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**“I FELT VALUED”:
MULTILINGUAL MICROTEACHINGS
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER AGENCY
IN A TEACHER EDUCATION CLASSROOM**

Abstract:

Existing research has explored the value of multilingual pedagogies that focus on utilizing the linguistic / cultural resources of students (e.g., García & Kleyn 2016, Turner 2017); however, there is still a need to examine how the kinds of teacher agency that can lead to multilingual pedagogies actually being implemented can best be developed in teacher education classrooms. The present study incorporates collaborative auto-ethnography to examine microteaching activities / reflections of three researcher-participants in a teacher education course on schooling and multilingualism. The authors found that playing the role of students in the microteachings enabled them to reflect on their own multilingual practices, and that they felt valued as multilingual subjects themselves in the process, which led them to have more empathy for their own multilingual students. In addition, the connection of theory to practice was strengthened through the microteachings, and they gained great insights on the value of multilingual pedagogies through trying them out in a low-stakes environment. Moreover, the development of teacher agency empowered them to try similar approaches in their own classrooms, and advocate for their multilingual students in a variety of contexts.

Keywords: translanguaging ♦ microteachings ♦ multilingual pedagogies ♦ teacher education ♦ teacher agency

Recently scholars have considered how teachers can systematically utilize multilingual pedagogies to draw on their linguistic and cultural resources in learning (García & Flores 2012, García et al. 2017, MacSwan 2017, Sultana & Dovchin 2017, Turner 2017, Wei 2017, Williams 1994, 2002). This scholarship also suggests that pedagogies in which students can use all of their languages for learning can act as a form of social justice, because learners’ access to content is more equitable. “Multilingual pedagogies” is used as an umbrella term that encompasses all approaches which “acknowledge the hybrid language practices” of bi / multilinguals, and that recognize and build on “the dynamic and complex language practices that are present in all multilingual contexts” (García & Flores 2012: 238–239). García & Flores have noted that these dynamic, heteroglossic multilingual approaches to pedagogy are intentional and carefully planned, and always “support the multilingualism of the students” (García & Flores 2012: 238).

Despite the research that supports the use of these strategies in the teaching of multilingual students (see next section), there is reason to believe that teachers might not use them because of the regulatory role of school, lack of understanding of how to implement them, or a variety of other reasons (see García et al. 2017). In the present paper, we incorporate collaborative auto-ethnography to explore a teacher education course in which the teacher educator required students (and herself) to lead a multilingual microteaching. As part of the study, we (the researcher-participants) reflect on the microteachings in written and oral discussions. These discussions / reflections act as a way to problematize the dominant monolingual narrative (prevalent in the United States where the study takes place). In addition, these interventions act to awaken our “consciousness” (Freire 2008 [1973]: 38) about issues related to teaching emergent bi / multilinguals (and language teaching in general), but also as a way of rerouting (Buchanan & Hilburn 2016: 420) our thinking away from past beliefs about students and teaching (Brandon 2006).¹ The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What can language teachers learn from practicing multilingual pedagogies (e.g., multilingual microteachings) in a teacher education classroom?
- 2) How does the use of the microteachings in a teacher education program contribute to the development of teacher agency, which provides an impetus to try them in their own classrooms?

We begin by discussing the theories behind multilingual pedagogies, focusing especially on the concept of *translanguaging*, as well as studies that have explored these approaches in teacher education. Next, we discuss the study’s framework, including its roots in teacher agency, as well as the value of microteachings in teacher education contexts. Finally, we explain the selected methodology of collaborative auto-ethnography, followed by the findings.

Translanguaging Theory and Pedagogy

In order to answer our research question regarding what teachers can learn from multilingual pedagogies, it is helpful to review *translanguaging* theory. Although many definitions of *translanguaging* exist, Wei (2017: 9) synthesizes it as a way of thinking about language that recognizes and values “the fluid and dynamic practices that transcend the boundaries between named languages, language varieties, and language and other semiotic systems.” Proponents of this theoretical frame also recognize the transient nature of language in both form and essence. As a theory of multilingualism, translanguaging helps to account for the ways in which multilinguals traverse “linguistic and semiotic modes and codes to arrive at a transgressive transformation of language and identity” (Sultana & Dovchin 2017: 82). Hence, the theoretical perspective of translanguaging “challenges linguistic homogeneity, or the separation of languages in classrooms” (Turner 2017: 70) and supports a “heteroglossic language ideology” that recognizes the value of multilingualism (MacSwan 2017: 167). Importantly, the concept of translanguaging also encourages scholars and teachers to question the linguistic inequalities that come about when students are forced to strictly separate languages (e.g., they are corrected for mixing languages to fill a communicative gap), or when varieties they speak (e.g. nonstandard / regional varieties of Spanish) are devalued or invisible in schools (García & Kano 2014). This questioning of inequalities connects to the study’s goal of teacher agency and critical consciousness development, which is discussed later in the paper.

