Drama pedagogy: subverting and remaking learning in the thirdspace

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Abstract
This qualitative, ethnographic research highlights how drama pedagogy using translanguaging-based Readers Theatre supports students learning English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) to develop knowledge of language central to their engagement with learning (Authors, 2020). Using socio-spatial theory of Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (Annals of the Association of American Geographers 70:207–225, 1980), we argue that drama pedagogy can shape a creative translanguaging space as reported by Li (Journal of Pragmatics 43:1222–1235, 2011) in which the high-stakes test based pressure to narrow curriculum and pedagogical breadth can be resisted, and classroom spaces remade so that literacy learning is identity-affirming and caters for the diverse needs of students.

Keywords Drama · Thirdspace · Translanguaging · EAL/D · Literacy · English

1 Introduction
Urban populations are becoming increasingly multilingual (Chik et al., 2019; D’warte, 2014) with over 350 languages being spoken in Australia (Eades, 2013; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). In the most densely populated areas and in the most remote areas of our country, teachers are attempting to meet the needs and build on the linguistic resources of a diverse range of learners (Dutton & Rushton, 2018a, 2018b, 2021; D’warte, 2014). This is occurring in a context which, since 2008, has focused on the assessment of English language and literacy through The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), resulting in an intensified focus on the development and assessment of skills in Standard Australian
English (SAE) (Hammond, 2012; Oliver et al., 2012). The annual results of NAPLAN are used to evaluate not only individual students but also inferentially their schools, teachers and programs. As a result, many teachers feel pressure to narrow curriculum and pedagogy breadth (Carter et al., 2018; O’Mara, 2014) and ‘teach to the test’ in monolingual, English-only classrooms that do not offer the opportunity to build on students’ linguistic resources (Cormack & Comber, 2013; D’warte & Slaughter, 2021; Pennycook, 2007; Phillipson, 2013; Wong Fillmore, 1991). This means that students whose language(s) differ from the dominant language can perceive their linguistic and cultural practices as lacking rather than valuable (García et al., 2017).

With its process-oriented approach to learning and scope for safely exploring a range of perspectives, drama pedagogy has a central role to play in effective teaching and learning in plurilingual settings. In this article, we report the findings of one aspect of our research on the use of Translanguaging drama pedagogy from the multi-phased ‘Identity Texts Project’ that we, as University partners, have developed for the past eight years. The key driver is utilising inclusive, creative pedagogy that honours students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as their agency in the learning process. To this end, we promote the creation of a translanguaging space (Li, 2014) in which teachers and learners embrace the use of multiple languages for learning and articulating ideas and move beyond monolingual-only classroom linguistic resources (Dutton & Rushton, 2018a, 2018b, 2021).

The connection between language development and drama pedagogy has been well established (Dunn & Stinson, 2011; Ewing, 2012) and oral language is central to developing student literacy given its relevance to both the ‘telling’ of identity stories and writing (Dutton & Rushton, 2021). Translanguaging drama pedagogy is a research-informed, innovative approach to literacy development involving a range of drama strategies, leading to Readers Theatre. Collaborative group talking activities, such as those fostered by drama-based approaches, provide rich opportunities for learners to practice and evaluate ways of using language to think (Mercer, 2002) and are key factors in the positive impact of drama-based pedagogy on additional language learning (Dunn & Stinson, 2011; Piazzoli, 2011; Stinson & Freebody, 2006). We use translanguaging drama pedagogy to create ‘space’ for students in multicultural classrooms to speculate, experiment and think critically about language, themselves and the world.

The project employs the socio-spatial frame of Lefebvre (1991) and Soja’s (1980) spatial terminology in which firstspace represents the everyday routines of school life, secondspace, the ideals shaped by curriculum and policy, and thirdspace the realm of challenge and innovation. The goal of implementing translanguaging drama pedagogy is to create a ‘translanguaging space’ (Li, 2011, 2014) in which any language can be used, while simultaneously developing metalanguage, vocabulary, and English language and literacy. In supporting teachers to adopt these innovative, thirdspace (Soja, 1996) practices, we aim to show teachers that quality literacy teaching does not have to eschew creative pedagogy. The findings of our translanguaging drama pedagogy research are reported below.

2 Review of the literature

2.1 Translanguaging space

The acquisition of English as an additional language or dialect is best achieved when students are given the opportunity to choose when and how to utilise their own individual linguistic
resources (Alamillo et al., 2016; Fielding, 2016; Rosiers et al., 2018) and when teachers employ a pedagogical stance which foregrounds language and student agency (Cummins, 2005; Garcia & Kley, 2016; Hammond, 2012; Schalley et al., 2015).

The term ‘translanguaging’ (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García, 2009; Williams, 1996) originated in Williams’ (1996) Welsh research. In our research, the term describes the fluid, language practices of bilingual and multilingual individuals and communities, as well as being a ‘pedagogical approach whereby teachers build bridges from these language practices and the language practices desired in formal school settings’ (García et al., 2017, p. 2). Translanguaging is differentiated from earlier conceptions of bilingual education such as ‘code switching’ as it challenges both the sole use of the target, or culturally dominant language, and upholds the importance of the use of any language in the classroom. Translanguaging is not simply a shuffle between two languages, but rather the speaker/writer makes use of complex discursive practices that draw on both or multiple languages to shape their full language repertoire (García & Li, 2014, p. 22).

