Becoming a Writer: Emergent Bilinguals Use of Language Resources in an English Only Kindergarten Writing Workshop

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Abstract

Drawing on sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) and translanguaging theory (García, 2009), this case study examined emergent bilingual students' writing development during writing workshop in the context of an "English only" official curriculum. Questions guiding the study were: (1) How do emergent bilingual writers participate in writing events? (2) What linguistic resources do emergent bilingual writers draw upon when engaged in the composing process? Findings from this study indicate that emergent bilingual students were able to enact sophisticated translanguaging strategies as they wrote. This study demonstrates how the politics of language education impact young students in not being able to use their full linguistic potential.

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Introduction

The United States has experienced a tremendous change in demographics of school-aged children in recent decades. The National Center for Education Statistics projects that by the year 2023, nearly one third of all students in the U.S. will be Latino (2015). Although 350 languages are spoken in homes in the United States (U.S. Census, 2010), Spanish is the most common home language spoken at home (Leos & Saavedra, 2010; US Census, 2013). Historically, states such as Texas and California have had a large number of bilingual students, but the number of students who are bilingual is also increasing in states that have historically not educated a large population of bilingual students. States such as Nevada, North Carolina, Georgia, Nebraska, Arkansas, Arizona, and South Dakota have seen a significant increase in bilingual students in Pre-K through 12th grade setting (García, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010; García & Cuellar, 2006; Sox, 2009). The new Latino diaspora (Hamann & Harklau, 2010; Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002) has had an enormous impact on school districts that have historically not served a large number of emergent bilingual students. This shift in demographics and language has created a challenge for teachers as they seek ways to support emergent bilingual students.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is framed using sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory has informed my conceptualization of language and literacy as a social construct. This perspective maintains that learning is socially and culturally developed (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory of learning is "a radical

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departure from conventional viewpoints that posit learning as largely unaffected by context" (Nieto, 2006, p. 327). Accepting this notion means that learning cannot be separated from the context in which it occurs. This is particularly important when considering that the emergent bilingual students in this study are learning to read and write in a context that does not honor their home language.

Additionally, García's (2009) notion of translanguaging informs this study as it provides a lens in which to examine students' language use. This notion posits that students who are emergent bilinguals are simply not just like two monolingual students, but instead engage in dynamic and systematic use of language that is shaped by the context. García & Godiva (2017) describes this as putting "back the emphasis on what people *do* with language to produce and interpret their social world" (p. 257). Garcia (2017) argues that translanguaging recognizes the potential that students have in the way that languages are used. This principle is key to this study as it accounts for the restrictions placed on students' language use in classrooms and considers how students navigated the language constraints propagated by the educational systems.

Literature Review

Studies focused on the literacy development of emergent bilinguals point to the complexities of biliteracy development (Bauer & Gort, 2012; Reyes, 2012; Moll, Sáez, & Dworin, 2001). In describing this complexity, Moll, Sáez, and Dworin (2001) explain that "bilingual children, unlike their monolingual counterparts, may become literate in language they do not speak fluently, their literacy ability may exceed their oral fluency in one language but not the other" (p. 447). In regards to writing development, emergent

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bilingual students are also different from monolingual students. Studies focused on the writing development of bilingual students have found that bilingual students in bilingual classrooms are able to use their language in strategic ways (Gort, 2012; Velasco & García, 2014). Furthermore, studies focused on bilingual students' writing have found that these students engage in translanguaging while writing (Bauer, Presidao & Colomer, 2017; Velasco & Garcia, 2014).

While most studies focused on translanguaging focus on bilingual settings, there is evidence that students engage in translanguaging practices even when they are learning in a monolingual context. Alvarez (2014) contends that when asked to operate in one language, "emergent bilingual students strategize from their stocks of translanguaging practices to make meaning" (p. 327). Edelsky's (1986) seminal research on this also found that students' literacy in Spanish supported students writing in English even when the expectation was for these students to write exclusively in English. These studies showcase students' linguistic capabilities and show the potential that could occur if students were allowed to use their full linguistic capabilities.

Guided by this theoretical framework and the review of literature, this study presents five emergent bilingual students as they navigated an English-only classroom during the writing workshop time. This study explores the following questions: 1) How do emergent bilingual writers participate in writing events? 2) What linguistic resources do emergent bilingual writers draw upon when engaged in the composing process?

Design and Methodology

Setting

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This qualitative study was conducted in an elementary school in in a small town in the Southeastern United States. The school, Birchwood Elementary (all names are pseudonyms) is located on the east side of a town that is home to about 33,000 people. According to 2011 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census, 48% of the people living in this town identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This small town has changed dramatically as the population has shifted in the last two decades from mostly White and African American to having a large number of Latino residents. The Latino population in this community began to grow in the late 1990's and has continued to grow due to the growth of the textile industry. This has been the trend in the last three decades mostly due to job opportunities in manufacturing. This trend in the growth of Latino residents is also reflected in the local school system. There are approximately 450 students in this school, with over 90% students being Latino. The school is a Title I school with close to 90% of students being eligible for free or reduced lunch. English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction is provided mostly through the push-in model for the 53% of students who are eligible for that service. This research study took place in a kindergarten classroom.

