The Effects of Translanguaging in Discussion as a Prewriting Activity for Writing in a Second Language

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Abstract

One of the biggest challenges in learning to write is the shift from a dialogue mode to a monologue mode (Weissberg, 1994). Prewriting discussions are a popular pedagogical approach used to lessen the burden placed on novice writers when it comes to that shift, but little research has been done to investigate how effective these discussions are for the production of better texts in a second language (L2). The present study aims to fill in the gap, with special attention paid to how translanguaging (García, 2009) practices can be an effective pedagogical approach even in a foreign language teaching context, which has traditionally been viewed as different from bilingual language learning contexts. Writing samples in L2 English from two university students under four different conditions, 1) without prewriting discussion, 2) with prewriting discussion in L2 English, 3) with prewriting discussion in L1 Japanese, and 4) with prewriting discussion in a translanguaging condition are qualitatively analysed.

Keywords: Prewriting discussions, translanguaging, L2 writing

1. Introduction

It was some 35 years ago that Zamel (1982) made this observation about the practice of teaching writing: “…for the most part, writing assignments are made for the sole purpose of testing the mastery of specific grammatical structures and …few involve invention techniques or prewriting strategies”. Despite various innovative attempts to make teaching practices more constructive in terms of writing ability, with some level of progress seen in the area of genre studies and in process-oriented approaches, teaching writing in English as a foreign language, particularly in the Japanese educational context, has remained more or less focused on grammar and vocabulary usage on a sentence level. Such emphasis on grammar in teaching writing is evident by the types of activities still employed in textbooks. Less than 5% of writing tasks are free compositions and the vast majority are controlled writing with a heavy focus on grammar (Kobayakawa, 2011). This observation was one of the two major motivational forces behind this study.
The other driving force behind this study came from an understanding that in our globalised world, bilinguals and multilinguals are no longer seen as a deviation from the monolingual norm. Being aware of the multilingual reality of the world, researchers and teachers are starting to view bilingual students’ linguistic repertoire in its own light and not through the lens of monolingual norms, a notion that has been crystallised in the concept of translanguaging (Garcia, 2009).

This concept has been widely applied in the context of heritage language study (e.g. Blackledge & Creese, 2010) and to the bilingual education of Deaf students (e.g. Swanwick, 2016), but less so when it comes to foreign language classrooms. However, in an era of super-diversity (Vetrovec, 2007), where bilingual students of diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiencies often study in the same classroom, it is counterproductive and impractical to draw a clear line between second language teaching and foreign language teaching; all students should instead be treated as being somewhere on the bilingual continuum (Hornberger, 2003). Motivated by the two forces mentioned above, the present paper explores the possibility of applying pedagogical approaches in the classroom that focus on bilinguals making use of their stronger language in learning a weaker language, with a special focus on writing through a process-oriented approach.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies on the Effects of Prewriting Discussions on Writing

Education in the 20th century has witnessed teachers attempt to shift their roles in the classroom from authoritative figures to facilitators focused on assisting students while they learn. Thus, collaborative learning has garnered teachers’ and researchers’ attention as a promising classroom practice that enhances more autonomous learning, and where students scaffold each other and co-construct their learning. This pedagogical approach bases its foundation on the claim by Vygotsky (1978) that views the development of a child’s language and cognitive skills as occurring through interactions with others and the physical environment that surrounds the child.

Put in the context of teaching writing, Vygotsky’s notion of development is of relevance as pointed out by Weissberg (1994, p. 122): “qualitative differences in novice writers’ texts reflect the varying degree to which they are able to move from a dialogue mode (dependence on a conversational partner to generate extended discourse) to a monologue mode (the ability to produce extended written text autonomously).” It seems this leap from a dialogue mode to a monologue mode is what novice writers find the most difficult when writing, and thus providing students with the opportunity to explore the topic prior to writing can function as valuable scaffolding for them. Indeed, Stock and Robinson (1990) observed how a classroom discussion of the writing topic before starting the actual writing process helped the teacher and the students collaboratively develop, critique and organise ideas which were then incorporated into their writing.
In second language (L2) writing classrooms, too, prewriting discussions have been widely used (e.g., Storch, 2005). However, as pointed out by Neuman and McDonough (2015), there has been little research conducted so far on exploring the relationship between the discussions and the resulting texts that are generated based on the discussions. To my knowledge, the only research to date on the effects of prewriting discussions in L2 writing are the studies by Shi (1998) and Neuman and McDonough (2015). Shi (1998) compared the quality of writing produced by students under three different conditions: after a teacher-led discussion, after a peer discussion, and without any form of discussion, but found no statistically significant differences between the three conditions, possibly due to the disorganised nature of these discussions.

