

## CHAPTER 11

# Socioemotional Well-Being and Social Justice

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe how translanguaging supports bilingual students' socioemotional well-being through *valorización*
- Explain how translanguaging classrooms can advance social justice
- Identify how you can use translanguaging to foster your students' socioemotional well-being and critical consciousness

The **translanguaging corriente** is the key to **translanguaging classrooms**. To feel the translanguaging corriente, all you have to do is take a step back from your daily routine and listen and look. Listen hard to what your students say to you and their peers, inside the classroom, hallways, and cafeteria and on the playground. If you listen hard enough, you might be able to perceive their intrapersonal voices (what they're saying in their heads, in imaginary dialogues with themselves and their friends). Listen also to the conversations that take place when their families and peers are present; try to hear what is being said and how it is said, as well as what is not being said and why. Listening in this way allows you to hear your students' voices anew, and puts you in touch with the flow of the translanguaging corriente, even if it is not obviously at the surface of your classroom.

Look at your students through a translanguaging lens. Focus so that you see, as Carini (2000) always says, the whole child. Observe closely so that you can describe fully what the student is doing with language. When, with whom, and where is the student languaging in certain ways? Let the students' own language practices bloom by giving them control of the tasks at hand or putting them in situations where they're interacting freely with others. After listening deeply to the students in your class and seeing them in their entirety, you become aware of their languaging. And if your students are bilingual, you will come into contact with the translanguaging corriente. Let the translanguaging corriente flow through your classroom. What happens? What is the translanguaging corriente able to do for your teaching and your students' learning?

Once you feel the translanguaging corriente you are unable to ignore it, and you learn to use the translanguaging pedagogy purposefully and strategically:

1. Supporting students as they engage with complex content and texts
2. Providing opportunities for students to develop linguistic practices for academic context
3. Making space for students' bilingualism and ways of knowing
4. Supporting students' socioemotional development and bilingual identities

Your teaching will then acquire a higher purpose—advancing social justice—ensuring that bilingual students, especially those who come from language minority groups, are instructed and assessed in fair and equitable ways.

This concluding chapter highlights two fundamental reasons for education—upholding and supporting the socioemotional strength of students and advancing social justice for the improvement of society as a whole. Placing these two goals alongside each other emphasizes that it is impossible to uphold and support the socioemotional strength of each individual student without also considering the sociopolitical and economic context in which bilingual students are being educated.

## STANCE: CON RESPETO, CON CARIÑO, COMO FAMILIA, Y CON ACOMPAÑAMIENTO

The development of students' socioemotional well-being is an important part of teaching, for one cannot learn without feeling secure in one's own identity and performances. A translanguaging classroom provides extended opportunities for bilingual students to be valued participants who draw on rich linguistic and cultural resources for learning. Thus, a translanguaging classroom enables students to create identities for themselves that are also academic.

Teachers in translanguaging classrooms believe that, as *Carla* put it, “la enseñanza y el aprendizaje comienzan valorizando a nuestros estudiantes.” [Teaching and learning begin with valuing our students.] This valorización derives from teachers' understanding about what their students can do, and from how translanguaging both uncovers and strengthens those assets. Here we identify four elements of the translanguaging classroom for socioemotional support—con respeto, con cariño, como familia, y con acompañamiento:

1. *Con respeto* refers to the respect that needs to be shown for the struggles and ways of life of bilingual communities. This was the title of Valdés' (1996) study of ten Mexican American families, mothers, in particular, in a U.S.–Mexico border town. Translanguaging is a tool to teach *con respeto* because the students' language and cultural practices are valued, leveraged, and strengthened.
2. *Con cariño* means the authentic caring between teachers and students that is the core of the successful education of bilingual Latino students.<sup>1</sup> However, *con cariño* goes beyond care; it builds on the love that brings *juntos* teachers, students, school, and community and English and other languages. *Con cariño* is at the core of the translanguaging classroom, where the languages of bilingual students are no longer conceived as separate but as working *juntos*. The translanguaging classroom recognizes not just a harmonious *cariño*, but an “armed love” to “fight, to denounce, and to announce” (Freire, 2008, p. 209). The language practices of bilinguals work *con cariño* to fight against their representation as autonomous languages in which bilingual practices are considered “illegitimate.”
3. *Como familia* refers to how translanguaging classrooms are like families, always acting together to promote the well-being of the whole, but sometimes also struggling with each individual member. It also refers to language practices that, like families, sometimes act *juntos*, and sometimes as separate individuals. Furthermore, *como familia* refers to how *pláticas*/conversations in classrooms cannot just be about content or language,

<sup>1</sup>See especially Valenzuela, 1999; see also Bartlett and García, 2011; Bartolomé, 2008; García, Woodley, Flores, and Chu, 2013; and Johnson, 2013.

but also need to be about sharing inner truths and connecting deeply (Flores-Dueñas, 1999; Johnson, 2013).

4. *Con acompañamiento* (Sepúlveda, 2011) means that teachers in translanguaging classrooms accompany youth as they share stories and experiences. Further, the act of teaching *con acompañamiento* includes “not only ‘being’ with another, or feeling with another, but also ‘doing’ with another” (Goizueta, 2001, p. 206). Teachers in translanguaging classrooms set up instruction so that they and their students are always languaging and learning *juntos*. The students’ voices are never just in English or Spanish; they are experienced *con acompañamiento*.

The **translanguaging stance**—understanding that the **language features** of your students’ bilingual repertoires always function *juntos*—is the first step toward setting up a translanguaging classroom. This stance extends to understanding that language, literacy, and content are learned *juntos*, that students’ home and school experiences go *juntos*, and that critical consciousness is developed *junto* with meaningful learning.

### *Valorización of Students’ Experiences*

Supporting students’ socioemotional positions *con respeto, con cariño, como familia, y con acompañamiento* means valuing their language and cultural practices as strengths in learning. In this vignette from Carla’s translanguaging unit, *Cuentos de la tierra y del barrio*, Carla displays her stance of *valorización* of bilingualism and bilingual students through her assessment practices.

During the lesson of *el jardín*, Carla and Sonia wanted to “*valorar el conocimiento y aprecio que tenían los estudiantes hacia el jardín de su vecindad*” [validate the knowledge and appreciation that the students had of their community garden]. Throughout the translanguaging unit design cycle, Carla immersed her students in authentic activities, discussed their performances with them, gave them further opportunities to show what they knew, and supported them in new ways of demonstrating their learning. She put her own collaborative assessment of students’ performances alongside that of students in their self-assessment, and of the peer groups in which they worked. And finally she had students show their families what they had learned and enabled family members to give feedback.

Carla knew that her students’ socioemotional states were important to their learning throughout the stages of the translanguaging instructional design cycle, especially during assessment. She understood that she could not just design assessments that evaluated student work and identified their weaknesses. Rather, she designed dynamic and flexible assessments that informed her understanding of what her students knew and could do, which contributed to the students’ socioemotional well-being. Carla put her students first, and her primary purpose in assessing was not for herself as a teacher or for the school or state, although each of these constituencies is important. Her primary purpose in assessing was to allow her students to learn. She knew students had to feel secure in their bilingual identities and they had to feel positive about their lives inside and outside school.

Carla’s assessment is intimately tied to her instruction. For example, she selected stories and contexts with which students could identify. She honored students’ bilingual voices and practices. All instruction and assessment stemmed from Carla’s stance that her students’ socioemotional well-being was central to their learning, and that a translanguaging classroom offered them the spaces to fortify their bilingual identities.

A valorización stance requires you to first ask yourself as an educator: “How do I view my students’ home language and cultural practices? Do I see the students’ bilingualism as a problem or a resource?” Teachers in translanguaging classrooms need to answer these questions con respeto for who their students are and what they bring with them to the classroom community.

