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Among the Cosmos by Zeke Peña



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MULTILINGUAL ARTS AND JUSTICE

Se hace camino al andar: Translanguaging Pedagogy for Justice

Two teacher educators present the power of translanguaging pedagogy to engage bilingual/multilingual students in learning for justice and equity.

[Abuelo] points to his heart. You're from here, from my love and the love of all those before us, from those who dreamed of you because of a song sung under the Southern Cross or the words in a book written under the light of the North Star. You? You are from all of us.

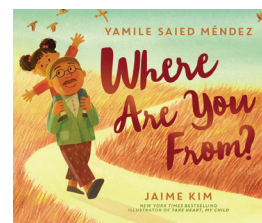
—YAMILE SAIED MÉNDEZ, FROM
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

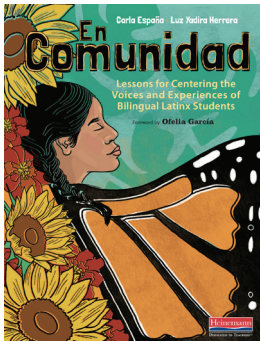
In the early 2000s, we (Luz and Carla) began our teaching careers in Harlem, New York City. Luz was in an English as a New Language setting, while Carla was in a bilingual dual-language classroom. In the title, we invoke the words of poet Antonio Machado, “se hace camino al andar,” as we remember how we paved our own path along the way and learned the importance of honoring our students’ dynamic language practices. Our experiences took form in our multiple roles as emergent bilingual students, teachers, researchers, and teacher educators. Luz immigrated at seven years of age from Nayarit, Mexico, with her two younger brothers and her mother. Luz reunited with her father, who was trying to get settled in Los Angeles, California. Her schooling began in the late 1990s and was marked by California’s restrictive bilingual education policies. This meant that her bilingualism wasn’t supported nor maintained in school, but was, in fact, supported by the rich literacy practices she experienced at home with her family. These experiences helped Luz understand the importance of supporting the multiple literacies that students bring into our classrooms. As a

teacher educator, Luz carries these lessons forward to help nurture future teachers that honor the language and literacy practices of their multilingual students.

Similarly, Carla immigrated from Valparaíso, Chile, to New York City with her mother to be reunited with her father and did not have bilingual education at her school. Still, on Saturdays her parents sent her to La Escuela Argentina, a Spanish-language school in her neighborhood in Queens, New York City. Throughout her childhood, her bilingualism was nurtured at home, places of worship, and community gatherings. These experiences also contributed to the varied literacy practices Carla engaged in across languages and places. Teaching bilingual Latinx students in New York City allowed Carla the opportunity to expand her own language practices and question monolingual, dominant English curriculum. This reality continues to inform her research, writing, teaching, and curriculum development. Bringing together teacher reflective practice, curriculum, children’s literature, and translanguaging pedagogy has been at the forefront of Carla’s work as she supports schools in redesigning curriculum across English-medium classrooms and bilingual programs.

The experiences we both gained in bilingual homes have provided for some of the critical learnings we share in our book *En comunidad: Lessons for*





Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students (España and Herrera). From our teaching and action research, we developed a critical bilingual literacies approach to teaching that emerges from three intersecting frameworks: culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris), translanguaging (García, *Bilingual Education*),

and raciolinguistic perspectives (Flores and Rosa).

Connected with the three frameworks are the guiding principles we designed to advance critical bilingual literacies (España and Herrera; see Table 1).

Critical bilingual literacies have led us to develop a framework for teaching and learning around what we call the three T's: temas, textos, and translanguaging.

Each of these helps us consider the identities, literacies, and language practices that we center in classroom spaces. The first principle asks educators to commit to ongoing self-reflection on our language ideologies and how these are

often reflected in our teaching practices. The second principle urges us to unlearn racialized language hierarchies that prevent us from honoring students' dynamic language practices. The third principle asks us to examine our teaching practice and texts we use through a lens of language, literacy, and power to consider whose stories we center in our classrooms. Finally, educators must celebrate their students' dynamic language practices and create spaces to welcome students' full selves.