Inspired by Shi’s study, Neuman and McDonough (2015) gave their students the opportunity to engage in prewriting discussions in a more structured manner. Their study illustrated how structured prewriting tasks helped students engage in reflective discussions about the content and organisation of their texts, and in cases where groups were engaged in a collaborative discussion, the quality of ideas generated by students were found to have improved. Although their findings did not present a straightforward relationship between prewriting discussions and text quality, as various factors were speculated to have made the process more complex than had been expected, their study still illustrates the potential that prewriting discussions can have on helping students produce writing of a better quality.

2.2 Previous Studies on the Use of L1 in L2 Writing

Provided that discussion as a prewriting activity in a process-oriented approach to teaching writing is effective and productive, the question arises as to whether there are any unique features in the way L2 writers make use of such prewriting activities when compared to their L1 counterparts. As Woodall (2002) rightly points out, a qualitative difference L2 writers possess is that they have their L1 as a resource to rely on when writing. Indeed, many studies have reported that L2 writers make use of their L1 in order to generate ideas prior to writing in an L2, but they do not necessarily agree on whether or not those using L1s are better writers than those who do not. Cumming (1989) reports that proficient writers frequently switch between languages when writing in L2, while less proficient writers reportedly plan in L1 and translate when writing in L2 (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Sasaki, 2002, 2004), and resort to the use of L1 while writing more frequently than proficient writers (Beare & Bourdages, 2007; van Weijin et al., 2009; Wang & Wen, 2002). As for the effects of the use of L1 on L2 writing, the result of previous studies are again somewhat inconclusive: van Weijen et al. (2009) report that L1 use negatively affects the quality of L2 writing, while studies of Japanese learners of English report how translation from L1 in fact helps the production of better L2 writing (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Uzawa, 1996). Woodall (2002) concluded that the use of L1 is effective when L1 and L2 are not linguistically too distant, while several studies present a view that doing prewriting activities in either L1 or in L2
does not affect the quality of produced texts (Akyel, 1994; Friedlander, 1990; Lally, 2000), and
that L1 use before writing does not have negative consequences (Knutson, 2006).

Such inconclusiveness of previous studies results from the super-diversity (Vetrovec, 2007)
of the classrooms where these students learn. Whether or not the use of L1 has a positive effect on
L2 writing can vary depending on, among other factors, the proficiency of the writers’ L1 and L2,
and it is simply not productive nor practical to control these factors for the purpose of
investigation. Rather, the questions that need to be addressed today are the ones that stem from
accepting such super-diversity in our classrooms and to discuss ways in which bilinguals on
various points of the continuum can make use of the linguistic repertoire they possess in
strengthening their weaker language. The next section reviews previous research in the realm of
translanguaging, which appears to be one of the most promising concepts in dealing with this
issue.

2.3 The Concept of Translanguaging and its Relevance to L2 Writing

The term translanguaging was originally coined in Welsh as trawsieithu by Williams (1994,
cited in García and Wei, 2014), to describe a deliberate change between the language of input and
output in bilingual classrooms. García (2009) extended the concept from a mere teaching strategy
practiced in bilingual classrooms to a concept that depicts the “multiple discursive practices in
which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds (p. 45)”.

Bilinguals’ fluid use of languages has long been observed under the notion of
code-switching, with somewhat negative connotations attached as it implies a speaker who has an
incomplete and incompetent usage of both languages. The concept of translanguaging clearly
differs from that of code-switching in the sense that bilinguals’ linguistic repertoire is viewed as
consisting of one unique entity of the speaker’s own. García and Wei (2014) explains:

[T]ranslanguaging is an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of
bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous
language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with
features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages (p.2).

