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ARABIC LEARNER PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSLANGUAGING: DESTABILIZING LANGUAGE HIERARCHIES IN CONTENT BASED INSTRUCTION

Abstract:
The paper discusses the students' perceptions of pedagogical translanguaging in an Arabic literature course in a higher education foreign language program. The research question we explore in this paper is: what are students' perceptions of pedagogical translanguaging in their Arabic literature course? In focused interviews with the students (heritage and nonheritage), we explore their learning experience in this course as compared to previous ones. Their perceptions of the transformative nature of translanguaging were examined. Four main thematic patterns emerged in ten excerpts that were carefully analyzed: bridging the division between lower and upper-level courses; bridging the division between students' proficiency levels; creating an inclusive space that embraces student full linguistic repertoires; and fostering criticality and creativity in dialogic construction of meaning in the language classroom. It is argued that student voices give legitimacy to pedagogical translanguaging. This legitimacy does not threaten the status of standard varieties, but rather motivate a wider space for Arabic dialects, particularly with the growing number of heritage speakers in content-based courses in Arabic programs.

Keywords:
Translanguaging ◆ content-based instruction ◆ diglossia ◆ learner perception

Introduction

Recently, there have been increasing calls for going beyond the language-content divide in foreign language (FL) programs (Willis Allen & Paesani, 2010). For example, the 2007 MLA Report recommended the elimination of the traditional language-content structure of FL

programs in favor of "a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole" (p. 3). The report proposed that this reform be accomplished through development of students' "*translingual* and transcultural competence," or "the ability to operate between languages," (pp.3-4) and increased emphasis on cultural narratives that present FL texts such as literature (poetry, fiction, and drama) film, and journalism. Translanguaging has been put forward as a theory and a pedagogical approach that can go beyond two-tiered system and its associated curricular divide to enhance translingual and transcultural competence (García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al, 2015).

This article contributes to the critique of the two-tiered system and its associated curricular divide in the context of Arabic as a diglossic language. For some time, the field of teaching diglossic languages (Ferguson, 1959) has been shaped by language ideologies stipulating that the standard variety should not only be the target but also the medium of instruction particularly in advanced content-based courses. This is due to the status, prestige, and power of the standard varieties of these languages (Bassiouney, 2009; Albirini, 2016). Recent research that adopts translanguaging pedagogy in content-based instruction (Oraby & Azaz, 2022) has shown how utilizing Arabic dialects and English promoted the negotiation of complex concepts, facilitated the engagement with and critical interpretation of literary texts, and enhanced the meaning-making process. This article continues this discussion. It examines student perceptions of the transformative nature of pedagogical translanguaging in the same setting. In analyzing student voices, the article continues to challenge the position that the standard variety in diglossic languages should be the *only* target and medium of instruction in advanced content-based courses. With the growing number of heritage speakers in content-based courses, student home dialects and L1s are advanced as important resources in content instruction.

Background

Content-based instruction with a focus on literature

Content-based instruction (CBI) is commonly known as a curricular model that integrates content learning and language instruction (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989). With its balanced focus, it differs from traditional language teaching, which aims at developing language skills in the target SL/FL language contexts in isolation from content. Historically, it has arisen as a response to the perceived inadequacy and inauthenticity of existing approaches to FL/SL language teaching (Lin, 2019). The motivation behind CBI is the expectation that using the target language to teach and learn focused content creates authentic communicative contexts for the use of the target language and leads to higher proficiency while simultaneously

achieving content learning. In this way, CBI supports L2 learning by creating opportunities for authentic, meaningful learning in a different context than that of the L2 classroom (Ioannou Georgiou, 2012).

Another important aspect of CBI is the contention that the use of disciplinary subject matters such as literature and film is a vehicle for language learning (Mohan, 1986; Wang, 2019). The integration of the target content in the context of disciplinary subject matter results in the enhancement of language proficiency as well as building content knowledge simultaneously. Although CBI gained merit for decades based on its focus on the target language, some controversy has emerged regarding the use of students' more familiar and additional and native languages and their role in meaning-making and negotiation processes (Lin, 2019; Swain & Lapkin, 2013). In the discussions of the juxtaposition of the two (language and content), the focus has been mostly on the target F/SL. In the context of diglossic languages such as Arabic, this 'target' language is often conceived to be the standard variety that has prestige and power (Azaz, & Abourehab, 2021).

With the ultimate aim of CBI of supporting more effective SL/FL learning via greater exposure to L2 input in the target content subject matter, this implies the minimization of other languages. Also, another important issue in this debate is to what degree L2 learners engage with abstract content knowledge that is usually crammed with L2 academic language (Lo, 2015). It has been shown in recent studies that this academic language has not benefitted all the learners (Valdés, 2001) and resulted in teacher-centered lessons with fewer opportunities for negotiation of meaning and scaffolding (Lo & Macaro, 2012). The role of the dynamic, distributed language view in the meaning-making process in these multiple settings has been underscored in studies that adopt a sociocultural perspective to classroom dynamics (Lemke, 2016; Thibault, 2011). Translanguaging has been put forward as a theory for language practice that dynamically utilizes all the linguistic resources that learners bring to the classroom including CBI settings (García & Li Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging

Translanguaging has been proposed as a critical pedagogy that utilizes all the linguistic resources that learners bring to the classroom in bi/multilingual settings (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Galante, 2020; Yilmaz, 2021). It destabilizes language hierarchies and borders between/among standard and dialectal varieties and provides a social space in which learners can bring in different dimensions of their language backgrounds, personal experience, and history (García & Li Wei, 2014). It allows students a deeper engagement with the materials.

For Baker (2011), translanguaging "is the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" (p. 288).

Translanguaging in the classroom means that "students may deploy their full linguistic repertoires and not just the particular language (s) or varieties that are officially used for instructional purposes in that space" (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017, p.1). García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) explain the main purposes of translanguaging are to support students' engagement with complex texts, provide students with opportunities to develop linguistic practices for academic contexts, make space for students' ways of knowing, and support the development of students' bilingual identities. Through helping students develop a bilingual identity and perceiving them as emergent bilinguals rather than failing native speakers, both FL learners and heritage learners can find a space in the FL language classroom. Fu, Hadjioannou, and Zhou (2019) call for embracing translanguaging as a pedagogic approach that is open to difference in schools and underscore its gains in education.