Ms. Brown, the classroom teacher, was a monolingual teacher with four years of teaching experience. She was in her second year of teaching kindergarten and had previously taught fourth grade in the same school. At the time of study, Ms. Brown was working on her masters and had become increasingly interested in writing instruction for young students.

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The classroom used a writing workshop model (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983) and used the kindergarten and the K-2 units of study developed by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (Calkins et al., 2003) as a resource. Students engaged in writing workshop every day for one hour, including a mini-lesson, independent writing time, and share time at the end of the workshop. Students worked in tables, talked about their writing, and were free to move around during the writing workshop time.

All instruction in this class was conducted in English. Ms. Brown and the paraprofessional in the room were monolingual. All of the students in the room, except two, were emergent bilinguals with Spanish being their home language. Students had a wide range of experiences with the English language. Some students' families spoke English and Spanish at home while others only spoke Spanish. Although students were allowed to speak Spanish during the day to each other, instruction, books, and charts in the classroom are all in English. The school district's policy was that students who are identified as English Learners receive 45 minutes of instruction with an ESOL teacher. ESOL teachers provide additional instruction, also in English, in the classroom in accordance with state policy.

Methods

The data collection took place during the 2013-2014 school year. As the researcher, I spent 4-5 days a week in a kindergarten classroom during the writing workshop time. The writing workshop time usually lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and included a mini-lesson taught by the teacher, independent writing time, and a share time at the end of the writing time. For the purpose of this study, the entire writing workshop

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time was recorded and field notes were taken. In total, I had collected a total of 17 writing workshop sessions, ranging in times of 25 to 70 minutes. During my data collection phase, my role was that of a participant observer (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002), where I observed and took field notes. My interactions with the students were minimal, although I did respond when students talked to me or asked questions. The focal students for the study all sat at one table and their conversations and interactions were video and audio recorded. Additionally, all of the focal students' writing was photocopied on a weekly basis.

For the purpose of this study, only the transcripts of focal students' writing interactions, their writing samples, and initial interviews were analyzed. I transcribed the writing workshop events, including the mini-lesson, the interactions among the five students during independent writing, writing conferences with the teacher, and share time. Analysis of the data was conducted in different stages. The first stage involved analyzing the transcripts of the focal students' interactions. For this stage, I used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to look for broad patterns in the students' conversations as they were writing I read and reread through all the transcripts and codes were generated inductively based on the data. I engaged in several rounds of this analysis. In each stage of the analysis, the new concepts, data, or ideas were constantly compared with the previous data. After the initial coding, I began to analyze the codes in order to begin to define relationships among the codes and thus identify broad categories in the data. The second stage of the data analysis involved the analysis of the focal students' writing samples. The samples were analyzed as stand-alone pieces

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and some were also analyzed in conjunction with the conversations that were being held as they were writing the piece. The focus of the stand-alone writing analysis was to look holistically at the topic, length, and language used in the piece. The analysis of the writing pieces along with the conversation took place after the initial analysis of the transcripts. Thus, the writing artifacts from each child were examined and I considered how they supported or challenged the themes that were identified in the coding of the transcripts. The writing pieces were used to further understand students' interactions as they engaged in conversations while they were writing. These two products were parallel in nature and helped me to understand how emergent bilinguals in this study used their linguistic repertoire to navigate an English only space.

Sample

Five students were selected with the help of the teacher to be the focal students for this study. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2005) was used to select these students in order to have varying English and Spanish language proficiencies. All students in the group were bilingual and all of them saw themselves as writers. These students were avid talkers in class and enjoyed talking about their writing. Students that were a part of this group have varying academic levels and different levels of English language proficiency. Table 1 gives information about the students' English language proficiency and the language first learned, spoken at home, and most spoken. In the following sections, I will describe each of the individual students, their families, and academic status in the classroom.