As teachers, we adopt the principles to help us consider how we might enact a pedagogy that centers the dynamic multilingualism that is ever-present in our students' worlds and school communities while keeping justice at the forefront of our curriculum design and instruction.

In this essay, we present how educators can enact a critical bilingual literacies framework for teaching and learning for social justice with their multilingual students. Critical bilingual literacies have led us to develop a framework for teaching and learning around what we call the three T's: temas, textos, and translanguaging. *Temas* refers to planning topics that are culturally and linguistically sustaining for

TABLE 1
Critical Bilingual Literacies Framework

Principle in Practice	Questions to Consider
Principle 1: Self-reflect and unpack our language ideologies.	What are my ideas around my language practices? What about my thoughts on students' language practices? How did those ideas evolve? How do they influence my teaching?
Principle 2: Unlearn racialized language hierarchies.	Whose language practices do I value? Why? How does this influence my teaching?
Principle 3: Engage in an analysis of language, literacies, and power.	What do I know about the history of this language? Where has this language been spoken? What other languages were/are spoken in this area? What language or language practice is described as "informal" versus "formal"? Why? Who decides what falls into those categories and what purpose does that fulfill? What types of literacies are valued in school? Why? How do I present my students with examples that provide context and complexity on issues of language learning and analysis?
Principle 4: Celebrate children's and youth's dynamic language practices.	How can I encourage children to use their entire range of linguistic resources to make meaning and connections?

These four guiding principles and the accompanying guiding questions and statements can help readers enact a critical bilingual literacies approach.

our students. *Textos* are multimodal texts adopted in our lesson plans that communicate solidarity with the youth in our classrooms; the content under study affirms their ways of being and knowing. Finally, the last *T* refers to the intentional creation of *translanguaging* spaces for students to bring their entire linguistic repertoire and engage in dynamic language practices in the classroom. The three *T*'s can guide planning for meaningful instruction that centers our multilingual students' lives and everyday experiences.

When spaces are created for students to practice translanguaging in the classroom, students can experience meaningful learning moments with their teacher and classmates. We believe these principles, approaches, and practices get us closer to justice in the schooling and education of young people. So, what does translanguaging pedagogy look like in the classroom? Let's examine some vignettes we collected from teacher observations that demonstrate the pedagogical approach we believe in as teachers and teacher educators. (All names are pseudonyms.)

TRANSLANGUAGING IN PRACTICE

EMMA

Emma is a White woman born and raised in the Central Valley of California. She teaches eleventh- and twelfth-grade Advanced Placement English language arts classes where most students identify as Latinx. In addition, many of her students are either recent immigrants or children of Latinx immigrants. Emma teaches a unit on the concept of home (tema) and what it means for people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She chooses a multimodal text set that includes poetry, spoken word performance, a novel in verse, and a young adult (YA) novel (see Table 2).


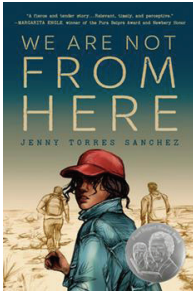
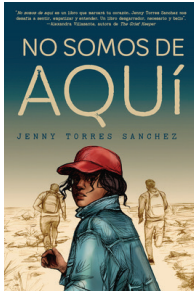
While growing up, Emma lived in the Central Valley's multilingual

community and, although she is monolingual, she knows the importance of honoring students' community language practices in her class. During an initial reading of the poem "America" from the novel in verse *Home Is Not a Country* by Safia Elhillo, students pointed out the Arabic words that appear. They discuss how the speaker attends an Arabic school outside of her regular school day to learn her home language.

In the classroom, Emma's students engage in discussion on reclaiming their bilingualism, and the students make comparisons with their own experiences learning and sustaining their home languages. They analyze how Elhillo navigates her language practices in this poem by including features from Arabic, and then consider what it means for their writing.

When the students engaged in a writing exercise on their own "America" poem, one asked if he could include some Spanish words in his poem. Emma was happy to hear his question and reminded students to use Elhillo's poem as a mentor text and similarly include their entire linguistic repertoire in their poetry writing.

