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3 'They Are Going to Forget about Us': Translanguaging and Student Agency in a Gentrifying Neighborhood

Luis E. Poza¹ and Aaron Stites

All the moral and political values of a given society along with its structures of power and domination, as well as its corresponding mechanisms of oppression are contained in the smallest cells of social organization (the couple, the family, the neighborhood, the school, the office, the factory, etc.)
Boal & Epstein, 1990: 36

<A>Introduction

'They're going to forget about us,' interjects Ayán,² as the class watches a video commercial prepared by the city government about the surrounding neighborhood. As the video's faceless narrator segues from storefront to storefront and one white young professional after another raving about the nearby shopping and dining, Ayán articulates what many of her peers are thinking: gentrification is erasing the Latinx characteristics, histories and people from this urban neighborhood in the southwestern United States. Under any circumstances, a class of 8th graders could be expected to feel somewhat powerless before large societal events, but for a group of mainly poor and working-class Latinx students not far removed from the 2016 US presidential election and in the midst of dramatic changes to the visual and demographic landscape surrounding them, Ayán's feelings of resentment and resignation seem even more poignant.

Such upheavals (the displacement of poor Families of Color amid re-urbanization campaigns) and oppression (such as the racialization, vilification and maltreatment of immigrants and People of Color under both the presidential administration and the perceived wave of affluent white newcomers to the neighborhood) have reasonably fueled discussion about the shortcomings of translanguaging scholarship and pedagogies to achieve any real transformation, articulated as a change in material inequalities and systemic oppression (Block, 2018; Jaspers, 2018). Moreover, the growing prevalence and popularity of the term risks dilution, or discursive drift, of any political consciousness intended in original conceptualizations (Jaspers, 2018; Leung & Valdés, 2019; Poza, 2017), as has been noted to occur in other asset pedagogies that take student-centered and social justice orientations to the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

To be sure, the unit of study described in this chapter did not halt gentrification nor bring any immediate relief to the students and their families from the racism, nativism or economic anxiety that they were experiencing. What it did achieve, and what translanguaging can facilitate more broadly, we argue, is a classroom that rejects and subverts the hegemonic ideologies and power relations of society, in turn creating a microcosm for equitable, democratic and emancipatory social relations. While Boal and Epstein (1990) posit that the dynamics of the broader society infuse the cellular components of that society, this work offers the hopeful perspective that the inverse can also be true: a classroom full of students and educators who have experienced dialogic, liberatory

relationships of learning could infuse the other cells of social order that they inhabit in ways that honor and affirm human dignity (Espinoza & Vossoughi, 2014; Espinoza *et al.*, 2020).

With these aims in mind, this work adopted a Social Design Experiment methodology (Gutiérrez, 2016; Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010) to explore the following research questions:

- (1) How are affordances for students' translanguaging part of a community-engaged and student-centered thematic unit?
- (2) How do students take up these affordances to cultivate their academic skills and engage as historical actors (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2019)?

These research questions accompanied pedagogical questions about how to make a unit on Westward Expansion relevant to students, how to center their voices and choices within the unit, and how to have them synthesize across multiple perspectives within and about historical and current events. The intersections of these research and pedagogical questions drew us to our methodological choices and to theoretical frameworks of translanguaging (García & Li, 2014), problem-posing education (Freire, 1974) and sociocritical literacies (Gutiérrez, 2008) that we elucidate further after providing context for the study.

<A>Welcome to Hilltop

This chapter reports on experiences and findings from a larger study consisting of one year of ethnographic and participant-observation in a PK-8 dual immersion bilingual program in a community we call Hilltop. The period of focus is a six-week unit in two 8th grade social studies classrooms comprised of district-mandated coverage of Westward Expansion in US history and extensions/enhancements that the teacher, Mr Stites, incorporated in response to students' stated connections between settler colonialism under Manifest Destiny and the current patterns of gentrification. The connection, perhaps hyperbolic to some, must be taken with the historical and contemporary contexts of Hilltop in mind.

Hilltop, like all land in the United States, was previously territory of sovereign Indigenous peoples, a history now mostly evident in the names of streets and city parks (a fact not lost on Ayán and her peers). By the early 19th century, Hilltop's various tribes had been massacred and displaced by fur traders, gold prospectors and farmers. Hilltop later became an enclave of immigrants from Southern Italy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, providing cheap labor for railroads, smelters, lumber mills and agriculture. Presaging current immigrant struggles, a passage from the official historical archive of the local Italian lodge notes that 'Instead of riches, they found more poverty and discrimination ... Few of them spoke English ... and were viewed as threats to the women of the city. Thus, Italians were not openly welcomed and their language and customs added to their predicament' (Mancinelli, 2013: 11).