## DESIGN: VALORIZACIÓN DEL TEXTO Y CONTEXTO

Designing a translanguaging classroom to support bilingual students’ socioemotional standing involves attention to the classroom space and the instructional and assessment design. Having a valorización design can improve bilingual students’ educational experiences by sustaining and strengthening socioemotional qualities developed at home and throughout the community. We return to Carla’s and *Stephanie’s* classrooms for examples.

Carla treated her students con respeto, con cariño, como familia, y con acompañamiento, and made the world around them and the words on the page more comprehensible by putting forward opportunities to learn from meaningful and relevant multilingual and multimodal texts. Her translanguaging unit plan validated and supported the students’ biliterately lived experiences by having them read, write, and discuss bilingual Latino/a textos and contextos. This affirmed the students’ socioemotional strengths as Latino bilingual students.

Carla designed her (bi)literacy lessons by first selecting stories that facilitated the use of textos bilingües written by well known Latino/a authors—Sara Poot Herrera’s *Lluvia de plata*, Sandra Cisneros’ *Three Wise Guys: Un cuento de Navidad*, and Rudolfo Anaya’s *The Santero’s Miracle*. One of the activities that Carla used during her literacy time was *Cuéntame algo*, which began with her reading en voz alta a bilingual text to her students. Carla also invited guest speakers, such as family members and community leaders, to platicar about their cultural practices, thus extending to a much broader contexto. The *Cuéntame algo* activity culminated with the students using translanguaging to develop and write their own cuentos from the barrio, which were then performed by the students with community participation.

Carla opened up a space that offered the students opportunities to translanguague to communicate their ideas about relevant textos and contextos with her. This meant that students felt socioemotionally supported at all times.

Carla designed her literacy activities knowing that each text needed to be read within a larger context. Carla knew that reading *Lluvia de plata* would generate a discussion with her students because many were from Chihuahua, Mexico. Through the *Cuéntame algo* literacy activity, the students communicated using their bilingual voices and identities, which affirmed their socioemotional well-being. By promoting the use of translanguaging to communicate their thoughts, imaginings, and curiosity, Carla was helping students develop strong identities as Latino bilinguals, not simply as speakers of English as a second language (ESL) or speakers of Spanish as a heritage language who were not up to the standards of a so-called “native speaker” of one or the other language. Rather than identifying with labels that seem truncated, deficit-oriented, or dated (e.g., second, heritage), Carla’s students are developing a sense of who they are as bilingual Americans. They are starting to view bilingual languaging as authentic and fuller than monolingual performances in one or the other language. Carla’s design recognizes and draws out the students’ **dynamic bilingualism** as a resource to be nurtured.

Stephanie's teaching with *valorización* was always present in her translanguaging classroom, even though she did not speak Spanish. Stephanie *acompaña* her students con cariño y respeto as they provide socioemotional support for each other in learning. As we have seen, she involves all of her students in creating a public service announcement (PSA) for the school community, regardless of their levels of oral and written English.

Stephanie required every student in the group to participate in the presentation of their collaboratively created PSAs. To scaffold this work, she provided sentence frames to each group to help them prepare. Stephanie explained to *Noemí* that she should do her best to explain the group's choice in English, but that she could use Spanish to expand on or clarify ideas.

After students had presented to the class, Stephanie made copies of students' PSAs and asked her principal if students could post them around the school. The principal agreed and even asked Stephanie if two students would explain the project to the community during the school's morning announcements. Stephanie asked *Mariana* and *Luis* to work together to come up with an explanation of the PSA assignment in both Spanish and English that they would read during the announcements the following week.