As we mentioned earlier, the term *translanguaging* is not just used to refer to the theories described above. It originates from the Welsh word *trawsieithu*, which was coined by Welsh educator Cen Williams (1994, 2002, later translated by Colin Baker [2001]) and used to refer to the pedagogical strategy of intentionally asking students to “alternate languages” in their learning in order to “deepen and extend their bilingualism” (García et al. 2017). *Translanguaging* has then been extended by many scholars to refer to both the pedagogy described above, and the fluid natural language practices of bi / multilingual speakers themselves.

For García with Flores (2012), *multilingual pedagogies* are ways in which teachers attempt to improve instruction for increasingly multilingual student bodies (who are present in a variety of educational contexts) by leveling “the playing field” through encouraging students to draw on the languages they know in their learning, but also giving them access to content in a language they are more comfortable with. As a multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging encourages “the dynamic use of multiple languages to enhance learning and make schools more welcoming environments for multilingual children, families, and communities” while affirming the value of linguistic diversity (MacSwan 2017: 190–191).

According to Creese and Blackledge, if we are to move toward implementing multilingual pedagogies such as translanguaging in our classrooms, more research is needed that shows “how

and why pedagogic bilingual practices come to be legitimated and accepted by participants” (2010: 113), and how they “can incorporate the complex, mobile language repertoires and identities of their students” to enhance learning (2015: 33). In the next section we briefly review research on multilingual pedagogies in order to provide insight into what these practices can look like in the classroom.

Teacher Education and Multilingual Pedagogies

Any discussion of multilingual pedagogies in teacher education must be prefaced by a recognition of the large contribution that Ofelia García and her colleagues have made in this area. García (and a number of colleagues, of whom we will name a few here) have produced a large body of work dedicated to developing translanguaging theory (e.g., García & Kano 2014, García & Wei 2014), and providing resources (García & Kleyn 2016) for teachers interested in “moving from the natural discursive practice of translanguaging in teacher talk to a more comprehensive and purposeful translanguaging pedagogy” (Allard 2017: 128). Furthermore, in García et al. (2017), the authors recognize that once teachers are “socialized into their disciplines and professional identities and accompanying language ideologies, they cannot change their practice unless they have a solid understanding of the alternatives” (vi). This represents a dilemma in which teachers have a set of beliefs and understandings about their teaching practice and they filter everything through this system, making it hard to accept new ideas or ways of thinking about their teaching. To counter this, García et al. (2017) provide examples of concrete activities, strategies and techniques to use translanguaging in different contexts in order to help teachers see what translanguaging could look like in their classrooms (see also García & Kleyn 2016).

Some other important studies that explore translanguaging as it relates to teacher education include Musanti and Rodríguez (2017), who show how preservice bilingual teachers creatively leverage their Spanish and English linguistic repertoire to produce meaningful writing. They also illustrate how these pedagogies challenge language separation in bilingual settings and integrate languages of students as instructional resources (ibid. 40). García and Lin (2017) examine developments of translanguaging in bilingual education, including problems such as tension between “a strong version of translanguaging theory that poses that bilingual people do not speak languages but rather, use their repertoire of linguistic features selectively” (to which we adhere) and a weaker version which “supports national and state language boundaries and yet calls for softening these boundaries” (ibid. 125). Although we support the strong model proposed in García and Lin (2017), we recognize that there are constraints, such as school / state language policies and the regulatory role of schools. Nevertheless, we advocate for spaces to liberate “tongues and minds” (García & Lin 2017: 127) when possible with multilingual pedagogies such as those proposed in this paper.

Palmer et al (2014) focus on practices of experienced bilingual teachers and identify successful translanguaging strategies they use, such as a) modeling dynamic bilingual language practices, b) positioning students as bilingual (even before they are), and c) celebrating and drawing attention to language crossing. Their research revealed how teachers “allowed, valued, and even mirrored students’ voices and linguistic choices” (Palmer et al. 2014: 757). Based on their observations, the authors conclude that “modeling and engaging in dynamic bilingualism, celebrating hybridity and moments of metalinguistic commentary, and positioning children as competent bilinguals could be potentially powerful translanguaging pedagogies” (2014: 768–769).

Other studies, such as Catalano and Hamann (2016) and Catalano, Shende, and Suh (2016), have modeled how multilingual pedagogies—beyond what might strictly be described as “translanguaging”—can be utilized in teacher education programs. These studies demonstrate how allowing preservice and inservice teachers to experience these pedagogies as students can heighten awareness of the potential for such pedagogies and facilitate their use. In Catalano, Shende, and Suh (2016), the authors explore how studying another language and keeping a journal about their language practices helped preservice / inservice teachers (and teacher educators) to understand the need to do this kind of reflective study in their own classrooms. Additionally, Catalano and Hamann (2016) gave examples of multilingual pedagogies they used in their teacher education classrooms such as comparative analyses of literature, including metaphors and idioms across languages, multilingual digital stories, interviewing community members about their language varieties, and multilingual multimodal inquiry projects (inspired by McGinnis 2007). They also showed how books such as Faulstich Orellana’s (2009) *Translating Childhoods* could be used to help teachers see their students “as human beings negotiating real and varying social landscapes, including contexts where different language skills are called to the fore” (Catalano & Hamann 2016: 272).