Table 1

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Focal Students' Use of Language

Student	Age	English Language Proficiency	Language First Learned to Speak	Language Spoken at home	Language most often spoken
Neyda	6	Low	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Pablo	6	High	Spanish	Spanish/English	Spanish/English
Lina	6	High	Spanish/English	Spanish/English	Spanish/English
Maria	5	Low	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Juan	5	Low	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish

FOCAL STUDENTS: ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Students in this kindergarten classroom were able to have discussions in both languages while they were writing. However, students were expected to write in English. Often times, students' oral discussions about what they would write were more complex and detailed than their actual writing. The richness in conversations included discussions in both languages. The following examples showcase the richness in the focal students' conversations. The examples of students' writing and talking demonstrate how students' writing examples alone do not show this complexity and thus demonstrate how writing cannot be separated from talk. The writing also serves as an introduction to the focal students in this study.
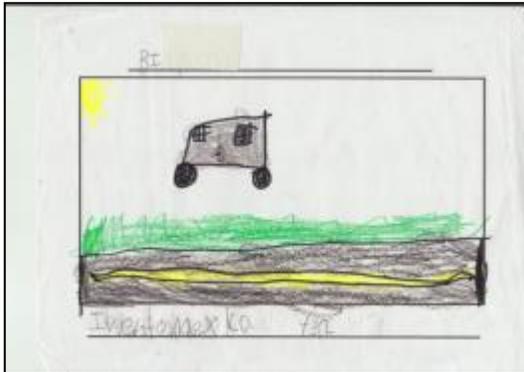
Figure 1. I went to Mexico.

Maria. Maria spent many days working on a story about going to Mexico (Figure 1). While she was writing the story, she had some extensive discussions with peers about her story and what she was writing about. She engaged in a writing conference with the teacher that included detail about her trip to Mexico. She told others around her the story, but also shared with them that she did not believe that she was a good writer.

Maria: I went to Mexico [clapping the words]. I just wrote that right here. I went to Mexico. I had fun. You this…. I cannot write. (April 19)

 The actual writing piece only included one page with one sentence and an illustration with a car.

Neyda. Neyda was one of the students who produced many pieces of writing. Neyda has

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a discussion with other focal students about writing a story about watching the movie the Titanic. In their discussion, students discussed the process of drawing and writing as they engaged in it. Neyda's final piece included three pages about the watching the movie Titanic (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Page 1. The boys look to the girls then the boys like the girls. Page 2. Was at movies sad so so so sad but they was alive. They make it out the water. Page 3. I was crying.

Juan. During writing time, Juan had conversations with all of the other focal students. He often discussed what he was writing about and liked to hear about what the other students were also writing about. During the writing of the piece, he discussed playing soccer while engaging in a conversation about the rules of soccer with the other focal students. The following is writing sample that was produced as he engaged in the conversation about the rules of soccer (Figure 3).

Figure 3. I was playing soccer ball with David. I get goal in so I win soccer ball. It was fun.

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Pablo. Pablo was the student in the group that had many interactions with other students, but few were focused on writing. Pablo spent many days on one piece of writing and most of his time was spent drawing. Pablo often discussed ownership of crayons or tools with other students. Many conversations occurred as Pablo worked on a story about going to the park. The following writing sample is representative of the type of writing that Pablo wrote during the writing workshop time (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Page 1: I went to the park I got ride my bike. Play with play my. Page 2: to play with sister my.

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Lina. Lina was the student who was the most prolific writer in the group. Her linguistic abilities in both languages allowed her to engage in rich conversations about her stories with her peers and teachers. Although Lina, like all other students, were expected to write in English, she was the only one during the study that received encouragement to attempt to write in a word in Spanish. The following conversation is an example of the conversations that Lina often had with Ms. Brown about her writing. In this example, Ms. Brown encourages Lina to write the word "padrino" which means godfather in English on her paper. The writing examples that follow show how Lina took this on in her writing after having this conversation with Ms. Brown. The story that she wrote about going to Chicago was 6 pages long. I have included the first 3 pages.

Ms. Brown: Okay read the story. Let's listen to the story for a minute

Lina: I went to Chicago. Then I went on a boat. Then it was rainy. It was sunny day. Then my mom buy a snack for me. Then we got on the boat. Then I played on the pool with. I wait with my friend Marco. Then we got off the pool

Ms. Brown: Whoa. That's a pretty cool story.

Juan: My turn

Lina: Then it was raining.

Ms. Brown: Wait, so at the beginning of the story it was raining. Um what I want you to think about is.. This story.. as a writer is again you feelings. I don't know

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what Lina was feeling at this time and maybe I want to be able to know how you were feeling in this story. What made you excited?

Lina: The word with –ing

Ms. Brown: So as a writer.. you need to be thinking about the sounds and what you already know how to use

Lina: It was raining hard and my padrino wet his shirt

Ms. Brown: Well see I didn't even know that. It was raining. You just said it was raining hard and somebody got wet with their shirts so that a great detail. You could add that to your story because that makes the story that somebody could understand.

Lina: My padrino

Ms. Brown: Beledino?

Neyda: Padrino

Ms. Brown: Padrino?

Lina: Padrino

Ms. Brown: Okay. Well tell me that.

