Investigación sobre literatura: Conversaciones que involucran el translenguar y temas de inmigración en una clase dual/ A Literature Inquiry: Discussions Involving Translanguaging and Immigration Issues in a Dual Language Classroom

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Abstract

The article analyzes bilingual students’ uses of their two languages, Spanish and English, in literacy discussions in a third-grade bilingual classroom in the Southwest of the United States. With a teacher action research (TAR) approach, I show a commitment of doing research with the participants in social classroom situations toward action. I analyzed data sources consisting of focus group interviews, transcripts of discussions, and writings looking for empirical evidence and co-occurrences. I show emergent bilinguals’ divergent thinking in interpreting and discussing a linguistically and multicultural diverse book and use of translanguaging practices for communicative purposes, drawing from their complete linguistic repertoire. The results of the study are related to a critical multicultural analysis of the text, language acquisition, identity, and immigration issues. I end with a conclusion and implications for future research in the field of biliteracy while viewing research as transformative for the participants.

Keywords: bilingualism, biliteracy, translanguaging, teacher action research.
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Introduction

I observed third-grade students' use of their two languages, Spanish and English, in literacy discussions in a bilingual read aloud from a literature unit. I also considered students’ interpretation of a story about how the characters of the book, who are immigrant children, learned to read and write in a second language and made new friends in new environments. A bilingual read aloud and a whole-group discussion of a book of a literature unit happened prior to literature circles with groups of four to six students.

This study took into consideration that the students’ interactions might reflect and refract from the broader social and historical context (Bloome & Power Carter, 2014) and might include a translanguaging practice. Thus, I looked at the differentiation between discourses (with a lower-case d) and Discourses (with a capital D) (Gee, 1996, 1999, 2013) in the discussions between the students in the way they developed and gained agency in interpreting the story, showed divergent thinking in interpreting the story, and expressing their opinion. Additionally, I facilitated literacy discussions around the understanding of identity constructions as bilingual and biliterate with the participants through reflection about power relations between the two languages: Spanish and English.

Theoretical Grounding

Bilingualism/biliteracy
Bilingualism has been viewed from a monolingual perspective (García, 2014b) and from a monoglossic ideology (Del Valle, 2000; García, 2009). From a monolingual perspective, bilingual speakers are two monolinguals in one (Valdés, 2005), which is problematic when two languages are being acquired simultaneously. Other considerations of the concept can be which language is used the most, known the best, or by which the speakers is most identified (Skytnabb-Kangas, 1981). The literacy development of children with two languages does not correlate with the one of a monolingual child as those two languages interact and transfer knowledge from one another (Reyes & Azuara, 2013). The monoglossic model of bilingualism considers each language as a separate code, whereas heteroglossic views, instead, refer to the languages within a bilingual/multilingual speaker as integrated (Freeman & Freeman, 2011), and “thus lead(s) to new understanding of bilingualism and biliteracy” (García, 2014b, p. 149). In such a context, students have been stigmatized and labelled as English language learners (Orellana & García, 2014), and limited English proficient students (García, 2014a), in contraposition to less restricted terms such as multilinguals (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994, as cited in Valdés, 2005), L1/L2 users (Valdés, 2005), and emergent bilinguals (García, 2009).

Understanding bilingualism should take into consideration the dynamic and multilingual atmosphere in which we live in (Orellana & García, 2014). It is imperative to “abandon single literacy in favor of multiple literacies” (Edelsky, 2006, p. 106), and to understand multiple literacies as social practices (Edelsky, 2006).

My understanding of biliteracy falls into an ecological perspective in the consideration of language as a social practice in which students gain agency in constructing language and developing their social identities within social and informal settings (Reyes & Azuara, 2013). On
one hand, taking into consideration Ruiz’s (1984) orientations toward language, understanding orientation as “a complex of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society” (p. 16) and language attitudes, language should be viewed as a resource. On the other hand, Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2003) give importance to the development of biliteracy drawing from aspects such as oral language and home language practices, which are usually powerless in an English-dominant school system.

**Dynamic bilingualism/translanguaging**

Traditional views of bilingualism agree with an additive bilingualism (adding two languages) (García & Leiva, 2014), but newer views incorporate the concept of “dynamic bilingualism,” considering the variety of language practices of bilinguals (García, 2012).