By the mid-20th century, Hilltop and its surrounding city became a hub of cultural and political life within the Chicano³ movement and one of the major centers of Aztlán (the mythical Chicax homeland) in the popular imagination, producing high-profile artists, activists and scholars who spoke to the oppression and marginalization of Latinxs in the United States (NPR, 2011). Civil rights victories of the 1960s and 1970s, including a major school desegregation victory in the courts, however, gave way to white flight and disinvestment that befell many US inner cities and Hilltop gained a reputation as a dangerous and poor community within a heavily segregated city.

By the early 2000s, shifts toward urbanization and strategic campaigns of urban revitalization (Butler & Robson, 2003) spurred an influx of (predominantly white) managerial and professional middle-class residents. Because of its proximity to Downtown and its relative affordability given decades of disinvestment, Hilltop has been a prime site of gentrification, with property values skyrocketing, working-class residents of Color being displaced mainly by whites with higher incomes and educational attainment (Governing, n.d.; Svaldi, 2016), and new housing developments such as luxury duplexes and large apartment complexes dramatically reshaping the landscape formerly marked by distinctive architecture on single-family homes. Correspondingly, gentrification was a frequent and divisive issue arising in social forums, political discussions, art and journalism, including various community meetings and protests in Hilltop.

<A>Aragón Dual Language

Aragón School has served the Hilltop community since 1931 and has been slower to reflect the demographic changes than its surrounding community. Using official designations, Aragón's student body is 95% Hispanic, 88% Low-Income (based on Free/Reduced-price Lunch qualification status) and 72% English Learner (EL)-classified,⁴ although the incipient change is evident in the pre-school, kindergarten and first grade classrooms where these numbers nearly invert, and this is somewhat by design.

Aragón adopted a dual language model less than a decade prior to this study in the hope that it would attract the neighborhood's affluent newcomers and stem the declining enrollments brought on by the neighborhood's demographic changes (for this same process taking place in Texas, see Chapter 2, this volume). Previously, Aragón offered only English-medium instruction until a consent decree with the Office of Civil Rights for the whole school district compelled transitional bilingual education for EL-classified students (Aragón was recognized as one of the district's high-achieving schools for serving emergent bilinguals during this time). Moreover, at the time of this study, the dual language model was itself in flux, shifting from a 90-10 model (with the bulk of instruction in K-1 being in the named language in which students tested best, most often English), to a 50-50 model, hoping to increase rigor and achievement in Spanish. Social studies was designated as an English-only instructional time for 8th grade, with allowances for home-language support for Newcomer students at early stages of English language development.

<A>Participants

The students

The two 8th grade classrooms on which this study focuses consisted of 47 students combined at the study's outset (although both classes would go down to 23 students each midway through the year, and then one more student would leave the school in the Spring). Almost all of them qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch, and all were Latinx. A handful were EL classified (three newcomers, and two who had remained in the label for their whole time at Aragón), but nearly two-thirds had been EL classified at some point in their schooling careers. All the students in the class were bilingual through heritage and sustained bilingual instruction, although many used Spanish minimally and only when required. While almost all of them had lived in Hilltop when they started school in early elementary, only a few remained local, as their families had relocated to remote suburbs where the cost of living was lower. Of those still in the community, several had moved in with other relatives (some of whom owned their homes) as rents in the area increased.

The teacher

I (Aaron) taught social studies to the 7th and 8th grade students at Aragón. When Luis presented goals related to his study of gentrification to our school staff, I identified an opportunity to collaborate with him based on the Westward Expansion Unit covered in the 8th grade social studies curriculum. I am a Caucasian cis-male with class privilege relative to most students and was in my fifth year of teaching at Aragón during Luis' research. Teaching was not my initial calling after college as I had various careers before entering the teaching profession, including two and a half years of educational work in Latin America. This work led me to pursue a career in education culminating in a teaching certificate and concurrent Master's degree. My teaching philosophy is centered on student engagement and student voice. Social studies is ripe with opportunities to manifest both. I believe issues of race, power, privilege and justice should be analyzed and discussed in a classroom setting that encourages students to voice their opinions and speak to their experiences. Further, I believe students must be able to have authentic control in their own educational context and my teaching cannot reflect traditional teaching paradigms. Grounded in this philosophy was my idea to link the expansion of the United States in the 1800s to the changing neighborhood, apparent to students at Aragón on a daily basis. This adaptation to the unit was created in the previous year to Luis beginning his study. Student engagement was high and student voice and choice were present. The unit was enhanced with the presence of Luis and his ideas for students further exploring gentrification and connecting this exploration to an important time in US history.

The academic

I (Luis) first engaged with Aragón when the previous principal approached me as a thought partner around the issue of gentrification and declining enrollments. Despite the retirement of this principal, the incoming interim administrators both favored the partnership and a broader inquiry agenda around equity, integration and strengthening the bilingual program, particularly Spanish instruction. I engaged with Aaron at his invitation, given that he had linked a unit on Westward Expansion to contemporary gentrification the year before, and hoped to expand upon those beginnings. My position was established early on for students as that of participant observer, meaning that while I was actively involved in supporting Aaron's teaching, I was also engaging students in ethnographic interviews as they completed their work and collecting audio, video and fieldnote data as the unit unfolded. Having worked as an elementary school teacher and studied classrooms as a researcher previously and with well-developed translanguaging competencies, I was at ease around students and readily approachable, but my position of authority was clear and likely shaped students' willingness to share information with me. Moreover, between age and my own positionality as a light-skinned Latinx cis-male with class privilege relative to most of the students, there was surely an inevitable distance that I sought to bridge through sincerity, empathy and respect, but only the students themselves could say how much trust was ultimately bestowed.

