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# Navigating Authoritative Discourses in a Multilingual Classroom: Conversations with Policy and Practice

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## Abstract

Using Bakhtinian concepts of persuasive and authoritative discourse, this study reports on science and English language arts instructional practices in a multilingual, rural, fourth-grade classroom in Kenya. Situated in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and through the use of case study, the study explores classroom discourse data to illustrate how teachers use instructional practices to reproduce, contest, or navigate prevailing institutional monolingual policies when mediating students' access to literacy and content. By analyzing classroom discourse, the authors argue that restrictive language policies that aspire for fixity disconnect multilingual learners from their daily realities. In contrast, they call for a (re)construction of multilingual pedagogy that capitalizes on the strengths of learners, teachers, and linguistic communities by embracing students' languages and language varieties in language learning and literacy development. In particular, implications are drawn for the use of EMI for emerging bilingual and multilingual learners. The authors identify the need to prepare teachers for a multilingual reality through legitimizing multilingual pedagogies such as translanguaging.

Multilingualism was ideologically obscured in 17th- and 18th-century Europe through the rationalization of “one-nation, one-language” campaigns that led to suppression of certain languages and enactment of language standardization movements during the 19th century (Adams, Janse, & Swain, 2002; Franceschini, 2011). Standardization movements shaped language and literacy research and embraced monolingual ideology as a norm, rather than as a social ideological and political construct. In many postindependence African nations, the pervasiveness of multiple languages has supplied a pretext for adopting monolingual ideology that excludes use of home languages in educational contexts. National policy in multilingual Kenya, for instance, mandates English medium instruction (EMI) from fourth grade in all public schools. However, research (Abiria, Early, & Kendrick, 2013; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Makalela, 2015) shows that multilinguals typically leverage their communicative repertoires as an integrated system for maximizing communicative potential. This study investigates how two teachers of English language arts (ELA) and science utilized their students’ linguistic repertoires in EMI classrooms and the patterns of participation that ensued in the process of student knowledge construction.

### **Discourse Practices in African Classrooms**

EMI in African classrooms has impacted students’ engagement variously. Classroom discourse studies in African classrooms have often shown prevalence of teacher-centered discourse patterns, which have been said to contribute to silencing and/or exclusion of students’ sociocultural experiences and to underachievement; hence, exclusion from epistemic access (Bunyi, 2001; Kiramba, 2017a, 2018; Ngwaru, 2011). This is because EMI has often marginalized home languages that are familiar to students, and thus linguistic hierarchies have been reproduced in these postcolonial settings. Scholars have observed that students’ participation is constrained in knowledge production due to their anxiety in using unfamiliar language(s), reluctance to participate, and lack of self-confidence (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009), rendering students as recipients of scripted knowledge. This trend has been reported in several African countries (e.g., Ngwaru, 2011, and Opoku-Amankwa, 2009, for Ghana; Williams & Snipper,

1990, for Malawi; Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007, for Kenya and Nigeria; Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007, Ackers & Hardman, 2001, Bunyi, 2001, 2008, Kembo-Sure & Ogechi, 2016, Kiramba, 2016a, Pontefract & Hardman, 2005, among others, for Kenya). These studies show that teacher–student interaction often takes the form of lengthy recitations of questions (by the teacher) and answers (by individual pupils or the whole class).

Pontefract and Hardman’s (2005) study of classroom discourse in Kenyan primary classrooms observed that recitation by the teacher and memorization and rote repetition by the students dominated classroom discourse, with few to no student-generated questions. They concluded that the teaching approach did not enhance a mastery of English. Similarly, Abd-Kadir and Hardman’s (2007) study on discourse patterns in Nigerian and Kenyan classrooms found a predominant teacher-centered discourse that emphasized recall of facts and limited student participation in knowledge production.

The use of rote memorization, repetition of formulaic phrases, and minimal student input has been deemed *safe talk practices* (Chick, 1996). Chick (1996) described safe talk as highly limited language used by teachers to avoid violating any proscribed language routines, like first language (L1) use in EMI classrooms. Students employ safe talk to avoid situations that give rise to linguistic policing and gate-keeping by teachers and other students. Such safe talk further leads to student silencing, rendering students’ home language resources invisible (Kiramba, 2017a).

Classroom discourse research studies have been carried out in multilingual settings in the Global South and Global North since the 1990s (Martin-Jones, 2015). These studies demonstrated prevalence of code-switching practices in the classroom (Adendorff, 1993; Arthur, 1996; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Lin, 1999; Merritt, Cleghorn, Abagi, & Bunyi, 1992; Ndayipfukamiye, 1994). Code-switching was seen as an additional resource for multilingual teachers and students. Teachers drew on this resource to meet specific purposes in the classroom. For example, Arthur (1996) demonstrated a teacher’s use of Setswana in a multilingual classroom to mitigate the challenges of using EMI. These earlier studies demonstrated the importance and functions of home languages in classroom discourse.

To date, research in educational linguistics across the globe continues to demonstrate the importance of home languages in connecting

classroom content to the familiar linguistic and cultural world of the student, making a case for inclusion of home languages in the classroom to make content more accessible to students (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Cleghorn, 1992; Cummins, 2008; García, 2009; Gibbons, 2006; Kiramba, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b; Makalela, 2015; Merritt et al., 1992; Probyn, 2015; Setati, Adler, Reed, & Bapoo, 2002).

### **Translanguaging**

In recent years languages have been considered as a social practice, a daily reality for multilingual speakers, rather than separate codes (Canagarajah, 2011; García, 2009). *Translanguaging* is one of the terms that represent this fluidity in language use by multilingual speakers. The term *translanguaging* was introduced by Williams (1994) and has been developed to mean “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages in order to maximize communicative potential” (García, 2009, p. 140). Translanguaging suggests that bi/multilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they draw features strategically to communicate effectively. Canagarajah (2011) has defined *translanguaging* as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (p. 401). In this study, we use the term *translanguaging* to refer to the process whereby bi/multilingual students and teachers utilize their linguistic repertoires to maximize communication goals.