As an umbrella term, translanguaging practices include, but are not limited to, translation, code-switching, code-mixing, and code-meshing. Whereas code-switching prioritizes the use of two codes or varieties in a *particular* context, code-meshing and mixing refer to use of the whole language repertoire in *every* context. Translanguaging encourages students to draw from all their linguistic resources (see Canagarajah, 2011). Translanguaging practices go beyond the interlocutors' sentence or single utterance to refer to the strategic and dynamic utilization and deployment of the linguistic repertoire of an individual who practices two languages (or more) in the various modes of communication for different purposes. In doing that, individuals are not limited by the defined boundaries and categories of *named* languages (Otheguy et. al. 2015). Conceptualized as such, translanguaging practices are different from disconnected and random language practices. They are "transformative" in the sense that they resist the standard hierarchy of languaging practices. They disrupt the concepts of "first", "target", "second, foreign", and "heritage", languages. Speaker and learners no longer possess a "native" or "first" language, and acquire a "second" language, but they rather possess an integrated linguistic continuum or repertoire from which they strategically draw in particular social contexts (García, 2011; Otheguy et. al., 2015). They provide opportunities for a creative use of language (García & Li Wei, 2014) and mark a theoretical shift from monolingual to translingual practices (Trentman, 2021; Oraby & Azaz, 2022). In the words of Li Wei (2011, p. 1223), the transformative nature of these practices "creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment."

This conceptualization of translanguaging practices has originated from pedagogical research. In this original pedagogical conceptualization, official teacher-directed translanguaging is perspicaciously used to assist language learning and cultural awareness (Williams, 2012; Lewis et al., 2012). Recently, the terms "pedagogical translanguaging", "translanguaging pedagogy/ies", and "translanguaging as a pedagogy" are gaining momentum (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Cenoz, 2019; Galante, 2020; Yilmaz, 2021, among many others). This pedagogical perspective underscores the use of translanguaging by teachers to explain terms, present complex parts of a topic, and explain something in another language. It is taken to be a way of differentiating instruction and a scaffolding approach to ensure that learners "engage with rigorous content, access difficult texts, and produce new language practices and new knowledge" (García & Li Wei, 2015, p. 233).

Present Study Ticheloven

Recently, studies have tuned to closely examine the views of the different stakeholders (researchers, teachers, and multilingual learners) to establish 'meaningful' translanguaging as a suitable teaching strategy (Ticheloven et al, 2018; Ticheloven et al, 2021; Holdway & Hitchcock, 2018; Hillman, Graham, & Eslami, 2019; Tian, 2020). These studies focus on English as a second/foreign language in multilingual settings and they characterize palpable pedagogic issues may be helpful in understanding how translanguaging in multilingual contexts can be implemented, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice. Only one study (Azaz & Abourehab, 2021) focused on teacher perspectives on translanguaging in the context of Arabic. This study turns the focus to learner views of translanguaging. It investigates heritage and non-heritage learners' perceptions of pedagogical translanguaging and its potential gains in Arabic literature content-based university classrooms. The research question we explore in this paper is: what are students' perceptions of pedagogical translanguaging in their Arabic literature course? Translanguaging in this paper refers to students drawing from their full linguistic repertoires, including Arabic varieties and English, in course activities and class discussion.

Context and participants

This article is part of a larger ethnographic study that was conducted over a semester period. The study was a participatory classroom ethnography of a literature course at the university level at a U.S. institution. The course was a third year contemporary Arabic literature course, and the linguistic proficiency level of the course within the language program was advanced. The course encouraged ethical reading of literary works and utilized pedagogical

translanguaging and content-based instruction. Data sources included 25 audio recordings of class sessions, 16 out-of-class group discussions, a three-interview protocol with six of the nine participants, and one long final interview with the other three participants, in addition to students' written work. Ethnographic data were analyzed from two perspectives: first, through a combination of coding methods and second through the lens of the theoretical framework of translanguaging as a theory of language as well as the research questions. The first round of data analysis utilized Elemental coding methods, specifically Initial, Structural, Descriptive, Process and In Vivo codes (Saldaña, 2013). Through Initial coding, data were read line-by-line and data corpus was categorized through Structural coding, and different emerging themes were labeled through Descriptive coding. Since this is a classroom ethnography focusing on acts of reading, it was important to use Process coding to capture the dynamics of literacy events. Using codes inspired by participants' language in In Vivo coding also helped give voice to participants and stay attuned to their unique circumstances. Focus Coding was used to examine frequent or significant codes and develop salient categories and Axial Coding to reorganize the data set and assemble the data in hierarchal categorization and subcategories (Saldaña, 2013). During this first round, we were immersed in the data and examined significant themes that emerged from within the data. In the second round of data analysis, we read the data in conversation with the theoretical framework of translanguaging (Li Wei, 2017) and existing literature of translanguaging pedagogy to answer the research question.

Participants of the study are nine students who took the course as an elective towards their Arabic minor or major. Four of the students were heritage learners (Ahlam, Rania, Majid, and Amal) who spent their childhoods in an Arab country and spoke its dialect (Sudan, Yemen, Iraq and Morocco respectively). Heritage learners refer to language students who are "raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken" and who are "to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés, 1999, p. 38). Five participants were non-heritage learners of Arabic. Three of them had studied abroad in the Middle East (Danny, Xiao and Nadia), and two had never studied abroad in the Middle East (Gwen and Madeline). Four of the non-heritage learners (Gwen, Madeline, Nadia and Danny) were white American students, and one (Xiao) was a Chinese international student. The class represented a multilingual classroom composed of students with different linguistic repertoires and cultural backgrounds. All participants' names in this article are pseudonyms. Approval for data collection was obtained in line with university human subjects' requirements.

Table 1. Participants

Pseudonym	Ethnic Background	Home Language	Additional languages	Major	Year in College	Arabic Proficiency level	Arabic Dialect studied or spoken	Arabic speaking country where participants studied, lived or visited
Rania	First generation Yemeni American	Yemeni Arabic	English	Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic	3	Advanced High	Yemeni Arabic	Lived: in Yemen since age 2 till the end of her primary education Studied: in a primary international school in Yemen Visit: Yemen (before the war), Egypt and Jordan to visit extended family
Gwen	White American	English	French (fluent) and Arabic	Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic	3	Intermediate high	Studied Levantine Arabic	None
Majid	First generation Iraqi American	Iraqi Arabic	English	International affairs	4	Advanced High	Iraqi Arabic	Lived: One year in Iraq at age7, and 3 years in Jordan Studied: preschool and 1st grade in the US, 2nd grade in Iraq, 3rd to 6th grade in Jordan Visit: Iraq and Jordan to visit extended family
Nadia	White American	English	Arabic	Middle Eastern Studies	MA student	Advanced High	Studied Levantine Arabic	Studied abroad in Lebanon and Oman Visited Palestine
Ahlam	First generation Sudanese American	Sudanese Arabic	English	International affairs	1	Advanced mid	Speaks: Sudanese Arabic, Studied Levantine Arabic	Lived: In Sudan since age 1 year till age 3, then returned to Sudan until 4th grade Studied: preschool in the US, then her primary education in

								a British school in Sudan until 4th grade Visit: Sudan to visit extended family
Danny	White American	English	Arabic	International Development	4	Intermediate mid	Studied Levantine Arabic	Studied abroad in Jordan
Madeline	White American	English	Spanish & Arabic	Computer Science and Arabic	3	Intermediate mid	Studied Levantine Arabic	None
Amal	First generation Moroccan American	Moroccan Arabic	French English	International Affairs	1	Advanced high	Moroccan Arabic	Lived in Morocco between 5 years and 12 years old. Studied her primary school in Morocco
Xiao	Chinese international student	Chinese	English & Arabic	International Affairs and Economics	4	Advanced mid	Studied Levantine Arabic	Studied abroad in Lebanon

