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Code-Meshing and Writing Instruction in Multilingual Classrooms

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Code-meshing offers an instructional framework that incorporates multiple languages into classrooms, interrogates notions of which languages are "correct" or "appropriate" within those spaces, and broadens how to approach writing instruction for linguistically diverse students.

It was almost Mother's Day, and students in Ms. Raniya's (all names are pseudonyms, except where noted) early childhood classroom were working on cards about their mothers. Jayda, a 4-year-old black girl and speaker of African American Language (AAL), was describing her mother to Ms. Raniya. The written portion of the card includes sentence starters in a standardized English, such as "My mom likes to make ___" and "My mom says ___." When Ms. Raniya read the sentence starter "My mom is the prettiest when ___," Jayda finished the sentence with "she get clothes on and go outside and barbeque." In another sentence starter, "My mom is funny when she ___," Jayda responded with "tickle me."

In both responses, Jayda employed the AAL grammatical rule in which the third-person singular form is implied based on context and thus does not require the verb to end in an *s*. Ms. Raniya was intentional in writing Jayda's words exactly as she spoke them, meshing together both AAL and Dominant American English in the card. We use the term *Dominant American English* (DAE) rather than *Standard English* to reflect how dominant sociopolitical factors influence what is considered standard (Paris, 2011). In this article, we disrupt standardizing mythologies regarding language and language varieties and offer suggestions for how teachers can build on students' linguistic repertoires (including AAL, Spanish, and other languages) by using code-meshing—the intentional integration of multiple codes or languages in writing (Canagarajah, 2011; Young, Barret, Young-Rivera, & Lovejoy, 2014)—to support writing development.

Language, Power, and Standardization

Jayda's and Ms. Raniya's code-meshing is an exception rather than the norm for how teachers respond to marginalized languages in the classroom (Young et al., 2014), particularly in writing. There is a common and long-standing myth that language learning is a zero-sum game, in which learners have finite cognitive space available for language learning (Grosjean, 2012; Ramírez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991). This myth underlies concerns that any time and energy spent speaking AAL, Spanish, or other marginalized languages somehow limits students' potential to develop DAE.

This myth is sustained in part by negative societal images of blackness and black cultures and by common misconceptions of AAL as slang or incorrect English. This is despite more than half a century of linguistic research documenting AAL as both systematic and rule governed (Labov, 1972; Smitherman, 1977, 2006; Wolfram & Fasold, 1974). Similarly, multilingual students are often subjected to subtractive pedagogies because of similar deficit assumptions regarding bilingualism and students' home languages (Palmer, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999).

Dominant ideologies about language are so deeply rooted that many linguistically diverse speakers carry deficit assumptions regarding their own language. For AAL speakers, this is the linguistic push-pull (Lippi-Green, 2012; Smitherman, 2006); the term describes the way some black Americans incorporate AAL into their own speech but repudiate the language at the same time.

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The pervasiveness of deficit assumptions regarding language varieties other than DAE is evidence of the inseparability of language and power. In the United States, white supremacy and ethnocentrism have played significant roles in identifying the language of many white middle and upper class Americans as "standard" English (Alim & Smitherman, 2012). Similarly, negative views of immigration from places such as Mexico, Africa, and the Middle East accompany deficit views of their languages (Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015). In short, which languages or language varieties are deemed "standard" has more to do with who is speaking them than the relative value of specific grammatical structures for communicative and cognitive purposes. This is underscored by the fact that what is considered "standard" English has shifted over time (Hudley & Mallinson, 2014).

One result of deficit views and misconceptions regarding language is that classrooms become linguistic sieves that filter out all languages except DAE, rather than spaces in which students' home languages become starting points for learning. Code-meshing, however, can help disrupt these power relationships. In the next section, we describe code-meshing as a translanguaging practice.

PAUSE AND PONDER

- What role do the home and community languages of students at your school play in curricular and instructional decision making?
- How are nondominant languages, such as AAL or Spanish, perceived among staff members at your school?
- How can your administration invest in further developing teachers' awareness about AAL and other varieties of English in your school?
- What elements of code-meshing included in this article can be incorporated into your literacy instruction?

