

Taking a Value-Oriented Perspective of Biliterate Families

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Introduction

Along with their parents, Thomas and Melissa are, respectively, Spanish and English-speaking and Spanish-Mixteco and English-speaking elementary school students that we studied in order to gain a better understanding of the reading interactions between bilingual parents and children. Thomas and Melissa and their respective parents drew our attention because they provide their children with educational opportunities in spite of the social, political, and economic challenges they face on a daily basis (Yoshikawa, 2012).

Their questionable immigration status, stressful work and financial conditions and the constant threat of discovery and deportation, as well as the parents' limited formal schooling in their native country, are all factors that feed into the prejudices they suffer from teachers and administrators who might often consider such parents 'disengaged' from their children's academic development (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Valdes, 1996).

The portraits of these two families challenge the deficit narratives of bilingual families (Dantas & Manyak, 2010). Immigrant families with little or no formal schooling are perceived as lacking reading and writing proficiency in their native language, arguably rendering it difficult for them to learn to read and write in English. In turn, children from these families are often viewed as needing support because they come from families who cannot aid in their children's English reading development.

We position these families differently. Instead of identifying them with deficient labels, such as "limited formal schooling"

or "limited English proficiency," we disassociate these parents from such labels and value them as knowledgeable participants who bring strengths, self-confidence, and knowledge to their own and their children's biliteracy learning.

Shifting from a deficit-oriented perspective, which Dantas and Manyak (2010) described as "a way of looking at students and families that is characterized by narrowness, presumption, and judgement" (p. 8), we move towards a value-oriented perspective, or a manner of positioning families as bringing value and strengths to their children's education.

In this article, we focus on how translanguaging, which is defined as a language practice that transcends formal language boundaries, was used as a linguistic tool and resource for expressing thoughts, emotions, and understandings of and around English and Spanish texts. Focusing on translanguaging as a medium for learning, we begin the process of valuing Thomas and Melissa as developing bilingual and biliterate learners who have linguistic strengths.

The implications of such a perspective emphasize the concept of bilingualism as a resource not only in speaking but also in reading, regardless of the languages of the texts (Faltis, 2013; Hornberger, 2003; Ruiz, 1984).

Biliteracy and Translanguaging

Biliteracy is defined as "any and all instances in which communication occurs in two or more languages in or around writing" (Hornberger, 1990, p. 213). Biliteracy is also a process of becoming a reader and writer within multiple social and cultural worlds. In other words, becoming biliterate involves using the tools of language to construct biliterate identities (Hornberger, 2003; Velasco & Garcia, 2014).

Reading in two languages is viewed through socio-psycholinguistic theory where readers actively construct knowledge as they employ linguistic cuing

systems (e.g., semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic) to construct a deeper meaning. At the same time, language acts as a mediational tool in developing our understandings of text, as well as constructs an interpretive framework for defining us as readers within the social structures of home and school. Because we argue that language is a unified system of meaning, we consider the reading process as a language process or a universal process regardless of the spoken language (Garcia, 2009; Garcia & Wei, 2014; Goodman, 1994).

For bilingual families, we view language through the concept of translanguaging, which is a practice associated with bilinguals that allows the participants to benefit from the permeability of communicating and learning across languages (Garcia, 2009). Translanguaging is defined as "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (Garcia, 2009, p. 45) and is a linguistic resource that transcends language boundaries.

Positioning both oral and written communication as translanguaging practices refutes the notion that languages are separate, transferable systems in which readers relate the characteristics of one language to those of another (Genesee, 2000). Contrarily, translanguaging stresses the notion that there is one linguistic repertoire from which bilingual individuals select among different linguistic elements. Bilingual individuals may read texts in one language but use another language to articulate ideas or understandings of texts with others who share the translanguaging space.

Biliteracy and Families

The concept and practice of translanguaging has reverberated across the field of bilingual education, and researchers document its use within both oral (Garcia, 2009) and written (Makar, 2012; Velasco & Garcia, 2014) contexts. While this may be the case, less focus has been placed on

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this bilingual language practice within families. The languages families use for purposes of communicating when reading and discussing texts have the potential to support the bilingual oral reading performances of their children.

