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Cover Page Footnote

Christine Hélot, PhD, is professor emeritus of English at the University of Strasbourg, France. As a sociolinguist, her research focuses on language in education policies in France and in Europe, bi-multilingual education, language awareness, early childhood education, and children's literature and multiliteracy. In 1988 she obtained her PhD from Trinity College (Dublin, Ireland) for a thesis entitled *Child Bilingualism: A Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Study*, and in 2005 she was awarded an Habilitation by the University of Strasbourg for her research on bilingualism in the home and school contexts. Her most recent publications include *L'éducation bilingue en France: Politiques linguistiques, modèles et pratiques*, Lambert Lucas, (2016) and *Language Awareness in Multilingual Classrooms in Europe, from Theory to Practice*, Boston/Berlin, De Gruyter (2018). In 2016, she was awarded a distinguished fellowship at ARC (Advanced Research Collaborative) at the Graduate Centre, CUNY, in New York.

Ofelia García: A Visionary Thinker

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As a tribute to Professor Ofelia García's visionary thinking on bilingual education, this article relates the reflexive journey of a French academic whose research was profoundly influenced by her scholarly work. The notion of power is the running thread through which four main themes in Ofelia García's approach to research are discussed in relation to their relevance in the French educational context: The power of imagination, the power of naming, the power of multilingual critical language awareness for teacher education, and the power of translanguaging. In this article, I argue in favor of thinking beyond one's epistemological borders and illustrate how Ofelia García's work led to put social justice at the heart of her research agenda, and to understand the need to decolonize our minds in relation to linguistic knowledge.

Keywords: bilingual education, critical multilingual language awareness, emergent bilingual, France, monoglossic/heteroglossic language policies, multilingualism, Ofelia García, social justice, translanguaging, tribute, USA, visionary thinker

L'être est multilingue. Un jour on le découvrira. Ce n'est pas la psychanalyse qui s'en chargera mais la physique. Elle nous démontrera que nous sommes plusieurs. Le moi est une illusion: Le bilingue le sait, il est hybride comme les mots en lui, surpris à mi chemin de la traduction. (Jurgenson, 2014, p. 115)

[Human beings are multilingual. One day we will find out psychoanalysis will not be responsible for this but physics. Physics will demonstrate that we are plural. The I is an illusion: bilinguals know this, they are hybrid like the words inside them, surprised halfway on the translation path.]

As a European researcher of bilingualism in the family, in schools, and lately in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, and as a parent and grandparent of multilingual children, I have been reading and writing about bilingualism and multilingualism for over forty years. My academic journey has been influenced by many encounters (in person or through their writing) with researchers all over the world. Among these researchers, Ofelia García stands out: she stands out not least for her humanity, generosity, sense of humor and warmth, but for the way she has inspired me to push the boundaries of my own thinking and to become an activist researcher engaged in transformative educational practices in France. Although García and I work in very different contexts and come from different traditions of sociolinguistics, reading her work opened new windows onto my research environment, encouraged me to

express more forcefully what I was trying to conceptualize, and strengthened my belief in the legitimacy of engaged research. In other words, both on a personal and a professional level, she became a model for me, as a brilliant presenter at conferences, as an original and powerful thinker and author, as a very sensitive observer of children in classrooms, and as an outstanding mentor to her students.

Reading Ofelia García, listening to her, or working with her, is always thought provoking, inspiring, and empowering in many ways. In this article, I wish to pay a tribute to her as a truly exceptional person and as a most influential researcher in the field of bi/multilingualism, bi/multilingual education, and sociolinguistics. Because she is such a powerful thinker, I have organized my contribution around the notion of power. I will focus on four main domains in which my research in France has been influenced by her unprecedented theoretical insights into: (a) the power of imagination to implement multilingual education for social justice, (b) the power of naming and transforming our representations of minoritized language speakers into competent bi/multilingual individuals, (c) the power of a critical multilingual approach to language education for teachers to become agents of social change, and (d) the power of the theory of translanguaging to reframe previous understandings of language practices and pedagogy.

The Power of Imagination: Imagining Multilingual Education in the 21st century

L'imaginaire offre une voie qui permet de penser là où le savoir est défaillant. (Wunenberger, 2003, p. 71) [Imagination opens a path for thinking when knowledge is failing us.]

In 2005, I organized a conference at the teacher education department of the University of Strasbourg entitled "*Penser le bilinguisme autrement*"ⁱ ["Rethinking Bilingualism"]. With such a title, Ofelia García's research on bilingual education in the US came to mind instantly. At the end of her contributionⁱⁱ, she asked the following question: "*Comment pouvons nous protéger les espaces linguistiques hybrides que l'éducation bilingue nous a apportés ?*" [How can we protect the hybrid linguistic spaces that bilingual education has opened up?] She was referring to the two-way dual language bilingual programmes (English/Spanish and English/Chinese) she had just described. What she had so acutely observed in the two schools was striking for her European audience: the complexity and very high level of *linguistic and cultural hybridity* (her terms) of the teachers and learners enrolled in a bilingual program. She explained that this bilingual program had been conceptualized from a monolingual point of view, i.e., two teachers taught the two languages separately to students who were considered as native speakers of either one or the other language. But in spite of such a policy, the fact that these programs were child centered and based on teaching small groups in which all the children had different linguistic profiles, she had observed heteroglossic and hybrid language practices, such as third spaces being built in classrooms where all voices could be heard equally and languages becoming hybrid entities.