In the present study we expand on the important work in teacher education outlined above by exploring how microteachings (which incorporate multilingual pedagogies) can provide opportunities for preservice / inservice teachers to gain the confidence and practical knowledge needed to utilize multilingual pedagogies in their own classrooms and recognize their own agency in making this happen.

Theoretical Framework: Teacher Agency

Dubetz and de Jong (2011: 251) define teacher agency as “acting on behalf of others” as well as both individual and collective efforts to “shape public policy in ways that ensure that individuals are treated equitably and have access to needed resources.” This can happen in or outside of the classroom. High quality teacher education programs that view preservice / inservice teachers as experts in their own lived experiences, and as capable of producing knowledge that can positively

change their schools and communities, foster the development of teacher agency (Carter Andrews et al. 2016: 207).

Critical consciousness (see Freire 2008 [1973]) is “a state of awareness, activated through dialogue, where one engages in analysis of context and power” (McDonough 2009: 530). In order to actualize teacher agency, teachers must first acquire a critical consciousness that allows them to see contradictions and engage in actions that free students from oppressive learning contexts, such as the hegemony of English in a variety of learning contexts in the United States.

Because novice teachers often “replicate the same system of instruction that they received” (Valenzuela 2016: 39), it is important that they experience the pedagogical approaches they are learning about as students, so they can understand student perspectives. Preservice teachers also need to be given multiple opportunities for insightful moments to reflect on this learning through dialog in order to cast aside underlying assumptions about what is possible, or mis-informed ways of thinking about society and inequality (called *dyconsciousness*) that limit our ways of knowing (Brandon 2006).

Multilingual microteachings

Research has shown that connections between theory and practice are often not made explicit during university teacher training programs (Bransford, Brown & Cocking 2000, Grossman 2005). This leaves preservice teachers underprepared (or at least feeling underprepared) for real teaching experiences. Microteachings—small lessons executed by preservice or inservice teachers to peers—are one way to make this connection between theory and practice, by engaging teachers in both vicarious and mastery learning experiences (Mergler & Tangen 2010: 200).

Microteachings have been shown to have a positive impact on the development of teacher identity and agency (Mergler & Tanglen 2010). In the case of this study, students in the class (including researcher-participants) were directed to create and teach a lesson in which multilingual pedagogies were incorporated to utilize the linguistic repertoires of students in the class. Furthermore, as part of the goals of an emancipatory education, Theresa (the teacher educator) aimed to help preservice / inservice teachers (many of whom were multilinguals who had not been allowed to use their home languages for the purposes of schooling) understand their right (and their students’ right) to experience schooling that values their home languages and cultures. This is often because *habitus*—or deeply ingrained patterns, skills, and frames of mind acquired from life experiences (Bourdieu 1994: 182)—causes teachers to reproduce language ideologies and beliefs that are commonly held in the dominant society, making them complicit in hegemonic language policies, which ignore the full linguistic repertoires of students. Hence, the aim of this paper is to create awareness, through the microteachings, of how these policies played out in our own lives and disrupt past beliefs (by experiencing the microteachings as students and teachers),

but also challenge and inspire us to utilize our languages / cultures to understand new content and contexts (Johnson & Williams 2015, Walqui & van Lier 2010). At the same time, through collective auto-ethnography (to be explained in the next section), we aim to honor and nurture individual ways of knowing through dialog and opportunities to make connections between our own personal situations and struggles and those within the larger society (Maramba & Velasquez 2012, Morales 2016).

Methodology: Context

The context for this study was a teacher education program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the United States. The participant-researchers were enrolled in (or taught, as in the case of Theresa) a class entitled “Schooling and the Multilingual Mind” in Spring 2017. Besides the participant-researchers, there were also six other preservice / inservice teachers enrolled in the class, five female and one male. These students were all multilingual, hailing from countries such as Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Spain, and the US, and languages spoken (besides English) included French and Spanish. All of these students took turns teaching and being a student in the microteachings. However, due to their desire to do research, and the way their backgrounds varied from that of the teacher educator, two of these students participated in the collective auto-ethnography.

As part of the teacher education course, the students (a.k.a., the preservice / inservice teachers) were required to complete many different activities related to multilingualism (e.g., language study, midterm exam, creation of a documentary film), but this study focuses on the multilingual microteaching assignments. The next section describes the researcher-participants of the study.

