Using Spanish In English-Language Spaces: Identifying Bilingual Composition Students' Translanguaging Practices

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USING SPANISH IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SPACES: IDENTIFYING BILINGUAL COMPOSITION STUDENTS' TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICES

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DEDICATION

To my husband and daughters who gave me faith, hope, and love.
USING SPANISH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPACES: IDENTIFYING BILINGUAL COMPOSITION STUDENTS’ TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICES

by

MARIA ISELA MAIER

DISSERTATION

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when I was ready to give up, your love pushed me forward. You became my cheerleaders and
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a qualitative study that uses ethnographic research methods to examine the translanguaging practices of bilingual students in first-year composition at a university along the U.S.-Mexico border. Specifically, I observe how and why bilingual students employ translanguaging practices, as they are encouraged or invited by their instructors, in contexts where English Standard Language policies exist. The results of this qualitative project demonstrate bilingual students’ use of translation as part of their translanguaging practices, as well as a tool that uncovers students’ writing processes which also demonstrates their language negotiation. Furthermore, the students’ translanguaging practices reveal the rhetorical use of language and bilinguals’ agentic role. Findings also show that there are also firmly established ideologies that prevent bilingual students from realizing the benefits of translanguaging. Understanding bilingual students’ translanguaging practices can aid in remapping and enhancing institutional policies and pedagogical practices and move in a positive direction toward adopting more inclusive approaches that honor students’ linguistic repertoires and their cultural backgrounds, and thus, gradually reorienting standard language ideology.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................................... iii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................................................... v  
ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... viii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................................... ix  
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................................... xiv  
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................. xv  

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION - LIVED EXPERIENCES ........................................................................ 1  
  “What am I doing here?” ......................................................................................................................... 3  
  “No Speaking Spanish” .............................................................................................................................. 5  
  A Marginalizing Culture ............................................................................................................................... 8  
  The Problem ........................................................................................................................................... 9  
  The Gap ................................................................................................................................................. 10  
  The Study ............................................................................................................................................ 12  
  A Note on Terminology - Substituting the Term Translanguaging ....................................................... 14  
Summary of Chapters ............................................................................................................................. 14  
  Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 15  
  Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Review of Scholarship ............................................................. 15  
  Chapter 3: Methodology ........................................................................................................................ 15  
  Chapter 4: Results and Analysis .......................................................................................................... 16  
  Chapter 5: Moving Forward – Hacia Adelante .................................................................................... 16  

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................... 17  
  Translanguaging Theory ......................................................................................................................... 17  
  One Integrated System ............................................................................................................................... 18  
  Dynamic Bilingualism .............................................................................................................................. 19  
  The Speaker and the Language ............................................................................................................... 21  
  Standard Language Ideology (SLI) ......................................................................................................... 23  
  Language Hierarchies ............................................................................................................................. 24  
  Spanglish ............................................................................................................................................. 25
Review of the Literature ...........................................................................................................26
Brief History of U.S. Composition Classes .............................................................................27
Language Resolution and Language Debates ..........................................................................28
The Image of College Students .................................................................................................29
Translanguaging Origins ..........................................................................................................33
Translanguaging Today ..............................................................................................................35
Terms for Diverse Multilingual Practices ..............................................................................36
  Code-switching .......................................................................................................................36
  Code meshing (Code-meshing) ...............................................................................................38
One Linguistic Repertoire Versus Bounded Languages ..........................................................40

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................42
Research Questions ..................................................................................................................42
Institutional Context ..................................................................................................................43
Qualitative Study and Ethnographic Methodology ..................................................................43
Research Site ............................................................................................................................45
  Language of Instruction ........................................................................................................47
  Instructor Participants: Professor Barcena and Professor Perez (pseudonyms) .................47
    Professor Barcena: Creating Opportunities .......................................................................48
    Professor Perez: “Voy hablar en Espanol” .......................................................................50
Building an Ecology ..................................................................................................................51
Data Collection Methods .........................................................................................................52
Survey Data Collection .............................................................................................................53
  Student Participants’ General Characterizes: Professor Barcena’s RWS-1301 Class .......54
  Student Participants’ General Characterizes: Professor Perez’s RWS-1301 Class .......56
Participant Observation or Fieldwork .......................................................................................57
Interview Data Collection .........................................................................................................58
  Students’ Semi-structured Interviews .................................................................................58
  Instructors’ Semi-structured Interviews ..............................................................................59
Student Writing Samples .........................................................................................................60
Data Coding and Analysis .........................................................................................................61
  Coding Breakdown ...............................................................................................................64
Study Limitations ....................................................................................................................66
Role of Researcher ............................................................................................................. 67

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS ...................................................................................................... 70

Introducing the First Question .......................................................................................... 70

Substituting the Term Translanguaging to Combining and/or Mixing ......................... 71

First Part of the Research Question: How Students Translanguage - Form .................... 73

Monica’s translation process - Relying on the computer and family members .............. 74

Translation to generate ideas and to aid comprehension ................................................. 75

Daniela’s Translation Process – translating internally .................................................. 77

Translation as a placeholder ............................................................................................ 78

Margarita’s Translation Process – Counting on Google Translate .................................. 82

Margarita uses translation as a placeholder .................................................................... 84

Second Part of the first Research Question: Why Students Translanguage - Reasons ....... 86

Combining/mixing to Facilitate the Writing Process – Norma’s Experience ............... 88

Combining/mixing to Facilitate the Writing Process – Rita’s Experience ..................... 89

Combining/mixing to Facilitate the Writing Process– Monica’s Experience ............... 91

Combining/mixing Languages for Rhetorical Purposes ................................................ 94

Timothy: Combining/mixing languages to maximize communication ....................... 95

Jacob: Combining/mixing languages for authenticity ..................................................... 98

Andres: Combining/mixing languages to persuade ....................................................... 101

RQ2: What are bilingual students’ language ideologies in reference to translanguaging?
   Do these ideologies change or are they set aside as the need to combine languages
   arises? ......................................................................................................................... 102

Language Ideologies and Standard Language .................................................................. 103

The Course Catalog and Syllabus: Brief Document Analysis ........................................ 104

Attitudes about Mixing and Combining Languages ...................................................... 106

Participants’ Language Ideologies .................................................................................. 106

RQ#2 Do these ideologies change or are they set aside as the need to combine
   languages arises? ....................................................................................................... 109

Carmen’s Writing Activity ............................................................................................ 110

Rita’s Translanguaging Activity .................................................................................... 115

Monica’s Spanish Writing Activity ................................................................................ 119

Resisting Translanguaging .............................................................................................. 122
CHAPTER 5: MOVING FORWARD – HACIA ADELANTE

Overview of Study .......................................................... 129
Discussion of Findings...................................................... 130
Understanding Their Bilingual World through Translation .................. 130
Emphasizing the Rhetorical Aspect of Language ................................ 132
Altering Standard Language Ideologies .................................... 133
Resisting an Opportunity .................................................. 135
Recommendation for Policy Changes ...................................... 135
  Recognizing and Taking Responsibility .................................. 138
  Teacher Preparation in Second Language Writing ...................... 139
  Graduate Courses in Second-language Writing ......................... 139
  Investigate Issues Surrounding Second Language Writing .......... 142
  Include Second Language Perspectives in Developing Theories ...... 142
Implications - Policy changes ............................................. 143
Pedagogical Changes ....................................................... 143
Limitations .................................................................. 145
Recommendations for future research ...................................... 146
Contribution to Rhetoric and Composition .................................. 149
Concluding Thoughts ....................................................... 149
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Professor Barcena's RWS-1301, participants’ general characteristics .......................... 55
Table 3.2 Professor Perez's RWS-1301, participants’ general characteristic ................................. 56
Table 3.3 Final codes and brief description of the codes ................................................................. 64
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Google Map Image showing the distance between San Elizario and El Paso Community College and San Elizario to the international border ........................................ 5

Figure 2.1 Representation of Dynamic Bilingualism in García (2009) ....................................... 20

Figure 4.1 Daniela's notes for narrative essay ........................................................................ 81

Figure 4.2 Timothy's rough draft depicting visual elements for website .................................. 96

Figure 4.3 Excerpt from Jacob's narrative essay ................................................................. 100

Figure 4.4 Carmen's reflection assignment ......................................................................... 112

Figure 4.5 Rita's reflection blog ......................................................................................... 117

Figure 4.6 Monica’s discussion post ............................................................................... 121

Figure 5.1 Guiding Multilingual Writers Homepage ......................................................... 141

Figure 5.2 Guide to Multilingual Writers - Guide Section ............................................... 142
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION - LIVED EXPERIENCES

I grew up in a Spanish-speaking household in a small rural town named San Elizario, which is located on the outskirts of El Paso, Texas, and less than a mile away from the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande serves as a natural border situated between the U.S. state of Texas and Mexico. My mom is Mexican and was raised in La Colorada, Zacatecas, Mexico. Although she only completed third grade, she could read and write in Spanish. On the other hand, my dad, a Mexican American, attended school in San Elizario, but dropped out of school in third grade and was basically illiterate. I have two brothers and five sisters; by the time I began school, my four older siblings had grown up and moved out of the house. Speaking English was not allowed at home since our parents did not speak or understand it, and because they felt that we were speaking about them or were up to no good. From music to television programs and books, everything was in the Spanish language. I remember being greeted early in the mornings by loud resonating music coming out from the kitchen’s AM radio tuned to my mother’s favorite music – rancheritas and norteñas. Ranchera music features traditional songs from Mexico while norteñas are closely related to the sounds produced by polka music and corridos (musical folk ballads). In the afternoons, around 5 o’clock, my family dutifully came together to sit in front of the black and white television set to watch and become engrossed by the melodrama of the telenovelas.

I first learned to read and write in Spanish, which was facilitated thanks to the weekly publications of historietas mexicanas “El Libro Semanal” (a comic book measuring approximately 14.5 x 11cm, roughly 200 pages long with mostly adult themes). We would buy two or three copies each week while we visited my mom’s family in Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. There may have been one or two books written in the English language at home while I was growing up, but I couldn’t tell you where they came from or who brought them. I read these
books only in what I called emergencies, when I ran out of Spanish literature. Our lack of English written material was compounded by the fact that our town did not have a public library. We did get a bookmobile that visited the area about once a month when I was a teenager, giving us an opportunity to check out a variety of books. Nevertheless, with a copious amount of Spanish language interaction, and very little English language communication, my knowledge of Spanish thrived while English was relegated to the back burner to be dealt with in the future.

I began primary school in the early 70s, at which time the school had limited educational resources and may have been one of the poorest schools in the area. Although the instruction at school was conducted in English, it seemed that everyone, including my friends and most teachers, spoke Spanish. This environment began shaping my linguistic background and I slowly began to learn a few English words and phrases. My English vocabulary consisted of basic words such as “dog,” “ball,” and some colors. I guess I was what Ferris (2009) refers to as an incipient bilingual, or someone who is in the early stage of bilingualism, but still dominant in his or her heritage language. There I was at the cusp of bilingualism, but without the resources to continue to grow. Ferris (2009) contends that an incipient bilingual could benefit from bilingual education programs to aid in the process of learning English. Unfortunately, there weren’t any bilingual programs established in my school – students would either sink or swim. With every lesson and class discussion going over my head, I sank. Clearly, my poor linguistic development in English went unnoticed and I ended up falling through the cracks in a system that was noticeably unprepared to handle second language learners.

Ferris (2009) uses the term early-arriving residents to describe groups of students that were “U.S.-born children of first-generation immigrant parents whose primary language was not English” (p. 17). Although my dad was born in the U.S., he never learned to speak English. Like
me, at this point, he only knew how to say some English words and could not carry a conversation with an English speaker. Another term commonly used to describe early arriving students is the phrase ‘Generation 1.5’ which also makes reference to children who are U.S. educated but whose home language is not English (Harklau, Siegal, & Losey, 1999) Since my interaction and exposure to the English language was limited, I graduated high school with a low proficiency of the English language. I could not complete an English sentence without having to add some Spanish words. I wouldn’t classify myself as a functional bilingual since my grasp of the English language was considerably inadequate. Ferris (2009) describes functional bilinguals as individuals who have “acquired a stable, possibly fossilized, form or the L2 and can use it adequately in many settings or for many purposes” (p. 10). With my limited knowledge of the English language, it was evident that I was obviously underprepared for college.

“What am I doing here?”

When I attended the local community college in the fall of 1984, I realized that I had to learn how to speak and write in English if I wanted to communicate with others outside of my immediate community. Even though the college was located in El Paso, Texas, (15 miles or 28 minutes away from my hometown) it served a primarily Hispanic\(^1\) community, and it also seemed that most of the other students managed to communicate better than me. The whole experience was a cruel reality check: It became clear that I did not belong amid students and teachers who spoke a language that rolled effortlessly off their tongues. Rarely did I participate in class discussions because I feared running out of English words, displaying my lack of knowledge of the language. My writing assignments were a sea of red from all the comments and corrections my teachers provided. The feedback mostly expressed the same phrases “needs

\(^1\) The term Hispanic is use throughout the dissertation because it is the most frequent regional term used.
work,” “written poorly,” or “creative, but too many errors.” These comments were particularly discouraging, and I remember thinking, “What am I doing here?” Beginning a writing assignment was the hardest thing for me to do. It would take me several days to compose a simple paragraph; I would just sit there staring at a blank sheet of paper for hours. I hated English, and yet I knew I had to learn it. It was no surprise that my grades were far from stellar, but I refused to accept the idea that I was incompetent. I may have not been proficient in speaking the dominant language of academia, but I was not dumb. Determined to learn to read and write in English effectively became my goal. I remember saying to myself, “I am going to learn English, even if it kills me.” Thus began my arduous and often agonizing journey filled with people making fun of my accent, laughing at my pronunciation and excluding me from social groups and activities. So, as the youngest of eight children, I set out to be the first person in my family to graduate from college.

The map below is a recent image showing the distance between my hometown, San Elizario, and the local community college I attended. The map also illustrates the proximity of my home to the international boundary designated by the Rio Grande (gray line) which separates Mexico from the United States. From my backyard you could clearly see the border and it was not unusual to have groups of migrants passing by my home on their journey to the U.S.
In 2001, several years after I received my masters in English, I began teaching at the same community college where I was enrolled as a student years before. During my time at the local college, I taught first-year writing courses such as English 1301: Expository English and English 1302: Research Writing and Literary Analysis. On occasion, I would also teach English 2341: Introduction to Literature, and English 0309: College Prep Writing. My classes were made up of students who were primarily of Hispanic descent. As an instructor, I noticed that my students often spoke English and Spanish. And while English was the dominant language of instruction, there were times when my students and I admit, myself, moved back and forth
between these two languages. This translanguage practice of moving from one language to the other appeared to be a natural process for my students and for me as well, since Spanish is my native language. Canagarajah (2011) defines translanguage as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (p. 401). (This is only one definition of the term in chapter 2, I will discuss in detail the varying meanings scholars have given the term translanguage). I am not sure if the students thought twice before speaking in their home language, but I am going to guess, that they did not based on how easily they communicated. It was evident that they felt comfortable mixing their Spanish and English language in their conversations, just as I did.

However, being cognizant of the English-only pedagogy adopted in higher education institutions, I was sometimes hesitant to speak Spanish in the classroom. After all, I was to be their role model teaching them to write in the dominant discourse of the academy. Oddly, I felt that I was doing them a disservice when I spoke Spanish by not showing them how to communicate effectively in the English language. The idea of doing what institutional leaders claimed to be the best course of action for our students was something that had been tacitly endorsed in my early college training. Therefore, it made sense for me to continue support a system that privileged varieties of English. I honestly did not realize then how this attitude was marginalizing other languages. The unfortunate truth was that I acted in this situation with a “that’s the way it should be” attitude without questioning the motives. This attitude stems from what Gramsci refers to a “common sense” mentality (Landy, 1986). According to Gramsci, “Common sense is not something rigid and stationary, but is in continuous transformation, becoming enriched with scientific notions and philosophical opinions that have entered into common circulation” (as cited in Landy & Bové, 1994). The recurring message about English
being the only discourse in academia took root in my own thinking and these policies and attitudes played an essential role influencing my own teaching style. This common-sense notion has persuasive powers and one espoused and accepted by many who may not realize that “it is cover for specific attitudes (often xenophobic ones)” (Milroy, 2001). Certainly, English language policies made sense for me as well as to other students since we attended school in the United States where English is regarded as the national language. It also made a lot of sense that reading and writing instruction remain in English since the passing of the English-Only Legislation in 1981 (in some states) which required educational institutions to adopt a monolingual approach to the teaching and writing of English (Crawford, 2008). Although there was not similar legislation passed in Texas, a monolingual mindset had definitely influenced education nationwide.

Seemingly, by not questioning Standard English Language policies, I was complicit in further contributing to the formation and perpetuation of hegemonic language ideologies in institutional contexts. Foucault describes universities as being a site where power is displayed and maintained through discourse. He argues, “any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourse, along with the knowledge of powers which they carry” (as cited in Mills, 2003 p. 61). Being in that environment, I continued to emulate the attitudes and behaviors that I had repeatedly seen performed. As a result, my position on language policies mirrored those promoted by my predecessors at the colleges I attended years ago as well as some of my current colleagues. The phrases “Speak English,” “this is an English class, no Spanish,” and “No speaking Spanish” were commonly heard when students spoke in their home languages around campus and in class. And like some of my colleagues, I resisted the shifting and mixing of languages and held tight to “English only” monolingual mindset. Not to mention the counterargument presented by many instructors who
argued that in order to learn a language well, you need sustained practice in the target language. While this is a true assertion, this does not preclude mixing languages. These experiences more than likely influenced the construction of my academic identity. Although I honestly believed that we were doing them a service, increasing their linguistic capital, I soon realized that I was contributing to a culture that marginalizes students based on their language differences. Language differences are representational of students’ identities, and identities matter inside and outside of the classroom.

**A Marginalizing Culture**

The current educational landscape has not fully embraced diverse student populations who bring with them their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, including their language repertoires. Scholarship continues to highlight the benefits for adopting a multilingual approach to include allowing students to employ their language varieties, and yet there exists a conundrum as to why most of academia holds up English Only as a model for instruction. Therefore, the current pedagogical practices in higher education continually contribute to a marginalization culture. By participating and utilizing a monolingual approach in the teaching of reading and writing in composition classes, educators may be promulgating an environment that marginalizes students’ linguistic varieties. Mangelsdorf (2010) suggests that “writing instructors, despite the best of intentions, play a role in promulgating a standard language ideology” (p. 113). In the same manner, Dance & Farmer (2011) posit “Unfortunately, English (and other) teachers are routinely enlisted in service to a mythology that they may or may not endorse, and, indeed, that they may or may not fully understand themselves” (p. 794). When the field requires that instructors teach in the hegemonic language it may be difficult to validate students’ languages. Thus, the nature of teaching composition in the dominant English discourse in and of
itself already gives way to establishing a hierarchy positioning one language superior, and above the other. This linguistic containment posits that there is only one correct and standard language. Mangelsdorf (2010) notes that “Because the belief in a standard written language is so widespread, writing professionals generally feel obliged to go along with this notion because of the assumption that so-called standard language can help students succeed in the mainstream culture” (p. 113). As a result, instructors are faced with the conundrum of teaching what is expected of them or accommodate linguistic differences in a space that privileges English.

Understanding the experiences that influenced my language development is important because my situation is not uncommon. My own upbringing and my educational challenges are not isolated or unique experiences; there are far too many second language learners who continue to struggle in the current educational system due to its language policies. My lived experiences, in and out of school, solidified my role as a struggling non-native English speaker.

**THE PROBLEM**

Going against the monolingual language policy and the unidirectional pedagogical approach in higher education has brought language issues to the forefront of current disciplinary conversations. There is a great deal of scholarship on the benefits for adopting a multilingual approach to include allowing students to employ their language varieties. Scholars including García (2009, 2011, 2016, 2019), Canagarajah (2011, 2012), Lu and Horner (2016) and others recognize the value in adopting a more multilingual approach in teaching writing and composition; they have a “deep sense of urgency about the challenges of global Englishes, language preservation, and the classroom multilingualism facing composition teachers” (Dance & Farmer, 2011, p. 795). For that reason, multilingualism is an area that has received extensive attention in the academic discourse community, specifically in first year composition courses.
With an increasing culturally and linguistically diverse student population in higher education, the educational landscape should be re-conceptualized to embrace diverse student populations who bring with them their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, including their own language repertories. These social factors have increased the attention concerning multilingualism, the use in speech or writing of more than one language, as an effective pedagogical approach. Scholars have long been interested in examining the ways in which these students speak and write in more than one language. In fact, in 1974, efforts to include students’ linguistic codes in the classroom prompted the Conference on College Composition and Communication to pass a resolution, “Student’s Right to Their Own Language,” which gave students the right to use home dialects language as a resource (CCCC, 1974).

More recently, research indicates that acknowledging and integrating students’ linguistic varieties can aid in students’ understanding of writing and meaning making (Canagarajah, 2011, 2012; Horner et al., 2011; Lu & Horner, 2016). Studies also support that one language does not necessarily negatively interfere in the use of another (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011). Additional research shows that adopting code meshing and translingualism in the classroom offers insight to students’ choices to make meaning (Canagarajah, 2011; Young, 2009; Lee, 2014). Certainly, including students’ linguistic repertoire will enable students to join the academic discourse and gradually discard the label “other” imposed on them for not speaking the same language that an official policy dedicated to the promotion and standardization of English demands.

THE GAP

Extant global research indicates that the growing interest in multilingualism is not new; however, in some Hispanic-serving institutions, in particular along the U.S. Mexico border, the exploration of multilingualism, more specifically, how bilingual students negotiate languages as
resources, may be limited. In this region, educational institutions of higher education are examples of colleges that reveal a significant disconnect between the teaching practices and the diverse population that make up writing classes. These institutions seemingly operate under the “myth of linguistic homogeneity” addressed by Matsuda (2006), which upholds the prevailing view that “most composition classrooms are occupied by students who are native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (p. 638). Significant research in this area is needed to dispel the belief that “[T]he eradication of one tongue is not prerequisite to learning of a second” (Gilyard, 1991, p. 160), when in fact the opposite is true.

There is also scant scholarship dedicated to studying bilinguals in higher education contexts where multilingual students are the majority, or come from homes where English is/was not the first language. Furthermore, there is limited research conducted by a Latina and bilingual individual, like myself, who has encountered similar struggles that non-native English speakers face today as well as someone who has utilized translanguaging in my own academic work. Border universities, where the majority of the student population is predominantly of Hispanic descent, represent unique research sites to examine how students negotiate their language varieties to achieve effective communication in the academic environment. In considering a shift in the pedagogy, it is important to know how students’ linguistic repertoires contribute to effective communication among multilingual students, in addition to where they are in the minority. Therefore, the challenge is in learning how bilingual students use language difference as assets to negotiate academic contexts.

Because of the growing number of multilingual populations present in universities, it is vital to identify multilinguals’ negotiating practices in the classroom and begin mapping or remapping pedagogical practices. It is evident that multilingual speakers use their language
abilities or rhetorical practices and cultural background, which raise the questions of how and why multilingual students use their language skills. In other words, we need to consider what these processes look like, why students draw on their resources, and what are the circumstances that prompt them to do so?

The problem at hand is that while it has been established that students' linguistic repertories can be resources for student learning, and that these varieties also afford students agency and voice as well as allow opportunities for making meaning, the question remains “How do students use their linguistic repertories in the classroom?” Research focusing on higher education context is limited when it comes to identifying the negotiation practices bilinguals’ employ in communities with high numbers of bilingual speakers. The gap becomes greater when it comes to studying bilinguals’ communicative practices in border institutions. There are limited studies that focus on bilingual students’ translanguaging practices in areas where the minority is the majority, especially in higher education. Therefore, the challenge lies in learning how bilinguals’ employ their language and cultural assets to negotiate learning in college-level academic contexts. Consequently, the next steps revolve around examining bilinguals' linguistic negotiating and communicative practices, how these practices manifest themselves as well as why students draw on their linguistic resources. As a result, this dissertation project aims at addressing the research gaps by examining the communicative practices of bilingual students in college-level writing courses, specifically in border institutions.

**The Study**

The study presented in this dissertation stems from my lived experiences and my aim to identify pedagogical methodologies, such as translanguaging practices, that can aid bilingual students (English and Spanish speakers) not only to access the academic environment but also to
successfully participate in professional communities. It is also my goal to contribute to the research on language diversity and continue to build on the conversation about addressing students’ linguistic resources in the classroom. I will do this by observing the situations that prompt English dominant and Spanish dominant students to call upon their linguistic resources in the college-level academic context as they are encouraged by their instructors. Being cognizant that there may be language ideologies present in the classroom, I also explore these ideologies and observe if these ideologies are set aside or change as the desire arises to make new meaning.

Identifying these bilingual students’ assets can aid in remapping and enhancing pedagogical and institutional practices and move in a positive direction toward adopting more inclusive understandings and pedagogical approaches that honor students’ linguistic repertoires and their cultural backgrounds, and thus, gradually reorienting standard language ideology. Additionally, learning why and how bilinguals use their linguistic repertories may lead educators to provide opportunities that enable all students to use their languages as resources in higher education, especially in border institutions.

In an effort to meet these goals, in this dissertation project I conducted qualitative research using ethnographic methodologies to examine how bilingual students use their translanguaging practices, combining English and Spanish language, when they are encouraged by their instructors in composition courses at a university along the U.S.-Mexico border. I used an ethnographic approach since this type of research focuses on observation of human social activities. By paying attention to these communicative translanguaging practices, I hope to advance the scholarship in adopting a multilingual approach in the teaching practices in writing and composition. In this project, I seek to highlight how students use their heritage language to make meaning by exploring language as a tool for negotiation. Ultimately, through field
observations, artifact analysis, and the voices and experiences of my participants, I aim at promoting inclusive approaches toward the growing multilingual student populations.

A Note on Terminology - Substituting the Term Translanguaging

The term translanguaging has been studied and defined by scholars in both linguistics and in the field Rhetoric and Composition. However, I felt that participating students in this study may not be familiar with this term and its various definitions. For that reason, I did not use the term translanguaging when I conducted semi-structured interviews or during any of the data collection methods. In place of the term translanguaging, I used the terms combine/combining or mix/mixing of languages. I determined that the words mixing and combining are similar to how scholars have addressed the term translanguaging.

Scholars have described translanguaging as “shuttling between languages” (Canagarajah, 2011), “using different languages together” (García, 2009), “using both languages together” (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012) and “mobilizing linguistic resources” (Li & Zhu, 2013). For the purposes of this dissertation project, translanguaging is defined as combining or mixing English and Spanish words, phrases, and sentences in written assignments. At times, the terms combining, and/or mixing languages will be used in place of word translanguaging.

