

Borderlands Epistemologies and the Transnational Experience¹

Fronteras Epistemológicas y la Experiencia
Transnacional

Mary A. Petró and Barbara Greybeck^{2*}
Sam Houston State University, USA

Abstract

This reflective article is based on an ethnographic case study of five transnational teachers of English in Mexico. These teachers had acquired English as children of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. At the time of the study, they were living and teaching in their parents' place of origin in rural Mexico. The intent of the article is to examine how borderlands ways of knowing were reflected in their personal and professional lives. The transnational experiences of living in and between nation states appeared at the forefront of their cultural and linguistic practices. They spoke the languages of transnationalism in that they engaged in *translanguaging* and considered English to be part of their heritage, too. They strongly identified with other transnationals who had similar backgrounds, and as teachers of English, they transformed their classroom into authentic lessons on language and culture. Their borderlands ways of knowing informed their linguistic identity and teaching practices.

Keywords: Transnational teachers, borderlands, heritage language, translanguaging

Resumen

Este artículo de reflexión se basa en un estudio etnográfico de cinco maestras transnacionales de inglés en México. Estas maestras aprendieron el inglés como hijas de inmigrantes mexicanos en Estados Unidos. En el momento en que se realizó el estudio, ellas vivían y enseñaban en el lugar de origen de sus padres, el cual está localizado en zonas rurales de México. El propósito del artículo es examinar las maneras de conocer como las fronteras epistemológicas se reflejaban en su vida personal y profesional. Las experiencias transnacionales de vivir en y entre dos naciones aparecieron en la vanguardia de sus prácticas culturales y lingüísticas. Asimismo, estas maestras hablaban las lenguas

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² map042@shsu.edu, bjg018@shsu.edu

del transnacionalismo empleando el *translanguaging* y consideraban el inglés como parte de su herencia cultural. Se identificaron plenamente con otros transnacionales con antecedentes similares y como maestras de inglés transformaron su aula en auténticas lecciones de lenguaje y cultura. Así, las maneras de conocer sus fronteras epistemológicas revelaron su identidad y práctica docente.

Palabras claves: Maestros transnacionales, zonas fronterizas, lengua de herencia, translanguaging

Resumo

Este artigo de reflexão se baseia em um estudo etnográfico de cinco professoras transnacionais de inglês no México. Estas professoras aprenderam o inglês como filhas de imigrantes mexicanos nos Estados Unidos. No momento em que se realizou o estudo, elas viviam e ensinavam no lugar de origem dos seus pais, o qual está localizado em zonas rurais de México. O propósito do artigo é examinar as maneiras de conhecer como as fronteiras epistemológicas se refletiam na sua vida pessoal e profissional. As experiências transnacionais de morar entre duas nações, apareceram na vanguarda de suas práticas culturais e linguísticas. Da mesma forma, estas professoras falavam as línguas do transnacionalismo empregando o *translanguaging* e consideravam o inglês como parte da sua herança cultural. Identificaram-se plenamente com outros transnacionais com antecedentes similares, e como professoras de inglês transformaram sua aula em autênticas lições de linguagem e cultura. Assim, as maneiras de conhecer suas fronteiras epistemológicas revelaram sua identidade e prática docente.

Palavras chave: Professores transnacionais, zonas fronteiriças, língua de herança, translanguaging

Introduction

The migratory movement of people across the U.S.-Mexico border is and has always been bi-directional (Wyman, 1993). Scholars have recently begun to present a more accurate portrayal of this ebb and flow, a picture that includes attention to “transmigrants” who live within a “transnational social space” (Pries, 2001). Using a framework of borderlands epistemologies, this paper examines the translanguaging practices (Garcia, 2009; García & Leiva, 2013; Sayer, 2013) and transnational identities of English teachers in Mexico who acquired English in the U.S. as the children of immigrants. Garcia (2009) defines translanguaging as the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p. 45). These participants forged a path which straddled borders, as Lidia,

one of the participants of this study stated, “I guess I am not just from here or there, I’m both from here and there.”