TABLE 2
Emma's Text Set: What Is Home?

Topic	What Is Home?
<p>Texts</p>	<p>"America" poem from <i>Home Is Not a Country</i> by Safia Elhillo "Pledge Allegiance" poem by Natalie Scenters-Zapico "Come Home" poem by Kevin Yang <i>We Are Not from Here</i> and <i>No somos de aquí</i> by Jenny Torres Sanchez</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div>
<p>Translanguaging</p>	<p>Students are encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire during paired or group discussions and when annotating texts, drafting, and writing their poetry.</p>

These text recommendations and approaches to translanguaging can engage students in reflection about the concept of home.

ALEJANDRO

Alejandro identifies as a Nuyorican from the Bronx. He teaches in a ninth- and tenth-grade self-contained English as a New Language class in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. Washington Heights is a Dominican stronghold in the city, though it is becoming increasingly gentrified and local residents are being displaced. Alejandro teaches emergent bilingual students who are labeled as English language learners. Some of them are relatively new to the country. In contrast, others may have grown up or been born in the country but have not passed the English proficiency exam administered every spring and are labeled long-term English language learners.

Alejandro recently launched a unit on social justice movements across modern-day US history, since he finds it essential to teach language through


meaningful content. The class investigated four significant social movements: the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords Party, the United Farm Workers (UFW) movement, and the contemporary Black Lives Matter movement. Like Emma, Alejandro chose a multimodal text set to support student learning (see Table 3). Although much of this content is in English, Alejandro believes that multilingual students will bring their entire linguistic repertoire when engaging with the texts (García, “Translanguaging”). For example, one group of students read *The Black Panther Party: A Graphic Novel History* by David Walker, illustrated by Marcus Kwame Anderson. Students were drawn to the graphic novel format, and though it’s in English, they used features from various languages, including Spanish, to discuss. Another group analyzed digital copies of *Palante*, a local Young Lords Party newspaper from the 1970s that was written bilingually, and they similarly discussed and drew connections using their entire linguistic repertoire.

Alejandro’s students chose various media to share their knowledge of these social movements with the school community at the end of the unit. They mainly focused on how these movements were in solidarity and inspired and influenced each other differently. Some created a slide deck to share their learnings, others made a five-minute narrated video with images, and others wrote spoken word pieces to share their understandings of this critical history.

TONI

Toni teaches ninth-grade English in Atlanta, and the majority of their students are Black. The ninth-grade teaching team formed a book club to read works that shaped the identity unit they were to teach early in the school

TABLE 3
Alejandro’s Text Set: Social Movements in the United States

Topic	Impact and Solidarity across US Social Justice Movements
Texts	<p><i>The Black Panther Party: A Graphic Novel History</i> by David Walker, illustrated by Marcus Kwame Anderson</p> <p>Art posters by Emory Douglas</p> <p><i>iPalante, siempre palante!</i> <i>The Young Lords</i> documentary</p> <p>Digital copies of the Young Lords Party <i>Palante</i> newspaper</p> <p><i>Dolores</i> documentary</p> <p>Images from boycotts led by the United Farm Workers</p>
	
Translanguaging	Students are encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire during paired or group discussion, and when annotating, drafting, and creating and presenting their culminating projects.

These texts and translanguaging approaches can support students in learning about social movements in the United States.

year. Instead of reading professional development texts for teachers as they had in prior years, this time they wanted to engage with YA literature to immerse themselves in the genres they would also be reading with students. The school’s book selection committee—comprising the principal, counselors, academic dean, English department chair, and English language arts teachers—meets every spring to consider new texts. They asked:

1. What opportunities does this book bring to our school to further our identity and community formation goals?
2. What triggers are in this book that will require us to support students within their reading?
3. What potential collaborations are needed across the English department and other content areas to facilitate an understanding of the concepts in this book?
4. How are we informing family members of our book selection rationale and welcoming them into the conversations?