Summary of Chapters

This dissertation examines the translanguaging practices of bilingual students in first-year composition as they are encouraged by their instructors. Specifically, I will observe how and why students employ translanguaging practices in contexts where English Standard Language policies exist.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. I begin with a narrative setting up a backdrop for my literacy development and my own struggles as a bilingual student and non-native English speaker. I describe factors that influenced my language ideology and highlight the culture that marginalizes bilingual speakers. Lastly, I introduce the problem, identify a gap, and present the study.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

In Chapter 2, I introduce the theoretical framework that contextualizes this study. This framework is developed by discussing translanguaging theory to examine the communicative practices of bilingual college students. I use this theory to illustrate the concept of dynamic bilingualism and to demonstrate how this language practice allows for the disruption of constructed language hierarchies. Following the theoretical framework is the literature review; I situate translanguaging within the field of Rhetoric and Composition by tracing the trajectory of language practices in U.S. college institutions. I examine the multiple language practices that bilingual speakers employ and outline differences and similarities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 3, I present the methodology used to examine students’ communicative practices in the classroom and in their own assignments. This chapter introduces readers the research questions, the institutional context, and the data collection methods gathered from the qualitative study using ethnographic methodologies. I will also discuss how I coded and analyze the data and provide a breakdown of coding rounds. Finally, I will end the chapter by highlighting the study limitations and my role as the researcher in this study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In Chapter 4, I introduce the results from the data collection and analysis process, including a discussion on the major findings related to the research questions. I present and analyze each of the research questions, critically reflecting on the findings and provide excerpts from my data collection instruments, which consist of semi-structured interviews and student writing artifacts. I analyze the form that translanguaging takes in students’ work and the reasons for using translanguaging practices in their assignments. Finally, I examine standard language ideologies present in students’ interviews and written work.

CHAPTER 5: MOVING FORWARD – HACIA ADELANTE

In this chapter I provide the conclusion to my dissertation with a discussion of the major findings from the analysis of the research questions, as well as implications and recommendations to improve language policies in first-year composition programs that aim to address the needs of bilingual students. I also highlight the limitations of my study and propose recommendations for future research. I close the chapter by expressing some thoughts on my own experience as a non-native English speaker and how this study has impacted my life.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation for this study is informed by translanguaging theory (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah 2011a, 2012, 2013), since this theory is primarily concerned with the language use of bilingual individuals and their communicative practices in specific learning contexts. I use a translanguaging lens to examine the communicative practices of bilingual college students to illustrate the concept of dynamic bilingualism, and to demonstrate that this communicative practice allows for the disruption of constructed language hierarchies, which places one language over other non-standard languages. Below, I discuss the framework that will be used to examine the key constructs used to explore the connection between translanguaging theory and bilinguals’ translanguaging practices in first year composition courses. Following the theoretical framework is a review of the literature, which situates translanguaging in the field of Rhetoric and Composition.

TRANSLANGUAGING THEORY

García (2009) defines translanguaging as “the complex languaging practices of actual bilinguals in communicative settings” (p. 45). This definition sets up bilingual communicative practices as complex, but also privileges bilinguals’ languages by placing all languages as equally important. In addition, translanguaging theory posits that bilingual speakers’ translanguage to make-meaning and to communicate (García, 2009). That is to say that bilingual speakers use their linguistic repertoires when they engage in translanguaging practices “in order to make sense of their bilingual world” (p.45). In this manner, bilingual speakers find new and creative ways to communicate and achieve objectives; thus, this practice facilitates student learning in educational contexts.
**ONE INTEGRATED SYSTEM**

It is important to highlight that translanguaging is not using two separate languages to make meaning, but rather using two languages simultaneously in a dynamic and integrated manner (Baker, 2011). In a translanguaging act, languages occur at the same time and help bilinguals organize and mediate mental processes (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). Ongoing research in translanguaging has added to the theoretical propositions; as García and Wei (2014) emphasize, “Translanguaging refers to the use of languages as a dynamic repertoire and not as a system with socially and politically defined boundaries” (1). By participating in translanguaging practices, speakers freely combine languages in a way that may not necessarily align with what is expected socially or politically in reference to Standard Language ideologies. Socially defined boundaries may signal a speaker to communicate in a way that is acceptable to the environment or context. Politically, speakers may not be using two named languages in the classroom, in this case, English and Spanish, but instead a combination of languages from one language system making full use of their linguistic repertoires. By politically, I mean that there are restraints placed on bilingual speakers, such as they can only speak English in classrooms or other places.

Translanguaging theory traditionally assumed that bilinguals had two or more autonomous language systems and a bilingual speaker separately accessed these two languages (Vogel & García, 2017). In actuality, central to translanguaging, is the understanding that bilinguals are linguistically unique language users and who use language based on their own language experiences (Grosjean, 1982). In other words, this integrated language system has linguistic features that correspond to one language or the other. Bilinguals make a conscious choice of selecting features to make new meaning. Bilinguals engage in an internal negotiating process, selecting appropriate linguistic features to address specific communicative situations.
This means that the new knowledge that is produced is built on prior understanding. In other words, this negotiation process allows bilinguals to combine existing knowledge with new information to augment their understanding of a concept.

It is this particular notion that specifically positions language as a single and dynamic repertoire that informs my dissertation research project. This perspective challenges the view that bilingual speakers draw from two different language systems; in fact, translanguaging offers bilingual speakers the ability to “shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah, 2011b, p. 401). Thus, bilingual individuals, in their sense-making process operate within one holistic language system that the individual assesses with varying degrees of awareness to communicate (García, 2009; Martinez, 2014). Simply put, what translanguaging makes clear is that there “are no clear-cut boundaries between languages of bilinguals” (García, 2009, p. 47).

**Dynamic Bilingualism**

To illustrate how bilingual individuals fluidly use their linguistic resources, García (2009) posits that “bilingualism is not simply linear but dynamic, drawing from different contexts in which it develops and functions” (p. 53). She uses the term dynamic bilinguals to show the concept of bilingualism which “involves a more dynamic cycle where language practices are multiple and ever adjusting to the multilingual multimodal terrain of the communicative act” (p. 23). As it is evident in the figure 2.1 Dynamic Bilingualism, languages move freely, fluidly in all directions (García, 2009).
In this figure, the four directional X in the center signifies the speaker and the arrows surrounding the center represents languages; there are two shades used to indicate multiple languages. These arrows are not going in one specific direction, but rather continue to move in different directions, demonstrating the continual interaction of languages. Like the arrows in the figure, language moves fluidly within the mind of a bilingual individual where he or she accesses these languages based on the specific communicative situation. Languages blend, mix and co-exist as legitimate forms of communication. This single illustration is akin to one semiotic system within the bilinguals’ communicative structure, which is equipped with various lexical, morphological and grammatical linguistic features. Also, within these linguistic features are bilinguals’ lived experiences with language that have become part of the embodied memory (Vogel & García, 2017). This underscores the complexity of language but also illustrates the dynamic and flexible nature of language use. For instance, my translanguaging practices change based on who I am speaking to and the context of the environment. When I speak with my family, I often translanguage because they are bilingual and share the same linguistic background. When interacting with my family, my utterances are usually spontaneous and
naturally occurring with words just rolling off my tongue. However, when addressing a specific audience, I strategically mix languages based on the purpose of the communication transaction. In essence, I see my own discursive practices as intuitive, fluid, unique, and an integral part of who I am.

A discussion about context is important when engaging in translanguaging practices. In the field of Rhetoric and Composition the conceptualization of context relates to the rhetorical situation. Bitzer (1968/1992) posits that rhetoric is situational. He examines the reasons that cause rhetorical discourse to take place in any given situation. Bitzer (1968/1992), notes that there are three components within a rhetorical situation which are exigence, audience, and constraints. Students in writing courses are often asked to address the situation or context to maximize rhetorical persuasiveness for communication. Exigence points to an urgent problem that demands a response, the audience is who the writer is addressing and who will react to the message, and constraints include “include beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and the like” which affect the writer/speaker and the audience (p. 8). By engaging in translanguaging practices, bilingual individuals also need to address the rhetorical situation and use their languages rhetorically. What this means is that in order to be persuasive, bilingual speakers should use translanguaging strategically based on the purpose or exigence, the audience and the constraints. Without careful thought to the rhetorical situation, a message, regardless of the language, may not reach its rhetorical goal.

THE SPEAKER AND THE LANGUAGE

As the dynamic bilingualism figure indicates, the speaker is at the center of the diagram, with languaging flowing outward. In this sense, translanguaging places emphasis on the individual speaker and not the language. García and Kleyn (2016) contend that translanguaging
“stems from the speaker up and not from the language down” (p. 23). This means that speakers make decisions and choices not just based on the named languages but on their entire linguistic repertoire (García & Kleyn, 2016). The affordances of having multiple languages allow bilingual speakers to use linguistic features of named languages (such as English and Spanish) and turn around and deploy any other features in their language repertoire as a means of expression. With this linguistic competence, bilinguals are putting their languages in conversation in their minds where they are in charge of the discourse. Thus, language is shaped by the speaker who uses it for specific purposes, goals and activities (Pennycook, 2000). This linguistic competence evolves with the speaker as he or she learns through dynamic social interaction with practices that are “ever adjusting to the multilingual multimodal terrain of the communicative act” (García, 2009, p. 53).

Translanguaging should not be viewed as a way for bilinguals to communicate when they are unable to recall a specific word or phrase, but rather as practices that “go beyond” use of the state-endorsed name language system (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 42; Li Wei, 2011). In other words, as bilingual speakers engage in creative translanguaging practices, they are critically and strategically thinking of words or phrases that can aid them in making new meaning. This means that they may not be thinking of the boundaries that separate named languages; instead they are focused “in the ability to use evidence to question, problematize, and articulate views” (Li Wei, 2011; Li & Zhu 2013).

It is not just a matter of trying to come up with the right word when bilingual speakers translanguing, but is it a way of accessing all of their languages. In this sense, bilingual speakers are going beyond named languages. As discussed earlier in this section, in the process of accessing their entire linguistic repertoire, individuals do not adhere to state-endorsed name
languages and the systems associated with them. Simply, named languages, such as English and Spanish in this case, have certain language conventions that are used by speakers based on specific contexts or spaces. The “trans” part of the word signals bilinguals’ communicative practice within and across languages, a practice that transcends boundaries, and one that shows the fluidity, exchange and interaction of language (García & Li Wei, 2014; Li Wei, 2011). When bilinguals translanguate, they are bringing together their entire linguistic resources actively “for thinking, doing, engaging and learning” (Swanwick, 2016, p. 83). The “language” part of the term translanguaging signifies having to do with languages; for instance, bilingual individuals negotiate across languages to make meaning.

**Standard Language Ideology (SLI)**

Currently, most writing courses in colleges and universities across the U.S. operate under a standard language policy with the English language as the primary language of instruction. As a result, this English-only policy present in the field of Rhetoric and Composition propagates standard language ideologies (SLI). According to Lippi-Green (2012), standard language ideology (SLI) is “a bias toward an idealized, homogenous spoken language maintained by individuals and institutions in power modeled primarily after the spoken language of the upper middle class” (p. 67). All languages are imbricated with ideology, and the ideology of English monolinugualism: 1) portrays language diversity as an “alien and divisive force”; 2) positions speakers of different varieties of the same language within a social hierarchy; 3) assumes that language is a “fixed code” especially in academic discourse; and 4) considers English as a superior code because it generates cognitive gains and communicative efficiency. Therefore, alternative codes are deemed subordinate to the English language (Wiley & Lukes, 1996; Lawton, 2008). Due to an increase in the number of Spanish-speaking immigrants and the
concern that immigration and other languages would threaten the national unity and American identity, the English-Only movement in the 1980s (which will be discussed in the following literature review) was a response to protect the English language (Lawton, 2008).

**Language Hierarchies**

Identifying English as the standard language places all other languages as “non-standard,” thereby creating language hierarchies. A “tacit policy” of English monolingualism positions the English language as the most commonly privileged and valued language in schools and academia. Further, this normalization indicates what is “correct” or “standard” and those who adhere to this view identify varieties and dialects as inadequate and illogical (Wiley & Lukes, 1996; Milroy, 1999). In this manner, institutions create “the authority and legitimacy of the scarcest, and therefore most highly valued linguistic and cultural forms and secures universal recognition of this legitimacy” (Woolard, 1985, pp. 740–741). Hence, Woolard (1985) suggests that schools play a significant role in establishing which languages have more prestige and value. Clearly, SLI may have not originated in educational contexts, but these places are at the heart of the standardized process and this process has served as a tool to maintain power by dominant groups (Lippi-Green, 2012). Thus, hegemonic institutional practices, both explicit and implicit, lead to language discrimination and language subordination, contributing to the production and reproduction of social differences.

Adhering to a SLI affects what types of languages are accepted and valued in society. This notion contributes to language hierarchies where prestige languages enjoy greater prestige because they are connected to nationalism and as a result, other non-standard language varieties are relegated as inferior. This attitude leads to language discrimination based on race, ethnicity, social class, culture and regional markers. Therefore, individuals who do not speak a specific
standard version of a language are viewed as lacking education, having a lower social class status, and belonging to a certain race or ethnicity. An example that highlights standard language ideologies was evident during WWI when President Theodore Roosevelt in 1917 proclaimed, “We must have but one flag. We must also have but one language” (Roosevelt, p. 13). Partly in response to the number of immigrants who spoke German, Roosevelt declared English the language of the United States as a necessary act “for creating and maintaining national identity and power” (Mangelsdorf, 2010).

**Spanglish**

At the university where the study was conducted, the student population is 80 percent Hispanic. Most students fall within the bilingual continuum, and Spanglish – a so-called non-standard language variety and a popular form of the language of many Hispanics in the U.S. - is frequently used in and outside of the classroom. Language ideologies of monolingualism and standardization are predominant ideologies in multilingual and multicultural language educational settings (Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Lippi-Green, 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Similar to English standard language ideology, there is also a Spanish language standard ideology. These ideologies influence the way bilingual speakers respond to combining and mixing their English and Spanish languages. This language ideology stems from the “ingrained, unquestioned beliefs about the way the world is, the way it should be, and the way it has to be with respect to language” (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006).

Subscribing to the belief and the legacy of pure Spanish or Castilian Spanish, – the language deemed throughout Spain – Spanish is positioned as having a higher status and is deemed as the most “purest” and most “correct” form of the language compared to other Spanish-language varieties (Pennycook, 2001). As a result, bilingual speakers are likely to be
marginalized based on their language choices. In this study, attitudes towards Spanglish have been mixed; while some participants describe this language variety with pride (indicating that the mixing of languages supports their identity as someone who is bilingual and knows two languages), other participants express criticism towards those who mix and combine languages. The latter perceive Spanglish as “ugly” “wrong” and “incorrect.” Otheguy and Stern (2010) contend that the term Spanglish “is often used to disparage Latinos in the USA and to cast aspersions on their ways of speaking” (p. 86). Not only is Spanglish stigmatized in the U.S., but also in Mexico (Mangelsdorf, 2010). Students participating in this study indicated that when they traveled to Mexico, many of their family members made fun of the way that they mixed their languages, often calling them pochos – this term implies that they are “Chicanos who have lost their connection to Mexico and who cannot speak so-called Standard Spanish” (Mangelsdorf, 2010). Instead of being viewed as individuals who can negotiate multiple interactions, bilinguals are seemingly stigmatized for their language practices. Unfortunately, to echo García’s (2014) views, bilinguals are “caught between the imperial designs of the United States and Spain” (p. 75).

In this section, I have identified translanguaging as my theoretical framework and discussed key concepts connected to language practices and standard language ideologies. In the next section, I will provide a review of the literature that situates translanguaging in the field of Rhetoric and Composition.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

I will begin this literature review by offering a brief history of the English-Only debate and a summary of the “Students’ Right to their Own Language” resolution. I will then highlight the perception educators have of students entering first-year writing courses. Next, I will provide
an in-depth examination of translanguaging, particularly its history and its role in higher education. Finally, I will provide an overview of the terms used to describe multilingual communicative practices.

**Brief History of U.S. Composition Classes**

Beginning this section with Bruce Horner and Trimbur’s (2002) article “English Only and U.S. College and Compositions” seems an apt place to start to describe the history of U.S. composition. In this foundational piece, the authors chronicle the development of U.S. composition by integrating past and present composition scholarship on language pedagogy. They note that starting in the late nineteenth century, writing courses began to move away from required or even recommended study of languages other than English. As such, learning other languages, such as modern languages, was perceived as a “feminine activity,” and these languages were treated “not as living languages, but as texts in an archive” (Horner & Trimbur, 2002, p. 604). It was also assumed that modern languages were a means to mastering English; thus, all classes were taught in English with the goal of helping students to write effectively in “standard” English (and only English). This mindset served to establish mastering “standard” English as an accepted and clear goal of writing pedagogy in U.S. higher education.

However, the inclination toward this monolingual English-only approach to teaching writing raised concerns about a tacit policy that privileges English in relation to other languages, as well as its practicality to engage, value, and acknowledge multilingual writing students. Those interested in dismantling the current dominant English Only movement and supporting the inclusion of students’ varied languages into the classroom pursued a counter-hegemonic response that would advocate for minority groups.
LANGUAGE RESOLUTION AND LANGUAGE DEBATES

With the goal of recognizing students’ varied languages, in 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) passed a resolution on language which affirms “the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style” (CCCC). This resolution supports students’ rights to use their languages as a means to become competent in English and, thus, establish their own style and identity. This resolution seemingly creates a space for varied communicative practices to be considered as a way for students to bring their languages into the classrooms, but also as a way to value their home dialects. Although this resolution provided a space for students to use their varied language codes, it did little to change the way English instruction is implemented. To further complicate the process, the 1980s experienced an English-only activism phenomenon (Crawford, 2000). In 1981, there was a rise in campaigns promoting the idea of giving English official status on a federal level (Crawford, 2000). Relating to the higher education, Horner and Trimbur (2002) contend that the English Only legislation in 1981 was depicted as a corrective measure to address students who were underprepared in written English skills. As a result, composition classes experienced a radical shift, which made English the dominant language in which to teach writing in higher education. The authors point out that perhaps the unidirectional monolingual language policy in modern curriculum may seem “warranted as inevitable” not because it is the only living language available in North America, but because of Benedict Anderson’s concept of an “‘imagined community’ and a sense of nationhood” (Horner & Trimbur, 2002, p. 607). In this case, the “imagined community” is one of “pure” English speakers. This imagined community might also
lead to questioning people’s nationhood. Evidently, multilingualism in effect is not perceived as patriotic or as preserving the values of nationhood where a common language is treasured.

Mangelsdorf (2010) comments, “A standard language is seen as necessary for creating and maintaining national identity and power” (p. 117). Similarly, Crawford suggests that the demand for having restrictions is also a demand “to reinforce the existing social order” (p. 27). Clearly, communicative practices that depart from the standard and challenge restrictions go against the core of these very sentiments.

Understandably, the English-Only legislation quickly turned into an English-Only debate where one side defended it, as Horner and Lu (2007) note, in terms of “ideologies linking reified notions of language and national identify, or in terms of the ‘globalization’ of a monolithic, uniform English as an international language of communication” (p. 141). When opponents to the English Only legislation have questioned the dominant monolingualism approach, they have consistently advocated for a change not only on how language is being viewed, but also how it is employed in writing classrooms. Horner and Lu (2007) argue that a monolingualist curriculum “fails to recognize the actual heterogeneity of language practices within as well as outside the USA and UK and denies the heterogeneity of practices within English itself” (p. 141).

THE IMAGE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

A factor that contributes to a tacit English-Only policy is the perceptions and expectations that instructors may have of new students entering first year composition courses. Although there are a great number of international students in higher education, most of the student population is made up of U.S. nationals. However, the fact is that not all students, even natives of the U.S., use English as their primary and dominant language. This is one of the arguments that Matsuda (2006) makes when he describes “the myth of linguistic homogeneity”
as being “the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (p. 638). Although multilingual speakers are born and raised in the U.S., this doesn’t necessarily mean that they are native English speakers. He further adds that all instructors have a certain image of their students, but when it does not reflect the student population then this can become an issue: “An image of students becomes problematic when it inaccurately represents the actual student population in the classroom to the extent that it inhibits the teacher’s ability to recognize and address the presence of differences” (p. 640). In short, this perception may hinder educators from applying effective pedagogical practices that can help second-language learners in their writing courses.

Another reason why instructors may imagine a student as a native speaker of English may be due to the understanding that they have passed the placement assessments, which test for English proficiency. Assuming that students already know the language, instructors are faced with a challenge of how to best approach this situation. In many cases, as Trimbur (1987) points out, “Even when language differences are recognized by the teacher, those differences are often contained by sending students to the writing center, where students encounter peer tutors who are even less likely to be prepared to work with language differences than are composition teachers” (p. 27). Adding to the issue is the fact that there may be little training in language diversity for educators to help these students. The present belief that students in first year composition already know the language of the academy leave instructors no other choice but to help them the best they can, and one strategy may be to send them to other places for assistance. The tacit language policy is restrictive and reifies language as static, “clearly bounded, and evaluated according to a narrow canon of rules, and it also reifies social identities in terms not only of language use but of nationality” (Shuck, 2006, p. 59). Although it is important to increase students’ language capital,
the importance placed in writing and speaking in English only serves to reinforce a dominant attitude toward language differences. Simply put, the monolingual orientation used in composition classes presents a problem for multilingual students who have not, for one reason or another, acquired the necessary writing skills to express themselves completely in English.

Since studies on Students Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), composition scholars have been advocating for a multilingual approach and yet English-only pedagogical approaches persist. Smitherman (1987) acknowledges that the goal of the resolution “was not realized.” She has called on educators in speech, language, and writing studies to “take up the unfinished business of the Committee on the Students’ Right to Their Own Language.” This approach should take a three-prong policy approach that will:

1. Reinforce the need for and teaching of the language of wider communication,
2. Reinforce and reaffirm the legitimacy of non-mainstream languages and dialects and promote mother tongue instruction as a co-equal language of instruction along with the language of wider communication, and
3. Promote the acquisition of one or more foreign languages, preferably a language spoken by persons in the third world, such as Spanish, because of its widespread use in this hemisphere (p. 31-34).

In essence, this is a reminder that scholars and educators need to move forward to support student-centered classroom by promoting all languages and language varieties. This approach highlights the changing educational landscape in schools across the United States where an increasing number of multilinguals are entering higher education. It is also a call addressing resistance to the so-called non-standard Englishes and an inactivity toward change.
Trimbur (2010) believes that the goal of this inclusive policy would go beyond a “discourse of linguistic rights to imagine the abolition of English monolingualism altogether and the creation in its place of a linguistic culture where being multilingual is both normal and desirable, as it is throughout much of the world” (p. 40). While there is a great deal of scholarship on the benefits for adopting a multilingual approach to include allowing students to employ their language varieties, there is still more to be done.

Some studies (Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Creese & Blackledge, 2010) have examined the pedagogical challenges and implications resulting from the implementation of a monolingual approach that is currently present in the majority of composition courses in academic settings. As Canagarajah 2011, 2009) Horner and Lu (2007) and Lee (2014) have shown, acknowledging and integrating students’ linguistic varieties can aid in students’ understanding of writing and meaning making. In addition, by employing pedagogical practices such as translanguaging students may be able to make possible connections with writing and learning. However, while translanguaging has proven to be a significant learning strategy, shifting to a new pedagogy that acknowledges students’ language varieties is not that easy. There is resistance especially when this shift goes against the prevalent English-Only hegemonic point of view. Lee (2014) is accurate in her view concerning the traditional monolingualist conceptual framework; she claims that this approach “has marginalized and alienated students whose language practices do not fit within it” (p. 312).

Most multilinguals come to the classroom equipped with a variety of linguistic codes at their disposal as part of their background and upbringing. Normally these members of the community successfully engage in what Guerra (2004) refers to as transcultural repositioning, a rhetorical ability where members intuitively adapt to a situation but at the same time self-
consciously regulate themselves so as to not to lose their own identity (15). Guerra explains that this self-regulation is essential if participants hope to shuttle back and forth “more productively between and among different languages and dialects, different social classes, different cultural and artistic forms, different ways of seeing and thinking about the increasingly fluid and hybridized world emerging all around us” (p. 15). One cannot expect that, as they enter the classroom, students forget or put aside what is an integral part of them: their language repertoire. Thus, incorporating a multilingual approach in the classroom affords students the opportunity to use all resources available to them and to deploy agency as they move between languages. Again, students may already be shifting from one language to the other, so why not encourage this to happen, instead of maintaining English as the only language available to learning how to write? In the next section, I will offer a brief historical account of translanguaging, and then I will highlight other terms used to describe multilingual diverse communicative practices.

**TRANSLANGUAGE ORIGINS**

The origin of translanguaging can be traced back to the 1980s in Wales when this strategy was first used in an academic setting. Although shuttling between languages had been a common practice in other areas, this is the first time when it is connected to education. According to Lewis et al. (2012), Welsh educator Cen Williams designed a plan to use two languages for teaching and learning. It is important to be mindful of the historic separation of two “monolingualisms” which were Welsh and English. Accordingly, these two languages held significant differences and prestige. Lewis et al. (2012) explain that these two languages were often portrayed under the shadow of “conflict, oppression, and suppression, of English language dominance and Welsh language endangerment” (p. 642). One can say that this attitude is similar to what is dominant in the United States today where Standard English enjoys privilege and
prestige while other languages and varieties of English may be considered less valuable. It also exemplifies the notion of maintaining a nation’s language as pure and intact. It is within this context inside the Welsh educational system that the idea of translanguaging was first established. Williams identifies an opportunity to mesh two languages as means to enhance learning by formulating a communicative process that is based on deliberately switching the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms. Williams coined the term “trawsieithu” in Welsh; in English it was originally called “translinguifying,” but later changed to translanguaging (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 643). Interestingly, while Williams developed the term translanguaging, Lewis et al. (2012) explain that this idea is also “linked to Jacobson’s (1983, 1990) concept of purposeful concurrent uses of two languages in a bilingual classroom and Faltis’ (1990) discussion of 16 cues for switching the language medium of teaching” (p. 644).

Noteworthy to mention is that Williams’ aim for translanguaging was pedagogical, but what is significant is that this practice places emphasis on the child (primary level students) rather than the teacher. In other words, the focus is placed on children’s development by showing how they shuttled between two languages to achieve effective communication. In addition, Williams views translanguaging as a means “to develop the weaker language thus contributing towards a potentially relatively balanced development of a child’s two languages” (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 644). He posits that translanguaging means obtaining “information through the medium of one language (e.g., English) and use it yourself through the medium of the other language (e.g., Welsh). Before you can use that information successfully, you must have fully understood it” (p. 644). It is evident that one must be able to acquire information in one language and have a complete understanding of what the communicative message means before one can turn around and use it in a different language. Thus, Williams’ translanguaging concept sets forth a
framework for adopting two languages by combining linguistic codes in writing and composition to enhance learning.

