Transnational English Teachers Negotiating Translanguaging In and Outside the Classroom[1]

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Abstract

Transnational youths develop complex linguistic repertoires because of their intricate mobility patterns and their exposure to multiple literacy and cultural frameworks. This leads them to develop malleable linguistic practices–defined as translanguaging–by means of creatively drawing on their linguistic resources to make sense of their worlds. Building on their knowledge of English and their experiences abroad, Mexican transnational youths often find in language teaching an opportunity to start a professional career in Mexico. This article shows how these transnational English teachers negotiate their translanguaging practices in and outside of the language classroom. The analysis of semi-structured interviews and writing compositions reveal the tensions around prevailing monolingual ideologies inside EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms and the flexible languaging that the participants display in their everyday lives. The transnational teachers in this study also report on the use of translanguaging as an empowering strategy for their students and themselves.

Resumen

Los jóvenes transnacionales desarrollan repertorios lingüísticos complejos como resultado de sus intrincados patrones de movilidad y exposición a varios sistemas educativos y culturales. Esta situación los lleva al desarrollo de prácticas lingüísticas maleables–conocidas como *translanguaging*–a través de las cuales hacen uso creativo de sus recursos lingüísticos para comprender su mundo. Aprovechando su conocimiento del inglés y las experiencias vividas en el extranjero, los jóvenes transnacionales mexicanos frecuentemente encuentran en la enseñanza del inglés una oportunidad para acceder al mundo laboral en México. El objetivo de este documento es mostrar como estos maestros de inglés negocian sus prácticas lingüísticas (translanguaging) dentro y fuera del salón. El análisis de entrevistas semiestructuradas y composiciones escritas revela las tensiones que rodean la coexistencia de las ideologías monolingües prevalentes en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) con las prácticas flexibles que los participantes usan de manera cotidiana. Los maestros transnacionales en este estudio también reportan el uso del *translanguaging* como estrategia de empoderamiento tanto para ellos como para sus estudiantes.

Introduction

Mexican migration to the United States is a multifaceted phenomenon and it has been studied from different angles allowing us to comprehend some of its intricacies revolving mostly around economic disparities (González-González, 2009), migration policies (Délano, 2011) and remittances (Durand, 2017). However, the migration dynamics between Mexico and the U.S. go beyond economics and politics as they have a direct impact on people and communities' daily lives on both sides of the border. Over the years, important research has been conducted to understand the relevance and impact that return migration (Gandini et al., 2015; García Zamora & Del Valle Martínez; 2016; Massey et al., 2015) and transnationalism (Delgado Wise & Rodríguez Ramírez, 2000; Lanly & Valenzuela Varela, 2004; Moctezuma Longoria, 2003; 2011) have had in Mexico. This body of work has illuminated some important aspects related to the complexity of mobility across borders and about the challenges that returnee and transnational migrants face as they navigate their journeys.

Research investigating transnational and returnee youths has become relevant as their presence becomes more visible across Mexico. Of particular importance is the work done to document transnational youths' schooling experiences characterized by the series of identity and language ruptures that these youths experience in school and other domains (Despagne, 2019; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011a; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b; Jensen & Jacobo-Suárez, 2019; Kleyn, 2017; Panait & Zúñiga, 2016; Tacelosky, 2018). Scholarly interest around transnationals and returnees' language practices has grown with a particular interest on how their linguistic capital plays a major role on their incorporation and socialization as English teachers in Mexico (Christiansen et al., 2018; Frausto Hernández, 2019; Lengeling, 2007; Mora-Pablo & Basurto Santos, 2019; Mora-Pablo et al., 2015; Mora Pablo et al., 2019).

This paper adds to this body of work by presenting data that bring together an analysis of transnational youths' everyday flexible languaging practices –understood from the perspective of translanguaging– and

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those within the context of their teaching environment. It is important to highlight here that the term transnational is the preferred descriptor for the participants in this study because of the complex mobility patterns they reported, accounting for the strong links they maintain between Mexico and the U.S. Thus, this paper aims to show the challenges that these transnational Mexican teachers face in reconciling their flexible discursive practices with the prevalent monolingual ideologies found in language classrooms in Mexico.

Review of the Literature

Before describing the situation of transnational English teachers in Mexico, it is important to explain why the term *transnational* was adopted as a descriptor of the profiles of the participants throughout this work. According to Skerret (2015) transnational youths are characterized by having significant ties with at least two countries, which leads them to the acquisition of particular capabilities that comprise their "cultural and linguistic repertoires" (p.7). Transnationalism has also been described as a "unique state of consciousness which allows one to operate within and between different national, linguistic and cultural borders without being subsumed by any of them" (Petrón, cited in Frausto Hernández, 2017, p.2). These descriptions capture the complexities and uniqueness of the profiles of the participants in this study, whose lives have been marked by an intricate and dynamic mobility across geographical, linguistic, and cultural borders (Duff, 2015).