Drawing on the work of Vygotsky, Moll (2014) proposed the bilingual zone of proximal development (ZPD) to illustrate how language flexibility allowed for more dynamic understandings of bilingual reading abilities. The bilingual ZPD represents a continuum between what a novice reader can do independently and what they can do with the assistance of others when multiple languages are used as a resource (Moll, 2014). When readers were allowed to speak the language of their choice, they were better able to show not only their “actual developmental level,” but also their “proximal level,” or their potential or future capabilities (Moll, 2014, p. 76).

Moll’s argument adds to the concept of translanguaging by supporting the notion that flexible language use allows for reflection and the expression of thoughts and ideas (García & Wei, 2014). In this sense, bilingual reading competence is socially reinforced through how we support the development and expression of ideas and knowledge through translanguaging.

While Moll developed the bilingual ZPD within classroom settings, we argue that families also construct a bilingual ZPD through translanguaging to support bilingual reading abilities and identities. Linguistically diverse families create natural, fluid language contexts where language boundaries are permeable and less rigid than in school settings, where language separation or language organization, in which schools may divide language use by the time of the day, the day of the week, or the content being taught, may define bilingual educational contexts.

Case Studies of Two Bilingual Families

In this research, we investigate how translanguaging mediated the social construction of knowledge about reading. The two case studies were part of two separate, larger studies. Thomas and Maria were participants from Kabuto’s (2015) larger study *Revaluating Readers and Families* and Melissa and Albino were participants in Velasco’s larger study that investigated the educational beliefs and behaviors of Mixteco families living in New York.

In order to investigate the social

construction of knowledge through the analysis of discourse, we asked the parent-child dyads to orally read, retell, and discuss books in English and in Spanish. We also documented their interactions with each other during the oral reading events through note-taking. Below, we describe the background information on the participants and the oral data collected as part of the reading and retelling contexts for each family.

Participants

Melissa’s parents are from Tlapa, Guerrero, located in the southwest of Mexico, where many inhabitants speak Mixteco. Mixteco is an indigenous language spoken in the states of Puebla, Guerrero, and Oaxaca by 480,000 people (Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 2012). Mixteco has been orally transmitted over generations. There are books for elementary school age students written in Mixteco published by the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (Ministry of Education) but their number is not enough to present students with a variety of topics and genres to fully develop literacy in that language.

Spanish oracy and literacy are formally taught in public schools in Tlapa, where the average duration of schooling for the generation of Melissa’s parents was 2.5 years (*Instituto Nacional de Geografía, Estadística e Informática* [National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics], 2000).

Melissa’s mother, Teresa, completed a second-grade education and felt at a disadvantage when it came to supporting Melissa’s reading and writing development. Teresa felt that her husband Albino was better equipped to support Melissa with her homework and literacy development. In fact, Albino reported that he reads to Melissa almost every night in Spanish and offers support and checks Melissa’s homework, which is all in English.

Albino finished eighth grade, which allowed him to enter a two-year bilingual (Mixteco-Spanish) teacher preparation program for Indigenous elementary school teachers in Tlapa. Albino worked in a multi-grade elementary classroom in his hometown. Even though Albino and Teresa speak Mixteco among themselves, they reported using Spanish to interact with Melissa. Spanish is considered the language of status in Mexico and one that Melissa will be able to use in her neighborhood where Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Ecuadorians predominantly live. In fact, Melissa reported that

she does not speak Mixteco and we never observed her using it.

At the time of this study, Melissa was a second-grade student who attended a public school that did not have a bilingual program. The curriculum in Melissa’s school was organized around balanced literacy in English, where comprehension is at the center of the reading process. Melissa was exposed to shared reading, read-alouds and specific daily-allocated periods for reading and writing independently.

According to her teacher, Melissa met grade-level reading expectations and, based on the Fountas and Pinnell (2012) assessment, read at the second-grade level (Level M). Albino stated that he admires the emphasis that Melissa’s school places on reading and allowing children to bring home books. He was impressed with the technology and computer programs that are geared to help students practice math and literacy skills.

Thomas’s parents emigrated from Ecuador and met and married in the United States. Spanish is the home language for their family. Neither parent finished high school; however, this fact did not deter Thomas’s mother, Maria, from increasing her Spanish and English proficiency upon arriving in the United States. Using public resources, Maria attended an English-language school until Thomas was in 5th grade and continues regularly to visit the library to check out books in English and Spanish for herself and her children.

Maria believed that she needed to increase her reading and writing abilities in both English and Spanish to assist her children to become academically successful. When it came time for Thomas to start school, Maria searched out a dual language school for him. Maria traveled with Thomas for an hour each way for him to attend the school, where she later sent Thomas’s sister, Jenny.