Remaking classrooms into translanguaging spaces (Li, 2014) means that teachers and students can embrace the use of multiple languages and do so in ways that are flexible and enhance student agency. There are well-established social and academic benefits in supporting the development of students’ first languages or dialects (Cummins, 2000; Eades, 2013; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013)—both in academic development and in promoting wellbeing. Teachers are better able to understand their students’ capabilities and challenge or confirm their perceptions of students as critical thinkers (Holdway & Hitchcock, 2018) when students use their agency to participate in the co-construction of knowledge choosing from their own linguistic resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Duarte, 2019, 2020). In a global context defined by transnational student mobility and the worldwide use of many ‘Englishes’ (Fu, 2009; Pennycook, 2007), a new perspective on practices formerly associated with a lack of linguistic competence has emerged, with translanguaging now recognised as exemplifying a high level of linguistic, cognitive and social capability (Li, 2014). A translanguaging space also means that authentic bilingual identities (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017) can be developed since confirming student agency results in the development of new connections between the language and culture of the home and the school (Pacheco & Miller, 2016).

Furthermore, a pedagogical stance that empowers multilingual students by remaking learning in a translanguaging space has been demonstrated to create equitable, inclusive classrooms which support language learning for all students (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; García & Li, 2014; Garrity et al., 2015; Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Ollerhead, 2018; Vogel & García, 2018). This is because learning in a translanguaging space supports the rights of language-minority students who may not even have the opportunity to use their first language or dialect, nor formally learn it, in any kind of educational setting (García, 2013; Velasco & García, 2014). Classrooms remade as translanguaging spaces can therefore provide a ‘framework for conceptualizing the education of bilinguals as a democratic endeavour for social justice’ (Velasco & García, 2014, p. 7). These shifts in the privileging of language use in a school are shifts in power relations (Creese & Blackledge, 2015) towards a more equitable, inclusive and socially just pedagogy (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017).

Ultimately, translanguaging shapes a ‘transformative … process, whereby language users display the best of their creativity and criticality …’ (Li, 2018, p.261). A classroom that draws on translanguaging pedagogies therefore resists deficit perspectives and enables identity-affirming literacy practices that are likely to increase students’ literacy engagement (Cummins et.al., 2015, p. 557).
2.2 Developing literacy and language through drama pedagogy in a translanguaging space

Drama pedagogy, with its language rich, collaborative possibilities, provides a research-supported base for developing literacy and language in a low-risk translanguaging environment (Worthy et al., 2013). Student engagement and language development in complex discussions are enriched when students are able to choose multiple languages when they collaborate in the classroom (Allard, 2017; Dutton & Rushton, 2018a, 2018b; D’warte, 2014). Whereas traditional classroom pedagogy often establishes a mind/body dichotomy with the body being ellipsed or subordinated in the drive to focus on the functions of the mind, embodied pedagogy ‘joins body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction’ (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 332).

Drama involves inviting students out of their seats to engage in well-planned learning activities that bring into play body, space and social context (Dutton & Rushton, 2021). These approaches allow students to employ their senses—described as the ‘avenues of knowledge’ by Dewey, 1997, p. 147)—and ‘feel knowledge, internalise it and commit it to memory’ (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 332). With its process-oriented approach to learning (Lee et al., 2015) and kinaesthetic dimension (Lee et al., 2015; Rothwell, 2011), drama pedagogy has been shown to contribute to positive academic and wellbeing outcomes for students (Ewing, 2010; Ewing & Saunders, 2016; Lee et al., 2015).

However, of significance to the EAL/D literacy focus of the project is the increasing evidence to support the positive impact of drama-based pedagogy on additional language learning (Dunn & Stinson, 2011; Piazzoli, 2011; Stinson & Freebody, 2006). The affective space created by drama strategies has been shown to reduce the anxiety of second language learners and enhance capacity and confidence for communicating in the spoken mode (Piazzoli, 2011). The opportunities afforded for rich discussion are developed when students are able to share the complex negotiating strategies they use when interpreting and writing texts (Canagarajah, 2013; Li & Luo, 2017; Lotherington, 2013). Drama allows students to test various registers, situations and nascent vocabulary in safety (Neelands, 1992; Worthy et al., 2013) and invokes a shift in control to students, empowering them in their learning.

The strategy of Readers Theatre was selected as the focus drama strategy of this research for its capacity to enhance literacy and shape connections with students’ home languages, cultures and identity. A collaborative approach, Readers Theatre is experiential and constructivist in nature (Gill, 2013) and involves students working in groups to develop and then read from and interpret a script based on literature (Ewing & Simons, 2016; Uribe, 2019) or specific academic content (Uribe, 2019). Readers Theatre differs from conventional staged theatre in that voice and body tension rather than movement are involved, it is informal and simple, and does not require scenery, costumes or props thus making it more accessible to teachers and students (Latrobe & Laughlin, 1990, p. 3. Cited in Karabag, 2015).