The experiences characterizing the journeys of transnational migrants play a determinant role in the acquisition of cultural and linguistic capital, which lead to the configuration of complex profiles and linguistic repertoires that become useful resources at given moments in their journeys. For instance, in referring to transnationals moving between Mexico and the U.S., Petrón (2009) explains how this capital "in the form of English and U.S. cultural knowledge has proven to be valuable in Mexico" (p.115), where depending on the context of interactions, transnationals are often praised for having a native-like accent or advanced English language command. Thus, the value of this capital has become a key element in many of these transnationals decision to become English teachers in Mexico.

In fact, research conducted by Lengeling (2007) has found that a common denominator in the stories of many EFL teachers working in Mexico is their experience living "in the United States for a period of time" (p. 92). In many cases, their linguistic competence is seen as sufficient qualification, and transnationals end up "falling into the job" (p. 92) of language teaching. Moreover, Lengeling (2013) explains that entering the "teaching profession is a multifaceted process" (p.13) that involves reasons such as: 1) having command or love for the language, 2) having an experience abroad, 3) following a family tradition of teachers or 4) 'falling into the job' meaning one becomes a teacher because of the command they have over a language and not the teacher education courses they have received.

Starting a career as language teachers in Mexico is influenced by the general perception of US/Mexico transnationals as native speakers of English. The emphasis on this attribute often overlooks the fact that these transnationals are bilingual to various degrees. The notion of language command in terms of sounding like a native speaker, is a prevailing ideology for a good portion of the population in Mexico and also in the U.S. (Horner & Weber, 2018; McIntosh, 2020). With transnational teachers in Mexico, Christiansen et al. (2018) have documented how the prevalence of this language ideology leads transnationals to be perceived "positively" by the general public (p. 92). However, these authors also recognize that there seems to be a contrasting perception around transnationals' linguistic competence.

This contradiction is manifested on the one hand in the celebration of their English language command and native-like accent, and by 'othering' them in contesting their identities. While the positive perception of their linguistic capital carries significant implications for the language teaching domain, the perceived burden of their complex identities is often regarded as an aspect leading to marginalization (Mora-Pablo & Basurto Santos, 2019) for not adhering to the imagined notion of what it means to be Mexican or American in the sense of having command of standard language use.

Further research exploring the phenomenon of incorporation of transnational English teachers in Mexico has investigated the factors leading these transnationals relocated in Mexico to pursue a degree and/or a formal career in language teaching. Focusing on the analysis of teachers' life stories and critical incidents, this important body of work illuminates the major role that bilingualism and biculturalism have played in the decision-making process of becoming English teachers (Brochin Ceballos, 2012; Frausto Hernández, 2019; Lengeling & Mora Pablo, 2016; Mora Pablo & Lengeling, 2017; Mora Pablo et al., 2015; Serna Gutiérrez & Mora Pablo, 2017; Serna-Gutiérrez & Mora-Pablo, 2018; Villegas Torres & Mora Pablo, 2015). Through this work it has been possible to understand the paths and factors which lead transnationals to become English

teachers in Mexico and to gain insights into how their lived experiences "influence their degree of investment" in the social and work environments they navigate (Mora Vázquez et al. , 2018, p.12).

Incorporating transnational or returnee migrants as English teachers in Mexico has taken major importance, especially in recent years as the flow of return migrants has increased and has become a new phase of the Mexico-U.S. migration (Gandini et al. 2015; Hazán, 2017). Within this context, institutional interest emerged with the purpose of supporting returnee migrants in their relocation in Mexico. Recent research in this area has documented how returnee and transnational migrants undergo the process of relocation with those who pursue English teaching careers. According to Mora-Pablo et al. (2019) an important number of these youths opt for English teaching programs. In fact, the professionalization of returnees or transnationals as English teachers is proposed as an answer to satisfy the need for trained teachers in programs and classrooms across Mexico.

 This research trend also illuminates aspects related to the systematic discrimination faced by English teachers in Mexico not only at a social level, but also in the professional field of teaching. For example, studies conducted in this area have shown the prevailing ideologies around "native-speakerism" (Holliday, 2006), which in many cases manifest in the preference for hiring native English teachers regardless of their academic credentials (Lengling et al., 2014). Recent research reports on the influence of aspects such as age, appearance, race, gender and certifications becoming significant criteria in the hiring process, affecting both transnational and non-transnational English teachers in Mexico (García-Ponce et al., 2020). The next section looks at the aspects related to language ideologies and language classrooms.

The prevalence of monolingual ideologies in language teaching is still widespread around the world. In fact, the notion that students' mother tongue is to be avoided or limited in the foreign language classroom continues to be at the core of many language teaching training programs or certificate courses, along with the idea that reaching a 'native-like' competence and proficiency should be the goal of foreign language learners (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Ndhlovu, 2015). These ideologies that place monolingualism as the norm and desired goal, go hand in hand with the prevailing discriminatory hiring practices discussed in the section above. They not only have a direct effect on student's perceptions of language teachers as competent or incompetent, but also feed teachers' sentiments of guilt or rejection of the use of students' mother tongue in language classrooms to comply with institutional policies (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Pan & Pan, 2010).