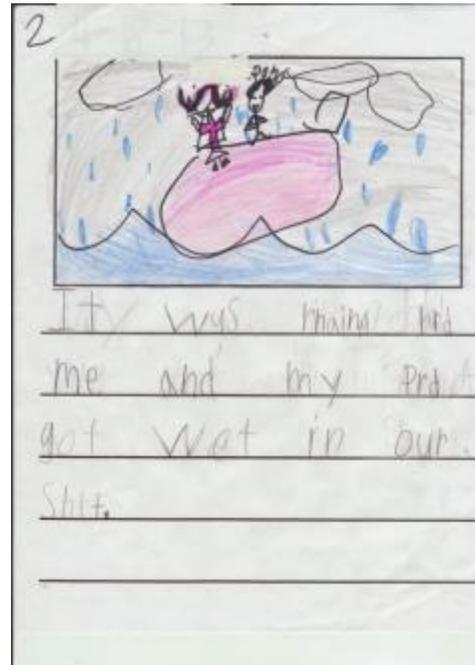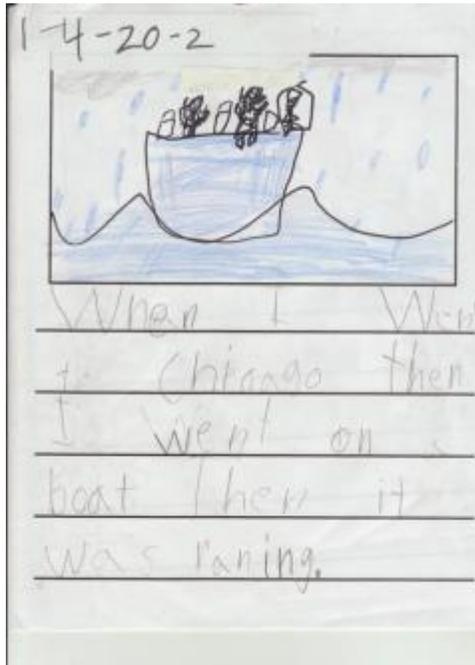Lina: Oh, I can use my sounds in Spanish

Ms. Brown: yes.

Lina: You can still use sounds in Spanish

Ms. Brown: You can use your sounds in Spanish. Same things.

Ms. Brown: Right

Neyda: How do you call in English padrino?

Ms. Brown: Padrino? Well just use your sounds in Spanish and write it for me

there. (April 18)
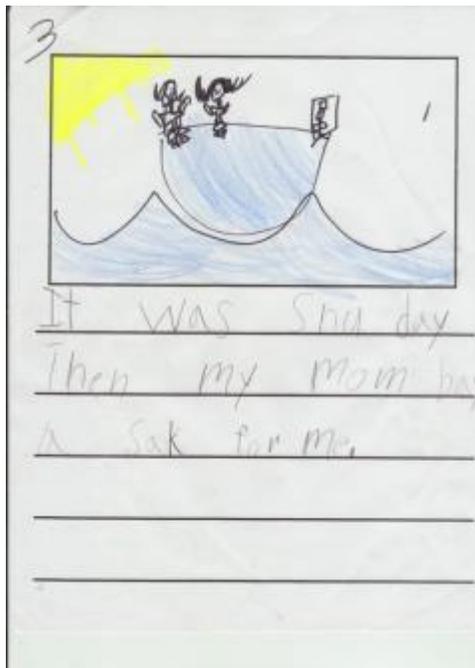
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Figure 5. Page 1: When I went to Chicago then I went on a boat then it was raining. Page 2: It was raining hard me and my padrino got wet in our shirt. Page 3: It was sunny day then my mom buy a snack for me.

Findings

Focal students in this study drew upon their complex linguistic knowledge of English and Spanish to participate in classroom writing events. As emergent bilinguals, the children spoke both languages, but with varied levels of proficiency. This finding is consistent with research that has focused on students' translanguaging capabilities (Bauer, Presiado, & Colomer, 2017; Velasco & García, 2014). The writing times in this classroom became a space for the students to access and use both languages as they navigated the expectations of being a writer and built social relationships. Therefore, the experiences of the focal students were encoded in either one of the two languages and students

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strategically chose the language in which to communicate those experiences. The language used in conversation depended on the purpose for the conversation. While students accessed both languages in their oral conversations, they only used English in their written text.

As members of the larger classroom community where almost all students were emergent bilinguals, the focal students were acutely aware of their linguistic abilities in the two languages. They often discussed their varying levels of expertise in speaking either English or Spanish. Students in the group also knew the level of expertise that other students in the group had with language. For example, Neyda's level of proficiency with English becomes a topic of discussion when Pablo and Lina are talking about numbers and being able to count.

> Pablo: You know all your numbers. Me too. Except for Neyda and he don't know English. Only a little right *[students often misused pronouns, thus in this statement Isaac was referring to Neyda]*

> Lina: And she doesn't know how to count in Spanish. Whenever her mom, she asks "mami que es 10?" [what is 10?] she say (May 1, 2013).