Even if at this conference (in 2005), she did not use the term 'translanguaging', she was already imagining the pedagogical possibilities such spaces of hybridity could

offer, if protected, and the affordances it gave minoritized language speakers when they could use their full linguistic repertoires. She was also already questioning the conceptualization of different languages as separate entities within the minds of bilinguals and this idea was going to be at the heart of her future research. Based on her inside knowledge of bilingual schools and multilingual children, she was developing a major new theoretical approach to bilingual education that can only be described as a great leap forward in the field of sociolinguistics. Her 2009 book *“Bilingual Education in the 21st Century. A Global Perspective”* is still today a most respected reference work on the subject, considering the extent to which it is quoted by sociolinguists all over the world. Questioning many of the notions I (and others) had taken for granted, she expanded on the previous models of bilingual education to take into account the linguistic complexity of our globalized world and to address anew the language learning needs of all children. Indeed, right at the beginning of the book she insists that, “Bilingual education is the only way to educate all children in the twenty first century” (García, 2009, p. 3).

I especially like quoting this sentence when I talk to educators in France who always think it is a provocative statement, a utopic, and unrealistic proposition. It gives rise to endless controversial questions regarding language education in France and it provides an opportunity to explain the ways in which bilingual education participates in the reproduction of inequalities. The strength of her formulation, *the only way* also points instantly at issues of social justice, therefore putting values at the heart of education as a stepping-stone to imagining how to do it. Imagining means breaking away from previous representations, opening to new understandings of reality, and finding the means to express them. This is exactly what Ofelia García did in her 2009 book: she argued for a reconceptualization of our understandings of language and bilingual education, with notions such as languaging (very difficult to translate in French), translanguagingⁱⁱⁱ, recursive and dynamic bilingualism, monoglossic and heteroglossic language policies, expanding on ideas she had started to formulate in previous publications (García, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Torres Guzmán, 2006) and introduced by researchers like Williams (1994; 2002) and Del Valle (2000).

Most importantly, she reminds us again and again of social justice as the ultimate aim of bi/multilingual education and that learners’ social practice of languaging lies at the heart of the learning process. This means that students today bring multiple multilingual languaging practices to schools that differ significantly from the ways in which the standard variety of the national language is used to teach them. Therefore, we have to imagine that it is possible to language differently at school, to transform our monolingual classrooms into multilingual ones where students are allowed to translanguage freely across all their linguistic and semiotic resources.

Bilingual education in the twenty first century must be reimaged and expanded, as it takes its rightful place as a meaningful way to educate all children and language learners in the world today. (García, 2009, p. 9)

A year before, in 2004, I was lucky to participate in a conference organized by Ofelia García and her colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia University. The title of the conference *Imagining Multilingual Schools: An International Symposium of Language*

and Education opened the doors I needed to make sense of the research I had been carrying out with my colleague Andrea Young in a primary school in the south of Alsace in northeastern France (Hélot & Young, 2006). Imagining multilingual education was somewhat of an intellectual challenge in France where the entrenched monolingual ideology of the education system was very difficult to question. Yet, for three years we observed two teachers implementing a language awareness project in a primary school where incidents of racism recurred amongst the children. Never having heard of language awareness before, the teachers reinvented the approach elaborated by Hawkins in the UK in the 70's and through the collaboration of parents introduced their students to eighteen languages (and cultures) over three years.

We observed and analyzed young learners and their teachers familiarizing themselves with multilingualism and acquiring a better understanding of bi/plurilingualism as a cognitive, social, and educational resource. In other words, these teachers had imagined an alternative approach to language education, based on inclusion, and they had managed to find the space in the regular curriculum to carry it through. Therefore, it was possible in a French school to contest the power differentials between languages, it was possible to empower migrant parents through their participation in a school project, and it was possible to change representations towards minoritized languages and most importantly towards their speakers. Significantly it was also possible to transform the schooling experiences of young children from feeling shame towards their home languages into self-esteem through the valuation of their and their parents' bi/multilingualism.

We then used our research to educate trainee primary teachers to sensitize them to the ways languages are used to exclude and discriminate. This meant including in the teacher education curriculum a critical approach to language education that we thought we could implement with a module on language awareness. The aim was to include activities in languages that were not taught in schools but seen as an obstacle to the acquisition of French. Mariette Feltin's film (2008) of the project became a persuasive testimony that what was possible in one school could be implemented in another, and what was felt as unimaginable to implement in a French school was in fact a matter of social justice. I always insisted that the Didenheim project was not a model to be replicated but an example of the power of imagination of teachers wanting to transform their schools and the reality of their students' experiences regarding their languages, cultures, and identity. At the end of the conference in Teachers' College, it became clear that my message to trainee teachers would be replicating García's discourse: educators are never powerless, even within strict constraints as in France, they do have the power to make choices for their students; and they always have the freedom to imagine pedagogy differently.

But what should pedagogy for the 21st century look like? Was language awareness the same as multilingual education, or only a very first step to challenge monoglossic language education policies? How could bilingual education answer the needs of learners with very heteroglossic repertoires? What about all the research I had carried out on bilingual education in France? I was well aware it needed to be expanded to include a plurilingual approach, as formulated in European language policy documents. But while proposing the productive notions of plurilingual repertoire and

plurilingual competence, these texts do not question the way national languages are taught, specifically to migrant children, they are addressed mainly to *foreign* language teachers, and they do not question the notion of bilingualism as the evaluation scales clearly show. In other words, these policy documents had no impact on language education in general. They did not question the hegemony of standard academic French and how it produces so much linguistic insecurity; they did not deconstruct the notion of language or the L1/L2 dichotomy; they focused on the learning and teaching of several languages, rather than on learning and teaching through several languages; they acknowledged the plurilingual repertoires of students but not their languaging practices, and how their actual social practices could leverage their appropriation of more standard or academic languaging.

