

Castledown

 OPEN ACCESS

Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics

ISSN 2209-0959

<https://journals.castledown.com.au/ajal/>

Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 3 (1), 60-76 (2020)

<https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.v3n1.300>

Translanguaging for and as Learning with Youth from Refugee Backgrounds



SASKIA VAN VIEGEN ^a

^a York University, Canada

saskiast@yorku.ca

Abstract

Although host countries generally integrate refugees into public education, wide-spread and comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning with children and youth who have experienced forced displacement and migration remains an unmet goal within most education systems. This article explores the educational needs of these children and youth, exploring teacher perceptions of and approaches to students' language and literacy practices. Sharing insights from case study research conducted in one Canadian school, the article discusses how educators at the school drew upon and engaged students' linguistic resources as key to student learning, relationships and engagement, catalyzing new configurations of language in education. Analyzing these processes through a translanguaging theory of language, the article discusses how teachers and students engaged "translanguaging instinct" and created "translanguaging spaces" (Li, 2018) in their classrooms to support teaching and learning. Finally, the article proposes a three-dimensional matrix for teachers to use in reflecting on language teaching and learning, comprising axes of (1) teacher- and student-initiated translanguaging; (2) planned and spontaneous engagements with translanguaging; and (3) translanguaging as either a scaffold or a resource for learning. Illustrated with examples from practice and elaborated with teacher reflections, the article describes why such approaches are of critical importance in response to circumstances of forced migration and resettlement of vulnerable populations. Findings arising from this work further support and respond to the call for nuanced understanding of how translanguaging practice and pedagogy materialize within situated educational contexts.

Keywords: bilingualism, multilingualism, second language education, refugees, migration, pedagogy

People leave their homes in response to a complex interplay of dynamic economic, social, political and environmental factors. Reductionist categories based on modes or rationale for migration limit understandings of complex migration journeys.

Copyright: © 2020 Saskia van Viegen. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within this paper.

We need to take the time to listen to individual narratives and collective her/his/their-stories.

Any assistance should support people's own livelihood strategies, expand opportunities for all who are excluded and re-centre local ways of knowing and doing. (Humane Mobility: Manifesto for Change, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, n.d.)

Introduction

Given that the number of global refugees is higher than at any other point in human history, and that countries around the world have pledged greater commitments to refugee resettlement and integration in the coming years, it is well worth examining what comprises curriculum and pedagogy to support the social and educational integration of children and youth who have experienced forced displacement and migration. Across multidisciplinary fields, including sociology, psychology, geography, law, political science and education, among others, refugee studies research has examined and documented international and national policy and planning of migration management, state-centred and non-governmental organization (NGO)-led resettlement and integration interventions, and community-based perceptions of and responses to forced migration and humanitarian efforts; however, rather less attention has been paid to the educational needs of children and youth within an already vulnerable and marginalized population, especially in host countries. Reporting on refugee education, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) points to significant gaps between refugee and non-refugee peers: “displacement disrupts children’s education because of the difficulties and dangers they face in reaching safety, accessing vital basic resources, acquiring new identity documents and helping their families in often vulnerable situations” (UNHCR, 2019, p. 16). These barriers tend to grow as children get older; global enrolment of refugee children in primary school is reported to be 63%, whereas global enrolment of refugee youth in secondary school is reported to be 24% (UNHCR, 2019). Education is crucial to social mobility and societal integration for children and youth in these circumstances, suggesting a pressing need for empirical studies to inform resettlement efforts and education policy and practice in host countries. Engaging with these concerns, this article explores teaching in one Canadian secondary school, identifying how a translanguaging approach emerged in response to students’ needs through a culturally responsive and humanizing pedagogy in which teachers recognized the sociohistorical and political context of their own and students’ lives, including the influence of power, race, ethnicity and culture on educational practice (Bartolome, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Although host countries generally integrate refugees into public education, wide-spread and comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning with children and youth who have experienced forced displacement and migration remains an unmet goal within most education systems. School districts and individual schools are often unprepared for students’ linguistic and educational needs, and sometimes conflate their circumstances with those of voluntary immigrants, identifying students as English Learners (ELs) and placing them in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes without specific understanding of the complex causes and patterns of forced migration, and how experiences of displacement have affected student learning and access to formal education. Navigating these limitations, educators generate knowledge within their own classrooms, based on their daily efforts to support students’ resettlement and social and educational integration. Often, these educators work on their own or engage in collaborative inquiry with colleagues within their school to plan, act, observe and reflect on students’ needs and how to address them through instructional practice. Attempting to highlight these efforts and the situated knowledge and expertise of educators who have developed inclusive and effective responses to meeting the needs of children and youth who are in the process of resettlement and integration, the purpose of this article is to shed light on teacher perceptions of and approaches to students’ language and literacy practices, synthesizing broad findings that

educators discovered to be facilitative and supportive. To do so, the article documents the efforts of a committed group of educators in a secondary school located in a large urban city in Canada, where a significant proportion of the student population were identified as refugees displaced from Syria and, to a lesser extent, from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Congo, Mali, Somalia, Palestine, Columbia, and El Salvador. Notably, educators at the school drew upon and engaged students' linguistic resources as key to student learning, relationships and engagement. Despite being confined by provincial education policy concerning the language of instruction, educators used their professional judgement to enact their own classroom-based language policies and practices and make curriculum accessible to their students. Documenting and analyzing these processes through a translanguaging theory of language, the article discusses how teachers and students engaged "translanguaging instinct" and created "translanguaging spaces" (Li, 2018) in their classrooms to support teaching and learning. Inspired by Hornberger's continua of biliteracy (Hornberger, 2003), and its contributions in making visible how educators can plan, act, observe and reflect on pedagogical activities, the article proposes a three-dimensional matrix for observing and reflecting on translanguaging pedagogy, comprising axes of (1) teacher- and student-initiated translanguaging practice; (2) planned and spontaneous engagements with translanguaging; and (3) translanguaging as either a scaffold or a resource for learning. Illustrated with examples from practice and elaborated with teacher reflections, the article describes why such approaches are of critical importance in response to circumstances of forced migration and resettlement of vulnerable populations. For teachers working with children and refugee youth, a translanguaging approach is essential to connecting with their funds of knowledge, recognizing their linguistic identities and providing equitable access to class participation and curricular learning. Finally, findings arising from this work support and respond to the call for nuanced understanding of how translanguaging practice and pedagogy materialize within situated educational contexts.

