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## **Transforming schools with emergent bilingual students: The CUNY-NYSIEB Project**

Bilingual students are the norm in classrooms in much of the world today. And yet, most school systems disregard the bilingualism of their students, insisting that only a national language be used. This is so especially when students enter schools without what is considered age-appropriate command of the national language, either because they live in homes and communities where other languages are spoken or because they are immigrants. These students' language practices are generally considered "limited," and little attention is paid to their expertise with language practices other than those legitimated in state schools. In the United States, the federal government refers to these students as "Limited English Proficient" (LEP), and many state educational authorities and educators refer to them as "English Language Learners" (ELL). We choose to call these students *emergent bilinguals* (García 2009b; García/Kleifgen 2010) to call attention to what they know how to do with language and to focus on their emergent bilingualism. Rather than "limited" or simply "learners," emergent bilingual students are recognized for being at the beginning points of a bilingual continuum that could be mined for learning. This is one of the positions that Prof. Ursula Neumann has held throughout her professional career at the University of Hamburg, and from which we draw inspiration.

This article describes the ways in which we, as part of a large team, worked with school administrators and teachers of schools with large number of emergent bilingual students to transform their ideologies about bilingualism and bilingual students. It argues that the most important thing in transforming school practices to enable emergent bilinguals to participate in education – and a public, community and economic life – is precisely to change the ideologies of educators, and especially school leaders, regarding their students' bilingualism.

This article focuses on the work of a project (CUNY-NYSIEB) in which faculty and research assistants from The City University of New York (CUNY), through the support and in collaboration with the New York State Department of Education, work with failing schools with very large numbers of emergent bilinguals. García is the co-Principal Investigator in the project, whereas Sánchez is Project Director.<sup>1</sup> We

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1 CUNY-NYSIEB is funded by New York State. The Principal Investigator is Prof. Ricardo Otheguy, with Prof. Ofelia García and Prof. Kate Menken, as co-Principal Investigators. At its inception in January 2012, Dr. Nelson Flores served as Acting Project Coordinator, a position now held by Dr. María Teresa Sánchez. The team of the Leadership component is composed of the following CUNY faculty: Professors Laura Ascenzi-Moreno, Brian Collins, Ann Ebe, Cecilia Espinosa, Tatyana Kleyn (who served as interim Co-PI 1/2013–1/2014), and Vanessa Pérez; a Field Supervisor, Christina Celic (1/2012–8/2013); and Research Assistants: Kathryn Carpenter, Luis Guzmán, Luz Herrera, Sarah Hesson, Liza Pappas, María Peña (since 9/2013), Kate Seltzer (since 9/2013) and Heather Woodley (1/2012–8/2013).

start by describing New York State policies for the education of emergent bilinguals and the schooling options for such students. We then describe the theoretical underpinnings of the CUNY-NYSIEB project, which leads to the ways in which we work with schools as part of a large team.

The main part of this article focuses on findings from three schools that made the most progress after a year of working with our team. As we will see, as a result of their involvement with CUNY-NYSIEB, school administrators and teachers started to understand the importance of bilingualism in the school's ecology, and in the pedagogy with which they taught. Specifically, we show here the changes that occurred in valuing multilingualism in the school building, as well as in classroom teaching. But because school practices are shaped by educational policies, we start by describing the language-in-education policies of New York State where our work is conducted.

### **1. New York State educational policies for emergent bilinguals**

In the United States, the bilingualism of language minority students is rarely considered an asset, and thus, schools often see education through English-only lenses, insisting in measuring academic success only through English monolingualism. Despite this national tendency, New York State has been engaged in bilingual education efforts for their Spanish-speaking language minority since the 1960s<sup>2</sup> (see Carrasquillo et al. 2013). This is directly related to the fact that New York City has been, and continues to be, the US city with the largest Puerto Rican population<sup>3</sup> (for more on this history, see García 2011; Pousada 1987; Reyes 2006; Santiago 1986).