In this paper, we address the following question: How are borderlands ways of knowing reflected in the identities and language practices of transnational teachers of English in Mexico? Our intent is to describe their use of non-dominant language forms in the context of Mexico, which resulted from their transnational heritage: translanguaging and English.

Literature Review

Transnationalism

Frequent, regular contact between transnationals and their ancestral country is at the heart of what Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999) have defined as “core transnationalism.” Core transnationalism exists when interaction occurs on a regular, patterned basis, and thus forms an integral part of participants’ lives. The participants described here are part of family networks who engage in core transnationalism. Their families essentially have a home base in the U.S. and in Mexico, with members of the immediate family in both, and with regular visits back and forth. Warriner (2007) recognizes that the extent to which transnationalism is possible depends upon several factors, including legal status. The type of core transnationalism these participants engaged in is possible because they and most of their immediate family members obtained U.S. residency or were born in the U.S. All had Mexican citizenship as well.

Much of the literature on transnationalism has arisen within the context of the U.S., focusing on ways in which immigrants and their children maintain transnational ties and practices with their country of origin (Levitt & Waters 2002; Ramírez & Félix, 2010-2011; Smith, 2002; Waldinger, 2013, Waldinger, Popkin & Magaña, 2007; Warriner, 2007). Bhatt and Roberts (2012) asserted that it is critical to research transnationalism from the perspective of the sending countries because “we have yet to arrive at a complete understanding of the ramifications of return migration on areas of origin” (p. 178). Accordingly, this study involved second-generation descendants of immigrants to the U.S. who returned to Mexico and were employed as teachers of English.

Research on immigrants returning to their homeland is relatively scant (Portes, 2009). With respect to the field of education, researchers have studied the language practices and educational experiences of these individuals. Smith (2006), for example, highlighted linguistic

issues in Mexico related to the teaching of the bilingual children of immigrants returning from the U.S. Researchers have also explored transnational educational issues and the perceptions of schooling of transnationals living in Mexico who had attended schools in both countries (Sánchez García, 2007; Tuirán 2001; Weller 1999; Zúñiga 2001; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2006; Zúñiga, Hamann & Sánchez García, 2008). Our research examines the language practices of transnational teachers of English as a representation of their borderlands ways of knowing within the context of Mexico. These ways of knowing have been researched by Chicano scholars in the U.S. within a framework of borderlands epistemologies (Del Castillo & Valenzuela Arce, 2004; Elenes, 1997; González, 2001; Murillo, 1999; Smith & Murillo, 2013).

Borderlands Epistemologies

Borderlands represent more than the area surrounding the physical dividing line between two nation-states. According to Ernst-Slavit (2000), “Borderlands are those unintentional, multicultural spaces where cultures meet, where those living on the edges discover similar shared beliefs and rituals and are able to construct new ones” (p. 251).

Borderlands, as a discourse and the ways of knowing of people who live between different worlds, has been embraced by some Chicana/o researchers in fields ranging from literary criticism to critical ethnography (Brochin Ceballos, 2012; Del Castillo & Valenzuela, 2004; Foley & Villenas, 2002; Jackson, 2006; Necochea & Cline, 2005; Smith & Murillo, 2013). Scholars working within the borderlands perspective reject the dichotomous division between nation-states. As Murrillo (1999) asserted, “The modern concept of community, based on the nation-state, common language, and experience has long become incapable to gain an understanding of the fragmented and often paradoxical identities that are negotiated between worlds” (p. 16). Transnationals often demonstrate their borderland ways of knowing through their language practices. Sánchez (2007) wrote that transnationals, “are afforded an entirely different host of socio-cultural resources from which to draw, including but not limited to the ways they speak, construct identity and develop their worldviews” (p. 279).