In Stephanie's instructional design, *acompañamiento* was always present as she designed lessons with appropriate scaffolding and mediation from other people and material resources. She grouped students for support. She provided students, especially **emergent bilinguals** like *Noemí*, with sentence starters and frames and translations as needed. She urged her bilingual students to use the full features of their linguistic repertoires to express their ideas. At the end of the preceding vignette, the students show what it means to *acompañarse*—with *Mariana* and *Luis* accompanying each other as they collaborated in sharing with the school community their PSAs in both English and Spanish. Students in Stephanie's class were never left to feel insecure about their identities, their understanding, or their language use. They were always *acompañados*.

There are many ways to set the course of the translanguaging corriente to build and strengthen bilingual students' socioemotional well-being within your instructional and assessment design:

- Group students con *acompañamiento*, as they would be in a familia, con cariño, y respeto, to encourage and foster their different strengths and insights.
- Open up a dialogue space that engages teacher and students in discussion about their insights and experiences inside and outside the classroom with all their language resources.
- Encourage the bilingual voices of community and families in the lessons, using multilingual and multimodal texts, and inviting family members to become the classroom's familia.
- Place students at the center of learning and teaching by encouraging them to draw on their bilingual language practices at school.
- Have students share with the entire school community their bilingual understanding, as well as their language and cultural practices.

These translanguaging strategies are only effective within the context of an instructional design of *valorización*.

The **translanguaging design** for instruction and assessment is central to the translanguaging classroom; it is what makes it different from a traditional monolingual or bilingual classroom. Designing instruction to set the course of the translanguaging corriente means that you carefully plan its components—the grouping of students, elements of planning (big ideas and questions, content

objectives, language objectives, **translanguaging objectives**, texts, culminating project), design cycle (explorar, evaluar, imaginar, presentar, implementar), and pedagogical strategies. It also means including the voices of others, taking into account the difference between content and language and between **general linguistic** and **language-specific performances**, and giving students opportunities to do tasks with assistance from others and other resources when needed. The translanguaging design is the structure that makes the translanguaging classroom purposeful and strategic.

## SHIFTS: CHANGING COURSE TO VALORAR

Good teaching is not always planned. In the same way, a good translanguaging classroom does not always follow a strictly planned translanguaging design. Most of the moment-by-moment shifts that teachers make have to do with following the flow of the translanguaging corriente. And most of those on-the-spot moves have to do precisely with ensuring students' socioemotional well-being so that they can learn. For example, recall that when Carla was reading *Lluvia de plata*, Moisés shared the following:

Esta parte que leí me gusta porque los trabajadores que construyeron el ferrocarril le llamaban al tren que venía de Kansas a Chihuahua “si te cansas.” Yo creo que no sabían cómo decir Kansas entonces para recordar cómo decirlo solamente mencionaban “si te cansas.” [This part that I read I liked because the workers who built the railroad would call the train coming from Kansas to Chihuahua “si te cansas”/“if you get tired.” I think they did not know how to say Kansas so to remember how to say it they would mention “si te cansas.”]

Carla hadn't planned the larger contexto that emerged in this interaction. However, she could see that the play on words was familiar to the students in the broader contexto of the community. Her students felt valorados when they heard the expression “si te cansas.” When one student said, “es como mi familia habla” [like my family speaks], Carla went with the flow. She responded not by immediately going back to her lesson plan, but by encouraging other stories. The dialogue that ensued not only affirmed the students' bilingual socioemotional identities, it also gave Carla further insight into how her bilingual students and their families practiced (bi)literacy.

To separate languages and identities is indeed to segregate and maintain bilingual students as the “other.” Carla's shifts were encouraged by her valoración stance, which enabled her to deeply understand her students' socioemotional strengths and work as their ally in the translanguaging classroom.

Translanguaging teachers can use different kinds of unplanned moves to respond to the translanguaging corriente and affirm bilingual students' socioemotional well-being:

- Listen to students and their cuentos, using all their language practices.
- Respond to students' performances in ways that are intimately tied to what students are doing, with whatever language practices.
- Value what students and families have to say (and how they say it) sufficiently to depart from your planned lesson (and your planned language use) as necessary.
- Be willing to change course when students' and families' cuentos bring other perspectives and language choices from the one of your lesson design.