**TRANSLANGUAGING TODAY**

In her book, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century*, García (2009) conceptualized translanguaging when describing the language practices of bilinguals. In this work, García describes translanguaging from the perspective of the users themselves as opposed to the way language is used. She explains that bilinguals engage in translanguaging using “multiple discursive practices to make sense of their bilingual world” (García, 2009, p. 45). This definition differs from Williams in that its focus is “existing bilingual practices and not teaching practices (Mazak & Carroll, 2017). Since 2009, García has refined this definition to articulate the theory behind the term. She argues that ‘language is an ongoing process that only exists as languaging (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 204). Thus, the emphasis on languaging changes the focus from “discrete languages” and places it on the ongoing process of meaning making. Translanguaging then refers to “the constant, active invention of new realities” as the process of languaging both shape and is shaped by interaction in specific contexts (Mazak & Carroll, 2017). A key feature to underscore is that in a translanguaging act, there is one “integrated repertoire of linguistic and semiotic practices from where bilingual speakers draw” (Mazak & Carroll, 2017, p. 2). This integrated repertoire is one system which contains features from all of their languages. García and Li (2014) posit “that translanguaging refers to new language exchanges among people with different histories and release histories and understanding that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nations-states” (p. 21). That is to say, as bilinguals engage in translanguaging practices, they are expressing their own internal viewpoint and lived experiences which have been influenced through social integration. Bilinguals negotiate languages based on
specific language conventions and leverage their communicative repertoires to make meaning. Thus, these repertoires become “potential semiotic resources” (Salo & Hanell, 2014, p. 25).

Lewis et al. (2012) define translanguging as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (p. 641). Based on this understanding, translanguaging undoubtedly offers students the ability to use their language varieties as a measure to make meaning of things that may have not been clear and assisting them in gaining new knowledge. Similarly, Canagarajah (2011) aptly describes this strategy as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages” (p. 401). Wei (2011) explains translanguaging as “both going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going beyond them” (p. 1224). There are various interpretations here, but one thing is apparent and that is that translanguaging is a strategy perceived as an asset for multilingual speakers. Velasco and García (2014) add that “students are using a strategy that all learners employ—using what they know to solve what they do not” (p. 10). Essentially, students’ language varieties are present and can be called upon to illuminate concepts that may not be well understood.

TERMS FOR DIVERSE MULTILINGUAL PRACTICES

CODE-SWITCHING

Many theorists and researchers in Applied Linguistics have examined code-switching for some time. For instance, in 1978, Valdes-Fallis defined code-switching simply as “the alternating use of two languages on the word, phrase, clause or sentence level” (p. 1). Similarly, Myers-Scotton and Ury (1977) identified code-switching as the “use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction.” Code-switching then began to be studied in the
area of Bilingual Education, with the primary focus on the spoken language of children (García & Collins, 1995, 2007; García, 2009, 2011). In the field of Rhetoric and Composition, the concept of code-switching as it applied to writing was initially presented by Young and Martinez (2011) who defined code switching as the separation of languages. In lieu of the term code-switching, Young and Martinez (2011) presented the concept of code-meshing, and as a result code-meshing began to be the popularized term in Rhetoric and Composition in general and in the area of translingualism in particular.

According to Baker (2011), “code-switching has generally been used to describe any switch within the course of a single conversation, whether at word or sentence level or at the level of blocks of speech” (p. 107). This indicates that when speakers are speaking in Spanish and they introduce an English word into the sentence/phrase or utterance, then they are code-switching in English. This works the same way if speaker introduce a Spanish word into an English conversation then they are code-witching in Spanish (Valdes-Fallis, 1978).

Researchers in bilingual education have understood code-switching as the oral use of two or more languages either within or across sentences in ways that are syntactically coherent (Escamilla et al., 2014).

García (2009) argues that code-switching should not be viewed as a “sign of inadequacy or sloppy language usage or lack of knowledge.” In fact, García maintains that this communicative practice is a “sophisticated linguistic skill and a characteristic of speakers of fluent bilinguals” (p. 50). In making this comment, García highlights the linguistic resources available for bilingual speakers. Rather than looking at the code-switching as a deficit, codeswitching is another tool bilinguals can draw upon.
However, there is an important feature of code-switching that needs to be explained and that is that when engaging in code-switching, speakers are using two separate monolingual codes as they alternate from one language to the other (García, 2012). This means that the speaker uses two separate named languages. García (2012) claims that code-switching implies that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other. In short, code-switching emphasizes language separation rather than language integration.

**CODE MESHING (CODE-MESHING)**

While there are many classroom pedagogies and bilingual programs that focus on helping students appropriate the language used in the academia, code meshing is one literacy practice that has received scholarship attention in Rhetoric and Composition, thus bringing this translingual approach in composition to the forefront. Canagarajah (2006) defines code-meshing as “a strategy for merging local varieties with standard written Englishes in a move toward gradually pluralizing academic writing and developing multilingual competence for transnational relationships” (586). Young, Barrett and Lovejoy (2014) acknowledge that code meshing is an approach to writing and interpreting texts that advocates for blending language codes in the classroom, rather than switching from one set of linguistic codes to another depending on the “appropriate” social and discursive contexts. Young and Martinez (2011) described code meshing “as the blending of minoritized languages with DAE (Dominant American English) encompassing both oral and written language practices” (Lee & Handsfield, 2018, p. 2).

Michael-Luna & Canagarajah (2007) further explain that code meshing is used for “specific rhetorical and ideological purposes in which a multilingual speaker intentionally integrates local and academic discourse as a form of resistance, appropriation, and/or
transformation of the academic discourse” (p. 56). By merging students’ language varieties with English, students resist the dominant monolingualist paradigm in writing and create a third space, hence transforming or re-appropriating and entering the academic discourse. Other scholars agree that code meshing allows writers to discover their voice and negotiate their identity while constructing texts that have the potential to move beyond the dominant discourse and can be generative and transformative at the discourse level (Lam, 2000; Michael-Luna & Canagarajah, 2007; Young, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011; Horner, Lu, Royster & Trimbur, 2011). What the term code meshing describes is the ability for writers to express their distinct and insightful perspectives by taking ownership of their language.

However, the code meshing construct, in regards to writing, is not as easy as some may think, as this practice asks writers to work a bit harder to create meaning because they have to integrate their language variety with Standard English. It is not a matter of just writing in Spanish, for example, but of incorporating Spanish into the academic text adequately so that it will make sense critically and rhetorically contribute to the overall meaning. Canagarajah (2006) argues that code meshing “…demands more, not less, from minority students. They have to not only master the dominant varieties of English, but also know how to bring in their preferred varieties in rhetorically strategic ways” (p. 598). In other words, students should be polydialectal competent in order for code meshing to serve their interests. Canagarajah points out that this process should be something that occurs naturally and as the person is talking or writing. For this process to take place, teachers ought to let “English work as it naturally does, as a meshing and blending or a variety of dialects and discourses.” (NeCamp, 2009, p. 248). Therefore, by promoting code-meshing practices in the classroom, scholars aim “to defeat the
monolingual state of mind…encouraging, not discouraging linguistic diversity” (Shelton, 2007, p. 57).

**ONE LINGUISTIC REPertoire VERSUS BOUNDED LANGuages**

There is a major difference between translanguaging and code-switching, and the difference rests within the language. Code-switching, moving from one language to the other, implies that there are two separate linguistic codes. On the other hand, translanguaging assumes that bilingual speakers “have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively” (García, 2012, p. 1). This repertoire is negotiated in relation to specific situations of language use and dominant conventions governing this language use (Canagarajah, 2016). As a result, this practice thus shifts the focus from a bounded language system to a discursive practice negotiated by the speakers. Given that the construction and the use of these discursive practices are interrelated, they cannot adhere to any traditional definition of language (García & Wei, 2014). The result is a dynamic language practice.

A simple way to understand the differences between translanguaging and code-switching is by using García and Wei’s (2014) illustration of the iPhone and its texting language feature. García explains that the iPhone has language settings with the default setting being English (in most cases). When you want to text something in a language, let us say Spanish, you must go to the language settings and change the language by changing the keyboard. Once in this mode, you can type in Spanish; however, if you want to type something in English, you must go back and change the settings. This illustration shows how languages are separate – as they are in code-switching. In short, to integrate both languages, you must go to the settings to make the switch. On the other hand, García explains that translanguaging would be like turning off the language-switch feature of the iPhone, thereby “enabling bilinguals to select features from their entire
semiotic repertoire and not solely from an inventory that is constrained by societal definitions of what is an appropriate ‘language’” (García & Wei, 2014 p. 23). Simply put, in translanguaging practices, languages are interrelated and not bounded, and speakers are selecting from one complete language repertoire where they make strategic choices to communicate.

In this literature review, a number of things stand out. One is that the history of Rhetoric and Composition in the United States has tacitly supported a monolingualism approach in the teaching of writing in context of higher education. While this orientation may have been as an effort to help all students to write effectively and be able to participate in the mainstream culture, it has also served to alienate those students who do not speak the dominant language of the academia. Two, while language resolutions like the STROL and language debates have paved the way to include minoritized language in the academic realm, change has been slow to come. Contributing to maintaining a monolingual approach may be the general assumption by educators that students entering writing courses are English speakers.

Translanguaging aims to normalize multilingual practices and to disrupt the languages hierarchies tied to standardization. Translanguaging invites bilingual speakers to use language at school as they do at home. As of yet, translanguaging scholarship on writing in higher education has been limited, specifically in border institutions where there is a large student population of bilingual and multilingual students. Having had the opportunity to listen to bilingual students’ lived language experiences coupled with my own language practices, I recognize the value in both theorizing linguistic practices and in advocating for strategies to more effectively enact translanguaging in the classroom.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The goals of this project are to contribute to the scholarship on language diversity and continue to build on the conversation about addressing, acknowledging, and valuing students’ linguistic repertoires in higher education. The long-term research goal is to promote change and begin remapping the pedagogical practices present in higher education, especially in regions where Spanish speakers are the linguistic majority. In meeting this goal, research highlighting bilingual students’ unique ways of using their linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural backgrounds to successfully participate in the academic environment, is needed. Therefore, I aim to shift the focus from the rhetoric of language deficiency in order to emphasize bilingual students’ contributions to language diversity and its place in higher education. To achieve a clearer understanding of the situated communicative practices of bilingual students, as well as their language ideologies, my study focused on the following questions:

RQ1: How and why do students, specifically Spanish dominant bilinguals and English dominant bilinguals, use translanguaging practices when they do, or if they do, in writing courses when they are encouraged by their instructors?

RQ2: What are bilingual students’ language ideologies in reference to translanguaging? Do these ideologies change or are they set aside as the desire to combine languages arises?

With the purpose of answering these questions, I conducted qualitative research, using ethnographic methods, to examine bilingual students’ translingual practices and to explore their language ideologies in writing courses. I chose to use ethnographic research methods for this type of study since ethnography focuses on the observation of human social activities. In the following sections, I will discuss the study’s institutional context and expand on the methods and
methodology used to observe, capture, and analyze the ways that bilingual students in this study draw upon their heritage languages in academic spaces.

**Institutional Context**

The study was conducted at a Hispanic-serving institution situated along the U.S.-Mexico border in the American southwest. The university’s unique location offers excellent research opportunities for linguistic and cultural scholarship, in particular because its community mirrors the university’s student demographics. The university is a large public research institution with a population of 23,922 students registered in the Fall 2016 semester (University Communications, n.d.). The university’s 2014-2015 fact book indicated that nearly 80% of the students are Hispanic; 5% are Mexican International; 8% are white non-Hispanic; 3% are African American; and the remaining 4% are of other races (University Communications, n.d.). According to a New Student Survey administered in the Fall 2016 by the Center for Institutional Evaluation Research and Planning (personal communication, July 7, 2017), approximately 39.9% of students identify themselves as bilingual in English and Spanish, 48.6% of students are most comfortable speaking English, and 10.6% of students are most comfortable speaking Spanish.

**Qualitative Study and Ethnographic Methodology**

This dissertation project consisted of a qualitative study that was conducted in two separate first-year writing sections offered in the Spring semester of 2017. This qualitative study used ethnographic methods to examine how and why bilingual students use translanguaging practices when encouraged by their instructors in first year composition courses as well as to explore students’ language ideologies. LeCompte and Schensul (2010) describe ethnography as “a systematic approach to learning about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings.” By taking an ethnographic approach, I sought to capture the communicative
practices as students drew upon their heritage languages in the classroom. This process was done through observations, interviews, and text analysis. Creswell (2013) notes that ethnographers “study the meaning of the behavior, the language, and the interaction among members of the culture sharing group.” Being physically present in the classroom conducting observations allowed me to gain a first-hand account of students’ responses and interactions with their instructors, their peer and the class material. Information gathered in the classroom may yield interesting questions and topics that can be fully addressed during interview sessions. By the same token, students may sometimes feel more comfortable expressing their ideas and behavior in a familiar classroom setting than sitting alone with the researcher in an interview.

Ethnography is a naturalistic form of research, focusing on observation of human social activities. It has more in common with biological fieldwork than it does with quantitative and experimental models that are common in other fields. Therefore, in order to observe the communicative practices in the culture of the classroom and capture the ways that bilingual students draw on their linguistic background, multiple data collection tools inherent in ethnography was the most effective approach to conduct the study.

For the purpose of the study, the ethnographic methods consisted of participant observation (Emerson et al., 2011), semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2012), as well as informal participation observation and interviewing before and after class, along with artifact/document analysis. In this case, this meant interviews with students and instructors in the course, classroom observation, observation of the course through the learning management system Blackboard (e.g., discussions, messages, and all course assignments), as well as analysis of the student guide handbook and textbook. The goal of ethnographic research is to use thick description to understand people’s ideologies, identities, attitudes, values, perceptions, and
emotional experiences (Geertz, 1973). In this manner, thick description is a discovery process that yields rich and valuable contextual data as researchers examine and comment on the human experience, paying close attention to specific detail. Thick description allows for a fuller picture to emerge by combining the facts with interpretation or commentary. When conducting fieldwork in the classroom, I used a double entry field notes template to record my observations. The template was a page that was equally divided vertically; one side was used to record what was happening in the classroom and the other side of the page was later filled in with the same observations, but my commentary was also included. This commentary was my own interpretation of what happened in the class; in other words, I took a subjective approach and included my opinion and my own understanding to describe what occurred. The product of ethnographic research is “an interpretive story, reconstruction, or narrative about a group of people (a [classroom] community)” (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Thick description provided a picture that straightforward note taking, where you only report what you see and hear, could not achieve.

**Research Site**

First-year writing (FYW) or freshmen composition as it is sometimes referred to, is an introductory core curriculum-writing course required for undergraduate students attending the university. This course is also where most students learn writing skills that can transfer to other academic and professional courses. There are two classes, taught during two separate semesters, which make up first-year composition – RWS 1301: Rhetoric and Composition I and RWS 1302: Rhetoric and Composition II (RWS stands for Rhetoric and Writing Studies).
I choose to conduct research in the first section of the FYC course, as opposed to an upper level division course, because of the different types of students enrolled in this class. Regardless of the students’ career goals, most students will have to sign up for the first section of FYC, providing me with a wide sample population. In addition, since this course is a writing course, I wanted to see how students drew upon their linguistic repertoires as they learned and/or developed their writing skills. Given that I also wanted to observe Spanish and English dominant bilinguals, I opted not to select ESOL courses. As students enter college some may take a placement exam and if they do not pass the exam for placement, or if they graduated from a non-US high school, they are placed in ESOL 1301 and 1302 in lieu of RWS-1301 and 1302. This placement may indicate that students are not English or Spanish dominant bilinguals.

Furthermore, having conducted a qualitative study as part of a research team in the past, I was fully aware of the huge time commitment the research study entailed. This experience also taught me that observing one class may not be sufficient or recommended since you never know how many participants will join or how many will complete the study. Since participation is on a voluntary basis, students may drop out from the study without notice. Not to mention that as a full-time doctoral student and instructor, there was only so much I could do. For those reasons, I choose to observe two sections of the first year-composition course RWS-1301 Rhetoric and Composition I. According to the course description, the goal of RWS-1301 is to develop students’ critical thinking skills in order to facilitate effective communication in different contexts. Students in this class are exposed to concepts including discourse communities, audience awareness, genre, rhetorical strategy and the writing process. Each section of RWS-1301 has a maximum of 24 students per class. I felt confident that I could gather significant data by concentrating my efforts on two classes rather than increasing my workload.
It is important to note that, in these composition courses, the dominant language of instruction is in the English language. While there is an increasing number of multilingual students entering higher education, universities in the United States are perceived to be English-only institutions. Nevertheless, in border institutions, bilingualism is common and expected both inside and outside of the classroom. As a result, translanguaging practices or mixing and combining languages often occur. Instructors teaching first year composition courses at this university receive a sample syllabus template created by the Rhetoric and Writing Studies program in the English department. The syllabus includes institutional and department policies, and suggested readings and assignments. Nowhere in the syllabus is it mentioned that all assignments should be written in English, or that communication, written or orally, should be conducted in the English language. Although the course syllabus for composition courses may not explicitly support an English-only approach, a tacit English monolingual policy exists. Professor Barcena, one of the participating instructors, indicated that while he does not have a language policy in the classroom, there is an expectation from the department and an expectation by society because “of the nature of the class” (Barcena, interview, April 11, 2017). Simply put, English language is expected in an English writing course. Unfortunately, an English monolingual policy works to dismiss students’ heritage languages by focusing solely on the target English language.

**Instructor Participants: Professor Barcena and Professor Perez (pseudonyms)**

First-year writing courses are taught by professors, full-time and part-time lecturers, doctoral assistant instructors, and by graduate teaching assistants. Given that I was going to conduct research using ethnographic methodologies, which includes semi-structured interviews,
class observations and artifact analysis, I limited my observations to two first-year composition sections. After receiving permission from the director of the RWS-Undergraduate program to conduct research, I began searching for instructor participants. First, I asked the program director for any suggestions since she was familiar with the instructors’ teaching backgrounds and experiences. More importantly, the director was also able to recommend candidates that would be more open to participating in the study. With four potential candidates in mind, I set up appointments with two of the four, introduced the study, and explained their level of participation. Based on their enthusiasm about the study, their availability, vast teaching experience and their genuine desire to help bilingual students succeed, I choose Professor Barcena and Professor Perez. Both instructors, who are bilingual, agreed to take part in the study and allowed me to observe and conduct research in their classrooms. Bilingual instructors bring a wealth of experiences and knowledge from their own backgrounds, which could possibly encourage them to create opportunities for communication in different languages to occur. Having two bilingual instructors, which was also another criterion for participating, was important since I felt that students would be more willing to use their linguistic repertoires in the classroom when their instructors, who were bilingual themselves, invited them to combine their languages. Both participating instructors, Professor Barcena and Professor Perez, had years of teaching experience at Hispanic-Serving institutions.

Professor Barcena: Creating Opportunities

Professor Barcena was born in South Texas, and grew up in a bilingual household; his mother is from Mexico and his father from Texas. He studied in Mexico for one year and had the opportunity to teach college-level Spanish for about four years. He earned a bachelor’s degree in English, with a double major in English and Spanish. He received a master’s degree in
English Literature and a master’s degree in Library Science. At the time of the study, Professor Barcena was a first-year doctoral student in Rhetoric and Composition at the university where the research was taking place, and was an assistant instructor in the RWS-Undergraduate program. In terms of being on the bilingual continuum (based on survey answer), on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest, Professor Barcena rated his Spanish speaking and listening ability a number 2, and Spanish reading and writing a number 1. Although these numbers seem to be conservative, in actuality, Professor Barcena proved to be well versed in the Spanish language based on our frequent conversations. As for his English ability, he rated all categories a 1.

In one of our conversations, Professor Barcena stated that since his participation in the study, he is more aware of students’ linguistic practices in the classroom. He added that he had several bilingual students in his class and that as a teacher he felt that he needed to explore different ways of structuring the class so that the students could draw upon their multilingual backgrounds:

I am inviting students to use multiple languages or a combination of languages in their reflection blogs, and I would like to put more thought into how to do that, um, in other assignments and in future classes because I am a big proponent of bilingual education from early on (Barcena, interview, April 11, 2017).

As evidenced, Professor Barcena takes a sincere interest in creating opportunities for students to draw on their linguistic background in their writing assignments. Recognizing the benefits in knowing multiple languages, Professor Barcena shared that “There are some situations where students will use Spanish, where they will draw on their Spanish to use a little bit more advance vocabulary words in English” (Barcena, interview, April 11, 2017). This practice did not go
unnoticed by Professor Barcena as he commented on students’ papers, saying “this is great, this is really good, because you are drawing on your Spanish” (Barcena, interview, April 11, 2017). During student interviews, it was clear that students felt comfortable drawing on their heritage language as a result of the instructor’s invitation to do so. The fact that Professor Barcena disclosed that he not only knew how to speak Spanish, but had also taught it, further encouraged students to use Spanish in their assignments.

**Professor Perez: “Voy hablar en Español”**

Professor Perez learned how to speak Spanish from his bilingual parents. He was born in Texas, but lived across the border in Mexico until he was 6 years old. He grew up speaking English and Spanish simultaneously; however, this dynamic changed when he entered school and English became his dominant language. He graduated from the university where the study took place earning a Bachelor of Art in English in American Literature and a Masters of Art in Rhetoric and Writing Studies. He also served as a tutor in the university’s writing center. During the time of the interview, Professor Perez was a full-time lecturer in the RWS-Undergraduate program. In a survey administered at the onset of the study, Professor Perez rated his Spanish language proficiency, on scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest, a number 2 in speaking and listening ability and a number 3 in reading and writing. His English proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing were all rated a number 1.

When I approached Professor Perez about the study, he indicated that he currently incorporates students’ linguistic backgrounds into his classes and was looking “forward to reflecting more deeply on how to facilitate opportunities for students to draw on their linguistic resources in my classes” (Perez, interview, March 22, 2017). The manner in which Professor Perez invited students to combine their languages is noteworthy. After I spoke to his class
explaining the specifics of the study and asking for volunteers, Professor Perez addressed the class speaking in Spanish. “Voy a hablar en espanol para el resto de la clase. No creo que hablo muy bien Español” (observation, February 17, 2017). He then shared his language experience, telling the class that he lived Juarez when he was little and later moved to El Paso. He concluded with “Ahora vamos hacer algo mas…” (observation, February 17, 2017). Having the instructor speak Spanish may have encouraged students’ participation in the study as well as set the tone for translanguaging practices to occur.

Drawing upon his language resources is something that Professor Perez does often. He noted that as tutor there were a handful of times when he felt that students felt more comfortable speaking in Spanish than they did in English. He added, “I was able to kind of meet them half way and kind of find a space for negotiation” (Perez, interview, March 22, 2017). Professor Perez explained that there was one particular student who met with him, “we’d speak primarily in Spanish, but we reached for shared English words when that was the only way to make ourselves understood” (Perez, interview, March 22, 2017). It is clear that Professor Perez understands the benefits of mixing languages especially when this negotiation affords students a clearer understanding of important class material.

BUILDING AN ECOSYSTEM

I studied two different classrooms and the interaction among the instructors, students, researchers as well as the environment affected participants’ inclination toward the study. Before I was granted approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I was able to sit in the classroom and observe, which allowed students to get used to seeing me, affording me a place in their academic setting. In short, the instructors’ eagerness to assist, the students’ willingness to
participate, my presence and the open invitation for students to translanguage in the classroom, influenced participants’ performances and, ultimately, the way the study unfolded.

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The ethnographic methods used in this qualitative study included surveys for recruitment, participant observation as well as informal participation observation and interviewing before and after class, semi-structured interviews, and artifact/document analysis. Once the study received IRB approval, five weeks into the semester, the instructor participants allowed me time to conduct a 5-minute in-class power point presentation introducing the study. Note that the students were already familiar with me since instructor participants had introduced me to the class the second week of semester when I began to sit in the class and unofficially observe the classroom environment. In this manner, students knew that I was a researcher and that I was going to be conducting research, but they did not know the specifics about the study as of yet.

The PowerPoint presentation was short with only four slides and included general information about the study. Some of the things that I talked about referenced the goal of the study which was to identify how students use their languages in writing classes, and how the findings may benefit other instructors teaching writing courses. I explained their role in the study and what was expected of them in terms of time commitments. I went over the risks, which included that sometimes when people talk about their educational experiences, or their work, past traumatic experiences can be touched upon. After stating this, I stressed that the university has a counseling center in case they need to talk to anyone. I went over issues of privacy and confidentiality outlining the fact that students can opt out of the study at any time. I assured them that all data is confidential with no personal identifiers and only I would have access to the data.
Following the presentations in each class, I administered consent forms and the surveys. For complete Study Consent Form, please see Appendix: A.

**SURVEY DATA COLLECTION**

I surveyed two first-year composition sections, each with a cap of 24 students per course. Since the goal of the study was to examine the communicative practices of bilingual students in college-level context, specifically in writing courses, the student survey was the main instrument for the recruitment of participants. The survey became the first step in getting to know my participants and a way for me to gauge their linguistic background, their feelings about academic writing and their area of study. There were two versions of the surveys, one for students and one for instructors. The instructors’ survey was used to gather descriptive information on their educational and language background as well as their teaching experience. For a complete Instructor Survey, see Appendix: B.

Each of the surveys was two pages long. The instructors’ survey consisted of 10 questions (for more information on the instructors’ survey, please see Instructor Participant section above) and the student survey consisted of 14. Most of the questions were adapted from a survey developed for a similar study I had worked on with a team of researchers a couple of years prior. The student survey asked about what languages they spoke as well as where they learned those languages. Additionally, the survey asked students to rate their proficiency in languages that they identified on a scale form 1-5 with 1 being the highest and 5 the lowest. Other important questions in the survey included one that asked them to rate how comfortable they were with academic writing and another that inquired if they had used another language in an English class assignment. The remainder of the questions were geared to learning about their area of study and hobbies. For a complete Student Survey, see Appendix: C.
I handed the students a hard copy of the survey and asked them to read it carefully and complete in class or bring in later if they needed more time. The criteria to participate in the study was for students to be on the bilingual continuum and be 18 years or older. Participation was voluntary since both students and instructors had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty. However, instructors provided incentives to encourage participation by offering extra credit of 5 to 10 points to be added to the students’ total class points. Once I identified participants and they agreed to be part of the study, I had participants sign a release form giving me permission to contact them and schedule interviews. Overall, I received 45 completed surveys from both sections and one survey from each instructor. Based on these completed surveys, I determined that 23 of the students were eligible to participate in the study, based on their description of their language practices. What follows are the general characteristics of students from each participating course.