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The participants of this study referred to their translanguaging (García, 2009) as Spanglish. García (2011) stated that translanguaging “is a product of border thinking, of knowledge that is autochthonous and conceived from a bilingual, not monolingual position” (p. 389). Spanish monolinguals and individuals who have learned English as a foreign language in Mexico refer to this phenomenon as *hablar*

mocho or hablar pocho (to speak Americanized Spanish). Spanglish has negative connotations in both the U.S. and Mexico (Otheguy & Stern, 2010; Rodríguez-González & Parafita-Couto, 2012). Otheguy and Stern (2010) assert that the term serves to disparage what is actually Spanish in the U.S. The notion of translanguaging (García, 2009, 2011; García & Leiva, 2013) is a more accurate characterization. However, the term Spanglish is used in this article when it represents the actual words of the participants.

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative analysis was used to address the following question: How are borderlands ways of knowing reflected in the identities and translanguaging practices of transnational teachers of English in Mexico? The data examined is part of a larger ethnographic case study of transnational teachers of English in Mexico (Petrón, 2009). As stated previously, our focus here is on the language forms that are not dominant in Mexico: translanguaging and English.

Context/Participants

Five women were selected through purposeful sampling to identify information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2001). Transnational teachers were not difficult to distinguish from those teachers who learned English as a foreign language. Transnationals tended to speak English at training workshops and congregate together. The participants were chosen based on number of years in the U.S. schools, continuing immediate family connections in the U.S., and employment in the *Programa de Inglés en Primaria* (English in Primary School Program) in their parents' area of origin.

All five women had siblings and/or parents living in the U.S. in essentially a second home base. Their parents were from the marginalized working class in rural Nuevo Leon and consequently had little or no access to formal education. Their parents were driven by economic circumstances to emigrate to the U.S., and all of the participants acquired their English as children in the U.S. Pseudonyms are used for the participants and the towns, villages or ranchos where the study took place.

Nora was born in the U.S. and attended school there from kindergarten through the eighth grade. She returned to Mexico when

her parents retired. Her siblings remained in the U.S. She was unable to get her U.S. transcripts validated by Mexican education officials. As a result, she completed *primaria*, *secundaria* and *preparatoria* through public and private adult education and testing programs in Mexico, and completed a three-year degree at a private secretarial school. Nora had been living in Mexico full-time for approximately seventeen years. She had not wanted to return to Mexico, but she did so in order to care for her parents.

Carely attended school from first through fifth grade in the U.S. and sixth grade through prepa in Mexico. She was studying for a degree in education at the time of this study. Her intention was eventually to become a bilingual education teacher in the U.S. Carely had been living in Mexico for the previous ten years; she had returned to Mexico at the request of her grandparents. Her mother and sister lived in the U.S. at the time of the study.

Elvira had extensive visits to the U.S. beginning at age five when her parents received amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1987. Her parents entire work history had been in the U.S.; she and each her siblings had been left in the care of their grandparents as infants. She completed first grade through junior high school in Mexico and then attended three years of high school in Texas. She returned to Mexico after graduating from high school by her own choice. Most of her siblings lived in the U.S. and her parents spent half of the year there.

Lidia attended preschool and kindergarten in the U.S. and first and second grade in Mexico. Third through sixth grade were completed in the U.S. before returning to Mexico for two years of junior high. Finally, she attended high school and one year of community college in the U.S. At the time of this study, Lidia had been living in Mexico for approximately two years by choice.

Laura attended kindergarten through fourth grade in the U.S., and fifth through prepa plus one year of secretarial school in Mexico. She and her husband had lived and worked in the U.S. periodically for the previous ten years. They went to the U.S. to work whenever they wanted to save money. Her parents and one of her siblings lived in the U.S. At the time of the study, Laura had been living in Mexico full-time for approximately one year because her husband preferred to live in Mexico.

Data Collection Instruments

Phenomenological interviews were conducted in accordance with the three-step process outlined by Seidman (2012), in order to obtain a first person description of a given experience (Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 2006). Participant observation took place in the homes and classrooms of the transnational teachers, and detailed field notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011) were recorded during these observations. Written artifacts such as school records were collected and analyzed. Interactions with Mexican education officials were also recorded.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The process of analyzing the data was on-going and recursive throughout the data collection phase in the field and beyond. A constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011) of thematic analysis was used by coding and bracketing interview transcripts and field notes based on an emic perspective rather than pre-existing codes. The words and actions of the participants themselves suggested the codes. Our interest in transnational issues stems from our experiences with conducting research and teaching in Mexico and on the U.S.-Mexico border. Consequently, our experiences contribute to the lens with which we viewed the data.