Code-Meshing as a Translanguaging Practice

Over the past decade, educators have paid more attention to multilingual students' translanguaging practices (how bilingual and bidialectal students dynamically move across and among languages) and how teachers may recognize and honor students' dynamic language practices in the classroom (Baker-Bell, 2013; O. García & Kleifgen, 2010; Pacheco & Miller, 2016). As noted by Pacheco and Miller and by García and Kleifgen, translanguaging pedagogies encourage students to recruit all of their linguistic resources in literacy tasks, rather than separating languages. Indeed, recent research has shown that such pedagogies can support students in more complex literacy practices and cognitive tasks than they could accomplish monolingually (G.E. García & Godina, 2017; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014).

Young and Martinez (2011) described code-meshing broadly as the blending of minoritized languages with DAE, encompassing both oral and written language practices. Others, however, have understood code-meshing more narrowly as a writing practice in which languages are intentionally integrated, particularly within sentences (Canagarajah, 2011). Although both understandings have merit, we focus on the latter given our emphasis on writing in this article. Nevertheless, both of these understandings of code-meshing differ from code-switching.

Also a translanguaging practice, code-switching may be more familiar to readers than code-meshing. Code-switching has garnered some uptake in schools, through the work of Wheeler and Swords (2006), and in the media, as evidenced by the National Public Radio Code Switch project (https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/04/05/176351804/about-us) and the work of comedians Keegan Key and Jordan Peele on the Comedy Central TV network (http://www.cc.com/shows/key-and-peele).

Researchers in bilingual education and biliteracy have understood code-switching as the oral use of two or more languages either within or across sentences (intrasententially or intersententially) in ways that are syntactically coherent (Escamilla et al., 2014). However, this degree of language integration has not characterized curricular instantiations of code-switching with respect to Spanish or AAL use in the classroom. Wheeler and Swords's (2006) seminal curricular framework for code-switching, for example, emphasizes language separation rather than integration, encouraging students to switch to primarily DAE within school or other formal settings. Although their work recognized the systematicity of AAL and students' varied linguistic repertoires, some researchers have critiqued this understanding of code-switching as an instructional frame for perpetuating deficit language attitudes among students (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). Their concern is that AAL and other marginalized language varieties

are relegated to informal contexts and thus do not challenge the academic and cognitive value of multilingualism. This is despite the fact that language varieties such as AAL are used in a wide array of contexts, both formal and informal (Young et al., 2014). In other words, code-switching risks forcing a binary in which both languages cannot coexist within school contexts.

In contrast to code-switching, code-meshing involves the intentional incorporation of more than one language within writing to "exploit and blend those differences" (Young et al., 2014, p. 43) in a way that frees students to exercise identity and agency within their language use. Code-meshing may incorporate instruction on the grammatical differences between DAE and AAL or other languages, but its purpose is not the separation of languages according to audience or context. Rather, it encourages the use of multiple languages within a text. Conversely, code-switching asks speakers to translate home languages to "appropriate" or formal oral and written language, which is typically deemed to be DAE.

Although multilingual students' writing and code-meshing have been the focus of recent research (Gillanders, 2018; Miller & Rowe, 2014; Soltero-González & Butvilofsky, 2016), teachers may be less familiar with how to integrate code-meshing into writing instruction. In the next section, we offer classroom examples of multilingual students' code-meshing. We follow with suggestions for classroom teachers seeking to enable and sustain students' language and literacy development through code-meshing.

Code-Meshing in the Classroom

The two examples that we offer are drawn from our previous research. Alice's (first author) study (A. Lee, 2015) investigated three teachers' knowledge of language diversity and the role of such knowledge in their classroom pedagogy. This study occurred during the 2013–2014 school year and involved documenting literacy instruction, including using code-meshing while writing Mother's Day cards in a pre-K classroom.

Lara's (second author) yearlong research (Handsfield, 2016; Handsfield & Valente, 2016) focused on language, positioning, and identity during literacy instruction in a fourth-grade bilingual (Spanish–English) classroom. Although the focus of the study was primarily on reading comprehension, reader response activities were often integrated with writing instruction, which yielded examples of students' code-meshing.

Jacobi's Mother's Day Card

Jacobi was a 4-year-old black speaker of AAL and DAE in Ms. Raniya's early childhood classroom. As shown in the opening vignette, writing Mother's Day cards was one example of how Ms. Raniya created space for multilingual students' code-meshing in her literacy instruction. After students finished drawings of their mothers, Ms. Raniya helped them finish their cards by transcribing their words as they explained their illustrations and described their mothers.