**STUDENT PARTICIPANTS’ GENERAL CHARACTERIZES: PROFESSOR BARCENA’S RWS-1301 CLASS**

Professor Barcena’s class yielded a total of 23 surveys; 6 students decided not to participate from the beginning of the study, and 3 students did not meet the study criteria. There were 14 student participants, of these 14, two students dropped after the study began. Consequently, I was left with a total of 12 student participants: 5 males and 7 females. The survey questions were geared toward obtaining an understanding of students’ linguistic background using questions specific to language usage. In providing feedback about the languages’ students spoke, the majority noted English and Spanish. One respondent referred to knowing “border” Spanish, and two students stated that they were trilingual, one speaking Arabic and the other Portuguese in addition to English and Spanish. Several of the participants
indicated that they learned Spanish at home from their parents or at very young age, with a few of them learning both English and Spanish simultaneously. Two students from the group stated that they learned English at home and Spanish from friends when they were older.

Participants were also asked if they had ever used another language, other than English, in their English writing courses. Most students indicated that they had not used another language or stated, “did not need to,” “not necessary,” and “not comfortable.” Two students responded that they thought in “Spanish and then translated.” Another stated that he “sprinkles Spanish ‘street’ terms in essays” and another noted that he uses Spanish to help spell “big words in English.” Other basic traits from this group were that all participating students, except for 2 students, had not taken this writing course before. All participants graduated from local high schools and half of them cited Nursing as their possible career major. Table (1) shows a breakdown of participants’ general characteristics.

**Table 3.1 Professor Barcena's RWS-1301, participants’ general characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Professor Barcena's RWS-1301</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Surveys Administered</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students that did not participate</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students that did not meet criteria</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students that dropped after study began</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total participating students</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female participants</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male participants</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Professor Perez’s class, 22 students filled out the survey, 3 students did not want to participate from the very beginning, and 4 students did not meet the study criteria. Four students began the study, but later dropped out of the study. As a result, there were 11 student participants that took part in the study: 5 females and 6 males. Responding to the question about how many languages they knew, the majority of students wrote English and Spanish, with one also knowing French. Most of the students noted that they learned Spanish first at home and then later learned English at school. In terms of using another language in their writing courses, only three students responded that they used Spanish “words and phrases,” or “to express emotions and titles” and when they know that the teacher “speaks the [Spanish] language.” The rest of the respondents stated that they did not use another language, other than English, in the classroom. Another common trait in this group was that all participants had never taken this writing course before. One student in this group indicated that he had graduated high school in Mexico, while the rest of the students graduated from area high schools. Most of the students in this group listed a major in either science or engineering. Table (2) shows a breakdown of participants’ general characteristics.

Table 3.2 Professor Perez's RWS-1301, participants’ general characteristic
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION OR FIELDWORK

I attended class sessions throughout the semester, taking field notes and observing students’ verbal and nonverbal expressions as they interacted with their peers and instructors. Classroom observations began in February and continued through April of the 2017 Spring semester. I visited Professor Benavides’ class twice per week (the class only met twice per week) and Professor Perez’ class three times during the week (this class met three times per week). Combined, I observed a total of 51.5 hours: 7 hours in February, 22 hours in March and 22.5 hours in April. Using my computer, I wrote on a double-entry format template that vertically divided the page in half. One section was labeled “What you see and hear” and the other “Reflections.” Whenever possible, I tried to “cook” my notes the same day I observed participants in the classroom. Kaplan-Weinger and Ullman (2014) describe the process of “cooking” as a way to reflect on the raw notes gathered in the field. This is a practice that helped me examine the notes on the left-hand column, and asking questions helped me make sure that the material made sense and it was clear. It is paramount to engage in the process of “cooking” the raw data within 24 hours of the observation or fieldwork since the material is still fresh and can be easily recalled. (Kaplan-Weinger & Ullman, 2014). Being in the classroom also afforded me with a source of questions to be addressed with participants during interviews (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Since taking notes did not allow for me to capture everything that was happening, I also used audio and video recordings as a backup for discussion or instructional moments that may have happen quickly, or when there were multiple speakers. These recordings also helped guard against loss of data. To minimize distracting the natural classroom environment, I sat toward the far end of the classroom and positioned my camera facing the
backs of the students. Occasionally, I moved around the room to better hear group discussions. As per IRB specifications, the camera was always placed at the back of the classroom to avoid capturing the images of non-participating students.

**Interview Data Collection**

The most significant source of data gathering was the semi-structured interviews. I conducted three separate face-to-face semi-structured interviews with both instructor participants and participating students. There was a total of 26 initial participating students. The first interviews were scheduled early in the study toward the beginning of the semester, the second during the middle of the semester, and the last interviews were conducted toward the end of the semester, but before finals week. There was at least one week between interviews with the same participant. Initially, I scheduled interviews by contacting participants via a phone text message. After the first interviews, participants were able to set-up subsequent interviews. Interviews were conducted at a place mutually beneficial to both students and me such as the university library. To allow for maximum participation, the interviews were conducted under one hour, sometimes in as little as 5 minutes and as long as 45 minutes. By keeping the interviews under an hour, students appeared to be more willing to participate. This was especially important during the last interviews since students were busy studying for finals. The number of questions per interview varied and all interviews were both video and audio taped. I conducted 80 student interviews for a total of 13.5 hours. With instructors, I conducted 3 interviews for a total of 2.5 hours.

**Students’ Semi-structured Interviews**

The questions used for the first interview focused on discovering students’ perception about the class in general including offering a description of the class, the difference between their high school classes and their college classes. Reinharz (1992) notes that “interviewing
offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words, rather than the words of the researcher” (p.19). I made every effort to let the students talk about their experiences both in and outside of class as they answered the questions. Although I used open-ended questions to encourage stories to emerge (Charmaz, 2006), there were times when students offered one or two phrase answers. When this occurred, I would ask them if they could elaborate or offer an example.

After the more general questions, I brought up the topic of languages asking students about the languages they used in class, if they mixed or combined languages, about the benefits of speaking multiple languages, and asked them to offer descriptions or elaborate on their responses. I wanted participants to describe specific events and actions related to being bilingual. For the second and final interviews, the questions were more specific to mixing/combining languages in writing assignments. The questions were aimed at obtaining insights to students’ perspectives, beliefs, and opinions. Although I had interview questions prepared for each session, I also looked at my fieldnotes and observations to address situations that came up in class. For instance, we talked about instructors’ invitation to combine their languages, and about their reaction to listening to their instructors speak Spanish. In addition, student participants knew that I also taught first-year composition, which made them comfortable asking me questions about writing. In fact, a student brought in an assignment to an interview session and asked if I could read it and provide some feedback. For the Interview Protocol for Students, see Appendix D.

INSTRUCTORS’ SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

I met with the instructors three different times during the semester. Our meetings took place either in their offices or in the library’s conference room. I used a similar approach when
interviewing instructor participants as I did when interviewing students. I began with general questions and gradually brought up the subject of language practices in their classroom. Our conversations were a bit lengthier compared to the students’ interview sessions. Both instructors provided thorough answers to my questions. During the first interview session, instructors shared information about their classes and teaching experiences as well as their language background. They offered their opinions on what they thought some of the challenges that learners might face in writing courses. During our second meeting, the questions were directed more toward class dynamics and students’ communicative practices both in English and in Spanish. The last interview sessions covered important material including topics such as policies for the course and encouraging students to use their multiple languages in class. For the Interview Protocol for Instructors, see Appendix E.

**Student Writing Samples**

At the beginning of the study, instructors invited participating students to compose an assignment where they could mix/combine their languages or write entirely in Spanish. Professor Barcena encouraged students to use their languages in low-stake assignments including journal entries, reading posts, and discussion questions. Similarly, Professor Perez invited students to combine their languages or write in Spanish in any low-stake assignments as well as their final assignment, which was high-stake project. Most of the students who chose to combine their languages did so in their journal entries, discussion posts, outlines, and writing drafts for major assignments. There were a few students who wrote low-stake assignments in Spanish only.

A few students used a combination of languages in their projects. One research project combined English and Spanish, with most of the Spanish being used in dialogue. Another assignment was a literacy narrative where the writer combined languages when narrating her
experiences learning English. There were several students who wrote assignments in Spanish only. One student opted to write her final assignment completely in Spanish, which was a 5-page researched argument. As students produced these documents, they emailed me their work or brought them to our last and final interview session. In these sessions, we would discuss the choices they made when they selected to combine their languages or their decision to write only in Spanish.

As evidenced, class observations generated considerable hours of data which produced points of interests, inspired conversations and presented new inquiries that were discussed and elaborated on during interviews sessions. Another outcome from the time spent in the classroom was students’ sustained engagement in the study. One of the participating instructors commented that he felt students made sure they attended class, especially if they had an interview appointment scheduled with me. He indicated that my presence in the classroom was seen as a valuable incentive that encouraged participation. While the majority of the time was spent observing and taking field notes in the classroom, it was the interview sessions, with both students and instructors, which yielded most valuable data specific to the research questions in this study. Although this is an amazing endeavor, it proved to be challenging when it came to selecting, transcribing, and coding the data. In the following section, I will discuss my data coding and analysis method.

**DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS**

As a means to gather comprehensive data and ensure the validity of the study, the data were triangulated using class observations, the semi-structured interviews, and artifact analyses. These methods allowed for a clear and richer picture to emerge as data were compared. Creswell (2013) contends that the process of triangulation “involves corroborating evidence from different
sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 251). As I explored the data for emergent themes or ideas, I could rely on different kinds of data to either discard initial notions or to further support and solidify my understanding of the data.

Once all the raw data was collected from class observations, interviews, and student writing samples, I read through my field notes carefully, making notations of areas that seemed significant. Then, I proceeded to transcribe the interviews, since I determined these to be crucial to the study. Rather than outsourcing the transcriptions, I decided to transcribe all 80 interviews myself. To keep from becoming overwhelmed, I decided not to transcribe irrelevant sections such as incidental conversations. It would make sense to begin to transcribe the interviews in the order they were conducted; however, I decided to start with the ones that I felt were interesting, brought up different points or in some way complicated things a bit. Furthermore, the reasons for doing my own transcriptions were the following: one, transcription services are expensive, and two, there are benefits in doing the work myself. For example, by listening to, and transcribing the information, this process may lead to researchers to making connections, developing potential categories and discovering emergent themes.

The next step of my qualitative content analysis was to code the data. The interview transcriptions were entered into MaxQDA, a qualitative analysis software program, and I began coding within the program. While MaxQDA has other useful functions for managing data as well as visualization tools, I used this software program mainly as a way to develop categories and codes. While the research questions provided a starting point for data selection, I was also cognizant that data was going to command the direction of the study. I was aware that, as with any qualitative study, data could always lead to unexpected findings. Since I had conducted three separate and different interviews with each of the participants, it made sense to code each
interview independently. I established codes during the first interview, and then I added new
codes after analyzing the second and third interviews. This approach kept me moving back and
forth between examples of data and codes.

Having to analyze so much data challenged me in coding the data, but I tried to remain
open to all possible directions that the data may take me. Conducting several rounds of analysis
helped in taking large segments of data and naming them in terms that were more concise.
Charmaz (2006) notes that this process helps to “develop abstract ideas for interpreting each
segment of data” (p. 45). Each coding process led me to establish categories with examples that
supported each category. Subsequently, with each review of the data, themes began to emerge.
For example, themes referencing both negative and positives views about mixing languages
began to materialize in the initial coding. Some of the initial codes for negative views included:
preferring not to mix, combine but only in small assignments, English courses should focus on
English writing and struggles with combining among other views. Initial codes referencing a
theme for positive views on language included: Spanish helps write in English, mixing comes
natural, benefits in knowing multiple languages, opportunities to mix languages, to name a few.
Given that data analysis is an interactive process, I kept revisiting the categories, and themes that
I had just created to try to understand the story the data were telling. Charmaz (2006) contends
“we interact with our participants” many times over as we study their conversations and actions
“re-envisioning the scenes with which we know them” (p. 47). In this manner, I placed close
attention each time I revisited the data to gain a fuller picture of meetings and observations.
Keeping in mind that data analysis is a recursive process, after three rounds of data coding, I was
able to narrow my focus.
CODING BREAKDOWN

The initial round of coding yielded an exhaustive list of interesting codes. The first round produced 35 codes and 8 sub-codes. Following this round, I combined, renamed and deleted codes to make the data more manageable, but also to better focus my scope. In the second round of data analysis, I reduced the number of codes to 21 and 7 sub-codes. The goal was to generate different codes, again, by combining common segments and categories, thus minimizing repetition. As some codes were deleted or combined, new codes were added based on further analysis. Then after another round, I ended up with 17 codes and no sub-codes. Table (3) illustrates the final codes and brief description of the codes.

Table 3.3 Final codes and brief description of the codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Ideology</td>
<td>When and where languages should be used, what languages can offer students, why languages differ, languages’ prestige, and how languages are tied to identity and nationality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students commented negatively about mixing/combining languages</td>
<td>Why mixing/combining is wrong, why languages shouldn’t be mixed/combined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students commented positively about mixing/combining languages</td>
<td>When mixing/combining is correct and when it is appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ statements about writing/speaking English Only</td>
<td>When writing in English is done and for what purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students statements about mixing/combining languages is hard</td>
<td>What mixing/combining requires, what do students need to do when mixing/combining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ response to how they mix/combine languages</td>
<td>How mixing occurs and how it is accomplished, what mixing looks like, and what are some examples of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s response to when they mix/combine languages</td>
<td>When mixing occurs and when it is accomplished, what situations prompt students to mix/combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students mix/combine languages in minor assignments/tasks</td>
<td>When mixing occurs, which assignments are written in a mixture/combination of languages and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students chose not to mix/combine or write in Spanish</td>
<td>Why students decided not to mix/combine, what are the reasons for not mixing/combining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students chose to mix/combine languages in written assignments</td>
<td>Why students decide to mix/combine, what type of assignments are written in a combination of languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students wrote assignment in Spanish only</td>
<td>What assignments did students write chose to write in Spanish, what were the reasons for this decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students wrote assignment in English only</td>
<td>When did students write in English only, what were the assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How students responded to Spanish having a role in academic writing/classroom</td>
<td>Why does Spanish have a role in the writing classroom, what is the role of Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How students responded to Spanish not having a role in academic writing/classroom</td>
<td>Why Spanish does not have a role in the writing classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students commented how Spanish or mixing/combining helps in academic writing</td>
<td>When does writing in Spanish or mixing/combining help students, how does it help and why does it help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students positively commented about their writing samples</td>
<td>Why did students mix/combine languages in their assignments, how and where did they combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students negatively commented about their writing samples</td>
<td>Why did students decide not to combine, what were the reasons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STUDY LIMITATIONS**

As with any qualitative study, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged. A major limitation pertains to the narrow amount of time that will be spent conducting this study. Most ethnographic studies are conducted over long periods of time so that researchers can collect data that yields a possibly deeper understanding of people’s culture and behaviors (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). This study was initially going to span a one 16-week semester; however, delays with IRB approval reduced the time of study. In addition, because the study focused on the classroom context, I only had access to students’ communicative practices that took place during the three hours a week when classes met. This means that students’ interactions with friends, family, co-workers, and others are not going to be observed. One of the characteristics of
ethnographic research involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants; in this case, it would be almost impossible to follow all of my participants into other facets of their lives.

My data was also limited in that I did not speak to previous instructors in the university who could offer me insight on the language practices displayed by the participants in this particular study. Again, while this may give me a different perspective, it would not be feasible given intensive and rigorous amounts of time this would entail. However, because my goal was to identify the language practices that students use in the academic environment, the participant-observations, combined with surveys and interviews yielded enough valuable data needed to make important connections. I was interested in examining one specific discourse community where students do most of their academic writing; selecting to conduct a semester-long study was the best method to ensure that I can build a close relationship with the participants.

Although more time dedicated to observing the participants of the study could have been useful, the time constraints as a Ph.D. student and writing instructor posed a significant challenge. Instructors who teach and conduct research at the same time have to balance their teaching and research duties carefully, and even though the data gathered from the study could potentially improve pedagogical approaches, instructors still have a duty to teach their classes. Davie-Kessler (2016) acknowledged the limitations of using ethnographic methods in the college writing classroom. He noted that instructors and researchers often opt to devote their times on class preparation. There are factors that can limit the research; some we can manage to work with, others because of institutional constraints, just have to be accepted.

**ROLE OF RESEARCHER**

My role was that of a non-participant observer/observer as a participant. As a non-participant observer, I did not participate in the classroom activities. However, my role as an
observer participant gave me access to the classroom culture to collect data as events were occurring. The significant amount of time spent in the classroom conducting field work not only helped me collect rich data, but more importantly, it offered an opportunity to observe students’ dynamic communicative practices and interactions. During the classroom observations, aside from occasional greetings, I refrained from talking to the students unless they spoke to me or asked me a question. My mere presence in the classroom allowed for a more relaxed experience during the interview sessions and this was partly because they were already familiar with me being in the classroom. By the third and final interview session, students appeared more willing to discuss their work in the classroom and their relationship with languages.

Additionally, I approached this project as a member of the community that I was researching; I took an emic or insider approach in this study. My positionality was that, as a native of the community, I could relate to cultural practices students participate in at home and in the community.

While my main role was as a researcher, students were aware that I was a composition instructor since the participating instructors introduced me as such. Being involved in all of the class sessions and building rapport with students during interviews, allowed for close relationships to develop. A few times, students used interview sessions to discuss course material, classroom experiences or express their own frustrations about the class or other aspects of their academic or personal life. On more than one occasion, a couple of participating students asked me to review their work or to explain some concept presented in class. And although this reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant is not always required, it may indicate that participants not only trusted me to share their knowledge, views, and experiences for the purposes of my study, but that they also could gain something in exchange for their participation.
My status as a bilingual researcher and someone who understands the dynamics of composition classes, and the nuances of language also served to establish a common link to the participants, especially with dominant Spanish bilinguals. During our interview sessions, the conversation would often change from speaking in English to Spanish. It appeared that they felt more at ease when speaking Spanish when answering certain questions, especially about themselves.
Chapter 4: Analysis

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodologies used for data collection in this research project. In this chapter, I will introduce the results from the data collection and analysis process including a discussion on the major findings related to the research questions. I will first offer a brief explanation of why I selected not to use the term translanguaging in semi-structured interviews, and then I will critically reflect on the findings providing excerpts from my data collection instruments, which consist of semi-structured interviews and student writing artifacts.

Introducing the First Question

My first research question was: *How and why do students, specifically Spanish dominant bilinguals and English dominant bilinguals, use translanguaging practices when they do, or if they do, in writing courses when encouraged by their instructors?* The question has two parts: the first part addresses *How* translanguaging practices are adopted (if, and when they are) and the second part focuses on *Why* bilingual students draw on their linguistic repertoires and translanguage (if and when they do). The purpose of composing the question concentrating on the two parts, *How* and *Why*, was because I see these two terms as being connected, where one follows the other. In other words, I aimed at studying not only the form that translanguaging takes, but also what function that it performs. For the first part of the research question, I examined how translanguaging is displayed or presented as it is practiced; put simply, how students drew on their linguistic backgrounds to negotiate and make meaning. For the second part of the research question, I specifically examined the conditions or circumstances that prompted students to combine their languages. Therefore, what I was interested in finding out was the form and the reasons of bilingual students’ translanguaging practices.
It is important to note that I did not use the term translanguaging in the interviews, or in any of the data collection methods. The reason for this was that I felt that most of the participants might not be familiar with the term. In place of the term translanguaging, I used the terms combine/combining or mix/mixing of languages. I determined that the words mixing and combining are similar to how scholars have addressed the term translanguaging. Scholars have described translanguaging as “shuttling between languages” (Canagarajah, 2011), “using different languages together” (García, 2009), “using both languages together” (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012) and “mobilizing linguistic resources” (Li & Zhu, 2013). For the purposes of this dissertation project, translanguaging is defined as combining or mixing English and Spanish words, phrases, and sentences in written assignments. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the terms combining, and/or mixing languages will be used in place of word translanguaging.

To answer the first part of the question – how students use translanguaging practices - I used the following sub-questions during the interview sessions to generate responses that would help answer the first research question. During the first round of interviews, I initially asked general questions leading up to more specific questions about language and combining or mixing languages. These were the questions:

1) Do you use any other language other than English in this classroom? In written assignments? If yes, which one? (interview 1)

2) If you could write in Spanish or a combination of both languages, when do you think you would write this way? Notetaking? Freewriting? Discussion posts? Prewriting? Drafts? Final drafts? (Any others?) (interview 2)
3) Can you show me the assignment that you composed in two languages? What areas did you compose combining languages? Which ones were just in one language? Why did you choose to write in both languages? Or in one language? (interview 3)

The first sub-question allowed me to introduce the idea of language and its use in the classroom setting. This question served as a springboard for talking about language, specifically using language, other than English, in written assignments in the classroom. During the second round of interviews, I gradually approached the concept of mixing or combining participants’ languages. Asking students to think about when they combined languages and giving them possible scenarios, helped them identify where they have practiced combining their languages.

It was during the second interview sessions that I asked students if they would consider combining/mixing their languages or writing the assignment in Spanish. Participants could select either a low-stake assignment or a high-stake assignment to combine languages or write it all in the Spanish language. Low-stake assignments included journal entries and discussion posts; high-stake were major assignments such as an argumentative paper. When I asked participating students if they were interested in combining or mixing their languages in a written assignment, I explained that their instructors were fine with them combining or composing an assignment in Spanish, and that the instructors actually encouraged it. Out of 23 participants, 14 students agreed to combine languages or write in Spanish and to bring a sample of their work, so we could discuss. During the third interview sessions, both the students and I went over the assignments and looked at the sections where students combined languages. I asked students to tell me why they decided to mix their languages, or why they decided to write their assignment all in Spanish, if they opted to compose that assignment in Spanish. Once I collected the data from these questions, along with other information gathered during the interviews, I was able to
begin the analysis process. Using a qualitative data analysis software allowed me to easily retrieve relevant data and organize it based on recurring patterns, ideas or concepts. I would like to note that the transcriptions provided in this section, with the exception of some words that have been inserted for clarity, have been left unaltered as the participants related them to me. For this reason, the language at times may seem choppy and repetitive. I decided not to edit these responses to provide a more accurate view of the participants’ stories.

**First Part of the Research Question: How Students Translanguage - Form**

Chapter 3 explains the coding breakdown and the categories derived from the data. These categories provided emerging patterns. After further analysis of the data, a specific term or word began appearing a number of times, revealing how participants used translanguaging practices. The word translation, or another version of the word, kept reoccurring in all of the interview sessions. Thus, patterns of expressions yielded a significant number of instances where students used translation practices. There was a total of 94 instances where the word translation or a formation of the word was reported in the data. This led me to conclude that students used translation more than any other explanation to show their translanguaging practices. In other words, students combined or mixed the English and Spanish languages by translating from one language to the other in an effort to create new meaning.

In the following section, I will use the term translation to describe how three participants changed a word or a phrase written in one language to the equivalent or similar word or phrase in another language. Thus, I use the word translation or associated words to indicate participants’ practices that included transforming words or phrases from English to Spanish or vice versa. Students referred to the term translation in the interviews, describing how they translated words in different languages to gain a better understanding of a word or phrase, among other reasons.
outlined in this section. While the data produced numerous instances where translation occurred, I will only offer a few examples that exemplify the most common practices of changing words or phrases from one language to another that students utilized to gain a better understanding and to make new meaning.

The next excerpts show how participants Monica, Daniela and Margarita use translation as a tool to generate ideas and increase comprehension as well as a placeholder in the writing and thinking process when they combined or mixed their languages. Each participating student used a different form of translation to achieve similar outcomes and complete the writing task. For example, Monica translated by consulting a dictionary or reaching out to her family members for help. For Monica, translation allowed her to generate ideas as well as helped her with comprehension. The next student, Daniela, did not specify what tool she used to translate, but mentioned that translation took place in her head after re-visiting her draft. By this, I mean that she used translation as a placeholder. Margarita also used translation as a placeholder, but she relies on Google Translate to convert her Spanish words or phrases to the target language.

**MONICA’S TRANSLATION PROCESS - RELEYING ON THE COMPUTER AND FAMILY MEMBERS**

Monica is a native Spanish speaker who learned English when she attended bilingual classes in elementary school. Like most of the participants who are taking first-year composition, Monica is young and graduated from a local high school. In the survey administered at the beginning of the study, she rated her proficiency in English and Spanish as being equal. This specified that she could easily communicate in both languages, English and Spanish. It is interesting however, that Monica felt more at ease with her Spanish communicative skills. She often referred to her strong command of the Spanish language.
Translation played a significant role in Monica’s composition process. She explained that she relies on the dictionary on her computer as well as her family for translating words, phrases or ideas. Since her family was educated in Mexico, she often reached out to them for help. In describing her efforts, she added that being able to discuss ideas with her family brings her comfort:

Like, um, I try to… I guess because my English, it is not very good, I guess it makes me feel more comfortable, like whenever I am translating in Spanish and, especially, when um, my family studied in [Mexico], and it’s where they helped me with big words in Spanish and I try to translate them see if they sound the same in English, like, to see if they are the same, like, using the big words in Spanish…(Monica, interview, March 1, 2017).

Monica’s translation process, and thus translanguaging practices, took the following form: First, she looked up Spanish words or phrases on the computer and translated them. Next, if translation did not make sense to her, she would ask her brother or her sister for help. Once they explained what the words or concept meant in Spanish, Monica incorporated this understanding and wrote in English.

*Translation to generate ideas and to aid comprehension*

This process of going back and forth negotiating meaning in different languages through translation allowed Monica not only to generate ideas, but also to better understand what she was reading. She explained that she knows more Spanish than English, so translation worked great for her. “It helps me more, like I said, translating things and trying to make them in English but trying to make them stronger words…” (Monica, interview, March 1, 2017). That is to say that while she had somewhat of an idea of what she wanted to say, translation prompted her to
generate a stronger and better way of saying things. Monica explained that she had difficulties when writing in English, and she engaged in translation to make meaning thus formulating a creative plan to write her ideas. She added, “…where I like have trouble writing in English, and I would like to think about it in Spanish, and then translate” (Monica, interview, March 29, 2017). Since she is proficient in both languages, it is fair to say that translation or combining/mixing her languages made writing “easier.”