Results

English as a Heritage Language

None of the participants spoke a dialect of English that would be considered prestigious. Carely, Nora and Laura spoke what is frequently called Chicano English (Fought, 2002). Lidia spoke an extremely strong Chicago or Inland North dialect of English (Labov, Ash & Boberg, 2006). Elvira spoke a variety of Southern American English (Labov, Ash & Boberg, 2006). These individuals displayed a high degree of oral proficiency and had no difficulty understanding the English spoken in the television programs they watched on a regular basis. They frequently read English books and magazines acquired in the U.S. Their writing in English in their role as teachers was competent at the sentence and paragraph level. Most were observed correcting the academic writing of their supervisors and other education professionals who had learned English as a foreign language in Mexico. As Nora stated when referring to a passage from an English manual being compiled at

one of her schools, “This doesn’t make any sense in English. You have to translate it into Spanish to be able to understand it.”

The term *heritage language* seems odd at first, especially when one thinks of English as a heritage language in Mexico. However, the research on transnationalism is generally framed within the context of the U.S. and involves ties with the immigrant country of origin. In a similar fashion, heritage language research is conducted in the U.S. where English is the dominant societal language. Other languages in this context like Spanish are seen as heritage languages. Considering the definition given by Kelleher (2010) that “heritage language is used to identify a languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given societal context,” English would fit this definition in the context of Mexico.

For these participants, English was a language spoken by their cousins, their aunts and uncles, their nieces and nephews, and even their own siblings. In some cases, English was their first language (Nora) or both languages were acquired simultaneously (Laura and Lidia). In all cases, they themselves defined English as part of their heritage. The participants’ knowledge of both U.S. English and culture was far superior to that of the professionals who spoke English as a foreign language in this area of Mexico. In this study, English is the heritage language of these individuals in much the same way as Spanish is the heritage language of a Latino in the U.S. whose parents and grandparents speak Spanish. English was the heritage language of these participants in Mexico because it was acquired, learned and was continually used as a result of their transnational heritage.

The social environment of Mexico and the accompanying attitudes towards English in which these transnational participants were living was very different from that of Spanish heritage language individuals, particularly those of Mexican origin, in the United States. English has become of major importance even in these rural areas. The hegemony of English, particularly U.S. varieties, in Mexico today cannot be disputed. At the time of this study, there was a general sense that English was no longer a luxury, but rather a necessity in today’s world. Education officials in this study frequently talked about this necessity generically as *globalización*. However, the participants of this study were affected by the social, cultural and economic processes of globalization long before the word became fashionable.

In Mexico, there has been a proliferation of bilingual and immersion institutes. Although once limited to major metropolitan areas, there are now private bilingual and immersion institutes in

smaller cities in more rural areas. The push towards English within the realm of public education has also increased, albeit more slowly. Access to English instruction within Nuevo Leon still tends to be strongly related to social class, with more affluent Mexicans paying dearly in an attempt to ensure that their children acquire the language. For the affluent, English is a tool to maintain their status and economic advantage, representing links to international business and advanced degrees from U.S. universities. In contrast, for these participants English proficiency was a consequence, not of affluence, but rather of their parents' being forced by economic conditions to leave Mexico. These were the daughters of field laborers, mechanics, a carpenter, and a bartender, and they had acquired English through their transnational heritage. Carely was clearly aware of this contradiction: "*Es curioso, pero es que los de arriba quieren el inglés que nosotros, los de abajo ya tenemos.*" (It's strange, but it's that those from above want the English that we, those from below, already have.)