What is interesting is that there seems to be a mismatch between these monolingual ideologies and the actual perceptions and practices taking place in language classrooms in Mexico. On the one hand, and as discussed above, research has found that English teachers are the object of discriminatory practices based on monolingual ideologies and the preference for hiring native English teachers that adhere to institutional policies oriented towards the use of the L2 or target language as the main means of classroom communication. Research has also shed light on the positive perceptions of students about the use of the L1 in the language classroom and the actual practices revolving around code-switching and strategic use of the L1 or mother tongue in the classroom (Narváez et al., 2014; Mora Pablo, Lengeling, Rubio Zenil, Crawford & Goodwin, 2011). This demonstrates the tensions that language teachers, institutions and students face with policies and expectations around languaging practices that fall out of the monolingual mindset (Ndhlovu, 2015).

It is also worth reflecting here on the fact that the use of 'the target language' in the classroom could be motivated by factors other than monolingual ideologies, as in the notion's case of *learner autonomy* or *learner agency* (Little, 1999; Van Lier, 2010) While these concepts find justification in constructivist learning theories, which share some principles with translanguaging, I argue that the meaning of 'target language use' would have to be contextualized when applied to certain EFL/ESL teaching-learning contexts where one would have to delineate the meaning and implications of the notion of language appropriateness (which in most cases means standard/prestigious/written language). In fact, Little (2007) claims that "key to successful implementation of the principle of target language use lies in the effective use of group and the appropriate use of writing" (p. 25).

However, from the perspective of translanguaging other forms of literacy are also seen as 'appropriate' and meaningful; thus, they are encouraged as part of emergent bilinguals' repertoires and skills leading to the development of skills in other 'languages' or elements adding to their repertoire. One would have to look at the actions that accompany the notion of appropriateness attached to learner autonomy. For example, is the figure/model of a 'native teacher' promoting autonomy? If so, what are the implicit values attributed to the use of students' 'mother tongue' and 'target language' in that context? While these and other questions

emerge, the concept of autonomy and agency offers yet another window to explore how emergent bilinguals and translanguagers can celebrate their bilingualism and exercise their sense of agency and identities.

Therefore, this line of thought is left open to be explored in future work. García (2012) notes bilingual situations or interactions often lead to a hegemonic dichotomy among the languages involved, consequently leaving one language in a "minoritized" (p. 3) condition. Within this context, the use of flexible languaging understood in terms of dynamically shifting and 'moving' freely between languages and "conceptions of language" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 59) allows the visibilization of voices and identities such as those of transnationals', which result from combining multiple complex cultural fragments and linguistic resources. The positive perspectives about the use of L1 or flexible languaging in language classrooms are in line with current notions of translanguaging and bilingual education around the world (Fu, 2003). As a matter of fact, over the last few years, translanguaging pedagogy has gained relevance as it offers a new perspective to understand the use of flexible languaging practices in language classrooms. According to Baker & Wright (2017), "[t]eachers can maximize learning by encouraging children to use both of their languages" (p. 280) or any linguistic resources available to them.

With origins in Welsh bilingual education, translanguaging has gained important attention in applied linguistics especially over the last decade (Baker & Wright, 2017; Conteh, 2018; Lewis et al., 2012). An emergent term, it has been received with excitement by many scholars, and it has refreshed the narrative surrounding the language practices of multilingual speakers and the contemporary understanding of bilingualism "not as the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals" (Grosjean, 1985, p. 24), but as the possession of "*one linguistic repertoire* from which [bilinguals] select features *strategically* to communicate effectively" (García, 2012, p.1, emphasis in the original). Based on its origins, translanguaging refers to a pedagogical practice that promotes the use of multiple linguistic resources such as languages, varieties, registers or modalities to mention some examples, as a vehicle for delivering and processing information (Lewis et al., 2012). More recently, translanguaging has also been proposed as a practical theory of applied linguistics that "can ask new and different questions on both the practice under investigation and other existing theories about the practice" (Wei, 2018, p. 11). In other words, it aims at considering new ways of understanding how bilingual individuals use and negotiate the linguistic resources available to them in their everyday activities, interactions and performance, all of which comprises their language practices.

Translanguaging is no stranger to controversy; it is often believed to be the same as code-switching or code-mixing. However, there are important differences among these terms, which manifest the evolution in the way code-switching has been understood since the 1990s. In this regard, Hall & Nilep (2018) have identified four research traditions linking discursive practices and code-switching.