To build on the momentum of a conversation on students’ writing, where colleagues debated whether to allow first-person writing and Black English in published writing pieces, teachers read excerpts from the following texts for a faculty study on the topic:

1. *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom*, edited by Lisa Delpit and Joanne Kilgour Dowdy;
2. *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy* by April Baker-Bell; and
3. *Black Appetite, White Food: Issues of Race, Voice, and Justice from Within and Beyond the Classroom* by Jamila Lyiscott.

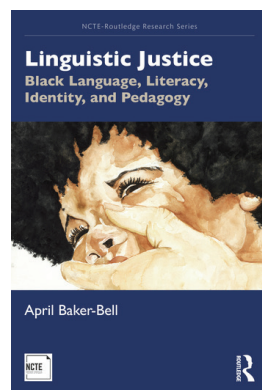
First, teachers discussed how the texts were written, noting examples of Black English, what this added to the writing, and how these texts compared with other education books they had read. Next, teachers discussed the experiences that informed the authors’ writing, this time comparing

them with their own experiences to notice commonalities and/or differences.

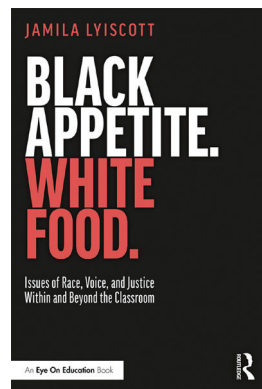
Teachers then split up into pairs to create a graphic with the main points of one reading that they selected, making sure to add examples of Black English and school applications mentioned in the text. These graphics were added to the school’s professional learning bulletin board and digital platform, where copies were made available for teachers to access. The last part of this faculty study was an inventory of writing conventions expectations. Each teacher shared rubrics, checklists, writing progressions, and writing task/assignment sheets for one unit of study. These artifacts were then workshopped through the lenses of Baker-Bell’s *Linguistic Justice* and liberating pedagogies from Lyiscott’s *Black Appetite, White Food*. For example, one teacher’s artifact included: “Writing is formal. No slang or text speech.”

Other teachers found the words *formal* and *informal* in some of their own artifacts, and they worked together to edit their wording. The revised artifacts included phrases such as “The dialogue in the short story is authentic to the character’s setting, background, and the plot” for a creative piece, and “The writer proofreads for clarity, making sure the writing piece does not have any obstacles for the reader’s understanding.”

After engaging in this faculty study through the readings and artifact workshop, Toni curated a list of texts for their students that exemplified these issues,



Each teacher shared rubrics, checklists, writing progressions, and writing task/assignment sheets for one unit of study. One teacher’s artifact included: “Writing is formal. No slang or text speech.”




considering different genres and media (see Table 4). Although they wouldn't have time as a whole class to go through every text, Toni carefully planned opportunities for students to engage in conversations on some texts as a whole class, others in partnerships, and one in small groups that led to panel presentations. In addition, students had the following choices

to show their learning: to create poetry anthologies/memoirs, develop a screenplay for a performance, or produce a documentary featuring interviews with people in their lives.

Toni started the unit with poetry reading and analysis of spoken word performances by Elizabeth Acevedo and Jamila Lyiscott. They noted the figu-

TABLE 4
Toni's Text Set: Language and Black Identity

Topic	Language and Black Identity
<p>Texts</p>	<p><i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i> by Jacqueline Woodson <i>Chlorine Sky</i> by Mahogany Brown "A Rat Ode" by Elizabeth Acevedo (spoken word performance) "Three Ways to Speak English" by Jamila Lyiscott (spoken word performance) <i>Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America</i>, edited by Ibi Zoboi <i>Talking Black in America</i> documentary <i>Fences</i> play by August Wilson <i>Giving Voice</i>, a documentary on the August Wilson Monologue Competition</p>
	
<p>Translanguaging</p>	<p>Students are encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire during paired or group discussions, and when annotating texts, drafting, and working on their projects.</p>

rative language that was familiar to the class from their previous poetry readings and added how use of Black English was also a technique. Toni introduced the term *translanguaging* and discussed what it meant in comparison with *code-switching*. Students created multilingual concept charts on the themes in the poems, including images related to those themes and their own understanding of what these meant for their lives. After this introduction, students read *Brown Girl Dreaming* or *Chlorine Sky* in book clubs. Toni met with different clubs, supporting their interpretation work, which included intertextual analysis (of the novel or memoir in verse and spoken word performances) and the role of translanguaging in the text. Students took notes and prepared for their panel presentations, in which they talked about the author, the writing, and the impact it had on their lives as readers and students in an English class.

