices. Interviews can be conducted with teachers, which helps them reflect on their materials design, and how best they can draw on medium-afforded resources to achieve inclusive and empowering pedagogical practices. At the micro-interactional level, Ho and Tai (2020, 2021) examined how online teaching videos were designed to carve out spaces for performative and interactional translanguaging to occur, in an asynchronous and digitally mediated teaching context. In

the meso-institutional context, they highlight the importance of positioning language teachers as facilitators and co-learners, and the importance of connecting teaching practices with students' out-of-class practices (Tai & Wei, 2020). In the macro context, the aforementioned studies reveal how dominant language ideologies are perceived by teachers and students, and how they are promoted, challenged, and/or resisted.

In their research in the United States, Tian and Shepard-Carey (2020, p. 1134) also explore what teacher-researchers and teacher-researcher collaborations can do to further shape conventional classroom practices. They define translanguaging *co-stance* as the enduring, dynamic process in which teachers and researchers collaboratively, respectfully, and openly discuss and negotiate their philosophical, ideological, or belief systems regarding bilingualism and translanguaging to better inform their pedagogical framework. They describe *co-design* as the iterative process that involves both teachers and researchers co-planning units, lessons, and assessments that build on students' full linguistic repertoires. Finally, translanguaging *co-shifts* refer to the many moments that teachers and researchers engage in self and communal reflections and make flexible pedagogical designs that have room for lesson adjustments and shifts in response to their observation of student participation in language-mediated classroom activities.

For example, Tian and Zhang-Wu (2022) investigated how five content area teachers grappled with translanguaging in a graduate-level teacher education course designed from a translanguaging perspective. In the *teaching/learning* about translanguaging phase, Tian was invited to give a guest lecture on the topic of translanguaging; students read relevant texts (e.g., García, 2009) and watched a video series created by the CUNY-NYSIEB team (<https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/>). Students also engaged in oral group discussions and written reflections (e.g., in-class journaling and final teaching philosophy statements) at different points to develop their understanding of translanguaging and working with emergent bilinguals. In the *modeling translanguaging* phase, the researchers created a Chinese read aloud to put the teachers in the shoes of emergent bilinguals and guided them on a bilingual field trip assignment (i.e., asking students to visit local bilingual communities to observe and document the linguistic landscape). In the *practicing translanguaging* phase, teacher candidates designed linguistically responsive lesson plans in which they could apply bilingual theories and instructional techniques and translanguaging strategies they learned, which they shared in roundtables. They investigated macro-level discourses about the United States as an English-speaking country through the linguistic landscape activity, which also allowed them to document the

extent to which bi/multilingualism was visible in the community so they could extend its reach into English-dominant schooling. Such interventions in classroom practice shift teachers' and researchers' stance toward a re-seeing and re-hearing of students for their linguistic assets and expertise (Seltzer, 2019).

## CONCLUSIONS

We have approached the question of how to sustain critical approaches to translanguaging studies in education, highlighting the potential of translanguaging to push against language hierarchies in society and taken-for-granted academic norms, while posing questions about ongoing linguistic hegemonies that affect some people's equitable access to their full language repertoires, and the impact on minoritized languages and their users. In all our studies, we have shown that bi/multilinguals are apt to translanguage, and there always exists a *corriente* (García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017), a linguistic current that allows people to make meaning with dynamic language flows. However, we must remember that translanguaging is not always equal across class participants or languages in terms of academic and linguistic expertise, and often creates a classroom that is more centered on English and/or the national language, and on students who enter academic spaces with more meso-institutional or macro-political/ideological linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Not all classroom participants (students, teachers, researchers) are equally able to position themselves as experts, as some have greater proficiency in more valued languages, more "standard" ways of speaking these languages, greater familiarity with academic literacies legitimized at school, and more accepted forms of translanguaging, even in meso-level cultures where translanguaging is the norm. This calls for collaboration between teachers and researchers, given the learning aims of their classes and the linguistic hegemonies in their contexts, to first identify macro-level ideologies and enacted language hegemonies at the meso and micro levels, and then create and sustain inclusive, equitable classroom social orders and alternative academic norms *different* from the ones documented to occur in context if left by chance.

We realize that we might be called on to answer how our principles may be refined as research is carried out based on them, and we recognize that the three principles are not an exhaustive set of recommendations. However, we believe they *always* stand and can only be supplemented by additional actions to identify inequities in opportunities to learn and to create *critical* translanguaging spaces (Fitts, 2009; García & Flores, 2014; Paulsrud, Tian, & Toth, 2021) that marshall

*underutilized* resources into the physical or virtual classroom and bring to light under-recognized identities and expertise. Classroom participants, from teachers to students to researchers, might find that they need to deploy a wider range of registers and modalities for academic inquiry (Tai and Ho), incorporate linguistically minoritized/indigenous communities' knowledge into the curriculum (Rajendram and Sah), and/or prioritize minoritized language users in the class (Mendoza and Hamman). Khote and Tian (2019) have examined the positive synergies between translanguaging and other critical theories in education (e.g., critical literacy, culturally sustaining systemic functional linguistics, feminist post-structuralism) to further enrich the notion of translanguaging and to address the educational and societal struggles of language-minoritized students. Research must continue to examine translanguaging as transformative pedagogy (Sánchez & García, 2022) to challenge oppressive language and literacy practices in schools and society.

To provide the theoretical basis for the above collaboration, in this paper, we show how we have grounded translanguaging research in the principles that underpin the Douglas Fir Group's (2016) framework: ideologies permeating all levels, translanguaging as situated and socially gated, and agency and transformative power as goals for translanguaging. We cannot avoid politicizing research to recognize what language resources are being underutilized in teaching and learning. The (non-)utilization of resources, and how they are socially framed in classroom settings, is a question that drives classroom observation research, while teacher-researcher collaborations aim to shape situations beyond what exists. By identifying what typically happens in context and why/how to shape it further, we can sustain critical approaches to translanguaging:

- facilitating collaborative relations of power between teachers and researchers,
- acting upon our contexts so that people's language practices are no longer minoritized, marginalized, invisible, or denigrated, and
- cultivating critical and ethical dispositions, in ourselves and in others, that can be brought to bear on new contexts of interaction.

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