I was left with my question: what kind of pedagogy was needed for the 21st century? Ofelia García's answer, as many times before, came to my rescue: pedagogy in the 21st century - she wrote in her 2008 article for the *Encyclopedia of Language Education* - should be multilingual, critical, inclusive, transformative, participatory, creative, transcultural, and nothing less. There lies the power and clarity of García's thinking. Each one of these adjectives is explained, illustrated, and justified across her numerous publications in which she analyzes the imagined creative potential of the multilingual classroom. This was going to influence my research for a good few years to come. It also gave me the impetus to embark on a new project with my Irish colleague Muiris O' Laoire, to think further on the role of language education policies in what we decided to call "a pedagogy of the possible"^{iv}.

The Power of Naming or Transforming Representations: The Notion of "Emergent Bilingual"

Insisting that these children are emergent bilinguals, whose language development exists within a bilingual continuum, also calls for development of bilingual pedagogy for all children, not just those we are calling here emergent bilinguals (García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 3)

In 2010, Ofelia García published a book with her colleague J. A. Kleifgen entitled *Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Language Learners*. In their introductory chapter they ask, "What's in a name?" and explain:

We prefer and we use here the term 'emergent bilinguals' because it has become obvious to us that much educational inequity is derived from obliterating the fact that a meaningful education will turn these English language learners not only into proficient students, but more significantly, also into bilingual students and adults. (p. 3)

In my own work on bilingual children in France (Hélot, 2007), I had been denouncing the fact that minoritized language speakers in French schools were never referred to as bilinguals as opposed to majority language speakers who were. I had tried to analyze the invisibility of migrant children's bilingualism and the frequent stigmatization of their family languages. I had used discourse analysis to deconstruct the meaning of a part of the French prekindergarten curriculum where these children

were referred to as “*les élèves dont le français n’est pas la langue maternelle*” [students for whom French is not a native language]. Not only were the students defined negatively by what they lacked, but nearly all the structures in the following text were negative as well, such as for example: “*le bilinguisme n’est pas un handicap*” [bilingualism is not a handicap]. I argued that defining children through their lack of competence rather than through their knowledge of other languages was discriminatory and could only give rise to negative visions by teachers and low self-esteem for the children concerned. I repeatedly explained to teachers, school psychologists, and other educators that these children were bilingual even on entering pre-primary school at age three because they were living with two languages, therefore, they should be recognized as “*bilingues*” or “*bilingues en devenir*”, or *bilingues débutants* [bilinguals, or future bilinguals, or beginner bilinguals], in other words as *emergent bilinguals*.

We all know as sociolinguists the central role of language in shaping the reality that surrounds us and, as educators, that it takes a long time and a lot of effort to change representations of a social phenomenon. Like Ofelia García, I explained that naming these children positively (all parents in France want their children to be bilingual) would allow teachers to imagine a different scenario, that teachers could focus on these students’ potential and develop higher expectations of them. Thus, naming these children bilingual could transform the educational reality from seeing these learners as a problem into considering their plurilingual competence as a resource to invent new pedagogies and to develop bilingual education for all children.

France has had a long tradition of reifying languages other than French particularly in schools where children used to be hit for speaking regional languages. The very widespread belief that speaking a language other than French at home or in school slows down the acquisition of the national language has silenced many young children who are then described as suffering from muteness at school. It took a lot of patience explaining again and again that it is the school policy of forbidding a home language in class which is responsible for silencing the children. In French, explaining the difference made by Ofelia García between being ‘silent’ and being ‘silenced’ can only be expressed with a verb, ‘*réduire au silence*’ [to be reduced to silence]. Why is it important to insist on this crucial distinction? Because it means shifting the responsibility for the silence from the children to the policy and starting to question why such language policies are in place.

On the one hand, the educational policy in France is overtly stressing the importance of the French language (for all students, monolinguals and bilinguals alike); it is still based on a very normative vision of the language because of the strong belief in the ideology of the nation state, French is the language of the Republic and therefore the language of schooling. Consequently, some teachers still believe that it is forbidden to speak languages other than French on school premises. In reality there is no law stating such a rule; it is more what I call ‘*un interdit intériorisé*’ [an internalized prohibition], or in Bourdieu’s term a habitus, ingrained in French school culture and rarely questioned.

“What’s in a name?”, Ofelia García and her colleague ask in the above-mentioned book. Indeed, labeling speakers of minoritized languages is a never-ending battle in

France. Another label I have been repeatedly querying is the term “*allophone*” [“allo” means different and “phone” refers to speaking] to categorize newcomer students (Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale, 2015). I always enjoy asking an amphitheater full of university students what the term means and very few can actually answer. The term is restrictive and othering for students who are de facto plurilingual even if they do not speak French. French colleagues have found the term more positive than previously because it is a first recognition that these students speak ‘another language’. As if it was not obvious! As if all speakers of languages other than French could be classified together as a homogeneous category! Strictly speaking, as I like to explain, although I am French, I am also an allophone since I speak languages other than French. Of course, what needs to be analyzed is the reluctance to name these children bilingual or plurilingual, and the French habit of using obscure terminology to define them and incomprehensible acronyms to describe the special courses available for them to learn French^v. It is all the more striking, and unfair that their plurilingual competence is ignored, invisibilized, and silenced when European discourses on plurilingual competence are so prominent in foreign language pedagogy aimed at monolingual learners.