Readers Theatre has traditionally been researched as an intervention strategy for struggling readers, and much of the data relates to impact on fluency and vocabulary development (Uribe, 2019). Because Readers Theatre also provides an authentic context for creating and/or re-reading literature-based texts (Uribe, 2019; Young & Rasinski, 2018) and this in turn provides an opportunity to practice and receive feedback on the use of specific language in a safe and supportive environment. Students also experience empowerment through being removed from teacher gaze and from developing social skills through collaboration and teamwork (Young & Rasinski, 2018). This means students are more likely to experience success and thus be more engaged in their learning (Dutton & Rushton, 2018a, 2018b; Lee et al., 2015; Rothwell, 2011; Uribe, 2019).
Despite these affordances and the alignment of drama pedagogy with emerging twenty-first century learning approaches (see also ACARA, n.d.; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017), drama pedagogy is often marginalised in Australian schools, representing an innovative or experimental pedagogy for many teachers. Teachers also report low levels of confidence in their capacity to implement drama activities, cite insufficient time to ‘do drama’ due to the crowded nature of their units, and reference the pressure to squeeze out creative pedagogy in response to the perceived pressures of high-stakes tests (Dutton & Rushton, 2018a, 2018b; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). However, there are many benefits for monolingual as well as multilingual students when cultural and linguistic awareness is foregrounded by drama-based pedagogical practices that promote discussion about language and culture (Fielding, 2016; García & Li, 2014; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Hamman, 2018).

3 The theoretical frame of the research

The research undertaken in this study employs the theoretical frame of the Trialectic of Spatial Practices (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996), specifically as interpreted in Soja’s (1996) first, second and thirdspace, and Li’s ‘translanguaging space’ (Li, 2011, 2018). Also known as socio-spatial theory, the framework provides a suitable lens through which to view the characteristics of, and interactions between, the ‘spaces’ that constitute schools, and teaching and learning as shown in Fig. 1.

The first, or everyday, space is dialectically juxtaposed to the second, or ideal space, while the thirdspace (Soja, 1996) is defined by ‘transgression and symbolism’ (Ryan, 2011: p. 888), being a space of ‘new possibilities and imaginings’. The socio-spatial framework has been selected for its capacity to speak to the factors shaping teacher practice and to show interactions among potentially enabling and constraining dimensions. In combination with Li Wei’s concept of a ‘translanguaging space’ (Li, 2011, 2018) the trialectic provides a lens through which to view educational practices, especially the development of those in the ‘thirdspace’ (Soja, 1996).

3.1 A space of practice, policy and performativity: the monolingual classroom

A space can be defined as a ‘social reality’, ‘a set of relations and forms’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 116) developed through interactions which may either prohibit or support changing relationships and practices. Inherently political and ideological, ‘spaces’ have distinct characteristics (Lefebvre, 1991) even as they function simultaneously.

In schools, firstspace (Soja, 1996) encompasses the usual routines such as the accepted organisation of classes, the relationships between teachers and students, and the everyday systems, policies and assessments that define the work of teachers and the learning experiences of students. The normalisation of the monolingual classroom (Kramsch, 2009) with the resulting erosion of student agency, voice and engagement (Ollerhead, 2019) exemplifies the routinised practices of the firstspace in Australia as do teaching practices that eschew creative literacy pedagogy in response to performativity pressure to carve out more time for high-stakes test preparation (Dutton & Rushton, 2018a, 2018b; Carter et al., 2018; O’Mara, 2014).

The secondspace (Soja, 1996) on the other hand represents the ‘ideal’ school and classroom as promoted by those with societal power. ‘Government policy, media reports and parent expectations generate a consistent commentary on school success (based on the achievement
levels of students in the external examinations) and contribute to the conceived secondspace of school life’ (Wilson et al., 2021, p. 6). Other secondspace ideals relevant to this project include both the desire for classroom practices that promote literacy development, and the desire for school environments that promote cultural and linguistic diversity, support identity and sustain wellbeing. The statements below from the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, n.d.) exemplify these secondspace aspirational perspectives.

… students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others.

… learning to use an existing language in new domains and contexts, students are able to notice, compare and reflect on things previously taken for granted; to explore their own linguistic, social and cultural practices as well as those associated with the target language. They begin to see the complexity, variability and sometimes the contradictions involved in using language.

The dialectical relationship between the ‘real-and-imagined’ (first and second) spaces (Soja, 1996) reflects the way teachers invoke everyday, local, ‘common-sense’ realisations of the
ideals stated in educational policies, curriculum documents and teacher professional standards. Potential tension occurs when a high-stakes testing context intensifies a school’s focus on test preparation. In these schools, teachers may make changes that do not necessarily align with their professional knowledge or the research corpus (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2011; Parr et al., 2013). These teachers walk a metaphorical ‘high wire’ (Dutton, 2017) as they negotiate the educational tensions created by a false dichotomy between a perceived need to narrow curriculum and pedagogy to achieve test success (firstspace realities) and the desire to shape an ideal secondspace informed inclusive space that fosters the engagement, literacy development and wellbeing of students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

3.2 Subverting and remaking learning: the ‘thirdspace’

‘The Identity Texts Project’ reported in this research focuses on creation of identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011) and the development of the ‘translanguaging space’ (Li, 2014). Identity texts are texts that affirm identity by reflecting a student’s linguistic and cultural heritage, and perspective and that make space for translanguaging. Use of identity texts and translanguaging-focused pedagogy shape the translanguaging space—a thirdspace that contests monolingual classroom practices but that accommodates both the secondspace ideals and firstspace realities outlined above.