Children and Youth from Refugee Backgrounds

The manifesto at the beginning of this article was written by a collective of interdisciplinary educators and researchers, putting forth a call to step outside of conventional labels and ways of doing when considering and addressing the needs of people who have been displaced, either voluntarily or not, from their countries of origin. The statement signals not only the insufficiency of the category "refugee" to describe peoples' complex identities, but also the inadequacy of universal approaches to addressing diverse resettlement and integration needs. Importantly, the manifesto calls for recognition of the humanity of people in the context of forced migration. This perspective stands in contrast to what can be seen as reductive institutional and media representations that tend to reify narratives about either the vulnerability of refugees and the need to help them, or the economic burden and security risk that resettlement commitments tend to evoke (Vigil & Abidi, 2018). While the refugee label refers to migration status, it also indexes lives and identities of individuals and communities who have experienced forced migration, an ideological move that elides attention to how social discourse voices are constructed out of particular values, beliefs and ideologies. Critically, the limits of such understandings can overlap and intersect with the limitations of other ways of thinking about children and youth from minoritized and marginalized social backgrounds and how to address their needs.

Children and youth refugees face formidable challenges of social and educational integration. Educational researchers across diverse global contexts, particularly in the top countries for resettlement (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Sweden, Norway) have documented the critical role of education in supporting resettlement (see for instance Burns & Roberts, 2010; Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011; Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Shapiro, Farrelly, & Curry, 2018, among others). Across these contexts, similar issues have been identified concerning secondary

education; namely, critique of deficit discourses around trauma, poverty and illiteracy and emphasis on the importance of programs and supports that recognize the agency, resilience and funds of knowledge that students bring with them to school. Resettling in and entering local school systems requires rapid development of new language and literacy skills to stay abreast of same-age peers in school, particularly for those who have had limited or interrupted access to formal schooling prior to their arrival. In Canada, these students are often classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) with limited prior schooling and, where resources and programs exist, placed in English for Literacy Development (ELD) classes that focus on foundational literacy and numeracy development. Within such contexts, teaching and learning needs can be amplified by the volume and speed of resettlement efforts, and because many families are being settled in areas where educators may have less experience working with children and youth who have experienced forced migration. Moreover, students who arrive during secondary school are under pressure to accumulate sufficient credits for graduation before being pushed out of school after the age of 18, particularly those who have been out of school for multiple years.

Educators also need to attend to socio-emotional challenges facing students, including how language affects their experiences of dislocation and resettlement, their identity development and protection of their human rights and dignity. Migration studies scholars highlight how these experiences can be understood through the lens of transnationality, as children and youth make sense of and locate themselves in multiple places, with “transnational migration taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society” (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 131). These complexities point to how students are both here and now, and then and there at once; while the same can certainly be said to be true for any student from an immigrant background, the complexities fall into sharp relief for students and their families who have been displaced temporarily or permanently, who may no longer have a home or country to return to. Such experience is articulated in a narrative by Vigil and Abdi (2018) reflecting on one author’s experience of refugee identity in the Canadian context:

...being forced to live in a place that you want to become a part of because you know there is no other option and there is no way back. It was in Canada that I lost my need to show my cubania and my mexicanidad everywhere I went. Instead, the ability to be simultaneously from here and there enabled me to embrace a kind of world citizenship. And this I owe to Canada, a place that in its being multi- exempts me from the necessity of defining myself as only-. Often I feel my cubania, my mexicanidad, and my canadienship coming all in waves, all at once, and it is difficult to find where one ends and the other one begins. It is the proliferation of the one.
(p. 57)

This description that contrasts a multi- and only-, multiple and singular identification reverberates with contemporary understandings of language, the movement and transit through multiple second-order named languages within a singular first-order linguistic system in the minds of bi/multilinguals (Lin *et al.*, 2020). Notably, the reflection points to the unique, situated ways in which children and youth experience forced migration: moving through diverse linguistic ecologies shaped by the social, political and historical construction of languages (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) and developing strategic, dynamic and adaptive communicative repertoires. Such experiences index a need to recognize the open and porous process of navigating the borders and boundaries of language and linguistic identity, inside and outside school settings. Debates concerning theorization of language and bi/multilingualism trouble the edges of these boundaries, where the material dimensions of language sit uncomfortably against perspectives on language as a social construction (see for instance Jaspers, 2018). These controversies materialize in approaches to educational integration and resettlement; wherein teachers work both to valorize linguistic competence and to accelerate new language

learning—both *roots and routes* to belonging, civic engagement and full participation in a new social and educational context.

Classrooms as Translanguaging Spaces

Bringing a critical applied linguistics perspective into dialogue with the educational issues articulated above highlights the limitations of traditional pedagogies in second/additional language teaching which originated in the monolingual habitus of the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Gogolin, 1997; see also Flores & Rosa, 2015). These approaches, which measure linguistic competence according to native speaker-like norms and view the use of other languages in terms of interference or deficit (Grosjean, 1989, 2008), can contribute to further marginalization of children and youth who have experienced forced migration. Positioning their cultural and linguistic practices as in need of remedy and leaving their language resources untapped risks overlooking cultural and linguistic identities and “funds of knowledge” as critical resources for learning and educational integration (Busch, 2014; Comber, 2015; Cummins, 2000; Gonzalez *et al.*, 2005; Marshall & Toohey, 2010).