Translanguaging pedagogy

To allow students to engage with the complexity of literary texts of different genres in Arabic, develop their academic skills in Arabic moving beyond studying language from a textbook, and ensure an inclusive learning environment with equal opportunities for class participation, a translanguaging stance was necessary to engage students' full linguistic repertoires. This translanguaging stance was made explicit through the course syllabus that balanced course activities in the two languages shared by all students in the class, Arabic and English. The teacher encouraged the use of students' L1s and the different varieties of Arabic that they spoke or had previously learned. Among the varieties of Arabic spoken in class were: Egyptian, Levantine, Sudanese, Iraqi, and Yemeni Arabic as well as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Through pedagogical translanguaging, the teacher aimed at promoting a deeper understanding of literary texts and allowing students more space to express and exchange their ideas. As students read the assigned literary texts in Arabic, they also read texts in English provided by

the teacher as background resources. To prepare for class discussion, students wrote their initial reflections on the literary texts in English. In class discussion students were encouraged to use their full linguistic repertoires to discuss their ideas. One student in the class spoke Chinese, one student spoke French, and two other students studied French and Spanish as foreign languages. Yet, these languages were never used in class discussions as students only utilized English and different varieties of Arabic. Furthermore, the Moroccan student never used Moroccan Darija in class discussion, and only used MSA and English. When asked at the end of the course, she explained that her choice not to use Moroccan Darija was due to the perceived unintelligibility of her home dialect (Hachimi, 2013). She added that she was deterred by previous reactions to Moroccan Darija by other Arabic speakers who often ridiculed her dialect. At the end of each unit, students wrote a response essay in Arabic on one literary text they read. At the end of the course, students created an artistic response to a literary text as their final project and wrote a final essay in English reflecting on their experience and development as readers.

Instructional design: Pedagogical translanguaging in action

The course was designed primarily based on the concept of *translanguaging co-labor* (for a detailed discussion of this concept see García & Kleifgen, 2020, p.566) to engage students as active learners. Students collaboratively created vocabulary lists and took turns presenting literary texts and their cultural backgrounds and leading class discussions. This instructional design moved the meaning making process to the social level, opened the way to student agency and the teacher to play the role of a co-reader and a co-learner. The course design allowed for translanguaging affordances as students accessed literary texts in different modalities in addition to the written text through online resources. Course design also created a space for translanguaging production and translanguaging assessment as students created translingual writings. Their English journals contained quotes in Arabic from the texts they read, and their Arabic response papers cited resources both in Arabic and English while in their final project students produced multilingual and multimodal artistic responses. Students' final reflection on their experiences throughout the course allowed a space for translanguaging reflection. Embracing translanguaging co-learning, the course design challenged the unidirectional understanding of learning in FL programs in which students learn from the teacher. The structure of the course required students to listen to each other, learn from each other and value what their colleagues brought to the conversation. At the heart of the course design was a translanguaging space where "texts read and written by students remain open; their meanings are not constituted a priori, because meaning emerges in interactions with other people, texts and other artifacts that may be available as actively enfolds." As excerpts from students'

interviews and reflections demonstrate, the course design allowed them to construct textual meaning through social interaction in an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness.

Findings and Discussion of Learner Interviews

The following section presents excerpts of students' reflections and interviews reflecting on their experience in the course that utilized pedagogical translanguaging and contrasting it with their past experiences in monolingual FL classrooms. This utilization of translanguaging aimed at inviting deeper engagement with course materials by encouraging students to make use of their full linguistic repertoire. Furthermore, as the following analysis of data will demonstrate, translanguaging created a space to participate in class discussion for each student regardless of their speaking proficiency level which fostered a culture of inclusion within the class, established a dialogic relationship among students, promoted criticality and creativity and allowed the transformation of students' subjectivities.

Transformativity: Breaking up language hierarchy

For most students in the study, the course was their first encounter with Arabic literature, and the first time to read texts longer than a couple of pages. Coming from different proficiency levels, heritage and non-heritage learners initially felt uncomfortable for different reasons. The following two excerpts demonstrate this initial discomfort, and the analysis examines how language ideologies in foreign language programs shape students' experiences and expectations.

Excerpt 1. Who is the ideal learner?

In in her final reflection at the end of the course, Gwen described the complexity of the content and the anxiety she felt during the first week of classes. She wrote:

> After the first day of class, when I came home and told my best friend about my day, I started to cry because I was so overwhelmed. After the last day of class, I smiled as I looked back on a semester of hard work and growth, proud of myself. After the first week of class, it was hard to see anything past the sensation that (for the most part) everyone was comfortable and fluent with Arabic but me. It was not for lack of wanting or trying, I literally could not do enough to be on the same playing field. It felt like I was reading with my eyes closed, and it didn't matter how badly I wanted to see, it wasn't going to happen. The same best friend half-joked that for me it was like watching a movie with the screen half cut off; I knew something was happening, but I didn't know what or by whom.

In addition to the describing her initial anxiety, stress and feeling of inaccessibility about the course content, Gwen's reflection also demonstrates how she perceived herself in relation to her classmates. It is clear that her perceived language proficiency positioned her at a disadvantage at the bottom of the ladder. Other non-heritage learners expressed a similar feeling in their reflections. For example, Madeline wrote, "*Thinking about my experience in the course as a whole, I don't know that anything short of being a native Arabic speaker would have made me completely prepared for the course*." While Danny wrote, "*I do not think that this is bad, but it shows that the non-heritage speakers were at a disadvantage due to their lack of exposure before the start of university*." The comments of non-heritage learners about the native speaker or heritage learner as the ideal learner for the course, demonstrate their perception of a language hierarchy in the FL education in which the native speaker is the "authoritative source of knowledge" (Keneman, 2016, p. 89). Underlying the three comments runs a feeling of an unjust competition, an impossible task and a wish to have similar or equal peers. While it is hard to delegitimize the feeling of disadvantage expressed in these comments, it is important to point out the underlying assumptions behind them. First, the defensive tone of these comments can be understood in light of what Glynn and Wassell (2018) call "the elitist reputation of world language study" (p. 22). As they explain, "language programs tend to be designed to weed out the academically weak students and act as a tracking mechanism to ensure that only the best and brightest are left in the class" (p. 22). Fewer students continue to upper-level classes and those students, as Glynn and Wassell (2018) point out, are likely to be academically successful students. Students' proficiency level not only affect their academic performance, but also their continuation in the program. Students' comments stressing their disadvantage as the course began seems to be a defense against an implicit notion that they were not good enough students due to their lower proficiency level. Students' comments above also indicate their perception of the native speaker or the heritage learner as the ideal learner for the course, while perceiving themselves are not so ideal. This is related to the prevailing culture in FL education where FL learners, as Cook (1999) explains, are judged against the standards of native speakers, which lead to the perception of FL learners as failed native speakers. By seeing themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy, non-heritage learners seem to internalize this hierarchal view of themselves as if they could not be different than a native speaker or a heritage learner without being worse or less. The above comments also demonstrate an instrumentalist understanding of meaning as belonging only to linguistic elements of the text and can be easily grasped if these linguistic elements were mastered (Kern, 2002).