Since it is a relatively new concept, examples of its application in teaching writing to
bilingual students are scarce. Canagarajah (2011) explores the possibility of translanguaging in
text, providing an important insight into what a bilingual writer does in order to convey his/her
meaning to its full extent. However, such practices of translanguaging in text are still in the
experimental stage, especially in academic writing where the purpose of writing is always to
clearly state the authors’ idea without any space for misunderstanding.

In an academic writing classroom, it would be more relevant to focus on translanguaging as
a pedagogical approach, where the use of any and all parts of the linguistic repertoire of the
bilingual students are legitimatised and promoted. Two previous studies have explored such possibilities. Velasco and García (2014) observed how young bilinguals composed their writing making use of their entire linguistic repertoire. They sum up their findings as: “In emergent bilinguals, TL (translanguaging) can function as a self-regulatory mechanism that expedites the process of language learning (p.12).” García and Kano (2014) examined the linguistic behaviours of much older bilingual writers under a translanguaging condition where bilingual reading materials were provided for use during the prewriting stage. The writers were asked to describe their linguistic behaviours when producing an English text by means of stimulated recalls. Through this study, it was revealed that bilinguals on different points of the bilingual continuum make use of translanguage strategies in their effort to produce written texts. Taken together, these studies suggest that bilingual writers do make use of translanguaging as a strategy in preparing to write. However, to my knowledge, no study to date has yet investigated the effects of translanguaging when used in prewriting discussions, and this gap in the literature was a strong motivation for the present study. The present study was also motivated by the need to expand translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy to a wider range of the bilingual population, namely, foreign language learners who are near the Japanese end of the Japanese-English bilingual continuum. This group has been traditionally referred to as “monolingual”, but given the super-diversity of today’s world, the notion of “monolingual” in its purest sense seems to be unrealistic and impractical. Therefore the research question that guided this study was set as:

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Two English-major university students at a Japanese university, Sakura (female) and Kenta (male) participated in this study. They were both native speakers of Japanese studying English at an intermediate level. Sakura spent one year in Canada during her course of study at the university, attending an ESL (English as a Second Language) school and pursuing working holiday experiences. Kenta has attended a one-month intensive language programme in Australia. The names used here are pseudonyms.

3.2 Data Collection

The participants were asked to write English essays under four conditions: 1) with no prewriting discussion (No-PWD), 2) with a prewriting discussion in English (PWD-E), 3) with a prewriting discussion in Japanese (PWD-J), and 4) with a prewriting discussion under translanguaging conditions (PWD-TL). The writing prompts were chosen from the official IELTS
preparation books and the official website of IELTS test takers to ensure that the levels of the tasks remained more or less consistent. These writing prompts were thought to be of ecological validity as well in a sense that these students have written similar tasks during their course of study. In all of the tasks, they were asked to take a position on a debatable issue. For example, the No-PWD task was:

Some experts believe that it is better for children to begin learning a foreign language at primary school rather than secondary school. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

(Taken from IELTS official website)

To ensure productive discussions, the participants were instructed to explore both sides of the argument in the discussion, even if their own personal opinions strongly favoured one side of the issue. In PWD-TL, instructions were given to maintain an English discussion for as long as possible but to freely switch to Japanese whenever they felt that helped. All the prewriting discussions, which lasted for about 20 minutes under each condition, were recorded with their consent and transcribed for analysis. They were given 40 minutes to type their essays on computers they were familiar with and were equipped with spellchecker functions. They were also allowed to use dictionaries when necessary but no other instruments were permitted for use.

3.3 Data Analysis

To investigate what effects the PWD had on the writing under each condition, the parts of the written text produced in relation to the PWD were determined through a stimulated recall procedure, where the participants listened to the recorded PWD and underlined the parts of the texts they believed were generated based on the PWD.

The numbers of tokens and types of content words in these PWD-influenced sections were then counted using online software called vocabprofile¹ to calculate the proportion of these words over the number of the types and tokens of content words present in the whole text. It was decided that the content words should be the focus of the present study on the basis that both of the students often made grammatical errors, which were in many cases related to the use of function words. Also as the focus was on ideas generated through the PWD, the number of concepts related to the topic was the main focus of this study, and thus content words were the best candidates in creating such an index.