How to move forward? Again, Ofelia García’s thinking gives us the answers we need. What these students need is bilingual pedagogy, what teachers need to understand is that ‘*their language development exist within a bilingual continuum*’, therefore the policy in place for these learners must change, if not at the official level, at least in classrooms. Again, we know it is possible: influenced by their readings of Ofelia García’s work (as well as other researchers), Kadas Pickel (2016) and Prax-Dubois (2018), two teacher/researchers of so-called ‘*allophone*’ students in France, have transformed their classrooms into safe spaces where multilingualism thrives and French is being acquired.

Most importantly, this research shows how students can reconstruct their lives while continuing to use their home languages. They are reconfiguring their plurilingual competence; and because they are allowed to use all their linguistic resources in class, their learning journey is more efficient. For example, students who come from Eastern European countries usually have knowledge of the history of the USSR, so that when the topic comes up in the mainstream history class, they understand the teacher’s discourse but it is very difficult for them to express their knowledge in French. Allowing them to use their own languages and to work in groups could prevent them from hiding their knowledge and being disempowered; it would also help teachers to understand that imposing French only is silencing them, robbing them of the opportunity to participate in class. Furthermore, expecting or waiting for these students to perform like native speakers of French to give them a voice is assimilationist and unfair. Therefore, as expressed by Ofelia García above, allowing these students to use all their language resources will help them to go beyond being ‘only’ French language learners, and to turn into proficient students, even more significantly, into competent and articulate bi/multilingual students and adults.

The Power of Critical Multilingual Language Awareness for Teacher Education

Bilingual education is much more than a technique or a pedagogy. Bilingual education is education, and it is also a way of equalizing opportunities. It rests on principles of social justice, and supports social practices for learning. (García, 2009, p. 386)

This said, for a French history teacher (or of any other school subject), to imagine that students could be speaking a dozen different languages in her class would take a major 'revolution'. The furthest our curriculum has gone along this path is bilingual pedagogy in the form of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), meaning a school subject is taught through a 'foreign' language (FL). Generally, the main aim of the CLIL model is to improve competence in a FL that is usually not the language of learners. This does not mean that learners should not appropriate new languages nor be exposed to learning history through English or German in France, but that the choices of teaching languages should not be restricted to the languages of power, dominant European languages only, therefore giving more power to those who already have it. I have argued previously (Hélot, 2008, 2010, Helot & Erfurt, 2016) that bilingual education in France is a source of inequality in the way it gives precedence to European languages over minoritized migrant languages.

I have not chosen the above quotes of Ofelia García haphazardly. In all of them she stresses the importance of social justice and that bilingual education should be offered to all students. Thus, rather than focusing on the languages that can be taught with the CLIL model, one needs again to insist that the focus should be on the students' own multilingual resources. This shift of perspective makes it possible to imagine that in a mainstream classroom, the teaching language be French (if the teacher is monolingual, which is in fact rare), but that the students' learning languages be different and multiple, that translation be available as well as peer group support, that dictionaries, textbooks in other languages and the internet be used as well. In other words, why restrict the learning languages of multilingual students? They need not always match the teaching language. We know that multilingual communication works in out of schools-spaces where it is very common, and that it also works in classrooms such as the ones participating in the CUNY-NYSIEB^{vi} project where all students are given a voice through their multilingual languaging.

The main issue here for teachers and policy-makers is to shift perspectives from languages to speakers of languages thus to understand multilingualism from a social point of view and not just as a new pedagogy or technique. Ofelia García has spent her life in bilingual classrooms observing learners and at her desk writing about their languaging and about teachers' need to address the linguistic complexities of the twenty first century. She has so aptly analyzed the lived experiences of bi/multilingual learners in and out of schools and repeatedly explained that multilingualism only becomes problematic for children when they enter schools that forbid them from speaking their languages. Why should multilingual children have to adapt to monolingual schools, why do they keep being silenced in so many classrooms, why do teachers relent on the possibility of a joyous languaging polyphony in their schools?

This does not mean teachers in France are not sensitive to their ‘*allophone*’ students’ special needs but very few of them are adequately prepared. Therefore, most of them believe learning French as a ‘foreign language’^{vii} is the only answer and the concern of specialist teachers. In other words, they cannot imagine taking into account the multiple multilingual practices of so many of their students into their classroom practices and even less that doing so would actually maximize learning efficiency and communication for all learners.

As I am writing these sentences, I can hear the voices of so many trainee teachers I have worked with saying, “But how can I work in my class with languages I do not know?” Fear is probably the dominant feeling in schools today regarding the languages of newcomers (just like the fear in the face of immigration in Europe today). Ofelia García (2009, p. 54) is right to point out the positive value of linguistic tolerance associated to the European notion of plurilingualism (Beacco, 2007), but the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity by European institutions is not devoid of its own ideology. Plurilingualism in Europe has been understood as more efficient teaching of more European languages, in other words languages that do not pose any threat to our identity. But what about other languages, for example Corsican, or the languages of others, for example Turkish or Arabic, what about translanguaging in La Réunion where people language with various creoles and varieties of French? All this gives rise to fears, represents a threat to political unity, social cohesion and the ‘purity’ of the French language. Prax-Dubois (2018) studied teachers’ representations of highly heterogeneous language practices in schools in La Réunion; she writes:

Le silence sur les situations de contacts de langues et surtout sur les idéologies qui sous-tendent les pratiques et stratégies langagières dans et hors de l'école n'est pas près de se résorber. La France a peur de ses langues. Même l'anglais a dû lutter en son temps pour se frayer un chemin à l'école primaire” (p. 185).