Excerpt 2. Who gets to speak?

On the other side of the continuum, the heritage learners in the class did not perceive themselves to be at an advantage. Despite their high proficiency level, or rather because of it, they too felt at a disadvantage as they usually did not feel welcomed in FL classes. Rania mentioned that she always felt that all language classes were not intended for her. She explained that she felt the need to be silent to give space to non-heritage learners to practice the language. Majid began the course with a similar expectation. Despite having the highest proficiency level in the class, during the first couple of sessions, Majid was reluctant to speak in class discussions. When the teacher asked him, he said, "*I thought I was not supposed to speak*." During the final interview, Majid explained how his high proficiency level affected his participation in his previous language courses:

> Teacher: I remember in the first week, you weren't talking in class, I remember I asked you to talk and you said "I thought I wasn't supposed to talk"
>
> Majid: Yeah, so that was the real problem I had here personally, it was whenever I am in those classes, just because of my history, I am usually at a higher level of reading and comprehension than my classmates, so like what I often do in those classes is like I don't feel like I should be taking the time from them to practice and learn and speak because speaking is part of the learning process, by the time I just became like a TA in the class translate for them
>
> Teacher: But not really have a conversation with them
>
> Majid: No, I never had a real conversation, you know, unless the professor is asking this question and then no one says anything for a while and I am just sitting there and silent so I got to just raise my hands and say like a couple of words. But this class, I told you, like I really enjoyed it because I felt I had more freedom to explore and discuss

Being of higher proficiency level, Majid did not fit FL classroom dominated by monolingual practices and expectations of target language use in all classroom activities. In his former content classes, Majid was implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, asked to give up speaking opportunities for lower-level students who needed practice. He was also implicitly expected to help students with language questions. This relationship between heritage learners and FL learners which is dominant in FL classrooms creates a power dynamic not only in the classroom culture but also in the process of reading and meaning making. Heritage learners as well as more proficient students get a monopoly on meaning making and bestow their unchallenged understanding on lower-level students. Consequently, due to lower-level students' inability to express their opinion in Arabic, class discussion usually ends up one-sided, artificial, and

serving only as a tool to practice speaking. This utilization of heritage learners as a resource for teaching continues to dominate FL programs. In his discussion of the advantages of mixing heritage learners and FL learners, Golfetto (2020) mentions heritage learners as a useful resource in class for the teacher to teach Arabic variations and provide them with authentic language experience. He adds that heritage learners can support FL students "through peer tutoring in simple dialogical and communicative settings or more complex language tasks" (p. 106). Heritage learners in monolingual FL classrooms are not only expected to act as aid to non-heritage learners, but also tend to be perceived as representing a monolithic understanding of their heritage culture.

As excerpts 1 and 2 demonstrate, the composition of students and their expectations rooted in monolingual culture posed the following challenges at the beginning of the course: how to provide a space for a real discussion with different linguistic abilities? How to allow heritage learners to speak their mind while providing equal opportunities for non-heritage learners to communicate on equal footing? How to help students see their linguistic differences as a resource and not as an obstacle? How to allow a space for interpretation and thoughtful engagement with literary works to all students equally regardless of their cultural background and linguistic ability? The pedagogical response to these challenges was pedagogical translanguaging. The wide variety of proficiency levels, linguistic repertoires and cultural backgrounds that students possessed demanded a translanguaging pedagogy that "disrupt[s] the linearity of curricula and the uniformity of ages and levels of instruction." (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017, p.560) Translanguaging pedagogy transformed power relations in class (Li Wei, 2017) and subsequently all learners were able to not only participate equally in the course and make meaning of Arabic literary texts, but also witness the improvement of their linguistic abilities as explained in the following excerpts.

Transformativity: Destabilizing ideological hierarchies by challenging the traditional monolingual perspective

Excerpt 3. Disrupting translanguaging guilt

Adopting a translanguaging pedagogy in this course posed a challenge to the monolingual ideology dominant in foreign language programs. This was apparent in students' initial expectation that they should speak Arabic only in class. In this excerpt from Nadia's final interview, we see how Nadia, who had the highest proficiency level among non-heritage learners, was conflicted about translanguaging practices. While she stated that she found writing her reflections in English before class helpful and "didn't feel like a chore", she felt the

necessity to speak Arabic in class and was not happy about having to translate in her head what she wrote in her reflection when speaking in class discussion. In her final interview she stated:

> I think that using English was easier for me to get my thoughts out, but I always feel like when I'm in the Arabic class I should be trying to speak Arabic. So sometimes I would feel like I was translating things in my head of things that I had written out in English.

She continued to explain her ambivalence about translanguaging in class discussion, which she called "Arabizi":

> Nadia: But I think it's just because I'm hard on myself. So, when I come, I just want to be able to express myself in Arabic more than English, but towards the end of the class, people are just kind of getting tired … just speaking more and more in English.
>
> Teacher: How did you feel about that?
>
> Nadia: I mean it kind of took some pressure off. But… and I didn't really care at the end because it just ... I don't know. I think because the language aspect was secondary, it didn't really matter what you were speaking. I mean, I don't really speak Arabizi, like a heritage speaker would or a native speaker would, but I'm starting to mix Arabic and English too, just because I just have to get my thoughts out. That's what's important. So, I'm not going to worry about finding the right word.

Nadia's guilt at the beginning of the course stems from her expectations, "*when I'm in the Arabic class I should be trying to speak Arabic*." Her feelings demonstrate the dominant culture in the monolingual language classroom. As Creese and Blackledge (2010) observed, "moving between languages has traditionally been frowned upon in educational settings, with teachers and students often feeling guilty about its practice." (p.105) This guilt is related to the monolingual ideology that dominates FL programs and necessitates the use of the standardized form of the target language in the classroom by teachers and students. Wang (2019) explains that the target-language-only norm in the monolingual ideology is rooted in both Krashen's (1985) Comprehensible Input as well as Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis which claim that to master the target language students need to produce it as much as possible. Thus, both input and output in the classroom need to be in the target language for students to learn. These monolingual assumptions, while lacking evidence, (Wang, 2019; Cummins, 2007) are taken for granted by teachers and students and are reinforced in classroom teaching (Cook, 2001).

Nadia uses the term Arabizi to describe heritage learners' translanguaging between Arabic and English. The term is generally used to refer to a system of writing Arabic dialects using English script in computer mediated communications (Bianchi, 2012; Hajir & McInerney, 2022).