Although creating Mother's Day cards is a fairly common practice in early childhood classrooms (Dennis & Votteler, 2013), Ms. Raniya's choice to honor students' use of AAL by writing their words just as they were spoken came out of her experiences in graduate school. Learning that AAL is a real language gave her conviction to allow AAL speakers the same linguistic rights as other students. She also learned that language is socially acquired, which allowed her to see that correcting students' language would not help them acquire DAE.

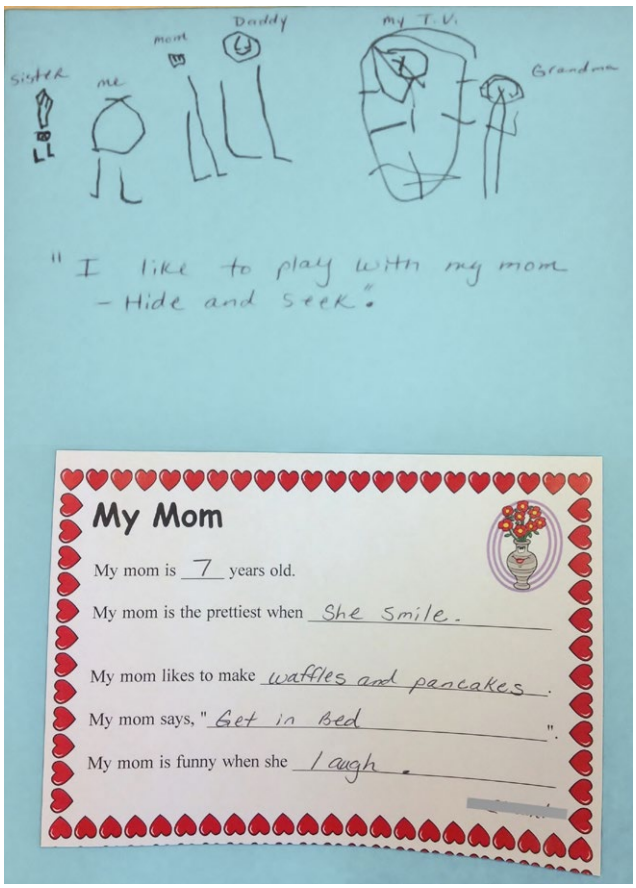
Figure 1 captures what Jacobi had drawn and said about his mother. In his description of his mother, we see Jacobi code-mesh both languages. Similar to Jayda from the opening vignette, Jacobi used AAL to complete the sentence starters written in DAE. The caption for his drawing, "I like to play with my mom," is spoken and then transcribed in DAE. Later in the card, however, Jacobi incorporated AAL syntax.

The most salient AAL grammatical rule in Jacobi's words is the deletion of *s* at the end of a verb following a third-person singular subject. For example, Jacobi's second line reads, "My mom is the prettiest when she smile." The verb following *she* (third-person singular subject) omits the *s* at the end of the word ("smile"). In DAE, the sentence would read, "My mom is the prettiest when she smiles."

We see this syntax again in the last line, "My mom is funny when she laugh." The *s* from *laughs* is dropped after a third-person singular subject, *she*. The deletion of the *s* to form the verbs *smile* and *laugh* are not accidental. Rather, they signify Jacobi's usage of and fluency in AAL.

Jacobi's language choices also indicated an awareness of audience, potentially on both Jacobi's part and Ms. Raniya's. Because the card was for Jacobi's mother, it made sense for him to use the language that he would use with his mother. As with Jayda, Ms. Raniya's

Figure 1
Jacobi's Mother's Day Card



Note. The color figure can be viewed in the online version of this article at http://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com.

choice to transcribe Jacobi's utterances as he spoke them illustrated how she invited students to incorporate and use their home language along with DAE.

During these conferences, Ms. Raniya also drew students' attention to the fact that she was writing down their words. She reread the entire card back to them, sometimes pointing to the words as she read them, and asked them if they liked how the card sounded. Students enjoyed seeing and hearing their words, true to the way they were spoken. Ms. Raniya also took the opportunity to teach students conventions and show how she would add punctuation to the writing when necessary.