Thomas was a sixth grade student who attended a dual Spanish and English language school in the same large urban public school system as Melissa. Thomas attended the school since kindergarten and was part of the first class to graduate from the school’s dual language program. The dual language program consisted of an alternating language model in which language arts, mathematics, and science and social studies were taught in Spanish and English on alternating days.

Thomas considered himself a confident reader, who read at grade level in both English and Spanish. Maria reported that she read to him in English and in Spanish

when he was a toddler. Few books were present in Thomas's home, and of the books present, most were in English.

Data Collection

There were two main data sources used for analysis. The first data source consisted of the oral readings and retellings from the parents and the children. The second data source consisted of retrospective reflections of their own and each other's oral readings that we elicited through interviews that targeted how they felt about their children's and their own reading in two languages.

Oral Reading and Retellings

For Thomas's case study, we documented his and his mother's oral reading miscues—the produced responses to text that differ from the written text. Kabuto, who is not bilingual in Spanish and English, and our bilingual research assistant worked with Thomas and Maria. Kabuto met with Thomas and Maria over a 10-week period. Over this period, Thomas read and retold three English texts: one short story, *Bored Tom* by Avi (2008) and two articles from *Time for Kids*. He read and retold three Spanish texts, which consisted of three chapters from *Yo, Naomi León* (Ryan, 2005). Maria read only in Spanish, which were the first two chapters from a book entitled *Cajas de Cartón* by Francisco Jimenez (2002).

Melissa and Albino read with one another in a shared reading format in Spanish and English. In these documented interactions, Melissa took the role of introducing her father how to read in English; and Albino took the role of reading with Melissa in Spanish. Therefore, we did not document Melissa's and Albino's oral reading miscues. We made this decision because Melissa did not have control over Spanish and this experience represented her first attempts at reading in that language.

For Albino, these interactions constituted his first attempts at reading in English. Velasco, who is bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English, worked with Melissa and Albino over a 10-week period. Over this period, they read a total of eight English books and eight Spanish books (See Table 1). When reading the books, either Melissa or her father read the first section of the book in either English or Spanish and then switched so that the other could finish the book.

For both cases, we documented the parent-child interactions through observational notes, as well as audiotaped and transcribed each session. As practitioner-researchers, we actively engaged in and discussed our views of reading from a socio-psycholinguistic theoretical perspective. In the next section, we describe the documentation of the oral reading for Thomas's case study, followed by Albino and Melissa's interactions when reading in Spanish and English.

Miscue Analysis and Retrospective Interviews

We used miscue analysis procedures to analyze the oral readings for Thomas's case study. Miscue analysis is an evaluative instrument used to document and analyze the types and qualities of miscues that readers create while engaging in the reading process. After marking the miscues using standard miscue procedures (see Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 2005), we selected high quality miscues, or miscues that make sense in the sentence and story and are acceptable within the grammatical structure of sentence.

For instance, in the following example, Thomas created a high quality miscue when substituting *become* for *be* in the sentence from *Bored Tom* by Avi (2008), "However, I want to be a human" (p. 26). These types of miscues demonstrate the reader's strength and are shared with the reader in a semi-structured interview called Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA; Goodman, Martens, & Flurkey, 2014). Selecting and discussing high quality miscues with the readers were critical in focusing on the readers' strengths—an important tenant in taking a value-oriented perspective towards the families as readers.

For Thomas's case study, we used a modified format called Family Retrospective Miscue Analysis (Family RMA; Kabuto, 2009) that engages all family members in the readers' high quality miscues. Family RMA is an important social milieu that