Most of the bilingual education programs in New York State have been transitional in nature; that is, the minority language, most often Spanish, is used only until students have developed English proficiency according to a standardized test measure. In the last decade, a number of two-way immersion bilingual education programs have been instituted, originally conceptualized as serving equal number of language minority children developing English and language majority children developing the language other than English. Known as dual language programs, these bilingual programs function often as developmental bilingual education programs, for the NYC Latino population today consists not only of children who speak only Spanish, but also of children who are bilingual, as well as of those who speak English only. Despite their growth, in 2013 in New York City only 4% of emergent bilinguals developing English were in these dual language programs.

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2 Bilingual education programs exist in other languages. In New York State, for example, transitional bilingual education programs are mostly in Spanish (84%), followed by Chinese (10%), but there were also 8 programs in Haitian Creole, 5 in Yiddish, 3 in Bengali, 2 in Arabic, and 1 in French. There are dual language bilingual education programs in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, French, Arabic and Korean (NYSED 2013b).

3 The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is considered a colonial dependency of the United States. Puerto Ricans have been US citizens since 1917.

The anti-bilingual climate propelled by the country's growing conservatism, accompanied by the growing superdiversity of the city's population (the NYC Department of Education reports that in 2013 there are 180 languages represented in its schools) has resulted in a decrease in enrollment of emergent bilinguals in transitional bilingual education programs. Alternatively, English as a Second Language programs have grown. Whereas in 2002–2003, 53% of emergent bilinguals in New York City were enrolled in ESL programs, by 2011–2012 that figure had grown to 76% (NYCDOE/OELL 2013). Since 2011, and in the face of the continued educational failure of emergent bilinguals, the New York City Department of Education, under the direction of Angélica Infante, has tried to reverse this trend. In the year 2011–2012, 50 new bilingual education programs – of the transitional and dual language types – opened their doors.

Despite the efforts of policy makers and educators to improve the education of emergent bilinguals, the failure rates of emergent bilinguals are dismal. The emergent bilinguals who entered high school in 2008 in New York State had a 34.3% graduation rate after four years, compared to the 74% statewide graduation rate (NYSED 2013a). New York State administered a new English Language Arts assessment following the newly adopted Common Core State Standards<sup>4</sup> in April 2013 to students in grades 3 to 8. Only 31% of students in the state met or exceeded the new standards, but only 3.2% of emergent bilinguals did (NYSED 2013b).

It is in the context of New York State's educational policies for their emergent bilinguals and the consistent failure rate of these students in school that the CUNY-NYSIEB Project came into being. All schools included in the project were considered to be "failing" by the New York State Education Department because of their students' underperformance. In addition, the schools had a very large number of students designated by the state as "English language learners." The CUNY-NYSIEB philosophy on educating emergent bilinguals and the structures of the project enabled changes in schools that show much promise.

## 2. The CUNY-NYSIEB Project

In the first year of the project (2012) we worked with 27 schools overwhelmingly located in New York City. The 23 schools in New York City represented different grade levels, different boroughs, and different types of educational programs.<sup>5</sup> We describe here our vision and the non-negotiable principles we established for the

4 The Common Core State Standards are internationally benchmarked college- and career-ready standards that were the initiative of the National Governors Association, and the Council of Chief State School Officers, an organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states. When this article was written, the Standards had been adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

5 There were seven elementary schools (Kindergarten–5<sup>th</sup> grade), two elementary/middle schools (Kindergarten–8<sup>th</sup> grade), ten middle schools (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade), and four high schools (9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade). Six of the schools were in Manhattan, nine were in the Bronx, seven in Queens and one in Broo-

schools, as well as the project structures that enabled us to communicate our vision and engage schools.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.1 Vision and non-negotiable principles

The project had a vision of bilingualism and its development that consisted of three tenets:

- 1) the creative *emergence* of individual language practices; that is, the idea that bilingual development is not linear, static, or able to reach an ultimate end-point of completion; rather, it is always emergent, continuous, never-ending, and shaped by relationships with people, texts and situations.
- 2) the *dynamics of bilingualism*; that is, bilingualism is considered dynamic and not simply additive (García 2009a). Thus, educators need to provide bilingual students with opportunities to language bilingually, or translanguaging (García 2009a), using their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to meet their communicative and academic needs.
- 3) the *dynamic processes of teaching and learning* of emergent bilinguals. Translanguaging as the discursive norm of all bilinguals, as well as a pedagogical scaffolding for emergent bilinguals and transformative pedagogy (see below for more on translanguaging), functions as the centerpiece of our vision (for a complete statement of our vision visit [www.cuny-nysieb.org](http://www.cuny-nysieb.org)).

