

# Shifting Linguistic Landscapes



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

Multilingualism and Translanguaging

Ofelia García

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

# Overview

- 1. My experiences & problems with traditional thinking**
- 2. Thinking otherwise**
- 3. Educating otherwise**
  - Ms. O'Connor's 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in NYC
  - Different stance
  - Different design

# My positionality through the eyes of others

- **No English** – “You’re just a stupid Cuban girl”
- **Not enough English** - Remedial English class H.S.
- **Not enough Spanish** – “Así no se dice” College
- **A Teacher in English only**
- **An academic pitied** for being “limited in English” and having to rely on Spanish

# Problems with vision from outside, through others' eyes: Personally

- Not recognized holistically for strengths
- In ways I made meaning
- In ways I used my dynamic bilingualism, always present, never limited.

Problem with vision from outside, through others' eyes:

## Scholarship on SOL/Multilingualism/Education

- Recognizing only **dichotomies** *that produce deficiencies*
  - SOL:
    - Language as discrete entity; L1/L2; native/non-native speakers; monolinguals/bilinguals
  - Education:
    - Language isolation/separation; additive or subtractive bilingualism; cross-linguistic transfer

# How do we develop a “thinking otherwise” and seeing as racialized bilingual communities?

Categories constructed by *colonial processes* that established a **line** that separated “white European civil society” from others relegated to an existential abyss which erases their existence. (Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*)

Rather than help racialized bilinguals overcome the line,

*Reject the line itself,*

*Reject our own abyssal thinking, from dominant side of line,*

*Reject our raciolinguistic ideologies*

*Adopt an “inside out” perspective, from racialized bilingual communities’ point of view.*

# How do we educate otherwise? Language and translanguaging

- The sociopolitically imposed concept of a *named language* has little to do with how anyone languages (Makoni & Pennycook, 2014)
- *Bilingualism* is not the addition of two language systems, or even the subtraction of one from the other. Bilinguals do language with a unitary semiotic repertoire, bilinguals engage in **translanguaging**, using a unitary network of meanings.

# Translanguaging: The what?

To do language bilingually, bilinguals assemble and leverage a **unitary network of meanings and features** (not separate linguistic structures, not act on 2 languages separately)

- **Trans-**, as in **transcend**, going *beyond* understandings of language that have been given to us by countries, schools, and prescriptive grammar to the ways racialized people engage in languaging
- **Trans-**, as in **transcending** *the effects of colonialism, racism and global capitalism*

“Translanguaging is the **deployment of a SPEAKER’S full linguistic repertoire** without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages” (Otheguy, García<sup>26</sup>& Reid, 2015, p. 281).



# Ms. O'Connor's 4th grade classroom

## Singularities in Pluralities -

- **Aminata.** Just arrived from Burkina Faso. Classified as French-speaker and “ELL”
- **Jacques.** Just arrived from France. Classified as French-speaker and “ELL”

## Named language? “ELL”?

- **Emmanuel,** Born in U.S. Haitian parents. Classified as Fluent English speaker.
- **Joaquín.** Born in Puebla, Mexico. Arrived at 2 years of age. Classified as Fluent English
- **Sara.** Born in U.S. Hard of hearing. Classified as Fluent English
- What remains invisible?

Students as **Emergent Bilinguals**

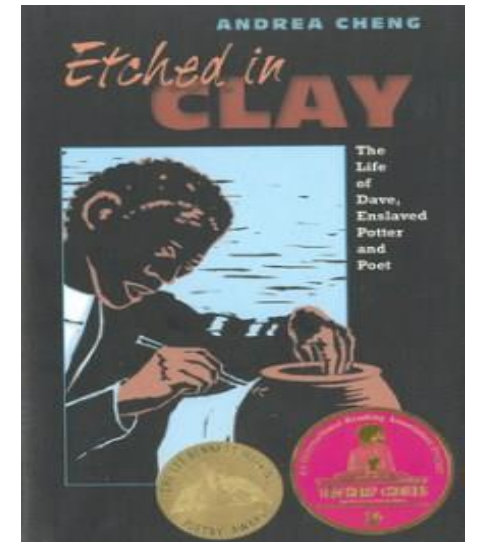
# Ms. O'Connor's Literacy Workshop

## Opening up Translanguaging Spaces

Temas, Textos & Translanguaging – (España & Herrera, 2019)

Etched in Clay by Andrea Chang

1. Read Aloud
2. Guided Reading
3. Writing Workshop



Enslaved young man, Dave, in South Carolina in 1815.

# Etched in Clay by Andrea Chang

## 1. Read Aloud

Someday the world will read  
my word etched in clay  
on the side of this jar  
and know about the shackles  
around our legs  
and the whips  
upon our backs.  
I am not afraid  
to write on a jar  
and fire it hot  
so my word  
can never be erased (pg 63-64)

- *Turn and Talk:*  
Grouping - Aminata, Jacques & Sara –  
Joaquín & Emmanuel
- *Questions in English. Discussion* and  
answers using different aspects of  
students' repertoire.

## 2. Guided reading – Discussion space

- Discussion using all their *resources*.
  - *Beyond* simply English. Use bodies, gestures, sign language, other languages, drawings, acting, music, technology
- How do they go about engaging with the text? How are they physically positioned? What are their gestures? their emotions? Their interests?
- How are they connected with the peers in group?
- Are they able to identify key ideas? Make inferences? Express complex thoughts: Associate ideas from multiple texts? Argue effectively and persuade classmates?

### 3. Writing – What have been our class’ shackles?

Objective for students:

- Using language creatively. Students’ choice
- Showing class’ language heterogeneity

Ms. O’Connor asks questions like:

- “How should we start?”
  - Everyone contributes ideas with their *own resources*
  - Ms. O’Connor scribes the text students produce, students scribe also.
- “Is that the best way to say it?” “What are other ways of saying it?” “How is this idea communicated in your family or community?”

Ms. O’Connor’s objectives:

- To see what racialized bilingual students **are capable of**
- To become a **co-learner**, also an emergent bilingual

# Educating otherwise: Educators' Translanguaging stance

1. For *bilinguals to learn*, they don't have to hold named languages as separate cognitive linguistic entities or transfer anything, they must *access everything*
2. *There are no monolingual texts* if bilingual students are *truly engaged* in reading, writing, listening, speaking.
3. Bilinguals *do not have to behave like monolinguals*, for their repertoire of meanings is more extensive and complex.
4. Educating racialized bilinguals requires an educator who is *a co-learner to see them in their complexity*

# Educating otherwise: Educators' Translanguaging Design

**Not strategies** but opening up **translanguaging spaces** that support dynamic languaging and ways of knowing so students can *use all their repertoires* and can *become critically conscious of histories of colonialism, racism and global capitalism* and their positionings within.

# Translanguaging Design – Opening up TRLNG spaces

Respecting input but opening up **translanguaging spaces** that **adjust to students and purposes**.

## 1. **Translanguaging Rings**

- To make meaning of learning, to scaffold what they don't understand, to include all
  - Aminata and Jacques

## 2. **Translanguaging Documentation and Assessment**

- To know children's capacities, their interests, their passions, their full knowledge
- To encourage wonderful ideas, imagination, thinking, without being constrained by language
  - Joaquín, Emmanuel and Sara

## 3. **Translanguaging Transformation**

- To develop bilingual subjects who understand the power of their dynamic bilingualism, how it can work, and the histories of how and why it has been constrained
- New subject positions as emergent bilinguals
  - All



Resources [www.ofeliagarcia.org](http://www.ofeliagarcia.org)

[www.cuny-nysieb.org](http://www.cuny-nysieb.org)