This interaction between Pablo and Lina demonstrates the awareness that students had about whom within the group was able to speak English, who understood and can speak Spanish, and the varying levels of proficiency for each language. In another interaction, Pablo reveals his linguistic abilities to other students as he explains to Juan

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what it means to be disqualified from soccer. The three girls join the conversation and begin to talk in Spanish. Pablo maintains that he doesn't speak Spanish well by stating, "Yo no puedo hablar bien en Español" [I cannot speak Spanish well]. Students also took advantage of those linguistic abilities by using each other for support in language use. In the following conversation, Lina is asking for help with how to pronounce a word:

Lina: How do you say in Spanish eating?

Juan: Comiendo

Lina: comiendo. Eating. (April 19)

The focal students' linguistic abilities in both Spanish and English allowed them to navigate both languages depending on the audience and purpose for the talk. Even in their restrictive language environment, students were able to use translanguaging during all stages of their writing. The varying abilities provided different levels of easiness in which the way they navigated and used both languages. The students' interactions during the writing workshop ranged in topics and purpose. Some of students were able to fully participate in the group and understand all of the interactions regardless of language used during the interaction; while others, such as Maria, had limited participation within the group based on proficiency in English.

While they were aware of their own linguistic abilities, the five students made choices in which language to use for which purpose. Purposes included (a) using English

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to "do school" and to help their peers; (b) using Spanish and English to navigate social relationships with other students and to include everyone in the group; and (c) using self-talk in English during the writing time. A discussion of these purposes follows.

APPROPRIATING TEACHER TALK TO "DO SCHOOL"

Another finding is that students in the study were aware of the status of the English language in the classroom as the language of instruction. The five emergent bilingual students often appropriated the school discourse, which was in English, as they helped each other with writing. The following examples illustrate how students adopt the discourse pattern of the teacher, which is all in English, as they help or teach other students in the group.

Pablo: Use your words. Neyda say it slow. (April 22, 2013)

Lina: Say it slowly and think about it more (May 7, 2013)

Juan: I said I do like yours cause you're doing your job (April 30, 2013)

Neyda: You need to write nice and neat (April 22, 2013)

The way in which students appropriated the teacher talk became even more evident during the second student interview, when students talked about what it means to be a writer. Students were able to articulate what Ms. Brown had told them about being a writer.

Researcher: Why do you think she thinks you guys are writers?

Pablo: Because we learn.

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Neyda: Because we color and then we do words nice and neat.

Lina: And she says you need to write your words and they need to match your picture and you need to write them nice and neat and the capitals should be first and you need to write them really nice and neat. Your picture too.

Pablo: And there is a paper in your folder and it's green and yellow and it has nice good writers and you need to write what is right there.

Researcher: What else does Ms. Brown tell you about writing?

Lina: She tells us to do a great job and to stay in your author's chair.

Researcher: Let's let Maria tell us about what Ms. Brown tell you about writing.

Maria: To raise your hand and stay in your author's chair.

Neyda: You cannot scream at Ms. Brown like this, "Ms. Brown, Ms. Brown!" You can't shout out. (Student Interview, April 19, 2013)

During this part of the interview, students were asked to consider the things that Ms. Brown told them about being a writer. Students articulated what they had heard during the writing instruction. Lina, the student with the highest English proficiency, was able to articulate many of the expectations that Ms. Brown talked to the students about for the writing time. Maria repeated that students needed to remain in their author's chair. This is something that she had discussed before. Students also used the teacher talk that they heard to communicate with or to help other students. These examples show that students appropriated the school discourse and used it as they interacted within the group. School

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talk became a tool as students navigated ways to help each other write in English in the classroom.

USING SPANISH AND ENGLISH FOR MULTIPLE PURPOSES

Emergent bilingual writers in this study used code switching for a variety of purposes. Gort (2012) identifies code switching as "the most distinctive behavior of bilingual speakers and an important component of communicative competence of proficient bilinguals" (p. 46). Focal students used code switching in the classroom during writing workshop. Gort (2012) contents that code switching "appears to be a complex skill that develops as part of emergent bilinguals' communicative competence" (p. 47). For this study, mixing in languages is considered code switching when students use the elements from the two languages in the same utterance or in a stretch of conversation (Genesee, 2000; 2002). Students used codeswitching for varying purposes. The different purposes included the sharing of experiences as they were writing, navigating the social relationships with each other, and including all students in conversations about writing. Although all students had some knowledge of both languages, the levels of proficiency varied. In using a mix of both languages as they were writing, students were able to include all of the students in the conversations.