Tradition 1	Tradition 2
1920s-1970s	1980s
Code-switching was regarded as a product of local speech community identities.	Code-switching represented the practices in reference to the contrastive nation-state identities.
Example: Gumperz (1982), Blom & Gumperz (1972), Myers-Scotton (1983, 1993)	Example: Hill (1985), Woolard (1985)
Tradition 3	**Tradition 4**
1990s	2000s
Code-switching is seen as a resource in urban minority communities for the performance of multicultural and interethnic identities.	Code-switching is understood as a marker of hybrid identities as the corollary to the language mixing brought about through accelerated globalization.
Example: Bucholtz & Hall (2004), Rampton (1995), Zentella (1887a)	Example: Blommaert & Rampton (2011), Blommaert (2013), Blommaert (2013), Jacquement (2005), Nilep (2009)

Table- 1. Four traditions in the study of discursive practices (based on Hall and Nilep, 2018)

In Table 1, we see how code-switching has been approached in each of the four traditions identified. It is clear that from the above table an important shift started in the 1990s, when language practices began to be understood in the context of multiculturalism and the intricacies brought along by globalization, increased mobility and information exchange. These new understandings of languaging practices and identity construction, therefore, break free from the structural linguistic tradition that had dominated earlier research and notions of code-switching. Consequently, the added dimensions and the new analytic perspectives

opened the door to place a greater importance on the processes and meanings behind people's discursive practices and performances, which are at the core of the contemporary notion of translanguaging. Within this context, García and Wei (2014) note that:

> [t]ranslanguaging differs from code-switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages, but to the speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire (p.22).

According to García & Wei (2014), the notion of translanguaging challenges traditional understandings of bilingualism and the education of bilinguals as being part of two separate language systems. Translanguaging advocates for the perspective that individuals have one complex linguistic repertoire comprising a diversity of resources from which they draw on to communicate effectively. Consequently, their linguistic practices and performance become flexible, allowing them to make sense of the complexities characterizing their everyday interactions and their worlds (García, 2012). It is important to highlight here that translanguaging entails a series of strategies that display not only the creativity of speakers but also their placement in what García (2013) calls a "bilingual continuum" (p. 4), where the notions of separate named languages or native-speakerism becomes irrelevant or invalid. This is the reason why translanguaging differs from 'code-switching', which uses the notion of 'code' in a monolingual sense that languages are separate entities that can be substituted at given times (García, 2012; Wei, 2018).

Research on translanguaging has focused on both the everyday practices of transnationals, and the common classroom practices used in contexts where students' linguistic repertoires are complex. A major aspect of translanguaging within the context of transnationalism is that it illuminates how individuals construct their identity. De Fina (2016) notes that transnationals "convey and negotiate identities in extremely innovative ways through the creative use of resources that leads to varieties that are not easily separable into distinct languages or easy to categorize as such" (p.168). Examples of these practices and how they account for identity construction have been increasingly documented by Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Wei & Hua, 2013; Hua & Wei, 2016. Moreover, as a pedagogical strategy, translanguaging has been found to be "collaboratively created" (Kaufhold, 2018, p.8) allowing students' in mainstream basic education, ESL/TESOL programs and higher education in multiple contexts to exploit their own and their teachers' linguistic resources in ways that lead them to the recognition of their bilingualism as a resource to succeed in school and to find links to the practices they perform on a daily basis (Celic & Seltzer, 2013; Esquinca et al., 2017; Mazak & Carroll, 2017; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014-, 2015; Moriarty, 2017; Sayer, 2013; Velasco & García, 2014).

The following are the research questions that guided this study:

- To what extent has bilingualism played a role for these transnational youths in becoming English teachers in Mexico?

- What is the role of translanguaging (flexible discursive practices) in these transnational-teachers' performance in and outside the language classroom?

Method

This paper presents and discusses data coming from a large qualitative study on the translanguaging practices of transnational youths. The study was based on a narrative platform that used semi-structured interviews and writing compositions as the main instruments for data collection. These instruments acted as twofold "specimens" (Peräkylää & Ruusuvuori, 2011, p.529) allowing for the collection of data coming from both participants' metalinguistic commentaries and samples of their natural languaging practices. The interviews were transcribed using the software Transana (Woods & Fassnacht, 2017), followed by a coding process called in vivo coding, which consists of reading the data and assigning codes to excerpts or portions of the data that refer "to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record" (Saldaña, 2016, p.105). Portions of the data are identified with the labels, expressions or words used by participants themselves.

These codes are used later to identify themes than can be used systematically with the help of the software to group the excerpts. The themes were analyzed through translanguaging moment analysis, which as explained by Wei (2011) focuses "on the way people articulate and position themselves in their metalanguaging" (p.1224). According to Wei "the analyst's job is to detect any changes in the course of [these moments'] presentation, themes and links that emerge from the narratives" (p. 1224). The findings presented in this paper correspond to the general theme 'everyday languaging' where participants provided

accounts of their languaging practices across multiple social domains of their daily life. The focus here will be placed on accounts of participants' English teaching practice.

Participants

The overall study included the voluntary participation of twenty-three transnational students in the age group 19-32 years. The recruitment process was mainly carried out at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas through a gatekeeper. Youths who had a history of migration between Mexico and the U.S. were eligible to participate in the study. Participants were asked to write a one-page composition on their schooling experiences in Mexico and the U.S. prior to the interview. This allowed the participants to familiarize themselves with the topic and the data served in the triangulation process. Participants were offered an online or face-to-face interview lasting 30-60 minutes, and it was audio recorded. The majority of the participants were interviewed in the school facilities of the B.A. in Foreign Languages, and the rest were interviewed in public places chosen by them.