Table 1
Books Read by Albino and Melissa

Session	Books in English: Melissa read the first half of the book and Albino the second	Books in Spanish: Albino read the first half of the book and Melissa the second
1	<i>Caps for Sale: A Tale of a Peddler, Some Monkeys and Their Monkey Business</i> (1987) by Esphyr Slobodkina	<i>Martina, una cucarachita muy linda</i> (2010) por Carmen Agra Deedy and Michael Austin
2	<i>Catch Me If You Can! ¡A que no me alcanzas!</i> (Green Light Readers Level 2) (2007) by Bernard Most (Author), F. Isabel Campoy (Translator), Alma Flor Ada (Translator)	<i>Catch Me If You Can! ¡A que no me alcanzas!</i> (Green Light Readers Level 2) (2007) by Bernard Most (Author), F. Isabel Campoy (Translator), Alma Flor Ada (Translator)
3	<i>Blueberries for Sal</i> (Viking Kestrel picture books) (1948/2010) by Robert McCloskey	<i>El árbol generoso</i> (2011) por Shel Silverstein y Carla Pardo Valle (Translator)
4	<i>Why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears?</i> (1992) Verna Aardema, pictures by Leo and Dianne Dillon	<i>Harry, el perrito sucio</i> (2003) by Gene Zion and Margaret Bloy Graham
5	<i>From Seed to Pumpkin</i> (2000) by Jan Kottke	<i>El jardín de las abejitas</i> (2006) por Tere Marichal Lugo
6	<i>Good Night Moon</i> (2006) by Margaret Wise Brown	<i>Un Pez, Dos Peces, Pez Rojo, Pez Azul</i> (I Can Read It All by Myself Beginner Books) (2005) por Dr. Seuss y Yanitzia Canetti (Translator)
7	<i>Children's Book About Bees: A Kids Picture Book About Bees with Photos and Fun Facts</i> (2013) by Emma Jacobs	<i>El Viaje del Pequeño Ratoncito: Una Pequeña Historia</i> (Spanish Edition) (2013) por Lucas Hosby y Carmen Hosby
8	<i>Ducks don't get wet</i> (1999) by Augusta Goldin and Helen K. Davie	<i>El monstruo comedor de zanahorias</i> (2013) por Beata Noemi Balint

allows for retrospective discussions of the readers' bilingual reading performances.

The questions that form the Family RMA interview engage all family members in the social construction of knowledge and elicit responses from one another regarding the reading process. In conducting the Family RMA sessions, we used the following questions to guide our discussions with both the parents and their children participating (Goodman & Marek, 1996):

1. Can you tell me what you did here?
2. Why do you think you made the miscue?
3. Does the miscue make sense?
4. Was the miscue corrected? Should it have been corrected? Why?
5. Did the miscue affect your understanding of the text?

Data Analysis

After we collected the oral data from Thomas and Maria's oral readings and retellings and retrospective reflections of their oral readings and Melissa and Albino's shared reading discussions, we transcribed all the oral data and analyzed the discourse. We focused on elements within the discourse associated with effective oral reading performances: graphophonic knowledge, grammatical knowledge, semantic knowledge, and comprehension.

In the following section, we present the findings from the analysis of this discourse across both cases. To illustrate the translanguaging context and the readers' knowledge about reading, we highlight the discourse that evolved out of the Family RMA sessions for Thomas and Maria and the shared reading interactions for Melissa and Albino.

Translanguaging and Readers' Metalinguistic Knowledge

The findings from the two case studies illustrate how translanguaging was a language tool used to develop deeper levels of understanding when reading both English and Spanish texts. This deeper level of understanding resulted in the development of metalinguistic knowledge regarding language cues as the parents and their children compared the characteristics of each respective language, encountered difficult areas in the text, and engaged with one another in discussions.

In the following, we provide examples of how Thomas, Melissa, and their parents developed metalinguistic and language

knowledge through translanguaging. Although we separate the examples and divide them into the categories of graphophonic, grammatical, and semantic and word knowledge, it is important to note that these language cues work in conjunction with one another; therefore, overlap may occur because miscues may affect more than one language cue at a time.

Graphophonic System

The graphophonic system relates letters (graphic) and sounds (phonic). During one of their sessions, Melissa and Albino read the *Children's Book about Bees: A Kids' Picture Book about Bees with Photos and Fun Facts* by Emma Jacobs (2013). During the reading, they encountered the word *bees* and related the graphophonic information in the word *bees* to discuss the differences between the singular and plural forms of the word. Simultaneously, they connected the English plural form with the Spanish form. As the dominant English speaker, Melissa guided the teaching and learning context, and Albino extended the concept of the plural forms in English to Spanish:

MELISSA: Y en inglés *bee* y no es lo mismo que *bees* porque *bees* son muchos. (And in English [it's] *bee*, and it's not the same as *bees* because *bees* are many.)

ALBINO: Ahh, como en español...la s se usa para el plural...abeja. (Ahh, like in Spanish...the s is used for the plural...*bee*.)

MELISSA: (interrupting and correcting her father) Abejas. (*Bees*.)