The *shifts* that you make in response to the translanguaging corriente are important. You can use them intentionally and strategically, for example, to

valorizar students' experiences, mobilize texts, and seize significant learning moments.

## TRANSLANGUAGING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Teaching for social justice means working alongside your students to create a better and more equitable world. It means enabling students—especially those who have been historically marginalized—not only to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987), but also to write and *rewrite* it using their own voices and unique ways of knowing. These acts of reading and (re)writing are, of course, intimately tied to language. Thus, we see translanguaging as integral to a social justice education. For emergent bilinguals, being able to share their experiences and produce academic work that contributes to a larger sociopolitical conversation can only be achieved when they have access to all of their linguistic resources. For those bilinguals who are proficient in English, translanguaging enables them to put their whole selves into what Stephanie's students call *la lucha*, the struggle for justice that is carried out through the work of the translanguaging classroom.

We advocate taking up language not simply as an autonomous system of structures, but as “a series of social practices and actions that are embedded in a web of social relations” (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 201). Hence, when we *language*, we are performing a series of social practices that link us to what we want and who we believe we are. Translanguaging goes even further than this idea of *linguaging* and acknowledges that within these social practices there are inequalities produced by the social position of speakers. Thus, opening up space for students to language flexibly also means opening up space for a discussion of power relations among social groups at school and in society. To break through the boundaries of language in the ways that society has constructed them, as English and Spanish for example, is also to break ties with the status quo, enabling teachers to embrace new bilingual and other social realities. This, in turn, could lead to the transformation and empowerment of students and teachers, as well as to more authentic learning.

Teaching students to view the world with justice in their hearts requires a new lens that recognizes that there is no “neutral” approach to content, and that traditional textbook explanations are often lacking. Social justice-oriented educators work with students to challenge “common sense” and the status quo. This kind of education opens students' eyes to silent hegemonies, prepares them to resist subordinate positions, and pushes them to work toward educational and societal change. Though *all* students need and deserve this kind of deep and meaningful education, social justice education is especially important for historically marginalized students. Drawing bilingual students' attention to their own languages, and to how those languages are viewed by the school community and society at large, can open their eyes and awaken what Freire (1970) called *conscientização*, or critical consciousness. As Darder (1991) writes,

Language represents one of the most significant educational tools in our struggle for cultural democracy in the public schools. It is intimately linked to the struggle for voice, and so is essential to our struggle for liberation. Through language we not only define our position in society, but we also use that language to define ourselves as subjects in our world. (p.107)

To move Latino bilingual students to action, educators must use the approaches—and *linguaging*—that encourage and support students on their journeys toward critical consciousness. Taking up a translanguaging stance, design, and shifts in your classroom provides a means of working toward this goal.

Teachers who educate for social justice infuse all parts of their teaching with authenticity, criticality, and the energy that catalyzes action. Rather than set aside specific time for this kind of teaching, teachers can encourage the flow of the translanguaging corriente as they work toward social justice.

### *Learning and Critical Consciousness*

In translanguaging classrooms, teachers facilitate and foster their students' development of conscientização, or critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). They also know that to develop this kind of lens, students must use all of their language practices at all times. Here, teachers' own critical consciousness is a major part of their stance, which in turn helps them go with the flow of the translanguaging corriente and set a course toward social justice. As we did in Chapter 9, we return to Stephanie's classroom to consider how teachers can help each student grow the kind of consciousness necessary to participate in la lucha:

Throughout her unit, *Environmentalism: Then and Now*, Stephanie incorporated readings about Latino historical figures who were given little treatment in the standards-aligned textbook. For example, though the textbook gave a short autobiography of César Chávez and briefly outlined his role in fighting for workers' rights, Stephanie and her students felt it was too cursory for such an important voice in la lucha. Stephanie decided to devote several days to learning about Chávez's life and commitment to both the environmental movement and the fight for human rights.