Some teachers employ translanguaging, which involves mixing, crossing, and hybridizing one or more language in their classrooms (Kiramba, 2016b). Sayer (2013), for example, demonstrated how bilingual teachers and students mediated academic content and language ideologies through translanguaging strategies. Abiria et al. (2013) found that Ugandan teachers and their students employed multiple linguistic and multimodal repertoires to maximize communication. Kiramba (2016b) and Cleghorn (1992) observed that translanguaging science lessons were more accessible than English-only lessons in Kenyan classrooms. Translanguaging practices provided teachers with a space to make cross-linguistic analogies and made lesson content more comprehensible to students.

Moreover, translanguaging—as a communicative and pedagogical strategy—also affords learners the expression and affirmation of multiple identities (Cummins & Early, 2011). The use of a student’s L1 in a second language (L2) context is acknowledged as one of the most powerful means for linking intended L2 linguistic and academic knowledge with the knowledge already developed in L1 (Cummins, 2008), and considerable scholarship has characterized literacy development in two or more languages (García, 2009). Martin-Jones and Jones (2000) use the term *multilingual literacies* to capture the complexity and multiplicity of individual and group repertoires; “in multilingual settings, people typically have access to several codes which they move in and out of with considerable fluency and subtlety as they speak and write” (p. 7). Thus, translanguaging validates home languages and is bound up with identity formation. It has been empirically observed to be a productive approach to language learning, leading to intellectual and affective gains, social interaction, meaning making, and academic success. It allows the voices of multilingual students to be heard (Bakhtin, 1981) and enables them to draw on the multiple communicative resources to enhance participation and creativity (Kiramba, 2017b).

Contrary to monolingual orientations to language learning, several scholars have called for adoption of holistic translanguaging approaches in the teaching of additional languages to benefit from linguistic realities of emergent multilinguals (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; García, 2009; Sayer, 2013). Kiramba (2016a, 2016b) and Blackledge, Creese, and Takhi (2014) highlight the agentive roles of teachers in mediating EMI and show how multilingual children draw from an integrated communicative repertoire.

Nonetheless, monolingual language policies imposed on multilingual contexts like Kenya create language discontinuities between school and home. The view of home language as a problem (Ruiz, 1984) creates multiple disadvantages for emerging multilinguals. For instance, although translanguaging generally permeates classroom discourses across multiple contexts, tensions around translanguaging practices in multilingual classrooms arise (McGlynn & Martin, 2009). Such tensions include those between an official language policy that privileges English and the multilingual realities and localities of students inside and outside of the classroom (Kiramba, 2017a), due to continued ideological preference for standard language varieties

(Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Kiramba, 2018; Sayer, 2013). Other controversies include language testing and assessment (Taylor & Snoddon, 2013) and standard conventions of writing (Canagarajah, 2011). Jaspers and Madsen (2016) argued that we should not overstate the reach of translingual practices, noting the continuing symbolic power associated with language separation (e.g., in academic registers). Acknowledging that a plurilingual curricular would address the needs of students in the diverse populace in schools today, Jaspers and Madsen point out that it is unwise to overlook the significance of language separation. While acknowledging the significance of institutional practices associated with language separation, we demonstrate that home languages play a pivotal role in students' access to EMI curriculum and are essential in mediating acquisition of school languages.

This study was motivated by a recognition that students play active roles in knowledge construction, the paucity of research on how Kenyan educators instruct emerging multilinguals in EMI classrooms, and a need to interrogate prevailing discourses in language and content area classrooms. An understanding of EMI-constrained multilingual classroom interactions opens a door for dialogue around additional pedagogical strategies for teaching that leverage multiple languages.

Studies on Kenyan classrooms have noted a teacher-dominated discourse (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007; Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Bunyi, 2001, 2008; Cleghorn, 1992; Kembo-Sure & Ogechi, 2016). However, we still need to shed more light on how teachers negotiate, reproduce, or contest EMI policies while at the same time highlighting how teachers' practice can engage or inhibit student's participation in knowledge production and learning. To do this, we draw on Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of persuasive and authoritative discourse to interrogate this case study's observed discursive educational practices and ask the following:

1. How do teachers utilize students' linguistic repertoires in ELA and science lessons?
2. How does the use of these linguistic resources influence students' participation in knowledge construction?
3. How do deployments of these linguistic resources reproduce, negotiate, and contest institutional monolingual policies?

## Theoretical Framework: Authoritative and Persuasive Discourse

Bakhtin's (1981) notions of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse afford a lens to analyze discursive classroom practices observed in this case. For Bakhtin,

the authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it . . . [and] make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally, we encounter it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is so to speak the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. (p. 342)

This authoritative word arises from the public legitimacy and recognition always already granted to it as well as from its having been the past (prior) foundation for all current knowledge. In contrast, the internally persuasive discourse is

tightly interwoven with "one's own word." In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and halfsomeone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. *It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts.* More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a struggle with other internally persuasive discourses. Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values.

(Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 345-346, emphasis added)

The emphasis above highlights the critical role of internally persuasive discourse for learning and education. It involves a “retelling in one’s own words” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341), so that educational content becomes one’s own, as close to one’s own words (and world) as possible. Making classroom discourse accessible to students provides an opportunity for students to own it, to play with it and its contexts, and, thus, enhance multilingual students’ authentic voices and creativity in knowledge production. This is in contrast to the authoritative word, which remains distanced (Bakhtin, 1981).