These transnational teachers were recognized by their supervisors and education officials as native speakers of American English. Their command of English was never called into question. In contrast to many Spanish heritage language speakers in the U.S., these transnational individuals did not evaluate their English proficiency in a negative way. They all believed that they knew English well. They tended to see themselves as their superiors saw them, as native speakers. It was probably not difficult for them to maintain a positive outlook about their English proficiency since they were constantly told that their English was *bonito* (pretty). They were frequently called upon to translate instruction manuals for individuals who had purchased items in the U.S., and their supervisors often asked them to revise curriculum materials in English.

Clearly, conditions in the social environment at that time were favorable for the maintenance and continuing development of these individuals' heritage language. These transnationals were well aware that they possessed something of great value. At the time of this study, none of these individuals had a college degree nor was a *normalista* (graduate of teacher training school). However, they had all been able to parlay their linguistic talents into relatively well-paying teaching positions in rural areas where steady jobs were difficult to come by. Furthermore, they earned more money and received more respect than their education levels and the class origin of their parents would normally dictate in Mexico.

As an example, Laura, who graduated from *prepa* (high school) and completed only one year of business secretarial school in Mexico,

never had difficulty finding work via her English in Montemayor. She was employed as a translator for a U.S. based citrus company, as the owner and instructor of her own English school for young children, as a teacher in the private and public sector, and as coordinator of English instruction at a private school. Carely, too, found work as a private English tutor while still a student at *prepa*. Similarly, Lidia was offered a job to simply speak in English to the preschool children of a wealthy landowner in Turco while she was still in *secundaria*.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging was used predominately among the participants whenever relatives were visiting from the U.S. or they were with other transnationals. For example, Nora would frequently say, “*Estás ready*” to her daughter. Among some of the participants, there tended to be good-natured joking about language in general. For example, Nora took great delight in recounting her daughter’s development in translanguaging. Exchanges such as the following were common in Nora’s home. This one occurred as Nora was scolding her three-year-old daughter.

Nora: Eva, get over here or I’m going to smack you.

Eva: *Ay mamá, no me esmaquees*. (Oh, mom, don’t smack me.)

Nora: Did you hear that? She does that all the time, makes up words like that. I’m not talking about the ones she hears my brothers use like *wáthale* (Watch out).

Lidia had strong ideas on the role of translanguaging in her own identity, “I know Spanish and I know English, but I like speaking Spanglish best of all... Anyways, all three are part of me and I want my kids to have that too.” Although the participants engaged in translanguaging, they often saw it as a bad habit. Monoglot standards (Silverstein, 1996) prevail on both sides of the border. Such standards serve to limit the linguistic resources of bilinguals during language production because they must “perform two ‘codes’ in additive ways, according to ‘standards’ created by powerful agencies such as schools, or nations” (Garcia & Leiva, 2013, p. 208).

The participants were very aware that translanguaging was stigmatized in Mexico. Several education officials or supervisors criticized transnationals, calling them *maestros mexicano americanos* (Mexican American teachers) and claiming they used too much Spanish

in the classroom. However, when observational data in field notes was compared, non-transnational teachers spoke about the same amount of Spanish in classrooms as transnationals. The difference seemed to be in the interchange of Spanish and English. Non-transnational teachers tended to translate from English to Spanish in a sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph manner, whereas transnationals were more likely to engage in intrasentencial code-switching. It must be noted, however, that the researchers spent significantly more time in the classrooms of transnational teachers than in those of non-transnational teachers.

Despite this negative atmosphere and their own ambivalent feelings, the transnational teachers often defended their translanguaging. This was apparent in several interactions between transnationals and non-transnationals, such as the excerpt that follows. Lulu, a non-transnational teacher, was telling a story about a recent shopping trip to Texas. Nora was a focal participant of this study; Nely is another transnational teacher of English.

Lulu: *Ay no, nunca voy a entender a los Tejanos. Mejor que usen nomás inglés porque lo del español, ay no. Vi un letrero en una maquina que decía: "No se puede refundir dinero. Gracias, El manager." ¿Qué es eso?* (Oh no, I am never going to understand Tejanos. Better that they use only English because their Spanish, oh no. I saw a sign on a machine that said: "Money cannot be recast. Thank you, the manager." What is that?)