Researcher-participants: Teacher educator

Theresa Catalano is the teacher educator of the course on multilingualism, which was the focus of this study. The course introduced students to research and theories of multilingualism, but concentrated on educational issues. Theresa is a native speaker of English, a proficient speaker of Spanish, and heritage speaker of Italian who taught Italian for 12 years and has studied a variety of other languages over the years. Currently, she teaches language education courses and conducts research on education and migration as well as multilingualism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where this study was conducted. As the instructor of the course, she modeled what the multilingual microteaching should look like: choosing to write a reflection and participate in collaborative discussions along with her students in order to understand better how to develop teacher agency in her novice teachers. Her reflection stems from the viewpoint that teacher educators should model what they want their students to do, and through dialoging with the other

researcher-participants she contemplates her own agency in making social changes as relates to language teaching policies.

World language teacher / doctoral student

Hanihani Traore Moundiba is a native speaker of Bwamu, Dioula, and Mooré, local languages from her home country of Burkina Faso where she studied French and English for academic purposes, along with German and Japanese for personal reasons. In Burkina Faso, she taught English as a Foreign Language, and she is currently working toward her Doctoral degree in education, with certification to teach high school French. In this study, Hanihani explores the transformative experience of being a student in a multilingual microteaching lesson in which her own home languages were made visible in the classroom for the first time.

English as a Second Language teacher and Master’s student

Hadi Pir is a native speaker of Kurdish (Kurmanji). He learned Arabic as his academic language, and English as part of his teacher training and Bachelor’s degree, and he also studied Farsi. He taught English in Iraq and worked as a translator and cultural advisor for the US Army and US embassy in Jordan. He is also co-founder of Yazda, a non-profit organization that helps women and children who have survived the Yazidi genocide. In addition to his work with Yazda, Hadi attended graduate school while teaching English as a Second Language at a local high school; the course that serves as a focus of this study was one of his classes. Because his current teaching context is in an English as a Second Language classroom in a US high school, Hadi approaches his reflection and discussion from the point of view of teachers with highly multilingual populations in English-only environments.

Collaborative Auto-Ethnography

For this study, we selected the qualitative research method of collaborative auto-ethnography (CAE). This method engages multiple researchers / participants with diverse perspectives in an autobiographical self-reflexive exploration of their own assumptions and perspectives (Chang 2013). The primary data for CAE are the personal experiences of the researchers / participants. Additionally, researchers collect these materials to analyze and interpret their data collectively through in-depth group discussions of the data, which allow them “to gain a meaningful understanding of the sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data” (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez 2013: 24). In this way, the specific experiences examined in the data become an impetus for understanding what goes on in the mind of teachers as they utilize translanguaging pedagogies. Institutional review board approval was waived for this study because the researchers are also the participants.

Microteaching Assignment

For the microteaching assignment, researcher-participants co-taught a lesson for their classmates on a topic related to multilingualism they had studied in class while demonstrating how to draw on the linguistic resources of students represented in the class. Microteachings were 15–20 minutes in length, followed by feedback and discussion. Theresa offered a model of what the microteaching might look like, in which she asked students to write an email to someone who spoke one of their languages but not English (hence providing students with the opportunity to review their learning in a language they are more comfortable with). This was possible since all of the students were bi / multilingual. In the email, they were asked to summarize the most important things they had learned in the multilingualism class so far. Then the person they wrote to was supposed to write them back (in the same language) and let them know what they thought about what they were learning. After the email exchange, students were assigned to write a summary of the experience, explaining their thoughts and reactions to this activity as well as any thoughts or reactions on the part of their email partners (who were not students in the class). Students then brought these summaries to class and discussed them as a group, sharing their response to the assignment and what they gained from it.

Hanihani and her partner (another student in the class) chose to teach about the advantages of multilingualism. They began by asking classmates to translate into their other language/s the Charlemagne quotation “To have another language is to possess a second soul.” To help them develop their metacognitive awareness related to translation, they also asked students to explain how they came up with the translation in their various languages and to reflect on how difficult it was to translate and why. Students were then given an article in one of their languages (e.g., French, Arabic, Spanish) and were asked to read it, to talk with their partners about the article in their language of choice, and then to discuss as a whole group in English. This activity demonstrates the strategy of disrupting English hegemony by showing how it is possible to provide students with learning material in languages other than English but also it supports sociocultural models of teacher education which encourage group work (Johnson & Golombek 2011).

Hadi and his partner chose to focus on linguistic landscapes, by having colleagues look at handouts with photographs of classrooms where their students learned (taken at the high school where they taught). In the linguistic landscape of these classes, no languages other than English were present, and there was nothing that drew on the backgrounds of emergent bi / multilingual students in the classes. Afterwards, Hadi and his partner asked their classmates to write or draw on the photographs to show where they might add elements of the languages or cultures of the students in the class to align with what they had learned that semester. The annotations were intended to

raise students’ awareness of their own agency in making their languages present in their environment. Hadi and his partner also wrote the class objectives and agenda, utilizing all the languages they knew to be represented in the class (including Hanihani’s Bwamu). They then asked the students to correct any translation or spelling mistakes. This strategy of drawing on learners’ linguistic resources in learning helped them to understand content on a deeper level because the translations provided necessary background context, so that they better understood what the lesson would be about. Furthermore, seeing the translations raised metalinguistic awareness as to different cultural ways of thinking and talking about the same topic.