In an environment of authoritative discourse, interaction of consciousness becomes difficult. It precludes dialogue. Authoritative discourse “knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousness; someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 81). As such, “when verbal disciplines are taught in school, two basic modes are recognized for the appropriation and transmission—simultaneously—of another’s words (a text, a rule, a model): ‘reciting by heart’ and ‘retelling in one’s own words’” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341). Bakhtin (1981) juxtaposes the authoritative discourse of “reciting by heart”—seen in the above-noted use of safe talk practices, rote memorization, repetition of formulaic phrases, and a minimum student input—with the internally persuasive discourse of “retelling in one’s own words” facilitated by translanguaging and drawing on the students’ and teacher’s funds of knowledge and actual lived experiences.

In this study, internally persuasive discourse (IPD) is operationalized following Matusov and Duyke (2010), who analyze it into three distinctions (described in detail below): appropriation, authorship, and dialogic. We apply all three intertwining categories to our analysis of discursive educational practices in the ELA and science classrooms.

### ***Appropriation as Internal to the Individual***

Appropriation occurs when someone else’s words, ideas, approaches, and knowledge are taken up as one’s own (Matusov & Duyke, 2010). Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes that appropriation is done freely; where IPD is involved, the word of the other “is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions” (p. 345). Rather, an individual requires no

imposition from someone else to be persuaded; the other's word is simply taken up. Enthusiasm in learners can be a sign of this appropriation. In view of appropriation, a teacher's goal can be to attempt to make the curriculum appropriable by students (Matusov & Duyke, 2010). Because one means to this end involves leveraging the students' biases through their ideas, opinions, and beliefs, Matusov and Duyke caution that students can appropriate prejudices, chauvinisms, and intolerances as well. This "risk" of appropriation does not rule out its necessity for IPD.

### ***Authorship as Internal to IPD***

Student authorship involves student-generated self-assignments and long-term projects that are acceptable as practices in their community. Matusov (2011) defines authorship as "a participant's bid for unique, creative contribution that is fully or partially recognized by a relevant community" (p. 24). Such authorship might be deemed problematic, contested, or controversial, but students' authorship of their own work as unique, original, and in their own embodied voice—their internally persuasive voice—is significant for learning. Authorship, including spoken words, makes students' activities visible. As a site of potential dialogue, it is capable of transforming the agency of students and teachers.

### ***Dialogue as Internal to IPD***

Dialogic IPD implies that participants are self-consciously, reflectively "testing ideas and searching for the boundaries of personally vested truths" (Matusov & Duyke, 2010, p. 174). In principle, all utterances are inherently dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981). They have "a history and a present which exist in a continually negotiated state of intense and essential axiological interaction" (Hall, Vitanova, & Marchenkova, 2005, p. 3). Bakhtin's observations around dialogue are relevant for multilingual/multicultural settings where differences between self and other are not only a matter of individual peculiarities but also complicated by requirements to mediate a linguistic and cultural divide. Through language, students bring their cultural worlds to the classroom while maintaining and shaping them to their own purposes (Hall et al., 2005). Yet authoritative classroom settings

often suppress this. When students translanguaged to participate in class activities, we can see this as their dialogized reflection on both their understanding of language and their larger cultural contexts as a way to mediate and enable participation.

Dialogic IPD locates learning in social interaction rather than only in the mind of individual learner. As such, to learn a language does not mean accumulating a variety of decontextualized forms or structures but rather entering into ways of communicating that are defined by specific economic, political, and historical forms (Hall et al., 2005; Vygotsky, 2012). This social interactional dimension of learning means that every utterance “is indissolubly merged with the response” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 282). The dialogic aspect of IPD is crucial, because it permits the linking of curricular ideas with the past, present, and future in ways that activate the students’ discourse in the classroom (Matusov & Duyke, 2010). Understanding IPD, including the three dimensions of appropriation, authorship, and dialogue as an alternative to authoritative discourse, can therefore help educators move away from the notion of learning as a monolingual, unidirectional transmission of knowledge from the teacher and/or the official text to the student.

## **Methods and Materials**

### ***Setting***

This qualitative case study took place in a rural primary school in Kenya, a multilingual country with speakers of approximately 67 living languages (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2016). The school was selected on the basis of its rural setting and its adherence to the transitional bilingual education early-exit program. For the most part, it served economically disadvantaged families in the local community. Students at the school were emerging multilinguals (speaking two to three languages while acquiring an additional language). The case in this study was a fourth-grade classroom with 28 students (12 girls and 16 boys), ranging in age from 9 to 12 years old. All the students were learning English as an additional language and did not have access to English at home. At home, students spoke Kimeru or Kiswahili, with a few speaking Kiluhya and Kikuyu. The choice of fourth

grade was important as a transitional phase to EMI and a window on discourse practices in two classrooms (ELA and science) in an area with shared sociolinguistic profiles, which are also shared by many rural schools across Kenya. EMI instruction is mandated by the Ministry of Education from the fourth grade.

### ***Participants***

We used purposive sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to select two teachers (Mr. Jabari and Mrs. Tabasamu; all names used are pseudonyms) in light of their potential to provide us with rich data as answers to research questions and to develop a deeper understanding of the discourse practices in their fourth-grade lessons. Discursive classroom practices across two different subjects were observed. Mr. Jabari is a trained primary school teacher with 28 years' teaching experience. He taught ELA. Mrs. Tabasamu had 16 years' teaching experience as a trained primary science teacher.

### ***Data Sources***

Primary data sources included field notes and audio recordings of classroom discourse collected over a 6-month period. In total, this included 35 science lessons and 40 English lessons, each 30 minutes long. We focused on the whole-class conversations because students had no control over who the teacher chose to respond to their questions. Note taking took into account contextual information, nonverbal behavior, description of physical scenes, identification of the participants, and so forth.