Immediately upon entering the classrooms where the research described herein was situated, it was evident that students and their teachers actively engaged a multitude of semiotic resources – a fluid mixing across languages and modes of communication and meaning making – making obvious the need for an analytic lens through which to view these practices as heteroglossic (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; Busch, 2014). A translanguaging theory of language is potentially useful to make sense of the sociolinguistic context of this school-based language use, characterized by multidiscursive practices and a cacophony of styles and voices in the classrooms, hallways and beyond (Bakhtin, 1981). Describing this kind of discursive practice, translanguaging has been defined as “using one’s idiolect, that is one’s linguistic repertoire, without regard for socially and politically defined language names and labels” (Li, 2018, p. 19). The permeable boundaries that this lens implies seem entirely aligned with a transnational perspective on the experiences of persons who have been displaced; as such, this article concerns itself with how a translanguaging perspective can potentially validate the communication and meaning-making practices of these youth and their teachers – fluid and unbound.

Translanguaging emphasizes an active, process-oriented view of language, not as a noun referencing a static, bounded system of linguistic features, but as an action – *languaging* – comprising situated enactment and dynamic use of semiotic resources according to particular social contexts, circumstances and communicative aims (Lin *et al.*, 2020; Moore *et al.*, 2020). From this perspective, Li (2018) names *translanguaging instinct* as the drive “to go beyond narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication” (p. 24). Understood as such, a translanguaging instinct moves speakers in a “natural drive to combine all available cognitive, semiotic, sensory and modal resources” (p. 25) for social purposes. Extending this conceptualization to the linguistic practices of children and youth from refugee backgrounds who are actively engaged in social and educational integration and resettlement processes, one can theorize that this drive pushes them to exploit all of their resources for learning, for new tasks, and interaction. With such understanding, translanguaging in the classroom can be embraced as a legitimate and unrestricted practice, with students free to use their linguistic resources as they wish to their own benefit. For education of children and youth from refugee backgrounds, this understanding and the agency it implies puts students at the center of sociolinguistic analysis, and how they make use of any linguistic resources at their disposal in a flexible, skilled and strategic way based on the context and purposes of interaction. Moreover, it brings an asset-oriented lens to students’ plural and partial competences, rather than focusing on abilities they may be perceived to lack.

A translanguaging approach has come about through growing attention to philosophies, ontologies and

fieldwork with bi/multilingual people and communities (Canagarajah, 2013; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2017; Li, 2018; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015, among others). For the educational context, where learning outcomes focus on disciplinary content area knowledge (rather than language teaching) this shift has generated interest in understanding how students' multilingualism, that is, their strategic, skillful and creative language mixing, can be incorporated into teaching and learning activities (Choi & Ollerhead, 2018; García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; McSwan & Faltis, 2019; Van Avermaet *et al.*, 2018). Where teachers and students strategically translanguage for teaching and learning curriculum content, they create social space for the multilingual language user, what Li (2018) has called *translanguaging spaces*. Multilingual educational contexts thereby have the potential to comprise these translanguaging spaces, wherein educators and students mobilize and leverage a range of semiotic resources for teaching and learning purposes. A pedagogy aligned with these understandings encourages students to make meaning and communicate skillfully, strategically and creatively, welcoming their complex, multi-voiced, and unique semiotic resources and trajectories to the classroom. As Li (2018, p. 15) suggests, taking a “the-more-the-better” approach to multilingualism in education potentially harnesses students' creative linguistic capabilities, supporting students to transcend boundaries - between languages, between linguistic and non-linguistic forms of communicative meaning making, and across the artificial divide between everyday language use and school-based language policies. For children and youth from refugee backgrounds resettling in host countries, who themselves have already successfully crossed, navigated and negotiated borders – artificial and material at once – a translanguaging approach not only aligns with their linguistic practice, but upholds and valorizes such border crossing as a courageous, political and transformative act.

Developing Understanding of Language in Education with Teachers and Youth from Refugee Backgrounds

With these perspectives in mind, I describe teaching and learning activities that teachers employed with youth from refugee backgrounds at the secondary level, illustrating what I understand as engagement with students' translanguaging practices. Through exquisite attention to students' out-of-school lives and experiences, teachers connected communication, meaning making and identity construction in a process of knowledge creation that aimed to support students' belonging, engagement and participation. To develop an understanding of these efforts, from the emic perspective of teachers and students themselves, I share findings from case study research (Duff, 2018) conducted with students and their teachers as part of a broader, multi-site study examining the language and literacy experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds across secondary schools in Canada¹. For this case study, the first phase of our work focused on perceptual data gathered using survey, focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders. Following up on findings emerging from these data, during the second phase, we engaged in fieldwork with select interested teachers and their students. This paper reports specifically on data from the second phase, focusing on classroom observation data and teacher perceptions. During this phase, I, along with a team of multilingual graduate student researchers, conducted participant observation and interviews (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Talmy, 2010) in six ELD classes, including language, mathematics and integrated arts classes, for students in grades 9-12. We visited the classes once or twice a week over six months in the 2018-2019 academic year. Five of the classes were taught by experienced teachers with at least five years' experience, and one class was taught by a novice teacher. In the classrooms, as experienced educators ourselves, our research team's involvement included supporting teachers, co-planning lessons and activities, working one-on-one with students, and gathering pedagogical documentation of student learning.

We took a collaborative inquiry approach to working with participating teachers, whom we viewed as key participants in understanding how to improve educational practice (Comber, 2013; Timperley &

Lee, 2008). As such, the teachers were involved in gathering evidence and making interpretations of student learning. Sources of data included transcripts of teacher interviews, fieldnotes and digital images, audio and video recordings of student work which were analyzed thematically to identify key patterns (Saldaña, 2015). Our collaborative analysis involved exploring questions of mutual interest during both formal meetings that were audio-recorded and transcribed and informal discussions before and after classes. Together we reflected on our observations to identify what appeared to be effective and why by examining evidence of student learning, then made collective decisions about how to build on and strengthen these approaches. Below, I share and discuss a small selection of the teaching and learning activities from these classes to illustrate what we can begin to identify as a translanguaging approach. Importantly, these data comprise a fraction of the larger dataset, selected specifically to demonstrate how teachers observed, acted and reflected on students' language practices and adjusted their practice to meet students' language teaching and learning needs across subjects at the secondary level.