After engaging in the microteaching, the researcher-participants completed a reflection about their microteaching on April 27, 2017, in which they were directed to think about how they met course objectives related to multilingualism, how they made use of students’ linguistic repertoires during their microteaching, what went well, and what changes they might make if they were to teach the same lesson again in the future.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study consist of the following:

- 1) Microteaching reflections completed on April 27, 2017;
- 2) Transcripts from audio recordings of three collaborative discussions (7/18/17, 8/23/17, and 5/ 2/18) in which researcher-participants reflected on the microteachings, discussed themes found, and considered their development of teacher agency.

After the course was completed on May 1, 2017, researcher-participant microteaching reflections were uploaded as one file to MAXQDA. We then met for our first collaborative discussion which Theresa audio-recorded (as with all discussions) on the Voice Pro App, uploading it to the researchers’ laptops, and later transcribing it. In Discussion 1, we examined the microteaching reflections in MAXQDA and together conducted focused coding (Saldaña 2013) based on thematic or conceptual similarity across all three researcher-participant reflections. Themes were coded in vivo, and ranged from a sentence to several sentences or a paragraph. Table 1 (in the next section) indicates the number of times each theme was found in the data. We then discussed the themes and reviewed each other’s coding in order to gain a greater understanding of what each participant meant. At the end of Discussion 1, a first draft was created, which was examined and debated in Discussion 2. Discussion 2 also included space to listen to audio recordings from Discussion 1 and reflect on how our thinking about using students’ languages in the lessons had changed since doing the microteaching. Discussion 3 helped us document concrete ways in which the microteaching had made a real impact on our teaching and thinking, and gave us another opportunity to dialog and make meaning together about our experiences one year after the microteachings. Theresa transcribed all discussions immediately following the meetings. Taken together, the collaborative

discussions allowed us to listen to each other’s perspectives, and to examine and question our own assumptions and biases in order to reach a deeper level of analysis (Chang 2013: 28).

Findings

Findings were organized into the following themes which appeared across all three microteaching reflections and three collaborative discussions and were most prevalent in the data: Blending and Mixing Languages, Connecting Theory and Practice, What it Means to Be a Language Learner, and What it Means to Be a Teacher of Multilingual Learners. Table 1 tabulates these themes and provides examples which will be discussed in detail below:

Table 1. Themes across reflections and discussions.

<u>Theme / Example</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Blending and Mixing Languages e.g., “everything is mixed, but we know what we are talking about”...	10	33%
Connecting Theory and Practice e.g., “it’s very important that teachers have the stance, the belief, and the knowledge background of the importance of translanguaging”...	4	13%
What it Means to Be a Language Learner e.g., “students seemed truly happy to be able to share their languages”...	6	20%
What it Means to Be a Teacher of Multilingual Learners e.g.,” Some people are really thinking and beginning to consider new perspectives—you are bringing this awareness in your classes”...	10	33%
Total	30	100%

Numbers were rounded to the nearest percentage.

Blending and Mixing Languages

Reflecting on the microteachings helped us examine our own natural translanguaging behaviors as multilinguals, and the way in which this naturally leaked into our teaching. We also reflected on our own schooling as multilingual learners. Both Hanihani and Hadi discussed the way in which their home languages were suppressed and erased in schooling in Burkina Faso (Bwamu, Dioula, Mooré) and Iraq (Kurmanji), and how blending and mixing of languages occurred in classrooms, but was seen as bad, or “not good teaching” by administrators. The issue of *pupil-directed* vs. *teacher-directed* translanguaging (Jones 2017) also came up, and we discussed how

translanguaging occurs in our lives outside of any school setting. For example, in Discussion 2, Hadi talked about meetings of his non-profit organization, in which members utilized all their languages to make meaning, noting: “If you were in our meeting and you would understand what we say, you would say ‘You’re not speaking any language’ because it is Arabic, Kurdish, English, everything is mixed, but we know what we are talking about.” Hanihani also noted in Discussion 2: “Talking to my friends and family, we always mix and blend languages for a better effective communication and more learning.” These comments reveal metalinguistic awareness of our own practices, and attitudes / orientations toward languaging and multilingualism.

Another issue related to mixing / blending that came up in the discussions was how to manage the fluid movement across languages in a multilingual classroom (in which there are monolinguals and multilinguals who speak different languages) in a way that would not exclude some students. In her reflection, Hanihani wondered if students who would not be considered multilinguals would feel left out or frustrated. Hadi made the point that if teachers are not careful to make sure that students translate for other students who do not understand their language, some students will be embarrassed or excluded. He noted that, as one of the only students during the microteaching who knew very little Spanish, he felt left out and didn’t know what was going on when his classmates were switching between English and Spanish to help them clarify or understand concepts better (microteaching reflection, 4/27/2017). As a result, when he is teaching, he is careful to translate for students when necessary, especially when students speak to him in Kurmanji or Arabic and he is able to understand, but others in the class do not.