To carry out these principles of *emergence, dynamic bilingualism, and dynamic bilingual teaching and learning*, we established two non-negotiable principles for all CUNY-NYSIEB schools – 1) the “old” idea that bilingualism had to be used as a resource in teaching and learning, but now within a dynamic bilingual paradigm which included translanguaging, and 2) the belief that the whole school had to support a multilingual ecology for all students, not just for those whose bilingualism was emerging. In order to communicate our vision and engage schools, CUNY-NYSIEB established structures of collaboration which are described in the next section.

## 2.2 Structures of collaboration

*Seminars and Collaborative Descriptive Inquiry.* The school leaders and the schools’ Emergent Bilingual Leadership Teams (which were formed as a result of CUNY-NYSIEB’s work) participated in monthly all-day seminars. In the morning, there was a formal lecture; in the afternoon, however, the educators were engaged in

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klyn. At the start of the project the majority of participating schools offered either English as a second language (ESL) programs and a few offered transitional bilingual education programs.

6 For a more in-depth discussion of CUNY-NYSIEB, see García/Menken (2015).

Collaborative Descriptive Inquiry, a disciplined, democratic process for collective teaching and learning (for more on this process, see, García/Traugh 2002).

*On-site support.* Our team was also organized into pairs consisting of a more seasoned scholar (CUNY faculty) with a doctoral student. These teams made monthly visits to the schools, offering them professional development focused on our vision of dynamic bilingualism and translanguaging pedagogies, using the CUNY-NYSIEB *Translanguaging Guide* that we developed (Celic/Seltzer: CUNY-NYSIEB 2012).

### 3. Transforming three schools

In order to understand the changes that have taken place in our schools, as well as the tensions that developed from our work, we focus here on three schools that made the most progress after a year of work with us. These three schools distinguish themselves because the principals and/or their assistant principals were very involved in the project, attending seminars and collaborating with our teams on-site. Table 1 displays the demographics and the characteristics of the three schools.

Table 1: *Demographics and EBL Program Characteristics (\*)*

	School A	School B	School C
Location	Bronx	Queens	Bronx
Grades	K-6	K-6	6-8
Number of students	1800	1400	370
Students receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	83%	72%	85%
Racial Composition			
Black and/or African American	12%	1%	25%
Latino	83%	48%	72%
Asian	4%	7%	1%
White	2%	44%	1%
Emergent Bilinguals (approximate)	28%	10%	20%
Programs for EBLs			
TBE – Spanish/English	Yes (**)	No	No
ESL self contained	No	No	Yes
ESL push-in and/or push-out	Yes	Yes	No
Bilingual Special Education – Spanish/English	No	Yes	No
Some content classes in Spanish	No	No	Yes – Math and Spanish Language Arts

(\*) Information obtained from NYC Comprehensive Education Plan 2012–2013 (Schools A and B) and New York State Report Cards 2011–2012 (for all schools). Numbers are approximate to maintain confidentiality.

(\*\*) Since the schools' participation in CUNY-NYSIEB their TBE program has been modified and does not completely fit a traditional model of TBE. 50% of the instruction is in English and the other 50% is in Spanish, and once students test out and are no longer considered EBLs, they can stay in the program.