Translanguaging for and as Learning with Youth from Refugee Backgrounds

Creating a space for translanguaging in the classroom

The school was characterized by a heterogenous linguistic ecology and students and staff spoke and understood a wide range of languages; however, in accordance with provincial education policy mandating instruction in one or both of Canada's official languages (French and/or English), English was the language of instruction. Nonetheless, there was recognition of the very considerable linguistic resources students brought to school; the sociolinguistic realities of the community invited teachers' regard for students' bi/multilingualism. Teachers therefore enacted their own informal and unwritten classroom language policies which extended to include the full range of students' language practices as both a scaffold and resource for learning. For example, In Ms. Lighthouse'sⁱⁱ Grade 9/10 ELD class, students constantly communicated with peers in their shared language(s), including English, using their home language(s) to help them participate in any and all class activities. While not always prompting this kind of language use, teachers nonetheless set a tone and context that explicitly and fully welcomed students' linguistic resources and creative language learning strategies to the classroom. For instance, while pre-teaching key vocabulary words relating to housing and the curriculum topic of community resources, Ms. Lighthouse, a monolingual English user, learned some words in Arabic to assist her in explaining tasks and instructions. The following excerpts were recorded during the activity ("ARA" for Arabic):

Ms. Lighthouse: Write a <ARA>jumla [sentence] about your house. Do ten <ARA>jumlas. Write the <ARA>jumlas here.

When asked about her use of Arabic for explaining instructions for this task, Ms. Lighthouse explained:

Ms. Lighthouse: <ARA>Jumla, loopda [period]. It's a joke with us but also a reminder. <ARA>Loopda.

Demonstrating her own resourcefulness by using words from the languages of some of the students in her class, Ms. Lighthouse modelled translanguaging practice. Equally, students incorporated English and the languages of other students in the class into their communication, demonstrating growing language awareness. For instance, "<ARA>Jamila, jamila [beautiful]!" was frequently declared by a student from El Salvador in the class both to comment on things that looked beautiful, and to comment on successful completion of classroom tasks. This language use often aroused laughter and brought attention to the speaker, potentially achieving socio-emotional aims by fostering positive affect and

inclusion of the student by classmates from Syria. Soon, other students in class began to say “*Jamila!*” in a similar way, sometimes prompting the teacher to repeat, reinforcing positive social relations among the students and teacher alike. Incorporating multiple languages therefore not only scaffolded student understanding of class activities and instructions, but also served social and affective purposes.

Ms. Lighthead elaborated on this strategy and the importance of humour and play with words; moments that were co-created by students and teachers in dialogic interaction:

The only thing I can think of in terms of managing their behaviour that works, like, I find well, not just with these kids but any kids I’ve taught is just like using humour and making kind of a joke of it. Like with Saabir, one of the kids in class who often doesn’t want to do work, he’s always “tomorrow, tomorrow” and our joke is, I say “yesterday, yesterday”. So you don’t have to be confrontational with them. (Teacher Interview, 06/27/19).

Students engaged their language resources not only for interaction and communication in the class, but also for written work. The image below of student classwork from a vocabulary activity demonstrates a student’s use of Arabic to translate key words during the activity. The student, Fida, worked with a classmate to do this translation, without direction or input from the teacher.

Name: _____	Date: _____	Vocabulary #3
1. bedroom	غرفة نوم	I sleep in the bedroom.
2. living room	غرفة معيشة	I sit and watch a movie in the living room.
3. kitchen	مطبخ	I cook in the kitchen.
4. bathroom	حمام	I shower in the bathroom.
5. hallway	ممر	I walk in the bathroom. I walk in the
6. stairs	سلالم	I go UP the stairs
7. basement	غرفة خزانة	The basement is under the house.
8. laundry	غرفة غسيل	The washing machine is in the laundry room.
9. sink	حوض	I wash the dishes in the sink.
10. fridge	ثلاجة	The food is in the fridge.
11. microwave	فرن ميكروويف	The chicken is in the microwave.
12. toaster	خبز	I put the bread in the toaster.
13. blender	مخلط	I put banana and juice in the blender.
14. kettle	إبريق	I make coffee with a kettle.
15. cutting board	قائمة	I cut tomato on the cutting board.

Figure 1 Student’s translation of key vocabulary (Grade 9/10 ELD class).

Like Fida, students frequently searched for and found translations for words independently, consulting with peers and using their personal smart phones to access online dictionaries, translation applications and text to speech functions. In a further move, students verified their translations using Google images and showed these images and the translations they found to their teachers, often spending several minutes teaching these words to their teachers or debating word choices and their meanings with classmates. These multimodal language learning strategies were central to most activities across all classes observed, supporting accomplishment of both receptive and productive tasks.

Broadly, these examples illustrate a small sample of the naturally occurring language practices in Ms. Lighthead’s class. Reflecting on this documentation, we concluded that students’ language practices were strategic and dynamic, moving across multiple languages and modalities. Language learning

strategies were co-constructed by students and teachers alike according to task purposes and interactions. We shared these observations with other teachers involved in the project and discussed ways to expand and enhance instructional tasks to purposefully incorporate these practices and promote these strategies in a broader range of teaching and learning activities.

Modeling linguistic inquiry

Mr. Gill's grade 10/11 ELD class was reading an adapted version of Jack London's story, *The Wolf*. During a reading comprehension activity related to the story, Mr. Gill engaged the students in linguistic inquiry across languages, making language an object of analysis. Drawing from his own linguistic repertoire, he modeled identification of cognates, language families and intercultural dimensions of language use. Below is an illustration of an excerpt of the discussion between the teacher and two students, along with a digital photograph of the teacher's accompanying multilingual, multimodal board work ("PUN" for Punjabi):

Mr. Gill: How do you say "paw" in Syrian?

Amar: <ARA>Dalsart. It's hard to say in Syrian. I'll try to find an easy word for you Mr. G. [student uses Google translate then checks translation using Google images on phone]

<ARA>Qadam. You can write qadam.