Audio recordings of all lessons were transcribed using standard orthographies for the participants' languages and translated into English by the first author. Both authors then identified illustrative discourses relating to the research questions. These discourses were revisited from the audio recordings, with the first author providing English translations. Excerpts from the transcripts presented in this study are a result of this process. There was also cross-referencing to field notes, which helped in contextualizing the recorded utterances and making further sense of what was going on in particular instances of talk.

### ***Transcription Conventions***

The transcription conventions adopted were as follows:

T	teacher
S1	student one
S2	student two
SS:	students
S-all	all students
*	incorrect phrase or word, either conventional or semantic errors
[ ]	researcher's observations and descriptions
( )	translations
<i>Italics</i>	words, phrases, or sentences in languages other than English
. . .	pause

### ***Data Analysis***

Transcribed data were analyzed using a thematic approach, which “involves discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data” (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014, p. 271). The first data set included all transcriptions of classroom discourse in the two subject areas. This provided an overall picture of the major language use patterns in the classroom. Working systematically through the data, we identified and progressively integrated topics into higher order key themes to enable us address the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We followed the five stages recommended in data management for thematic analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014): familiarization, initial thematic framework, indexing and sorting, reviewing data extracts for coherence, and data summary and display.

Through a close reading of the transcribed data, we developed analytic codes to group pieces of data into categories of relevant information, noting recurrent terms. The framework was a mixture of emergent and a priori themes. The themes/subthemes were identified both inductively (as themes derived from literature and theoretical ideas) and deductively (new ideas from the data). We reviewed them taking into account the aims of the study. The themes

were then taken up for indexing and sorting stage. This more detailed analysis drew on the construct of authoritative and persuasive discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). We showed from the data which themes or subthemes were referred to in the data selection; read the transcriptions and labeled them, noting the thematic references in the margins of the transcript; and applied labels to chunks of data that we judged to be about the same thing so that similarly labeled data extracts could be further analyzed. After indexing, we reassembled materials with similar contents and properties together, identifying points where single themes were discussed at different points across the data collection. The sorting yielded a portrait of each teacher's discursive practices with respect to communicative repertoires in EMI classroom.

We analyzed the data in a case and cross-case analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Having developed the categories of relevant patterns in an individual subject, we checked these patterns for two subjects under investigation. Within-case analysis helped us to describe, understand, and explain a single bounded case about the individual subject and teacher and students' discursive choices. Cross-case analysis helped us develop a more sophisticated descriptions of the entire case. The discourse texts discussed in this article are taken as typical discourse patterns identified by the initial more holistic analysis.

## **Findings**

The findings below illustrate the discursive practices of two fourth-grade teachers of ELA and science, respectively. In particular, they disclose how the teachers and their students deployed linguistic resources that reproduced, contested, or negotiated the school's institutional monolingual EMI policy.

### ***Case 1: English Language Arts Instruction***

The ELA curriculum had three distinct sections: oral skills, reading, and writing. Each lesson began with oral skills covering key vocabulary items in a topic, followed by reading comprehension, and then writing activities.

**Oral skills.** The following is an example of oral skills discourse in Mr. Jabari's classroom. The specific topic for the lesson was people in the community. Mr. Jabari asks students to read each sentence aloud in class.

*Excerpt 1*

- 1 T: The next question, Kito!
  - 2 Kito: A person who grows potatoes, maize, vegetables,  
and other crops is called a farmer.
  - 3 T: [correcting student's pronunciation] . . . and other  
crops is called a?
  - 4 SS: Farmer.
  - 5 T: Repeat the sentence everybody!
  - 6 S-all: [students repeat the sentence twice after teacher's  
prompt, again!]
  - 7 T: [Repeats the sentence] A person who grows potatoes,  
cabbages, vegetables is called a what?
  - 8 SS: Farmer.
- \*\*\*
- 9 T: [later, summarizing] Today we have learned the terms  
*dispensary, nomads, manyatta, farmer, doctor, and*  
*neighbor*. [Students' noise level is high.] Can you  
keep quiet! Who did we say a nomad is? [prolonged  
silence] If you want to answer a question raise up  
your hand, *sawa sawa?* (OK?) [continuing] Today  
we have learned about people in the community. We  
have learned about a nomad and said, it is a person  
who moves from one place to another . . . isn't it?
  - 10 S-few: Yes. [The teacher reviewed all the terms that were  
learned by prompting students' response with "isn't  
it?"].

The teacher-student interaction in this oral lesson followed initiation, response, and evaluation (IRE; Mehan, 1979, cited in Cazden, 2001) discourse pattern. The teacher asked a student to read a sentence as seen in Turn 1, then prompted the students to repeat reading the sentence(s), Turns 5 and 6. The teacher repeated sentences after the students as shown in Turn 7, leaving off the vocabulary word,

eliciting students' response by using "is called?" Students mainly kept silent (Turn 9) when asked wh-questions as they looked up the words to use from the textbook. The students' responses were limited to repetition, a consequence of both their emerging English language proficiency and the monolingual teaching orientation to ELA. The students repeated factual knowledge, and the teacher seemed to take the role of transmitting knowledge to students through recitation, with feedback limited to repeating the phrases and reinforcing. In Turn 10, the teacher reviewed the lesson, trying to engage students by using the tag "isn't it?" to elicit a response, which was limited to "yes." Bakhtin (1981) notes that authoritative discourse only recognizes itself, so responses to it will be either affirmations, the students' "yes," or silence. Opportunities to grasp the full meaning of the vocabulary items learned or appropriate them to students' cultures and languages is limited due to authoritative language use in the classroom.