Thirdspace can be viewed as a ‘space to resist, subvert and re-imagine everyday realities’ (Ryan & Barton, 2013, p. 73), a transformative space of heightened potential for an ‘expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge’ (Gutierrez, 2008, p.152) and a space where teachers can re-make taken for granted practices and beliefs. Thirdspace is a space typified by hybridity meaning that it can accommodate the ‘use of hybrid language practices [that] link the past to the present and future (particularly in reported speech about home and community) to build community and extend the means by which students can engage and make meaning’ (Gutierrez, 2008, p.153). In the translanguaging space, student agency is facilitated and knowledge about literacy and language can be developed in creative ways.

In this study, inclusive but less routine drama practices such as Readers Theatre were used to recognise and build on all the linguistic and cultural resources that students bring to school (Dutton & Rushton, 2021; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Choi et al., 2020; French, 2016; García & Leiva, 2014; May, 2013). The research reported below demonstrates how by fostering a translanguaging space and making thirdsace drama-based pedagogical choices teachers can challenge dominant monolingual and conventional classroom practices and can do so in ways that allow students to both develop literacy skills and embrace their linguistic and cultural identity.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research context

This Human Ethics Research Committee (HERC)–approved study adopted a qualitative, ethnographic design. In the tradition of phenomenological research, the study seeks to represent the lived realities of the participating teachers and their students (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The multiple-site case studies were conducted in two schools in New South Wales, Australia, a state with around 36.9% of students with a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) (CESE, 2020). Teacher volunteers (n = 8) and
student participants \((n = 20)\) from one secondary and one primary school accepted the invitation to take part in the research. Both schools have similar enrolments of approximately 500 students with almost 100% of students defined as LBOTE. Some students, especially if they are refugees, face social and economic factors which impact on their learning (Laguardia & Goldman, 2007). Both schools have an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating below average and in Socio-Educational Advantage (SEA) they are in the bottom quarter, 59% and 68% respectively.

For many teachers, there are perceived tensions between confirmation of identity, culture and language and the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1986). As the students in this study are in Stage 2 in the third or fourth year of schooling and Stage 4 in the eighth year of schooling, most will still be developing CALP in English. Not all students, even in these contexts, will receive specialist support through every stage of language development from Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) to CALP (Cummins, 1986).

### 4.2 Nature of the teacher professional learning

In the initial phase of the research, teachers identified the literacy and wellbeing needs of their students and entered into professional dialogue and reflection (Timperley, 2011). Several cycles of information gathering, meetings with school leaders, delivery of professional learning and development and evaluation of teaching programs and resources ensued. We offered teachers the research-informed ‘Inclusive creative pedagogy model’ \(^1\) as criteria for the selection of their teaching strategies and resources (see Fig. 2).

Developing student agency is key to developing an inclusive pedagogical stance which can facilitate the use of translanguaging, while also developing English language and literacy. The key strategy we suggested was the development of identity texts to incorporate the ‘essential aspects of the link between identity affirmation, societal power relations, and literacy

\[\text{Fig. 2 Inclusive creative pedagogy model (Dutton, D’warte, Rossbridge & Rushton, 2017)}\]
engagement’ (Cummins et al., 2015, p. 556). The learning sequence began with an opportunity to learn about English literature through the modelled reading of relevant, quality texts, often ones with translanguaging or subject matter that encourages its use. This rich literature functioned as a stimulus for the subsequent drama activities and included texts such as those shown in Fig. 3.

We also encouraged bilingual teachers to use their own linguistic resources to model the process for students. One teacher describing her practice observed, ‘I started speaking … the way my parents would, so they got the confidence to start speaking in their own language.’ (Stage 2 teacher.) A range of drama strategies such as ‘Advance/detail’, (a story telling strategy which develops both talking and careful listening), ‘Walking in role’ and ‘Readers Theatre’ were included as they are rich collaborative tasks that provide opportunities for substantive oral language exchanges and are positioned between spoken and written language at different points of the mode continuum as shown in Fig. 4.

During these suggested drama activities, student agency was encouraged. Students researched and then shared a family story in pairs. They employed the ‘Advance/detail’ strategy to tell the story which was then re-told by the partner in a re-paired share activity allowing the development of both speaking and listening skills. The two pairs then formed a group of four and chose one of their stories to develop into a Readers Theatre script. The decision was made using evaluation criteria jointly developed by the class. Readers Theatre was also created in response to a stimulus literary text such as a poem or picture storybook. An overview of the teachers’ pedagogical choices based on the ‘Inclusive creative pedagogy model’ (Dutton, D’warte, Rossbridge & Rushton, 2017) is provided in Fig. 5.

As noted previously, Readers Theatre provides scope for participant agency, expressing emotion by word choice or intonation, and can encourage reflection about cultural practices. Because translanguaging is also employed, the performance offers a meaningful way to communicate with the community.