Ana and Clarita's Lucha Libre *Story*

Our second example takes us to a fourth-grade bilingual classroom, where students collaboratively composed stories modeled after the picture book and mentor text *Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask: A Bilingual Cuento* by Xavier Garza (2005). Garza's text features the world of Mexican wrestling. Although the book is written in both Spanish and English, with the two narrations separated on each page, Garza's use of language includes code-meshing in the mostly English narration. An example is a conversation between Carlitos and his father at a wrestling match:

> "Are Mexican wrestlers really superheroes," I ask.
>
> "They are better than superheroes, *mi'jo*," Papá Lupe assures me. "*Luchadores* are real people who nobody ever sees without their masks!"
>
> "Wow," I say. "Then anybody could be a masked *luchador*, right?" (n.p.)

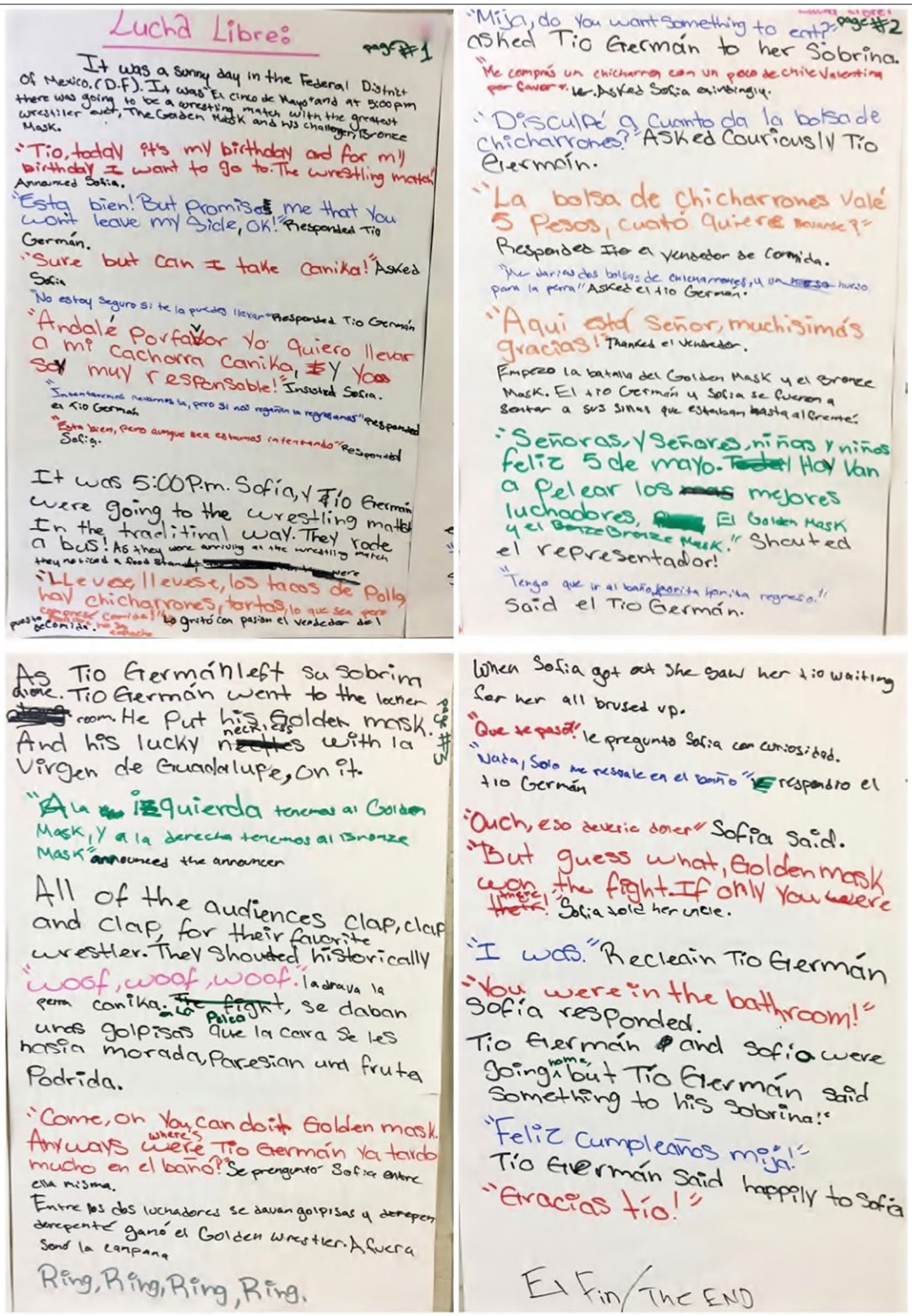
Garza's code-meshing is targeted in that virtually all instances involve substituting Spanish nouns for English ones and surrounding those words with contextual clues for the benefit of monolingual English readers. This occurs in Carlitos's initial question about Mexican wrestlers and Papá Lupe's use of the Spanish word *luchadores* in his response.