<A>Theoretical Framework and Relevant Literature

As noted earlier, our theoretical framework revolves around different conceptualizations of student-centered pedagogies, particularly the pedagogical frameworks that follow from translanguaging perspectives (García, 2009) on bilingualism and language use. These conceptual foundations taken together provide an outline of our values as educators that informed the planning and implementation of this unit, and that nurture the transformative potential of these pedagogical approaches.

Student-centered pedagogies

We approached the unit with a commission to foreground students' experiences and questions. In so doing, we heeded the words of John Dewey, who argued that 'An educational aim must be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs ... of the given individual to be educated' (Dewey, 2011: 82), and incorporated Vygotsky's (1987) sociocultural perspectives on learning which argue that students' academic ('scientific') and vernacular ('spontaneous') knowledge are interdependent, and that development of academic concepts is best facilitated by an expert other, gradually supporting students to expand their skills and knowledge. Moreover, we complemented this theory of learning with elements of pedagogical philosophy that direct the aim of education toward a more cohesive and democratic society (Dewey, 2011).

Of course, we acknowledge that democratic processes are incompatible with situations of systematic and institutionalized oppression, and thus incorporated different models of Critical Pedagogy that not only seek to change society, as Dewey proffers, but to do so specifically by recognizing and subverting unjust power relations. Here, Freire's (1974) notion of critical consciousness is especially helpful, whereby learners are treated as subjects rather than objects in a dialogical and empowering educational journey, with an awareness of themselves as agents and historical actors in their circumstances.

In this spirit, we specifically drew upon Gutiérrez's concept of sociocritical literacies and the collective Third Space (2008). Gutiérrez, discussing a residential pre-collegiate program for migrant students in California, similarly relies on sociocultural and ecological perspectives on learning (Engeström, 2001) to call attention to the historicized systems of activity in which students' linguistic and literacy practices are embedded and produced. She offers that the institute's approach fostered awareness of academic genres and discourses while highlighting students' capacity as historical actors for themselves, describing the collective Third Space as a liminal and physical space in which 'students begin to reconceive of who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond' and which is 'characterized by the ideals and practices of a shared humanity, a profound obligation to others, boundary crossing, and intercultural exchange in which difference is celebrated without being romanticized' (Gutiérrez, 2008: 148–149). The translanguaging pedagogies evident in this unit of instruction create not only the opportunities for students to demonstrate their academic dexterities, but also their relational and agentive capabilities as they compiled and synthesized information to arrive at complex and unromanticized understandings of both gentrification and Westward Expansion.

Translanguaging pedagogies

Translanguaging pedagogies highlight the specific role of language in reifying or subverting the hierarchies that place immigrant, Latinx and/or emergent bilingual students in positions of vulnerability and marginalization. Translanguaging as a theory of language and bilingualism rejects notions of language as structure with component parts and posits that speakers strategically assemble fluid repertoires of linguistic and communicative resources for meaning-making (García & Li, 2014; Vogel & García, 2017). With specific regard to pedagogy, this implies recognition of how beliefs about language and language learning that have privileged white, elite, orthographic norms for language standardization reinforce deficit perspectives about the communicative practices of marginalized peoples, including the insistence on language separation and parallel monolingual paradigms of proficiency in bilingual programs. Subsequently, translanguaging pedagogies invite opportunities for students to incorporate the full breadth of their bilingual repertoires, including features considered ‘vernacular’ despite their obvious value in academic settings, in their negotiated constructions of knowledge and identity. With specific regard to the transformative capabilities of translanguaging as an ontological and pedagogical frame, García and Li contend:

<quote>

[A]s new configurations of language and education are generated, old understandings and structures are released, thus transforming not only subjectivities, but also cognitive and social structures. In so doing, orders of discourses shift and the voices of Others come to the forefront, relating then translanguaging to criticality, critical pedagogy, social justice and the linguistic human rights agenda. (García & Li, 2014: 3)

</quote>

Thus, translanguaging pedagogies emerge directly from the kinds of critical student-centered frameworks of education that support the classroom as a transformative space.