Translanguaging appears to give validity to the act of performing bilingual, in particular, a dynamic bilingualism, and to a bilingual pedagogy characterized by a bilingual teaching and learning (García & Leiva, 2014). “Translanguaging refers to the language practices of bilingual people” with “one linguistic repertoire” (García, 2012, p. 1). and goes beyond in the way that it breaks the hierarchy of languaging practices valuing all the linguistic repertoire of the speakers (García & Leiva, 2014). The concept of “pluriliteracy practices” includes and values all literacy practices, important in the view of translanguaging as an approach to biliteracy (García, Bartlett, & Kleifgen, 2007). It is essential to reflect on the “multiple paths to biliteracy development” (Dworin, 2003, p. 176), which includes practices such as translanguaging into the development and intercurrence of languages.

This study stood in the importance of accepting, integrating, and applying the concept of alternative educational discourses (Freeman, 1998) and Bourdieu’s (1991) understanding of
human interchange, “in which individuals strategically employ whatever discourses are most appropriate in the setting for gaining linguistic capital, in other words increasing their personal status (i.e. relative power)” (as cited in Palmer, 2008, p. 102). The term translanguaging (García, 2009) came into place in my literature study as it is about bilingual speakers’ creative and critical language construction; thus, the use of interrelated language features that make up bilinguals complete repertoire should be used for learning and as for teachers, for teaching and assessment. Going further, teaching, the curriculum, or the language we use and we value should be applicable for our students, their lives, worldviews, realities, communities, needs, and strengths.

**Research Question**

While reflecting on the question “How is immigration portrayed in this book?,” I challenged the view of the concept of translanguaging exploring the following questions: How did students use their two languages during the literature discussions, and How does translanguaging permit bilingualism and biliteracy in “emergent bilinguals” (García, 2012)?

**Context and Background**

This project took place in a school that served a large Hispanic community, and worked with diverse students and families with lower socioeconomic status. The school was implementing a 50-50 model in Spanish and English. It is also important to highlight the bilingual nature of the community where the school was situated, and the big effort and great success of this specific school to collaborate with parents within the community by doing community-based projects, parent night, family events, and much more. Both the school and the community have a strong Hispanic personality, and most staff and children are bilingual and biliterate, or, in the case of the children, are working towards it.
Description of the Focus Community and Group

I worked with nineteen students who are eight and nine years old attending a third-grade bilingual classroom. They were bilingual and biliterate in both Spanish and English, four English-dominant speaking, and eleven Spanish-dominant speaking students. While considering bilingualism as changing, fluid, and dynamic (García, 2009), I consider being bilingual as adapting to the conversational context, the listener(s)’s linguistic competences and emotions, and the social needs, drawing from a complete linguistic repertoire.

Their homeroom teacher and I had worked together in the past as she permitted me to work with her students for other course projects. The relationship of friendship and good communication between the homeroom teacher and I was very important for the study itself, for me as a teacher-researcher, and for her as a reflective practitioner of her students’ inquiries and language practices. Once we talked about my initial ideas, she gave me some recommendations in regards to how to address the topic of the study with the students and we agreed that I would do the study in her classroom. She was present in the classroom during all the sessions, and we had informal conversations about the study on a daily basis. At the end of the study, we talked about the results of the study and about other possible future collaborations.

Methodology

Design of the Study

Appropriation of teacher action research (TAR). The notions of democracy and being a citizen were necessary to the first steps of my understanding and appropriation of TAR. Democracy embeds the practice of people’s government (Brettschneider, 2007) and human values and participation in public dialogue (Freire, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2005). Thus, in my notion of democracy, all of us as citizens should hold the same power, this to give us agency to
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participate, to engage, and to be responsible for societal issues (Torres & Reyes, 2010).
Additionally, my view of democracy and citizenship profoundly change my understanding of research. Research is political (Demas, 2004; Smith, 1999, as cited in Saavedra, 2011) and can be viewed through imperial eyes (Smith, 1999, as cited in Saavedra, 2011). I deeply believe that as researchers we do not appropriate knowledge or the “solutions” for the participants to gain knowledge – learning and ultimately, liberation. It is for that reason that I reflected on the existence of power relations, very often implied in a research study: researcher and “researched”, and the idea of hegemonic types of knowledges: doctorates and non-doctorates.