Mr. Gill: No, it's <PUN>khur. In my language, Punjabi, it's <PUN>khur. The languages are all derived from one. We use <ARA>kitab in Persian, Urdu, Arabic. [Writes words on board]

Amar: <ARA>Kebab is barbecue. It's the same Mr. G. language. My people it's the same. Yaser: No, it's meat.

Amar: No, it's barbecue

Yaser: Barbecue is same.

Amar: <ARA>Kitab is closer to <ARA>kitaba. Is writing.

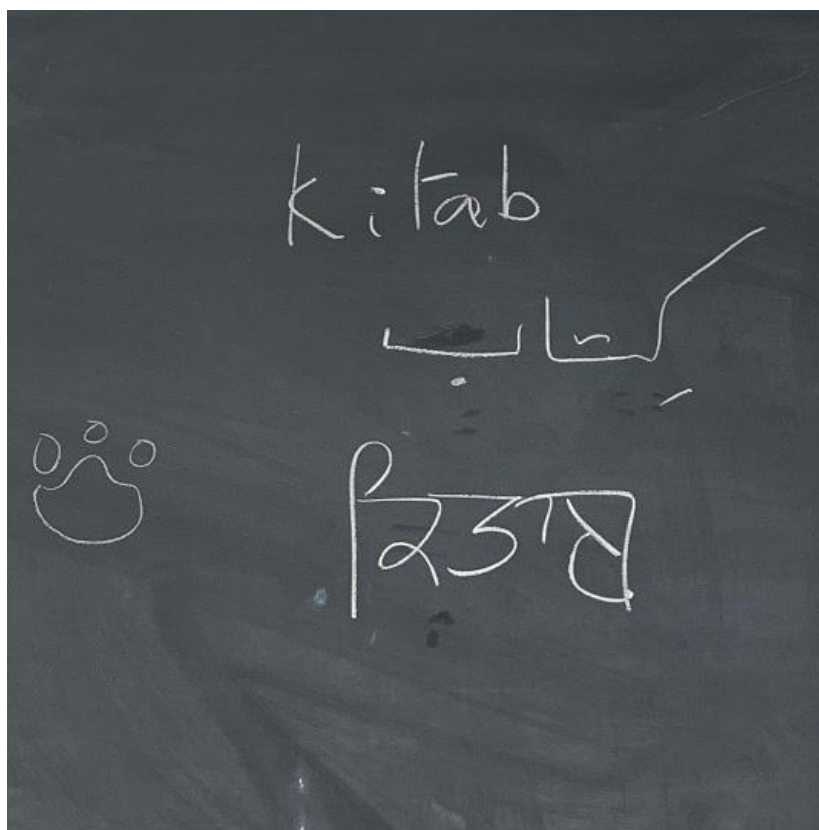


Figure 2 Teacher's boardwork engaging in metalinguistic inquiry (Grade 10/11 ELD)

This excerpt demonstrates how students made choices about vocabulary and reflected on language use, drawing attention to their linguistic knowledge, including synonyms and word families. The teacher also modeled metalinguistic thinking, the process of searching for and assessing words and comparing linguistic equivalents, which Amar took up in his presentation of the word <ARA>*kitab* [*writing*]. Reflecting on his approach to this instructional strategy, Mr. Gill's explanation went beyond a technical or instrumental use of students' language(s), elaborating a fundamentally asset-oriented lens to students' plural competences. Mr. Gill explained that all of students' linguistic resources were valuable for learning, and he described the importance of promoting positive affect, student self-efficacy and self-regulation:

Otherwise a kid who does not feel encouraged, who feels discouraged, will not pick up anything. Make them express themselves the way they want if they have some questions. To be bilingual, or trilingual or multilingual I feel it's the expertise or the knowledge which kids already have it, that adds to the learning, quick learning, if not they can figure out what is that, what is this, if they're able to get some language support in terms of learning a new language. (Teacher Interview, 06/27/19)

Viewing multilingualism as the norm, Mr. Gill's comments and actions suggest a belief that teachers and students should be free to use their linguistic resources as they wish, unrestricted. Reflecting on documentation of this kind of spontaneous, teacher-led translanguaging practice, we discussed the artificial divide between school-based language policies and out-of school language practices, which may be unhelpful and potentially marginalizing for youth from refugee backgrounds who need to make sense of and engage with curricular concepts in a way that builds on their funds of knowledge, including conceptual knowledge constructed in and through other language(s). We discussed whether and how teachers might address these considerations more purposefully in teaching and learning activities. We wondered how students might respond and feel about seeing their language(s) included in a greater range of classroom materials and/or instructional tasks and theorized that such efforts would contribute to students' agency and sense of inclusion in the school.

Building disciplinary knowledge and thinking

Teachers in two ELD Math classes incorporated students' language(s) into a variety of teaching and learning tasks. Importantly, their efforts illustrate how teachers engaged multilingualism not only for language and literacy learning, but also to build conceptual knowledge and disciplinary skills in curriculum subject areas. Figures 3 and 4 present a series of images connected with a collaborative hands-on task designed to promote number sense, reasoning and financial literacy, skills critical to students' resettlement and social integration needs. For instance, a common activity in several ELD classes at the school was taking students on a field trip to a local bank and teaching them how to use automated teller machines (ATMs). Teaching math through a discovery model, students were assigned a project to build a house; however, to do so, they were required to work together and cooperate to purchase arts and crafts supplies and rent tools to build the house from their teacher. The teacher provided them with a daily allowance using cheques, and students had to record their spending against their budget and balance their bank account. Together, the teacher and students created a bilingual anchor chart with key mathematical concepts, and the students completed a dual-language vocabulary placemat activity to support meaning making of these concepts.