Stephanie did research of her own and found several websites that had readings about Chávez in English and Spanish. Because she wanted her students to get a full picture of Chávez, rather than the flat rendering she found in the textbook, Stephanie found articles that examined Chávez's legacy from different angles. Some were glowing retellings of his role in the movement. Others highlighted criticism about Chávez and looked at the controversies around his life and work. While some of the readings she found were in Spanish, many were only in English. Thus, Stephanie knew she would have to use different kinds of strategies to help her students—especially emergent bilinguals like Noemí and Luis—access the texts. She knew that her students could handle the content of such nuanced, complex readings; they just needed the language support to do so.

Stephanie's social justice stance is clearly at work as she imagines her approach to a new topic. Stephanie and her students—whose opinions and ideas always inform her choices—identified a gap in their textbook: to them, César Chávez was underrepresented. Rather than simply move on to other content, Stephanie wanted to address the injustice by educating her students about this important figure, who also happened to be Latino. She believed that providing her students with more information on Chávez would not only expand their knowledge of the unit topic, but also help them think critically about why certain people are placed on the margins, rather than at the center, of social studies textbooks.

While the "what" (the varied readings on Chávez's legacy) was very important to Stephanie, the "how" was equally important. This meant providing many of the readings in English and Spanish and encouraging students to use translanguaging to delve deeply into these readings. By approaching this topic with a translanguaging stance, which is *itself* a social justice stance, Stephanie made space for students to access texts, voice their opinions and ideas, and connect with history in a more meaningful way. This kind of access not only made the classroom more engaging, it also opened the doors for Stephanie's

students—especially emergent bilinguals—to see themselves as both invited into and important to academic discourse.

### ***Designing Social Justice***

Your classroom design—everything from the physical space to instruction and assessment—is where translanguaging for social justice becomes a reality. When your stance informs how you design your classroom, you set up opportunities for students to use all of their language practices at all times and to work together as a community to become agents for change.

### **Approaching Instruction with a Social Justice Lens**

Here we focus on Stephanie's planning process as she begins a new unit of instruction. This insider view of one teacher's design gives us insight into the kind of thinking that leads to the creation of a social justice-oriented, translanguaging unit.

Once Stephanie found . . . Common Core standards that lent themselves to the unit, she moved on to the New York State Social Studies Standards. She thought about the resources she already had—and the understandings she wanted the class to grasp—and, again, found standards that met her students' needs. For example, Stephanie knew she wanted her students to use their understanding of environmentalism and sustainability to locate a problem in the school or community and come up with possible solutions. With this in mind, she found a standard that asked students to prepare a plan of action that defines an issue or problem, suggests alternative solutions or courses of action, evaluates the consequences for each alternative solution or course of action, prioritizes the solutions based on established criteria, and proposes an action plan to address the issue or resolve the problem. This standard, along with ones that asked students to explain how technological advances affect people, places, and regions, understand the nature of scarcity and its link to economics, and explore how citizens influence public policy, helped Stephanie align her vision to those standards that would help structure her students' learning.

Teaching in a translanguaging classroom means that *you* use the standards, not the other way around. This also extends to teaching for social justice. Stephanie knew that she wanted her unit on the environmental movement to culminate in an action-based project that pushed students to imagine a more sustainable and environmentally friendly community. Rather than start from the textbook or from a set of standards, Stephanie started with her own social justice vision and found standards to support that vision. The standards helped Stephanie align and organize her instruction; they did not dictate what she would teach. By encouraging students to meet standards and engage with curriculum using all of their language practices, and providing them with opportunities to language critically, you are also offering them increased access to academic success and the chance to extend their existing understanding to new learning experiences.