Nadia reflected above on how everyone became more focused on the content and the ideas they contributed to the discussion than practicing Arabic language. Although Nadia initially was reluctant to utilize translanguaging, she eventually allowed herself to engage her full linguistic repertoire in class discussions. As she progressed in the semester, her participation in class discussions went beyond practicing her Arabic as she became more focused on expressing her ideas and discussing the texts. Through translanguaging with her colleagues throughout the semester, Nadia was able to accept her dynamic moving between languages and language varieties as a legitimate way of communication. She was able to accept translanguaging as, to use Li Wei's (2017) words, "a very common feature of human social interaction." (p.26). As the class evolved into a translanguaging space, "it didn't really matter what you were speaking" or in Li Wei's (2017) words, "From a Translanguaging perspective, asking simply which language is being used becomes an uninteresting and insignificant question." (p. 26) Translanguaging kept the flow of the discussion and turned it into genuine conversation. Although Nadia states above that getting her thoughts out became more important than finding the right word, she reported in the same interview the improvement of her language skills throughout the course. She said that by the end of the course she was "more confident not just with reading literature, but more confident in my language skills than I was before." Nadia's testimony here demonstrates how as translanguaging transformed classroom interaction into real discussion, students' language improved in the process.

Excerpt 4. Translanguaging as a reality

Nadia's guilt is contrasted with heritage learners' acceptance of translanguaging as a reality and an every-day practice (Mazzaferro, 2018) in their lives as they exist in between different languages and cultures. Rania highlighted that translanguaging is her natural way of thinking and speaking. In her interview, she stated, "Sometimes I think in Arabic. Sometimes I think in English. Sometimes I think in both at the same time." She further explained:

> I loved the discussions. I can always switch to English, switch to Arabic. However, sometimes even when I'm sitting with random people who are not in Arabic classes, sometimes I think in Arabic it's that simple, sometimes I think in English, so it's nice to have that option and be able to go back and forth

Rania's reflection on her translanguaging as something she does naturally outside of class and even with people who do not speak Arabic, has been described in the literature by scholars like Canagarajah (2011) who maintains that translanguaging is a naturally occurring phenomenon for multilingual students even if done behind the backs of their teachers. These comments demonstrate what Li Wei (2016) calls a "Translanguaging Instinct" which he defines as, human beings':

> innate capacity to draw on as many different cognitive and semiotic resources as available to them to interpret meaning intentions and to design actions accordingly. This innate capacity drives humans to go beyond narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend the culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication." (p.541)

Rania's comment here also shows her pleasure that her translanguaging was recognized in the course design and class discussion, a reaction similar to participants in Galante's (2020) study who were happy that their translanguaging was validated by their teachers and the classroom tasks.

Majid too reflected in his interview on how he naturally moves between languages in his life. When asked whether he considers himself a native speaker of Arabic, he said,

> Majid: I don't know what that entails. I've grown up with going between back and forth between English and Arabic, and I never got into a point in either language where I would say that this is my native tongue.
>
> Teacher: So, you are kind of in between these languages?
>
> Majid: Yeah, I mean now, finally after like 12 years of school I think I am at a decent level enough of English where I can comfortably say that I am native. And in Arabic when I visit my family back home, when I go home over the summer I spend maybe like a month or two in Jordan or in Iraq or in Istanbul. The first couple of weeks when I am there, I struggle communicating with my cousins. I am usually listening; I feel like I can't speak at the same speed that I want
>
> Teacher: And then it comes back?
>
> Majid: Yeah. By the end of the month, I am there.
>
> Teacher: It feels like these labels "native/non-native" are kind of limiting
>
> Majid: Yeah, because while I can't speak Arabic at the same level of proficiency that I do English, I still consider it a native language. Cause like a lot of time I am speaking

> it. A lot of time there are feelings or words that I try to express in English but I can't because there is an Arabic word for it, and that I don't know if there is even a correct translation for it

Majid's comment above demonstrates what Li Wei (2017) calls "the complex linguistic realities of the 21st century" (p.14) In Majid's experience, the term native language does not hold much meaning. He lived in between two languages and multiple dialects all his life that he cannot box himself in one language or another. When Majid describes how sometimes when he tries to express himself in English, he cannot as there are words in Arabic that do not have equivalent in English, this attests to Li Wei's assertion: "Multilinguals do not think unilingually in a politically named linguistic entity, even when they are in a 'monolingual mode' and producing one namable language only for a specific stretch of speech or text." (Li Wei, 2017, p.18)

Rania and Majid's comments here show how they perceive translanguaging beyond a classroom scaffolding strategy and more as "a legitimate and significant resource which allows the task to move on." (Rubenstein, 2020, p.239) Their comments also demonstrate how their understanding of themselves and their language is shifting with the shifting global realities around them. While their experiences do not fit the modernistic assumptions dominating FL programs (Kramsch, 2014), their reflections depict their lives in 'linguistic borderlands' (Brady, 2019). Pedagogical translanguaging welcomed their complex and creative linguistic reality to the classroom.

Transformability: Breaking up language hierarchy

Excerpt 5. Leveling the playing field

Opening a translanguaging space in the classroom invited all students to participate equally in all course activities regardless of their proficiency level. In class discussion, translanguaging lifted the pressure off students of lower proficiency by shifting the focus from the production of language to the deliberated ideas and the content of discussion. In the following excerpt, Gwen responds to the question of whether she felt she had an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion. She said:

> I felt that I had an equal opportunity to say what I wanted at any time. People were patient (laughing). They'd wait for me to try in Arabic for a little bit and then I would say it in English. So, yea, I felt like I had every opportunity to say what I wanted.

In the following part of the interview, she reiterates how using English helped ease her struggle during class discussion:

> In fact, there were moment where I just would be quicker to try and but then also quicker to ease out on myself... if I was struggling with what I wanted to say, I would struggle, but I wouldn't burn myself to the ground trying to get it out in Arabic. I would get it in English and take some pressure off myself

Gwen's language proficiency was on the lower end of the classroom continuum. If the course enforced the program's Arabic-only policy, Gwen would not have been able to participate in class despite doing the required course work including reading and comprehending literary texts and reflecting on it. Gwen's comment here describes how she was able to combat her anxiety to speak during class discussion through translanguaging. She notes her efforts to express her ideas in the target language, and her ability to utilize here first language to "take some pressure off" and maintain the flow the conversation with her colleagues. Martín, Jansen & Beckmann (2016) identified language learning anxiety as a risk factor in language learning and an important source of FL students' attrition in language programs. Their data specified two reasons for language anxiety, "worrying that other students seem to speak better" and "feeling uncomfortable to speak the language in front of others" (p.80) We witnessed Gwen's high level of anxiety at the beginning of the course in excerpt 1, and we can see here how a translanguaging approach helped her deal with her anxiety and integrated her as an equal member of the classroom community. This is in line with findings of the case study of emerging multilingual learners at two elementary schools by Back, Han & Weng (2020) which highlighted the role of translanguaging in reducing students' anxiety, scaffolding students' emotional well-being, and improving students' acquisition of academic content.