The prewriting discussions were also transcribed for qualitative analyses through which various functions of these discussions were observed. These observations were then presented to the participants to verify if they agreed with how their comments had been interpreted.

4. Results
The number of types and tokens of words in the whole text, as well as the content words produced in the whole text and in the sections related to PWD are shown in table 1.

Table 1
The number of words produced in the whole texts and sections related to PWD under the four conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Words in the whole text</th>
<th>Content words in the whole text</th>
<th>Content words in the sections related to PWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sakura</td>
<td>Kenta</td>
<td>Sakura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No PWD Tokens</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWD-E Tokens</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWD-J Tokens</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWD-TL Tokens</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the proportion of content words in the sections related to PWD over the words in the whole text.

As presented in table 1, Sakura produced the longest essay in terms of tokens produced in the text under the No-PWD condition, and the shortest in the PWD-J. Kenta produced longer essays under the PWD-E condition and the PWD-TL condition compared to the essays under the No-PWD and the PWD-J conditions, and a similar pattern was observed in terms of content words produced over the whole text.

Looking at the proportion of content words in sections related to the PWD over content words in the whole text, it was evident that both Sakura and Kenta made use of PWDs under the PWD-J condition the most, followed by the PWD-TL condition, and lastly the PWD-E condition to varying degrees when types were considered. 88.7% of the content words Sakura wrote were related to the PWD under the PWD-J condition when types were considered, and the numbers were 76.3% and 48.1% under the PWD-TL condition and PWD-E condition respectively. Likewise, 67.4% of the content words Kenta wrote were related to the PWD under the PWD-J condition, and the numbers were 60.5% and 50.8% under the PWD-TL condition and PWD-E condition respectively.

5. Discussion
Both Sakura and Kenta were able to produce texts more or less around the expected length (recommended minimum word count was 250), indicating that both of them are capable of pursuing writing tasks on their own. The effects of the prewriting discussions (P WDs) under the three different conditions will be discussed in the following sections.

5.1 Reliance on PWD When Dealing with Unfamiliar Topics

From the three PWD conditions, PWD-J resulted in the shortest texts produced by both Sakura and Kenta. After writing, both said it was the most difficult task due to their unfamiliarity with the topic: they were asked to write about their opinions regarding the benefits of nuclear technology and if they outweigh the disadvantages. In Sakura’s case, reliance on the ideas generated through PWD amounted to nearly 90% of all the produced text when types were considered.

5.2 Moments of Communication Breakdown in PWD-E

The PWD-E was the least effective in assisting the participants in terms of the proportion of content words produced over the whole text. The reason for this could be connected to the moments of communication breakdown in the PWD-E. “Communication breakdown” here refers to the moment during the PWD in which one of the participants is aware that the other is not following his/her argument in the way he/she intends, but negotiation for meaning (Long, 1996; Pica, 1996) does not resolve the problem. In this essay, they were asked to write about whether ‘alternative forms of transport’ other than cars should be encouraged, and if international laws should be introduced to control car ownership and use. They started off their PWD-E by looking up the word ‘alternative’ together, and agreed that it would mean something like buses, trains, and bicycles in this context. Kenta then made the point that the number of cars should be limited so that traffic problems would be solved. Sakura half agreed with Kenta but her reasoning was more environmental, pointing out that exhaust gasses could exacerbate global warming. Kenta went on to say that even electronic cars would be problematic because they still caused traffic jams, while Sakura started to question the validity of her own reasoning by pointing out that even when people use electronic cars and trains, greenhouse gasses were still produced when electricity was generated. There was a sense of confusion between the two when Kenta tried to push the discussion forward:

〈Excerpt 1: PWD-E: 12:32-13:29〉
K1: How about….well, whatever. I think it’s good point. About discuss. Well…
S1: How about parts of Disagree?
K2: ん[huh?]? Did we discuss about agree?
S2: え？ちがうの？[Huh? Am I mistaken?]
K3: Really? It’s quite disagreeing, right?
S3: For this one?
K4: うん [yeah.]
S4: Huh?
K5: Anyway, what about disagree?
S5: (laughs) How about disagree?