[The silence about instances of language contact and mostly about the ideologies underpinning linguistic practices and strategies inside and outside of schools will take a long time to be broken. France is afraid of its languages. Even the English language in its time had to fight its own way into primary schools].

I spent many years in France addressing teachers’ fear of languages they did not understand, and believing that allowing students to share their home languages in class would be exclusionary to their peers and the teacher. Deconstructing such fears, explaining discriminatory language practices, and all the issues mentioned above demands time and space in the teacher education curricula; and it is still not seen as a priority. It also demands to be conceptualized within a language education approach that integrates all the languages taught in schools and all the languages of students.

Interestingly, it was through the teaching of a language of power^{viii} (English) that I started taking trainee teachers on the alternative journey of Hawkins’s (1984) language awareness (LA) approach. Hawkins’ aims of LA as a way to question language, to develop linguistic understandings, and to challenge linguistic prejudices met with my objectives. However, in France, LA approaches took their own path, focusing again on languages more than on their speakers even if minoritized languages speakers did benefit affectively from seeing their family languages used at school. They also included

the objective of improving competence in French for migrant students. So that whenever I presented the Didenheim project at academic conferences in France, I had to answer the following question: does LA improve students' competence in French?

Teachers in European schools are asked to develop students' awareness of plurilingualism and linguistic tolerance, although they are rarely confronted with the histories of oppression and social inequalities that produce minoritized status of both regional minorities, including autochthonous and indigenous peoples, and especially immigrants. (García, 2017a, p. 268)

It was never our objective as researchers to test the children in French at the beginning or at the end of the project. We were more interested in the affordances LA gave the children to hear their own voices in their own languages in class, in the process of empowerment it developed in parents whose knowledge was valued at school and in the change of attitudes in teachers who believed previously that migrant parents should speak French at home. In other words, we observed the slow transformation of monolingual classrooms becoming spaces where other languages started to cohabitate with French, where teachers had negotiated their own language policy, understood their own beliefs, attitudes and ideologies, and where migrant parents had become engaged in changing the school culture.

Reading Ofelia García again helped me to question the conceptualization of LA in relation to bilingual education. In her 2008b chapter in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (vol. 6) she chose the term *multilingual language awareness* which was a first clarification for me of what I wanted to do with trainee teachers, not just LA but indeed multilingual LA. This then required addressing social, political, and economic issues surrounding the use of languages in both monolingual and bilingual programs; and it meant taking teachers further on the terrain of critical thinking and getting them to understand the reasons why they should be concerned by glottophobia (Blanchet, 2016). Then I read García's entry into the latest edition of the same encyclopedia (2017a) and saw how her thinking is always on the move. The new entry is entitled "Critical Multilingual Language Awareness (CMLA)". In this chapter, she explains that CMLA for teachers should not only include an understanding of the complex language issues in the twenty-first century but that teachers should 'enact' these understandings in their teaching and in their students' learning.

Enact! Of course! I exclaimed, as so often reading Ofelia García, feeling the power of each new step forward in her thinking. This example illustrates how she, as a great thinker, knows to put forward new ideas that within one's reflection are only at the stage of intuition. The tables she used in 2008b to summarize the different kind of knowledge and awareness needed by teachers keep growing, including in 2017, a further component of CMLA: the awareness that language is socially created, thus socially changeable. This idea has been especially productive in my own interpretation of language policies in France and my understanding of the way the hegemony of French is perpetuated in educational institutions.

If language is socially changeable it means teachers have agency to negotiate their own language policy in their classrooms. Indeed, I had analyzed this in a chapter

written for a volume edited by Menken and García (2010) where I had shown that despite a context where implementational spaces for change are scarce (école maternelle in France), beginner teachers had managed to negotiate their own language policy in order to embrace their young students' multilingualism. Both teachers had experienced pedagogy as situated in practice and thus understood the importance of transgressing the French only language policy. The learners concerned in this case were plurilingual three-year-olds entering school, which made it crucial for the beginner teachers to ensure they felt safe and secure throughout their first schooling experiences. This could only be achieved by teachers enacting their understanding of the complex linguistic hierarchies prevailing in their schools, and challenging a language regime that excludes children linguistically when they enter schools.

Teacher education programs must engage teachers in changing the sociolinguistic order and the ways in which languages have been constructed and hierarchized. (García, 2017a, p. 277)

According to García, pedagogy is about changing the world; therefore, like Freire (1970), she is a transformative educator and throughout her impressive career she has formulated critical models of teacher education meant "to result in action that has the potential not only to transform practice and pedagogy but also to transform the lives of children and communities." (García, 2017a, p. 276)

The Power of a New Concept: Translanguaging

Translanguaging or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices, is an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable. (García, 2009, p. 44)

Some books have a very powerful effect on their readers, academic research can be ground breaking for its field of inquiry, and some researchers totally transform the vision of the phenomenon we have been studied for years. Sometimes you even say to yourself: 'this is the book I wish I had written'! García's 500-page-volume on bilingual education in the 21st century (2009) was all this for me. She was questioning so many notions I had ended up taking for granted, because they were easy to explain; they suited my context; and they seemed to have an impact. The power of her thinking resides in the way she does not sit with easy categorizations. She goes straight to the heart of simplified dichotomies and she questions them. She questions relentlessly the central issues in our field: what does it mean to be bilingual; what does it mean to educate children bilingually; how should bilingual teachers be educated?