Several works have undertaken a systematic review of the term *translanguaging* and its connections to pedagogy (Leung & Valdés, 2019; Lewis *et al.*, 2012; Poza, 2017). Lewis *et al.* offer valuable insights into how a term that began with reference to bilingual pedagogies in Wales gained international prominence, and Poza examines the possible dilution of sociopolitical consciousness as the term gained popularity between 2009 and 2014, akin to Jaspers’ (2018) more recent warning of discursive drift. However, given the rapid diffusion of the concept in the last decade, the review by Leung and Valdés is most instructive. Leung and Valdés situate translanguaging scholarship within the broader field(s) and history(ies) of additional language teaching. They note its particular relevance to conditions of ‘*language struggle* between a dominant language and minoritized language’ (Leung & Valdés, 2019: 357, italics in original), highlighting that while translanguaging research covers a vast range of educational, social and professional settings in myriad international contexts, the bulk of the burgeoning scholarship regards Spanish-English bilingual programming in the United States, with its concomitant power struggles between English and Spanish (an already racialized and denigrated language in US society) and between notions of proper Spanish linked to the practices of educated elites in Spain and Latin America. They conclude that translanguaging scholarship would benefit from greater attention to the specific local and programmatic contexts of language learning and instruction, the linguistic repertoires that students and teachers bring to bear in pedagogical interaction, the specific ways in which translanguaging is planned for and deployed in reference to established learning goals and official benchmarks, and the developmental learning trajectories that students experience. With this in mind, and recognizing that this work features a unit with deliberate planning for translanguaging, we focus here on works that examine intentional translanguaging within curriculum rather than the many more that report on organic and often unsanctioned translanguaging that occurs interactionally in classrooms.

Synthesis of research describing translanguaging pedagogies identifies numerous common practices and the subsequent opportunities they expand – allowances for and encouragement of teacher and peer translation, bilingual recasting, use of features said to be from different named languages in speech and in writing, strategic grouping of students, and praising metalinguistic speech – that tap into students’ cultural funds of knowledge and allow experimentation with novel language forms en route to academic discourses and identity representations. These occur in diverse instructional contexts and activities from early elementary to secondary, including use of bilingual poetry (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017), translingual identity texts about students’ transnational experiences (Martínez-Álvarez & Ghiso, 2017), and teachers’ deliberate use of and invitations for translanguaging in speech to affirm students’ languaging practices (Palmer *et al.*, 2014; Sayer, 2013). Likewise, translingual literacy assignments have been characterized as humanizing pedagogical elements that support students’

engagement with and composition of complex texts (Fránquiz *et al.*, 2019; Pacheco *et al.*, 2019; Velasco & García, 2014), nourishing rich discussions of grade-level literature (Ebe & Chapman-Santiago, 2016; Woodley & Brown, 2016; Worthy *et al.*, 2013), dense historical texts (Collins & Cioè-Peña, 2016) and scientific content (Espinosa *et al.*, 2016; Poza, 2018). Works exploring multimodal translanguaging (text, oral language and audiovisual media) speak to the affordances created for students to develop academic skills such as arguing with evidence and accessing complex content while also engaging with social justice debates relevant to their lives (García & Leiva, 2013; Seltzer *et al.*, 2016). Usefully, García and Sylvan (2011) observe and share the core principles from the International High Schools in New York that can encompass this wide array of practices, resources and curriculum arrangements: collaboration among students and among instructional staff, awareness and affirmation of students' cultural and linguistic diversity, and integration of language and content instruction through plenty of experiential learning. Across these works, it is evident that translanguaging serves to empower students with marginalized social identities by affirming their communicative skills and the ecological factors that have shaped their repertoires, while also supporting students' learning of target linguistic and literacy practices with transformative aims.

<A>Methods

Given that the larger partnership of which this unit was a part aimed to be both exploratory and action-oriented to help address questions and challenges stemming from gentrification, the project demanded a dialogic relationship with the participants at the school as we engaged in the investigation. This led to social design experiment (SDE) frameworks and their foundation in Cultural Historical Activity Theory as an overarching methodology.

SDEs adapt principles of design-based research to the theoretical orientations of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. Design-based research seeks to study learning in authentic contexts, incorporating participants as co-investigators whose experiences and curiosities fuel inquiry, and thoroughly describe learning processes in a constant back-and-forth between theory and observation (Brown, 1992; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). Gutiérrez and Vossoughi (2010) build upon this foundation by adding attention to the cultural and historical factors influencing activity systems. Thus, they offer SDE as 'oriented toward transformative ends through mutual relations of exchange ... this interventionist research maintains that change in the individual involves change in the social situation itself' (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010: 101). To this end, interventions resulting from observed needs and emerging questions resist pathologizing groups or individuals for perceived skill deficits and are instead framed as *re-mediations* of the entire ecology of learning, thus departing from design research which often operates within the constraints of existing institutions (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016). SDEs privilege ethnography to understand the histories, experiences, values, contradictions and emic understandings within activity systems (Gutiérrez, 2016). As such, ethnographic observation, including audio- and video-recordings as well as extensive fieldnotes, was used to gain insight into the rhythms of life within the school and community, particularly with regard to this pair of focal 8th grade classrooms.