5 Data sources and analysis

Data reported in this study includes the following anonymised artefacts gathered from one Stage 2 (years 3, 4) and one Stage 4 (years 7, 8) class (see Fig. 6). Consent was received for the release
## The Mode Continuum

### Spoken Language

* Telling a story from home
* Advance/Detail
* Note taking
* Readers Theatre

* Pair share – re-telling a story

* Walking in role

* Evaluating using ‘Play script criteria’

### Written Language

* Characters’ dialogue
* Narrator’s role

### Fig. 4
Spoken and written language at different points of the mode continuum

### Translanguaging drama pedagogy using readers’ theatre

| Creative pedagogy | Use of ‘Walk in Role’ and ‘Advance Detail’ to explore characterisation and point of view in stimulus texts. Scaffolded Readers Theatre created in response to a story or picture book. |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Real world task   | Gathering a story from home/community or selecting a story from a text. Collaborative use of criteria to select a story for group development of a script. Collaborative development of a script. Rehearsal and performance for peers and community. |
| Authentic texts   | Creation of performance text. Use of translanguaging encouraged to: - support script development - represent cultural background of the author, performers or characters. |
| High expectations | Scaffolded group task. Student agency in authorial decisions, role allocation & collaborative directorial decisions. Realistic but defined deadlines. |
| Cognitive challenge | Transformation of medium from original story or picture book to scripted performance text. Reworking of single voiced omniscient narrative to multi-voiced script (appropriate use of voice: 1st, 2nd and 3rd person and direct or reported speech) Recognition of narrator’s role in developing plot and characterisation. Use of textual conventions and form. |

### Fig. 5
Translanguaging drama pedagogy using Readers Theatre
of the following teacher selected project artefacts to the researchers for analysis. The authentic student texts were gathered as part of teachers’ and students’ usual work during the project.

The anonymised data were analysed inductively, iteratively and recursively by the researchers. Socio-spatial theory was employed as a lens to identify key features and patterns. Lean coding (Creswell, 2013) winnowed the data and organised it into primary themes relevant to the research with detailed researcher notes being compiled. Sub-coding was employed as required to generate sub-themes to allow a more nuanced analysis of the data (Saldana, 2013). After coding was completed, comparisons were made across the data sources to identify patterns and/or inconsistencies. Of interest were key linguistic and interpersonal elements in the translanguaging Readers Theatre texts and reflections, and representations of spatial tensions relating to enabling and constraining factors shaping teachers’ support of students’ language and identity. Multiple, independent spaced readings supported consistency of interpretation (Guba, 1981). An ‘audit trail’ comprising annotations, researcher journal notes and coding definitions was preserved (Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam, 2002).

6 Results and discussion

Analysis of student work samples and teacher artefacts using the socio-spatial lens reveals the capacity of translanguaging drama pedagogy to support literacy development and foster connections with culture. The following key patterns were identified in the data.

6.1 Translanguaging: developing student agency and representing diverse voices

Student agency and the representation of diverse voices is a key theme emerging from the data. Thirdspace experimentation with language can be seen in the Stage 4 sample G script adaptation of That is not my hat (Fig. 7), with students drawing on four cultural traditions and using translanguaging juxtaposition for impact. The Arabic-derived ‘kabir’, meaning ‘great’, and Aboriginal origin ‘warra’ (man of the water), are employed along with ‘asrak’ (Arabic boy’s name) and ‘moi’ (French for ‘me’). The repetition of ‘kabir’ constructs a comedic tone, suited to the episode being scripted, and demonstrates an inferential representation of character. The repetition also exemplifies playfulness with the aural qualities of language as well as an awareness of the performative dimension of script writing.
Enabling this thirdspace playfulness moves students away from a focus on English language learning and repositions plurilingualism as a strength, more indicative of the current global context in which the use of many ‘Englishes’ (Fu, 2009; Pennycook, 2007) is affirmed. Increasingly, multilingualism is associated with linguistic competence (Li, 2014) and indicative of a high level of linguistic, cognitive and social capability. It is also in keeping with the ‘secondspace’ curriculum and wellbeing policies that support diversity and student agency.

A Stage 2 teacher made similar reflections on the capacity of the Readers Theatre lesson sequence to empower diversity in student voice, by citing a student with limited English literacy skills in the written mode. This student would normally have been denied access to a platform for sharing their story because of this.

Khadija … she was the one who kept speaking up… Her story was like something you wouldn’t have imagined … but it was so detailed as well and it actually got chosen by her group to be performed. It was that interesting to them … [Readers Theatre] was a way for her to engage in writing without engaging in writing per se … She had the group there to support her to do it … She also had higher ability students scribe for her … because her writing … was very unreadable … her talking skills are amazing … it was very emotive … unbelievably emotive. (Stage 2 teachers’ reflections)

The student, Khadija, was supported by participation in the drama strategies, Advance/Detail and Readers Theatre and in response developed a very sad, personal Identity Text Fig. 8.

| Narrator: | There once was a warra moi who stole an asrak hat from a kabir moi. |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Little Fish: | Ooh, a Gucci hat. Has to be mine. (Little Fish grabs hat…) |
| Little Fish: | See this hat, I stole it from a Kabir fish, a kabir, kabir fish no wait a Kabir, Kabir, Kabir moi. |
| Narrator: | The warra moi stole it from a … (Big Fish snores) from a kabir moi sleeping… |
| Little Fish: | Don’t worry the Kabir moi won’t wake up for a long time. |
| Narrator: | The kabir moi woke up. |
| Little Fish: | Even if he does wake up, he’s too kabir to notice that it’s gone. |
| Big Fish: | My Gucci hat, my Gucci hat is GONE! AHHHHHHH … |
| Narrator: | After a warra chomp and a few screams, everything was back to normal. |