In addition, some of the Spanish words in the English narration are unique to Mexican wrestling, such as *los técnicos* (the good guys) and *los rudos* (the bad guys), or are terms of endearment, such as *mi'jo*, a contraction of *mi* (my) and *hijo* (son). Garza also uses the Spanish form of proper nouns and titles, such as "*Papá* Lupe" and "*El Vampiro*," the name of a wrestler. These terms are difficult to translate in culturally meaningful ways, so presenting them in Spanish adds to the cultural authenticity of the text. Together, Garza's code-meshing demonstrates a high level of audience awareness.

Ana and Clarita's teacher, Patricia Valente (who asked that we use her real name), conducted an interactive read-aloud of the text and discussed Garza's linguistic choices. Students then worked in partners to compose their own *lucha libre* stories. Ana and Clarita's narrative is shown in Figure 2.

As in Garza's text, some of Ana and Clarita's Spanish phrases are easily deciphered by context: "*Está bien!* But promise me that you won't leave my side, OK!" They also used Spanish titles, such as "*El Cinco de Mayo*" and "*Tío* Germán." Unlike Garza, however, they also meshed English proper nouns into paragraphs written largely in Spanish: "*Señoras y señores, niñas y niños. Felíz 5 de mayo. Hoy van a pelear los mejores luchadores, El* Golden Mask *y el* Bronze Mask" (p. 2; "Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys. Happy fifth of May. Today two of the best fighters will face off, the Golden Mask and the Bronze Mask").

Figure 2
Ana and Clarita's *Lucha Libre* Story



Lucha Libre: page #1

It was a sunny day in the Federal District of Mexico. (D.F). It was El cinco de Mayo and at 5:00 pm there was going to be a wrestling match with the greatest wrestler ever, The Golden Mask and his challenger, Bronze Mask.

"Tio, today it's my birthday and for my birthday I want to go to the wrestling match" Announced Sofia.

"Esta bien! But Promise me that you won't leave my Side, ok!" Responded Tio Germán.

"Sure but can I take Canika!" Asked Sofia.

"No estoy seguro si te la puedas llevar" Responded Tio Germán

"Andalé Porfavor Yo quiero llevar a mi cachorra Canika, Y Yo soy muy responsable!" Insisted Sofia.

"Intentaremos llevarnos la, pero si nos regañan la regresamos" responded el Tio Germán.

"Esta bien, pero aunque sea estamos intentando" Responded Sofia.

It was 5:00 P.m. Sofía, y Tío Germán were going to the wrestling match In the traditional way. They rode a bus! As they were arriving at the wrestling match they noticed a food stand. [redacted] were

"Llevese, llevese, los tacos de Pollo hay chicharrones, tortas, lo que sea pero compren comida!" Lo gritó con pasion el vendedor del puesto de comida. [redacted]

"Mija, do you want something to eat?" page #2 asked Tio Germán to her Sobrina.

"Me compras un chicharron con un poco de chile Valentina por favor." Asked Sofia enthusiasticly.

"Disculpé a cuanto da la bolsa de chicharrones?" Asked Courious Tio Germán.

"La bolsa de chicharrones valé 5 Pesos, cuató quiere llevarse?" Responded el vendedor de comida.

"Que darias dos bolsas de chicharrones, y un hueso para la perra" Asked el tio Germán.

"Aqui está Señor, muchisimás gracias!" Thanked el vendedor.

Empezo la batalla del Golden Mask y el Bronze Mask. El tio Germán y Sofia se fueron a sentar a sus sillas que estaban hasta al frente.

"Señoras, y Señores, niñas y niños feliz 5 de mayo. Hoy van a pelear los mejores luchadores, El Golden Mask y el Bronze Mask." Shouted el representador!

"Tengo que ir al baño, bonita, ponita regreso." Said el Tio Germán.