Procedures

The interview guidelines included questions about their family/life history, schooling experiences in Mexico and in the U.S, descriptions of their language(s) use and their identity. For both the writing composition and the interview, absolute freedom was given to participants to use their linguistic repertoires, resulting in the identification of features coming from: Standard American English, African-American English, Northern Mexican Spanish, (E)spanglish, "broken German"[3], and local dialectal forms of the Spanish spoken in central-north Mexico. Although this study does not aim at identifying 'codes', acknowledging these features provides an account of the complexity of participant's repertoires. This paper presents data corresponding to the interviews of 6 participants identified as: Nely, Carlos, Renata, Moni, Paco and Isaac. They were chosen because their interviews provided detailed accounts of their teaching experience. All the participants in the study were in Zacatecas, Mexico at the time of the data collection process between May-June 2017 and July 2019. Participants' transnational profiles were determined based on their history of migration, place of birth, time spent living in Mexico and/or the U.S. and the type and frequency of their international mobility (Hamann et al., 2008). Pseudonyms and consent forms were used to protect participants' identities and information.

During the interviews and in some of the writing compositions, many of the participants revealed their experience as English teachers. In fact, eleven out of the 23 participants who took part in the study talked about their teaching practice. Their narratives around this aspect of their lives provided rich information that added details to understand their everyday translanguaging practices, and it also provided significant evidence of the constant negotiation between widespread traditional (monolingual) language ideologies and their flexible language practices. The reasons for becoming English teachers and the circumstances surrounding participants' teaching practice involved various factors; however, their knowledge of English due to their transnational profile played a determinant role in it as it became a skill that added value to their professional identity. Although the participants' reasons and stories about becoming English teachers are themselves interesting, what was most remarkable for this study was considering aspects about their translanguaging practices. Therefore, the discussion of the findings revolves around the role that language creativity and language ideologies play inside their classrooms and how these contrast or align with the translanguaging practices and events found in their narratives about everyday languaging in other domains. We now turn to a description of how the participants in this study became teachers of English.

Results

Linguistic capital as a trigger of a language teaching career

In order to determine the extent to which bilingualism plays a role in the development of transnational teachers' careers in Mexico, we must consider how these teachers' translanguaging practices are performed in their everyday. Therefore, this section presents an overview of the participants' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A common denominator for nearly all the participants who talked about their teaching practice was the beginning of their career as young university students. In fact, various references to their teacher-identity were made throughout the interviews.

Furthermore, when asked questions about the benefits or advantages of being bilingual in Mexico, the responses were overwhelmingly centered around job opportunities in the field of English language teaching (ELT). For example, upon her sudden return from the U.S. to Mexico at the age of 18, Nely became a teacher

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[3] This expression is used here in adherence to participants' labels given to their own languaging practices.

of English at the university where she was studying a B.A. in Educational Intervention as part of her social service[4]. Another example is Carlos who continued studying English upon his return to Mexico. His process of *professionalization* consisted of completing TKT[5] courses and exams. Obtaining this certification played a significant role in becoming a teacher of English and to eventually teach Physics courses in this language while completing his postgraduate studies in Physics. Renata has also built a career in the ELT. She talked about her master's studies in applied linguistics, which were in progress at the time of the interview. In the case of Moni, teaching became an opportunity that allowed her to relocate in Mexico and consolidate a teaching career after completing her postgraduate studies. Paco started his teaching journey as part of his professional practice while completing undergraduate studies in Foreign Languages, and for Isaac, who was majoring in Physics at the time of the interview, teaching was a job on the side of his academic activities.

Besides the economic and professional opportunities that teaching has offered to these participants, their teaching practice is yet another key dimension to understand and explore their personal translanguaging practices. Through their teaching, they not only manifest and project their own languaging and their beliefs about languages but in some cases, they also provide spaces for their own students' translanguaging. Therefore, their classrooms can also be regarded as translanguaging spaces (Wei, 2011) where the dynamics of language use illuminate the conflicts, negotiation processes and creativity that participants engage with through interaction with students, colleagues, global discourses and their own transnational experience.

Translanguaging in and outside the classroom

One of the main findings around the teaching practice of the participants has to do with the way they navigate languaging inside the classroom with students and outside the classroom with their colleagues. Their descriptions regarding this dimension of their lives also provide valuable information to reflect on other aspects of their lives or the dynamics emerging within other domains where their translanguaging is manifested. During the interview, Isaac provided a very rich account of his translanguaging practices in different domains, including his classroom and professional interactions with colleagues.