Figure 3 Financial literacy activity (Grade 10/11 ELD Math)



Figure 4 Student house building activity (Grade 10/11 ELD Math)

Similar to the house building activity, figure 5 comprises images of a problem-solving task designed to teach and practice formulas, equations and critical mathematical thinking. Students were assigned a project to plan a trip and calculate the cheapest and most efficient way to travel to their selected destination with a partner, during which they actively negotiated with one another using all of their shared language resources. To scaffold students' completion of the assignment, the teacher, Ms. Nowak, presented key vocabulary words and mathematical concepts which the students discussed and translated into other languages. Ms. Nowak prompted students' use of other language(s) by making space on the graphic organizer for students to identify key words in their first language, to scaffold completion of the task for assessment and evaluation purposes.

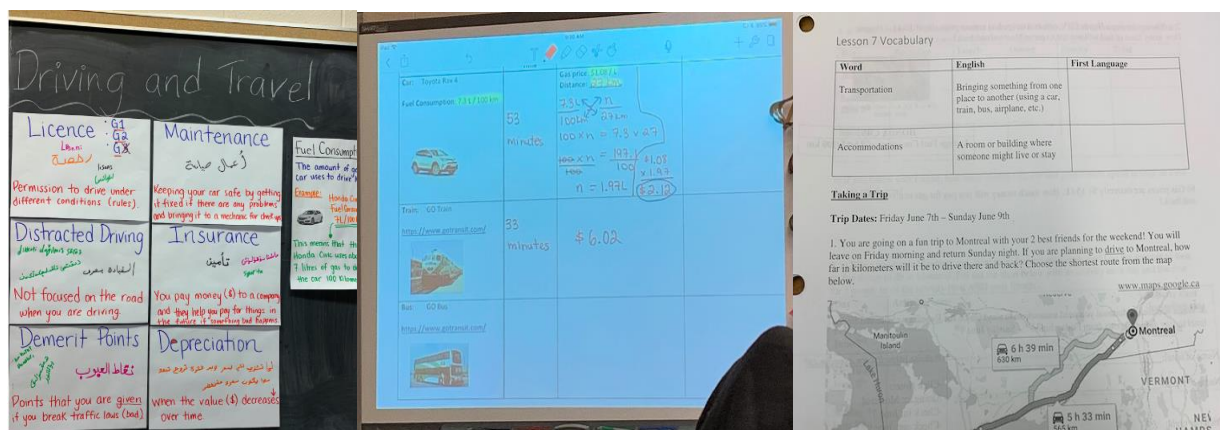


Figure 5 Teaching mathematics formulas (Grade 11/12 ELD Math)

Taken together, these examples illustrate how teachers promoted and supported students to use their full linguistic repertoire for math teaching and learning by including and encouraging students to use their shared languages in whole-class activities, in individual written work and in active, collaborative learning tasks. Reflecting on the design and implementation of these tasks with the teachers, we noted that these kinds of examples illustrated purposeful and intentional use of students' linguistic repertoires rather than in the moment, ad-hoc improvisation. By planning in advance strategies to prompt students' translanguaging, these activities were teacher-initiated rather than student-initiated. Moreover, the tasks engaged students' linguistic repertoire as a resource for developing mathematical concepts and skills, not as a mere scaffold for English teaching and learning.

Developing translanguaging pedagogy – plan, act, observe, reflect

Focusing on observations of instructional activities and teacher perceptions, the selection of examples shared here illustrate how teachers engaged in collaborative inquiry to plan, act, observe and reflect on students' language teaching and learning needs. This process supported teachers' purposeful and intentional efforts to notice and engage students' translanguaging practice in a skilled and strategic way, according to their specific context, learning tasks and purposes of interaction. In the first example, Ms. Lighthart and her students created a space for translanguaging (Flores & Schissel, 2014; García & Tupas, 2019; Hornberger, 2005) to build relationships and foster an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Students were free to use their language resources as they wished, and their teacher modelled creative and flexible language practices that were taken up by students teaching, learning and borrowing phrases and expressions from one another. Such purposeful efforts toward mutual comprehension, as translanguaging instinct constitute: "...the natural tendency to combine multiple resources [which] drives them to look for more cues and exploit different resources" (Li, 2018, p. 25). Such tendencies materialized across a variety of teaching moments, to which teachers responded by modeling and engaging in metalinguistic linguistic inquiry with students. As illustrated in the second example, Mr. Gill prompted students to reflect upon word choices and make observations about language knowledge and use. Finally, the third example showcased teachers' leverage of students' linguistic resources to develop conceptual learning and disciplinary skills. Pushed to accomplish collaborative problem solving and discovery-based learning tasks, students engaged in translanguaging not only to accomplish particular outcomes, but also to demonstrate mathematical thinking and meet curriculum objectives for assessment purposes.

Teachers developed these strategies based on observation and documentation of their students' learning and reflection upon their approaches to supporting this learning. Observing, reflecting and acting upon

their practice promoted what García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) articulate as “translanguaging stance”, referring to beliefs and ideologies toward language and bi/multilingualism and its value to learning and education. This stance “positions translanguaging as a right of the child to fully bring themselves into the classroom to achieve academically” (Kleyn & García, 2019, p. 73). For youth who have experienced forced displacement, this right matters in material ways that others who have not experienced forced displacement cannot likely imagine. Recognizing and facilitating translanguaging could rightly be an aim of teaching and learning with youth from refugee backgrounds, building on their resourceful linguistic competence and creativity to foster and deepen engagement with school-based learning and formal education. Moreover, given that the inclusion of these youth has already reconfigured the sociolinguistic context of classrooms, translanguaging for and as learning can reconfigure classroom language policy and instructional practice for educators and students alike.