Most crucially she asks what is language; what are named languages, and what do we do with our languages; how do bilinguals perform their bilingualism; why is there so much inequity in the education of bilinguals; how we should redress it and why? Beyond questioning our comfortable assumptions, García also shows us how to expand our thinking from bilingual education to multilingual education. Multilingual education poses far more complex pedagogical questions than bilingual education, so that she is always searching for new theories to interpret a new reality. Based on her very wide knowledge of research on bilingual education throughout the world, she found a term in the work of the Welsh researcher Ces Williams (1994; 2002), whom she

never forgets to quote, the term ‘translanguaging’. But whereas Williams used the term as a synonym to language alternation in bilingual classroom, García developed an extensive theoretical investigation of the concept and profoundly transformed previous research on code switching and mixing. Since her 2009 book, she has expanded her research further in numerous publications, however, not without putting it to the test in a major empirical project in public schools in New York City. The CUNY-NYSIEB^{ix} project has now become an invaluable resource for researchers and teachers wishing to embark on transformative bi/multilingual pedagogy.

Ofelia García’s relentless questioning of her conceptualization of translanguaging in political, sociolinguistic, and educational terms over the last ten years has impacted the field of bilingual education in a very powerful way. The number of researchers who have now appropriated the term across the world, the number of conferences which main topic is translanguaging, attest to the impossibility of ignoring her work. Similarly, a flurry of books and articles have been published since her 2009 volume, using the concept of translanguaging as if it were no longer possible to think of bi/multilinguals’ practices and bi/multilingual pedagogy without it. Even in France, researchers working with minoritized language speakers and bilingual teachers refer to her definitions (Mary & Young, 2017). At the European level, where researchers have been working with the notion of plurilingual competence, Ofelia García (2017b) was asked to contribute to a document published by the Council of Europe on the integration of adult migrants where she explained the role of translanguaging for language teachers. Although the difference between code-switching and translanguaging is still not always understood properly, the concept as elaborated by García makes sense; it makes so much sense when one is bilingual or when one has to teach bilinguals, that one wonders how as researchers in this field we did without it for so long. However, like all new brilliant ideas spreading throughout the scientific literature, new concepts meet some detractors who see it as a slogan or a fashionable term simply because it is recurrent in the scientific literature.

It is very easy to counter argue such discourses if one reads García’s publications since 2009. Whether in her books or articles with Kleyn (García & Kleyn, 2016), with Bartlett (Bartlett & García, 2011), with Ibarra Johnson, Kate Seltzer, and Guadalupe Valdes (García, Johnson, Seltzer, & Valdés, 2017), with Li Wei (García & Wei, 2014), with Velasco (Velasco & García, 2014), with Sanchez (García & Sanchez, 2015), with Menken (García & Menken, 2015), with Otheguy and Reid (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015), or in her work with the Council of Europe (García, 2017b), etc., she has been expanding in more and more depth what she means by translanguaging; she also gives ample examples of translanguaging practices in multilingual classrooms where students and teachers are engaged in languaging to learn using their full linguistic repertoires, rather than inhibiting half of it.

Translanguaging, however, refers to the way that bilinguals use their language repertoires, from their own perspectives, and not from the perspectives of the national or standard languages. What is important to realize is that from the speaker’s (i.e. internal) perspective, what he or she has is one linguistic repertoire. (García et al., 2017, p. 20)

In my opinion, the most incisive clarification of the concept is the distinction García makes between the insider perspective on bilingualism and the outsider perspective, the deep personal lived experience of bilingualism and the outside perspective on languages as named linguistic objects that nobody really speaks. But she is a pedagogue and a realist; she insists both perspectives should be kept in mind in the education sphere. Seeing the bilingual from the individual vantage point or the insider perspective helps to understand that bilinguals have a unitary linguistic competence, similar to the European notion of plurilingual competence, an integrated competence from which the speaker selects one of the other or both languages to negotiate a communicative situation. If one stands in an outsider position or traditional social position towards bilinguals, one will observe dual competence, which is often judged in comparison to an ideal monolingual standard. Consequently, depending on what educators want to do, they should be able to consider their bilingual learners from both perspectives the insider and the outsider.

García's theorizing of the notion of translanguaging is based on her extensive observations and deep understanding of the languaging practices of bilinguals in everyday life; she does not conceive of bilinguals having separate competence in two or more languages, as is so often the focus in school policies of bilingual education. Yet, she is not saying that bilingual children should not learn to language monolingually in certain situations, but that they should not be forbidden to translanguage. She argues that if one shares the principles of a child-centered pedagogy, one should give learners the right to access all of their available resources and prior knowledge. Furthermore, when teachers adopt an insider perspective on bilingual speakers, they then come to ask themselves why the use of only one language is imposed, by whom and to what aims.