In her final reflection, Madeline wrote:

> Prior to taking this course, I never imagined that I would have the ability or confidence to analyze and respond to pieces of Arabic literature, without having some sort of professionally translated version. I think if this course taught me anything it would be the beauty and ability of the language to convey meaning and the amount of patience that is sometimes required to fully grasp this meaning. Over the duration of the course, my reading skills and confidence improved markedly.

Madeline's reflections illustrate the growth that she observed in her reading skills that surpassed her expectations. The seemingly impossible task of reading contemporary Arabic literary texts was made possible through translanguaging in all course activities, which created a space for students of lower proficiency level and limited cultural encounters like Madeline to meaningfuly encounter literary Arabic texts and in the process improve their reading skills.

In our study, translanguaging in class discussions provided opportunities for all students to share their interpretations of the texts and have in-depth conversations about them. This is comparable to findings in Wang's (2021) study where students perceived translanguaging as "promoting a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter, helping the development of the weaker language, and facilitating the integration of fluent speakers with early learners." (p.7)

Excerpt 6. Engaging with complex content

During her final interview, Madeline explained the dynamics of class discussion and how she would have had little to say if the discussion were completely in Arabic.

> Teacher: Tell me about the language of discussion in the class
>
> Madeline: In terms of language in the classroom, I would say, it was initially hard for me to speak because I know that my Arabic is not even close to obviously a native speaker, but I think it was helpful in that it helped figure out how we can talk about subjects that I am not very comfortable with the vocabulary, I guess
>
> Teacher: How about the mixing of Arabic and English?
>
> Madeline: It was interesting because sometimes we would like get more into speaking English and then it would be something that somebody was talking about that they couldn't really express in English so that they would have to go back to Arabic, it was interesting to see the dynamic between the two languages, I think because there was so much vocabulary in the text that I just didn't know. It was helpful, but it wasn't a 100% Arabic, because I don't think I would have been able to say a lot... I think we need both Arabic and English, because regardless of background we are all here at this university and I think both languages were helpful. I think it was good to have both.

Madeline explained in this excerpt the fluid movement between the two languages during discussion. She justified the use of both languages by heritage and non-heritage learners who study Arabic literature in an English-speaking academic setting. The Arabic-only policy would have deprived Madeline from participating in the discussion and the in-depth engagement with the texts. In the same interview, Madeline mentioned the effect of translanguaging in the course design. When asked about writing journal reflections in English before coming class, Madeline said:

> I think it helped me really also relate it [the text] more to myself. Because I mean I can say really whatever I want in English, but Arabic (.) it was hard to really elaborate out a thought. In terms of journaling especially it was helpful to be in English.

The opportunity to respond to and discuss Arabic literary texts in her first language, English, made it possible for her to relate to the texts and learn from them. In her interview, Gwen also stated that she appreciated the ability to move between English and Arabic in class discussion. She pointed out that using English discussing sensitive topics made her more comfortable: "especially when the conversation would become more delicate, to be able to be more precise in what I was saying if it was a more delicate comment, it makes me more comfortable." The assigned literary readings touched on issues of otherness, gender, sectarian conflicts, social and political oppression and imprisonment. A critical reading of these texts and a genuine discussion of their themes required the employment of students' full linguistic repertoires. This was clear to other students in class as well. For example, Xiao explained in his final interview the need for translanguaging during class discussions and the impossibility of conducting the whole discussion in the target language due to the complexity of the content:

> What I want to say is it [class discussion] is not really designed for speaking practice because if we read about something, if we read news we can discuss in Arabic because it's something that we're immersed ourselves in every day. There are things we can talk about but if we just discuss like a single piece of literature, there's so many terms in that, so many [literary] vocabs that we don't use in daily life. So, if we wanted to discuss them in class in Arabic, we have to memorize those so and also the plot is very very well-developed. So, there's a lot of twists. You have to explain, express those, summarize those in Arabic. Yeah. So, if we can't even present, like the presenters can't even present the summaries in Arabic very fluently. It's impossible for us to discuss in Arabic

Xiao contrasts the complexity of literary texts in this course to some of his other courses like media Arabic. In Media Arabic, readings are thematically organized and vocabulary are more controlled. Thus, most students can maintain the conversation in Arabic as they discuss factual information in the news. As Xiao alludes here, discussing literary texts require much more sophisticated vocabulary than what a third-year language student possess. By contrasting the task of presenting a summary of literary texts and its context to their colleagues with class discussion, Xiao highlights the importance of translanguaging in class discussion. While presentations offered a space for target language practice, class discussion needed to be fluid to foster authentic interaction among students. This idea is reiterated by Majid in his final interview:

> Majid: I understand you know forcing the dialogue to like to remain in Arabic, but I believe that allowing a person to express an idea in English when they have it right away, really helped propel these questions, because there were times when I would say

> something and the student would understand what I said but they wouldn't be able to respond [except] in English, and then I would respond in Arabic and maybe their response to that would be in Arabic. What I am saying is, eventually they would come back when they can use it, so I think allowing the flexibility and ability to use English kind of helped, I think, the discussion, the fluidity of the discussion.

Both Xiao and Majid understand the monolingual policy in language programs and the expectation of only using the target language in upper-level courses. They do not question the importance of practicing the target language. Yet, they both stress the need to go beyond the target language to address the complexity of texts in the literature course. This is similar to the findings of Walker (2018) where learners' linguistic practices were a resource for handling a cognitively demanding task. It is also in line with Wang's (2021) study, where translanguging during collaborative work enabled students to understand complex concepts as students felt that without the use of English the class would have been unachievable.

Excerpt 7. Enhancing Language Development

In their final reflections and interviews, most students reported an improvement in their language skills as a result of pedagogical translanguaging. Non-heritage learners highlighted the boost in their reading skills and language proficiency at the end of the course. Gwen, for example, who in the first excerpt above expressed her anxiety at the beginning of the course over her proficiency level, wrote in her final reflection at the end of the course: "As time progressed, not only did my Arabic improve, but my understanding of Arabic text and of engaging with literature also improved." This is consistent with Galante's (2020) findings where students reported that translanguaging helped them learn the target language. Heritage learners too reported improvement in their language at the end of the course. Despite their high proficiency in Arabic, heritage learners initially reported struggling with reading and discussing the literary texts. Majid, for example, had one of the highest proficiency levels in the class. During the final interview, he described how he improved his language throughout the course:

> Teacher: Did you have any challenges in this class?
>
> Majid: Not in the sense of reading and comprehension. For the first couple of weeks, I was a little slower than what I liked, but after that I got to a point where I was more comfortable when I was reading, I got to a pace where I was satisfied. But the real challenges were in discussing and developing my deep ideas about the narrative.
>
> Teacher: Tell me about that.

> Majid: It was just the difficulty of discussing ideas in English, so I got used to doing that. But then when we switched to Arabic, you got to reroute the way that you're making certain ideas, and there are certain words that you have to use. There are certain technical words that you have to use in discussion. In the beginning I was just using whatever words to convey the idea, but I think that over time hearing you say things and reading like certain pieces of the reading, I kind of see how that is being tackled in the language.