Connecting Theory and Practice

Across all reflections, we noted an increasing appreciation for the confidence and knowledge that theory brought to praxis. Hadi was surprised that actually implementing the strategies was not so hard. However, he notes:

Reading the last week’s article, I noticed that the “translanguaging stance” (García et al. 2017) is the building block, or the fuel for any successful translanguaging strategies. Therefore, I see it’s very important that teachers have the stance, the belief, and the knowledge background of the importance of translanguaging first. (microteaching reflection, 4/27/2017)

Just as García et al. (2017) argue that teachers will not change their practices unless they are able to see different ways to think about it, Hadi believes that it is crucial that teachers first understand the thinking behind multilingual pedagogies like translanguaging in order to be able to do it. If they don’t believe that drawing on all the students’ linguistic and other semiotic resources in teaching is good pedagogy, it will not work because they are not convinced of the value.

Another important point about the connection of theory to practice that came up in the reflections and discussions was that the more you practice multilingual pedagogies, the better you get at them. For example, Theresa (note: a seasoned teacher educator!) realized after her lesson that students would have benefited so much more if they had understood better what they were supposed to do (microteaching reflection, 4/27/2017). Hence, regardless of the activity, clear instructions are important, and *translanguaging cues* (Jones 2017) can be important ways to indicate to students when to employ particular linguistic resources for particular aspects of assignments (such as in this case when students needed to utilize languages other than English in order to understand how it could be done with their own students). Since modeling this microteaching for her preservice / inservice teachers, Theresa has made improvements on the way she gives instructions and hence, even though she was well versed in the theory (and didn't need to be convinced of its value), the practical exercise of trying it out when she modeled the microteaching helped her refine how she would implement and teach about the approach in the future.

What it Means to be a Language Learner

We all noted in reflections what it felt like to play the role of student in a classroom in which multilingual pedagogies were practiced. Hanihani noted that the microteaching made her feel more engaged, offered more ways to negotiate meaning, and increased involvement and participation between learners (i.e., the researcher-participants and their peers) and teacher, because every learner's language had been incorporated. In addition, she commented that the preservice / inservice teachers (who played the role of students in the class, including herself) seemed to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts, because the building up of “individual and collective linguistic repertoires makes learning flow like water” (Hanihani, microteaching reflection, 4/24/2017). She also felt that the multilingual teaching strategies strengthened the community spirit of the class, something she felt was represented best through the German expression “Zusammenarbeit.” Interestingly, Hanihani seemed to be emboldened by her translanguaging experience, so much so that she freely incorporated words (such as “Zusammenarbeit”) from German into her reflection to communicate her point better, something that she had not previously felt she could do in her university academic writing. In addition, she noted that students in the microteaching seemed truly happy to be able to share their languages. In fact, when she saw the reaction of the students when she gave them readings in their languages, she thought “Why didn't I do this more?”

Haniani noted that she was affected positively and deeply by the experience of being a student in a classroom in which her languages were utilized and drawn upon for learning. She explained in her reflection:

I felt valued, considered as an individual when I saw the languages that I speak / or that I am learning on the board during my peers’ micro teaching lessons. I was excited and eager to learn because I felt part of what was going to happen. I was happy to be called on to read in some of the languages I understood and to answer in other languages that I did not understand very well. This gave me the opportunity to try these languages and practice them a little bit. I wished my English and French teachers had used multilingual strategies to teach us. (Hanihani, microteaching reflection, 4/24/2017)

Hence, not only did she gain an understanding of how the use of students’ languages in her lesson could affect her students positively, she felt those same effects herself, noting that she “felt valued” as an individual, since the novice teachers had taken the time to draw on her languages to help her learn better in their microteaching. We all laughed together in Discussion 1 about how Hanihani’s face lit up when she saw Bwamu on the screen and how joy was emanating around her. This all because one sentence had been written in Bwamu and she was asked if it was written correctly, and then to read the sentence to her classmates. Seeing her face, it was clear to all her classmates that translanguaging can have an impact in terms of student morale, self-esteem, and enthusiasm for learning.