From January through March 2017, we worked closely to gather students' questions and prior knowledge, to amass materials to facilitate their analysis of primary and secondary sources, and to structure out-of-school opportunities for students to examine the impacts of gentrification upon a range of community stakeholders including one another and their families. Aaron began by extracting the key learning objectives of the district-mandated social studies curriculum related to Westward Expansion and securing relevant primary and secondary sources for students to examine the changes in land use and ownership, the patterns of colonization and occupation and the killing and forcible removal of Indigenous Peoples from their lands from various perspectives. Aaron not only linked the themes of conquest, displacement and white supremacy of that era to current sociopolitical conditions, but also invited students to lead the inquiry when they themselves analogized the process to gentrification. As part of their inquiry, students consulted primary sources such as: the text of a speech to Congress by Andrew Jackson; an interview by Sitting Bull; and journal entries or biographical sketches from pioneers, Mexicano ranchers, missionaries, gold prospectors, and Chinese immigrants working in agriculture or the railroads (see [Figure 3.1](#) for a portion of the graphic organizer for this activity).

They coupled these primary sources with the study of maps showing how land ownership and use changed over time, as well as how the Indigenous population was decimated. In parallel, students investigated gentrification in small groups equipped with Chromebooks, digital audio-recorders and the video-recording capabilities of their

phones or hand-held video cameras that they could borrow from the classroom. They consulted news articles and social media and carried out interviews with parents, community members, city and school district officials, construction workers and their peers, including sharing their own stories of displacement and housing insecurity. Much of the work took place in the classroom, but students also took walks around the community with recording equipment during class time and in their own free time after school. **Figure 3.2**, for example, captures two students interviewing neighborhood residents about their experiences in the neighborhood and how gentrification has impacted their lives, a pedagogical arrangement that allowed for the centering of students' questions and the perspectives of community members within the unit of study.

We observed and recorded the classroom as the unit unfolded and collected students' notes, pictures, writing and culminating projects as artifacts for analysis. Transcripts of recorded interactions along with collected artifacts were analyzed thematically using the overarching research questions for a priori codes. We remind the reader that these questions were: (1) How are affordances for students' translanguaging part of a community-engaged and student-centered thematic unit? and (2) How do students take up these affordances to cultivate their academic skills and engage as historical actors (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2019)?

Thus, we specifically sought instances of students' translanguaging in speech or writing, and expressions of agency in students' described experiences or recommended actions in response to gentrification. In the Findings section that follows, we present some examples of the pedagogical arrangements that afforded translanguaging opportunities and students' subsequent work.

<A>Findings and Discussion

Crucial goals of the unit were not only for students to learn key names and facts about Westward Expansion as per the district curriculum, but also to synthesize across various (sometimes divergent) perspectives and make inferences from primary and secondary sources, meaning that their translanguaging abilities were instrumental in gathering viewpoints from diverse stakeholders and communicating their findings to various audiences. This also meant moving beyond facile comparisons equating gentrification and settler colonialism or blanket ascriptions of blame. Underlying their learning were guiding questions about how different stakeholders were experiencing gentrification and what feelings they had about the process, as well as how contemporary gentrification was similar to and different from Westward Expansion and settler colonialism in the past.

With respect to our first inquiry question, students were encouraged and provided affordances throughout the unit to leverage their full bilingual repertoires. Aaron employed a number of the strategies associated with translanguaging pedagogies, including extensive opportunities for collaborative work on discussion and literacy-based tasks with express allowances for translanguaging communication, provision of the internet and online translators as a multilingual/multimodal resource, opportunities for multilingual research, and multilingual reading and responses (Hesson *et al.*, 2014). To provide specific examples, informational materials, task instructions and graphic organizers (including the exemplar from Figure 3.1 above) were provided in both English and Spanish, students were given access to online translation (Google Translate) at their will and, in many cases, students had the option of submitting assignments in the language of their choice.

In effect, students' conversations were not policed to ensure adherence to any English-only mandate. Although the school's 50-50 model demanded that social studies be taught monolingually in English, Aaron incorporated Spanish into some of his whole-group instruction and into much of his small-group conversations whenever Newcomer students were involved. Students were praised for their bilingual dexterity as they relied on translanguaging to gain information across print and in-person sources.

Students also engaged with visual media and musical artworks throughout the unit, leveraging and adding to the semiotic resources in their translanguaging repertoires. For example, students examined the painting *American Progress* (Gast, 1872), which depicts a robed, white, blonde woman ('Progress') hovering above a frontier landscape as trains and stagecoaches traverse from right to left under her emanating light while Indigenous peoples flee in the left margin of the canvas still in shadow. They compared this work to the video installation *Destinies Manifest* (Jota Leños, 2017), which places the scene in *American Progress* within a prolonged video chronology that begins with Indigenous iconography (visual and aural), segueing to a modern dystopia featuring militarized border walls, depleted and contaminated landscapes of highways and skyscrapers, and plutocrats alongside the Ku Klux Klan, before being shattered back by stampeding bison to Indigenous song and darkness to close. Students wrote about and discussed the competing visions at play in such depictions of Westward Expansion.