As the table indicates, two of the schools we portray here are elementary schools (grades K-6) and one is a middle school (grades 6 through 8). The middle school is a small school, but the elementary schools have well over 1,000 students. Over 80% of students in the two Bronx schools (the NYC borough with the greatest poverty rate) have free or reduced lunch (a measure of poverty), whereas 72% of the students in the school in the borough of Queens school are eligible for free lunch. Only one of the three schools has a transitional bilingual education program; the other two schools offer only ESL instruction through self-contained classes in the Bronx school, and push-in and/or push-out in the Queens school.<sup>7</sup> In the two Bronx schools Latino students predominate, making up 83% and 72% of the student body. However, in the Queens school, just almost half of the student population is Latino. Emergent bilinguals make up over 20% of the students in the two Bronx schools, and 10% of the students in the Queens school.

The data we present below comes from interviews with school leaders, as well as the notes and reflections of the CUNY-NYSIEB support teams. As we said before, changing the ideologies of educators regarding their students' bilingualism turned out to be paramount in transforming school practices so that emergent bilinguals could participate in a meaningful education.

#### **4. From failed ignorance to commitment. Shifting ideologies.**

Despite much research that supports the use of emergent bilingual students' home languages in instruction (see, for instance, August/Shanahan 2006; Bialystok 2007; Goldenberg 2008), the dominant ideology in US schools insists on English only, even when students do not understand lessons. And students' knowledge is acknowledged only when it is in English only. Through engagement with CUNY-NYSIEB principals started to shift their ideologies about the role of the home language in instruction, and especially in ESL programs, as well as how language and knowledge are connected. Most importantly, however, were shifts in the ways that they perceived themselves beyond mere technocrats to thinkers about bilingualism and the education of emergent bilinguals. The quotes that follow, coming from interviews with school leaders, make evident the shift in ideologies concerning use of home language, the role of English in ESL classrooms, the role of language in education for emergent bilinguals, and most importantly, their own role as educational leaders in schools with large numbers of emergent bilinguals.

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7 Self-contained ESL classes means that the classroom teacher is specialized in English as a Second Language and teaches a whole class of emergent bilinguals. ESL pull-out programs consist of ESL teachers who take out small groups of emergent bilinguals from mainstream instruction for certain periods to reinforce concepts and develop language. ESL push-in programs means that the ESL teacher works collaboratively with the classroom teacher for certain periods of instruction, helping emergent bilingual students who are in regular classrooms.

#### 4.1 Beyond English Only: Using the home language as tool

In an interview conducted a year after the start of the project, an Assistant Principal told us:

I keep *going back* to that teacher who always had the “English police” in the classroom: “Everyone has to speak English”. This [project] *changed my thinking* about that ... You don’t need to *force people into English*; it’s [about] using the home language as the tool in order to become proficient in other languages. (School C Assistant Principal, Interview, December 6, 2012, our italics)

The ways in which this principal uses language points to the impact that CUNY-NYSIEB has had in his thinking. Not only has the project changed his thinking about the “English police,” but also he keeps reflecting and “going back.” This “going back” is something that CUNY-NYSIEB encourages through our Collaborative Descriptive Inquiry, and through repetition of our vision and principles in all seminars. School leaders are encouraged to “keep going back,” to develop a critical lens through which they understand that what is “policed” is not always what has to be done, to become their own policy-makers (Menken/García 2010). Teaching cannot be about “forc(ing) people into English;” it’s about “using,” developing “tools.” The understandings that this assistant principal’s quote reveals are many; for he has also learned that English is never “had;” it is “used” in ways that respond to the communicative or academic situation to which the student is exposed. The development of bilingualism is not simply additive; it is dynamic and responds to the “affordances” enabled by the teacher.