What it Means to be a Teacher of Multilingual Learners

A final theme noted somewhat in the reflections, but even more in discussions (especially Discussion 3, which came one year after the microteachings) was what it meant to be a teacher in multilingual classrooms, and how the microteachings, theory, and collaborative discussions helped us recognize our own agency in implementing the strategies in our classrooms. Below, Hadi talks about how the microteachings (and how learning translanguaging theory) empowered him to try more multilingual pedagogies in his English as a Second Language class:

I saw the results in the microteaching, and I see them now in my classes. Before, I had some beliefs, but I didn’t know that someone actually studied this in a scientific way. I knew growing up as a multilingual that some of these things worked, but I did not try them because I wasn’t sure if it was right. Before, it was personal, but now I can defend myself and my methods if someone asks me. I can also see that because I try certain strategies like translating key words and objectives for students or having them use google translate for these things before we even start the lesson, they have shown me that they do really understand what they are learning, and they are doing better as a result. (Hadi, Discussion 3)

In this example Hadi demonstrates his own agency, which developed because of his exposure to theory in his teacher education class, and because of the opportunity he had to try out his strategies and get feedback on them in the microteachings. Since he is multilingual himself, he knew that some of the things he tried in his class would work, but before actually doing them in his teacher

education class and seeing the theory that backed up this type of pedagogy, he did not truly believe he had the power to teach in this way.

In Discussion 3, we also considered the advantages of being multilingual when teaching multilingual learners, acknowledging that even if we do not know the languages of all our students, we understand what it means to be a language learner, and have experience using language learning strategies that we can pass on to our students. We also discussed how the microteachings gave us confidence in our own agency to make small changes to disrupt the English hegemony in our classrooms, such as encouraging students to look new vocabulary up in their home languages or providing students with readings in several languages and letting students choose which one to read.

One area of agency that we felt we could do more with was the fact that most teachers that exit teacher preparation programs in the region are monolingual, and very few study a language past high school because they are not required to do so. However, Theresa noted that she has added language study elements to several of her undergraduate and graduate courses, in which students must study a language and reflect on it (see Catalano, Shende & Suh 2016), and several other former graduate students of hers have tried this in their own sections of teacher preparation classes as a result of taking Theresa’s classes, in which multilingual pedagogies were emphasized.

Theresa also noted (in Discussion 3) that teaching the course and modeling multilingual strategies has given her more evidence of how they actually work, which has emboldened her to keep pushing for bilingual programs in her community. Over the last few years she has been disappointed by the local district’s continued lack of a dual language program, and she has been working with a local coalition to lobby for support of a program.² In addition, with a former student of hers who conducted a study on changing demographics in a non-urban city in the state, she was encouraged to meet with the superintendent (and her former student, who went to school in that district) to propose dual language programs there. Despite these exertions of her own power in making change, she often feels disappointed that she cannot do more. When talking about this in Discussion 3, Hanihani pointed out to her, “Maybe you don’t realize how much consciousness you are raising in your classes. Some people are really thinking and beginning to consider new perspectives- you are bringing this awareness in your classes.” Hence, according to Hanihani and Hadi, Theresa should not underestimate her own agency as a teacher educator in raising awareness in teachers, which can make direct change in their students.

Since the course, Hadi has piloted several major projects in his ESL class, such as a government comparison in which students could use their language of choice to research facts about the United States and compare them to their own countries and then present the information in English. He did the same thing for a project on planets when students were instructed to do the research and discuss it in the language of their choice. Students were encouraged to work in groups to come up

with the English translations together (using Google Translate when necessary, and then checking the translation with the teacher to see if it made sense), and then present their information in English to the whole group. Hadi remembers that his students began to tell him so many details, such as “I didn’t know this planet had so many moons,” and he believes that they would not have learned the content in such depth without being encouraged to utilize Arabic and / or Spanish information on the Internet. They also achieved a much higher level of English in the process because they had to translate complex concepts from their home languages that they were able to understand more deeply, into English. In addition, Hadi has adapted his classroom practices based on what he learned during the course and this study. He now starts his lessons by having students translate class objectives using their Chromebooks (e.g., Google Translate), and then they do the same for key words. He writes the key words on the board and tells students if they don’t know the key words, they can translate and share them in their languages with the class to help them remember. Then he begins class. Hadi believes that without gaining confidence from the microteaching, he might not have enacted his own agency in making this daily change to the way he approaches his teaching. As a result of participating in the microteaching and the collaborative discussions, Hadi also says that he is now able to identify monolingual ideologies that disadvantage his students, such as when he encountered a faculty member who advocated for an English-only policy in English language class:

We had our school meeting and they talked about valuing languages and one of the teachers said we should just learn English and her family came from a German background and they learned English. My colleague [who was also a student in the multilingualism course] looked at me to see if I would say anything and I didn’t. I looked at the environment, but I didn’t feel I was in a position to be in this argument, so I didn’t say anything. (Discussion 3)

In the discussion, we asked Hadi why he didn’t feel he was in a position to advocate for his students at the meeting, and he responded as such:

I believe in gradual change. People like her have fears about their way of life and what they value. They fear attack and they will resist even if you just hint at an attack. You have to let them know that you value them and then they will be more open to listening to you. (Discussion 3)

In this example, Hadi demonstrates the limits of his agency in advocating for his students, but also great pragmatism in terms of actually making progress. Rather than call out a more senior teacher in the meeting, he chose to save it for another time when he could express his appreciation for his colleague so that she would be more willing to listen to what he had to say without making her lose face.