(Big Fish burps… and falls asleep…)

| Big Fish: | Serves him right for stealing my Gucci. |

Fig. 7 Stage 4 Readers Theatre script

Enabling this thirddspace playfulness moves students away from a focus on English language learning and repositions plurilingualism as a strength, more indicative of the current global context in which the use of many ‘Englishes’ (Fu, 2009; Pennycook, 2007) is affirmed. Increasingly, multilingualism is associated with linguistic competence (Li, 2014) and is indicative of a high level of linguistic, cognitive and social capability. It is also in keeping with the ‘secondspace’ curriculum and wellbeing policies that support diversity and student agency.

A Stage 2 teacher made similar reflections on the capacity of the Readers Theatre lesson sequence to empower diversity in student voice, by citing a student with limited English literacy skills in the written mode. This student would normally have been denied access to a platform for sharing their story because of this.
Teacher reflections also attest to the high levels of agency students experienced when creating their Readers Theatre. The quotation below is indicative of the high levels of student engagement and pride reported by teachers.

Mine is the targeted EAL/D class and all students thoroughly enjoyed the … unit. They enjoyed every activity, particularly the “walk in role” and “conscience alley” strategies but by far the component the students enjoyed the most in this unit was incorporating words and phrases from their first language into their scripts. Every group of students actively participated in the construction of their scripts and were excited and enthusiastic about their performances. (Stage 4 teacher’s reflection)

The teacher positions the students as agentive learners ‘incorporating words and phrases from their first language’. Working in their first languages the students become the ‘experts’ and the teacher an observer of their learning. The teacher’s pedagogical stance empowered the multilingual students and created a more equitable, inclusive classroom, which supported learning for all the students (see also Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; García & Li, 2014; García et al., 2012; Garrity et al., 2015; Gort & Sembianete, 2015; Sayer, 2013; Vogel & García, 2018).

### 6.2 Developing knowledge about English literature, language and literacy

A second theme identified in the data is the capacity of translanguaging drama pedagogy to support development of knowledge about English literature, language and literacy. The
translanguaging drama pedagogy approach supports student participation in tasks that use all four macro skills reading, writing, listening and speaking. With encouragement to use both English and the home language, the presentation of a Readers Theatre script is a culmination of the creative process and integrates all macro skills. In the final script, the more written like language used by the narrator contrasts with the more ‘spoken’ lines of the characters. This allows students to demonstrate their capacity to employ shifts in mode along the written-spoken mode continuum as they develop their scripts.

The juxtaposition of the narrator’s role and the characters’ dialogue in the Fig. 9 script provides further opportunities to reflect on the role of the narrator in developing the story as well as a focus on the delicate level of choice in expression to delineate the characters’ roles.

In the Stage 4 script (Fig. 9), there is clear evidence of inferential representation of character in the dialogue (‘No! I wanted to buy a new topi …’) and the stage directions (‘Snatch hat’). Present also is complex awareness of audience in the provision of the glossary of terms. Textual cohesion is developed by the narrator’s initial use of the English term ‘hat’ before employing translanguaging for impact with the Indonesian ‘topi’. This is representative of the ways the students were empowered to embody the roles of teller and translator. The provision of definitions of non-English terms is evidence of a sophisticated awareness of the language needs of the non-expert audience of teacher and peers.

Stage 2 teachers made similar observations when reflecting on the importance of developing oral language to support writing development in the translanguaging space.

… encouraging the students to use home language which they found quite interesting and excited to use in their writing. A lot of them started to put in brackets, the meaning in English, what it means … and they were happy to share and reflect on each other’s writing and … A particular activity that comes into mind was … “Advance Detail” … it

Narrator: Under the silver waves there the ocean is nothing but lifeless.
There was a small sardine Samaka, egar (sic) to find the perfect hat. But no one was there.
(Little Fish): No! I wanted to buy a new topi. But there’s no one here.
(Gasps) A topi!
(Big Fish): Zzz (snores)
(Little Fish): She wouldn’t mind if I take it and it’s too small for her. So unlike me (hair flick) I will take it. (Snatch hat)
Narrator: Little did she know that big Samaka had caught her fishy scent.
(Big fish): Oh that little Samaka! She took my treasured topi (angry face) …

Key
Topi: Hat in Indonesian
Samaka: Fish in Arabic

Fig. 9 Stage 4 sample F
just got them to have that discussion and then increase the information they were putting in, utilising the language that they had spoken by getting their partner to scribe exactly what they said.

The authentic bilingual identities (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017) being developed through translanguaging drama pedagogy thus confirms student agency resulting in reshaped connections between the language and culture of the student’s home and the school (see also Pacheco & Miller, 2016).

Creating opportunities for translanguaging also stimulated student interest in language, word origins and dialect—areas of the English Syllabus that are often challenging to teach. A key theme emerging from student data was a new awareness of the value of multilingualism with representative exemplars provided below.