Monica made use of translation to generate ideas for writing purposes, but she also relied on translation as an aid for comprehension. She stated that she looks up words or phrases in English and in Spanish. The following excerpt demonstrated her dynamic way of utilizing her linguistic repertoire to get a firm grasp of a concept and then establish the best way to approach the writing situation. When Monica could not understand something in English, she translated and made “sure that the Spanish word makes sense with the like, the English and the rest of my phrase, or if not, I try to look for another word in Spanish that has the same meaning and then translate the other one into English” (Monica, interview, March 1, 2017). Again, it appeared that Monica was stronger in her Spanish communicative skills, so she used her Spanish comprehension skills to make sense of a word or concept, and then she used this knowledge to formulate her ideas in English. Once she had her ideas solidified in English, she may translate this section back to Spanish to make sure everything made sense.

While this translating method seemed to be lengthy and time consuming, most of the process seemed to occur in Monica’s head, is naturally occurring and may take only seconds to complete. Monica commented that combing/mixing her languages in her writing comes naturally, referencing to the fact that because she combines/mixes all the time when she speaks. She added that she is quite comfortable translating and mixing her languages, “I feel like, I am
confident, on the like, like I feel pretty confident, I like knowing like Spanish and English and combining them in my writing” (Monica, interview, March 29, 2017). Furthermore, Monica indicated that she is stronger in Spanish, and explained how she used this strength to improve her English writing skills:

… because, um, I believe I know more like, more Spanish than English so it makes a great, like, it helps me more, like I said, translating things and trying to make them in English but trying to make them stronger words… I don’t know if I make sense … (interview, March 1, 2017).

This may suggest that because she had a solid grasp of the Spanish language, she could think of synonyms in Spanish, and then used one of those to translate it into English. In this manner, Spanish augmented her knowledge of English terms as she engaged in a negotiation process.

It is important to note that using translation in writing requires more than just converting words and phrases from one language to the other. The work lies with the writer to make sure that the translated section is coherent and flows well with the rest of the content. Therefore, bilingual students learned methods to manage their complex linguistic repertoire, which helped to develop their critical thinking skills. Writing can be a difficult task; being bilingual however, affords writers creative possibilities for expression using “multiple discursive practices” (García, 2009). Being bilingual and able to translate helped Monica generate ideas and comprehend concepts in an effort to achieve writing demands. Translation as a form for translanguaging demonstrated the dynamics of bilingual students’ language practices.

**Daniela’s Translation Process – Translating Internally**

I was very fortunate that the majority of the participants were open to attending the interview sessions and willing to share their stories with me. Daniela, the next student, whose
first language is Spanish, disclosed that her mother and she learned English together when Daniela was in elementary school. Talking about her literacy experiences easily gave way to talking about combining and mixing languages. In all of our meetings, Daniela never mentioned a specific form for translating; she did not rely on Google Translate, her computer or help from her family. Her father and siblings speak English, but she commented that they were too busy to help her. Based on our conversations, the act of translation appeared to be something that Daniela did internally in her head; “I know that I still sometimes don’t know my words in English because my brain is wired in Spanish mostly…” (Daniela, interview, March 1, 2017). It is evident that Spanish played a major role in Daniela’s writing process too; she credited her writing skills to having learned how to read and write in Spanish first. She mentioned her love for reading Spanish books at home and expressed her disappointment leaning that there were very few Spanish language books available at her school. This situation motived her to learn English so that she could read more books.

*Translation as a placeholder*

The process of translating internally implied that the translation act occurs in the person’s head, which was the case with Daniela. However, before she got to the translation act, Daniela inserted Spanish words or phrases in her writing as placeholders. In other words, while she was in the writing process, and she could not think of a word or phrase in English, Daniela strategically placed the Spanish equivalent to hold the place of the English term or phrase. She explained, “…so I know at times when I am typing I can’t find a word in English, but I find it in Spanish. So, then I use that word and then when I come back to it, I am like, I got to replace you” (Daniela, interview, March 1, 2017). The last words, “I got to replace you” is a note, or a
reminder that she had to come back to this section and replace what she could not think about at that moment. Translation allowed her ideas to flow without interrupting her train of thought.

Unlike Monica who used translation to generate ideas, Daniela already had her ideas formulated; therefore, translation served as a postponing strategy, something she had to return to, revisit, and revise. Daniela elaborated on the process:

…because I had the idea down and like in Spanish and I just had to translate it into English, and then yeah, because the idea was down, it wasn’t so hard to come up with an idea, as it was to translate it. The idea just being jotted down and then translate it, it was easier then like trying to figure how to put it in English and then like...get that to work the way that I wanted it to. (Daniela, interview, April 4, 2017)

This means that Daniela expressed her ideas in Spanish as she was thinking about them and transferring them on to her paper. The issue that she encountered when combining her languages was translating her ideas to English and making sure that it all made sense. It appeared that Daniela was keenly aware of how to use her Spanish as a holding place, as a way to continue writing without interrupting the flow of ideas.

Early on as we discussed combining and mixing languages, Daniela made it clear that while she combined languages, she did not feel right about combining them in academic writing, especially if she was going to turn this work in for a grade. For Daniela, writing for academia had to be uniform or cohesive, in one language or the other. However, this thinking did not keep her from combining her languages when composing a draft. She explained her translation process, “I write words in Spanish, like when it is the first thing that comes to my mind, and then I translate it later to keep it, like, cohesive…” (Daniela, interview, March 1, 2017). As mentioned earlier, using Spanish as a placeholder allowed her to continue writing; however, she revisited
her draft and made sure that everything was in one language to make it sound “cohesive.” By this, she meant that since the writing assignment was in English, everything should be written in English.

This translating process allowed Daniela to use translanguaging methods, combining English and Spanish, in her written assignments. This approach helped Daniela complete the
writing task. Figure 4.1 illustrates Daniela’s use of Spanish words and or ideas that she will later translate to English.

Figure 4.1 Daniela's notes for narrative essay
Daniela’s writing sample are notes that she took to prepare to write a literacy narrative essay. There are some words/phrases written in Spanish; she explained she wrote them in Spanish so that she could later go back and include these sections in her essay. Staying true to her opinion about not combining/mixing languages, Daniela’s final draft, the one she turned in for a grade, was written entirely in English with the exception of a question that she wrote in her home language and then translated it for the reader. The question was: “Que hago aqui?” “What am I doing here”[?] (Daniela, final draft, February 10, 2017). Here she was referring to her experience when she was first enrolled in an English language classroom. In the same manner that Daniela used her Spanish language as a placeholder, Margarita, my next participant, made use of this technique. Before narrating her experience using placeholders as a technique, I will discuss Margarita’s act of translation.

MARGARITA’S TRANSLATION PROCESS – COUNTING ON GOOGLE TRANSLATE

Margarita is a Spanish native speaker who learned the basics of English in the third grade. She was placed in a bilingual class where she spoke English “all the time” and then “at home, Spanish.” In this manner, her languages meshed, “sometimes I am talking English and I will just start talking Spanish without noticing” (Margarita, interview, March 27, 2017). When the study began, she rated her proficiency in the Spanish language higher than in the English language. She noted that she has always had problems with writing in English and that she often relies on Google translate for help. “I will go into Google Translate and look up the word that I was trying to figure out.” (Margarita, interview, March 27, 2017). She said it as if this was the most natural thing to do. Although she relies on Google Translate for help to understand the meaning of words, she commented that sometimes Google Translate lets her down:
Well if I write in English, I will translate, like, I will say some words in Spanish, like some words I say them in Spanish cause they sound so good in Spanish, …I go to google translate but the expression is not the same. Because I always think that Spanish has a bigger expression, the way, the word sound like (boom with her hands) like a lot. But when I translate it to English, it is just a simple word. It bugs me all the time (Margarita, interview, April 11, 2017).

Google Translate was an excellent tool that helped bilinguals translate words, but when it came to specific phrases, this device may not be ideal. Asking her friends or classmates was not always an option either, “…I can’t ask my friend because he has the same problem as me (laughs). Cause they just talk Spanish and they are like ‘I don’t know what you mean’ (Margarita, interview, March 27, 2017). Fortunately, Margarita could turn to her family for help when she has questions about certain terms or concepts, “…then I go ask my parents to see for them to give me examples [that] I actually understand” Margarita, interview, March 7, 2017). Her family speaks Spanish only so they tried to help her as much as they could by suggesting different ways to approach the problem:

Well, when I am really stuck with the words, this is my word, and he says [uncle] what if you try to write it in a different format, cause I already have my sentence written out it is just that word. And he’ll say, try to mix it up, just mix it up, get out of that box you have, get out of it and try to think of other ideas. (Margarita, interview, April 11, 2017).

While her family may have not provided a translation of words or phrases, they encouraged her to attack the language issue by changing the perspective. These examples showed that Margarita found every possible way to make things work when it came to writing.
Margarita uses translation as a placeholder

Similar to Daniela and her translation process, Margarita used her Spanish language when she was composing and could not think of how to use a particular word in English:

“I’ll do it sometimes in this class cause I know what I am trying to say but I say it Spanish, so I will write it first in Spanish and then once I finish, I will go into Google Translate and look up the word that I was trying to figure out” (Margarita, interview, March 28, 2017).

When writing, Margarita substituted a Spanish word in her writing and resumed with the writing task. It was not until she finished that she looked on Google Translate to replace the Spanish word. For Margarita, translating was a common practice she partook in as indicated by her answer on the survey; when asked if she used any other languages, other than English, in class, her response was, “Yes, I think in Spanish and then I translate.” (Margarita, survey, February 21, 2017). It is evident that Margarita’s first language guided her writing. She first formulated ideas in Spanish and then wrote them in English. Next, she substituted Spanish words for English words she did not know. Based on our conversations and her response on the survey, it appeared that Margarita thinks in Spanish, which meant that she has formulated her ideas in Spanish and then writes out her ideas in English. If there are words or phrases that she cannot immediately translate to English as she was writing, Margarita used the Spanish word or phrase in her writing and later went back and replaced this with the English equivalent.

The strategy of writing out ideas in one language, and later returning to the piece and translating the words/phrases or ideas to the target language of instruction is what Velasco and García (2014) refer to as a postponing strategy. In a 2011 case study about bilingual students and translanguaging in an elementary school in New York, Velasco and García discuss how a child
postpones using a Korean word, which is the target language, and writes down an English word and later returns to obtain the Korean word. Velasco and García (2014) posit that this is a common translanguage strategy in bilingual writing. In the same manner, Daniela and Margarita used Spanish words or phrases as placeholders to continue writing without interruptions. This postponing strategy, as Velasco and García reference it, allows for bilingual writers to “communicate complex thoughts, rather than just words” (Velasco & García, p. 19). For Daniela and Margarita, using Spanish words, as placeholders, can help them communicate complex thoughts.

According to the data, translation practices permitted participants to generate ideas, aided in comprehension, and served as a way to hold a place for words or phrases that needed to be replaced in the targeted language of instruction. These translating practices allowed participants to continue with both their thinking and writing process as they composed writing assignments. It appeared that this process was implemented when participants wanted to generate ideas, needed to know a word or phrase in Spanish to understand the meaning of the English word or phrase, and while they were writing and didn’t want to interrupt the process. In Monica’s case, she used translation to understand words and phrases but also concepts. Daniela and Margarita used translations practices to search for the meaning of the Spanish word or phrase they needed, and once they understood what it meant in Spanish, then they are able to gauge a better understanding of what the English word or phrase meant.

These 3 participating students indicated that they used translation strategies by searching on Google Translate, dictionaries, or by asking their family members, especially those who were fluent in Spanish and/or English. For most of the participants (including others in the study), translation served various purposes, including moving past a difficult writing situation and
understanding unfamiliar words or concepts. Therefore, the practice of translating became a tool to access information in a different language, which students then translated to their language of choice. By using translation practices, Daniela, Monica, and Margarita essentially combined or mixed (translanguage) their home languages with the language used in academic environments to make new meaning in academic spaces.

**SECOND PART OF THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION: WHY STUDENTS TRANSLANGUAGE - REASONS**

The previous section examined participants’ forms or how students enacted translanguaging practices in writing assignments; this section will primarily analyze the reasons students use their linguistic background in various stages of the writing process. To illustrate this, I will answer the second part of the first research question, which addresses the inquiry: why do students, specifically Spanish dominant bilinguals and English dominant bilinguals, use translanguaging practices when they do, or if they do, in writing courses when encouraged by their instructors?

As discussed in Chapter 3, I used the software MaxQDA to obtain macro level codes, which produced numerous categories and subcategories. In this phase of coding, and for the purpose of answering the second part of the question, I conducted additional rounds of coding aiming at capturing experiences and patterns or relationships presented in the data collection. Rather than focusing solely on frequencies, as I did in answering the first part of the question, I concentrated on specific experiences, instances or moments. I did this to illustrate the relationship between the participants and the communicative practice. For this purpose, I refined my coding process by analyzing data that expresses why participants combined or mixed their languages by identifying the experiences or moments where translanguaging occurred and what
factors prompted students. In this manner, my final set of codes was developed through a series of recursive steps that included highlighting experiences that demonstrated participants’ reasons for mixing or combining their languages. Basically, I examined the trans languaging function across transcripts in different interactions to both inform and contextualize my findings.

Frequency of repeated words or specific concepts did play a vital role in the analysis, in that it prompted me to examine these sections more closely. There were numerous times when participants talked about the reasons for combining or mixing their languages. There were patterns in conversations, and repetitions of certain words or ideas that helped support each category. Through examination and an iterative coding process, two key categories emerged. These categories were: 1) Spanish or mixing/combining languages facilitates the writing process; and, 2) Students combine/mix languages for rhetorical purposes. The first category occurred in the data 49 times; the second category occurred 29 times. The following examples encapsulate why students draw on their heritage languages. These examples come from my interactions with the participants during the interview sessions. While there was a total of 78 instances available for discussion, I have selected some excerpts that contained the richest data on why students use translanguaging practices. In the following section, I will offer examples that illustrate the categories derived from data, which addresses the second part of the first research question.

The first category that I will introduce examines how participants describe using Spanish or mixing/combining English and Spanish language as a resource to facilitate the writing process, which may include invention, composing and revision. The data suggested that the reasons students were combining or mixing their languages was because this made the composing process easier. The data revealed that translanguaging strategies affected their
performances by allowing participants to continue thinking about an idea and developing their
dwriting assignments.

Writing is a process, and students are encouraged to use all available means to express
their ideas. One of those means available to bilingual students is the communicative functions
that translanguaging provides. Leveraging their linguistic repertoires, bilingual students can
negotiate meaning for communicative purposes. Combining or mixing languages can take all
shapes and forms; this practice can occur in someone’s head or may be fleshed out in notes,
responses, discussions or major assignments. The affordances that translanguaging provides
gives bilingual students opportunities to overcome writing obstacles. The following are excerpts
from students’ interview responses that show the reasons for combining/mixing their languages.

**COMBINING/MIXING TO FACILITATE THE WRITING PROCESS – NORMA’S EXPERIENCE**

Norma is bilingual, but she described herself as being more proficient in the English
language. She attributed this to being exposed to English at a young age in school. In the survey
taken at the beginning of the study, she indicated that she leaned English first, and later picked
up some Spanish since her family speaks both languages. When I first sat down to speak to
Norma, she told me that she speaks “Spanglish,” a combination of English and Spanish, with her
friends, but not often during class. She stated that since the classroom is mostly English based,
“it feels kind of weird to talk Spanish.” She admitted that when she writes she will combine a
word or two in Spanish, mainly because “it is harder to put it into words in English instead of
just putting one word in Spanish” (Norma, interview, March 29, 2017).

This practice showed that Norma easily accessed her Spanish language in situations when
English words were not available in her thinking process. She did not consider herself a strong
writer in the Spanish language but admitted that when she could not find a word while writing in
English, she used Spanish. In a later conversation, she related that she finds that by using Spanish she can make sense of what she is writing. “Since I have some thoughts in Spanish and English, um, it lets me stay on topic and like be like clear” (Norma, interview, April 17, 2017). Norma added that being able to mix in some Spanish words allows her to get her ideas out “no matter like, if I am thinking in English or if I am thinking in Spanish” because that’s how she thinks, that’s how she talks and that’s how she grew up. She noted that maybe this practice may be confusing for readers, but she thinks it does help her. What she meant by this was that if someone would look at her notes or rough drafts and see the combination of languages, they may find it confusing.

I asked her if Spanish had a role in the development of her academic English, and if Spanish helped her write in English. Norma stated that yes, that using Spanish makes it easier to figure out what she is going to say:

Yes, um, it makes me like if, it makes me think of how I want to say it, not like, kind of like, not dumb it down, but like, it makes me try to find a way to actually translate what I want to say in Spanish to English. Instead of short little … um like the phrases and words I am saying, like it helps me find a like an academically, not like higher vocabulary, but like, so that it is clear what I want to say. (Norma, interview, April 17, 2017).

In Norma’s experience, the way she thinks was the way she writes: in two languages. However, when it came to turning in her final draft, she writes her papers in English. Her ability to move between languages showed Norma’s critical thinking skills facilitating the writing process.

**Combining/mixing to Facilitate the Writing Process – Rita’s Experience**

When I was in the classroom taking down field notes, Rita sat across me. She was very quiet until she discovered that the student sitting next to her spoke Spanish. Most of their
conversations had to do with trying to understand an assignment, or about the feedback they both received from their instructor. Rita had taken this writing course before, and I am assuming that she had to retake it again. In our initial interview, Rita’s responses were short, without much elaboration, even though the question were open-ended questions. Our first interview session lasted a little over 8 minutes; however, as she got more comfortable with me, she began to open up. Our final meeting more than doubled in time, lasting more than 23 minutes. I attributed our lengthy discussion in the end to the fact that she conversed and responded in Spanish, allowing her more freedom of expression. I was the one who initiated our conversation in Spanish, hoping that she would feel comfortable, and in no time and without much hesitation, Rita began sharing her language experiences.

In the same manner that Norma used her Spanish language, Rita drew on her heritage language to help her with her writing process. She explained that when she is writing and reaches a point where she cannot continue with an idea, she draws on her Spanish language for help. However, because she wants to improve on her English writing skills, she tries not to rely too much on her first language. She commented that she uses a Spanish word “…no mas lo utilize cuando no mas asi, cuando me atoro, lo traduzco Español…(I only use it like when I get stuck, I translate it [word] to Spanish) (Rita, interview, April 11, 2017).

Rita added that she mixes/combines in all of her assignments because “I don’t know if my sentence is correctly written, and so I translate it to Spanish and if it makes sense, so it’s, it’s okay” (Rita, interview, March 7, 2017). In this manner, Spanish aided her in writing her sentences in English; she used her Spanish to gauge if her English sentences made sense. Checking to see if her ideas made sense in one language made it easier for Rita to write in English.
It is evident that Rita used her Spanish as a resource for learning at any time, regardless of the situation or the class. She commented that she relied on her first language when someone is talking quickly and she may not have the time to stop and think of the word in English, so she inserts a word in Spanish in order to continue with her notetaking process:

Because sometimes, well not in this class, but sometimes in other classes, like, the professors’ talking like too fast and then, I forget the words in English, and I just write it in Spanish (Rita, interview, March 28, 2017).

She explained that combining comes naturally to her and may come without planning:

… and whenever I text too, one of the words come out like “porque” (why) or and then I keep on writing in English, I don’t know it is kind of weird, I feel like it makes sense if I just do in Spanish and English. It’s kind of weird (Rita, interview, March 28, 2017).

Not being able to think of the right word/phrase in English appeared to be one of the main reasons for why participants combine their languages. Being unable to come up with the right word or phrase when composing can pose a huge obstacle for all students in general, whether they are writing in English or any other language. Bilingual participants in the study, however, understand that they have the linguistic repertoire and cultural background at their disposal to help meet the writing demands in a language practiced in most college writing courses.

**Combining/mixing to Facilitate the Writing Process—Monica’s Experience**

Earlier in this chapter, I highlighted Monica’s experience with translation and how she used translation to generate ideas. Here, I will focus on additional examples, and perhaps more pronounced reasons for combining and mixing her languages.
Combining and mixing languages in the classroom played a significant role for Monica. She indicated that she combines them to overcome writing obstacles. Monica explained:

Mostly when we are doing essays, like, when, like I run out of words or stuff, like I start thinking in Spanish, I start forming sentences in Spanish instead of English and yes, I use it like I feel, like I use more like, my Spanish in essays, I feel like it would be easier … (interview, March 29, 2017).

In terms of writing an assignment with a combination of English and Spanish, she responded positively stating, “Yes, I think that would make it easier. Yes, whenever I don’t have the words to translate something in English, I think it would be perfect in Spanish or backwards…” (Monica, interview, March 1, 2017). She stressed that she would feel more confident, combining Spanish and English in her writing. After some thought on the subject, she added that she would probably write it in Spanish. This way of thinking may indicate that she is more comfortable writing in one language, rather than a combination. However, to aid her in the writing process, she still likes to combine languages. Like some of the other participants, incorporating Spanish was something that happened organically; she explained that she speaks more in Spanish than in English with her friends and “… since it is my first language, like, I feel I just think about it [Spanish]” (interview, March 29, 2017).

Both Rita and Monica have been combining their languages in academic settings. Monica commented that she writes her notes in a combination of languages:

I feel like notes, I do it a lot like in some of my classes, I do write my notes in Spanish because it the only, like its only me reading them, its only me who is going to understand them and then I like, put them in English again, I translate them in English, or sometimes I just use them and like, I think, I studied in Spanish, for my like, for my biology exams, I
feel that if I study in Spanish, like the material in Spanish, I feel I would be able to understand it more, or have a better understanding of it. (interview, March 29, 2017)

Because Monica was confident in her Spanish writing skills, she agreed that the Spanish language influences what she writes:

I feel like, I know the language, so that is why I free write, like I just go, it comes naturally, like I don’t have to think about something, and sometimes I do have to go and translate it in English to see if it is going to make sense, I don’t know it is kind of weird…” (interview, April 13, 2017).

Bilingual students adapt their communicative strategies to address specific communication needs. Lu and Horner (2016) argue that this approach positions language as performative. Language practices are performative because they occur naturally and fluidly. The authors contend that being able to use more than one language is something that individuals “have” but something that they “do.”

Although the practice of combining/mixing may occur naturally, as the students are thinking about it without it ever displaying itself in a visual form, being encouraged and invited to employ translanguaging practices may promote an environment that honors all languages. Encouraging students to utilize their various languages may preserve this practice. Because mixing is a spontaneous and fluid process, it suggests that bilingual speakers have their linguistic repertoires available to be called upon as the need arises. These excerpts, derived from the data, show how bilingual students leverage their multiple languages to make meaning in academic settings. Clearly, participants’ first language always seems to be present when students learn to write in another language, thus facilitating the writing process.
COMBINING/MIXING LANGUAGES FOR RHETORICAL PURPOSES

Participating instructors created opportunities for bilingual students to use their languages in the classroom, whether it was in class discussions or in their writing assignments. However, as described in this chapter, participants who combine their languages may already be using this practice fluidly and organically without needing any formal invitation or encouragement. The interesting aspect of the study was that students participating in the study were explicitly encouraged by their instructors to combine and mix their languages in their class discussions as well as in their writing assignments. In addition, I asked students to articulate and explain how they used translanguaging practices (when and if they did use these) in our semi-structured interviews. The reasons for having students share their choices was to discover what prompts them to combine and mix their languages.

The data revealed that students specifically used translanguaging as a rhetorical practice. In other words, students elected to write in Spanish or a combination of language as they consider their audiences. The purposes may include using translanguaging as a technique to reach a wider audience, as a way to bring authenticity to a narrative, and as a method to communicate a message clearly and precisely. For example, Timothy used a combination of languages in an effort to reach a wider audience in and outside of the classroom. Jacob found that using combinations of languages in his storytelling allowed readers to appreciate the authenticity of his experiences, and Aaron combined languages to maximize the impact of language. This approach also means that students have agentic power to negotiate meaning. As participants described, sometimes “you need to combine” languages. Following are some reasons and situations that prompted students to use translanguaging rhetorically as a way to construct and shape their message.
One concept that kept recurring in the data was how students responded to combining or mixing their language in an effort to persuade or influence readers. Participants indicated they oftentimes needed to use Spanish terms or phrases in order to get their message across. For example, Timothy, a dominant English speaker, stated that being able to use a combination of English and Spanish is an opportunity to reach a wider audience. Although Timothy self-described as not speaking much Spanish, he understood the value of knowing multiple languages. For his final project, Timothy decided to create a webpage using animation elements, and knowing that his audience was going to include Spanish-speaking viewers, he wanted to incorporate bilingual elements. For our last meeting, Timothy brought a sample of his rough draft for this website. His topic was an argument about whether traditional art is better than or should be equal to digital art. Although it was a preliminary outline, figure 4.2 offers a window to how he planned to use English and Spanish.
Figure 4.2 Timothy's rough draft depicting visual elements for website

Timothy stated that since his Spanish language was limited and because he wanted to keep things simple to attract more viewers, he used easy terms and phrases. “Everything was easy to translate... Like the little catch phrases for the character that I have those are kind of easy enough
for and they are words that I kind of know” (interview, April 19, 2017). As he discussed his ideas with me, it was visible that he was excited at the opportunity to combine languages. He described his ideas enthusiastically:

…so like as they are guiding, uh, people through the website for example, my face would pop up and say “hola” or “bienvenidos” and just welcome people to the website and then I would have like all sorts of characters that are going to say different things… (Timothy, interview, April 19, 2017).

His goal was to attract local visitors to the webpage, and thinking about his peers, who would most likely be the first ones to access his page, he incorporated the language of the border:

…if people are more comfortable reading it in Spanish because we live in (community) and it’s kind of a predominant language, so if people are more comfortable with it, it’ll be there. (Timothy, interview, April 19, 2017)

Timothy did not have to use a combination of languages for this project, yet he realized the potential of reaching more viewers by developing a bilingual website. When I visited his website, I saw that he used a combination of English and Spanish language. While he may have initially perceived of the audience being composed of his professor and classmates, he recognized that his website would have the capability of reaching a much wider audience. One of the requirements of the project was for students to identify their audience; Timothy identified his audience as “Students who are interested in the topic.”

In addition, I got the impression that he was thinking globally as he discussed his ideas with me. He mentioned that in America, we are used to seeing animated characters in shows like *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* who speak English. Timothy’s goal was to create a website or shows that would feature other languages, “…I was thinking that it would be cool to see
someone speak another language…at least bilingual…two people from two worlds who can understand” (interview, April 19, 2017). It is evident that Timothy believed in the power of language and how using multiple languages was important to have a global impact. In addition, unlike the other participants in the study, Timothy learned to deploy his communicative practices and moved across languages in a different modality – a website containing visual and audio elements.

**Jacob: Combining/mixing languages for authenticity**

My meetings with Jacob stand out because of the way he dressed, and also because he is a great conversationalist. Our initial meeting took over 27 minutes; with other participants, the first sessions were no more than 15 minutes. My examination of his language practices showed that Jacob is indeed an interesting individual.