As Tio Germán left su sobrina alone. Tio Germán went to the locker room. He put his Golden mask. And his lucky necklace with la Virgen de Guadalupe, on it.

"A la izquierda tenemos al Golden Mask, y a la derecha tenemos al Bronze Mask" announced the announcer

All of the audiences clap, clap and clap, for their favorite wrestler. They shouted historically "woof, woof, woof." la ladraba la perra Canika. ~~The fight~~ La Pelea, se daban unos golpisas que la cara se les hasia morada, Paresian una fruta Podrida.

"Come, on You can do it Golden mask. Anyways where's Tio Germán ya tardo mucho en el baño?" Se preguntó Sofia entre ella misma.

Entre los dos luchadores se davan golpisas y derepente derepente ganó el Golden wrestler. A fuera sonó la campana

Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring.

When Sofia got out she saw her tio waiting for her all brused up.

"Que se pasó?" le preguntó Sofia con curiosidad.

"Nada, Solo me resbale en el baño" respondio el tio Germán

"Ouch, eso deberia doler" Sofia said.

"But guess what, Golden mask won the fight. If only you were there!" Sofia told her uncle.

"I was." Reclaim Tio Germán

"You were in the bathroom!" Sofia responded.

Tio Germán and Sofia were going home, but Tio Germán said something to his sobrina:

"Feliz Cumpleaños mija!" Tio Germán said happily to Sofia

"Gracias tío!"

El Fin / The END

Note. The color figure can be viewed in the online version of this article at http://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com.

Ana and Clarita also wove more Spanish, including entire sentences, into their narrative as well as Spanish and English speech descriptors, such as "responded *Tío* Germán" (p. 1), "shouted *el representador*" (p. 2), and "*Se preguntó Sofía entre ella misma*" (p. 3; "Sofía asked herself"). Additionally, Ana and Clarita meshed English terms with their Spanish abbreviations, which we see in the first sentence: "It was a sunny day in the Federal District of Mexico. (D.F)" (p. 1). D.F. is the abbreviation of the Spanish *Distrito Federal*. These choices may make their text less accessible to monolingual readers but may also indicate their audience awareness: The primary readers for their story were their teacher and their classmates, who were all bilingual in Spanish and English.

The code-meshing used by Jacobi, Ms. Raniya, and Ana and Clarita disrupts the common assumption that AAL, Spanish, and DAE are completely separate or incompatible semantic and syntactic systems. Such language practices are not uncommon in multilingual classrooms. However, because of negative assumptions regarding linguistically and culturally diverse students, such code-meshing is rarely invited or encouraged, particularly in students' writing.

Pedagogical Possibilities

Building on the two examples that we have given, in this section, we provide ideas for teachers interested in sustaining their own students' community languages through code-meshing while also growing students' competencies in DAE. Specifically, we discuss the use of mentor texts, remixing monolingual texts using code-meshing, and principles of assessing students' code-meshed writing.

Mentor Texts That Include Code-Meshing

In the example of Ana and Clarita's code-meshing, the teacher, Patricia, used *Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask: A Bilingual Cuento* (Garza, 2005) as a mentor text. Such texts often serve as models of author's craft in writers' workshop (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2017; Ray, 1999) and as touchstone texts for teaching a variety of literary concepts. Selecting mentor texts with code-meshing honors languages other than DAE within the official curriculum and engages multilingual speakers with a text that has language with which they are already familiar. Importantly, they can also be used to teach students about language, including complex graphophonemic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic concepts.

For AAL, teachers may consider using *Flossie and the Fox* by Patricia McKissack, *Almost to Freedom* by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson, or *Bruh Rabbit and the Tar Baby Girl* by Virginia Hamilton, which also includes the Gullah language. For Spanish, English, and other languages, in addition to bilingual picture books with parallel or side-by-side narrations, mentor texts may include more integrated code-meshing, such as the novel in verse *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, or *Chato's Kitchen* by Gary Soto.

During interactive read-alouds, teachers can engage students in analyzing authors' language choices to prompt complex thinking about language and show how students can incorporate their own languages in ways that enhance both the complexity and authenticity of their writing. The text *Bruh Rabbit and the Tar Baby Girl*, for example, can be used as a mentor text to highlight character development, the use of dialogue in storytelling, descriptive language, and conflict/resolution. During one-on-one conferences, teachers can refer back to the mentor texts as students consider how to incorporate those aspects of writing into their own stories.