The reasoning behind selecting TAR sits on its philosophical principles of moral/political ethos and purpose for social justice (Pine, 2009) and being a research “by, with, of, and for people, rather than on people” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, as cited in Pine, 2009, p. 31). I argue that schools should be centers of inquiry (Schaefer, 1967). Thus, action research is a continuous process of inquiry, reflection, and evaluation to understand and improve practice. In other words, TAR supports critical consciousness that brings a political and practical action (Grundy, 1987) by studying a problem to make a change (Pine, 2009). TAR is not a method but a paradigm (Pine, 2009), which is “a social and cultural framework for doing research” (Pine, 2009, p. 63).

My appropriation of TAR stands on a commitment of doing research with the participants in social classroom situations, ultimately, “in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990, as cited in Masters, 1995, p. 3). Participants should be encouraged and moved along with the researcher,
learning along the way, to appropriate the knowledge, move together towards more reflexivity - self-reflexivity in the words of Delgado-Gaitan (1993)-, collaboration, and change toward change, and change toward action. In my case, as an outside insider, I consider very important having knowledge about the students, classroom, and school and its dynamics (Torres, 2013). The latter grounded a strong foundation toward an understanding of TAR and helped me, consequently, to make the decision to plan and later, implement, the described project.

Data Collection and Analysis

This literature inquiry study had a duration of six sessions over three weeks. Each session had a duration of sixty minutes. I addressed the aspect of language in the literature discussions done in small groups and looked at how students used Spanish, English, and/or translanguaging while engaging in a conversation about a linguistically and culturally responsive book.

I looked for empirical evidence by interpreting three data sources: pre- and post- study focus group interviews, read-aloud and whole-class discussion, transcripts of discussions, and writings. The pre- and post- study focus group interviews and discussions were transcribed according to students’ responses. For the pre-study and post-study focus group interviews the students were given cards with the questions. For the discussions, each student decided on a role to prepare and engage in the discussion.

I analyzed my data focusing on co-occurrences, or recurring patterns that I categorized into themes or events -thematic coherence (Bloome & Power Carter, 2014). Additionally, I used a content analysis and a critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) to analyze a book on immigration. Botelho and Rudman’s (2009) critical multicultural framework includes a look at race, gender, and class in an examination of the literary aspect, the historical and
sociopolitical context of the children’s books, genres as social constructions, and the use of a continuum to discuss the power relations among the characters.

I selected a linguistically and culturally diverse book that dealt with controversial topics to create opportunities to have open discussions (Vasquez, 2012). The objective to use this text was to encourage the students to think critically (Vasquez, 2004; Vasquez & Felderman, 2012; Lewison & Heffernan, 2008, as cited in Albers, 2014). In that direction, a read-aloud was used to introduce children to a variety of issues to be discussed: identity, power, control, social justice, equity, fairness, ageism, race (white privilege), and gender (Vasquez, 2012). My study went into that direction: to deconstruct issues to discuss about and to view relationships between text and context (Halliday, 1985, as cited in Albers, 2014).

**Devolution of Results to Group/Community**

On the very first day with the students, I justified my presence in their classroom as a mutual collaboration; I explained the meaning of it to the students and tried to be coherent with it in the way I presented an activity or did not pose questions letting the student’s present ideas and possible issues and ask questions. However, it seemed to me that the sense of democracy was not accordant to the classroom routines. Although I believed I had created a space of dialogue and mutual collaboration in which all was welcoming if ideas were shared with respect and in the interaction with the social and the personal side of the whole story it was difficult not to guide and lead. The only time the students had initiative and made decisions was before the discussions, when they made an agreement about which role each student within the group would do. The student roles were: discussion director, summarizer, illustrator, vocabulary enricher, and connector.
In the process of this project with the students, themes of language acquisition and identity surfaced, and divergent thinking, translanguaging, power relations and gender issues were also themes involved in discussion, action, and learning. The findings of this inquiry project emerged from the data as I read the transcripts of the pre-study interviews, the discussions, the post-study interviews, the writings, and my fieldnotes-conceptual memos. The critical multicultural analysis of the text also provided data by deepening the literature discussions and the social construction of culture and issues related to language.