**Reading skills.** Literacy practices during reading lessons included individual reading, reading aloud in the classroom, comprehension questions that were asked orally, and later guided writing in response to prompts based on a passage. The following excerpts a reading lesson. The title of the reading task was "Adventure in the Forest," the story of a boy who went to a forest, saw some good-looking fruits and wanted to grab some, but was suddenly confronted by a giant and became afraid. During the first 5 minutes of the lesson, Mr. Jabari asked students to look at a picture in the textbook and describe what they saw, guiding them to create a story by speaking about the picture:

*Excerpt 2: Adventure in the Forest*

- 11 T: Look at the picture and tell us what is happening.
- 12 S1: The boy was afraid.
- 13 T: Yeah, that boy was afraid.
- 14 S2: The giant was laughing him!
- 15 S-many: Yes!
- 16 T: Very good! The giant was laughing at him [correcting students' phrase]. He was also shaking him. [The teacher demonstrates holding and shaking.] Now look at page 160 of your books. Use this picture to

complete these sentences. Who can complete these sentences? [The teacher reads the beginning phrases for the students to complete using their own words.]  
He looked very . . . very what?

- 17 S3: Huge.
- 18 T: Eeh . . . [agreeing] He held . . . held is past tense of hold . . . so he held
- 19 S2: He held Awoi and started shaking him. [reading from the text]
- 20 T: What did Awoi do? He felt . . . ?
- 21 S4: He felt . . .
- 22 T: He felt what? [prolonged silence as students seem to be looking up the word *felt* from the passage] *Watu wengine wanalala* (Some people are sleeping). Wake up! [prolonged silence]. [The teacher ignores the silence and goes to the next question.] Then he thought . . . ? [prolonged silence] Come on, from the picture and the story! What did Awoi feel?
- 23 S4: He felt afraid.
- 24 T: Yes, he felt afraid. Then he thought? Thought is the past tense of think. [prolonged silence] [frustrated] *Ah! Ni kama nimekwambia* (Ah! I have actually hinted to the answer). *Nakupeleka pole pole hushiki kitu?* (I am taking time to explain but why won't you understand anything?) Say something . . . [The students remained silent. Students were then asked to write the story and complete it using the pictures and the story. Students began writing the story filling in the guided composition.]

Excerpt 2 typifies the first part of a reading lesson. Students were required to describe a picture and answer questions using their own words. Initially, some students responded (Turns 12, 14, and 17). However, when silence sets in (Turns 22 and 24), the teacher becomes frustrated and switches to Kiswahili (Turns 22 and 24). He consequently directs students to move on to the next (writing portion) of the reading lesson.

Contextually marked by IRE interactional structure with little space for student appropriation of the content, the use of Kiswahili in the classroom's authoritative EMI environment illustrates the role

of a language other than English as punitive (used for scolding, Turns 22 and 24) or as only of limited, instrumental value to enable mastery of the target language. At the same time, this use of Kiswahili negotiates, even works around, the English-only stricture and seems to arise out of the teacher's frustrated but sincere desire to help his students learn.

**Writing skills.** The most common writing practice observed in this ELA classroom was copying from chalkboard and textbook. Writing tasks seemed to emphasize mechanics, that is, the correct formation of handwriting, letters, words, phrases, and sentences. Grammar was taught as part of writing, where the teacher would write sentences and ask students to construct their own sentences using the grammatical features shown. The following excerpt typifies the grammar-writing lessons observed. The teacher began by writing the following sentence on the board: "The train is very far away but I can see it." He then asked students to read the sentence aloud, guiding them to identify the use of *very* and *but*. He then asked the students to construct 10 sentences each using this grammatical form. As students did so, the teacher moved around the classroom, commenting on and grading the student's sentences and cautioning them not to copy from friends. As he graded students' work, I could hear him asking questions like "Do Land Rovers walk? What is this? Don't do the same pattern; think of other words."

*Excerpt 3: Writing: Use of "very . . . but"*

- 25 S1: *Mwalimu huyu anaangalia yangu* (Excuse me teacher, this one is copying my work). [Copying and silence reigned. Almasi and her seatmate have similar sentences; they have copied from each other.]
- 26 SS: Yes! Yes teacher! [Students raise hands asking the teacher to come over to see what they have written.]
- 27 T: Sit down! There is something I want to correct. When starting a new sentence, for example, someone has said, "The tea is very hot but I can drink." You should start with a capital letter and finish with a full stop. Also note, when using "I" it should be capital because it refers to a human being. [Teacher

- starts walking around and realizes students are writing sentences similar to the example given earlier.] Excuse me, I won't mark a sentence like this: "The elephant is far away but I can see it." Don't use this. There are many things you can write about!
- 28 T: [continuing] Also do you write the aeroplane like this? *Aerloplane* . . . [spelling issues abound in the classroom], *rolly* for a lorry . . . [prolonged silence]. [Teacher calls for attention and shares a sentence one student had written.] Look at this sentence! Can you read the sentence?
- 29 S-all: "\*The hyena is very king but I can see it."
- 30 T: Read again! [The students read but they could not realize what the mistake was.] Is the sentence correct?
- 31 S-many: [Mixed reaction; silence, "yes!", "no!"]
- 32 T: [Writes another lesson] The lion is very king . . . ?  
What is this, class four pupils? [Reading another sentence by another student] \*The dog is very thin but I can solve it. [Teacher writes these sentences on board.] Does it have a meaning?
- 33 S-many: [Mixed responses] No! Yes!
- 34 T: What could he have said?
- 35 S-all: [Silence. The teacher shares all of the wrong sentences on the board, but the students barely see the mistakes he wants to them to identify.]
- 36 T: What could he have said? [prolonged silence] He could have said, "The sum is very challenging but I can solve it, or the dog is very thin but can walk for a long distance."

Beginning with an example, students were then asked to use this knowledge to generate their own sentences. Although their examples indicate a grasp of the grammatical form, the semantics were not well developed. Both "\*The hyena is very king but I can see it" and "\*The dog is very thin but I can solve it" (Turns 29 and 32) suggest a mastery of the sentence structure but not its meaning, although the general copying of the teacher's and peers' alike makes it unclear to what extent even the grammatical structure has been grasped. In general, the students lacked an adequate vocabulary to construct correct English sentences of their ideas.

