


Chapter 10

Translanguaging Pedagogy to Support Bi/Multilingual Students' Language Learning in Social Studies: “How We Communicate Everything”

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigates how Mrs. Vega, a high school social studies teacher, supported her emergent bi/multilingual immigrant students' development of academic, content-based language learning in a U.S. Government class. Drawing upon data collected as part of a larger ethnography and using translanguaging pedagogy as a theoretical frame, this chapter centers Mrs. Vega's translanguaging stance, design, and shift. Findings demonstrate the multiple and varied ways Mrs. Vega's pedagogy supported her students' already-present linguistic and cultural abilities in support of their disciplinary learning. Implications are provided for theory and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Wide spread migration creates shifts in both global demographics and local United States classrooms so there are increasingly more students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds in U.S. schools (Suarez-Orozco & Michikyan, 2016).

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However, a majority of U.S. teachers are typically monolingual (Goodwin, 2017) and may be less prepared to address marginalized students' cultural and linguistic practices (Pappamiheil & Lynn, 2014) affecting the sociocultural components of teaching and learning. Scholars of critical language education have continued to call upon teachers to adopt pedagogical practices that fully support students' diverse linguistic and cultural practices in support of their academic learning and lived experiences (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Paris & Alim, 2014). This chapter seeks to add to existing studies focusing on linguistically and culturally responsive teaching (Lucas & Villegas, 2013) by centering approaches teachers can use to support emergent bi/multilingual students' content language development (Arkoudis, 2005; Bunch 2013; de Mejia & Helot, 2015; Janzen 2008; Schleppegrell, 2013). More specifically, this chapter provides evidence for how teachers and researchers might operationalize concepts that align with Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez's (2008) "essential understandings of second language learning" (p. 363), by providing instruction that draws students' attention to the linguistic form and function of academic language while creating a safe and welcoming classroom environment to promote students' additional language use. One potential pedagogical approach to support such instruction, translanguaging, is gaining increasing research attention (Poza, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to identify how tenets of translanguaging pedagogy (Garcia, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017) might be used to support "linguistically responsive" instruction (Lucas & Villegas, 2010, p. 311) within the context of the social studies. Given that the disciplines of the social studies draw upon cultural practices and include complex academic language demands (Levstik, 2008; National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), additional insights for how teachers support linguistically and culturally diverse students to successfully navigate academic language in this content area are needed, especially as the role of language teaching and learning has been less examined in the social studies (Yoder & Kibler, 2016).

In this chapter, I center on the pedagogical practices that Mrs. Vega (pseudonym) used to support her bi/multilingual immigrant students in a social studies classroom at Hallandale High (pseudonym) a Title One school serving a large number of immigrant and refugee students. Even though Mrs. Vega's approaches are not necessarily generalizable to other contexts, the dispositions and pedagogy informed through her beliefs about language teaching and learning may serve as inspiration for other teachers learning with and from immigrant youth. Specifically, I asked: How does a social studies teacher's practice align with tenets of translanguaging pedagogy to support her bi/multilingual immigrant students' academic English language learning in a U.S. government class?

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