Similarly, with respect to contemporary gentrification, the commercial described in our introduction was paired with a spoken word poem and accompanying video by a local artist lamenting the closure of the community's VFW⁵ hall. The poet bemoans the changing character of the neighborhood with poignant verses, conjuring a multi-ethnic enclave marked by both struggle and fraternity, and proclaims the indelibility of the liminal space occupied by the VFW hall, 'These memories are bricks/that no hungry tractor's mouth/will ever be able to consume' (LeFebre, 2015).

In turn, students took up these affordances to leverage their translanguaging repertoires. Observations of students' interactions and analysis of their work throughout this unit addressed our second inquiry question regarding students' leveraging of translanguaging opportunities to grow academically and as agentive subjects. For instance, Aaron's direct invitations to consult journalism and social media across named languages allowed students to investigate experiences of gentrification from diverse sources online. In **Figure 3.3**, for example, a group of students takes notes about different groups' experiences or perspectives with gentrification on a graphic organizer as they consult online social media, blogs and news articles in both English and Spanish.

Another illustrative example comes from the exercise analyzing multiple perspectives about Westward Expansion. After reading about the various groups involved in Westward Expansion, students were asked to reflect on the legacy that various groups left behind (Figure 3.1 above). One newcomer recently arrived from Cuba noted on her exit slip:

<quote>

El mejor legado fue el que dejaron las Pioneras, ya gracias a lo que hicieron todas las mujeres ahora pueden votar ...
El peor legado fue el que dejaron los misioneros ya que llegando de Europa hizo causante de muchas muertes porque llevaron muchas enfermedades a los Nativos Americanos ...
[The best legacy was that left by Pioneer women, since thanks to what they did all women can now vote ... The worst legacy was that left by the missionaries given that coming from Europe caused many deaths because they brought many diseases to the Native Americans ...]

</quote>

Her insights came as a result of having access to the primary sources from the different groups and the graphic organizer in Spanish alongside the ability to dialogue with peers without rigid monolingual expectations placed upon them.

Figures 3.4 and 3.5, meanwhile, show how students' language choices for assignments demonstrate their sophisticated ability to language across fluid contexts. For example, the slide from a student presentation captured in Figure 3.4 shows how students are aware that to interview people in the community they cannot do so in English only, as they add questions in Spanish. The slide in Figure 3.5, meanwhile, shows how a group that had some newcomers adjusted to the group's language needs by using Spanish to summarize the advantages and disadvantages of gentrification.

<Insert Figures 3.4 and 3.5 next to each other, if possible>

Likewise, in **Figure 3.6**, we see how students engaged in multimodal translanguaging, drawing on features ascribed to Spanish and English as well as memes and GIFs to spur debate about the justifiability of Westward Expansion.

A particularly salient and comprehensive example of how students took up the affordances for translanguaging to agentively evaluate gentrification returns us to the opening of this chapter when students viewed the promotional video for the new amenities in the changing neighborhood juxtaposed with the aforementioned poem and video about the shuttered VFW Hall. In the ensuing discussion comparing the vision of the two videos, the students demonstrated their remarkable capability for synthesis across perspectives gleaned from their research and community study and acknowledgement of their own cultural dynamism.

In the following transcript⁶ of one small group's discussion (transcription conventions adapted from Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998), we analyze the exchange between several students as they begin with conversation about the videos and gentrification broadly. In the exchange we can appreciate not only the dynamic bilingualism at play in their debate, but also their synthesis across interviews and readings that they have consulted in their research. The prompt for the students' discussion is a question posed by Aaron, 'According to the two videos, what's special about Hilltop?' The participants in this discussion are: Bianca, a reserved US-born Mexican-American girl with robust bilingual competencies in her linguistic repertoire; Amelia, also a US-born Mexican-American girl with

highly developed English and Spanish features in her linguistic repertoire and who alternately deployed her bilingual repertoire to disrupt class or to make some of the more insightful comments in class discussions; Santos, a US-born Mexican-American student with highly developed bilingual competencies in his repertoire and a Gifted And Talented classification; and Ezequiel, a Mexican-American boy whose family had been direly pressured by gentrification and whose hostility to neighborhood newcomers shone through.