<u>Isaac</u>

Isaac's description of the school where he was working and other academic environments where he used English and Spanish illustrated the complexity of the languaging practices and dynamics that characterize the worlds of bilinguals. Isaac started off by stating his positive feelings towards working as an English teacher, and he described the way he approaches his teaching practice. As an instructor, Isaac said he believed in accommodating his vocabulary to simplify his student's experience in the classroom. This teaching belief collided with his personal preferences around language, as he highlighted the fact that he enjoyed "flamboyant words" and "the complexity of language". Therefore, he had to navigate a situation that could be regarded as a conflict between his professional use of language and his personal languaging outside the classroom. Throughout the interview, Isaac described the languaging strategies and flexibility he used when interacting with others. In fact, he referred to this creativity in terms of "new codes" or "secret codes". Interestingly, Isaac's language awareness and sensitivity lead him to perceive the nuances in teaching different levels. In this sense, his clarification about interaction with lower and upper-level students implies the possibility that he was able to accommodate various teaching levels. Consequently, he was able to fulfill his preference for complex language use in advanced lessons, as he demonstrated his flexibility around languaging.

Isaac seemed to be conscious that within different domains there are expectations for specific language use and performance. This was manifested in his description of how he navigated language use in academic settings within an international community formed by a fellow Mexican scientist and other non-Spanish-speaking colleagues. Isaac shows awareness of particular features of academic language as he listed adjectives such as: "formal", "specific" and "specialized". This then contrasted with another side of his teaching world where languaging among his teaching colleagues was flexible and somehow opposed his 'simplified' interactions with his students. Isaac first acknowledged his colleagues' language command by saying "I respect their level of English", this statement was then followed by what could be regarded as an

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[4]The Social service is a mandatory requirement for university students in Mexico in order to obtain the B.A. diploma or degree. All students must carry out temporal professional activities (equivalent to 480 hours) in their field of study in the interest of society or the State, therefore the social service is offered in public or government institutions or NGOs offering a direct social benefit to Mexico. The objective of this service is to allow students to gain experience and networking opportunities for future employment.

[5] Teaching Knowledge Test is a Cambridge assessment aimed at testing candidates' knowledge on given areas of language teaching. There are five modules (three general and two specialists). For more information see: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/tkt/

explanation to why he respected his colleagues' language level. He highlighted the fact that standard English is the common variety among teachers. Then he explained that they also used colloquial English, and he particularly referred to the use of "curse words" and "slang" as the most salient ones. This flexibility in the use of language within the teacher-circle is yet another indicator of the dynamics manifested in Isaac's ordinary performance, and it reinforces his belief about modifying and toning down his language when he is in the classroom.

Finally, Isaac ended his description by sharing more about his everyday languaging practices inside the family domain, where he and his brother "speak kind of playfully in English". The fact that he qualified their languaging as 'playful' evokes a sense of flexibility and creativity characteristic of their performance. In this case, Isaac explained how he and his brother used English to "annoy everyone else because they can't understand". Therefore, their languaging allowed them to engage in a form of communication that has an intention and a particular meaning for them both, just as it happened with the "code" Isaac used with his girlfriend. In another portion of the interview, Isaac explained that he and his girlfriend spoke "broken German" to express their feelings of love for each other.

Isaac's narrative can be regarded as a collage that integrates his professional and personal experiences and beliefs about language use. Although the narrative seemed to have a sense of tension linked to Isaac's languaging, his decisions and performance appeared to co-exist with lingering traditional monolingual ideologies across domains. This constant negotiation of embedded ideologies and his heterogeneous languaging practices emerged at various points throughout our conversation.

Isaac provided further details about his workplace and his teaching beliefs based on the schools' policy and his own experience as a language learner. Although Isaac claimed he has "many liberties while teaching", he also pointed out to the fact that the school where he worked belonged to a franchise, therefore the way it operated was already pre-established, for their English-only policy. This implies that as a teacher he must follow the guidelines. In addition, Isaac discussed one of his main teaching beliefs "there is no need for Spanish", hence his policy "zero Spanish" in the classroom in alignment with the school's policy. He supported his belief by saying that in relying on Spanish or on "what students already know" there is a risk of having a "little bug" which forces one to look for a translation.

After describing his teaching strategies, which were based on using visual aids and giving examples, Isaac claimed that teaching a language was not like teaching subjects such as math or physics. This reflection becomes significant in the sense that Isaac recognizes the level of complexity in teaching a foreign language. What makes his reflection even more remarkable is the fact that Isaac seems to distance his teaching from his own flexible practices outside the teaching domain. In fact, it seems quite contradictory that he disregards his own experience to a great extent in favor of adopting a rigid monolingual approach to teaching. While analyzing this portion of the interview with Isaac, I wondered the level of influence that the school policies, his own learning experience and even his knowing a little about my background in ELT have in the way he portrays himself as a teacher with a strong monolingual approach that suppresses the use of students' mother tongue in the classroom. In adopting a monolingual stance as a language teacher, Isaac positions himself as an 'ideal teacher' that meets with the expectations of institutional policies.