### **Holistic, Authentic, and Enriching Assessment**

Assessment should also reflect a social justice orientation. Because so much of our students' educational experience is tied to measuring student performances, it is important that what students know and can do is authentically represented. If students are to remain engaged in the work of the classroom and

in their own learning, they must feel that their teachers (and others) see their potential. When we assess our students holistically, in a way that enriches—rather than stifles—their learning, we are engaged in an act of social justice. In Carla’s classroom, this belief resulted in incorporating families, the students themselves, and peer groups into the assessment process. The following excerpt looks at the use of the Family Assessment Tool: *La conexión* (see Appendix A.6.4).

Carla evaluates her students with multiple assessment tools, including her own, students’ self-assessments, and their family members’ assessments, to get a more just picture of students’ full potential. She used the Family Assessment: *La conexión* to enrich her students’ data folders by including the voices of family members and students. In *la conexión*, families provide Carla with feedback about what they learned from their children about different instructional topics. For example, after an activity in which students learned how to “put a *jardín* to sleep,” families ask their children to show them or tell them what they learned that day. Parents wrote down what their children expressed in either Spanish or English and their children returned the handouts to Carla the next day.

*La conexión* refers not just to the connection between what students learn at school and what they show their families at home, but also to the connection and integration of home and school learning, practices, and understanding. This type of assessment practice reflects the assumption that knowledge is not simply deposited into students and then measured on a standardized test. Rather, authentic assessment is based on students’ performances at school, at home, and in the community.

These types of assessment tools also invite families—arguably the very first “assessors” of their children—into the conversation around their children’s progress and growth. Rather than mystify assessment by distancing it from students and their families, *la conexión* and tools like it send the message that students’ growth is *everyone’s* responsibility and can be measured in various ways by different people. In addition to spanning the common gap between in-school assessments and the kind of learning that goes on at home, this type of assessment gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know. Instead of measuring students’ knowledge in discrete ways, often using English-only tools, the translanguaging design for assessment provides insight into the whole child, making assessment more just.

### Setting the Course with, and for, Social Justice

There are many ways that teachers can set the course of the translanguaging *corriente* to work with, and for, social justice:

- Involve your students in decision making about curriculum and language use, as well as the day-to-day workings of the classroom.
- Provide students with a variety of choices for demonstrating their learning, and make space for them to justify those choices (e.g., let students make decisions about what language to use in a piece of writing and have them support that choice).
- Make projects and other assessments as authentic and local as possible, and include students’ multiple ways of knowing in all classroom work so that they are better able to demonstrate their learning (e.g., flexible language use for meaning-making, culturally relevant assignments, projects that encourage students to go into the community).

### Enacting a Democratic Classroom

In the science class where *Justin*, the ESL teacher, co-teaches, students speak a number of different languages, most of which he does not speak. This presents a particular challenge and requires creativity and flexibility on Justin's part, two characteristics that are reflected in his **translanguaging shifts**. As we discussed in Chapter 5, in addition to gauging his students' comprehension and engagement and making on-the-spot shifts in response to their performances, Justin helps students understand new content by making some translanguaging moves that shape the conversation:

Justin was going over students' homework for their science class. As he discussed the topic, heredity, he got the sense that his students, especially *Fatouma* and *Yi-Sheng* who had recently arrived, did not understand what he was explaining. There were blank looks, some off-task behavior, and very little participation. Rather than plow forward, he stopped and asked students to talk to one another in Spanish, Mandarin, French, Vietnamese, Tagalog, or any of their languages about whether they looked like people in their families or not. Though he did not speak most of these languages, Justin could tell from the shift in energy in the room and the excited conversations that students were engaged. After they had spoken to one another, Justin asked them to share some of their ideas in English. *Danilo*, with the help of his Tagalog-speaking classmates, said that he had dark skin but his sister was fair and even had freckles! A student translated for Fatouma that though both her parents had brown eyes, she had green eyes but no one knew why. Some students even shifted the conversation to the many names for different skin colors in Spanish. Jumping off from these comments, Justin connected the idea of looking like (or not looking like) a family member to the work students had done that day with Punnett squares. Suddenly students started to make connections to concepts like dominant and recessive alleles, phenotype, and genotype that they had not tapped into before.