Focal students used different types of codeswitching. At times, students used code switching at the lexical level when discussing terms that were culturally relevant terms (Gort, 2012). An example of this is when Lina states, "My padrino [godfather] got wet." Lina uses the Spanish word for godfather despite discussing this topic in an English only context. Other words that were used that were related to family members were *madrina*

[godmother], *tia* [aunt], *papi* [daddy], and *mami* [mami]. In using these terms, Lina and other students maintained these names as relevant in any context because they are "related to the children's social and cultural experiences within their bilingual and bicultural community" (Gort, 2012, p. 62). Other times, focal students use codeswitching at the sentence level. The following example shows how Neyda is able to codeswitch in one conversation by mixing Spanish and English sentences. It also shows how students used both languages to have a conversation. In this example, Neyda is writing about Draculaura's birthday and discussing what she is drawing with Lina and Maria. Draculaura was the Monster High characters that the students talked the most about.

> Neyda: Look here is him birthday
>
> Lina: That's not Draculaura's favorite things.
>
> Maria: Porque le echates feo? [why did you add the ugly?]
>
> Neyda: Es que no sabia [It's because I didn't know] Querias hacer her ponytail little. Pretend I was drawing Draculaura. Draculaura is so little right here. (May 15, 2013)

English was the language used for formal instruction and learning in this classroom. As students navigated the unofficial space in the classroom, they made use of their knowledge of two languages. Both languages were also used to have conversations during composing process. During the independent writing time, the focal students engaged in conversations with each other in both languages about a wide range of topics, including family and home. Although students always wrote in English, they often

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discussed what they were writing about with other students using both languages. The following excerpt illustrates how Maria uses a combination of English and Spanish to discuss an experience that she is writing about. The focal students are having a conversation as Maria is writing her story about how she got a little dog. Maria begins the conversation as she is coloring the dog that she has drawn.

Maria: Yo en la casa tengo un perrito. Yo ya tengo un perrito.

[I have a dog at my house. I already have a puppy]

Juan: Yo tambien[me too]

Maria: Lo encontre en la pulga. Era free. [I found it at the flea market. It was free]

Neyda: When is she going to give me the thing Maria?

Juan: My brother gave me a baby doll

Maria: Y se hizo popo en mi troca [and he pooped in my truck]

Neyda and Juan: Ewww

Lina: I can draw Juan

Maria: Y tiene una casita [and he has a little house]

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> Juan: Neyda, Neyda, you know Briana she gave me a little dog

> Maria: Mi papi le hizo su casita a el perrito [My daddy made a little house for the puppy]

> Neyda: You need to write nice and neat (April 22, 2013)

As Maria begins to construct her story about how she got a new dog, she shares her story mostly in Spanish with the other students. The other students listen to Maria's story and reply by providing some kind of feedback. Although the final product for Maria's story included a simple sentence that said "I have a dog," the process of constructing the story with her friends was much more complex and she was able to use her linguistic resources in Spanish to describe this event in much more detail than in her written story.

Since Spanish was the language spoken at home for all the focal students, students often shared these experiences with each other in Spanish. In the following excerpt, Maria and Neyda are discussing the often-discussed topic of the television show Monster High. Maria shares the conversation that she had with her mother about wanting to watch Monster High and switches to speaking only in Spanish, as that was the language in which the experience occurred.

> Maria: I'm writing about the aquarium. This is our aquarium.. This is ours.. This is ours. (laughs).. What's that?

Neyda: A t.v.!

Maria: A t.v.? (laughs)

Neyda: Lina, remember the t.v? You was watching something.

Maria: No, you wasn't.

Neyda: A gentleman was outside. I need to watch a Monster High and It was Abbey's 16th birthday and Abbey seen for her a present.

Maria: Sabes que? Sabes que va salir Monster High at 2'o clock. Y tu ya la vistes? [Do you know what? Do you know what Monster High is going to show at 2' o clock and have you already seen it?]

Neyda: Uh-uh

Maria: Oh, yo no porque mi tele no se miraba. No se miraba y deje "I want to watch Monster High!" y le dije, "Mami, se delata mucho para que salga Monster High. Yo quiero Monster High" [Oh because you could not see the television. It was not showing and I said "I want to watch Monster High" and I said, "Mami, it takes too long until Monster High comes out. I want Monster High"] (May 13, 2013)

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As Maria shares her experience at home, she recounts the experience in the language that was used (Spanish). Since Maria's mother only speaks Spanish, she makes sure that she describes that experience using the language that was used. Through discussing experiences like this one, the focal students were able to share their home experiences with each other in the home language. Through the sharing of these experiences students also got to know more about the other students' lives outside of school.

Focal students also used Spanish or a combination of both languages to establish and social relationships with each other. Students' relationships with each other were fluid and changed often on a day-to-day basis. Students used English as well as Spanish as they asked each other questions and they told each other what to do. Questions ranged from students requesting help to getting clarification about each other's stories. The following excerpts illustrate the range of questions that the focal students asked each other as they were writing in English.