The invitation to combine languages in assignments sparked great interest in Jacob. Being able to combine/mix languages is something that Jacob looked forward to when his instructor encouraged him. When I asked him if he would like to combine languages his response was a direct “Oh yeah, hell yeah.” (Jacob, interview, March 3, 2017). Jacob is a non-traditional student, having graduated from high school some 20 years prior. Sharply dressed in matching suits and a stylish hat reminiscent of the Zoot Suit era, he sat toward the back of the room next to me and my recording equipment. Because of our proximity in the classroom, and our long interview sessions, I got to learn more about him and his personality. He commented that he speaks “border Spanish” or “broken Spanish,” adding that some people, because of the way he dresses, think that speaks very good Spanish. As he made the next statement, he motioned with his hand. He said that people assume that his “Spanish is up here, I am down here…you need to break it down, you know, I am not at your level. I look it, but, no I am not” (Jacob, interview,
March 3, 2017). Jacob shared that he did not start speaking Spanish until he was a freshman in college in New Mexico. He related that he and his “homeboys” would listen to oldies on the radio and play cards, and it was then that he learned to speak like his friends who “speak real like they are high” (Jacob, interview, April 18, 2017). Jacob brings a distinct variety of Spanish, a language that he has embraced with his friends and now with his professor and me.

In our interview sessions, he expressed that he took advantage of the invitation to combine languages, especially in his literacy narrative. He said that inserting Spanish phrases when you write about life experiences makes the message more “authentic, this is what actually happened.” He explained that once he knew his instructor was bilingual, he felt more comfortable mixing since his audience would be able to understand what he was saying. He emphasized that one should consider the audience but maintained that the purpose of the writing plays a role in mixing languages. In his case, incorporating Spanish in his assignment made the message real, “this paper has more effect…by using whatever Spanish I know because it is authentic” (Jacob, interview, April 18, 2017). Figure 4.3 shows an excerpt of Jacob’s narrative:
As shown in figure 4.3 by mixing in some Spanish, Jacob is maximizing his rhetorical potential. He did apologize for using curse words, but he maintained that the selection of language was done deliberately to make a point, “I think it adds more authenticity to some of my stories some of my…you know, I don’t want to like to cuss but, you know, what I mean, it just sounds more [accurate]…” (Jacob, interview, March 3, 2017). I asked him if his story would have the same impact if he omitted the cuss words. He replied, “No, it doesn’t. I am not doing this to be like a bad boy… this is just the real deal; this is the way it is” (Jacob, April 18, 2017).
Despite being an English classroom, mixing languages allows Jacob to relate his story with more accuracy. He expressed that as long as the teacher is okay with him mixing his languages, he would continue doing it.

**Andres: Combining/mixing languages to persuade**

Data from the interviews and writing samples indicated that strategically mixing languages could help to effectively persuade others. This is especially true in reference to idioms or sayings that are present in the Spanish language. Participating student Andres stated that one of the reasons he combines languages was because there are some things (words/phrases) that just do not translate. Andres is a native Spanish speaker who rated his proficiency in English and Spanish as excellent. Not only does he have strong command of English and Spanish, based on our conversation, but he also has some knowledge of both French and Korean.

Andres related that he mixes his language often in his writing. He shared that when it comes to sayings in a specific language, there is no way that translating them to match the language of instruction will have the same impact:

…definitely, like sayings in Spanish, that is something that is kind of unique to it [to the Spanish language]. So that is something that I say is benefit towards it. Also, kind of like the casualness, I guess that is not seen that much in English. (Andres, interview, April 3, 2017)

It is evident that Andres valued the rhetorical power of language, and perceived Spanish as something that could be used spontaneously as opposed to English, which he associated as being more rigid. While Andres may not be inclined to mix his languages other than when using sayings or idioms, he firmly believed that students should have more opportunities to include Spanish in their writing. He commented, “…there are some things that we can say in Spanish
that don’t translate well in English, and it’s not as strong for me in English…” (Andres, interview, April 3, 2017).

In addition, combining and mixing languages is not just a matter of inserting words/phrases here and there for persuasive purposes. In order for the combined languages to make sense and thus be persuasive, writers need to be aware of how to combine rhetorically by using their own linguistic expertise. There are multiple factors that come into play for this translanguaging to be effective; these include the linguistic proficiencies of the interlocutors, the end goal of the interaction and the context of the interaction. It is important to note that Andres not only spoke excellent English and often participated in class discussions, but also achieved high marks on his assignments. Being highly proficient in both languages offers an advantage for bilingual writers to navigate information, create meaning and maximize communication.

Students Timothy, Jacob and Andres, all three with differing levels of bilingualism, acknowledged the importance of being able to leverage multiple languages to maximize meaning in their writing. With RWS-1301 being an English writing class, these students could have opted out of using Spanish in their work; however, they understood that certain situations demand a different approach in order to reach a specific target audience to establish authenticity and to persuade. In this manner, these students demonstrated their rhetorical skills by focusing on the needs of the audience allowing language practices to shape their communicative contexts.

**RQ2: What are bilingual students’ language ideologies in reference to translanguaging? Do these ideologies change or are they set aside as the need to combine languages arises?**

In this section, I will address the second set of questions in my research project. Using a similar approach of analyzing the data as in the previous sections, I examined the data in order to
locate similar instances or experiences that reveal language ideologies related to translinguaging from both professors and students. To do this, I conducted a brief analysis of the course catalog entry and instructors’ course syllabi and then I analyzed the data from the interview session transcripts that reference students’ language ideologies. The findings presented in this section focus on answering the second research question. However, before explaining the results, I will first introduce the concept of language ideologies.

**LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND STANDARD LANGUAGE**

Language ideologies embody beliefs about language used in specific social environments. Martínez-Roldán and Malavé (2004) describe language ideology as “a set of ‘core’ beliefs and attitudes shared by individuals, as members of groups, regarding the use of a particular language in both oral and written forms” (p. 161). It is evident that language ideologies do not happen in a vacuum, but instead are shaped and influenced by varying factors, including societal discourses, institutional policies and other practices concerning education. Aspects of language ideologies may not always be overtly present but rather tacitly implied, such as the current standard language policies across most American universities. To examine the language ideologies expressed by the participants in this study, I adopted the language ideology (LI) framework, defined as beliefs held by people about the ways languages should be used in specific social worlds (Martínez-Roldán, Malavé, 2004, p. 161). In the following sections, I will analyze the writing classes’ course catalog entry and syllabi, looking for specific statements that place the English language as the primary and only language of instruction. I will then turn my attention to examining students’ language ideologies by capturing moments or experiences expressed by the participants.
The university where the study was conducted is a commuter school, which draws the majority of its students from the community, which is 80 percent Hispanic, in addition to a small number of students from other states and countries. Although the Hispanic student population is considerably large, it is important to note that these students come from different backgrounds, with a variety of valuable experiences and language ideologies. While the majority of students may be bilingual, not all of them are biliterate in English and Spanish. What this means is bilingual speakers can use both English and Spanish with reasonable fluency; a biliterate bilingual is able read and write proficiently in two languages.

The participating university’s catalog describes Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) - 1301 as a class that “develops students’ critical thinking skills in order to facilitate effective communication in all educational, professional, and social contexts” (UTEP, 2017). This statement clearly did not mention anything about students writing in English, or that the goal of the course was to teach them to write in any language specifically. However, it is no secret that writing instruction across most American universities is done in English, and this particular entry made no mention of this. The primary goal of the course is to prepare students with writing skills that will transfer to other areas, including educational, professional and social contexts. The catalog further states “this effective communication is based on an awareness of and appreciation for discourse communities as well as knowledge specific to subject matter, genre, rhetorical strategy, and writing process” (UTEP, 2017). Students signing up for this class may expect to learn how to write in English; after all, throughout their primary and secondary education, writing and English have gone hand in hand. While not implicit in the wording, English is the target language of the writing course at this university. Mangelsdorf (2010) notes that “because
the belief in a standard written language is so widespread, writing professionals generally feel
obliged to go along with this notion because of the assumption that a so-called standard language
can help students succeed in the mainstream culture” (p. 113). Based on the catalog entry for
this class, it was apparent that this university was making an effort to focus on preparing students
to communicate effectively without referencing the language used for this purpose.

Instructors teaching first-year writing RWS-1301 are provided with a course syllabus
template with sample course calendars, suggested readings and assignments, as well as textbook
and handbook recommendations. Adjunct faculty, assistant instructors, and teaching assistants
are strongly encouraged to use the syllabus template but are given freedom to design their own
course syllabus by adding supplemental readings, activities, and exercises, as well as
incorporating their own teaching style. Full-time instructors also use the same syllabus template,
but they also have more freedom to adopt different textbooks or implement different
assignments. Both participating instructors, assistant instructor Professor Barcena and the other
full-time lecturer Professor Perez, had similar syllabi content material; however, Professor Perez
used a different textbook. Examining the course syllabi for the two RWS-1301 first-year
composition classes, I did not notice any mention of any language policies advocated by either
the department, or the instructors. Neither of the participating instructors mentioned anything
about writing only in English or using academic English language for composing assignments. In
fact, the word English language is not visible in any of the syllabus. As a matter of fact, in
February, at the beginning of the second month in the semester, both instructors introduced my
study and me and openly invited students to use translanguaging practices both in class
discussions as well as in their written work. Of course, this class may not be indicative of what
other instructors are doing in their own classes.
ATTITUDES ABOUT MIXING AND COMBINING LANGUAGES

The absence of a language policy and an invitation from participating instructors to use multiple languages in the classroom may certainly point to an inclusive approach to linguistic differences. While the participants that were in the study enjoyed the freedom to use their linguistic background in the classroom, surely this may have not been the case for most of the students educated in primary and secondary schools across America. In fact, Berlin (1988) contends, “it should now be apparent that a way of teaching is never innocent. Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed.” Thus, by the time students enroll at the university, their language ideologies may have already been shaped and maintained from different power sources throughout the course of their education. In this study, language ideologies connected to combining/mixing languages in academic spaces were revealed in the data. As evidenced by the data, students’ expression on language ideologies, based on their position combining/mixing languages, varies. The following section illustrates students’ attitudes toward combining or mixing Spanish and English and beliefs that influence their language use.

PARTICIPANTS’ LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

During the interview sessions and conversations with the students, it became apparent that many had been raised with the understanding that combining/mixing languages was not correct. Because of this understanding, students maintained or even solidified this attitude when it came to participating in writing courses at the university level. For example, Belinda does not like to mix languages; she explained how she was raised. “I was raised, my parents would say either speak Spanish or English, but when you mix them together, it just sounds really choppy and it doesn’t sound right” (interview, March 30, 2017). It can be understood that this perception
about language could have been something that she heard when she mixed her languages or a belief that she formed on her own based on other peoples’ comments and observations. What was certain was that this social production influenced the way that Belinda felt about mixing languages.

Another example of a student participant who expressed that she did not like to mix her languages comes from Rita. Rita was more concerned with appearances, of what other may think about her when she mixed or combined her languages. She was serious about not combining her languages telling me:

I don’t like, I don’t like it. I don’t like that, I feel that it sounds like ugly. Ugly speaking in both, I don’t know how to say it but, I just, I don’t like it, or it is either English or Spanish, I feel like …like if someone else hear me, I feel that that person will think that, like, I am not a like, I am a “naca” (interview, April 11, 2017).

“Naca” is a word that is often heard in border communities and the term stands for someone who is uneducated. Appearances are important, and it is evident that Rita, although bilingual, did not feel comfortable mixing or combining her languages based what other may think about her. This belief supports what Kells found in her study on the languages spoken by college students on the border between Mexico and the southwest (as quoted in Nero, 2012). Kells states that many students showed “high degree of negativism that bilingual Mexican Americans exhibit toward Tex Mex as a language practice. It appears that many users adopt the attitudes of the dominant culture toward their language varieties” (Nero, 2012, p. 189). Adopting these attitudes is not difficult especially if these views are repeatedly dispersed in groups of people who may believe in their own superiority.
Later in our conversation, Rita added that not only is it not right to mix languages because of what people would say about her, but also because she experienced some teachers who did not speak Spanish, and “so it would be difficult for them.” Besides, she explained, “I think because also, he [instructor] expect to me like, to talk in English and to work on my English” (Rita, interview, April 11, 2017). This of course is the goal of writing courses at most universities, but the aim should not discourage multilingual speakers to use their languages.

Andres, another participant in the study, pointed out that mixing languages did not bother him, but he could see that this may be an issue with an older generation, “but I do believe it bothers other people, especially when I talk to like older relatives, I can see that, I can see that they are more stronger in Spanish but they are not very fluent in English…” (interview, April 19, 2017). This may mean that while some people prefer to speak one language without mixing in an effort to maintain language purity, older generations may prefer to use one language because they only have one linguistic code at their disposal. People’s belief that mixing and combining is wrong may have come from the attitudes of people they interact with, which illustrates that language ideologies are influence by their context.

Becky also agreed with the belief that the practice of mixing languages is wrong. Becky stated, “I don’t think that mixing is correct, I think if you are going to respond to something in English, it should be fully in English, and if you respond to something in Spanish, it should be in Spanish (interview, March 27, 2017). While expressing that mixing languages is wrong, Becky also brings to the surface another aspect which indicates that speakers have agency to choose which language they should or should not use in conversations – in this case, as interlocutors do not mix.
What is evident in this analysis is that participants come into writing contexts with existing and oftentimes solidified language ideologies. These beliefs may stem from their own upbringing or environment, or long-established systemic forces at play in various institutions, which participants have been exposed to before entering college. A point that should be stressed is that not all language attitudes, in reference to mixing or combining languages, are seen as being negative or wrong practices. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, mixing or combining may serve an important purpose for some bilingual individuals, for some translanguaging helps them make and create new meaning, which ultimately allows them the opportunity to fully participate in the academic setting. In this manner, translanguaging practices can be beneficial for bilingual students and as they integrate their various languages in their writings, they are not only providing insights to translanguaging purposes, but also carving a space for their heritage languages within the writing context. An approach to including students’ heritage languages in academia is an important step for language diversity advocates as well as a significant move toward shifting the way we teach writing.

**RQ#2 DO THESE IDEOLOGIES CHANGE OR ARE THEY SET ASIDE AS THE NEED TO COMBINE LANGUAGES ARISES?**

While language ideologies are part of an integrated system of beliefs strongly rooted and ingrained in people’s minds, these ideologies are not necessarily fixed. It is evident that language ideologies are complex, in constant flux and are influenced by past and present variables. The following section aims to answer the last research question: *Do these ideologies change or are they set aside as the need to combine languages arises?* Basically, my goal is to uncover critical instances when translanguaging occurs, prompting a shift in students’ language ideology and language usage. In this manner, I hope to identify a shift in language ideologies based on
students’ language behavior. Although all participants were encouraged to translanguage, only fourteen students agreed to compose an assignment where they would combine/mix their languages after the instructors mentioned that they could do this. From those fourteen students, nine students actually completed and submitted an assignment in which three examples clearly illustrates students’ position on language ideology. This section includes the discussion of three student participants’ language ideologies and their language usage experiences that are taken from the interview sessions as well as from the written assignments.

The first incident is based on the fact this participant, who I will call Carmen, early on indicated her opinion about mixing/combining languages, which was that it was not correct to mix one should write in one language or the other. However, as the study continued, and as Carmen was encouraged to use translanguage practices, her perception about mixing/combining was affected by the practice of combining/mixing languages. Following is Carmen’s transformative experience and shifting perception with mixing/combining languages and writing in Spanish.

**CARMEN’S WRITING ACTIVITY**

Carmen is a native Spanish speaker who attended elementary school in Mexico. She explained that she wanted to improve her English and that is why she is studying in the United States. This observation may indicate that she is fully aware of her audience and understands that she needs to address her English-speaking reader. In the survey administered at the beginning of the study, Carmen stated that she uses Spanish in her English writing class, but this practice occurs in her head not in a written form. Late in the study, Carmen revealed that she believes that combining/mixing language in written formats should not be done. While she never explicitly
stated her language ideology, it is apparent that she likes to keep her languages separate, especially when it comes to academic writing.

In our first interview, when I asked her if knowing Spanish helps her in writing in English, she indicates that it did not help her, “I don’t [think] it helped me. It is good for me as a person, like to know both languages. But to help me, like write, I don’t think so” (Carmen, interview, March 9, 2017). She further stated that when she writes in English she is not thinking, “Ay, this [Spanish] will help me speak English better” (interview, March 9, 2017). Her thought process as she composes in English is not focused on how her Spanish language background is going to aid her in developing her ideas or thoughts. Carmen acknowledged that she did not see an advantage in using her heritage language in the classroom. In fact, for her, English and Spanish are different and “…it is hard to think twice things” (interview, March 9, 2017). Simply put, for Carmen mixing languages just takes too much time and effort; it is like doing things twice. She prefers to use her English language to write rather than write in her home language. This process may be connected to the fact that she wants to improve her English literacy skills, but also that she strongly believes that mixing is not right as she related in the interview session when we discuss her writing sample. Like other students in the study, Carmen was encouraged to combine/mix languages for an assignment or write the assignment all in Spanish. The purpose for the option to write in Spanish was to understand students’ motivation for choosing to write in their first language. Knowing that Carmen did not like to mix languages, I was hoping that she would venture out and combine languages in her assignment. However, that was not the case.
Figure 4.4 shows Carmen’s writing sample. Please see Translation of Carmen’s Writing Sample in Appendix F.

Carmen
RWS
04/17/17

Reflection Paper

En mi clase de inglés que estoy llevando este semestre se me ah hecho que eh mejorado mi forma de escribir me siento mas segura y que llevo un orden. Antes solamente escribia lo que se me venia ala mente sin embargo ahora siento que va en orden y la gente puede entender mejor lo que escribo. Tengo muy buenas ideas para escribir mis papeles pero no se plantear mis ideas. Es algo que mi profesor este semestre me esta a ayudando. Por primera vez no me siento mal escribiendo en primera persona por que cuando estaba en preparatoria no me permitian hablar en primera persona y mucho menos expresar mi opinion.

Cada lectura que tenemos en clase por mas corta que sea cuenta como una calificacion y me ah hecho tomarme mas enserio cada papel que escribo. El hecho que pueda incluirme en mis escritos sin miedo me a ayudado en escribir mas fluido. Algo que tambien me ayudo mucho fue que ni un profesor se habia tomado el tiempo de leer lentamente y detalladamente lo que escribo. Hasta el mas minimo detalle de lo que escribo me pregunta por que use esa palabra o por que acomode esa oracion en esa parte de el texto.

Me gusta que en la clase tengo opinion, que realmente tengo/voz como habia dicho antes mi opinion en prepa era como sonar improfesional. El maestro tiene una estructura muy marcada de su tecninca de escribir en la cual muchas veces no la hago como el quiere o simplemente no escojo las palabras que el utilizaria, algunas veces puede ser moleto pero como si eh notado mi cambio en la forma que escribo creo que si es mucho mejor usar su tecnica. Me siento muy comoda y creo que es una gran oportunidad que no debo de dejar ir, no es comun que en Universidad un maestro te de el privilegio de corregir los papeles y decirte en que fallaste y poder mejorararlo.

Figure 4.4 Carmen's reflection assignment
When I met with Carmen for our final interview, she brought in her assignment, a reflection paper that was written all in Spanish. She explained her choice for writing in Spanish:

Ah, because, like, when I am thinking like in Spanish, I only focus in Spanish and it flows, and I am just writing. And if I do like, “mix” I will be thinking like “okay, this and this I will put in English, this I will put it in Spanish…so that’s why, and I just put it in Spanish. (Carmen, interview, April 17)

She added that she did not combine because “I think it would be harder, um, cause, I don’t know and it’s easier to write in one language” (Carmen, interview, April 17). For Carmen, changing languages requires for her to change gears, and that was not something she was comfortable doing or something that she had the time to do.

Although this example may not openly show Carmen’s reasons for her language ideology, it does demonstrate her hesitance to mix/combine languages; she was obviously not in favor of mixing/combining and stated that this practice has a limited role in her academic writing development. What makes this example worthy of examination is the fact that, after she was encouraged to combine/mix in an assignment, Carmen’s perceptions towards using her Spanish in her English writing classroom changed dramatically. She shared that the experience of considering combining/mixing as a tool to help in the writing process changed the way she perceived using Spanish in her writing:

Like in the beginning when we used to have these interviews, I thought it wouldn’t help me. But, when I was writing this paper…I changed my mind because I have…a long time since I haven’t written …Spanish, so at the beginning, I was, in what way could help me? But when I was writing this paper, like many things in English came to my mind, and I think it would be a good way to express myself better, because I express better in
Spanish, and I have my ideas, more concrete, or more like, more organized, than if I think in English. You know, so it helped me to be more organized (Carmen, interview, April 17).

As she related her experience, she was visibly surprised at this discovery. She admitted that at first, she could not comprehend how her knowledge of Spanish was going to help her in writing English and thus succeed in class. However, when she completed her assignment, she learned that since she is stronger in writing in Spanish, this knowledge helped her organize her thoughts better:

For the Spanish speakers like me, it's a good way to...organize their ideas, if their dominant language is their Spanish, like mine… Persons like me and Rita that speak, like their first language is Spanish, they speak it all the day, I think it would help them.

(Carmen, interview, April 17)

In addition, Carmen expressed that by being able to write in her own language, her professor has “given me a voice on my own language and my second language which is English. So I think it is having an effect on me, I used to think before that, it was like, how can that help me?” (interview, April 17, 2017). She came into the classroom with the belief that languages should be dealt with or used separate; this perception could have been as a result from the fact that she was formally schooled in both languages in two different locations (in Mexico and United States) which served to separate each language purpose and function. After her participation in the study, Carmen was able to understand the benefits that translanguaging afforded her, in this manner changing her attitude about mixing.

Additionally, Carmen’s concluding comments illustrated the complexities of language ideologies. While the writing project helped Carmen, it also affected her perception on
mixing/combining languages. She struggled with the idea that mixing/combining is not ideal, “…we shouldn’t [mix/combine], but I mean, it helped me to put my ideas organized.” Here she was referring to a response for a post that she submitted. In one of our sessions, she explained that she had trouble creating a response for an assignment; she indicated that she started combining her language and when she was done, she realized that when she used Spanish, she was able to successfully develop her ideas. She stated that it was good for improving writing skills, but “not to give out as a paper…I mean, it’s not um, I don’t know, I don’t see it correct” (Carmen, interview, April 17). Clearly, she had strong beliefs in reference to translanguage, but she had taken the opportunity to experiment with mixing/combining languages. Maybe she may not ever turn in a paper for a grade written all in Spanish or one that mixes languages, but what is certain, based on the data, is that she has found a way to organize and express her thought using all her linguistic repertoires.

**Rita’s Translanguaging Activity**

When it comes to mixing and combining languages, Rita, also a Spanish native speaker, agreed that mixing languages in academic settings is not correct. “I, I never have like, writing in Spanish and English, I just, one or the other” (interview, March 9, 2017). She added that she does not like to mix languages, because it sounds ugly, “Ugly speaking in both, I don’t know how to say it but, I just, I don’t like it or it is either English or Spanish” (interview, March 9, 2017). At one point she stated that mixing/combining languages “looks funny,” because classes are normally being taught in English. Her response seemed to indicate that she viewed mixing/combining languages as something that should not be incorporated in the classroom, and this could be based simply on the fact that she associates writing courses at the university as using only English instruction. What was clear, based on our conversations, was that Rita, as
well as Carmen, were taking writing courses with the goal of improving their writing English skills. Rita contended that mixing/combining languages hinders learning since you are only doing what comes easy to you and not working on your weak areas, “Porque, pues, no mas estarias trabajando en lo que se…te hace facil para ti, a ti mismo y no estarias trabajando en tus debilidades” (interview, March 9, 2017). This thinking makes sense since students come to school to better themselves and learn.

Although Rita’s language ideology pointed to combining/mixing languages as being wrong, she admitted to mixes/combines her languages. Unlike Carmen, Rita used her Spanish language inserting words here and there in her writing in order to make sense of what she is trying to say, “Pero nomas lo utlizo cuando nomas asi, cuando me atoro, lo traduzco en Espanol” (interview, March 9, 2017). It is clear that Carmen draws on her home language when the need arises; however, she added that she would only combine/mix languages when drafting an assignment and would not turn in a paper for a grade, unless the instructor asked for students to combine languages. This thinking helps solidify her belief that languages should not be mixed.

Rita was open to the idea of combining/mixing languages and accepted the invitation to combine languages in one of her assignments. In our final interview, Rita showed me a reflection posting where she used English and Spanish language (see figure 4.5).
In this class I have learned a lot. For example, how to write depending on the situation.

During this semester there are some specific times were I have to write, but most of the time I have to write for my homework for this class. Most of the time, I write is on Wednesdays in the mourning when I have to make my RWS homework, and sometimes at school when the professor tells us to write in our journal. A veces también tengo que escribir para mis otras dos clases como historia y arte. However, I have write for those two classes only two times for each during the whole semester.

During the time I have been attending here at UTEP, I leaned many things about myself. For example, factors that help in my writing. For example, when I am under pressure, I tend to write my essay better. My ideas are better, specific, and with less grammatical issues. Also, having an outline helps me focus on my writing because it is easier to follow something than writing without knowing where I am going.

However, there are some strategies that I can take to improve my English. For example, taking my essays to the writing learning center, para que ellos los revisen y yo pueda ver mis errores. También, leer puede ayudarme mucho a incrementar mi nivel de inglés because I would see how other people use English writing, so I would be more engaged with the language, and I would see some ideas that I could use in my writing. For example, dashes (-). By reading I can see how people use them.

**Figure 4.5 Rita's reflection blog**

The opening of her writing was done in English and it was toward the second paragraph that Rita inserts one sentence in Spanish. She explained her choice for combining/mixing:
Por que no sabia come escribir “aveces” tambien, y en ingles se escucharia “also,” no se como, no sabia como ponerlo y tampoco sabia como poner “tengo que escribir para mis otras dos clases como historia y arte…lo diria en ingles, lo diria, “for my other two classes” y no sabia si poner “such as” o “like” entonces como no me gusta usar “like” entonces solo lo puse en español para no pensar (I didn’t know how to write “sometimes” also, and in English it would sound like “also,” I don’t know how to write it and also how to write “I have to write for my other two classes like history and art…I would have said it in English, “for my other two classes” and I didn’t know how to write “such as” or “like” so then since I don’t like to use “like” then I just wrote in Spanish so that I didn’t have to think) (interview, March 9, 2017).