It's interesting how Majid found difficulties expressing his ideas about the texts both in Arabic and in English. The discussion of literary texts put him in a situation where he needed to express complex ideas and provided him a space to learn and improve his ability to express himself in both languages. Majid describes his improvement in more details in his final reflective essay where he wrote:

> Beyond reading, the discussions in class posed a whole new challenge. The first quarter of the class, I felt incredibly frustrated with my ability to discuss the concepts I was absorbing from the readings. I felt like I couldn't truly articulate my feelings and ideas I had developed from reading the text. But after the first month or so, I felt more and more comfortable in sharing my thoughts. A big part of it was also the fact that the professor allowed me to actually express my thoughts freely without having to worry about if my classmates understood everything I am saying. This has always been an issue for me in the Arabic classes I have taken here. I end up being more of an assistant to my classmates, which I do not mind doing, but it greatly limits how much I learn from the course. I believe that allowing us to freely discuss our thoughts ensured higher levels of discussions and allowed a deeper understanding of the work. I would be interested to see how my non-native classmates felt about these discussions and if they saw them to be helpful. From my experience, they seemed to at least comprehend the general ideas being discussed and would share their thoughts about them as well. Having other native speakers in the class also helped in propelling discussions forward.

Here Majid describes how not having to tailor his language to the proficiency level of his colleagues helped him improve his ability to discuss complex topics in Arabic. During class discussions, Majid and other heritage learners moved freely between formal Arabic, their home Arabic dialects, and English. Their free movement between and beyond languages created a space for deeper engagement and deliberating over the literary works. Majid's comment also shows his concern for his classmates. The freedom to express oneself that he is describing here did not mean a total disregard of his interlocutor. As shown in excerpts from classroom conversation (Oraby & Azaz, 2022) Majid did orient his conversation to his interlocutor, and classroom discourse in general demonstrated a creative bridging of languages and cultures.

What Majid is describing here is how translanguaging opened paths for class discussion to go beyond the limitations of a language class lexicon. Transforming class discussion from a means to practice the language to a real dialogue that embraces and makes use of all their linguistic repertoires, translanguaging helped students improve their language skills. For heritage learners, the shift into an authentic discussion with their colleagues meant that they fully engage in the discussion, even above the perceived linguistic level of their interlocutors.

Ahlam too reported both in her interview and her final reflection how the course in general improved her Arabic language. She explained that she discovered how her exposure to the language through her family was limited, and how the course introduced her to aspects of Arabic language that she did not know about. In her final interview she said that class discussion was eye-opening for her and added, "we tapped into different ideas that I never speak about in Arabic" She reiterated this point in her final reflection at the end of the course

> It became clear to me that I know a very limited, and mostly conversational, Arabic. I do not know formal political language, sexual language or romantic language, or even violent and vulgar language in Arabic. Indulging myself in Arabic literature and expanding my knowledge of the language strengthened my connection with the different aspects of my own culture that I never fully understood.

Recognizing the limits of her language proficiency as a heritage learner, Ahlam noticed how the course expanded her lexicon. Ahlam's reflection is in agreement with the general profile of heritage language learners in the U.S that Carreira & Kagan (2011) reported in their national survey of heritage language learners of different languages and different geographic regions in the U.S., specifically with regards to limited exposure to the heritage language outside the home.

The improvement in students' target language was observed by the teacher of the course, which may be counter to Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis pertaining the need for producing the target language as much as possible. Through translanguaging, students collaboratively and critically examined complex Arabic texts and analyzed different cultural perspectives while expanding their lexical knowledge and improving their language skills.

Excerpt 8. Difficulties of translanguaging with heritage learners (transdialecting)

In the above excerpt, Majid enjoyed the freedom to utilize his full linguistic repertoire to express his ideas without having to think about the level of the language he produces and the proficiency levels of his classmates. He also wondered whether this may have caused challenges to some of his colleagues, specifically non-heritage learners. For all students, the ability to use their full

linguistic repertoires in the discussion allowed flexibility and eased an already complicated task of reflecting on Arabic literary texts. Yet, translanguaging with highly proficient heritage learners may have represented a challenge for non-heritage learners. For example, Gwen mentioned difficulties she had in conversing with heritage learners during class discussions. In the following excerpt of her final interview, Gwen reflected on difficulties she encountered:

> Teacher: Tell me about the class discussion.
>
> Gwen: It was useful, the kind of where other people were coming at it. Again, with the discussion there was just a lot of vocab, and I don't know if it was just vocab or accent or dialect or what, but there were lots of patches of discussion where I'd be like not sure what was being said.
>
> Teacher: And you wouldn't feel like asking for clarification?
>
> Gwen: Sometimes I would, a lot of times I wouldn't. I wouldn't more because they were in kind of a flow, someone else were engaging with them, so I didn't want to constantly be like breaking up the discussion.
>
> Teacher: Did that make you feel silenced during the discussion?
>
> Gwen: I don't think I was silenced. I think I was just a little slower on processing what I wanted to say, and processing what other people were saying. Like I normally process what someone said once the conversation kind of moved on or I would understand what they said but by the time I kind of process what I would say back they kind of moved on because I wasn't at the same conversation pace that everyone else was at. So, I didn't talk as much but it was more for not formulating what I wanted to say. I didn't feel left out or I couldn't participate.
>
> Teacher: Speaking in both Arabic and English, did it allow you to jump in the conversation?
>
> Gwen: Yeah, a lot of times there was one English word I'd know kind of what page they were on and then I could pick up more of the Arabic once I knew kind of where they were at.

Later in the same interview the teacher asked again about her ability to express her ideas and participate in the discussion, Gwen responded that in some moments she felt confident to comment, while in others she learned more from listening. She added,

> Every moment I was listening I was processing what people were saying, and trying to figure out if I agree with them or not. Sometimes I would [not speak] because I didn't know if I agree with them or not

The way Gwen describes the dynamics of the discussion here shows how she used translanguaging to overcome the challenges of communicating in a different dialect or with more proficient speakers. Translanguaging aided her comprehension of what was being said in dialects of Arabic that she never studied or encountered before, and allowed her to participate in the discussion expressing her views while learning from her colleagues.

Excerpt 9. A dialogic construction of meaning: the classroom as a space to exchange perspectives through translanguaging co-labor

Utilizing translanguaging in class discussion not only provided students opportunities to learn and improve their speaking, it also invited them to challenge each other's reading. Students' final reflections and final interviews indicate that through class discussion their readings were interrupted and challenged by eachother's readings inviting a richer and deeper engagement with the literary works. Within a translanguaging pedagogy each student developed and shared their singular understanding of the text which destabilized the monopoly of meaning that heritage learners and higher proficiency learners tend to have in FL class discussions.

Rania reflected on how her reading was challenged by her colleagues' readings during class:

> I come in thinking of something and then I hear what other people have to say. It's something that's completely different, but it's completely valid, it makes sense.