Before I started using the term myself, the questions that the concept of translanguaging raises were at the heart of my research in bilingual families, in multilingual classrooms, and in early childhood centers. For my thesis on bilingual families in Dublin I questioned the one parent one language policy. Based on interviews with parents I asked them if they "mixed" their languages and what they thought of it. While approximately half the French mothers (who were teachers) were adamant they always used French and only French with their children, other mothers admitted the policy was too difficult to adhere to at all times. When I tested the children, their level in French was no different whether the mother used only French or "mixed" with English from time to time.

I was well aware that the mothers' discourses were declared policies corresponding to a monolingual vision of bilingualism and I wondered how they could inhibit their bilingual competence at all times with their children. I knew myself as a bilingual mother that it was not possible to speak French all the time with my children in Ireland. Yet at the time (in the 1980s) and still today in France, the one language/one person policy is thought to be the most efficient strategy in mixed lingual families; and such a policy implies that each parent should language monolingually. But what does such a belief entail? It means that bilingual parents implementing this policy to bring up their children with two languages control their language practices more or less all

the time, as well as those of their children, they inhibit their bilingual competence and model monolingual languaging to their children.

Interestingly, a lot of the data I collected from children included examples of translanguaging which I interpreted then as transfer, as in this example: “*je veux une tartine *avec-sans* beurre*” [I want a slice of bread with-without butter]. Such a sentence can only be produced by a French/English bilingual child and illustrates clearly why we should adopt an inner perspective on the languaging of bilinguals. Therefore, when Ofelia García writes that bilinguals access a language continuum when they express themselves it makes perfect sense, as well as when she explains that “there are no clear-cut boundaries between the languages of bilinguals” (García, 2009, p. 47). That is indeed what the concept of translanguaging makes obvious.

An equitable pedagogy under no circumstances forbids a student to use either language. (García, 2009, p. 320)

Translanguaging in classroom contexts is far more controversial than in everyday life in the family. Schools by nature are spaces where language practices are strictly controlled and where children must adapt to the norms of standard and academic language. In some bilingual programs they also have to adapt to the policy in place and to different teachers, spaces, times, and subjects being allocated to each language separately. The perspective on learners and languages in these programs is an outside societal perspective where practices are idealized to correspond to a supposed native speaker, “a category which is just another way to keep power in the hands of the few and exclude those who are different” as explained by García (2017b, p. 14).

This is specifically relevant to the work I carried out with trainee bilingual teachers in Alsace. I wanted to question the notion of native speaker and the one language one teacher policy in place, a policy that splits the schooling experience of children between German and French with two teachers working separately. As explained elsewhere (Hélot, 2014; Hélot & Fialais, 2014) the conceptualization of this bilingual program is monoglossic in the sense that it operates as parallel monolingualism, the language taught is Hochdeutsch (in Alsace where a regional variety Alsatian is still in use) and the pedagogy is based on the framing of language as L1 or L2 thus on second language acquisition principles rather than on bilingual pedagogy. In other words, teachers and learners are expected to language monolingually and therefore have to inhibit their bilingual competence at all times, which is particularly difficult at the beginning of the program with children aged 3 or 4. This policy also means that teachers’ identity is affected because they teach only German (and through German). Briefly, the one language one teacher policy is put in place to make sure that translanguaging does not happen, and that the border between two national languages remains in place in a region where the translanguaging of Alsatian speakers is stigmatized.

Again, it was quite a challenge within such an environment, to introduce trainee bilingual teachers to the latest research on translanguaging pedagogy. Having observed bilingual teachers I knew that they did in fact translanguage at times, simply because it could not be helped, but they always felt guilty about it, believing using French from

time to time was not good for their students' acquisition of German. Deciding it was not ethical in such circumstances to gather data from these illegitimate instances of translanguaging, I turned to written examples of translanguaging in literature, children's literature, and literary work produced by bi/multilingual authors. What I found in the domain of children's literature was a very monoglossic vision of bilingualism where dual language books display two or more languages, hierarchically with the dominant language on top of the minoritized one. For example, I analyzed several translated books from English into French and French into English^x and found cultural differences erased, thus children's ability to understand difference underestimated. Very few books for children portray bilingual characters and fewer again dare to replicate the translanguaging practices of bilinguals. And when some multilingual authors make a point of using transgressive creative heteroglossic practices, their work is refused by publishers^{xi}.

My search for instances of translanguaging in adult literature was more successful and illustrates so well what García meant by the inner perspective on what it means to be bi/multilingual. I found several translanguaging writers who because of their personal experiences as trans-nationals were crossing borders and languages and creating new literary forms that expressed the creativity of the translanguaging practices of their community. What some of these authors show is how through translanguaging, bilinguals create their own language beyond the named languages defined by societal groups, and how translanguaging gives them the possibility of not having to choose between one language and the other. Recreating in their novels the real languaging practices of their community gives them and their readers a new legitimacy, which also enables them to question the power differentials between state languages like English and Spanish in the US for example, as in the novel of Junot Diaz (2008)^{xii}. What such authors help us to understand is that they do not just go across these named languages but that their translanguaging practices is their own means of expression, of creativity, and through translanguaging new literary voices emerge.