Her choice to insert a sentence in Spanish supported what she said earlier about combining/mixing when she gets stuck or can’t think of a word in the other language. After she gets past this part, she switches to English again, and completes one paragraph in one language. Her last paragraph, however, did contain one full sentence in Spanish, with another sentence written in combination of both languages. Unsure of how to incorporate some phrases in English, Rita inserted Spanish phrases:

Aquí, no sabia como poner, por ejemplo “para que ellos lo revisen” y pueda…puedan ver mis errores. Y yo pueda ver mis errores, entonces no sabia como ponerlo en ingles, estaba pensando, “for them to read them and I” o sea, no se, yo crei que se iba eschuchar raro, entonces lo puse en español porque eso me parece mas facil. (Here I did not know how to, for example, “for them to revise” and can…can see my errors. And I can see my errors, then I didn’t know how to write it in English, I was thinking, “for them to read them and I” in other words, I don’t know, I thought that it was going to sound strange so I wrote it in Spanish because that seems to easier) (Rita, interview, April 11, 2017)
This selection showed that Rita shifted back and forth in her writing when she needed to. Nonetheless, she expressed that since she is used to writing mostly in English for school, she did most of this assignment in English; however, she indicated that if she would have had more time, she would have combined more in her assignment. She stated, “…pero ahorita como ya me acostumbre al ingles, entonces ya no mas escribo y escribe, y luego para detenerme a escribir algo en español, puse solamente las partes en las que batalle. (but now, since I am used to writing in English, then I just write and write and then to stop and write something in Spanish…I just wrote parts where I was having trouble) (Rita, interview, April 11, 2017). For Rita, combining proved to be useful; she used this technique in her writing drafts, as well as when she takes notes, especially if her professors speak quickly. She claimed that she combines/mixes mostly in this writing class and only when she needs to, but that she has been getting better at writing mostly in English.

When I asked her if other professors should encourage and accept assignments written in a combination of languages, she stated that perhaps for the first two years of school, and then for the rest of time English should be used. Yet she understood that this may not be practical, since a lot of professors do not speak Spanish.

**MONICA’S SPANISH WRITING ACTIVITY**

Monica is a native Spanish speaker with strong communicative English skills. She commented that she mixes languages quite often, relating that when she runs out of English words, she starts thinking about what the words would be in Spanish and then she translates the Spanish words to English. It is clear that Monica drew on her Spanish language organically to come up with options when she was writing. She added “I feel like, I am confident, on the like, like if feel pretty confident like, I like knowing Spanish and English and combining them in my
writings…” (Monica, interview, March 29, 2017). Although Monica used her various languages and easily moves from one language to the other, she was somewhat hesitant about mixing in writing assignments, especially the ones that she needs to turn in for a grade. She thinks combining is helpful:

I think it would be helpful, but I don’t think that it should be in class, inside class because, since I don’t know my English 100%, I think it just like, for me to improve my English, I think that it should just be in English, but I don’t know…. (Monica, interview, April 13, 2017)

Her thoughts about combining/mixing could have indicated her language ideology, which pointed to the fact that since she is in an English writing class, then she should write in English. This may have also pointed to the fact that she wants to learn English and prefers to build on her writing skills. As she was encouraged to complete an assignment where she could combine/mix languages, Monica stood firm in her belief that while combining/mixing is an excellent technique for writing, when it came to academic writing, combining/mixing should be avoided. This was evident in her writing sample where she wrote her entire paper in Spanish.

Knowing that Monica’s writing practices included mixing her languages, it was interesting to see that she completed her writing project in Spanish only. While she incorporates translanguaging practices in drafting ideas, she found it difficult to mix in her writing projects:

I feel like I wouldn’t like, be able to cause, it would be kind of hard, mixing both languages because I would like, I would be repeating myself. I wouldn’t think I had that…since I would be able to translate, I think I would be repeating myself, over and over so I don’t know…I would have to try it first and see if it works it comes like, it I like
what I wrote, I think I would turn it in, if not I would just write it one language. (Monica, interview, April 13, 2017)

Monica wrote two writing assignments in Spanish: one was a discussion post and the other was her final argumentative project. She indicates that she wrote her discussion post entirely in Spanish because she was responding to an article that she had read that was written in Spanish. As seen in her sample posting in figure 4.6 she expressed her thoughts entirely in Spanish. For the Translation of Monica’s Discussion Post, see Appendix G.

Creo que fue buena idea de esta actividad, no esta mal analizar articulos en espanol de vez en cuando. Creo que el proposito de analizar este articulo en espanol fue para ver que la lengua espanola es igual de importante que la de ingles. Que las lecturas y palabras pueden ser apreciadas para lo mismo que la de ingles, incluso pienso que la lengua espanola es un poco mas dificil de apreciar que la de ingles ya viene siendo por lo significados que las palabras contienen o puede aver mas tras de eso. Esta lectura me parecio un poco frustrada por el echo de que hay palabras que nunca habia desarrollado en mi vocabulario pero encontrando la definicion a las palabras logre hacer una concepcion con el resto de las palabras y lectura. Al igual que fue desagradable saber que las lenguas espanolas o otro tipo de lenguas se estan deteriorando por no ser sadas correctamente ya sea por anglicismo o por cosas incesarias como no si lo digo asi se escucha mejor llevandolos a cortar palabras o otro tipo de situaciones.

Figure 4.6 Monica’s discussion post

The other writing project, the argumentative paper, was lengthier since it was a major writing assignment. Since this assignment was her final project and was turned in at the end of the semester, I did not get a chance to talk to her about her choice of writing it in Spanish. Based
on our conversation, I think that Monica relied on her home language to communicate and when given the opportunity to combine/mix languages, she preferred to write in one language only.

The data revealed that students who use translanguaging practices and combine/mix their languages have differing ideologies. The students mentioned in this section express some form of linguistic ideology that at times supported their language behavior. Monica, set in her own belief that languages should not be combined/mixed, discovered that translanguaging practices, in fact, offered her opportunities for facilitating the writing process. This experience revealed that while one may come with deep-seeded beliefs about mixing languages, there is room for change. This change may come upon when bilingual students are encouraged or invited to experiment by drawing on their linguistic backgrounds. Similarly, Rita perceived the practice of combining/mixing languages as something that is not correct; however, she was open to the use of translanguage in her writing assignment. Her writing sample demonstrates that Rita was comfortable with combining her language while still holding to her belief that this is wrong. For Rita, getting the job done is important and if she is invited to use her various languages it will afford her a negotiating tool within the writing classroom. Monica also welcomes the invitation to write in two languages and notes that she mixes her languages often. However, her writing sample clearly shows that combining/mixing language is not something that she would do; she prefers to write in one language only. One thing that is certain is that bilingual students have learned to leverage their heritage languages in English-centric contexts, thus making sense of their multilingual worlds.

**Resisting Translanguaging**

While most participants see the benefits in combining languages, a few students did not think combining/mixing languages is helpful. The previous section showed how participants
value the opportunity to use their home languages. This section demonstrates that there were a few students who resisted the opportunity to combine or mix their languages. This is the case with Ines. Ines is a student who grew up bilingual but speaks Spanish more than she writes it. She indicated that she does not write in Spanish that much because her English writing skills are stronger since that is the language that she practices more (Ines, interview, April 4, 2017). Ines added that although combining comes natural to her, she “never finds herself writing” in both languages. Conversationally, Ines will use all her languages, but academically, she sticks to writing in English.

Ines expressed that combining languages may be good for those individuals who are not strong in English or Spanish, because “there can be two ways of communicating” (interview, March 21, 2017). She self-described as a dominant English speaker but made it clear that she would not combine her languages in writing assignments, “I think writing in one language is better for me because if I mix both, I feel that I won’t make as much sense as writing in just one language” (Ines, interview, April 4, 2017). She added that she did not struggle with the English language, “so I feel like I don’t need to write in Spanish.” Evidently, Ines positioned mixing language as a resource for individuals who may not be proficient in English writing skills. Ines is not alone in thinking that translanguaging is not right. Another student, Monica, echoed these sentiments:

I feel like I wouldn’t like, be able to cause, it would be kind of hard, mixing both languages because I would like, I would be repeating myself. I wouldn’t think I had that...since I would be able to translate, I think I would be repeating myself, over and over so I don’t know, I would have to try it first and see if it works it comes like, it I like
what I wrote, I think I would turn it in, if not I would just write it one language.

(interview, April 13, 2017).

During our discussion, Monica seemed to be afraid of combining and mixing her languages fearing that she would just be repeating herself. She may have been under the impression that she would have to write in both languages separately. For example, writing in Spanish and then offering a translation into English following the Spanish version. Perhaps, since she is not used to combining in academic texts, she was not sure how she would express herself or how not to sound repetitive when trying to make her writing clear. Again, I am making this assumption since when she was encouraged to participate in the translanguaging activity, Monica was unable to mix her languages, and instead she wrote her assignment using only Spanish.

Combining/mixing does not work for Javier either; he preferred to write in English because, “It would be faster and easier for me. Because I am out of practice, I haven’t written in Spanish in a while” (Javier, interview, March 10, 2017). During our initial meeting, he expressed that he would like to write in Spanish, but that most of his writing, up to this day, has been in English. He used some Spanish words or phrases when he texts and on birthday cards or other type of greeting cards. He understood the value of being bilingual especially since he was considering going into the medical field. “I wouldn’t just be able to talk to English speakers but also to Spanish speakers” (Javier, interview, March 10, 2017). Initially he seemed to be open to the idea of combining languages in an assignment; when I asked him if he would be like to write an assignment in Spanish or a combination of languages, he said “Probably.” He also voiced his desire to practice the Spanish because he is “losing it,” referring to his Spanish language. However, in the end, he did not participate in the last interview session where he was to bring in his writing sample.
Becky similarly preferred not to combine/mix languages primarily because she is better at writing in English:

I prefer English; I think I am better at it. I already have a hard time expressing my thoughts and putting them into words and then to write in a language that I am not very good at to write in, I think would maybe kind so hurt me rather than benefit me.

(interview, March 27, 2017)

Both Becky and Javier felt confident about their ability to write just in English. For them, integrating Spanish is not beneficial since they are more comfortable writing in English. It is not uncommon for bilingual students to prefer to write in one language, and this may be based on their writing strengths and a long-standing practice of writing in one language throughout their education. Although instructors encourage student to combine/mix, Becky did not see this as an opportunity to facilitate the writing process since she felt more proficient in English. She added:

Let’s see if I were to do an assignment in Spanish, I feel personally I would get a lower grade then I would if I would to respond to English only because I have more confidence writing in English and Spanish, I would probably have to like to use a dictionary to look up what the words mean and how to use them correctly. (interview, March 27, 2017)

While Becky is bilingual, she is more dominant in English than in Spanish. Though her understanding of the Spanish language comes from her grandparents, in her household English is the main form of communication. This may help to explain her hesitation in combining languages; she seemed to lack a solid foundation of the Spanish language since her exposure to the language was minimal.
A common thread in these responses indicated that participants, although bilingual, selected to communicate in one language rather than mixing. The majority of the student responses suggested that it is difficult to move between languages. Another reason for not combining may be that participants are more proficient in the English language and find that combining requires more work. In fact, when it comes to combining/mixing languages, Canagarajah (2006) contends that this practice “...demands more, not less, from minority students. They have to not only master the dominant varieties of English, but also know how to bring in their preferred varieties in rhetorically strategic ways” (p. 598). Basically, students should be polydialectically competent in order for combining to serve their interests. Canagarajah points out that this process should be something that occurs naturally and as the person is talking or writing. This means that for students who need to think about combining languages, as opposed to this practice being naturally occurring, the work involved in trying to make words fit may prove challenging. In addition, there were a couple of students who expressed some reservation for combining or mixing their languages indicating that they come to school to learn English and would like to strengthen their English writing skills and do not see how combining languages will help them with their writing.

Participating students in this section discussed the concept of translanguaging as it related to their own experiences with the practice. They made it clear that while they are bilingual, when it comes to writing in academic settings, they prefer to use only one language, English. However, when they referenced to combining or mixing in general, they pointed out how this practice can help other students in their writing projects. For example, Monica, while she did not feel that Spanish had a role in the writing classroom, she did feel that introducing Spanish in the classroom can help others, “...once in a while, like essay assignments or assignments that require
a lot of writing, it could be good, I think it would make students feel comfortable. I guess since it is their home language it could help a lot…” (Monica, interview, April 13, 2017). Ines indicated that for those students who are not proficient in English, introducing Spanish in the class would be a good idea especially “…for those people whose English is not their strong language and for people whose Spanish is not their strongest language, there can be two ways of communicating” (interview, March 21, 2017). Monica and Ines may think this way because for them, Spanish has played a role in their development as writers, and they see potential for other students to learn English using their home languages.

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the semi-structured interviews and student writing artifacts. I did this by providing examples from the data collection and analysis process. The first step in this analysis was to introduce the terms that I used when speaking to the participants. Rather than using the term translanguage, I opted to use the terms combining and mixing languages. This approach was purposely taken so participants could clearly understand the practice of using different languages in their communicative practices.

To answer the first research question: How do students translanguage? I focused on the form that translanguage took, or how this process manifested itself. Using a qualitative analysis program, I found emerging patterns of expressions where the word translation, or other associated forms of the term, occurred. Participants Monica, Daniela and Margarita use translation as a tool to generate ideas and increase comprehension as well as a placeholder in the writing and thinking process when they combined or mixed their languages. In the second part of the first research question, I focused on the reasons participants highlighted for translanguage. Patterns of conversations and repetitions of certain words provided two specific categories: 1)
Spanish or mixing/combining languages facilitates the writing process; and, 2) Students combine/mix languages for rhetorical purposes.

The last part of this chapter examined the second research question: What are bilingual students’ language ideologies in reference to translanguaging? Do these ideologies change or are they set aside as the need to combine languages arises? Data revealed that students come into writing contexts with existing language ideologies. However, for students like Carmen, Rita and Monica, experiencing the benefits translanguaging affords them in the writing process, altered their perception about combining and mixing to some level. Finally, the data also showed that, while some bilingual speakers can clearly communicate combining both English and Spanish, they opt not to do this in academic contexts.
Chapter 5: Moving Forward – Hacia adelante

Overview of Study

The purpose of my dissertation was to examine the translanguaging practices of bilingual students in first-year composition in a border institution. Understanding bilingual students’ translanguaging practices can aid in remapping and enhancing institutional policies and pedagogical practices and move in a positive direction toward adopting more inclusive approaches that honor students’ linguistic repertoires and their cultural backgrounds, and thus, gradually reorienting standard language ideology.

The topic for this dissertation emerged from my own lived experiences with learning how to write in college in a language that was not my own. As a bilingual student in composition courses, and as an instructor of writing for college-level courses, I witnessed first-hand the obstacles bilingual speakers faced when their home language and cultural background are designated as being inferior and a hindrance to learning English. The idea of investigating strategies that could possibly help non-native English speakers facilitate the writing process became my goal as a doctoral student. Being personally invested in the search for methods that value all languages in writing courses was a powerful force in my quest to bring change to the teaching of writing in the Rhetoric and Writing field. This chapter concludes my dissertation with a discussion of the major findings from the analysis of the research questions, as well as implications and recommendations to improve language policies in first-year composition programs that aim to address the needs of bilingual students. I close the chapter by highlighting the limitations of my study and proposing recommendations for future research.
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

To examine the translanguaging practices of bilingual students in first-year composition courses, I conducted qualitative research using ethnographic methods. The questions (and sub questions) that guided my study were: 1) How and why do students, specifically Spanish dominant bilinguals and English dominant bilinguals, use translanguaging practices, when they do, or if they do, in writing courses when encouraged by their instructors? and 2) What are bilingual students’ language ideologies in reference to translanguaging? Do these ideologies change, or are they set aside as the desire to combine languages arises?

The results of this qualitative project, as evidenced through the findings, demonstrate bilingual students’ use of translation as part of their translanguaging practices, as well as a tool that uncovers students’ writing processes demonstrating language negotiation. Furthermore, translanguaging practices reveal the rhetorical use of language and bilinguals’ agentic role. While there is an inherent transformative potential in translanguaging, there are also firmly established ideologies that prevent bilinguals from realizing the benefits.

UNDERSTANDING THEIR BILINGUAL WORLD THROUGH TRANSLATION

Findings for the first question demonstrated how students used translanguaging, specifically, how these translanguaging practices were manifested. Participants indicated that they used translation as a form of translanguaging. As a bilingual speaker, the findings were not necessarily new, given that I use translation and have seen my students use translation to understand words, phrases and concepts that are unclear. What was surprising was the continuous use of translation and the multiple purposes that translation afforded students. The word “translation” and other words associated with this term occurred a little under 100 instances in the data. Participants used translation as a tool to generate ideas and increase comprehension
as well as placeholders. What is especially noteworthy about the finding is the clear connection to the concept of dynamic bilingualism described by García (2009). The data revealed that bilingual students utilized their linguistic repertoires spontaneously yet strategically in an effort to make meaning and to communicate. In this manner, participants drew on their languages to “make sense of their bilingual world” (García, 2009). The conceptualization of dynamic bilingualism points to bilinguals’ fluid use of their linguistic resources and whose language practices are “multiple and ever adjusting to the multilingual multimodal terrain of the communicative act” (García, 2009, p. 23). Translanguaging, in the form of translation, allowed participants to adjust their languages to meet their specific communicative needs.

Another noteworthy observation is that by using translation, as a form of translinguaging, bilingual students can be seen as actively participating in the writing process. Translation provided a visual representation of the writing process for bilingual students, especially when students created written drafts. Some of the participants indicated that they translated in their head, and as such we cannot see the process; however, one student’s writing sample provided a visual representation of her translinguaging practices. This approach offered significant information about the writing process and the role that translanguaging has in this process. In Daniela’s draft, her narrative essay (see figure 4.1), she shows her thinking process and the choices she makes to use her Spanish language. This is important because her draft focused on the process rather than the final product. Daniela used placeholders – words in Spanish - creating a visual of how translanguaging can help her in developing her ideas. In a study conducted by Velasco and García (2014), the authors illustrated several ways that elementary bilingual students used translinguaging practices at multiple stages of the writing process including planning, drafting, and in the final stage. García and Kleyn (2016) argue for an understanding of
translanguaging where students’ “full language repertoires” are “given a place in the process of learning” (p. 28, emphasis in the original). Like the students in Velasco and García’s study, Daniela demonstrated that she could craft texts using multiple languages. In this manner, this present study brings attention to the different stages in the writing process where translanguaging aids student learning.

**Emphasizing the Rhetorical Aspect of Language**

An important element to recognize here is that participating instructors encouraged students to use translanguaging practices both in the writing process and the final draft. Emphasizing the rhetorical aspect of language, participating instructors encouraged students to use their linguistic repertories and pay attention to the rhetorical situation in order to deploy their linguistic resources in strategic ways.

The second part of the research question addressed the reasons that bilingual students offered for using translanguaging practices. The data revealed that bilingual students specifically used translanguaging for rhetorical purposes, including using translanguaging as a technique to reach a wider audience, as a way to bring authenticity to a narrative, and as a method to communicate a message clearly and precisely. For example, Timothy used a combination of languages to reach a wider audience; Jacob used a combination of languages in his storytelling to give authenticity to his experiences, and Andres combined languages to maximize the impact of language. This approach also showed that students have agentic power to negotiate meaning. This means that they chose to combine and mix and leveraged their languages for effective communication.

Similar to Canagarajah’s (2011) well-known ethnographic study that describes the translanguaging strategies of a Saudi Arabian undergraduate student, this study provides
examples of students’ metacognitive awareness. Unlike Canagarajah, I was not the instructor of the class where the study was conducted, but I did have several opportunities to ask students about their translanguaging choices in their assignments. Participating students explained their translanguaging choices, accessed the effectiveness of their choices and thought critically about available options. In addition, this study matters because it offers the perspective of several students’ writing different assignments, unlike Canagarajah’s (2011b) study.

Given that the field of Rhetoric and Composition focuses on the effective use of language, understanding the role that translanguaging plays in maximizing students’ communicative potential is important. As some of study participants expressed, sometimes “you need to combine,” to achieve precise communication. Used rhetorically, translanguaging practices allows for different levels of rhetorical and communicative effectiveness, and this approach helps create a strong case for the legitimacy of non-standardized languages. In essence, what this study demonstrated, through the use of translanguaging, was that non-standardized languages can be as robust as the “standard” English language that is privileged in writing classroom in higher education.

It is important that educators have conversations with their students to explain that all languages are important and should be valued. But in order to participate in the academic environment and succeed in the workplace, students will need to rhetorically use the language that is currently valued in these places. The goal is to prepare students to write for the different audiences they will encounter.

**Altering Standard Language Ideologies**

Admittedly, some of the most significant findings of this study came from the second research question which asked about students’ language ideologies in reference to
translanguaging and whether these ideologies change or are set aside as the need to combine languages arises. I say that the results were significant in that some of the findings were unexpected, at least to me. Knowing that educational institutions, in specific higher education, operate under a standard language policy with standard English language as the primary language of instruction, is a given. What was unexpected was the firmly established belief in standard language ideologies. I say it was unexpected because there is so much scholarship supporting language diversity and the benefits of being multilingual. The data revealed that standard language ideologies are solidified through social interaction at home, work and school. Standard language ideologies present in academia, displayed by other students or by instructors, also contribute to the perpetuation of these language ideologies.

In this study, the data showed that while some students were adamant in not combining/mixing their languages, once they were encouraged to do so, they had a transformative experience, as Carmen’s experience shows. Carmen did not care to combine languages and described the practice as something that would not help her since her goal was to learn English. Interestingly, her perspective on translanguaging changed when she realized how drawing on her linguistic repertoire helped her. She stated “…I express better in Spanish and I have my ideas, more concrete, or more like, more organized” (Carmen, interview, April 17). Simply put, she was able to complete her work in English with the help of her Spanish language. Participants who set their language ideologies aside when they were given the option show that they have learned to leverage their heritage languages in English-centric contexts, thus making sense of their multilingual worlds.

Their transforming experiences with translanguaging may indicate that because participants had not purposefully combined their language in the past, they did not realize the
benefits this practice offers. Once students were encouraged to use translanguage practices, and more importantly, once they engaged in a meaningful discussion on the process, and the choices they made, participants were able to appreciate the value of translanguage.

**Resisting an Opportunity**

Resistance to translanguage was expected. Language ideologies run deep. A common thread in students’ responses indicated that participants, although bilingual, select to communicate in one language rather than mixing. Some students indicated that combining was “wrong,” “incorrect,” and “ugly.” Other students felt that it was difficult to move between languages, indicating that since they are more proficient in the English language, they find that combining requires more work.

I shared a similar attitude about translanguage, and these feelings may have been augmented by a number of educators who did not value non-standard languages. I have always struggled to write in English (even now), and I never thought that my Spanish would help me in my writing efforts. I don’t blame my teachers, they were only doing what they were taught to do and their perceptions about combining languages was negative. They would say that students do not learn a language using another language. I heard them say, “What language did you use to learn Spanish? None, right? You just started speaking when you learned to speak, in the same manner you will learn English.” What they meant was that I was going to have to learn English without much help. And just like that, I was destined to remain silent because I lacked the words to communicate with other English-speaking peers.

**Recommendation for Policy Changes**

Undoubtedly, change needs to occur in order to increase language diversity in our writing classrooms and affirm the linguistic repertoires that students of non-standard languages varieties
bring with them. In addition, composition program policies and objectives set forth by program administrators in higher education institutions should consider redefining policies to address the linguistically diverse student population in regions where the student population is overwhelming multilingual/bilingual. In specific, attention needs to be given to the manner in which curriculums for first-year writing courses tacitly continue to embody a language policy that privileges English in relation to other languages. There has been important progress in acknowledging students’ linguistic repertories, cultural and history as evidenced by the CCCC’s “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution in 1974 and in the “Statement on Second-language Writing and Writers” resolution in 2014. These resolutions aim at both supporting and advocating for multilingual writers, but results can only be measured when universities begin to implement suggestions in these resolutions. For one thing, change can begin with how syllabi for writing courses are created. Department documents should take an overt approach to acknowledging multilingual languages by emphasizing the rhetorical aspect of language. By doing so, we attend to the writing that our students can do in languages and dialects other than Standard English.

The curriculum, set forth by the university’s writing program where the study took place, contributed to the shaping of instructors and students’ language ideologies. A brief analysis of the first-year writing course syllabus used in this study did not disclose any indication of an explicit English-only policy; however, a tacit policy to teach only in English exists. This is illustrated by the fact that all writing classes were taught in the English language and all assignments are expected to be written in English. On the English Department’s webpage, where the study took place, the vision and mission statement mentioned a commitment to “teaching and scholarship, and service that promote cultural awareness [and] diversity…” (English, 2019).
statement positioned the university as being attuned to the needs of the community and its student population. However, the link to the First-Year Composition Program page did not include any statement addressing diversity, culture or language. Carrying the message of inclusivity to the first-year composition program page can extend the department’s commitment to including the cultural histories students bring to the university.

Teaching policies communicated by program administrators in higher education institutions should consider redefining policies to address the linguistically diverse student population in regions where the student population is overwhelming multilingual/bilingual. Composition instructors should have opportunities to develop their multilingual competence in an effort to understand the experiences of working in another language. This effort can take various forms, as presented in the position statement by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) (2014) Statement on Second-language Writing and Writers:

- Recognize and take responsibility for the regular presence of second language writers in writing classes, to understand their characteristics, and to develop instructional and administrative practices that are sensitive to their linguistic and cultural needs.
- Offer teacher preparation in second language writing theory, research, and instruction in the forms of graduate courses, faculty workshops, relevant conference travel, and, when possible, require such coursework or other similar preparation for instructors working with writers in a higher-education context.
- Offer graduate courses in second language writing theory, research, and instruction and, when possible, require such coursework or other similar preparation for instructors working with writers in a higher-education context.
Investigate issues surrounding second language writing and writers in the context of writing programs, including first-year writing programs, undergraduate and graduate technical, creative, and theoretical writing courses, writing centers, and Writing Across the Curriculum programs.

Include second language perspectives in developing theories, designing studies, analyzing data, and discussing implications of studies of writing.

I will discuss each of these points below.