Rania was able to see how a different reading of the same text could be as valid as hers though her discussion with her peers. Danny almost repeats the same statement in his final interview:

> I come in having read most of the text or all the text and I'm like, "Okay, this is what I think happened." But when I leave class an hour and a half later, it's usually shifted because of the conversations we have.

Danny went on to explain the importance of class discussion stating, "you know reading at home by yourself is lovely and nice and it's important but I definitely think the bulk of the information that I received from this class was in class not from reading at home." Other than the multiple perspectives that the discussion brings, Danny explained how the discussion brings texts to life:

> If you're reading a piece of text, you don't hear someone's tone. You can't hear someone's lived experience outside of the text, where if you're talking to someone who's also read the book or read the passage or poem, it kind of brings it to life. You know, there's more of a backbone in terms of, you know, structure and interpretation and things like that and there's just an element of passion too.

Conversing with classmates about the different literary texts, Danny was able to not only perceive the texts from different perspectives, but also experience the texts through different affective lenses connecting with multiple life histories that his classmates share. Danny here expresses how he appreciates the dialogic construction of meaning (Lin, 2019).

Gwen too wrote in her final reflection about the interaction with the different readers in the class and their different interpretations:

> It was also helpful to the reading experience to see where everyone's struggles overlapped or diverged during the discussions. Not only did it provide a sense of solidarity, but I also felt I was learning not only about the texts but about each personal lens through which the text was being read. I felt like for each book we read, I learned not only about the region where the book took place, but also about everyone else's home regions because of how they brought their own experiences to their understanding of the text and to the discussion.

As Gwen explains here, through in-depth conversations about the texts students were able to understand the role of the reader and their sociocultural background and personal history in the construction of meaning.

Madeline reflected on the difference between class discussions in the course and her former literature classes in which there was one best way to take the interpretation. She described the different readings exchanged in class discussion as eye opening for her. She wrote about how the different interpretations of the same text helped complicate the meaning for her:

> It was really interesting to see other students' perspectives and then go back through the text to understand where they were getting meaning. These discussions helped me as a reader because it shows you the various ways someone can approach a text as well as different ways to contextualize this meaning.

Going back to the text to see where her peers' readings came from, Madeline learned more about the text and about reading as a social event. Nadia's final reflection reiterates the idea of appreciating the multiplicity of meaning that the collective reading allowed in class discussion. She wrote that discussing the literary works with her colleagues helped her the most in her

reading experience. She described the difference in her interpretation when she read on her own and then discussed the text with her colleagues in class: "My understanding and interpretation of the readings tended to be more straightforward and flatter, whereas in the discussion, the texts became multidimensional and more complex." Through her encounter with her colleagues' readings, Nadia's understanding of literary works turned from flat to multidimensional. Not only did her understanding of the literary works evolve, but also understanding of the process of meaning making. In her final reflection, she explained how she learned to stop "trying to determine an exact meaning of a text." She learned "that there can be multiple interpretations of a text, and that one's interpretation can change over time and with successive readings, as well as after discussing it with other readers." Through class discussion, Nadia learned that reading is "to respect and exploit the plurality of meaning rather than to reduce it" (Davis, 2014, p. 86).

In all these comments, we can witness students' emerging understanding of meaning as a site for collaboration and deliberation and the classroom as a space for collaborative interpretive work. This finding is also highlighted in Walker's (2018) study where students' translingual practices "enabled a form of collaborative agency afforded by an expanded linguistic repertoire as a resource for further action or interaction" (p.33)

Excerpt 10. The transformative power of the classroom as a translanguaging space

Several students reported in their final interviews how they felt changed towards the end of the course. For example, when the teacher asked Xiao at the beginning of his final interview to reflect on his overall experience in the course he responded:

> Personally, I have grown as a person, not particularly knowledge-wise but the ability to sympathize and empathize-wise. I think it's because each piece of literature has very strong theme, so it kind of drags me in to think deeper about the subject. Like for example, there's feminism. If you ask me before I started taking this class if I support feminism, I would say, "Of course I support feminism," right? But I think after what we've read, I think I now have a deeper connection to this topic and deeper appreciation and understanding of it.
>
> Teacher: How?
>
> Xiao: I don't know. I think it's like soul touching.

Xiao's feeling of growth as a person is not tied to an acquisition of new knowledge throughout the course but rather his understating and sympathy. Xiao felt dragged in by the literary works.

He was pushed to think deeper, to go beyond his limits. This excerpt demonstrates a transformation in Xiao's understanding of the themes of the literary works read throughout the course.

Ahlam also explained, in her final reflection how the course has transformed her perception of and relation with Arabic language:

> Coming into the course, my primary goals were to develop my reading and comprehension skills, and to cultivate my competence in relating literature to my own personal experiences and beliefs. I ended up accomplishing these two goals in a way I never thought would be possible, for my whole perception of Arabic and my relationship with the language changed completely.

As a heritage learner, Ahlam was able to connect more with her home culture and appreciate the diversity within and the unity of Arabic culture. In her final interview, she emphasized how the course challenged her ideas: "I also left this class with some really engrained notions that I had, have end up challenged." As a translanguaging space, the course afforded opportunities for learners' subjectivities and consciousness to transform (García & Li Wei, 2014)

Conclusion and Implications

The above ten excerpts demonstrate students' reflections on their classroom experiences in a target content course that was designed with a translanguaging pedagogical lens. As the students reflected on this learning experience, they compared it to previous courses. The analysis showed that translanguaging facilitated a genuine classroom interaction in which students critically engaged the texts and each other and were able to learn from and about each other. Students' comments demonstrate how, as multilingual language users, they consciously construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values through translanguaging. It has allowed them to bring in different dimensions of their personal histories, experiences and environments, their attitudes, beliefs and ideologies about which languages and varieties should be used. Opening the space for their dialects and L1 was an important vehicle to integrate their linguistically diverse backgrounds and language codes that were previously practiced in separation. Learner responses to the interview questions suggest that they view their multiple dialects in Arabic as important resources for learning sophisticated content. Arabic dialects should not be restricted to basic communicative and pragmatic functions. When used, they enrich class discussion.

The results of this study call for revisiting the status of Arabic dialects and students' first languages in the current content-language division in Arabic and other similar diglossic

languages. If the field of Arabic pedagogy has been shaped by language ideologies stipulating that the standard variety should not only be the target but also the medium of instruction particularly in advanced content-based courses, student voices in this study problematize this established position. Finally, planning for pedagogical translanguaging requires surveying students' linguistic repertoires at the beginning of the course and creating opportunities for students to employ different languages and language varieties to engage with the curriculum.

There are some weaknesses in this study that could be addressed in future studies. This study contained a small sample of participants, and a larger study could focuses on more fine-tuned learner perspectives in heritage and non-heritage contexts. Also, future studies should focus on how learner situated experiences in Arabic classrooms shape their perspectives on which varieties of Arabic they decide to learn. Related to this is future work that analyzes how the dominant institutional discourse around the status of Arabic dialects and other languages is congruent or incongruent with learner views after learning Arabic using translanguaging pedagogy.

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