**Critical multicultural analysis of the book.** The book *My diary from here and there/Mi diario de aquí para allá* (Pérez, 2002) tells a story about Amada and her family moving from Mexico to Los Angeles and how she records her fears, hopes, and dreams for a new life in Los Angeles, California, in her diary. (MOVED UP) The book was analyzed through a critical multicultural analysis (beginning and ending of the story, issues of gender, how characters interact with each other, and sociopolitical and historical context of the book) (Botelho & Rudman, 2009).

Analyzing the historical context, this book focuses on the immigrants’ lives and jobs that they have in the U.S.; Amada’s father worked in the fields, picking grapes and strawberries. It is historically remarkable that immigration numbers increased in the 20th century. It is also important to refer to the discourse of the American Dream, as this book refers to Amada’s family moving to the U.S. in pursuit of a better life. Based on power relations, class, race, and gender (Botelho & Rudman, 2009), the idea of working hard and having initiative as the only ways to be successful negates the underrepresentation of certain groups or inequities and inequalities. The ideology of the American Dream, in result, affects immigrants as it “blames socio-economic
inequities on the individual,” and “represses historical memory and promotes a permeable power structure that supposedly benefits all people” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 134). Analyzing socio-political context, this book was published at the beginning of President Obama’s administration (2009-present, Democrat), right after the end of George W. Bush’s presidential administration (2001-2009, Republican). The book could better serve as propaganda for a petition for an immigration law and better conditions for migrant workers. On another note, the book reminds Spanish-dominant speakers to maintain their Spanish language and culture; the main character was fearful that she would not be allowed to speak her own language in the United States. Cultural statements were present in the book, related to Mexican communities but specifically to family unity, storytelling, and Mexican food. Analyzing the genres as social constructions, the genre of the book is realistic fiction with multicultural themes: the apparent theme is the American Dream and the subliminal theme is the family separated while the father looked for a job and applied for “green cards” for his family and the strikes of migrant workers asking for their rights headed by Cesar Chávez. Analyzing the closure of the story, it is happy and full of emotions. Analyzing the social processes among the characters, power belonged to the immigration patrol officers and initially, to the father. The father might have been seen as having agency for being a U.S. citizen but he had difficulties finding a job and, probably, to find good opportunities for his family and him in the new country. Analyzing the focalization and story grammar, it is important to mention that the story is told in first person by the main character, as an insider who told her own story as a child.

**Divergent thinking.** During the discussions, some participants showed divergent thinking in interpreting the story, moving further from describing the characters, the main idea,
or the ending of the story to wondering about the whys of the situation the main character and her family go through and making emotional and personal connections.

The summarizer, the illustrator, and the discussion leader of this literature circle get moved seeing that the main character of the story, Amada, sad for moving. They point out that this sadness encouraged her to start writing a diary to express her feelings and emotions and once in the United States, she wrote a letter to her best friend, Michi. These students wonder about the relationship between Amada and her best friend from the distance and the whys of the family moving, of Amada not wanting to move and starting a diary.

Student 1 (S1): Well, I was the summarizer. I wrote a paragraph.
Student 2 (S2): I saw. Can you read us the paragraph?
S1: I just wrote the main idea ‘cause that’s what we were supposed to do.
S2: OK.
S1: Diary from here to there. Amelia was supposed to be asleep but she cannot fall asleep. Her parents said they were moving. She started a diary. The next day the mom told them they were moving. Amada was sad because she was moving.
S3: Yo soy el ilustrador. Lo que hice es…Amada se estaba yendo y le mandó una carta…a Michi.
S2: I called Mic-hi.
S3: En español no pronuncias la h. So hice este dibujo.
S1: I like it! It’s pretty!
S3: Hice un dibujo que representa que Amada hizo una carta a Michi.
S5: I am the question person. I did 5 questions. The first one is: ¿Por qué está triste Amada? Second, ¿por qué no se quiere ir? Después de que se fueron de México, ¿Amelia, por qué está escribiendo su diario? (Audio transcript 4)

A group of students could relate to Amada leaving her house, her country, and her friend for good due to having moved as well. The discussion leader also notes that Amada was separated from her father for a long time, him in the U.S. and them in Mexico waiting for the green card. The summarizer of another group adds the difficulty of getting green cards to move to the United States and about the possibility of having a better life once in the U.S. Another
student might have related having had a previous experience with the green cards before or having heard of it from somebody else.