Maria: Eso parese como un leon. Que es?[that looks like a lion. What is it?] (April 19, 2013)

Neyda: Como se hace un bikini? [how do you make [draw] a bikini?] (May 8, 2013)

Lina: Tu tienes la word Draculaura alli? [do you have the word Draculaura there?] (May 15, 2013)

Students asked each other many questions as they were having discussions about their official and unofficial worlds. Students also used their knowledge of both languages to

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tell each other what to do. In the following example, Lina is telling Neyda that she needs to stay in her space. The two girls are having an argument over space at the table. Lina wants Neyda to stay in her space and to keep her paper in her folder.

Lina: Neyda, don't put your papers in my folder. Tienes tu folder aqui tambien.

[You have your folder here too]

Neyda: Esque no lo puedo quitar. [It's because I can't take it away]

Lina: Pues quitalo para tras. Neyda, quitale el otro paper. Neyda, stop stepping on my paper. [Well take it back. Neyda, move back the other paper] (April 19, 2013)

Emergent bilingual writers drew upon their repertoire of two languages as they discussed their writing and illustrations. Students often asked questions about the illustrations or to elaborate on what was being written. They also provided feedback on each other's drawing and writing. In the excerpt, Neyda, Lina, and Maria are discussing a story that Neyda is working on.

Neyda: Look here is him birthday

Lina: That's not Draculaura's favorite things.

Maria: Porque le hiciste feo? [why did you make him ugly?]

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> Neyda: Es que no sabia [It's because I didn't know] Querias hacer [do you want to make] her ponytail little? Pretend I was drawing Draculaura. Draculaura is so little right here.

In this exchange, the 3 girls in the focal group are discussing Neyda's drawing of two Monster High characters and also providing some feedback. Maria is able to contribute to the conversation by using her linguistic abilities in Spanish. In continuing this conversation in both languages, Maria was able to participate in this conversation. These young writers' ability to mix both languages as they discuss writing-related topics and popular culture, and provided a way in which they could include others in the conversation. In the following excerpt, Neyda and Maria are once again discussing Draculaura, one of the main characters in Monster High.

> Neyda: I'm going to draw the principal
>
> Maria: The principal of Draculaura. She's beautiful?
>
> Neyda: No. Se quita su cabeza [No. she takes off her head]
>
> Maria: Eww
>
> Neyda: Dijiste [you said] "she's so beautiful" and I said "no, se quita la cabeza" [no, she takes off her head] De verdad. No estoy mintiendo [It's true. I am not lying.]
>
> Maria: El canal de mi papi. Una niña era calabera y alguien le quebro su cabeza

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> [on my daddy's channel. A little girl and somebody broke her head] En serio y
>
> estaba muerta [For real, and she was dead]
>
> Neyda: Quieres que te ayude [do you want me to help you?]
>
> Maria: Nah, mejor como Jaden. Jaden le hace, "nah" [Like Jaden…Jaden says,
>
> "nah"] (May 15, 2013)

In this excerpt, Maria and Neyda make use of both languages as they discuss characters in the Monster High show. This also shows how Maria's knowledge about the show is limited, but Neyda is able to include her in the conversation and writing about Monster High through their talk about the show.

Students in this study used their varying knowledge of two languages for multiple purposes. Students used codeswitching when discussing their writing with each other. Students also used both languages as they shared their personal experiences as well as their experiences with popular culture. Students were able to also navigate social relationships with each other through the use of English and Spanish. The access to both languages, although with varying proficiencies, allowed the opportunity for all focal students to be included in conversations about writing.

SELF-TALK

Focal students used English when they engaged in self-talk as they wrote their stories. Self-talk included students reading their stories to themselves or talking themselves through how to write a word. Students used self-talk as they were writing for different

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purposes. Maria used self-talk to remind herself of where she could find the words "all about." Students used self-talk to talk through what they were writing, like Juan's example of spelling "bad guy" and hearing the sounds in the words. Students also used self-talk to narrate or announce their progress in writing. Neyda tells herself what she is going to write about next and then continues to talk to herself as she writes the words. In talking to themselves in English, students used what they learned about how to do writing from the teacher and talked to themselves about and through this process. The following examples demonstrate the kinds of self-talk that students engaged in.

Maria: I know how to spell "All About" the aquarium cause I'm going to copy my paper (May 9, 2013)

Juan: Hey, where is my pencil? Oh, there it is. (self-talk) /b/ /a/ /d/ bad guy…bad guy.. bad.. have …was…. Fighting…. The…Power /r/ /r/ against the power ranger. /r/ and.. (May 20, 2013)

Neyda: I'm going to write a song….. (self-talk) and… and.. and…a…and… a… little….I…I…and a little girl said… said…s /ai/.. said … sai /d/ I'm doing a music and a little girl and… (May 15, 2013)

In using this self-talk, students also adopted the language of instruction as they talked themselves through the process of writing a story or a word. Students used the strategies modeled by Ms. Brown to talk to themselves. The following exemplifies how Juan uses self-talk to talk through what he is writing the word "saw."