- 1 **Amelia (A):** It's special to all the Caucasians
 2 and all that because it has the stadium(.) the food(.)
 3 [the bars
 4 **Ezequiel (E):** [I see a lotta white people
 5 **A:** Yeah(.)
 6 There's like no Hispanic people=
 7 **Bianca (B):** =But it has everything there
 8 Restaurants, parks, the river=
 9 **E:** =But it's all the white people's culture
 10 It's all the things they like
 11 The shops (.) the restaurants=
 12 **B:** =Whatever
 13 I get ice cream at [XX] all the time (.)
 14 **A:** You know that building's not there anymore?
 15 They already built apartments [on that corner
 16 **B:** [Yeah
 17 **Santos (S):** That's messed up
 18 Wouldn't it be better for them to build
 19 a memorial
 20 instead of apartments?
 21 Isn't that better?
 22 **B:** A la mejor lo pueden convertir en un museo de lo que fue antes.
 [Maybe they can convert it to a museum of what it was before]
 23 **A:** Pues se me hace que sí(.)
 24 podemos tener las casas nuevas
 25 y viejas
 26 porque es una buena condición
 27 Creo que sí es una buena combinación
 [I think we can have the new homes and the old ones because
 it's a good condition. I think it's a good combination.]
 28 **S:** Ayudan mucho la ecología
 29 Usan paneles solares
 30 Son más ecológicas=
 [They help the ecology. They use solar panels. They're more
 ecological.]
 31 **E:** =I remember there was a lotta Mexicans and
 not that many white people
 32 There was white people
 33 but not that many
 34 That affects me because we are a beautiful culture(.)
 35 **A:** Porque nos quitan un poco la cultura, ¿qué no?
 [They take away our culture a little bit, no?]
 36 **B:** Pero tiene muchas maneras en que enseña(.)
 37 Es bueno para que todos los estudiantes para que aprendan a ser
 38 como(.)
 39 más involucrados
 [But it teaches in a lot of ways. It's good for students to learn to be more
 involved.]

In this discussion, not only do the students language dynamically across what is said to be English and Spanish (e.g. Lines 22 and 35), but also synthesize across their own diverse perspectives and those of the many sources they have consulted in their research. What begins as a lament about the neighborhood's demographic change (Lines 1–6) is redirected when Bianca points to the desirability of the neighborhood and some of its new amenities, including the new ice cream parlor that she frequents (Lines 7 and 13). Indeed, these new businesses and the increased safety of the neighborhood were frequently mentioned by community members as positive changes of the last few years. When Amelia heightens the evocation of loss by noting that the VFW featured in the poetry video has already been demolished and replaced by apartments since the video's posting, Santos and Bianca both offer some options for memorializing and commemorating the neighborhood's history. Santos, by noting that the new homes use solar panels (another feature mentioned by community members in interviews), aligns with Amelia's point that there may be some benefits to having new and old buildings intermixed (Lines 23–30). As Ezequiel insists on the loss of the Latinx culture of the community and the hurt this invokes, Bianca in turn notes the opportunity for students to become more civically engaged.

<A>Conclusion

This discussion offers a valuable microcosm for our broader argument. Translanguaging pedagogies did not shift the power relations in society that were driving gentrification and the patterns of disinvestment that preceded it, nor did they alter the discourses about immigrants and Latinx peoples in the United States on any societal level. However, they provided contexts in which students could grapple with the points of tension in the overly facile critiques of both gentrification and Westward Expansion with which they entered the unit. Hearing from diverse stakeholders, students learned that some Latinx families were in fact benefiting greatly from the changes if they owned their homes and enjoyed the increased amenities and safety of the community, and that some white families were being equally harmed by the rising cost of living and congestion, muddying the race–class correspondence that many presumed. As they prepared slideshows, essays, animations and oral presentations to share with their peers, with students and faculty in the school and with the school district personnel who had served as interview participants, the students also came to see themselves as capable representatives of their families and community in advocating for more equitable approaches to community development that could foster integration without as much displacement and hardship for poor and working-class families. In short, translanguaging pedagogies in this unit created the kind of collective Third Space that Freire (1974) and Gutiérrez (2008) encourage – a space in which dialogue, empathy and humanistic principles catalyze learning, interrogate social power relations, and position students as capable academics and citizens of a democratic society.

Notes

- (1) Luis would like to acknowledge the National Academy of Education and Spencer Foundation for the funding and mentorship that made possible the research on which this chapter reports.
- (2) All names of individuals and places are pseudonyms.
- (3) We use the terms *Chicano* and *Aztlán* in deference to the movement of the 1960s and 1970s that organized for civil rights of Latinxs in the region and the nation, recognizing that at present the term has fallen out of favor given its exclusion of female and non-binary gender identities as well as the many other nationalities and ethnicities that comprised the Latinx civil rights struggle (NPR, 2011).
- (4) We use the terms *English language learners*, *English learners* and *EL* when specifically recognizing the bureaucratic label placed upon students. We use the term *emergent bilinguals* (García *et al.*, 2008) at all other times to refer to students developing English in school and with a primary or heritage language with a racialized and marginalized history in US schooling.
- (5) VFW stands for Veterans of Foreign Wars, a service organization for US veterans.
- (6) Transcription conventions adapted from Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998). No pause between turns (interruptions) is signaled by ‘=’. Overlapping speech is signaled by ‘[’’. Pauses are denoted by ‘(.)’. Language in closed brackets is the authors' translation. Statements in features ascribed to the named language of Spanish are not italicized despite convention to accentuate our view of the singular communicative repertoire associated with translanguaging frameworks.