Nonetheless, this excerpt belies some degree of appropriation and authorship by the students. Although their offerings were frequently semantically incorrect and their participation subject to authoritative criticism by the teacher, most seemed unfazed by this and relished the opportunity to have their writing acknowledged. In particular, the moments of engagement by the students (Turns 26, 31, and 33) during this exercise drawing attention to their sentence, even when being critiqued, stand in marked contrast to silence both during other lessons and this one, as when the teacher asks, “What could he have said?” (Turn 36). Had an English-only rule not been in effect in the classroom, experientially and conceptually sound but semantically incorrect sentences like “\*The dog is very thin but I can solve it” could have been engaged dialogically—as a conversation and discussion around the products of student authorship—to uncover the intended meaning and direct the students to an adequate expression in English. Authoritative instruction that acknowledges only the legitimacy of English, however, forestalls that possibility.

### **Case 2: Science Instruction**

Mrs. Tabasamu drew from students’ knowledge of home languages by using Kiswahili and Kimeru together with English (the required language). She also translated key points of the lesson into Kiswahili and Kimeru and checked for comprehension cues from the students who were silent. She also repeated students’ responses using EMI. The science classroom reflected tension between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse. The multilingual reality of the classroom necessitated translanguaging and the elicitation of multiple voices.

#### *Excerpt 4: Factors affecting floating and sinking*

- 1 T: Ok. So, what do we mean by material? [Silence. The teacher picks a wooden chalkboard ruler and a book ruler.] The material of this one and this one; *zote mbili ni* (both of them are) rulers. *Lakini ukiangalia moja imeundwa na mbao, nyingine plastiki* (but when you look at them, one is made of wood and the other one plastic). So that is what we mean when

talking of material. These are rulers, *si ndio?* (Isn't it?) *Zote mbili ni?* (The two are?)

- 2 SS: Rulers.
- 3 T: *Lakini ukiangalia hii imeundwa na plastiki* (But if you look at this one it is made of plastic). So that's what it means when we are talking about material. Now I am coming to the size. Are they of the same size?
- 4 S-all: No!
- 5 T: What can you say about the size? [repeats the question twice, followed by prolonged silence]
- 6 S1: One is big, another one is small.
- 7 T: How? One is big, and the other one is small. It is big in which way? [prolonged silence] [Calling on a student] Mahiri!
- 8 Mahiri: The wood one is longer than the other one.
- 9 T: That is what I wanted . . . the size of the wooden ruler is longer than plastic one. So, when we are talking of size, that's what it means. And then apart from being long and short, another may be thick another one may be thin. *Kimoja kiwe kikubwa kingine kidogo/kikonde* (one may be big, another one may be small or thin). We can also be talking of size there. I want to explain to you how materials affect floating and sinking. [Teacher gets a plastic bottle and a glass bottle.] These are all bottles but made of different what?
- 10 SS: Materials.
- 11 T: *Hii chupa imeundwa na material gani?* [Which material is this bottle made of?]
- 12 S-all: Plastic.
- 13 T: *Kuna hii nyingine ya soda* (There is this other soda bottle). This material is different from this. They are all bottles but made of different materials. When you put them in water what do you think will happen? (pause) The plastic bottle will?
- 14 S1: Float.
- 15 T: What about the other soda bottle?
- 16 S2: Sink.

- 17 T: It will sink. *Italingana na kitu kinaundwa na nini* (It will depend on what it is made of). The material will make it sink or float. *Pia* (Also) shape also matters a lot. *Ule muundo wa kitu* (the shape of an item), *ile* (that) shape, *itadetermine* (it will determine) if that object is going to float or sink. So, the two, material and shape, determine the sinking and floating. [Translating into the third language, Kimeru] Shape *nitumaga gintu kigasink kana kigeta atia?* (Shape makes a thing to sink or?)
- 18 S: *kigafloat* (to float) [Kimeru and English].
- 19 T: Now the last one: size. Does it matter?
- 20 S-all: No!
- 21 T: Does it matter whether something is long or short?
- 22 S-all: No!
- 23 T: Bottle top, you know it. What did we say it does? Does it float or sink? *Kulingana na vile ilivyo* (depending on how it is). It will?
- 24 S-few: Float.
- 25 T: And when we take it and crush it, it will sink. That is because shape *yake imebadilika* (has changed). Shape *yake sasa imebalika* (its shape has now changed). *Na ndio unaona* (And that's why you see) the same *ambayo ilikuwa inaelea itaenda chini* (that which was floating, now sinks), and that's because the shape now has changed. Isn't it?
- 26 S-all: Yes!
- 27 T: So write these notes before the bell rings. [Teacher writes notes on the board and students begin copying into their note books.]

In this science lesson, Mrs. Tabasamu mixes English, Kiswahili, and Kimeru back and forth. She uses translanguaging to engage the students' thinking through repetition of information already presented in the three languages. We see translation in Turns 1, 9, and 25 and code mixing in Turn 17 *itadepend* (Swahili/English), *itadetermine* (Swahili/English), *gusink* (Kimeru/English; to sink), *kigasink* (Kimeru/English), and *kigafloat* (Kimeru-English). Although Mrs.

Tabasamu uses English predominantly in this lesson, the students' silence alerts her to the fact that there is misunderstanding or that students are not following. This in turn triggers translation into Kiswahili or Kimeru (Turns 1, 3, 9, 11, 13, 17, and 25). Students also engage in translanguaging (Turn 18), or one-word English phrases. In general, students produced short phrases or sentences in English, but this indicated an understanding of the content.