Seeing translanguaging in the classroom as both a practice and a pedagogy distinguishes “spontaneous” and “intentional” translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017); the former referring to naturally occurring bi/multilingual language use and the latter referring to planned pedagogic engagement with bi/multilingualism in instructional strategies that integrate two or more languages. Intentional or pedagogic translanguaging corresponds to situations in which teachers explicitly and purposefully plan to create translanguaging spaces and design their curriculum and/or specific lessons or tasks with this objective in mind, what García *et al.* (2017) call “translanguaging design”. By contrast, spontaneous translanguaging refers to instances where translanguaging spaces have emerged as a result of extemporaneous and natural use of students’ linguistic repertoire in the classroom. While these classifications can be helpful for the purposes of definition and conceptualization, real classrooms seldom lend themselves to binary classifications; moreover, students’ voices and their agentic contributions are somewhat masked by these distinctions. To assist teachers to develop translanguaging pedagogy in a manner that more explicitly addresses the contributions of students, I find Hornberger’s (2009) continua of biliteracy, which has guided thinking and research about bilingualism, literacy and language planning, helpful in making visible how educators can plan, act, observe and reflect on translanguaging pedagogies co-constructed in dialogic interaction with students. Specifically, the continua represents intersecting relations among, rather than binary opposition, points on a continuum that are not static or discrete. Borrowing ideas from this model to help teachers think about planning and practicing translanguaging pedagogy, intersecting continua can comprise axes of: (1) teacher- and student-initiated translanguaging practice; (2) planned and spontaneous engagements with translanguaging; and (3) translanguaging as either a scaffold or a resource for learning.

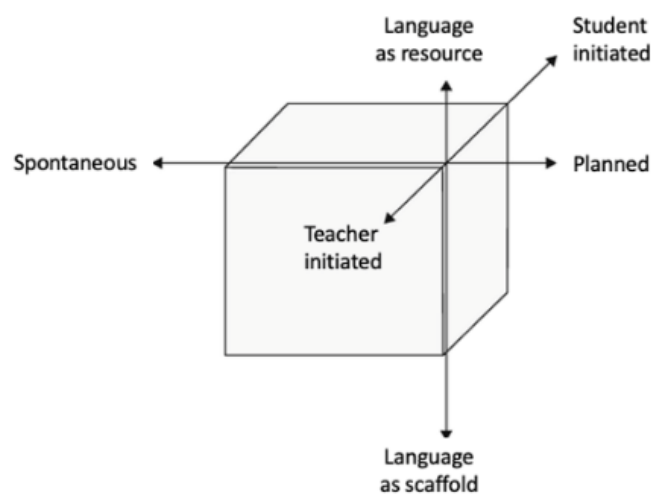


Figure 6 Continua for planning translanguaging pedagogy

Using these continua to interpret the three examples shared here sheds light on whether and how instruction materializes translanguaging pedagogy. For instance, teachers can gather evidence of their classroom practice, including their lesson plans, observational notes and other forms of pedagogic documentation to reflect on whether and how their classroom includes both planned and spontaneous translanguaging practice. They can reflect on classroom dynamics and interaction to see whether and how these practices were initiated by students or themselves. Finally, teachers can engage an assessment for learning lens to document evidence of student learning, gather artifacts of student work and conduct student-teacher conferences to understand how and when they are drawing on translanguaging practice as both a scaffold and resource for curriculum teaching and learning.

Importantly, like the original continua of biliteracy itself, these intersecting continua may be helpful in underscoring how all points on the continua are interrelated, and that the spaces between these points indicate places where teachers might challenge themselves to try something new or different, moving more or less in a particular direction along the spectrum to contest or change approaches to practice. For instance, if translanguaging pedagogy is always characterized by student-initiated, spontaneous translanguaging practice that teachers regard as a scaffold for learning English, teachers might wonder about and reflect on why this is the case or whether such patterns reflect marginalizing discourses or beliefs, particularly about students identified and labelled as refugees. Based on this reflection, teachers might then choose to change their actions and integrate more or deeper teacher-initiated, planned engagement with translanguaging that clearly positions students' linguistic resources and/or funds of knowledge as a resource for teaching and learning. Transformation at one point on the continua can affect other points as well; for instance, creating more student-directed translanguaging spaces may open learning to critical exchange, invigorating new knowledge building and ways of seeing the world for teachers and students alike – thereby moving along the continua to a stronger engagement with students' linguistic repertoire as a resource for learning.

A core aim of this paper is to contribute to theorization and articulation of translanguaging pedagogy for the fields of both applied linguistics and education. Researchers and educators alike have called for more examples of how translanguaging pedagogy manifests across diverse educational contexts, and to date there are few studies that consider a translanguaging pedagogy specifically for educational resettlement and integration purposes. While the suggestions herein may be useful in other teaching and learning contexts, for children and youth experiencing forced displacement and migration, translanguaging pedagogy invites much needed recognition and use of their cultural and linguistic resources. In face of the inestimable losses that endure, not only before but also after arrival and resettlement in host countries, I suggest that it is critical for children and youth from refugee backgrounds to use their translanguaging practice in school. Indeed, this concern reflects one of the key limitations of the present paper; namely, that students' experiences, perspective and voices need greater consideration when determining and implementing pedagogies that are designed to support them. Further, the data described herein articulate a single case, and findings cannot be generalized to other contexts. While these issues are addressed in the larger study data and will be reported elsewhere, these limitations underscore the need to recognize students as experts of their own experience, who can contribute to defining what counts as effective pedagogy to address their lived realities and experience. Constructing a pedagogy aligned with their existing linguistic practices then, might go some way toward achieving this aim, such that students can exert their agency to resist and challenge marginalizing educational discourses and practices that otherwise exclude their linguistic talents and capabilities from the classroom.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express deep gratitude for the students and teachers involved in this study, as well as graduate student research assistants Jaslyn Prihar, Nickesha McGregor, Sabeen Lodhi and Mich Fiallo-Perez. Thanks also to the special issue editors Julie Choi, Sue Ollerhead, and Mei French, and to anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