#### 4.2 Beyond English to Education: ESL instruction

In another school, the principal acknowledged that through her involvement in the project, she changed her vision of ESL programs from one that functioned in English only to one that used the students’ home language practices:

[My thoughts [before CUNY-NYSIEB] were that the ESL teachers went in 4 times a week, 8 times a week – whatever it was – and taught the children English, and taught them, almost like being *a one-way street*. Now I think of it that there’s *so much more* to it. And that the *use of the home language* ... should be encouraged and used as much *as we can to help* them gain English; but also, just because they don’t know English doesn’t mean they can’t *think* and can’t *express* themselves ... *I think* is really important for us to realize as a school. (School B Principal, Interview, March 2, 2012, our italics)

This principal’s only knowledge about the ESL program before coming to CUNY-NYSIEB was the periods of instruction required by legislation. But our project never talked about what was required by regulations, but about what was right for emergent bilinguals. This principal now thinks not of required periods, but of “so much more,” and not as in a “one-way street,” but in dynamic ways. The measure



is not a targeted period of instruction, but what the educators “can” do “to help.” And this help doesn’t come in English only, but in “the use of the home language.” Furthermore, emergent bilinguals are now seen not just as students who have to be taught English, but as “thinkers” able to “express themselves.”

In all three schools, school leaders now support the use of home languages in ESL programs, and understand the importance of bilingualism in the students’ English language development. For example, at School C, the Assistant Principal described how the school changed their practices of asking for English only products in ESL classes to allowing students to work through their home language practices. He says:

[One] ESL teacher has this whole product in Spanish from two different kids. Before [the administrators] would have been giving [teachers] advice about how can [they can] help this kid do this [product] in English. We still would, but knowing the kids, one just arrived from Nicaragua right before they did the project, so the first week she’s here [and she’s able to show what writing she can produce], that’s awesome. She did a whole project on Nicaragua! It’s ESL, there’s no English in her product, but *she’s feeling comfortable and teaching* the other kids about her country. We just *rewarded that*, looked at it from the point of view about *what’s good about the project, not what language it’s in* ... [The administrators commented on the teacher’s lesson] ‘You’re allowing kids to produce the product in many languages,’ instead of like, ‘How can you use this piece of work to have it be in English?’ (School C Assistant Principal, Interview, December 6, 2012, our italics)

This quote reveals how there has been a shift from English as the measure of knowing to knowledge itself as its own measure. The child who recently arrived from Nicaragua is rewarded for what she knows, for what she can teach others in the class about Nicaragua, about what’s good, and not for what she doesn’t yet have after one week in the US – English. To learn it is important to feel comfortable and to be able to teach others, which is precisely what this emergent bilingual child is doing. Educators in this school have learned an important CUNY-NYSIEB lesson: The focus of education is learning, not just “what language it’s in.”

### 4.3 Beyond English to Education: Bilingual education

As a result of their involvement with CUNY-NYSIEB, leaders in the school with a transitional bilingual education program have also changed their ideologies. Deepening their experience with bilingual education, the school leaders worked on making the program less transitional in nature, focusing on the children’s bilingual development throughout their elementary school years. Rather than thinking of a score in an English test, the school leaders became convinced that what was important was developing bilingual citizens. One Assistant Principal discusses this change:

I am most proud of the fact that the staff is taking a *huge, huge leap* and *changing* our practice model. We are *not changing* our program. We have a transitional bilingual program, but we are changing the model we are going to use to accomplish our goal. (...) The

long-term goal is not that students will pass the [New York State] English [proficiency] exam but that they will be *bilingual citizens*.” (School A Assistant Principal, Interview, December, 2012, our italics)

School leaders in this school have begun to shift their bilingual educational ideologies. As in the ESL programs in the quotes above, the ideological shift reveals an emphasis not on English test scores, or even on test scores in Spanish in this particular school. The focus is now how to develop citizens, and in this case, bilingual citizens. The leap, as the quote states, is “huge,” emphasized in the repetition of the word “huge.” And yet, despite the leap in practices, the program is “not changing.” This indicates to us the ideological leap that is taking place, as educators shift their scope of work, but maintain their core principles. It is not a leap in distance or place; it is a leap in time. It is not a short-term leap, it is “long-term.” And long-term what this school wants are “bilingual citizens,” not just good test scores in English. This quote reveals pride in what they have taken up as a goal as a result of the involvement in CUNY-NYSIEB – not simply good test scores, but enabling emergent bilinguals’ participation not only in their school’s curriculum in the present, but in the public, community and economic life of our changing global multilingual world.