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Groups of Westward Expansion				Name:
Name of Group	Reason(s) for going west	Positive aspects of this group	Negative aspects of this group	What was this group's legacy?
The Explorers 1				
The Mountain Men 2				
The Forty Niners 3				

Figure 3.1 Portion of graphic organizer for student activity learning experiences of various groups involved in Westward Expansion



Figure 3.2 Students interviewing neighborhood residents about gentrification



Figure 3.3 Students collaboratively reviewing journalistic and social media accounts of gentrification

Questions we asked for the interview:

- *What do you think of gentrification?*
- *What does gentrification look like in this community?*
- *How is gentrification affecting the community?*
- *Do new buildings, and people affect the neighbourhood?*
- *What are your experiences of the community changing?*
- *Why did you decide to move into this neighbourhood?*
- *¿Qué piensas de la gentrificación?*
- *¿Cómo se ve la gentrificación en esta comunidad?*
- *¿Cómo está afectando esto a la comunidad?*
- *¿Construir un edificio nuevo y las personas afectan el vecindario?*
- *¿Cuáles son tus experiencias con la comunidad cambiando?*
- *¿Por qué decidiste mudarte a este vecinda*



Figure 3.4 Screen capture of bilingual interview protocol from Google Slides presentation from student group project

Lo negativo y lo positivo

LO POSITIVO

- Mayor incentivo para que los propietarios incrementen/mejoren la vivienda
- Disminución del número de viviendas vacías
- Mayor mezcla social

LO NEGATIVO

- Desplazamiento a causa de incrementos en el alquiler/precio
- Precios insostenibles de la vivienda
- Resentimiento y conflicto en la comunidad
- Precios insostenibles de la vivienda

Figure 3.5 Screen capture of Google Slides presentation weighing benefits and drawbacks of gentrification mentioned by community members in Spanish during community interviews

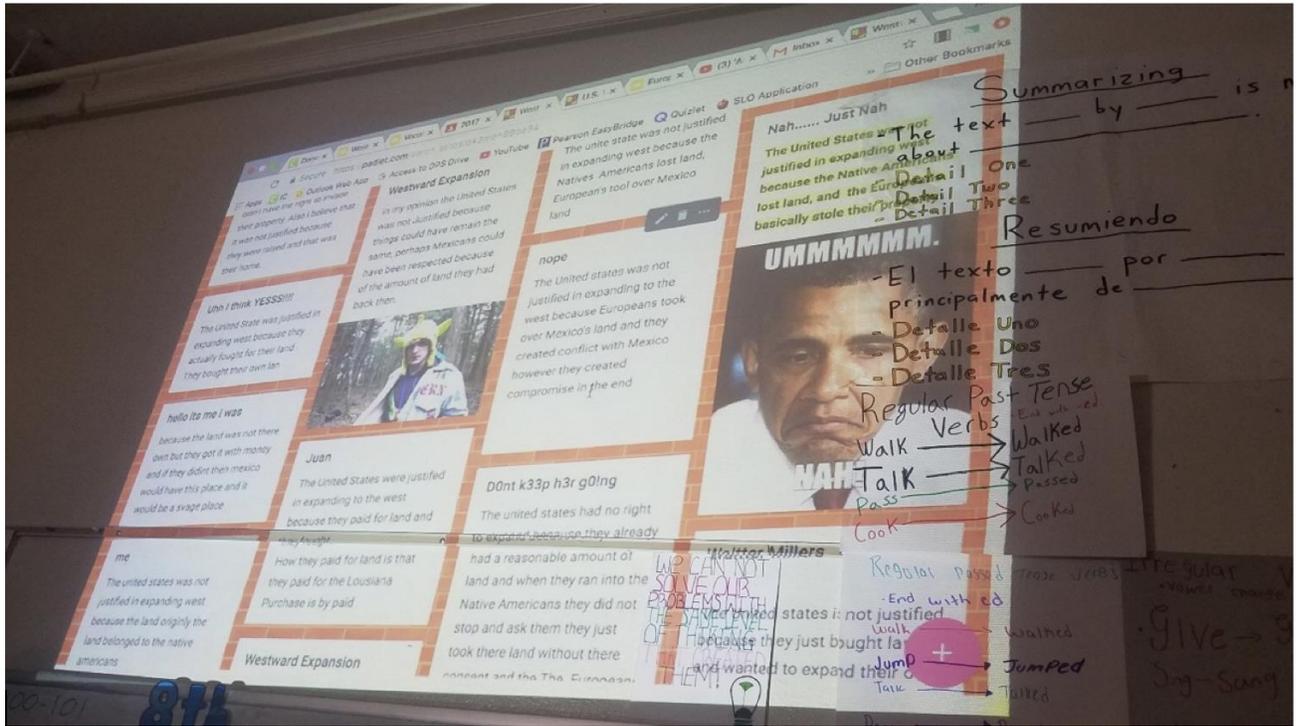


Figure 3.6 Student responses in Padlet including Spanish, English, memes and GIFs in response to prompt about whether or not US government was justified in expanding Westward