In discussing the morphological elements in English and Spanish, Albino and Melissa engaged in a comparative analysis of both languages. The division between English and Spanish in which Melissa took the lead with English texts and Albino with Spanish texts was not the organizational structure utilized during all of the shared reading sessions. Melissa turned to Albino when she had questions regarding English texts.

In another example, Melissa encountered the word *shoot* when reading *From Seed to Pumpkin* (Kottke, 2000). Although she read the expected sentence, "A shoot is growing from the pumpkin seed" (Kottke, 2000, p. 4), she turned to her father so he could confirm that she had pronounced the word *shoot* correctly.

MELISSA: Is it *shoot* or *shout*?

ALBINO: Es *shoot* (It's shoot).

MELISSA: ¿Cómo sabes? (How do you know?)

ALBINO: En la otra hoja leíste esa palabra

y dijiste *shoot* y me la grabe... ésta tiene que ser *shoot* porque se escribe igual. (On the other page, you read that word and you said *shoot*... I memorized it...this one has to be *shoot* because the spelling is the same).

Within the shared reading format, Albino acquired word knowledge of English when listening to Melissa read and used this knowledge to assist Melissa in self-monitoring her own reading. The language of the text did not determine which spoken language would be used to communicate and share ideas.

Grammatical Knowledge

Within the language cuing system, the grammatical, or syntactic, cuing system refers to the grammatical structure of the written language of the text. When reading Chapter 2 from *Yo, Naomi León*, Thomas read the sentence, "Naomi fue a un psicólogo durante dos años [Naomi went to a psychologist (in the masculine form) for two years]" (Ryan, 2005, p. 25) as "Naomi fue a una psicóloga durante dos años [Naomi went to a psychologist (in the feminine form) for two years]."

Hearing his miscue, Maria tried to correct him; however, Thomas ignored her correction and read the sentence with the high-quality miscue. In the following example, Thomas, Maria, our research assistant, and Kabuto discussed Thomas's reading and Maria's response to Thomas's miscue.

RA: Did you hear what you did? What did you do?

THOMAS: I said *una psicóloga*.

RA: And what does the sentence say?

THOMAS: *Un psicólogo*.

RA: Do you think that it makes a difference whether you say *una psicóloga* or *un psicólogo*?

THOMAS: No, not really.

KABUTO: So did it make any difference in the meaning for you, Thomas? Does it mean the same thing?

THOMAS: Yes, the only difference is that they change the *o* and the *a* [for feminine and masculine].

KABUTO: I wonder why you did that. Did you know while you were reading it?

THOMAS: No, I was thinking it (the psychologist) was a woman.

KABUTO: That is interesting. So you never thought it was a man?

THOMAS: No.

KABUTO: Oh, and mom was correcting him?

RA: She was whispering to him, "It's not *psicóloga*, it's *psicólogo*!"

Within this dialogue, translanguaging allowed us to discuss the masculine and feminine forms of the Spanish word *psychologist* (*psicólogo-psicóloga*) an aspect that is not characteristic of the English language. On the one hand, Thomas's high-quality substitution demonstrates his understanding of Spanish grammar as he created a parallel structure by matching *una* with *psicóloga* in changing the word from the masculine to the feminine forms.

If Thomas had read *un psicóloga*, then he would have disrupted the grammatical structure of the sentence. However, Thomas's miscue illustrates the metalinguistic knowledge he brought to the text and how he predicted the surface features of the written language to develop a deeper meaning.

Semantic and Word Knowledge

Semantic knowledge refers to readers' abilities to make sense of what they read. Although word knowledge is not synonymous with semantic knowledge, word knowledge plays a role in creating meaningful sentences. Word knowledge not only encompasses vocabulary, it also relates to differentiating word meanings and structures.

In the dialogue below, Albino and Melissa read *From Seed to Pumpkin*, and Melissa assisted her father in developing English word knowledge. Melissa allowed Albino to determine independently which words he would like to learn.

MELISSA: ¿Cuál palabra quieres saber? [Which word do you want to know?]

ALBINO: Ésta, (señalando *ripe*) [This one (pointing to the word *ripe*).]

MELISSA: *Ripe*, ya está listo [*Ripe*... it is ready.]

ALBINO: ¿Para venderlo? [To sell it?]

MELISSA: Para comerlo [To eat it.]

Without translating the word from English to Spanish, Melissa assisted her father by defining the meaning of *ripe*. Albino then extended the definition of the word to something that is ripe and ready to sell, to which Melissa responded that ripe means something that is ready to eat.