(Note: The numbers indicate the time in minutes and seconds of each excerpt in the recordings. For Japanese comments, translation is provided in [  ] . )

As can be seen from this excerpt, Kenta thought he was making a point disagreeing with the resolution of introducing international laws to restrict car use. Sakura on the other hand did not take his opinion that way, and up to that moment believed that he was for the resolution. This is a crucial point in the discussion and the fact that they misunderstood each other shows a critical shortcoming in depending solely on a second language in PWDs. It is striking that they resorted to using Japanese in the excerpt above, as the instruction clearly stated they were to make use of English only, showing how natural it is for second language speakers to make use of their stronger language during critical moments in communication breakdown.

There was another communication breakdown during this PWD. At the very beginning of the PWD-E, they collaboratively defined the phrase ‘alternative forms of transport’ in this particular context and agreed that meant buses, trains, bicycles, and something other than cars. After about 15 minutes of discussion, Kenta started to question the definition itself.

〈Excerpt 2: PWD-E: 15:14-17:52〉
K1: What is ‘alternative’? ‘Alternative form of transport’?
S1: What is?
K2: Hum. What is?
S2: Like a bus or train or bicycle or…
K3: Really? Is that? I don't think it's alternative forms, I think, because the car is very useful and like if I get out the house and just get on the car I can go anywhere if I want. What about bicycle? Can I go to the Niseko? But if I get on the car I can get to the Niseko, if I want. The bicycle is not alternative forms for me in case like this.
S3: ‘Alternative forms’? Hmm?
K4: Train is not very useful for me, because I live in a rural area and it's too far to go to the station and I need to move from my house to station in the other way.
S4: I understand but え [huh]? ‘Alternative form of transport’ mean…
K5: I am saying it's not, it shouldn't be encouraged at the point of disagree. Did you understand what I am saying?
S5: No, I am panicking. え [huh]?

In this excerpt, Kenta was trying to present a critical view of their definition of the phrase ‘alternative forms of transport’. He tried to make a point that one could not treat cars and bicycles
in a similar manner since a car is far more convenient than a bicycle, and if one accepted a bicycle as an alternative to a car, he or she needed to acknowledge the loss of convenience offered by cars. Therefore he attempted to deepen the discussion, but as evident in turns 3, 4, and 5, Sakura became confused. She did not understand why he started to question the definition of the phrase she felt had been clearly agreed upon by both of them at the beginning of the discussion. Kenta, because of his limited proficiency in spoken English, was unable to clarify his abstract argument and repeated simple questions when he actually wanted to critically examine the co-constructed definition. Sakura did not see Kenta’s intention and got confused as to why he was questioning something she thought both of them had already found the answer to together at the very beginning of the PWD, and thus failed to see his point.

5.3 Various Functions of PWD-TL

Under the PWD-TL condition, the participants were encouraged to use their first language whenever they felt the need to do so, and thus were able to overcome the possibility of a communication breakdown like these documented in the PWD-E. The five functions of the use of translanguaging observed in this study were:

1. Asking their partner for vocabulary related assistance
2. Using L1 to recall words in L2 or looking them up in the dictionary
3. Using L1 instead of finding appropriate words in L2 to move the discussion forward
4. Clarifying meta-linguistic discourse from a topic-related discussion
5. Clarifying the point of discussion using L1

The use of L1 when learners do not have the necessary vocabulary in their L2 is well documented, and the PWDs observed in the present study were no exception. In excerpt 3, Sakura tried to remember the word “quit” which was on the tip of her tongue and after several attempts she resorted to Japanese to ask for help from Kenta in S2, which was immediately provided.

〈Excerpt 3: PWD-TL: 5:28-6:22〉

S1: Like a 無期懲役 (looks up in the dictionary), life imprisonment I think life imprisonment and death penalty is like similar because we didn’t do the death penalty, we did do the death penalty like a two or three people in a year, right?
K1: そうなの? [Really?]
S2: うん。[Yeah.] So it’s…what’s the difference between death penalty and life imprisonment? I think like a if we finish? We quite? やめる? [quit?] We stop the death penalty,
K2: quit?
S3: Quit? But we still have life imprisonment; it’s fine.
Sakura made use of Japanese to recall necessary English words not only by asking Kenta for help but also by looking them up in a dictionary as evident in Excerpt 4.