#### 4.4 Beyond technocrats to thinkers

The principal of School B acknowledged above that her initial thoughts about emergent bilinguals had to do with the periods of ESL instruction that her school was required to provide. As a result of her involvement in CUNY-NYSIEB, she now views her students as thinkers, able to do and learn. In so doing, however, she reveals how she herself has gone from being a mere administrator to a thinker. She adds to what she said above:

And *I think* when we made [emergent bilinguals] focus on English, read in English, write in English, we were missing an opportunity for them ... to develop their thinking skills, in whatever language. Because it really is about thinking! *I think* we weren’t valuing that enough, and giving kids the opportunity to show what they knew, and to learn more. We have a 5<sup>th</sup> grader that’s in a B<sup>8</sup> book because those are the English words he knows, but it’s certainly not [his actual reading level]. *I think* we limit him when we do that, you know, whereas if in Spanish or Polish they could probably be reading on grade level, or close to it if not on. *I think* this helps us take limits off kids (School B Principal, Interview, March 2, 2012, our emphasis).

It is interesting that for this principal it is the use of English that has become limited. No longer are the children considered “Limited English proficient,” as the US federal government calls them; it is English only that limits. The principal has become a

8 This rating refers to a leveled book of low difficulty. A leveled book collection is a large set of books organized in levels of difficulty from easy to complex. Students access books in the level that will allow them to read with accuracy, understanding, and fluency and move up the level.

thinker, emphasizing her ability to “think” about these students four times in the above quote. No longer does she have “thoughts” about emergent bilinguals guided by state regulations, as she expresses in the first quote given above in the section on ESL instruction. Now she “thinks” generatively, she has become empowered to act, to do for her children, to develop their thinking; in other words, to educate beyond language. It is this generative thinking by principals that has led to changes in the schools which we review in the next two sections.

## 5. Creating multilingual ecologies

When the CUNY-NYSIEB teams walked into our schools, only English was visible and audible. It was important to work with schools in embracing the entire range of language practices of ALL children and families, especially in the school’s textual landscape (i.e. signs, texts etc.), as well as in interactions of members of the school community. Creating multilingual ecologies was then one of the first changes implemented in the schools. One Principal said: “I think we also went for the early win – starting to shift the multilingual ecology. Some of the early easy wins were the visuals, so we prioritized that” (School C Principal, Interview, December 6, 2012). In this school, in addition to signs in Spanish and Arabic, the predominant languages of the children, the school also started to put up procedural posters in American Sign Language in order to reflect the needs of Deaf students in the school.

In School B close to 40% of the students were speakers of Polish. The Assistant Principal described how they went about changing their multilingual ecology and the effect it had in the school community:

There was a parent who walked in on parent teacher conference day (...) and on the front door it says “General Office” and then it says “Office” in Polish and Spanish. And a Polish family came in (...), the father came in and said ‘Oh my goodness. What a *nice surprise* to see my language on the door!’ And he made a *big deal* about it, and he was *very impressed*, and so I *felt good* about that. (School B Assistant Principal, Interview, December 17, 2012, our italics)

Although changing the visual landscape of the school in the form of signs wasn’t difficult for the school administration, it was certainly a “big deal” for the families who were “very impressed” because they’re not used to having their languages recognized in schools. The home languages gradually started to become school languages also. The father finds this a “nice surprise.” The feelings of alienation that language minority families often feel in schools are supplanted by sentiments of enjoyment and pleasantness in being in school. And it turns out that the educators also “felt good.” The cycle of estrangement, division and even hostility that often exists between schools and families is broken, as both parents and educators start to express feelings of respect for each other’s work.