Similarly, Thomas demonstrated word knowledge by correcting miscues that did not make sense. For example, Thomas

read the following passage: "Entonces, un verano, Walter Gordon organizó una excursión al campo con la empresa y tú llevaste a Skyla...y Fabiola y Bernardo llevaron a varios hombres mexicanos de su ciudad natal que estaban de visita [So one summer, Walter Gordon organized a retreat to the countryside for the company, and you took Skyla...and Fabiola and Bernardo took several Mexican men from their hometown who were on vacation.] (Ryan, 2005, p. 30). When reading, he read *mexicanos* as *mecánicos* and then self-corrected to the expected response.

RA: Did you catch that?

THOMAS: Yes, I said *mecánicos* [mechanics] instead of *mexicanos* [Mexicans].

RA: So why do you think you went back and said *mexicanos* instead of *mecánicos*?

THOMAS: Because when I was going to say *mecánicos*, I saw that there was an *x*, so I said *mexicanos*.

RA: So you corrected yourself, right? Why do you think you got stuck like that?

THOMAS: Because both words look alike.

RA: Why do you think you had to correct yourself?

THOMAS: I noticed the *x* in *mexicanos* and I self-corrected.

KABUTO: So you realized the words looked different. Even though you said *mechanics*, you realized that it couldn't be because it didn't look like it. So do you think it still makes sense? *Mexicans* and *mechanics*, are those two words interchangeable? Could you use those words either way? Do they have the same meaning?

THOMAS: No.

KABUTO: Not really. The words *mechanic* and *Mexican* do not have the same meaning. So maybe that's also what made you go back and take another look? The meanings of the two words are different.

THOMAS: There is another reason why I got confused. I thought *mexicanos* was spelled *mejicanos* (spelled the word).

Thomas initially explained that his self-correction was because of the spelling of the words *mexicanos* and *mecánicos*. Although he read *mecánicos*, Thomas said that the word could not be correct because he saw the *x*. And yet, as the dialogue progressed, Thomas suggested that he thought that the word *mexicanos* was spelled without the *x*. In our dialogue, we attempted to make Thomas and Maria aware that Thomas's self-correction was not solely a result of the graphophonic information present in the

words and instead was a result of his Spanish word knowledge because *mecánicos* did not make any sense in the sentence.

Developing Comprehension

It was quickly evident when working with Thomas, Melissa, and their respective participating parent that valuing them as readers involved more than acknowledging the diverse language strategies that they employed to make sense of texts. While reading and talking together, Thomas, Melissa, and their parents made deep connections with the texts, especially the Spanish stories, and talked with their children about the emotional and touching aspects of the stories.

When reading *El árbol generoso* (*The Giving Tree*, Silverstein, 2011), both Albino and Melissa were moved by the story. The controversy concerns whether the relationship between the boy and the tree is a positive (selfless love on behalf of the tree) or a negative relationship (egotism on behalf of the boy). In retelling the story after the oral reading, Melissa and her father created a collective summary.

ALBINO: Está bonito el libro... los dos crecieron jóvenes... los dos necesitaban el uno para el otro pero el niño aprovechó mas... primero hizo una corona de hojas, y luego jugaba en sus ramas. [This book is beautiful... both grew up young... both needed each other... but the boy took more advantage... first he made a crown made of leaves...then he played on the branches.]

MELISSA: Y el árbol le dijo que cortara su fruta para que tenga dinero. [And the tree said to him to cut the fruit so that he could have money.]

ALBINO: Eso es verdad, lo que dice el libro... saca mucho dinero ...se beneficia mucho con esos árboles, con madera, como carbón y también frutas. [That is true, what the book says... you can make money...you can benefit a lot from those trees, with wood, like coal, and fruit too.]

In Albino's final comment, he compared how the boy in the story benefitted from the tree's resources in ways that are similar to the ways in which individuals in the Mixteco region benefit from the falling trees. In his discussion, Albino demonstrates his family's fund of knowledge (Moll, 1992) and uses the book to pass on his knowledge of his native region to his daughter.

After reading Chapter 2 from *Cajas de Cartón*, Maria made connections between the ways in which the children live in the story and the ways in which children live today.