Reflecting on this session now, I believe it was useful for the trainee bilingual teachers to question the legitimacy of the strict separation of languages in their program and it helped them to acknowledge the linguistic insecurity entailed in having to function as a monolingual German speaker all the time. They did understand that German was part of their plurilingual repertoire in other words not just the language of others across the border but also their own, therefore no longer an L2, and they were happy to throw out the myth of the native speaker. They were convinced they should not forbid the use of French in their class despite thinking at the beginning of the course that allowing French in the German class would make learners lazy. They were impressed by the pedagogical affordances of translanguaging but would need more training to feel legitimate implementing it in their own teaching. What was most difficult was questioning the power issues related to the reification of national languages and specifically the dominant positionality given to academic French in schools.

To Conclude

The advantage of educating adult migrants with translanguaging theory and pedagogy in mind is that in focusing on the practices of people, it gives agency to minoritized speakers, decolonizes linguistic knowledge, and engages all of us in the social transformations that the world so sorely needs today. (García, 2017b, p. 24)

Translanguaging theory was born out of a poststructuralist and critical perspective on the ontology of language, bilingualism, and native speakers; it profoundly disrupts traditional ways of thinking about language, language policy, and language education. It argues first and foremost that language belongs to speakers rather than to nation states, and it questions the linguistic oppression of minoritized language speakers. The power of García's theoretical advances lies not only in the concept of translanguaging but in the way she has also reconceptualized it in pedagogical terms. Her empirical work in translanguaging pedagogy shows very convincingly that it is possible to transform our monolingual educational systems and to teach and learn multilingually in 21st century classrooms all over the world. Her visionary work on the philosophical stance that teachers of immigrant students should adopt to transform their educational practice with equity and social justice in mind is admirable.

No doubt for me today, the most challenging part of my work in France is to decolonize linguistic knowledge. Decolonizing linguistic knowledge, decolonizing French schools (Salaün, 2013) or decolonizing English language teaching (Hélot, Masahito, & Young, 2018; López-Gopar, 2016) means before anything else “se décoloniser l'esprit” [to decolonize one's mind] (Thiong'o, 2011^{xiii}). I was very lucky at 18 to leave France and to spend a year in California which changed my life forever because I left my language at home, learned to live through a new language which meant going beyond the many ideological borders of my French upbringing and education. Then later on, after living 17 years in Ireland, I was a returnee to France, which was an experience somewhat similar to migration except that I spoke the language and had legal rights. I felt deeply the pain of exile, and the social disqualification at the beginning. I discovered my Irish accent had to be adjusted for the teaching of phonetics in the English department, and that every time I opened my mouth in French, I felt judged. All these experiences were food for thought for a sociolinguist and made me sensitive to the plight of children speaking minoritized languages at home and being stigmatized in schools. It took me a long time and a lot of effort to untangle the historical, political, social, and educational factors that were the cause of the linguistic oppression of migrant children. But I had some guiding lights on this long journey: Ofelia García was my lighthouse, standing strong and tall in the academic sea of sociolinguistic research. She guided me on my many scientific explorations. Today, she still inspires me to enact the understandings I have gained through reading her most compelling writings on language, multilingual education, and social justice. In this article, I have expressed my gratitude for her and the scholarship she has accomplished.

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End Notes

ⁱ The various contributions were published in 2008a in Hélot et al. "*Penser le bilinguisme autrement*, Frankfurt, D.E.: Peter Lang.

ⁱⁱ Published in the above volume as "*L'enseignement en milieu multilingue aux Etats-Unis*", (García, 2008a).

ⁱⁱⁱ Translanguaging has been compared to Lüdy and Py's (1986) expression '*le parler bilingue*'. I think '*parler translanguages*' would be a more accurate translation.

^{iv} This was the subtitle I chose for a book I edited with M. O'Laoire in 2011 entitled *Language Policy for the Multilingual Classroom. Pedagogy of the possible*, Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters

^v UPE2A : *Unité pédagogique pour élèves allophones nouvellement arrivés*. These are classes offered at primary and lower secondary levels for newcomer's students which they attend for 10 to 12 hours per week learning French. The rest of the time they are schooled in a mainstream class usually with no support in French.

^{vi} See the website at <https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/>. It offers guides, videos, report, webinars, research, etc.

^{vii} The field of language didactics in France uses several terms to refer to the teaching of French to non French speakers: French as a foreign language, as a second language, as a language of instruction, and even as a language of integration

^{viii} Similarly, in Japan, Hélot, Masahito, and Young (2018) designed a course on critical language awareness for teachers of English as a second language. This poses the question in countries such as France or Japan of finding the available spaces in monoglossic teacher education curricula for critical multilingual awareness.

^{ix} See the website at <https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/>. It offers guides, videos, report, webinars, research, etc.

^x Recently I was sent the US translation of a beautiful French picture book entitled « Premier Printemps » and in this case the picture had been amended, the upper body of a stylized little girl at the beach was covered by a swimming top !

^{xi} For example, I met Amaia Hennebutte-Millard in the French Basque country. She told me her book of poems *Begi Blue* in which she translanguages from Basque, to English, to French and Spanish was refused by her regular publisher.

^{xii} It should be noted that "the Brief Wondrous like of Oscar Wao" won the Pulitzer prize. Up to this day, I have found no other novel that uses translanguaging to such an extent and that reflects so beautifully the creativity of latino speakers in the US.

^{xiii} I read this book in French but it was first published in English under the title *Decolonising the Mind*, published in 1986 by East African Educational Publishers. The author is Kenyan and explains in this book why he decided to stop writing in English and to write only in Kikuyu and kiSwahili. He has been in exile in the USA for many years. He taught at the University of California in Irvine and directed the International Centre for Writing and Translation.