The visual representation of the students' languages also encouraged other changes in the multilingual ecology of the school. The Principal of School C expressed how the school's efforts in building the multilingual ecology have helped bilingual students feel more comfortable in school:

[Students] have parts of their day when they know *they can speak in any language* they chose. Allowing them that space has *changed their view of school*. Those students who are not beginners, but still bilingual are part of this too. There's not really that 'oh, those are the Spanish kids' *separation, or fear of speaking*. And kids *will speak to me in Spanish*. It's like *the other language [in the school]*. [They are also feeling that] not knowing English is not something to be ashamed of. Before maybe they thought it's not *ok to talk in Spanish* unless I'm *whispering* to my friend, but now it's ok. (School C Principal, Personal Communication, December 6, 2012, our italics)

Embracing a multilingual ecology in the school greatly improved the social atmosphere in the school. Families now felt welcomed as their languages were recognized in Welcome Signs and other visual signs. This then impacted the students' social and emotional well-being, for they then recognized that their home language practices were also valued in school. The change in multilingual ecology in the school changed not only the school walls; it changed the families and the educators, but also the students themselves. It changed all the participants "view of the school," but also how they behaved in the school. For students, this means that they now "can speak" in school, and not have any "fear of speaking." Their "whispering" turns to a voice in "any language." They can speak with their own voice not only to their "friend," but also to their teacher. They now know it's "ok to talk in Spanish." Spanish has turned from being the "other" language that could only be whispered to "the other language in the school." This is so not only for students who are at the beginning points of the bilingual continuum, but for those who are bilingual, who now know they don't have to whisper in the "other" language. In fact, students in this school who were not bilingual became interested in their classmates' bilingualism and the languages other than English. There was much talk of different scripts and sounds, as students experimented with each other's language practices.

The adoption of a multilingual ecology has meant changes not only in the school walls, but also changes within the school community. From a place alien to the community, schools have now become part of the community with their languages spoken and made visible throughout. But feeling good about a school community is not the same as making changes in the processes of teaching and learning, more difficult to achieve. The three schools that we're portraying here distinguish themselves because they have been able to embrace bilingualism in classroom instruction, and are experimenting with translanguaging as a valid pedagogy, the subject of the next section.

## 6. Adopting a dynamic bilingual stance through translanguaging

The importance of the dynamic bilingual stance taken up by CUNY-NYSIEB lies in the fact that it opens up the possibility of teaching bilingually beyond bilingual education structures. That is, given that the majority of emergent bilingual students are presently in ESL classrooms, and given that there is increasing language heterogeneity in New York City, ways have to be found to use the students' home language practices regardless of program type or whether the teacher is monolingual or bilingual. A translanguaging pedagogical theory mines students' home language practices regardless of the teachers' bilingual skills or the programs' structure or the student composition.

The term translanguaging was coined in Welsh (*Trawsieithu*) by Cen Williams (1994). In its original use, it referred to a pedagogical practice where students are asked to alternate languages for the purposes of reading and writing or for receptive or productive use; for example, students might be asked to read in English and write in Welsh and vice-versa, and it is that meaning that still is prevalent in the Welsh bilingual education literature (for a review, see Lewis, Jones/Baker 2012a, 2012b). García (2009a) has extended the term to refer to the flexible use of linguistic resources by bilinguals in order to make sense of their worlds, and has applied it mostly to classrooms because of its potential in liberating the voices of language minoritized students. Translanguaging is related to other fluid languaging practices that scholars have called by different terms (for a review, see García/Li Wei, forthcoming).

In García's conception (2009), translanguaging is a speaker-centered view of bilingualism that posits that languages are external categories generated by the national, political, educational, and ideological systems prevalent in society (Duchêne/Heller 2007; Makoni/Pennycook 2007). But bilinguals experience socially separate linguistic features as one new whole. Translanguaging posits that:

[B]ilinguals have *one linguistic repertoire* from which they select features *strategically* to communicate effectively. That is, translanguaging takes as its starting point the *language practices of bilingual people as the norm*, and not the language of monolinguals, as described by traditional usage books and grammars. (García 2012, emphasis in the original)

A translanguaging theory of teaching and learning has not been exploited either in ESL or bilingual classrooms because of language teaching traditions that consider languages as separate autonomous structures, and understand bilingualism as the addition of these separate structures. The CUNY-NYSIEB work with school leaders has challenged these traditional understandings of language and bilingualism, encouraging the fluid language practices of bilinguals to educate meaningfully.