Hanihani recently demonstrated several other multilingual microteachings for other classes and discussed (in both Discussion 2 and 3) how the microteaching in her teacher education program gave her courage to try these approaches. In addition, she has brought multilingual pedagogies into her English tutoring with refugees. When she reflects on her return to Burkina Faso in a few years, she notes that:

What I have learned here has been eye-opening for me and when I go back to Burkina, I feel that I can use this because they will be more motivated to get it [e.g. learn French or English]. I will try to put myself in their shoes—I would be happy if the teacher wanted to know how I would say the word in my own language. At least they won't feel like they are forgotten if they don't speak the main local languages. (Discussion 3)

Hanihani additionally reported that the microteaching activity helped her to imagine how she could help students who spoke languages other than English compare structural and cultural elements from these languages with French in her future world language classrooms. This brings up the important issue of context. That is, multilingual pedagogies such as translanguaging will look differently in different contexts, and certain types of multilingual activities will not be as successful in all contexts, thus, responding to local circumstances is important (Creese & Blackledge 2010: 107). According to Allard (2017: 117), although “we can acknowledge that across all linguistically diverse contexts moving between languages is natural, how to harness and build on this will depend on the sociopolitical and historical environment in which such practice is embedded and the local ecologies of schools and classrooms.” In a world language context, in which students have access to the language only 50 minutes per day, and few chances to practice outside the classroom, students need a chance to engage with the language socially and in various modalities. Hence, there remains the dilemma of how to use multilingual pedagogies while at the same time providing enough exposure to the language of focus.

Discussion

In answer to the question of what language teachers can learn from practicing multilingual microteachings in their teacher education classroom, findings suggest multiple benefits. First, being required to use multilingual pedagogies led us to reflect on our own natural language practices, as well as our own use of translanguaging in language learning, but also, the way in which Hanihani and Hadi suffered when they were not allowed access to their home languages in Burkina Faso or Iraq. Through experiencing the multilingual pedagogies as students in the microteachings, we all saw that *pedagogical translanguaging* (Cenoz 2017) could be a transformative activity that brings renewed empathy and understanding of what our own students experience during language learning. In addition, it is an “act of social justice and way of supporting their students’ socioemotional growth” (García et al. 2017: 15), which could be seen

by the emotions displayed on the faces of the students (and ourselves as we played the role of students in the microteachings). Although we all agreed that being multilingual was an advantage for teachers, we all felt that we could do more to enact policy changes related to language education of teachers. Findings also indicated that it is important for teacher educators to instruct students on inclusive methods of translanguaging so as not to exclude those who do not speak the same languages and to give explicit and clear directions, because adding more languages makes activities more complex. Finally, teacher educators need to help novice teachers recognize that translanguaging and other multilingual pedagogies do not look the same in all contexts, and they need to think about what works best for their specific context.

We also found that having a critical stance and understanding of the theory behind translanguaging (hence, connecting theory to practice) was important, and once teachers understood the “why” behind its use, applying the strategies was easy. These strategies included reviewing learning in a student’s language of choice, developing metacognitive / metalinguistic awareness regarding translation, disrupting English hegemony in content choices, helping students realize their own agency in the use of multilingual pedagogies, and drawing on linguistic resources of students. As a result, we recognized our own agency in utilizing multilingual pedagogies in our classrooms. In addition, we discovered through dialogue that we should not underestimate our own power and agency in modeling these practices for teachers and in making language study and multilingual microteachings required elements of teacher education curriculum. We should also encourage more dialogue in the teacher education classroom (and in language classrooms) to reflect on the microteachings and multilingual pedagogies, and the impact they have on students.

Conclusion

This study was limited in the scope of data and in the number of participants. As such, more research is needed that includes a wider range of data and participants, and that continues to explore the possibilities that modeling multilingual pedagogies provides, taking care to document the experiences of both novice teachers and teacher educators. That said, the collective auto-ethnography illuminates the myriad benefits that can come from allowing novice teachers to practice multilingual pedagogies and reflect on them together in the form of microteachings. In addition, the study supports the need for teachers to reflect on their own agency in promoting change and advocating for emergent multilingual students, and it demonstrates how trying out approaches in the low-stakes environment of a teacher education classroom helps build confidence in teachers that they can (and should) do the same in their own classrooms. Finally, if the aim of language education is to provide an emancipatory education which acts as a vehicle for self-actualization and empowers teachers to redefine themselves (Morales & Shroyer 2016), it is essential to start with the teachers, and this means also including teacher educators.

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¹ “Emergent bi / multilinguals” or “emergent multilingual learners / students” refers to learners who speak two languages or more and are in the early stages of learning an additional language.

² As this article went to press, we were informed (to our great joy) that our district will officially begin a dual language program soon, and we hope to study multilingual pedagogies in this program as well.