I learnt how important expressions and use of unusual words are.
I learnt that we need to be confident and should learn a bit of each language.
It was interesting to see the different words my group used for the same word. I was the narrator so had to learn how to say fish in Indonesian even though I don’t know how to speak that language. I think I said it OK.
(Stage 4 student reflections)

The teacher reflection below is representative of the data reporting how the Readers Theatre learning prompted students to explore their linguistic and cultural resources and those of their peers.

Each student took pride in sharing the linguistic resources of their first language through the words and phrases they incorporated into their scripts. It was interesting to observe the way in which students of Arabic speaking backgrounds from different middle eastern countries compared their pronunciation of words as this drew attention to the fact that some spoke the same language but using a different dialect. Students were also fascinated by the fact that the girls of African descent speak only English but using a different dialect. Overall, students felt as though their own linguistic resources were valued in a classroom/academic context and were highly engaged through the unit as a result. (Stage 4 teacher’s reflection)

By giving students the ability to choose when and how to utilise their own individual linguistic resources in a ‘translanguaging space’ (Alamillo et al., 2016; Fielding, 2016; Rosiers et al., 2018), the teachers opened up room for the flexible practices of multilingual speakers and subverted the notions that there are ‘clear boundaries’ between languages (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 22).

6.3 Re-shaped teacher practice in the translanguaging space

Despite the well-established connection between language development and drama pedagogy (Dunn & Stinson, 2011; Ewing, 2012), the pre-professional learning data showed teachers in this study rarely used drama pedagogy in their firstspace everyday practice and the majority expressed concerns about their capacity to ‘do drama’ seeing it as potentially ‘risky’ and a pedagogy not endorsed by secondspace perspectives. Secondspace-shaped perspectives
relating to test performance also meant that writing was given priority over oral language. Teachers had not facilitated home language use in English in their EAL/D classrooms although all were cognisant of the wellbeing benefits of cultural and community connection for their students and had worked actively to foster this in other ways.

The professional learning delivered in this research project invited teachers to promote the creation of the translanguaging space (Li, 2014). They moved beyond ‘firstspace’ practice and resources typical of English only monolingual classrooms (Dutton & Rushton, 2021) and instead embraced the use of multiple languages for learning and articulating ideas. It thus required the teachers to shift their classroom practices and adopt strategies that disrupted their usual classroom routines and ways of teaching literacy, and to do this in the context of high-stakes testing environments where NAPLAN results are carefully scrutinised.

When discussing the impact of this project on their language and literacy teaching, Stage 2 teachers offered these reflections on the shifts they had experienced during the project:

Think, pair share … a lot of think, pair share …
We recorded them … and got them to listen to themselves …
Definitely incorporating more time for talk before they start writing, more collaboration … rather than speak to one person, speak to a number of people.
Initially I found the students very engaged orally when they were given the opportunity to discuss and speak and listen to others and their stories … this increased the confidence overall in writing for my students.

These quotations speak to an increased awareness in the value of planned, structured talk (Mercer, 2002) especially as a preparation for writing (Dutton, D’warte, Rossbridge & Rushton, 2017; Manuel & Carter, 2016), and of the structures they will employ to facilitate meaningful talk.

The Stage 2 teacher data below is representative of the pattern of shifts in how the teachers used drama pedagogy to make space to value multiple student voices and of how this shaped deeper awareness of their students’ backgrounds.

I heard stories that my students hadn’t shared before … it gave me a background into who they are and what they’d experienced.
Rich talk where the kids got to talk amongst themselves and with us as teachers. (Stage 2 teachers’ reflections)

Data also shows that students valued the thirddspace approaches of translanguaging drama pedagogy with the Stage 4 reflections being indicative of students’ overwhelmingly positive response. Students did not report their drama-based lessons as being ‘soft’ or chaotic—the oft-articulated reasons teachers give for not doing drama. Rather their focus was on key dimensions of literacy, engagement and twenty-first century learner qualities such as the collaborative nature of the task leading to the valuing of group members’ diverse skills and voices.

I learnt that we need to be confident when performing …
I learnt that acting needs time (practice) to perfect a script, you need to practice …
I enjoyed working with a partner and acting it …
I learned to be more organised …
It was funny yet fun …
… we did the script successfully and received the kind of reaction from the audience that we would like to see.
I enjoyed this activity because it involves teamwork and would much appreciate if you could make this become an assignment/or involve parents watching as well. (Stage 4 student reflections)

The collaborative drama-based activities provided rich opportunities for the learners to rehearse and think about their language use (Mercer, 2002) but to do so in safe ways that remove them from the ‘highwire’ (Dutton, 2017) of high-stakes test practice. These findings align with the positive impact of drama-based pedagogy on additional language learning shown in previous research (Dunn & Stinson, 2011; Piazzoli, 2011; Stinson & Freebody, 2006).

Students also articulated their sense of how their contribution ‘fitted’ with those of other group members. To further shape connections with community, their stated desire was to ‘involve parents watching as well’. Teacher reflections also echoed the students’ positive response.