**RECOGNIZING AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY**

The university where the study took place is a Hispanic-serving institution with a student population of 80 percent Hispanic. This means that writing courses will more than likely be made up of bilingual individuals who bring with them rich cultural backgrounds. Understanding student’s language histories can enhance teachers’ awareness of the challenges bilingual students face in writing courses. Increased awareness allows instructors to design material that is sensitive to students’ diverse writing skills. Canagarajah (2016) argues, “Teacher preparation for translingual writing would focus on encouraging teachers to construct their pedagogies with sensitivity to student, writing, and course diversity, thus continuing to develop their pedagogical knowledge and practice for changing contexts of writing” (p. 266). Creating material that addresses the characteristics of bilingual students can yield opportunities for teachers to take existing teaching models and adjust these to meet the needs of diverse students. These models can include voices from scholars who are on the periphery or texts that have translanguaging literary devices. In this manner, bilingual students can see their histories/voices represented in the classroom.
In a similar effort to address multilingual writers and their cultural and linguistic assets, the National Council of Teachers of English’s (NCTE) (2018) position statement “Understanding and Teaching Writing: Guiding Principles” acknowledged the significance of understanding who writers are. Principle 2.2 of their position statement highlights writer’s multiliteracies, and maintain that writers bring with them “cultural and linguistic assets to whatever they do” (NCTE, 2018). One way to identify the strengths second-language writers bring to the classroom is through the use if translanguaging practices. By inviting students to translanguage, educators can encourage students to become active participants in their own learning. While the NCTE position statement does not mention translanguaging practice, this approach may be considered as an opportunity to value all languages in the classroom.

**Teacher Preparation in Second Language Writing**

Offering second language theory classes for teachers, especially teaching assistants, adjuncts and lecturers can prepare them to understand the role that culture and language plays in writing and student learning, as well as the power and political dynamic of language differences. In addition, more focus can be given to understanding standard language ideologies and their role in writing courses. Without this conversation, English-only attitudes and policies will continue to prevail. Furthermore, because multilingual communities provide rich opportunities for research, encouraging teachers to engage in empirical research can help contribute to the scholarship on language diversity and multilingual writing. Findings can enhance the teaching of writing courses in multilingual communities.

**Graduate Courses in Second-language Writing**

Acknowledging a need to prepare teachers as they worked with bilingual students in writing courses, the university where the study was conducted offered a graduate course
specifically addressing bilingual writers. The “Teaching Multilingual Writers” class was developed by language scholar and proponent of language diversity, Dr. Kate Mangelsdorf, who also teaches at the university. The syllabus stated course description presented this course as a direct response to:

Tony Silva’s (1997) call for the ethical treatment of multilingual writers, in which he implores writing instructors to better understand ESL writers, provide effective learning environments and instruction, and offer fair assessments of their writing. This course directly responds to this call, for the field of Rhetoric and Writing Studies still gives insufficient attention to multilingual writers (Mangelsdorf, 2018).

I audited this course in an effort to gain a better understanding of multilingual students and how to better serve this population. The course material presented students the opportunity to learn about literacy theory, best practices in second language writing, programmatic, course design and instructional issues. Time and space were also given to the study of standard language ideologies. This is especially important because, as evidenced in my study’s findings, academia, through the teaching of writing in English only, contributes to the perpetuation of standard language ideologies. The section focused on language ideologies helped students learn about what practices can lead to solidifying language ideologies.

Additionally, one of the requirements of this course was for students to collaboratively develop instructional and programmatic materials that would help rhetoric and writing instructors more effectively teach students from different languages backgrounds (Mangelsdorf, 2018). Based on the students’ research and creative work, a website was created providing materials to be used in writing workshops, first-year writing program guides to teaching as well to use for revising existing assignments to be more inclusive to multilingual students. Below is
the website link and images of the website, Guiding Multilingual Writers, which features resources for educators (Bhusal, A., et al., 2018).

http://guidingmultilingualwriters.org

Figure 5.1 Guiding Multilingual Writers Homepage
These types of courses and collaborative efforts are important and are needed as the number of bilingual students enroll in universities and colleges increases. Making effective teaching practices for educators can help better engage bilingual students and help them succeed.

**INVESTIGATE ISSUES SURROUNDING SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING**

In echoing Matsuda’s (2014) words, I agree that “the field of writing studies need to recognize the problem and to engage with issues surrounding language differences more critically” (p. 483). In order to do this, research is needed in higher education in language diversity.

**INCLUDE SECOND LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVES IN DEVELOPING THEORIES**

As educators and scholars, we need to listen to what multilingual students are doing or not doing in the writing classroom. In particular, qualitative research would be ideal to document students’ experiences and the nuanced of language practices in and outside of the classroom.
Advocacy for marginalized languages through research can begin to blur the lines between language hierarchies and position different languages as valuable. In order to ensure bilingual students’ meaningful participating in class, we need to make use of their full linguistic repertories and view them as competent language users.

**IMPLICATIONS - POLICY CHANGES**

Changing language policies in U.S. college environments, which privileges an English only pedagogy, has been problematic. In 1974, the CCCC passed the resolution giving students the right to their own language; four decades later, many teachers do not have the freedom to incorporate methods that assist minority students to learn rhetoric and writing. It is fair to say that change has been slow in promoting translilingual practices in the classroom.

Writing program administrators (WPAs) recognize that there is an increasing number of multilingual students in writing college courses, and that it is imperative to address this growing trend. In fact, at the university where the study took place, WPS highlighted the linguistic strength of bilingual students by having instructors encourage students to write in Spanish or other home languages; this became an important move that impacted the curriculum of the writing program at the university where this study took place (Wojahn et al., 2016). While this action was instrumental in acknowledging and valuing the language of minority students, efforts to continue this pursuit have narrowed considerably. At least that is the case at the university where the study took place.

**PEDAGOGICAL CHANGES**

Purposely making space to enact translanguageing practices in the classroom can be either a welcoming proposition, or this approach may be rejected by students, as evidenced in this study. Wei (2011) proposed the concept of incorporating a translanguageing space in the
classroom. A translanguaging space may not necessarily be a physical space, it can also be a space that bilinguals create in their minds as they engage in the translanguage process. During their thought processes, bilingual speakers are free to combine and mix their linguistic tools, acquired from lived experiences, and create meaningful acts. One the other hand, in the classroom a translanguage space can represent a physical social space that allows bilingual students to bring “together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment; their attitude, belief, and ideology; their cognitive and physical capacity, into one coordinated and meaningful performance” (Wei 2011, p. 1223). In creating actual translanguaging spaces, bilingual language users are given the opportunity take part in meaningful participation as they use their linguistic abilities to strategically communicate and thus achieve academic meaning. While a similar approach would provide spaces for students to translanguage, as indicated in the findings in this study, some students do not wish to combine or mix their languages.

In this study, instructors invited and encouraged students to use their languages in their writing. While there were many students who saw translanguaging practices as a way of assigning value to their languages, an aid for comprehension as well as a tool for negotiation to make new meaning, there were other students who resisted practicing translanguaging. The practice of mixing and combining languages was viewed as a deficit and a hindrance to learning English. It is clear that this perception stemmed from ideologies of language purity that had been instilled in them by their upbringing, society and academia. However, some students did benefit from translanguaging and were able to change their perception about mixing languages only after they were encouraged, and after they engaged in the practice itself. Allocating spaces for translanguaging practices can also be challenging especially when educators may not fully
understand what translanguaging is and how it works. In addition, there may be some educators who still see bilingual students as equivalent of two monolinguals despite the research showing differently. As noted earlier in the theoretical framework section, bilingual language users draw from one integrated system, operating within one holistic language system that individuals assess with varying degrees of awareness to communicate (García, 2009; Martinez, 2014). In other words, there are no clear-cut boundaries between languages.

**LIMITATIONS**

This study examined the translanguaging practices of bilingual students in first-year composition in a border institution. Through the use of ethnographic methods, I was able to enter the classroom as an observer of their communicative practices. Examining these practices allowed me to observe students’ interactions with language, expressions of their cultural histories and experiences that have shaped who they are. This was a qualitative study using ethnographic methods, and although an ethnographic approached allowed for an in-depth analysis of bilingual students’ translanguaging practices, the length of the study was limited.

Typically, ethnographic studies are conducted over a prolong period of time. This present study was conducted during three months in the spring semester. The narrowed time span may be seen as a limitation for collecting data. There were several factors hindering my efforts to prolong the study. One, the IRB had to be revised several times, which delayed approval. Instead of beginning in January when the semester started, the official study began in February. Data was collected during February, March and April. Conducting research in the month of May was not possible since most participants were busy with preparing for finals. Second, while I would have liked to continue studying participants as they took the second part of the first-year writing course, chances of them taking the course at the same time with the same instructor would have
been slim. Third, as a one-person team, an instructor and student, I could not dedicate more time to meet with them or join them while they worked together in projects or assignments. I was also unable to observe students in settings outside of the university.

**Recommendations for future research**

There has been extant research conducted on translanguaging and other translingual practices (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Canagarajah 2011, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; García & Otheguy, 2015; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lewis et al. 2012; Wei, 2011; Sayer, 2013; Williams, 1994). However, there is limited research that focuses on translanguaging in higher education and in specific in border institutions. Most of the literature explores translanguaging in primary and occasionally secondary contexts in the U.S. and UK (Mazal & Carroll, 2017).

Border universities, where the majority of the student population is predominantly of Hispanic descent, represent unique research sites to examine how students negotiate their language repertoires to achieve effective communication in the academic environment. In considering a shift in policies and pedagogies, it is important to know how students’ linguistic repertoires contribute to effective communication among multilingual students. Therefore, the challenge is in learning more on how bilingual students use language difference as a way to negotiate academic contexts.

An ethnographic approach coupled with translanguaging theory allowed me to understand bilingual students’ dynamic linguistic practices. Had it not been for the ethnographic component of this study, it would have been difficult to examine the translanguaging forms and reasons why students draw upon their languages. Being present in the classroom and having opportunities to interact with students during the semi-formal interview sessions provided an
insider’s view of participants’ lived experiences. Analysis of students’ written drafts highlighted their language choices as well as doubts and possibilities.

As I am concluding this project, some ideas have emerged as possibilities to continue exploring the topic of bilingual translanguaging practices. First, it would be great to identify a group of bilingual writing students and follow them throughout their first-year writing trajectory to include both sections of Rhetoric and Writing studies. This exploration can yield rich data on students’ transformative writing process as they engage in translanguaging practices. Second, it would be valuable to trace standard language ideologies present in writing department artifacts, texts and other course materials. Third, an examination of instructor’s language ideologies should be performed to understand how these ideologies influence the teaching of writing in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Finally, it would be instructive to observe students outside of the university to see their language practices with their families, friends, and co-workers. I believe that the best methodology to collect data would be using multiple data sources, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. While qualitative research, particularly ethnographic research, is the best approach to studying the social and cultural life of communities and institutions, quantitative measures can be used to verify qualitative findings. For instance, quantitative methods of inquiry such as questionnaires and surveys as well as statistical/numerical information, can substantiate patterns of frequency found in the coding process. In this study, I used quantitative methods to count the frequency that participants used the word translation or other words associated with this term.

On a broader level, while I was researching, I found limited examples of scholarship being conducted in the field of Rhetoric and Composition by females and specifically by bilingual speakers of Hispanic descent. In qualitative studies, bilingual Hispanic or Latina/o
researchers can offer an insider’s perspective that is often neglected and unrecognized in research. Being part of the community where the study took place allowed me to understand my participants lived experiences. My responsibility as a researcher was to accurately capture their stories and let their voices be heard. Although I was a researcher, the participants also viewed me as someone who they could talk to about their own struggles with language and learning. As we spent more time together, I was able to gain their trust, acceptance and cooperation. A few students shared personal details and obstacles that they faced attending college. They opened up and disclosed their frustrations with their classes, concerns about not understanding the material, and several demonstrated their appreciation for doing research on languages, in specific their home languages. This type of relationship may have not been possible if participants perceived me as being an outsider, someone far removed from their culture.

My research was aimed at studying bilingual Spanish-English speaking students at a border institution. A similar qualitative research approach can also be used at other kinds of universities with bilingual and multilingual students. Educational sites with a diverse student population deserve to be studied in order to better serve the needs of all students. For example, places like San Francisco, California, where students might be bilingual in a variety of languages (Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese and so on) are excellent sites to learn how student make sense of their multilingual worlds and how we can capitalize on their cultural knowledge and background. In addition, with the growing number of multilinguals entering colleges and universities all over the United States, regions far from the border such as the Midwest can also benefit from qualitative and ethnographic research methods. Areas such as the Midwest have experienced an increasing number of migrants who are or will be enrolling in higher education. These
marginalized populations bring with them a wealth of cultural practices that can be highlighted in classrooms where their language and cultural background are valued.

**CONTRIBUTION TO RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION**

This study contributes to the field of rhetoric and composition because it shows that translanguaging practices can be beneficial for students. It is important that students discover this for themselves. However, if they are not encouraged or invited to use translanguaging practices, they may never find out. It also highlights the fact that bilingual students already translanguage whether or not they are invited or encouraged to do so. Of course, some students engaged in this practice more than others. Also, this practice can be readily observable, or it may only take place in the student’s thought process. What is evident is that mixing and combining, through translation, the use of placeholders or other techniques have become a normal mode of communication for many bilinguals when they write. Therefore, I argue that translanguaging should be introduced in course curriculums in Rhetoric and Composition departments. It is a viable language practice that transforms students' experiences with language, but also attempts to diminish the hierarchy among languages. I hope that this present study encourages educators, scholars and researchers in recognizing writing classrooms as spaces with a variety of language users with diverse proficiencies that use linguistic repertoires to make meaning.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

This study’s findings revealed that many bilingual speakers, like myself, have worked under the assumption that mixing and combining was something that they should not do, especially in academic spaces. Furthermore, the findings showed that there are students, like myself, who had not engaged in translanguaging practices, until they were exposed to the concept or encouraged to translanguage. This study broadens the current understanding of
translanguaging practices, but more importantly, it situates translanguaging in college level writing courses. This study deliberately invited and encouraged bilingual students to engage in this practice, deepening their understanding of how language works.

As educators, we influence our students. We represent our language ideologies through our linguistic interactions and pedagogical practices in the classroom. My educational and pedagogical experiences have been informed by those teachers who taught me. I embodied their behaviors and for a long time, I carried with me their language ideologies as well. Their position in authority led me to believe that mixing languages was wrong and that since we lived in America, I needed to speak English. For those reasons, I avoided mixing my languages in speech and in writing, which delayed my development as a writer. Through my own research into translanguaging and similar communicative practices, I discovered my voice, my strength and my value. More importantly, I am no longer ashamed of my background, upbringing or my accent. Today, I combine and mix languages without reservations; I am no longer intimidated by the English language and those who speak it well, for I know that I have my Spanish, a language that has never failed me.
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157


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Study Consent Form

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject.

1. Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

2. Why is this study being done?

You have been asked to take part in a research study of examining multilinguals’ negotiating practices so that I can identify how multilinguals use their language codes as tools in the academic environment.

Approximately, 50 (fifty) study subjects will be enrolling in this study at UTEP.

You are asked to be in the study because you are 18 years or older, are bilingual and are enrolled in a RWS-1301 Rhetoric and Composition course or because you are teaching one of the courses in the study.

3. What is involved in the study?

If you agree to take part in this study, the researcher will observe, take field notes and both audio and video record your class. The purpose for the video and audio recording will be to help the researcher identify participants and will not be shared with anyone. The video camera will be set up at the back of the classroom to avoid recording individual faces. After the study is completed, these videos and audio recordings will be destroyed. I will also ask you to fill out a survey. If you agree to be in the study, I will conduct up to 3 (three) 1 (one) hour interviews with you, in a private space that I mutually agreed upon by you and the researcher. I will ask your instructor to add me to your Blackboard course, as a teaching assistant, so that I can observe your class discussions and assignments.

4. What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

When people talk about their educational and other life experiences, it can bring old wounds and traumatic experiences to the surface. It is possible that participating in the interviews for this project could bring up those feelings. Minimal risk includes the loss of confidentiality of participants enrolled in the study.

5. What will happen if I am injured in this study?
The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to Isela Maier at (915) 549-6992 and to the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915-747-7693) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

6. Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

Often when people participate in life-history interviews, it is an opportunity for them to reflect on their lives. People frequently find this to be beneficial to their general well-being.

7. What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study. Students and instructors may choose to withdraw from this study at any time, without explanation or penalty. Your decision to participation in this study will not affect (add from page4)

8. What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

9. Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be compensated for taking part in this research study.

10. What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to skip any questions or stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to a member of the research group so that they know why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm.

11. Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call the PI Isela Maier at (915) 549-6992 or email her at mmaier@utep.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915-747-7693) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

12. What about confidentiality?
Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. All records will be secured in a private area. All electronic data for this study will be stored on password protected computers. Digital recorders will be used to record data. The video camera will be set up at the back of the classroom to avoid recording individual faces. Encrypted computers will be used for all transcription data analysis, and writing.

13. Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _______________________________ Date: ____________

Participant Signature: ___________________________ Time: ____________
APPENDIX B:

Instructor Survey

Spring 2017

Feel free to answer these questions in English/Spanish.

Name:_________________________________

Date:__________________________________

1. Have you taught RWS 1301/ENG 1311 or a course like it at another university before? Please circle your answer.

Yes        No

If yes, when and where?

2. What languages do you speak?

3. How did you learn those languages?

4. How would you rate your proficiency in those languages today, in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing? On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest, please rate your ability in each language. Please write the name of the languages at the top, and write 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 after Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.

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5. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the most and 5 being the least, how comfortable are you with teaching composition (RWS 1301)? Please circle the appropriate number.

   1  2  3  4  5

6. Tell us about your educational background.

7. Tell us about your teaching/work background.

8. Is there anything you are working on in your teaching practice? If so, what is it?

9. What are some of your favorite books? Movies? Games? (in any language)?

10. What else would you like us to know about you?
APPENDIX C:

Student Survey

Spring 2017

Feel free to answer these questions in English/ Spanish.

Name: _______________________________
Date: _______________________________

1. Have you taken RWS 1301/ENG 1311 or a course like it at another university before? Please circle your answer. 

Yes        No

If yes, when and where?

2. What languages do you speak?

3. How did you learn those languages?

4. How would you rate your proficiency in those languages today, in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing? On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest, please rate your ability in each language. Please write the name of the languages at the top, and write 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 after Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.

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<td>Writing</td>
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5. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the most and 5 being the least, how comfortable are you with academic writing in English? Please circle the appropriate number.

1    2    3    4    5
6. Have you ever used another language to compose your English class assignments? If so, where did you do it, and why? If not, why?

7. Did you graduate from high school or get a GED? Please circle your answer.

High school  GED

9. If you graduated from high school, which high school did you attend, and where?

Name of high school ____________________  City ____________  State _________

10. What were your experiences with writing in English in high school?

11. What do you think your major might be?

12. Do you think academic writing will be useful in your future classes? Why or why not?

13. What are some of your favorite books? Movies? Games? (in any language)?

14. What else would you like us to know about you?
APPENDIX D:

Interview Protocol for Students

Interview 1
1. How would you describe this class to a friend?
2. Can you describe the difference between your class and your high school classes?
3. Do you think there is diversity in your classroom? What types of students are in your class?
4. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of good academic writing in English?
5. Do you hear a mix/combination of languages in the classroom? If so, what languages?
6. Do you use any other language other than English in this classroom? In written assignments? If yes, which one?
7. In your opinion, are there differences between speaking and writing in English? In Spanish? In a combination of both languages? Can you give me examples?
8. Do you see yourself as a writer in English? Why or why not?
9. Do you think that Spanish has a role in classroom? If so, when and how?
10. Does Spanish have a role in the development of your academic writing? English? If so how? If not, why not?
11. Have you done writing in Spanish (journal, texts etc.)? If so, do you think that experience helps you to write in English? Why or why not?
12. What would help you succeed in this class?
13. If you had a chance would you like to write some of your assignments in a combination of English and Spanish? Or only Spanish? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Interview 2
1. How are you doing in class so far? Or/and how do you feel about this class?
2. If you speak Spanish, are there any times when you prefer to speak in Spanish in class? If so, when? Why? If not, why not?
3. Are there any times when you prefer to write in Spanish in class or in a combination of both English and Spanish? Is so, when? Why?
4. Does writing in a combination of languages or just in Spanish come natural to you? If yes, why do you think this is so? If not, what is your experience?
5. If you could write in Spanish or a combination of both languages, when do you think you would write this way? Notetaking? Freewriting? Discussion posts? Prewriting? Drafts? Final drafts? (Any others?)

6. In your opinion, how do you think that using both languages can help you in writing in English? Do you think there are benefits in knowing multiple languages? In writing in multiple languages? If so, why? If not, why not?

7. How do you feel about mixing languages, English and Spanish, in your written assignments?

8. Would you like to write in an assignment in Spanish or a combination of English and Spanish? If yes, can you show me how the writing process looks? Can I see your drafts and your final product?

9. Is there anything else about this experience that you would like to tell me?

10. For our next meeting, can you bring your work where you have used a combination of languages so we can go at it together?

Interview 3

1. Did you get a change to do an academic writing assignment/project using both languages?

2. Can you show me the assignment that you composed in two languages? What areas did you compose combining languages? Which ones were just in one language? Why did you choice to write in both languages? Or in one language?

3. After you composed the assignment, did you translate all the words that were not in English? Was it easy to translate them? Why do you think you used the Spanish words rather than looking it up the word in English?

4. Did you proofread your work before submitting it?

5. Do you think that combining English and Spanish helped you in writing in English? Why or why not? If yes, how did it help?

6. In your opinion, do you think Spanish has a role in your RWS-1301 classroom? On Blackboard? If so, how? If not, why not?

7. Based on your experience writing in both languages in some of your assignments, do you think that Spanish has a role in the development on academic writing in English? If so, how? If not, why not?
8. Should instructors encourage or provide opportunities for students to write in their home language?

9. Would you turn in a paper in for this course that combined Spanish and English? Why or why not?

10. What are the challenges that you think learners face in RWS-1301?

11. Tell me about your impressions of your class this semester?

12. Are there any other things you would like to tell me?
APPENDIX E:

Interview Protocol for Instructors

Interview 1

1. Tell me about your preparation for teaching this course.
2. Teaching is a practice. What are you working on in your teaching practice this semester?
3. What is your language background? Are you bilingual? If so, when do you speak Spanish (or another language)?
4. Is there a policy regarding speaking or writing in English only in the classroom? If yes, where?
5. Does Spanish have a role in your RWS-1301 classroom? On Blackboard? If so, how? If not, why not?
6. Does Spanish have a role in the development of academic writing in English? If so how? If not, why not?
7. Would you consider allowing students to speak or write in both English and Spanish (or Spanglish)? If yes, Why? If not, why not?
8. What are the challenges that you think learners face in RWS 1301?
9. What are some language challenges that you think learners might face in RWS-1301?
10. Tell me about your first impressions of your class this semester.

Interview 2

1. Tell me how the course is going thus far.
2. Do you hear students using multiple languages in classroom interactions? In written assignments?
3. Would you allow students to use another language in the classroom? If so, why? If not, why not?
4. Has your policy about the use of Spanish and English in class, on Blackboard, and in assignments changed from the beginning of the semester until now? If so, how?
5. Based on their written work, and to the best of your knowledge, do you see students having any concerns with speaking or writing in English? Is so, how can you best address this?
6. Are there any challenges you see in teaching this class that perhaps you did not see at the beginning of the semester? If so, what are they?
7. Are there any other things you would like to tell me?

Interview 3

1. How do you think the course went this semester, as you reflect on it?
2. Are there things you have learned about your own teaching practice this semester? If so, what are they?
3. Are there any things you would do differently in this course if you were to teach it in the future?
4. What are your thoughts about the policies for this course?
5. Did you develop policies in addition to the required department policies? If so, why?
6. To what extent have the program workshops and training affected how you have taught the course?
7. Are there any other things you would like to tell me?
APPENDIX F:

Translation of Carmen’s Writing Sample
Carmen
RWS
04/17/17

In my English class that I am taking this semester, I think that I have improved my writing form, I feel very safe and that I have some type of order. Before I would only write whatever came to my mind, however, now I feel that it is in order and people can better understand what I write. I have very good ideas to write my paper, but I do not know how to plan my ideas. It is something that my professor is trying to help me in this semester. For the first time, I do not feel bad when writing in the first person because when I was in high school they did not allow me to speak in in the first person and even less to express my opinion.

Every reading that we have in class, although short, counts for a grade and this has made me take each paper more serious. The fact that I can include myself in my writing without having to worry has helped me write more fluidly. Another thing that has helped me is that no other professor had ever taken the time to read what I write, slowly and thoroughly. Even the smallest detail that I write, he asks me why I used this word or why I arranged this sentence in that part of the text.

I like that I have an opinion in class that I truly have a voice. Like I mention before, my opinion in high school was that this was not very professional. The teacher has a strict and marked structure on his writing techniques, and many times I do not do it [write] like he wants me to, or simply I don’t chose to use the words that he would use. Sometimes this can be a bit bothersome but I have noticed a change in my writing, I think it is better to use his technique. I feel very comfortable and I think that this is a great opportunity and I should not let it go, it is not
common that at a university that a teacher gives you the privilege to revise the papers and to tell you that you failed but that you can improve it.
APPENDIX G:

Translation of Monica’s Discussion Post

I think this activity was a great idea, it is not bad to analyze articles written in Spanish every now and then. I think that the goal for analyzing this article in Spanish was to show that the Spanish language is as important as the English language. Both readings, as well as words, can be appreciated in the same manner as in English, in addition, I think that the Spanish language is a bit harder to appreciate than the English [language] this could be because of the significance that the words have or there can be more behind the term. This reading seemed to me a bit frustrating for the fact that there are words that I had never developed them in my vocabulary, but I was able to find the definition of the words based on the rest of the words and the readings. Similarly, it was troublesome knowing that the Spanish language or other types of languages are deteriorating because they are not being used correctly. It is either because of anglicisms or due to unnecessary things like, if I say it this way, it will sound better. This action decreases words or other types of situations.
VITA

Maria Isela Maier earned an Associate of Arts Degree from El Paso Community College in 1987. She attended The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication in 1990, and a Master of Arts Degree in Professional Writing and Rhetoric in 1998. Maria Isela is the recipient of Adjunct Faculty Achievement Award presented by the English Department at El Paso Community College in Spring 2013. In 2017, the UTEP’s Department of English recognized her work when she received the Outstanding Achievement in Teaching Award (by a doctoral student). The following year, 2018, she also received UTEP Graduate School’s Outstanding Teaching Award. She received the Hunter Strauss Fellowship for Dissertation Completion in 2019. In 2017 she was awarded the Nuestra Gente Award from UTEP. In 2019, she co-authored the article La salud en mis manos: Localizing Health and Wellness Literacies in Transnational Communities through Participatory Art and Mindfulness, published in the PresentTense Journal.

While pursuing her degree, Maria Isela presented at numerous conferences, including the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication, the 2017 Two-Year College Association West (TYCA) Conference, and the 2016 Cultural Rhetorics Conference. Maria Isela has taught at various Hispanic-Serving institutions including El Paso Community College, in El Paso, Texas and Dona Ana Community College in Las Cruces, New Mexico and at The University of Texas at El Paso. She has taught first-year writing courses as well as workplace writing and technical writing.