Justin's translanguaging shifts provided students with *access* to the new content. By talking with one another in their home languages, students were able to move from the abstract concept of heredity to the specific, relatable question about whether they looked like people in their families. As has already been discussed, providing emergent bilinguals with access to academic content is part of creating a social justice-oriented classroom. By granting all students, and especially those who are often left out of academic conversations, access to content, you are creating a more just classroom that focuses on students' strengths and potential.

In addition to increasing access through his translanguaging shifts, Justin also made his classroom more democratic by allowing his students' connections and interests to shape the conversation about content. Justin did not know that his students knew so much about a science topic like phenotype (even if they didn't know what it was called). It was only through his flexibility that this kind of knowledge was released in the classroom, making content-area learning more interesting and connected to students' own experiences. Suddenly, Justin was not the sole "keeper of knowledge" in the classroom—his role as expert was shared with his students—who then used their own "local" knowledge and experiences to help the class understand these science topics in a more meaningful way. This kind of moment helped students see that their opinions, ideas, and stories were welcome and important to the academic conversation.

There are many ways that teachers can go with the flow of the translanguaging corriente and stimulate action for social justice:

- Have students turn and talk, brainstorm, free write, or make connections in their home languages so that they can better access content in a new language.
- Remember that your students are your greatest linguistic resource! Ask them for on-the-spot translations or explanations of content-area vocabulary or concepts and then have them (or a peer) translate what they said back into the new language.
- Elicit students' stories, experiences, and connections to new content whenever possible. This helps create a strong classroom community and makes space for students to teach one another through their own experiences.
- Have students share their own linguistic resources with others. This helps students see the languages of others as a resource and promotes linguistic tolerance and commitment to the struggle against linguistic discrimination.

When educators take up translanguaging in their classrooms, we can begin to challenge injustices experienced by bilingual students at school and in society.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen how a translanguaging classroom works to leverage bilingual students' socioemotional strengths to learn. The *valorización* stance that we have described is enacted in instruction *con respeto, con cariño, como familia, y con acompañamiento*. Teachers can support bilingual students' socioemotional well-being and their social standing through their choices of appropriate texts and contextos, as well as the ways they encourage students to interact with those texts and contexts. Teaching with translanguaging to enhance bilingual students' learning is itself an act of social justice—releasing voices, languaging practices, and experiences other than the dominant ones of the classroom.

We also emphasize that translanguaging classrooms do not simply work for individual bilingual student's success. Remember that a translanguaging classroom goes beyond traditional definitions of a monolingual or bilingual classroom. And a teacher in a translanguaging classroom goes beyond the definitions of a monolingual or a bilingual teacher. Translanguaging has the potential to develop bilingual students' sense of critical consciousness. Translanguaging classrooms can prepare teachers and students *juntos* to identify inequities at school and in society, and then challenge and potentially transform them.

## QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. How does translanguaging open up space to support and leverage bilingual students' socioemotional development?
2. How does the translanguaging corriente relate to social justice? In what ways is translanguaging itself an act of social justice?
3. How can translanguaging contribute to the *valorización* of students' socioemotional strength? Describe the elements of *valorización* and how translanguaging contributes to each element.

## TAKING ACTION

1. Look closely at a unit plan or lesson that you have implemented in your class (ideally the unit that you have developed as you work through this book).
  - How does your unit reflect *con respeto, con cariño, como familia, y con acompañamiento*?
  - How does your unit relate to your students' socioemotional well-being?
  - How does your unit work to advance social justice?
  - What action steps can you take to ensure that your translanguaging unit designs and assessments advance bilingual students' content and language learning, leverage their bilingualism, promote stronger socioemotional identity, and work toward social justice?