S11: The story is about moving to United States of America. She doesn’t want to move to America and leave her friends. Her father is trying very hard to have a better life because there are no jobs and they need permission to get cards.

S12: I don’t think it is a good summary, maybe you want to put your opinion at the end.

S13: It is his thinking.

S12: He was talking about the message.

S13: It is a summary, not his opinion.

S12: A summary is seven sentences. […]

S13: Why were they supposed they had to borrow …?

S14: They were trying to get green cars, but it is just hard! (Audio transcript 6)

**Language acquisition and identity.** Both in the pre-study and post-study interviews, participants showed multiple identities related to being proficient in the languages that they speak. Language and identity became apparent in their conversations. Many of the students learned Spanish at home and English at school. However, multiple language identities were evident as they identified with both Spanish language and Mexican culture, and with English and some with the simultaneous use of English and Spanish. On another note, it is interesting to mention that before they delivered the assent forms, the homeroom teacher said that only one student would need it in Spanish, but it was actually eleven of the students who requested the form in Spanish –eight in English, identifying themselves more with the Spanish language. Even, the homeroom teacher had said that the forms were not for their parents but for themselves. Spanish was mentioned first.

**Translanguaging.** Evident in the transcripts was the one linguistic integrated system where students draw from during the discussions: translanguaging happening in both Spanish and English sentences, within a sentence and within the interaction between the participants.
There were times where students use words in the other language to make themselves understood: “Está recording en los idiomas” (audio transcription 1), “dimos questions y luego dimos answers” (during recap on second session), the first one” and “second” (Audio transcription 4), “No quería ser el summarizer,” and “Quise ser el discussion…el moderador” (same roles gathering). They could have used the words “summarizer” and “discussion director,” these being new words for them. These examples show that students make decisions between their Spanish and English linguistic expertise to convey meaning. Students could or could not have found the correlate Spanish or English term (e.g. “dimos questions y luego dimos answers”) at the moment of speech. However, these students chose the first word from their complete linguistic repertoire that expressed what they were thinking at that moment.

Students also use terms as “Kinder” or “So” that are embedded in the community discourse in both Spanish- and English-speaking communities: “en el Pre-K,” “cuando fui a Kinder” (audio transcription 1), and “So hice un dibujo” (same roles gathering). Students take into consideration the language proficiency of the listener: English and/ or Spanish speaker?, when in an example, a student chooses to speak English to explain something to an English monolingual speaker: “In Spanish you don’t pronounce the h” (Audio transcription 4). Students use “Ok, you” and “Pay attention, a ver lo que está diciendo” (Audio transcription 5) to demand others to listen. The latter clearly reveals that students adjust to the context where a conversation occurs, take into consideration the listener(s)’s linguistic repertoire, and draw from the vocabulary that they have in their repertoire to convey meaning. Additionally, these students use their expertise as bilinguals to extend the limits of only using one language and to be able to
communicate successfully and with empathy. The use of translanguaging shown in these examples reassures the dynamic nature of bilingualism.

Moreover, students make their selection to make an emphasis within sentences, mostly in Spanish: “les dijeron kicked out of the bus (roles sharing in the whole group), “porque era muy confusing,” “son like good persons,” “como read and write,” “puedes estar sad” (Audio transcription 8), and using “colonias” within an English sentence (Audio transcription 4). Additionally, students also use their complete linguistic repertoire to respond to somebody else: “Con nosotros, con un libro…” and the response is “With information?” (during recap on second session) and “You didn’t read to us. We were like…” and the response is “¡Porque estánhablando!” (Audio transcription 4). As one student says, learning languages can be like when “Tu brain went backwards. Es como español, luego inglés …” (Audio transcription 2). Here we see the dynamic nature of bilingualism.