Translanguaging affords the teacher a chance to allow students to retell the science content in their own words, thus enabling them to appropriate both the terminology and the concept as internally persuasive (Bakhtin, 1981). Mrs. Tabasamu negotiates the EMI to fashion a form of authoritative voice that uses discourses outside of it to support students. Kimeru and Kiswahili remain of instrumental use—for example, for checking student understanding and conveying conceptual information. This flexible language use also acknowledges student voices, even when silent, and affords access to the content presented. She accomplishes this through a repetition of ideas, direct translation, and allowing students to translanguage as well in their short choral responses. This enables negotiation of English-only discourse. The following two excerpts that occurred during a lesson on tooth care exemplify authorship and appropriation in the translanguaging science classroom. Excerpt 5 begins with a student being asked to read a question from the text.

*Excerpt 5: Tooth Hygiene*

- 28 S1: Which of the following is not a sign or a symptom of gum disease?
- 29 T: [repeats reading the question] To answer this question, we need to know the meaning of the word *symptom* or *sign*. What is the meaning of the word *symptom* or *sign*? [prolonged silence]
- 30 T: *Yaani* (that is); *hebu tuweke kwa Kiswahili* (let's put it in Swahili). *Dalili ni nini* (What is a symptom)? [short silence] *Na* (and) *gum ni nini* (what is gum)?
- 31 S2: *Ni hii* (It is this) [showing, pointing to his gum].
- 32 S3: *Ni ile inashikilia meno* (It is that which holds the teeth together).

- 33 T: Na kwa Kiswahili inaitwaje? (And what is it called in Kiswahili?)
- 34 S4: *Ufizi* (gum).
- 35 T: *Sasa umejua* (Now you have known). *Ni sehemu ya mdomo inayoshikilia meno* (It is the part of the mouth that holds the teeth together).

The students find a voice when the teacher translates the question into Kiswahili (Turn 30), where a student responds in Kiswahili showing gum (Turn 32), and another defines gum in Kiswahili (Turn 32). Turns 31, 32, and 34 demonstrate that students are co-constructing knowledge with the teacher. Translanguaging here disrupts a typical initiation, response, evaluation pattern and opens the potential for a dialogue by enabling student participation. The teacher prompts the students to contribute by using the language they are more comfortable with, by asking for the Kiswahili word for *gum* (Turn 33). The teacher acknowledges the students' contributions in their language and repeats the definition in that language (Turn 35). Although these translanguaging practices are considered illegitimate in Kenyan EMI classrooms, Mrs. Tabasamu chooses to contest and negotiate institutional monolingual policies as a way to provide students with access to science content. The students who respond in Kiswahili would otherwise remain silent. Translanguaging thus affords a resource for enhancing student participation.

Bakhtin (1981) emphasized the primacy of response: "It prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding ... understanding that comes to fruition only in response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other" (p. 282). Gibbons (2006) refers to these kinds of facilitating language shifts as pedagogical translanguaging, which opens up spaces for multilingual students' voices and empowerment as a freedom to respond in home languages. Although the students' responses in this excerpt were all very brief and in Kiswahili, the use of home languages afforded appropriation of the English term *gum* by the students, along with some authorship, albeit limited, in their contribution of the word *ufizi* in the classroom in response to the teacher's question.

The following excerpt is a continuation of the unit on body care.

*Excerpt 6: Care of teeth: Brushing*

- 36 T: So, we have found many teeth problems; there is bleeding gums, bad breath, tooth cavity, and then we have tooth decay. What causes tooth decay? When a tooth become brown and rotten, we say one is suffering from tooth decay. Now what causes the tooth decay?
- 37 S1: [reading from the text] Sweet food.
- 38 T: Sweet foods like what?
- 39 SS: yes, yes . . .
- 40 S2: Sweets!
- 41 S3: Juice!
- 42 S4: *Hapana* (No!) [opposing the previous response, juice]
- 43 S5: Sugarcane!
- 44 SS: *Hapana! Ndio!* [Students judge each other's responses, with yes, no, disagreeing and/or agreeing.]
- 45 T: Causes of tooth decay include sweet foods like sweets, cakes, chocolate, and sugary drinks. Can you give an example of sugary drink?
- 46 S1: Honey!
- 47 S2: *Naincu!* [Translating S1 above to Kimeru]
- 48 S3: *Mwalimu no, honey ni dawa* (No, teacher, honey is a medicine). [Student opposes the fact that although honey is sweet, it has a medicinal value.]
- 49 T: *Ni dawa ya nini?* (What does it treat?)
- 50 S3 and S4: *Ya kifua* (of chest). [Students engage their experiential knowledge along the conflict between their experiential knowledge and the book knowledge. The teacher pauses for a moment.]
- 51 T: Tooth decay can lead to tooth loss. If you have a tooth problem, do not try to attend it yourself.

Here, the teacher begins by summarizing the content of the lesson in English, then introduces the next concept, tooth decay (Turn 36). Students share examples of sugary foods, some disagreeing with their peers' responses (Turns 40, 41, 42, and 43). Students contest each other's responses (Turns 42, 44, and 48). In Turns 48 and 50, students bring in their sociocultural experiences about honey in their home languages. The teacher encourages this by eliciting a

conversation about honey as medicine (Turn 49), then connects this dialogue to the original lesson content, tooth decay and what to do about it (Turn 60).

In this instance, translanguaging provided means of creating a lively interactional space for discussion of everyday knowledge and values in the classroom. In formal terms about “tooth decay,” the discussion about “sweet food and drinks” provided access to IPD appropriation, authorship (as publicly offered utterances about the topic), and dialogic testing, contestation, and discussion about those offers. Although it was clear that the matter was not settled, the teacher reprised the lesson’s point and related it back to the topic of study, tooth hygiene. This leveraging of IPD between the teacher and the student co-constructed a dialogue in which multilingual students’ languages and experiences were envoiced.