MARIA: La historia es bonita y triste. Estas son cosas que suceden a menudo en nuestras vidas. Si usted escucha a cómo las personas sufren, te das cuenta de que vivimos muy bien, y tenemos todo. Algunos niños comen de la basura. El error de los padres fue no llevar el bebé directamente al hospital. A veces la gente simplemente no lo saben. Cometieron un error, pero un milagro salvo al bebé. [The story is beautiful and sad. These things happen often in our lives. If you listen to how the people suffer, you realize that we live very well and have everything. Some children have to eat from the trash. The parents' error was not taking the baby directly to the hospital. Sometimes, people simply do not understand. They made a mistake, but a miracle saved the baby.]

Similar to Albino, Maria used the reading context to teach life lessons to Thomas. Thomas's immediate family is far from economically stable. They live in an area with high crime and poverty because such an area is, according to Maria, what the family can afford. Maria felt that although she could relate to the characters' struggle, she also felt grateful that her husband had a stable job and could put a roof over their heads and food on the table. The tones of gratitude and faith underlie the meaning that Maria took from the story.

Concluding Thoughts

The reading practices described in this article were carried out by adults who had different levels of schooling that they attained in their home countries. The ways in which language mediated the reading contexts for these two bilingual families support how becoming bilingual readers is about language unity, rather than language separation. Translanguaging holds a key place in explaining the fluidity and flexibility of language use to convey thoughts and ideas in order to reach deeper levels of reading comprehension.

Trans means 'across' or 'through,' and in taking a translanguaging orientation towards the study of biliteracy, we saw the transformative learning that occurred across and through languages when we reaffirmed the reading interactions of these two bilingual families. Taking a value-oriented perspective towards bilingual readers means viewing the language and linguistic abilities of bilingual families as an educational asset in negotiating the linguistic spaces within which the families develop their children's reading proficiencies.

In these two case studies, although the books read were written in either Spanish or English, these languages created a uni-

fied system to navigate the various problem-solving and explorative situations that arose among the participants. Therefore, translanguaging permitted the participants to demonstrate their knowledge of the reading process as they employed language at their own comfort and ability levels.

Thomas's and Melissa's family challenge the deficit views that surround low-income, immigrant students and families. Both families live with financial stress and in fear of the sociopolitical context that offers no rights or protection for persons of their status. Although Maria did not finish high school and Albino and Maria did not have proficient English language and reading abilities, the parents were cognitive facilitators and actively engaged in the teaching and learning context.

The parents and their children created and functioned within a bilingual zone of proximal development. Albino and Maria brought their abilities to engage in reading events through probing, questioning, and explaining through the medium of translanguaging. In addition, the reading contexts were also defined by reciprocal teaching and socialization as the children used the opportunities to assist their parents in discussing their reading and assisting them in developing their own reading proficiencies in English and Spanish.

As the examples in this article indicate, bilingual students, such as Thomas and Melissa, do not have an English language or a Spanish language persona. Instead, they use an integrated form of language for constructing and communicating meaning within reading events. As such, requiring language separation based on the language of the text (i.e., speaking English when reading English texts or Spanish when reading Spanish texts) does not allow students to access the range of linguistic and comprehension abilities that they bring to reading events.

Furthermore, fashioning a pre-determined structure of how language is to be used creates a potentially artificial context for learning and interpersonal communication. Consistent with what other researchers have observed (Makar, 2013), the language practices that arose from session to session were organic in nature among the parents, children, and us, and not planned or pre-determined by any of the participants.

The discursive nature of translanguaging created a new sociolinguistic milieu that arose out of the meaning-making potential that language brought to the reading events (Garcia, 2009). Because

of the permeability and flexibility that translanguaging provided, the participants engaged in seamless and harmonious dialogue regarding one another's understandings of both the linguistic aspects and the meaning of the texts. The dialogue, in turn, highlights the intimate relationships that the participants developed with one another and with the meaning of the books that they read. The ultimate result was the construction of competent bilingual reading identities.

More importantly, working with these two families has made us realize that as teacher-practitioners, teacher-researchers, and/or researchers, we do not simply work with students and their families; we work with language. The language that we use and the languages we accept have the potential to construct reading abilities and competent and/or incompetent biliterate identities.

Although every teacher will not know the languages of their students, just as Kabuto was not bilingual or biliterate in Spanish, teachers can allow students to create and construct natural language contexts with others in the classroom. Permitting translanguaging is not a deterrent to learning across languages; it is a medium of learning. Taking a value-oriented perspective means to value the translanguaging abilities of students who are developing bilingual and biliterate learners.

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