Finally, the term Spanglish appeared in the discourse in two occasions: “Puedes decir Spanglish” (Audio transcription 2) and “¿Está bien si lo pongo en inglés también? ¿Como Spanglish? Es que yo quiero poner bilingüe” (before writing exercise). For the students, Spanglish could mean the use of Spanish and English within their speech, already stigmatized in society and educational contexts (Orellana & García, 2014). Like me, students view their languages as drawing from one only linguistic repertoire. For me, Spanglish is not translanguaging or viceversa. However, translanguaging is the view of language as an integrated system.

**Power relations and gender issues.** Gender issues and power relations are revealed in some of the conversations. One student makes a correlation between the teacher’s role and the
discussion leader’s role: the teacher asks the questions, the same the discussion leader is assigned to do. Additionally, some within the group tell others whose turn it is or if they have not done it well. There was also a gender confrontation in the way that the girls laugh when one boy is talking and when boys said: “Ladies first” (Audio transcription 4) and in another discussion, a boy says to another boy to ignore the girls of the group after noticing that they are not listening to them.

**Immigration.** Issues on immigration started to be revealed in the following examples. In one discussion, a student even makes personal connections remembering family members who were left back for not carrying the needed documentation to cross the border. Other two students seemed to have misconceptions when they said “buy the little tickets” (Audio transcription 5) referring to the green and “to borrow” (green cards) (Audio transcription 6). The example below is regarding immigration issues such as “papers,” green cards, being with or without “papers,” crossing the border legally and illegally, crossing with or without “papers,” the notion of border and feelings about border/moving to another country, or being deported or “kicked out of…” for not carrying the required documentation.

S10: …agarrar papeles. Está bien difícil por el gobierno y también agarrar una nueva casa, un trabajo, agarrar papeles. (recap on session 2)

S12: Now I know why it is very hard for them because they need green cards.
S14: Green cards cost money, living costs money… (during read aloud 1)

S13: I know why. Some crossed illegally by the dessert.
TR: They were in the bus.
S7: They crossed without papers and they ask for a ride. (during read aloud 2)

S6: Where are they going? Why is it important?
S2: Passing the border. […]
S13: I think it is really meaningful to do this. I was afraid when I hear border. […]
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S2: I put in also that, how she felt, why she was moving, why her father had to leave, why they were kicked out by some other people, their aunts… (same roles gathering)

TR: Connectors.

S12: Yo hice ésta porque muchas personas se están riendo de esta parte. Cuando la mujer y su niño les dijeron kicked out of the bus. La pregunta es: ¿Cómo te sentirías si te vas con tu hija y tu hijo? (roles sharing in the whole group)

Based on the critical multicultural analysis done, the book was selected to promote meaningful conversations on controversial issues such as immigration and cultural and linguistic issues, as well as thinking for action. However, beginning-type of literature discussions arisen. Neither the literature discussion nor the writings that they did reflect deepened thoughts from the participants about any of these topics. The students might have had questions, misconceptions, and assumptions made from listening to the text and making connections.

In the devolution of results to the group, I reported back one stance of the audio-recording with the students that I felt it was crucial to continue the conversation, with intent to promote consciousness about the discriminative practices around language and about translanguaging as a resource. It needs to be said that I used both Spanish and English in the project. However, the students did not go further and, again, I felt if I had had more time I could have pointed to more related points of audio-recordings or to have further discussions in later points of the project about language issues. I shared with them my interest on language and asked: What topics can we talk about language? When you hear language, what are you thinking? There was not feedback and, in my second try, they answered: “Spanish and English”, “Everybody’s language,” and Chinese. I considered the second comment was significant in the way we perceive language as part of one’s identity and if discriminated, both identity and civil
rights are repressed. I thought the conversation could have gone on. In our conversation, students did not relate voice and identity, culture, and human rights.

Some misunderstandings were revealed, mostly in relation to how one becomes a citizen, receives the blue card, and legality crossing the border and permanency in the United States. Furthermore, I reflected how beneficial would have been to report back exempts from the recordings to investigate further with the students about what is required to move to another country (e.g. Mexico-U.S.), the process to obtain residency or green cards to live in the U.S., deportation issues, and the border.