… almost every single student thanked me for the lesson as they walked out of the classroom … Furthermore, at least 8 students told me that they would finish their scripts and submit to me for marking the following day (last day of the term) …
Students used their first language in their play scripts and I incorporated the walk-in-role strategy to check for understanding. It was highly engaging. (Stage 4 teachers’ reflections)

The walk in role drama strategy empowered students to enact and visualise the emotions of a character as they ‘walked’ in that role and answered questions from class members.

In the safe space of the translanguaging classroom, multilingual teachers also took the opportunity to share their own language and cultural backgrounds with students by modelling the Readers Theatre script using a family story. As with the students, Jasna’s story resulted in the teacher deepening their connection with their family and culture, while simultaneously shaping new trust-based connections with their students through the sharing of a personal story.

As Jasna’s [Stage 4 teacher] grandmother is of a Serbian background, Serbian words and phrases were used in the script. The students loved this and commented that this made the script “more real”. Guided comprehension questions followed the dramatic reading of the script and once girls had answered the questions, they broke off into their groups and shared their own personal stories. (Stage 4 teacher’s reflection).

The student and teacher data therefore shows EAL/D learners successfully developing language and literacy by simultaneously utilising and building on home languages, cultures and identity but doing so within a creative pedagogy that engages students in their own learning (see also Berliner, 2011; Cummins, 2000, 2005; Authors, 2021; D’warte, 2014; Garcia et al., 2017).

By shaping a ‘translanguaging space’, the teachers were able to bring to the fore voices that may otherwise have been silenced and shift the education of the bi/multilinguals in their class towards a more democratic, socially just approach (see also Velasco & Garcia, 2014).
7 Conclusions and reflections on remaking the ‘thirdspace’

…and before we knew, the bell rang and the students were dismayed that the lesson had come to an end! Ordinarily, 5 minutes before the end of the lesson, someone draws my attention to the fact that it is time to pack up!

These words from a Stage 4 teacher’s reflection and the data reported above capture the high levels of student engagement in learning reported from the translanguage drama pedagogy approach implemented during this project. Given the opportunity to use language from their cultural backgrounds during a series of drama-based activities, students ‘felt a sense of achievement because they used words, they were confident with’ (Stage 4 Teacher Reflection) and took the opportunity to learn more about their language and cultural backgrounds and those of their classmates. Teachers reported that with relatively few exceptions, students were a receptive audience, valuing each other’s texts and most students were excited to perform their Readers Theatre script. Teachers who reported pejorative student reactions in response to pronunciation of some first language words took the opportunity to discuss inclusivity and diversity with their students and strengthened classroom talk protocols. Overall, for the teachers in this study, the shift to drama-based and translanguage literacy pedagogy is one that brought both literacy and wellbeing benefits to their students.

The non-generalisability of this case study are acknowledged but while teacher data reports some resistance from students, who were reluctant to use home languages, most gained confidence and were engaged in tasks which were undertaken in a translanguage space. It is possible that the shift to the translanguage space remained incomplete for some students accustomed to experiencing literacy challenges. The ‘firstspace’ monolingual dominance may have shaped low literacy and personal confidence/competence that could not be countered by a short period of ‘thirdspace’ translanguage practice.

While further study is required to fully understand the factors impacting on student choices, teachers speculated that a lack of confidence in using a language other than English in the classroom was the result of lack of support in developing that language (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Cruickshank et al., 2020; D’warte, 2014). The Stage 2 teacher’s reflection below is representative of this perspective.

I had a few students who refused to add in their home language because they felt really, really embarrassed … they were quite hesitant. (Stage 2 teacher, 4.15).

‘The Identity Text Project’ research reported above reveals how teachers can subvert conventional classroom practices and remake the learning environment into a translanguage space that accommodates first space routines and time constraints, and secondspace pressures relating to high-stakes testing. Prior to the project, teachers’ initial reflections expressed a common thread regarding a false dichotomy between the aim of literacy and language development, and the desire for an inclusive classroom that is not an English-only monolingual space. They felt that drama pedagogy was for special occasions and represented innovative, maybe risky pedagogy and as such they did not see it as a mainstream secondspace ‘approved’ pedagogical option.

In both research settings, however, by utilising drama pedagogy and remaking learning, teachers moved to contest perceived secondspace pressure relating to the narrowing of
curriculum and pedagogical breadth in response to high-stakes testing. By creating opportunities for their students to create identity texts and engage in drama-based learning, and by also sharing their stories, the teachers created a transformative collective third space (Gutierrez, 2008). This space aligned with secondspace aspirations relating to linguistic and cultural diversity, and literacy development, and embodied heightened potential for an ‘expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge’ (Gutierrez, 2008, p.152) and was a space where teachers and students could subvert and re-make taken for granted practices and beliefs.

Our findings demonstrate the capacity for translanguaging drama pedagogy to provide teachers with a way to challenge the dominance of pedagogy that suggests that English is best learnt in an English-only classroom. There is always room for further research but we argue that teachers are ready and willing to create a translanguaging space that employs drama pedagogy to foster both the social and academic development of their students and that they can achieve this in a context with a focus on performativity. What is needed is further support from secondspace school leadership and education systems so that teachers can continue to access quality professional learning, trial ways to subvert less effective firstspace practices, and remake classroom spaces so they truly cater for the diverse needs of all students.

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