At the root of the adoption of translanguaging, however, is the educators' shifting ideology about the purpose of education from one that was all about English to one which is about thinking and engagement. An example of this is evident in the interview of School C principal, when she mentions that before adopting a translanguaging pedagogy, students did not understand the lesson. She says:

And teachers were fine with that [students not understanding]. But now there's been a *major shift in a lot of people's thinking*: 'It's my responsibility to make sure the students are learning the content.' That's where you see more use of home language instruction. Like when they're making a brochure for a country, teachers are making sure all students have a resource book in their language to use. (School C Principal, Interview, December 6, 2013, our emphasis)

It is precisely the change in ideology, "a major shift in a lot of people's thinking," that is responsible for the use of translanguaging. The shift is not about bilingual use, instead it is about "learning the content," and understanding that the teacher's "responsibility" is precisely to make sure students learn. Translanguaging practices are only accepted when teachers are convinced that it is an instrument to learn.

At School B, four teachers have been implementing translanguaging strategies, mostly to build vocabulary. In one ESL lesson, where students have been "pulled out" of the classroom for intensive ESL work, the ESL teacher guided the reading of "The Emperor's new Clothes." Although the teacher did not know Arabic, the language of one of the children in the group, the vocabulary words she had chosen were written in English, Spanish, and Arabic (for which the teacher used Google Translate). The teacher asked students to read the words aloud in their home languages. In a self-contained kindergarten class, the students were reading "Knuffle Bunny." The teacher got to the word "bunny" and bilingual students helped the class say the words in Spanish, Polish, Hungarian, and Italian. The teacher also had the words written on a paper, and pointed out how the Spanish and Italian names looked similar. The lesson continued and students made predictions using the word "because." The teacher referred back to a paper posted in the class from a previous lesson with the word "because" written in Romanian, Spanish, Chinese, and Polish. Different students said the word "because" in their languages, then they continued with the story (School visit, June 2013). These teachers are beginning to understand that one develops new language practices in interrelationship with old ones. In teaching emergent bilinguals, these educators recognize what the students already know, incorporating their language practices into the lessons, and learning from their students.

When the CUNY-NYSIEB team met with teachers in School A, they commented that since using translanguaging there is more participation, particularly for those at the beginning and intermediate levels of English proficiency. Teachers also reported that there was an increase in the quality and quantity of students' writing. Because students were able to build off their Spanish knowledge to learn English words, they reported feeling freer to write.

Despite the teachers' incursions with a translanguaging pedagogy, translanguaging remained elusive – a scaffolding strategy, rather than a transformative pedagogy throughout the schools. Adopting a full theory of translanguaging in teaching and learning would require a complete epistemological change that would put dynamic bilingualism at the center of all learning. US schools, instruments of the nation-state, are not yet ready for such a change, and so our three schools grapple with the tension that CUNY-NYSIEB has introduced into their teaching.

## 7. Conclusion

The transformation of state schools to meaningfully educate emergent bilinguals requires a reconceptualization of education, as well as of language and bilingualism. For emergent bilingual students, as for all students, the goal of education must be the ability to think critically and to understand that the relationship of language to material and social realities is neither innocent nor natural. But for students to understand this requires school leaders and educators who afford a “productive ideological appreciation of social organization, human conduct, and language” (Freebody 2008, p. 107).

Through the collaborative structures of CUNY-NYSIEB, we are promoting the ideological shifts among educators that enable access by emergent bilinguals to powerful ways of knowing and communicating. This article gives evidence of how school leaders and educators in three schools are shifting their definitions about what it means to educate emergent bilinguals from one that focuses on English only to one that embraces the critical thinking of students, as well as their own. By carefully building the multilingual ecologies of their schools, understandings of instructional language and pedagogy have also shifted, allowing a translanguaging theory of teaching and learning to emerge.

The work of CUNY-NYSIEB is continuing. As with that of Ursula Neumann, it is a long and arduous task that focuses on transforming the experience of bilingual students, as well as that of school leaders, educators, families and communities to ensure that social justice is served.

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