For younger students still learning to connect oral and written language, teachers can follow Ms. Raniya's example and assist students in transcribing their words. They can then use students' own code-meshing practices as models, pointing out students' linguistic flexibility, audience awareness, and meaning-making practices. For older students, teachers can follow Patricia's lead and invite students to write stories that include the kinds of translanguaging practices they use in their everyday lives.

Finally, teachers can incorporate code-meshing through the use of multimodal mentor texts and tools, such as graphic novels, digital texts, and applications that enable music and movie production (Price-Dennis, Holmes, & Smith, 2015). These might include texts such as a video (Today.com, 2017) of rapper Ludacris freestyling the children's book *Llama Llama, Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney. Producing and performing similar kinds of texts provides culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) opportunities for students' fluency development.

Using Code-Meshing to Remix Texts

The use of mentor texts, such as those already mentioned, can lead to an array of writing activities for promoting students' metalinguistic awareness and linguistic flexibility and can be extended to discuss

audience awareness. Although teachers of multilingual students may already engage students in translating their writing into different languages for different audiences (e.g., Dworin, 2006; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003), code-meshing offers additional opportunities for becoming aware of and using language in complex and creative ways. One such approach is rewriting monolingual texts by remixing them into code-meshed multilingual texts.

Remixing involves the adaptation of a text, such as a song, a photo, or a book, by adding, changing, or removing portions to create something new: a mash-up. Remixing has typically been discussed with respect to adolescents' literacy practices, in particular multimedia and technology, and fan-fiction (Gainer & Lapp, 2010; Stedman, 2012). However, younger students can also engage in remixing texts for academic purposes. Lotherington and Chow (2006), for instance, reported on how Chow prompted her first graders to critically rewrite Goldilocks and the Three Bears in response to predominantly mainstream and monocultural renderings of the fairy tale. Chow supported her students in analyzing story structures and representations of characters and settings prior to rewriting. Remixing texts using code-meshing can be approached in a similar way.

Central to this approach is using mentor texts and students' own language use as cultural models (C. Lee, 2007; Orellana et al., 2003), much like Patricia did with her students' writing of their own *lucha libre* stories. In the case of remixing, teachers might prompt students to consider how texts written monolingually can be remixed through code-meshing to achieve a linguistic mash-up and analyze how authorial choices may shift meanings for varied readers. Such remixing engagements may focus on elements of writing previously taught (e.g., voice, character development) and may also involve performance using music and drama.

Remixing through code-meshing can support a wide array of writing skills: spelling and grammatical patterns, similarities and differences across linguistic systems, vocabulary, and audience awareness. Additionally, it can help students develop critical language awareness (Alim, 2005) and help counter deficit discourses of community languages and multilingual learners.

Noticing Code-Meshing Gems in Students' Writing

When assessing students' writing, the temptation for teachers is to mistake texts written solely in DAE for "good" writing. Here, we offer suggestions for culturally sustaining assessment of students' code-meshing, drawing on Bomer's (2010) notion of "hidden gems" (moments of brilliance) in students' writing. Rather than forcing students' writing into "formulas determined by notions of correctness and acceptability" (p. 3), teachers can document what they notice about students' language choices—their hidden code-meshing gems—and build on them instructionally. In particular, teachers can look for hidden gems across the four language cueing systems: graphophonemic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic (Goodman & Goodman, 2013).

With respect to letter–sound correspondence (the graphophonemic cueing system), teachers may note how students experiment with applying Spanish phonology to English words, such as a third grader's rendering of "happy meal" as "*jápimil*" or a student's choice to write *your* as *yo*. Similarly, teachers can notice and point out students' grammatical gems (the syntactic cueing system), such as Ana and Clarita's decision to write the abbreviation for the Spanish term for *Federal District* as D.F., reflecting conventional Spanish noun-adjective syntactical ordering, or Jacobi's meshing of AAL verb structure with the DAE sentence starters.

Regarding word choice (the semantic cueing system), teachers can point out and celebrate students' intentional meshing of words and phrases in DAE and AAL, Spanish, or other languages. Consider the following excerpt from page 3 of Ana's and Clarita's story (students' spelling miscues are retained in this example; see Figure 2): "All of the audiences clap, clap and clap, for their favorite wrestler. They shouted historically. 'Woof, woof, woof.' *ladrava la perra Canika* [barked Canika the dog]."