Nely

It is relevant to highlight here the fact that Nely, who worked in the same school as Isaac also pointed at the rigorous policy around avoiding the use of Spanish in the classroom. When I asked Nely how she approached her teaching and if she used any Spanish in class, she told me: "*Pues lo que siempre nos dicen es que motivemos a los alumnos a que usen puro inglés* […] *y si no, pues decirles frases de: "¿Cómo se dice* [insertar palabra]*?" y, y, que sólo diga el objeto en español o … pero sí, se busca, así como que, motivarlos para que usen el inglés que ellos saben."* (Well, they always tell us to motivate students to use only English […] or to use phrases like: 'How do you say [insert word]?' and then they say the object in Spanish or … the idea is to motivate them to use the English they do know). Considering both participants' description, it becomes clear that there is a strong influence of the school's policy in the way they approach their teaching. However, contrary to Isaac's "zero Spanish" policy, Nely has a slightly more flexible opinion. Although she followed the school's rules, Nely also believed in having some balance to motivate students. In fact, she stated: "[…] *en mí opinión si debería haber cierto control y cierto balance."* (in my opinion there should be some control and some balance).

Paco

On the more flexible end of the spectrum there is the teaching approach that Paco followed. In our conversation, he explained how during his professional practice teaching adult students he moved from

teaching only in English to incorporating Spanish in his lessons. In fact, he recognized that his training as an English teacher had instructed him to use English only: "*La maestra M siempre me ha dicho: Es que tienes que hablarles siempre en inglés*" (Teacher M has always told me: Always teach them in English). Given his experience in the classroom, Paco decided to "switch" between English and Spanish during class despite going against his training principles. The rigidness of the ELT training that Paco and many teachers in Mexico receive was clearly manifested as he said: "*Al inicio dije: "Ay Dios mío, me va a regañar la maestra M si se entera", pero cómo me dio resultados* […]*"* (At the beginning I said: "Oh my God, teacher M would scold me if she found out, but since it worked …"). In defying this strict and almost dogmatic belief about teaching English through English only, Paco reached the conclusion that it was beneficial to provide students with "a base of English-Spanish", so that: "[…] *para que cuando lleguen a ese nivel de hablar sólo inglés puedan enfrentarlo de una manera en la que usen lo que saben y aprendan lo que les falta, en este caso, vocabulario y más confianza ... así es de que me siento satisfecho con eso, culpable pero satisfecho*" (when they get to the level of speaking only English they can face it by using what they know and they can learn what they need, in this case, vocabulary and gaining confidence … in that sense I feel satisfied with my choice, guilty, but satisfied).

The narratives that have just been discussed provide evidence of the tensions that bilinguals must navigate particularly when they engage in professional domains where policies and expectations are highly prescriptive and monoglossic. The decision to present three narratives in the sequence above has the intention of illustrating the various degrees of translanguaging that the participants promote in their teaching practice. I wonder the extent to which awareness of my background in teaching could have influenced how openly participants would discuss their languaging practices. The way they portray themselves might be seen as a *rhetorical function* to construct their professional identity (García, 2009a). This observation is based on the interactions and descriptions provided by Nely and Paco. With Nely, her neutral final statement about *control and balance* or Paco's reference to *guilt* in disobeying a trainer's advice might be taken as indicators of participants' intention to save face by not 'completely' or 'freely' adhering to the idea of translanguaging in their classrooms. The questions about these teachers' languaging practices in the teaching domain did not intend to elicit right or wrong answers, but they rather aimed at exploring this aspect of participants' life and their languaging. The accounts provided allow us to see a prevalence of monolingual ideologies inside ELT classrooms in the research site; this may be taken as a sign of the broader teaching context across Mexico. However, the data in this study also revealed how flexible languaging is used by transnational teachers to increase confidence in their students. The following section describes this process.

The role of translanguaging in empowering students

The powerful influence of purist and prescriptive ideas about language use inside classrooms continues to perpetuate stereotypes that more often than not influence students' confidence and performance both in and outside the classroom. In this regard, Wei (2007) notes that "[u]nfortunately, although switching and mixing of languages occurs in practically all bilingual communities and all bilingual speakers' speech, it is stigmatized as an illegitimate mode of communication, even sometimes by the bilingual speakers themselves" (p.18). The pressure that comes with this stigma might be another factor influencing the teaching beliefs and practices that participants described previously. However, there also seems to be resistance manifested in certain languaging practices reported by them. For instance, Carlos described the high level of English command that his students in a private school have by stating: "[…] *en su mayoría yo diría que más del 90% de los estudiantes, este, interactúan con uno en inglés*." (the majority, I'd say more than 90% of the students interact with me in English). In a similar fashion Moni explained what the situation is like in the public school where she teaches: "*In my classes I try to speak, uh, English …probably, like ... 80% of my classes are in English. I can say, like, a higher percentage because I give the beginners course, so sometimes it's really hard to only speak English with them.* The fact that Spanish is present at least to a minimum degree in these participants' classrooms is a refreshing indication of languaging flexibility and the recognition of the positive implications this might have for the learning process.