References

- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bartolome, L. (1994). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64(2), 173–195.
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2014). *Heteroglossia as practice and pedagogy*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Blommaert, J., & Jie, D. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork: A beginner's guide*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Burns, A., & Roberts, C. (2010). Migration and adult language learning: Global flows and local transpositions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(3), 409–419.
- Busch, B. (2012). The linguistic repertoire revisited. *Applied Linguistics*, 33(5), 503–523.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. New York: Routledge.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017) Minority languages and sustainable translanguaging: threat or opportunity? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 38(10), 901–912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1284855>
- Choi, J., & Ollerhead, S. (Eds.). (2018). *Plurilingualism in teaching and learning: Complexities across contexts*. New York: Routledge.
- Comber, B. (2013). Teachers as researchers: A ‘fair dinkum’ learning legacy. *English in Australia*, 48(3), 54–61.
- Comber, B. (2015). *Literacy, place, and pedagogies of possibility*. New York: Routledge.
- Conteh, J., & Meier, G. (Eds.). (2014). *The multilingual turn in languages education: Opportunities and challenges* (Vol. 40). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Creese, A. (2008). Linguistic ethnography. In N. Hornberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and education*, (pp. 3424–3436). New York: Springer.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire* (Vol. 23). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. (2017). Teaching minoritized students: Are additive approaches legitimate? *Harvard Educational Review*, 87(3), 404–425.
- Dooley, K.T., & Thangaperumal, P. (2011). Pedagogy and participation: Literacy education for low-literate refugee students of African origin in a western school system. *Language and Education*, 25(5), 385–397.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). *The educational experiences of refugee children in countries of first asylum*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Duff, P. (2018). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171.
- Flores, N., & Schissel, J.L. (2014). Dynamic bilingualism as the norm: Envisioning a heteroglossic approach to standards-based reform. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(3), 454–479.

- García, O., Johnson, S.I., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Calson.
- García, O., & Tupas, R. (2019). Doing and undoing bilingualism in education. In A. De Houwer & L. Ortega (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of bilingualism* (pp. 390–407). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gogolin, I. (1997). The “monolingual habitus” as the common feature in teaching in the language of the majority in different countries. *Per Linguam*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.5785/13-2-187>
- González, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Grosjean, F. (1989). Neurolinguists, beware! The bilingual is not two monolinguals in one person. *Brain and Language*, 36, 3–15.
- Grosjean, F. (2008). *Studying bilinguals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hornberger, N.H. (2005). Opening and filling up implementational and ideological spaces in heritage language education. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(4), 605.
- Hornberger, N.H. (Ed.). (2003). *Continua of biliteracy: An ecological framework for educational policy, research, and practice in multilingual settings* (Vol. 41). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Jaspers, J. (2018). The transformative limits of translanguaging. *Language & Communication*, 58, 1–10.
- Jones, B. (2017). Translanguaging in bilingual schools in Wales. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 16(4), 199–215.
- Kleyn, T., & García, O. (2019). Translanguaging as an act of transformation: Restructuring teaching and learning for emergent bilingual students. In L. de Oliveira (Ed.), *The Handbook of TESOL in K-12* (pp. 69–82). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74–84.
- Lau, S.M.C., & van Viegen, S. (Eds.). (forthcoming). *Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative undertakings for equitable language (in) education*. Springer Educational Linguistics Series.
- Levitt, P., & Jaworsky, B. N. (2007). Transnational migration studies: Past developments and future trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 129–156.
- Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7), 641–654.
- Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039>
- Lin, A.M.Y., Wu, Y., & Lemke, J.L. (forthcoming). “It takes a village to research a village”: Conversations with Jay Lemke on contemporary issues in translanguaging. In S.M. Lau & S. van Viegen, (Eds.), *Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative endeavors for equitable language (in) education* (pp. 390–407). Springer Educational Linguistics Series.
- Lüdi, G., & Py, B. (2009). To be or not to be... a plurilingual speaker. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 6(2), 154–167.
- Makoni S., & Pennycook, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Disinventing and reconstructing languages*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Marshall, E., & Toohey, K. (2010). Representing family: Community funds of knowledge, bilingualism, and multimodality. *Harvard Educational Review*, 80(2), 221–242.
- MacSwan, J., & Faltis, C. J. (Eds.). (2019). *Codeswitching in the classroom: Critical perspectives on teaching, learning, policy, and ideology*. New York: Routledge.
- Moore, D., Lau, S.M.C., & Van Viegen, S. (forthcoming). Mise en écho perspectives on plurilingual competence and pluralistic pedagogies: A conversation with Daniele Moore. In Lau, S.M.C., & Van Viegen, S. (Eds.), *Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative endeavors for equitable language (in) education*. Springer Educational Linguistics Series.
- Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named

- languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6(3), 281–307.
- Paris, D., & Alim, H.S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85–100.
- Paulsrud, B., Rosén, J., Straszer, B., & Wedin, Å. (Eds.). (2017). *New perspectives on translanguaging and education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Piccardo, E. (2017). Plurilingualism as a catalyst for creativity in superdiverse societies: A systemic analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 2169.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.
- Shapiro, S., Farrelly, R., & Curry, M. J. (Eds.). (2018). *Educating refugee-background students: Critical issues and dynamic contexts*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Talmy, S. (2010). Qualitative interviews in applied linguistics: From research instrument to social practice. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30, 128–148.
- Timperley, H., & Lee, A. (2008). Reframing teacher professional learning: An alternative policy approach to strengthening valued outcomes for diverse learners. *Review of Research in Education*, 32(1), 328–369.
- Van Avermaet, P., Slembrouck, S., Van Gorp, K., Sierens, S., & Maryns, K. (Eds.). (2018). *The multilingual edge of education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vigil, Y. N., & Baillie Abidi, C. (2018). “We” the refugees: Reflections on refugee labels and identities. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 34(2), 52–60.

Author biodata

Assistant Professor Saskia Van Viegen is an applied linguist interested in bi/multilingualism in education, focusing specifically on language assessment and language teaching and learning in K-12 and post-secondary educational contexts. Related areas of interest include language and content integration, disciplinary literacies, translanguaging pedagogies and biliteracy development.

ⁱ This case study is part of a larger project, “Language and Literacy Learning Among Youth Refugees in Canadian Secondary School Classrooms” (Principal Investigator Maureen Kendrick, University of British Columbia) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

ⁱⁱ All names are pseudonyms to protect privacy and confidentiality of participants.