The last texts they looked at as a class were two documentaries, *Talking Black in America* and *Giving Voice*. Students used the viewing guide with the former and created their own guide for the latter, adding questions and responses to a shared class document. For their final project, students applied their learning and followed their passion


These texts and translanguaging approaches can be used to support students in learning about language and Black identity.

by writing poems, crafting a screenplay, or producing a documentary. Toni brought back one of their artifacts from their faculty study group to share with students so that they, too, could edit it. This rubric became a living document in the class.

HACIENDO CAMINO: GROWING CRITICAL BILINGUAL LITERACIES

Emma, Alejandro, and Toni listen closely to their students and their forms of speaking, introduce them to the characters and voices in YA literature, and feature multimodal texts, all of which reflect themes and experiences in their students' lives and the planning process happening at their schools. Their classrooms are spaces that honor the humanity of all children, especially the identities and practices of those from the global majority that includes language-minoritized students.

Some questions to consider in our practice as we cultivate our critical bilingual literacies are: What do our learning spaces sound like? How can we inspire enthusiastic discussions on texts and lives, where students feel free to be their whole selves?

As we witness (Luz in California and Carla in New York) states across the country launching legislative efforts to restrict what teachers can teach and censor what students can read, we are certain—more than ever—that translanguaging pedagogy is vital to strengthen our social justice efforts in schooling and education. The teachers featured in this article and the other examples you will read in this issue of *English Journal* give a vision of schooling that centers students and dismantles the structures that get in the way of communicating and healing in writing and beyond—all of us creando nuestro camino. 

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CARLA ESPAÑA taught in a bilingual Spanish-English dual-language program in New York City. Currently, she leads curriculum design that centers the use of culturally and linguistically sustaining literature and pedagogy. She teaches middle-grade English and will be joining the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at Brooklyn College as assistant professor of bilingual education and Puerto Rican / Latinx and Latin American studies in fall 2022. Carla and Luz founded the En Comunidad Collective with the focus of bringing educators together to reimagine education for bilingual and multilingual children; read more about it at encomunidadcollective.com. Carla has been a member of NCTE since 2014 and can be contacted at carla.espana@gmail.com.

READWRITETHINK CONNECTION

Lisa Storm Fink, RWT

Students read and discuss a series of picture books that highlight social barriers and bridges of race, class, and gender. Prior to a read-aloud of each picture book, students participate in activities, such as research or independent reading, that help lay the context for critical discussion of the read-aloud. Throughout the series of readings, students respond to each book in a writing journal. After all the picture books have been read, students use their journal responses to help them synthesize the themes they have encountered in the books. They discuss how they can take action to break barriers they have identified in their own worlds and to build bridges from what is to what could be. Finally, students read a novel and discuss how the novel relates to the picture books they have discussed. <https://bit.ly/3Bd1UV9>

The Unexpected Poet

You say you are not a good writer,
but the words you wrote
on this piece of paper
torn out of your spiral notebook
tell me a different story.

You say you were never good at writing,
but what you have written here
did not come from half-learned academic lessons
on the five-paragraph essay,
proper syntax, and coherent structure.

It came from a place of truth within you
and bled out through the barrel of your pen
making itself visible
in the curves and lines of your hurried handwriting.

You say you want me to tell you
if what you have written is good,
but my marks on your paper,
like signs and billboards on the side of a road,
will distract you from seeing
that the words you wrote
are now calling upon you
to mold and shape them,
to weave them together,
to share them with the world.

—SANDRA WOZNIAK
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