In addition to the teaching situations reported above by Carlos and Moni, it is important to look at the moments where language attitudes and perceptions emerge in what would be considered an average English classroom in Zacatecas, Mexico. The following excerpt provides an example of this and it comes from the interview with Renata. The narrative illustrates a remarkable translanguaging moment during our conversation that provides an insight into the tensions and the reality that Renata and her students navigate constantly:

Yeah, 'cause sometimes you feel, like, very subconscious … 'cause I have some of them that don't wanna talk: "No miss, es que hablo muy feo" (No miss, I speak really badly) *o "es que no me va a entender"* (You won't understand me). *And I'm like: "I'm just correcting, like, your ... Not, like, your accent, just, like, that you're speaking clearly, that you know how to communicate and that's all that matters". When you go to another country they're gonna understand you, and usually people don't mock others for their accents 'cause you know that they're from another country, like, if a Chinese person comes and they start talking to you in Spanish, you know that they're gonna speak differently, but it's 'cause they're from another place, it doesn't mean that they don't know or that they're dumb or anything.*

This narrative, which is a translanguaging moment (see Wei, 2011), is used by Renata in our conversation to illustrate the interactions she had with her students. This example allows us to see the preoccupations that Renata's students had around their accent and their performance in English. The statements quoted by Renata show what Wei (2007) referred to as the stigma that many bilinguals have about themselves; this, in most cases, is motivated by the negative experiences and perceptions that the so called 'native-speaker' ideal promotes and perpetuates. In this translanguaging moment Renata uses Spanish to quote her students and English to quote herself in her role of the teacher and to describe the situation in the language she chose for the interview exchange. It is also interesting to consider the message that Renata sent to her students in the way she reacted to their beliefs about their language use. Without clarifying her teaching principles Renata distanced herself from the image of the English teacher as a model of 'correct language' and 'native-like-accent'. She positioned herself as a teacher who promotes effective communication rather than correctness in structural terms. She aimed at fostering confidence in her students by reassuring them of the sympathy that people abroad would have towards those aiming to communicate in a foreign language. She even tried to personalize the situation by including students in an example of the sympathetic attitudes that they themselves would have when encountering a hypothetical Chinese person speaking Spanish. Renata finished her example by highlighting the fact that speaking a foreign language with an accent does not imply a lower level of intelligence or worthiness, therefore encouraging students to embrace their accent.

Renata's transnational background and her professionalization as a teacher give her words authority. Even if her students are not aware of her background or her story, her confidence and her coherence are palpable in the way she encourages them. Throughout the interview, Renata made numerous references to the importance of embracing one's bilingualism, accent and personal ways of speaking. For instance, she reflected on episodes of her everyday life in Mexico or in the U.S. when her accent was the center of attention. Her reflections about those situations and the interactions with people eventually led her to reach a point that she describes as follows: "[…] it doesn't bother me as much, it used to bother me a lot, but then it's, like, what I tell my students, like: "It doesn't matter if you have an accent when you speak another language […] you can practice and you can still talk very clearly and very nicely, but it doesn't make you, like, less, it doesn't make your knowledge, like, questionable or anything." Renata's approach to teaching clearly based on her life experiences is a refreshing finding for this study, as it draws important lines for reflection on the way bilingual teachers could encourage learners and emergent bilinguals along their language learning journey.

Conclusions

This paper has provided insights into the everyday translanguaging practices of young transnational English teachers working in Zacatecas, Mexico. The results confirmed that these teacher's English command corresponding to their bilingualism and experiences in the U.S. are the fundamental elements considered to be hired by language schools from a young age. In fact, most of them develop a teaching career on the side of their university studies. The narratives presented also showed how these transnational youths navigate their lives using flexible languaging in and outside the teaching domain.

The findings of this study have shed light on the tensions around translanguaging, which is celebrated and frequently used in some social domains, while it is mostly 'suppressed' in the language classroom in order to adhere to institutional policies. The teachers in this study reported on the benefits and frequency of using Spanish as a strategy in their classrooms, but some of them also manifested feeling guilty to use it in their professional domain. These transnational teachers' decisions around translanguaging seemed to be deeply influenced by the institutional English-only polices of language schools, training courses and previous experiences in language learning. However, the experience of transnationalism also gives these youths, the confidence to build on their flexible languaging strategies to motivate their students and to support their learning process.

While the accounts provided by these transnational teachers are taken as a refreshing approach to language teaching in Mexico, it is still important to draw attention to the prevailing monolingual ideologies inside

language classrooms. Adhering to restrictive language policies could lead to obscuring transnational teachers' languaging practices and on the other hand the emergent bilingualism of their students. This paper adds to the body of research that has documented the trajectories of English teachers in Mexico hoping more work is done to investigate the dynamics around languaging practices and their potential to develop bilinguals' confidence and skills. This study offers an opportunity to engage in conversation about monolingual institutional policies and their irrelevance for contexts where teachers' and learners' linguistic repertoires and daily practices challenge traditional understandings of language use and bilingualism.

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