Nora: What you mean what is it? It is a sign on a vending machine talking about money. Make the connection, Lulu, make the leap. I hate it when people criticize stuff like that.

Nely: Basta, Lulu. We never get a break. Damned if we do, damned if we don't.

Nora: Yeah, Lulu. *Y yo oigo a mis estudiantes y aun tus hijos diciendo cosas como, "Estoy chateando" o "Haz clic" pero esos no son pochismos porque la gente que los dicen no son pochos. Pero nosotros, everything we say gets criticized. Déjanos en paz.* (And I hear my students and even your kids saying things like, "I'm chatting" or "Click on the icon", but those aren't Americanized Spanish because the people that say them are not Americanized Mexicans. But us, everything we say gets criticized. Leave us in peace.)

Several key issues were present in this excerpt. Lulu's criticism was directed toward the translanguaging of *Tejanos*. Yet, California-raised Nely and Nora quickly defended them. Nora immediately

switched to a rapid-fire English and integrated specialized terms such as *vending machine* and slang expressions like, *make the leap*. Lulu, who learned English as a foreign language, did not have access to such English. In this way, Nora asserted her linguistic superiority over Lulu. Nely continued with her use of idioms: “We never get a break. Damned if we do, damned if we don’t,” had the effect of barring Lulu from participating in the conversation because Lulu did not understand what Nely was saying. Nora continued the isolation of Lulu by verifying that she did understand what Nely was saying and suggesting that Lulu should have been able to understand, but did not.

Nora then switched back into Spanish and offered a critique of the class issues surrounding translanguaging in Mexico. *Chatear* and *haz clic* are considered acceptable words because they are frequently uttered by middle-class, computer savvy, educated Mexican youth, such as Lulu’s own children. However, as Nora indicated *pochismos* used by those who live and work in the U.S. are not acceptable because these individuals are typically members of the working class, who are viewed as less Mexicans by virtue of their transnational experiences. This attitude was exemplified by the fact that education officials often referred to transnational teachers as “*maestros mexicano americanos*.” Many conversations took place in which transnationals demonstrated transnational solidarity and positive support for translanguaging, usually in opposition to criticism from non-transnationals. In other words, transnationals defended their borderlands ways of knowing.

Transnationals in the English Language Classroom

In all of their classrooms, these transnational teachers integrated their knowledge of U.S. cultural practices throughout their lessons. They told stories about their school days in the U.S. and explained the pictures in the textbooks so that their students would understand them. Some of the textbooks were reprints of English as a second language texts published for use in the U.S. with little accompanying background information. For example, in one text, there was a picture of a child carrying a school lunch tray. Lidia explained the picture to her group of sixth graders.

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Lidia: *Mira el dibujito del boy. Tiene una bandeja con su food porque allá te dan de comer en la escuela al mediodía. Allá los kids están en la school desde las eight in the morning hasta las three in the afternoon y por eso, they eat at school en vez de la casa Y ¿ves el cartoncito ahí? It’s milk. Porque todos los children tienen que tomar milk in school. (Look at the picture of the boy.*

He has a tray with his food because over there they feed you in school at noon. Over there, kids are in school from eight in the morning until three in the afternoon and that's why, they eat at school instead of at home. And see the little carton there? It's milk. Because all the children have to drink milk in school.)

As the above example illustrates, both cultural lessons and pedagogical code-switching were common in their classrooms. Pedagogical code-switching (Petrón, 2009) was different than the translanguaging that occurred within their transnational families. The rate of speech was slow and the English words were well-enunciated. Furthermore, these teachers used English to reinforce the vocabulary the children were learning or had learned, and Spanish to make sure the children understood the cultural information. They modified the vocabulary in the textbooks in accordance with their own experiences and language usage, for example, *backpack* replaced *book bag* and a *shop* became a *store*.