## **Discussion**

### ***Authoritative Discourse and Monolingual Perspectives***

Teachers utilize linguistic repertoires differently while playing agentic roles to support students’ acquisition of literacy and access to content in EMI classrooms. For the ELA teacher in this study, this involved bracketing out, ignoring, or utilizing home languages minimally to scold while providing all instruction in the target language. Although the students were eager to engage—as the excerpts demonstrate—this bracketing of home language led to silence, rote repetition of phrases or copying, guesswork, and/or the production of sentences that were structurally correct but semantically anomalous. This practice generally excluded students from meaning making. The use of English-only instruction in ELA discourse aligned with and reproduced the school’s institutional monolingual policy (cf. Kiramba, 2018). Vygotsky (2012) observes that “memorizing words and connecting them to the object does not in itself lead to concept formation” (p. 107) and that education is not simply a transmission of knowledge, retention, recall, and transfer, but rather a co-construction of knowledge involving active participation by learners. Many of the practices deployed in the ELA classroom reflect monologism, an authoritative discourse that suppresses dialogue in the classroom

and leads to rote learning. This may impede the students' ability to develop useful skills for tasks that require complex thinking (Vygotsky, 2012). It may also obstruct any "retelling in one's own words" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341) and afford only safe talk practices (Chick, 1996). Authoritative discourse makes IPD appropriation and authorship difficult and forecloses dialogue (Matusov & Duyke, 2010). Similar findings have been reported in other classroom settings where monolingual pedagogical orientations prevail (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007; Ackers & Hardman, 2001).

### ***IPD and Translingual Practices***

Mrs. Tabasamu's agentic role in the science classroom included translingual practices. These practices facilitated IPD appropriation of English terminology, for example, the characteristics of materials and definition of *gum*. Translingual practices drew on student funds of knowledge to inform their authorship, for example, voicing opinions about the characteristics of *sweet* such as honey as medicine and engendered dialogic engagement, contestation, testing, refinement, and conversation about those offers overall.

In Mrs. Tabasamu's classroom, translanguaging exhibited the potential for disrupting an authoritative IRE classroom framework. In some instances, children were positioned as competent members. With institutional support, translanguaging could eliminate seeing students as passive novices who mimic scripted knowledge by mitigating challenges experienced by students when studying content subjects in an unfamiliar language. It can also assist in identity affirmation and literacy engagement (Cummins & Early, 2011). Several scholars argue for the implementation of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms as a way to improve multilingual education and EMI (Makalela, 2015; Sayer, 2013; Shoba & Chimbutane, 2013).

Our findings disrupt the notion that a rigid language separation in classrooms should be enhanced (Cummins, 2007), because such separation is inconsistent with how multilinguals use language(s) in real life as they draw on their multiple linguistic resources for effective communication (Abiria et al., 2013; Blackledge et al., 2014; Makalela, 2015). Rigid language practice perpetuates social inequalities through the use of unfamiliar languages, ideologically erases countless other language varieties, and fails to take advantage of the

resources of home languages and cultures for education. This study advocates fuller use of the resources in children's linguistic repertoires in formal educational contexts.

### **Conclusions and Implications for Practice**

In this study, the engagement, conceptual bridging, and uptake that occurs in a translingual classroom contrasts strongly with the silence, repetition, and lack of connection in the ELA classroom of emergent multilinguals. Equally ubiquitous in both classrooms was the requirement to use English only, which fostered approved but more authoritarian practices in the ELA class, compared to disapproved but more consensual practices in the science class. The authoritative discourse constrains the appropriation of curriculum, resulting in silence, repetition without comprehension, and copying. It turns students' authorship away from the development and testing of ideas and/or cognitive skills related to the class lessons and inhibits dialogic engagement. In contrast, Mrs. Tabasamu found ways to balance policy constraints with students' needs and realities. Translanguaging in the classroom facilitated appropriation, encouraged student authorship of material in their own words (Bakhtin, 1981), and opened up multilingual dialogue for learning that drew on multiple resources in the classroom, including the teacher's resources, the textbook resources, and the lived experiences of the students.

This study presents a close analysis of different teachers' discourse practices and their consequences for students' learning, taking account of silencing, exclusion of students, and opportunities for opening up dialogue, authorship, and appropriation of topics in the curriculum. These are key interactional and meaning-making processes for educators to reflect on and make informed instructional decisions. Although further research into additional strategies that educators use to leverage, mediate, or contest discourses of language instruction for emerging multilingual children would be useful, and although practices are situated and may vary from one multilingual classroom to another, the findings of this study suggest that teacher education courses could benefit from attention to translingual classroom practices and the ways to incorporate home languages into emerging bi/multilinguals' literacy development.

Findings from this study underscore the need for interactional spaces where bi/multilingual students can explore their metalinguistic abilities and perform their multilingual competencies. This study argues that translanguaging is an effective means for mitigating EMI teaching challenges that arise in rural schools in Kenya. A heteroglossic multilingual framework that incorporates and draws on home linguistic repertoire and experiences that students bring from home to the school, including dialects and urban vernaculars, would better provide multilingual children with access to both local and global languages at the same time as affording high-quality educational opportunities (Kiramba, 2016a, 2016b). Teachers could be trained and encouraged to facilitate the development of multilingual spaces that defuse negative attitudes directed at African languages and leverage the multilingualism of rural Kenyan students as a resource.

Teachers are required to use an authoritative monolingualism in the fourth-grade classrooms of this rural Kenyan school, but a shift to a more translingual perspective—to facilitate IPD appropriation, authorship, and dialogue among students—would allow students to connect to and learn the curriculum and afford educators access to the actual learning achieved by their students. The notion that bilingual or multilingual learners are simply two monolinguals in one (Cummins, 2008) and that students should observe linguistic boundaries in knowledge construction lead to legitimation of authoritative discourses that exclude some students from knowledge construction and learning.

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