〈Excerpt 4: PWD-TL: 8:35-7:09〉
S: But we…even though we have death penalty, like it's I searched before like a in a class, in a なんだっけ[What was it?] 囚人 [prisoner] (looks up the dictionary) prisoner, it's a many prisoner to do death penalty and we pay tax to…

In yet another instance, just saying the word or hearing it in Japanese was enough to prompt the recall of the English equivalent.

〈Excerpt 5: PWD-TL: 7:59-8:10〉
S: But even though we have death penalty this なんだっけ?[What was it?] 犯罪 [crime] crime didn't decrease… Right?

In the interview Sakura commented on this part of the PWD-TL and said, “Thanks to the word drills we did at high school, saying a word in Japanese can trigger the recall of the word in English.” Here, L1 functioned as a trigger for accessing forgotten L2 vocabulary.

In some instances, the participants were too absorbed in the content of the discussion and chose not to pause to look for the appropriate word in L2 but instead move the discussion forward.

〈Excerpt 6: PWD-TL: 7:30-7:57〉
K1: I think some people say it's not 人道的 [humane]?人道的じゃないから [not humane, that’s why]
S1: They didn't do the death penalty?
K2: They don't want to do that.
S2: But we HAVE death penalty. If we have death penalty, we SHOULD do that.

The task for the PWD-TL condition was to discuss if capital punishment is essential to control violence in society, and here Kenta presented his view of why some people would disagree with the idea of capital punishment. Unlike instances shown before where Sakura was looking for the word in English, they did not pause to look up the word in a dictionary. Nor did saying the word out loud in Japanese help either of them recall the English word, and so the search for the L2 word remained unsolved, but they were more interested in exchanging ideas related to the topic at that moment.

In another instance, translanguaging made it possible for them to clarify meta-linguistic discourse from the topic-related discussion.
S1: Disadvantage… What's… we just do capital punishment in a two or three people… two or three people in a year, and I saw like in the internet, and just many prisoner, just prisoner, なんだっけ、死刑囚になるけど、[what was it? He will be sentenced to death, but] it's not happen, so just we should pay tax for them.
K1: we have to でしょ[you mean].
S2: そう[yeah], we have to. We have to pay tax for them. And just people increase. It's problem で、見た。[and I watched it (on the internet).]

In this excerpt, translanguaging presents two functions; one is being to move the discussion along, as we observed in excerpt 6 in which the students discussed the disadvantage of having the death penalty. In S1, Sakura was probably looking for the word “executed” in explaining that keeping prisoners on death row can be costly since in Japan the number of executions are limited. She could not recall the word in either Japanese or English, so she just paraphrased it saying “it’s not happen”, after attempting to phrase it using Japanese.
The other function of translanguaging observed in this excerpt is using Japanese to clarify a metalinguistic comment from a content related comment. In S1, Sakura presented the view that paying tax to support the life of a prisoner on death row was wasteful, but she said “we should pay tax for them”, when she really meant “we have to pay tax for them”. Catching this grammatical error, Kenta commented in K1 “you mean ‘we have to’, don’t you?” but instead of saying everything in English, he chose to translanguage and made the comment in Japanese except for the actual phrase of “have to”, which made his suggestion more explicit. Sakura’s immediate uptake in S2 shows how explicit and effective Kenta’s comment was.
The most extensive use of Japanese in the PWD-TL was seen when there was a need to clarify a point of discussion, which was very similar in nature to the moment of communication breakdown in the PWD-E condition observed in excerpt 1.