Conclusion

This exploratory study is the first experience for me, as a researcher, to carry out a teacher action research. I learned important aspects of TAR within the process: the limits of structuring a project and time constrains, the importance of knowing the participants and creating a free-of-judgment community of learning and open discussions, and the relevance of knowing the context of the study and possible issues within the community. In reference to number one, I found it out difficult to align my in-design TAR project and the IRB submitted and approved in reference to the flow of sessions and the duration of the study. In reference to number two, I considered that the time constrains impeded me to establish a closer relationship with the students in order to promote discussions that go beyond ideas such as: “I liked the book,” “The main character of the book is bilingual,” “The family in the story struggles to start a new life in the U.S.,” or “being bilingual is good.” I am referring to language issues comparing the power that carries English in comparison to Spanish, structural obstacles that the family had to go through to move and settle down in the new country, and cultural and linguistic aspects that are
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different in the country of residence in contrast to the ones in the country of origin of the family. In the reference to number three, I felt that knowing the school, the community, and most of the participants (there are new students this year) have been an advantage to feel comfortable enough to have a fluent conversation with the homeroom teacher to ask her questions about specific students and her opinion about the study and to schedule the sessions in advance. Consequently, I plan to continue learning and being attentive to the principles of TAR while carrying out a study, and being more reflexive as I believe TAR is the paradigm to appropriate in schools.

In relation to d(D)iscourses (Gee, 1996, 1999, 2013), the participants identified themselves with one or two languages but none did not make further connections related to the story: the main character of the story feared that in the U.S. would not allow her to speak Spanish. In all groups the participants conflicted with the flow of the conversation and did not make further connections to relate the book with their experiences, power relations, or language issues in the broader society. The participants are still developing a small d (discourse) (Gee, 1996, 1999, 2013); although as part of a group, this activity has helped them to start connecting the dots. One group went on to discuss about two important happenings in both the text and the social context: moving can imply the need to obtain green cards to gain residency into the new country (the U.S.), that is an arduous procedure, and people might be deported for not carrying the required documentation. This is important in the relationship between the textual and the social (Fairclough, 2011; Halliday, 1985) and the students’ possible ways of interacting and intertextuality, ways of representing and use of the pronoun “I” for action, ways of being and the importance of voice (Fairclough, 2011; Rogers, 2014), and Gee’s (1996, 1999, 2013) Discourses. The study mainly benefits the participants in the process to develop their identity as bilingual and
biliterate and into their developing of becoming critical thinkers after being exposed to a culturally and linguistically text -.

Implications for Future Research

The importance and potential significance of this study resided in doing a critical multicultural analysis of a culturally and linguistically diverse book and a discourse analysis of language of biliteracy events and literature discussions. The discussion of the text selected is, as others, a social construct (Vasquez, 2012), and looking at the critical multicultural analysis, might have reflected and refracted from the broader social and historical context (Bloome & Power Carter, 2014). However, the findings brought up the following: the necessity of taking a longer period of time to study further the students making connections, and the importance to build consciousness in students to create a community of inquirers. On another note, my understanding of the construction of “third spaces” (Gutiérrez, 2008) inspired me to view this project as a transformative space in which students were not only allowed but encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire to make meanings and to envision their place in a multilingual and multiliterate world. Consequently, translanguaging (García, 2009) was used within the group discussion to make a message across, to make emphasis on an idea or to make a strong point, and to show empathy with others.

This study was my first study approved by an IRB, and it was on issues that I plan to look at in my dissertation. My thoughts here were to consider language issues, observed in the broad context, in the classroom, possibly viewed as a mini-society. In an aim to do so, I found out that students were eager to discuss and argue about controversial issues; however, they found it difficult to do as since there was their first time to participate in literature circles. The fact that I
utilized this setting for my study taught me to consider time constraints as a possible limitation to help the students engage and come into a “conscientization” (Freire, 1982) to critique societal issues and to gather together to create change. Meanwhile, I witnessed how issues of language acquisition, multiple identities, and translanguaging awaken, and I become aware that the term Spanglish continues to be used in the classroom by the students as already stigmatized by the society. Major insights from this study should be taken into consideration when discussions can lead to become aware of language issues, in this context, to further promote inquiry and changes against discriminative practices and for equality views of language(s) usage and for future teacher action research projects.
References


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