Non-transnational teachers did not appear to deviate from the content and vocabulary of the textbooks, nor did they offer cultural explanations. As mentioned previously, non-transnational teachers never engaged in translanguaging; they translated. In addition, all of these transnational teachers devoted considerably more attention to pronunciation in their English classrooms than non-transnational teachers. Education officials in Nuevo Leon saw this as one of the benefits of having transnational teachers in the classroom. The emphasis on pronunciation was directly related to the experiences of these transnational teachers. They frequently mentioned the difficulties experienced by their relatives in the U.S. who had strong Mexican accents. They asserted that Americans did not want to listen to anyone who had a Mexican accent.

In contrast to non-transnational teachers, these transnational teachers were well aware which of their students had lived in the U.S. All noted that it was easy to identify such students. *Real English*, as opposed to *book English*, were the terms they used to describe the English of their own transnational students. All spoke of their attempts to provide moral support to these students. These participants highlighted the difficulties involved in making the transition from schooling in the U.S. to schooling in Mexico and did what they could to help their transnational students make this transition.

In addition to providing moral support to their transnational students, the participants validated the language skills these students brought to the classroom. Although these transnational teachers spoke

slowly and enunciated clearly for the benefit of their learners who spoke English as a foreign language, they addressed rapid-fire comments in English to their transnational students, as is evidenced in the following pedagogical side sequence:

Carely: (Speaking very slowly and gesturing to the whole class) Open your books to page ten, page ten, open your books. (Speaking rapidly to a transnational student) Freddie, run next door and see if I can borrow some chalk from Maestra Berta.

Freddie: She ain't there. I'll ask Maestra Nancy.

Carely: Whatever, just get me some chalk.

Carely stated that did not correct his use of ain't because it was important that "Freddie feel proud of his real English." These teachers frequently encouraged their transnational students to keep up their English. Most also lent them magazines or books and gave them alternative assignments. Although their efforts were not systematic, they empathized with these students and made some attempt to address their needs. Lidia even went so far as to demand additional materials for her transnational students because as she stated, "Look at this book. How can I teach them with this? If you have lived just six months over there, you would know more than what's in this book."

Conclusions

This research is unique in that it deals with transnationals who have returned to their parents' place of origin, in this case, rural Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Much of the widely read research on transnationalism or heritage languages or translanguaging emanates from scholars studying these issues within the context of the U.S. However, what happens in the Mexican context is just as significant as what happens in the U.S. context.

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Our purpose was to examine how borderlands ways of knowing are reflected in the language practices of transnational teachers of English in Mexico. The transnational experiences of living in and between nation states appeared at the forefront of the cultural and linguistic practices of these participants. They identified with other transnationals who had similar borderlands ways of knowing.

The participants in this study spoke the languages of transnationalism. Their English, although representing non-prestigious

dialects in the U.S. was viewed positively on the Mexican side of the border. They were recognized as competent native speakers of English. They saw English as part of their heritage as transnationals. At the same time, they often felt most comfortable with translanguaging and would defend this language practice from the criticism of non-transnationals.

These individuals also brought their transnational experiences into the classroom. They taught vocabulary and cultural lessons based on their own background, not that of a textbook. In this way, they transformed the learning environment into real world lessons on language and culture. They made a distinction in the classroom between students with a transnational heritage and those without. They tended to try to validate the experiences and language development of the transnational children in their classrooms because they could more readily empathize with them. In sum, for these transnational teachers, their borderlands ways of knowing informed their linguistic identity and teaching practices.

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Authors

***Mary A. Petró**n is an Associate Professor of Bilingual and English as a Second Language Education in the Department of Language, Literacy and Special Populations at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. She has experience teaching both English and Spanish as a second language in the U.S. and abroad. She has worked in the field of second language teacher preparation and training in Texas and Mexico. Her research interests include U.S.–Mexico transnationalism and second language teacher education.

***Barbara Greybeck** is an Associate Professor of Literacy Education in the Department of Language, Literacy and Special Populations at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. She has extensive experience working with Spanish-speaking children in K-12 education in the southwestern United States, and she has taught coursework in education at universities in California, the Texas borderlands and in Mexico. Her research interests include biliteracy and the development of reading in a second language.