S1: For me. Maybe not disadvantage… what do you think? About capital punishment, disadvantage
K1: Disadvantage… we have to pay the tax more longer than in death penalty,
S2: じゃあアドバンテージにしよ[All right let’s talk about the advantage, then]
K2: disadvantage 死刑を廃止しなかったら [if we do not abolish capital punishment]
S3: あ、廃止しなかったら、のほうね、OK [Oh, you mean if we don’t abolish it, ]
K3: 廃止したら…? [If we abolish it, maybe?]
S4: 廃止したら…ってことね、[You mean if we do abolish it, ]OKOKOK
K4: 廃止したら…[If we abolish it]税金を払わなければいけない [we need to pay tax], で、さっき言ったみたいに執行人の気持ちでしょ [and as I said before, the feelings of the executers] disadvantage
S5: 執行人の気持ちは…? [Feeling of the executers is…?]
In this discussion, both of the students saw advantages to capital punishment, but they also tried to see the other side of the argument as instructed. The resolution they were discussing was whether or not capital punishment is essential to control violence in society, but because Sakura used the word “advantage” in S1 but did not clarify if she meant the advantage of keeping capital punishment or abolishing capital punishment, Kenta got confused. In K1, Kenta presented a disadvantage to abolishing capital punishment by pointing out that if capital punishment was abolished and criminals committing serious crimes were sentenced to life imprisonment, then tax payers would have to spend more money on criminals. In S2, instead of pointing out that what she had intended was to talk about the disadvantage of keeping capital punishment and not abolishing it, Sakura tried to adjust her argument to Kenta’s by switching to the advantage of maintaining capital punishment. Kenta’s comment in K2 exacerbated the confusion, as he tried to build his argument that a disadvantage to not abolishing capital punishment (i.e. keeping capital punishment) would be having to pay more tax money for life imprisonment, which was actually a false construction of his argument: what Kenta really meant to say was that the disadvantage of not keeping capital punishment was having to pay more tax. Up to K5, both of them sought to clarify the use of “advantage” and “disadvantage”. In S6, Sakura suddenly realised that they were confused about whether they were talking about the disadvantage of keeping capital punishment or abolishing capital punishment. Through several exchanges they came to realise that a disadvantage to keeping capital punishment was that executioners face a heavy emotional burden in pursuing their duties, while a disadvantage to abolishing capital punishment was an increase in the number of prisoners sentenced to life in prison which would be more costly for tax payers.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The present study illustrated various functions of prewriting discussions held in translanguaging conditions while showing possible difficulties that may arise in an English only
condition. The participants of the study made use of PWD-TL in looking for vocabulary in L2, foregoing the need to search for an appropriate L2 word by choosing instead to move the discussion forward in L1, making metalinguistic comments, and clarifying highly abstract points of discussion. These moments of translanguaging initiated by the students themselves illustrated how legitimisation of the flexible use of the entire linguistic repertoire possessed by bilingual writers can foster their writing, even when the bilinguals are at near one end of the bilingual continuum. Velasco and García (2014) states:

Effective language learning, including the effective use of translanguaging strategies, requires enactment within a meaningful context, which facilitates the processing of linguistic and writing demands. Teachers can incorporate translanguaging strategies by opening up the spaces that will allow the recursive process of writing to interplay between the languages a student has (p.21).

An enhanced use of translanguaging can and should be extended to foreign language classrooms that include students who were traditionally viewed as ‘monolinguals’. By redefining them as bilinguals, no matter how near end of the bilingual continuum they may be, and encouraging them to make active use of their entire linguistic repertoire, teachers can create a meaningful context in which emergent bilinguals can further develop their linguistic abilities.

There are many limitations to this study, the small sample size being the biggest issue. A similar study needs to be replicated to observe how a larger variety of bilingual writers make use of translanguaging as a self-regulating strategy. In carrying out a similar study on a larger scale, however, other issues including the level of English proficiency of the participants, as well as the relationship between the participants should be taken into consideration. Also, the varying degree of topic familiarity proved to be challenging in this type of research. Content knowledge of the topic has a large impact on the number of words writers can produce. Thus, it is almost impossible to make a direct comparison of the number of words produced under each condition when varying prompts are used. In future research, such problem might be avoided by preparing many written prompts and having the participants choose the ones they are comfortable with so that this problem has less of an effect on the results.

Notes

2. Niseko is a ski resort that is about 120 km away from the place where the discussion was taking place.

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