Juan: (self-talk) I went with

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Juan: (self-talk) I went with this and I saw /aww/ saw /aww/ How you spell /aw/?

Juan (self-talk): I went were it was and I saw…. (May 7, 2013)

On three different occasions, Juan talks to himself as he is writing his story. For example, when he is writing the word "saw." Juan practices saying the sounds in the word just like the teacher models how to hear and record sounds in words. Juan even asks himself the question as he is writing about the spelling of the word saw. The focal students engaged in self-talk during the writing process, but did so only in English. By engaging in this self-talk only in English, students establish that they understand that English is the language of official learning in this classroom, thus demonstrating that these very young students understood the different status of languages within the classroom setting.

Discussion

The young, emergent, bilingual students in this study demonstrated the potential for using language in sophisticated ways. Even with limited experiences in literacy in Spanish, these students were able to make use of their first language and use a repertoire of translanguaging strategies. They had limited opportunities to use their native language for instructional purposes, but they used their knowledge of Spanish to accomplish not only academic work, but also social work within the group. The use of Spanish was used during the writing time to discuss what they were writing although the actual composing was done in English. For Maria, this unofficial use of language was a scaffold as she attempted to do the work in a language in which she was not proficient. One particular

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example of this was when Maria was writing a story about how she had gotten a new dog. Maria tells an elaborate story in Spanish and English and the other students interact with her as she is telling the story. The final product is one sentence in English, but her oral story is rich and filled with details. Maria is able to share her story orally with other students, but this is not valued as the finished written story. Students also used their different levels of knowledge of both languages in order to include peers in the conversations. For example, in one particular instance, Neyda and Maria were having a conversation about Monster High. Maria begins to recall a conversation that she had with her mother about wanting to watch the show. When Maria describes the conversation with her mother, she switches to speaking Spanish because that is the language spoken at home. Codeswitching was often used when students were having conversations about popular culture topics. Additionally, one day the students are having a conversation about a song in Spanish that most of the students in the group know. Students begin to sing the song and talk about it in both languages. Neyda talks to Maria who does not know the song in Spanish and switches to English when she talks to Lina, "Maria, mira. Haci es como canta la musica de Monster High [This is how you sing the music from Monster High]. Lina, show her how it's done!" This interaction between students shows how students used both languages to discuss a popular culture topic as well as to engage in the social work which was to include everyone in the conversation.

Much of the research focused on translanguaging has taken place in bilingual classrooms (e.g. Bauer, Presidado, & Colomer, 2017; Martínez, 2010; Reyes, 2012; Reynolds & Orellana, 2009)The findings from this study regarding knowledge and use of

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language by emergent bilingual students are congruent with the findings from other studies that show that young bilingual students are capable of sophisticated linguistic work (Bauer, Presidado, & Colomer, 2017; Gort, 2006; Velasco & García, 2014). This study contributes to existing body of work by researching five-year-old students who have not received any formal literacy instruction in their native language. Through this study, we see how the emergent bilingual kindergarten students use translanguaging practices to achieve both academic and social work in their classroom. Other studies have focused on young students. Reyes' (2006) study also examined preschoolers' patterns of language and literacy in Spanish and English in a bilingual classroom. Reyes (2006) concluded that from a young age, emergent bilingual students try to make sense of their knowledge of two languages and make use of tools from both languages. In a similar fashion, this study expands on that notion by showing how young students are able to use language in sophisticated ways. Previous studies also have prompted us to consider the affordances of bilingualism (Gort, 2012; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez, 2001; Moll, 1990; Váldes, 1996). The current study, which took place in an English-only context, shows how students were able to use both languages for social purposes, but had varying degrees of access when it came to discussions about writing. This study also gives us a glimpse into how at a very early age, students begin to understand the linguistic power. Lina, the student with the highest English proficiency in the group was afforded more power within the group and the classroom. Students also understood that English was to be used for the official writing. The study showcases the tensions around language ideologies that these students must navigate as they make meaning. It also

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reminds us that even the youngest learners operate within institutional and policy contexts that limit their potential.

Finally, this study is unique in that students in this classroom were all bilingual with the exception of one student and the teachers. With the growing demographics of Latino students in schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016) and the stagnant number of teachers from diverse groups (USDOE, 2016), this is the norm in many classrooms. Despite the bilingualism in this particular classroom and community, students had limited access to their native language for academic purposes. The findings from this study speak to the potential for learning that could happen if teachers were to draw on translanguaging practices to support and create opportunities for literacy learning

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