In a writing conference, we might begin by noticing and celebrating the syntactic coherency of the sentences, in which they meshed English and Spanish and their expression of the dog's barking as a three-beat echo of the people's clapping, and ask how or why they made those choices. We could then also point out to Ana and Clarita that their choice to write "*ladrava la perra Canika*" in Spanish would be accessible even to a monolingual DAE-speaking audience, given the contextual clues they embed in this paragraph. This may prompt additional conversations regarding who their primary audience is and whether they might retain that audience focus as they revise their story and decide how and where to code-mesh.

Perhaps what is most important is to point out these gems to students during writing conferences or

in written feedback on students' work and to spark their thinking regarding how their language choices intersect with their communicative purposes and audiences. This also requires that teachers pay significantly more attention to the pragmatic cueing system in writing assessment than is prompted in many assessment frameworks. Moreover, it means that the sole usage of DAE is no longer viewed as the gold standard for students' writing. Rather, DAE becomes one register or language among many, depending on writers' purposes and audiences. In the process of fostering a multilingual classroom, monolingual DAE speakers may expand their metalinguistic knowledge and can also learn to honor and celebrate languages other than DAE within school contexts.

Conclusion

The work of reframing dichotomous views of languages (DAE and non-DAE) requires conscious and continued efforts to unlearn the myth that there is only one correct way to speak or to write. We do not dispute that DAE is important in many contexts or that students should become proficient in DAE. However, contrary to popular belief, monolingual instructional frameworks are insufficient and counterproductive in this regard (A. Lee, 2017). Additionally, language-policing approaches to assessment do not foster the literacy and learning development of linguistically diverse students. Code-meshing offers a culturally sustaining alternative for writing instruction and engagements to honor, sustain, and build on the linguistic strengths of all students.

TAKE ACTION!

1. Identify several mentor texts that code-mesh multiple languages. Try to choose texts that represent the languages and cultures in your classroom.
2. Pick one of those code-meshed mentor texts to read aloud to your class. Consider the following questions:
   - What literary features or aspects of writing might you highlight as you read?
   - How might this text serve as a model for students to write their own code-meshed stories?
   - How do authors use language to convey their messages and communicate to various audiences?
3. Alternately, you can select a text that is written in DAE and ask students to remix the book, incorporating their home and community languages.
4. The next time you conference with students about their writing, look for the ways that they code-mesh multiple languages into their texts. Then, use those instances to show them the hidden gems that they have incorporated into their writing and how these gems are evidence of their linguistic brilliance!

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MORE TO EXPLORE

Additional children's literature with code-meshing includes texts that incorporate hip-hop and rhythms grounded in games such as double Dutch (Covington-Ward, 2006; Turner, Hayes, & Way, 2013):

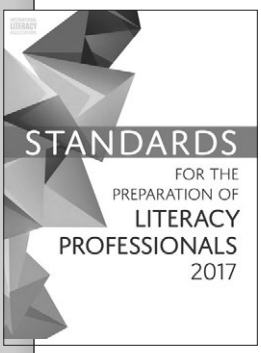
- *Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry With a Beat* edited by Nikki Giovanni
- *Be Boy Buzz* by bell hooks
- Latino children's literature that meshes Spanish and English, such as *What Can You Do With a Paleta?/¿Qué Puedes Hacer con una Paleta?* by Carmen Tafolla and *Niño Wrestles the World* by Yuyi Morales

To adequately honor AAL in the classroom, it is important for teachers to have some linguistic understanding of the language. These resources explain this:

- Hudley, A.H., & Mallinson, C. (2011). *Understanding English language variation in U.S. schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Turner, K.C.N., & Ives, D. (2013). Social justice approaches to African American Language and literacy practices: Guest editors' introduction. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *46*(3), 285–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2013.808892

If you want to further think about how to instructionally plan and respond to your AAL-speaking students, consider the following:

- Compton-Lilly, C. (2005). Nuances of error: Considerations relevant to African American Vernacular English and learning to read. *Literacy, Teaching, and Learning*, *10*(1), 43–58.
- Compton-Lilly, C. (2015). Reading lessons from Martin: A case study of one African American student. *Language Arts*, *92*(6), 401–411.



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