

**Translanguaging: Using American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 Classroom**  
by

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## **Abstract**

When teaching the Basic English 3101 course, English language learning was affected due to the lack of teacher-student communication in class. This lack of communication could be attributed to students' fears towards communicating in the English language and the forceful implementation of English only language practices in their previous English courses. Throughout this study, the incorporation of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language ("yes," "no," "understand," "do not understand" and "question") were carefully planned to allow translanguaging practices to challenge the lack of teacher-student communication in the Basic English 3101 classroom. A case study focused on qualitative data collection and analyses was conducted with undergraduate students enrolled in the Basic English 3101 course. In this study, English was established as the primary medium of instruction, while Spanish served as a stepping stone to improve students' English skills. Meanwhile, the five signs in American Sign Language provided students with a sense of privacy, security and *confianza*. Hence, leading to the creation of a third space and challenging monolingual ideologies in the Basic English 3101 classroom.

## Resumen

Al enseñar el curso Inglés Básico 3101, el aprendizaje del inglés es afectado debido a la falta de comunicación entre el maestro y el estudiante en clase. Esta ausencia de comunicación podría ser atribuida al miedo de comunicarse en inglés de los estudiantes y la implementación contundente de las prácticas de idioma únicamente en inglés en sus pasados cursos de inglés. Mediante este estudio, la integración de inglés, español y cinco señas en lenguaje de señas americano (“si,” “no,” “entiendo,” “no entiendo” y “pregunta”) fueron planificadas cuidadosamente para que las prácticas de translenguar permitan retar la falta de comunicación entre el maestro y los estudiantes. Un estudio de caso enfocado en colección y análisis de data cualitativo fue realizado con estudiantes cursando estudios no graduados matriculados en el curso Inglés Básico 3101. En este estudio, inglés fue establecido como el medio de instrucción principal, mientras que el español sirvió como plataforma para mejorar las destrezas de los estudiantes en inglés. Sin embargo, las cinco señas en lenguaje de señas americano crearon en los estudiantes una sensación de privacidad, seguridad y *confianza*. Por lo tanto, en el aula del curso Inglés Básico 3101 se desarrolló un tercer espacio e ideología monolingües fueron desafiadas

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Every day educators face diverse challenges in their classrooms. As a twenty-two-year-old, working at the Department of Education in Puerto Rico as an elementary English teacher, my job seemed an impossible feat. Yet, every day I would learn new techniques or strategies which worked in my teachings and with my students. One strategy which sparked my interest was when I saw the second-grade homeroom teacher use American Sign Language with her students. She had taught students the sign for bathroom, which is simply done by placing the index finger over the thumb and shaking the hand from side to side two or three times. If a student needed to use the bathroom during class time, they would sign to the teacher and she would respond using the signs for “yes” or “no,” allowing communication to occur without interrupting the lesson. I had taken basic, intermediate and advanced American Sign Language courses during my bachelor’s degree, but I never thought I could integrate American Sign Language as a strategy to improve communication in my English classroom.

It was not until I started teaching Basic English (INGL 3101- 3102) to undergraduate students as an Instructor of Record at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez (UPRM), when I noticed most students would not communicate their doubts or questions in the classroom. As I explained grammar concepts to my pupils, I would ask if they had any questions, but no one would reply. This lack of communication truly bothered me, especially when I corrected their quizzes and would find most students did not understand the lesson. As a result, the next class was dedicated to reteaching material and attempting to decipher, “why is it so difficult for students to express their doubts or questions in class?” As a result, this lack of communication was affecting their potential to acquire the English language and at the same time it lowered their test scores.

It was then when I revisited the idea of using American Sign Language in the classroom to challenge pupil's lack of communication. I thought, by implementing signs such as "yes," "no," "understand," "do not understand" and "question" students would communicate with me. However, it was not until I was introduced to translanguaging that my idea became concrete. Among many other things, translanguaging is a pedagogical strategy (Mazak, 2017), based on the notion that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they strategically select specific features to communicate effectively (Celic & Seltzer, 2011). Translanguaging creates a space for bilingualism to be the norm and allows bilinguals to strategically use their language repertoires to make meaning. For example, the grammar content of my Basic English 3101 class is in English, the materials are in English and my lesson is as well. Yet, most of the time when students want to ask a question, clarify a doubt or discuss the lesson more in depth, it happens in Spanish, while I respond in a mixture of the two. This play on language strategically continues throughout the entire fifty-minute lesson, hence allowing students to use their entire language repertoires in class. Moreover, by creating a space where language is not fixed or limited, educators are not only respecting and acknowledging student's language backgrounds, but they are promoting a dynamic learning space.

Little did I know that translanguaging in my classroom would open the door not only to another language, but another culture. As I carefully planned the fifty minutes of class to teach my students the signs "yes," "no," "understand," "do not understand" and "question," I found myself integrating not only these key signs, but Deaf culture as well. I felt I had a responsibility. If I was incorporating the language, my students needed to respect it and the only way to do this was to demystify the stereotypes associated with American Sign Language and Deaf culture. Therefore, the first fifteen minutes of class were dedicated to revising the key signs, introducing

new signs, watching YouTube videos to initiate conversation about a particular topic regarding Deaf culture and reflecting on past experiences or interactions with Deaf culture. Hence, challenging students' notions and attitudes of Deaf culture with this new knowledge.

Throughout my experiences as an educator, student's hesitation to express doubts or questions greatly impacted my classroom. Therefore, this study aims to increase communication between the teacher and the students with the integration of multiple languages in the classroom. Within this study, the role of communication did not limit itself to spoken language, in that it transcended and expanded into the realms of nonverbal communication. Hence, integrating the use of some American Sign Language might allow students to convey new information and meaning which allowed access to be able to supplement the use of English in the classroom. As a result, pupils could develop different perspectives and opinions on diverse languages, as equal and powerful tools to develop language learning. Therefore, using some American Sign Language as a form of translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom can create a space for students to effectively communicate their doubts and questions without the fear of using the target language. Moreover, the implementation of American Sign Language could improve teacher-student communication and the classroom environment by challenging English only educational policies and allowing learners to use their language repertoires to acquire knowledge.

In addition, by integrating American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course it allows students to expand their repertoires. This leads to different approaches or ideologies towards language learning, one which embraces vocal and nonverbal languages as equal tools for learning. Thus, integrating a third language in English classrooms could help address issues of language and ideologies that might contribute to the resistance to learn the English language.

This study was developed in the Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. A case study design was chosen due to the homogeneity of the undergraduate students, who were taking the same course in which I was the instructor. In order to answer the research questions as effectively as possible, this research focused on qualitative data collection and analyses.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to improve teacher-student communication in the Basic English 3101 course at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. This study aims to challenge the use of language in the Basic English 3101 classroom by designing and implementing lessons in which students can purposefully use English, Spanish and some American Sign Language to understand the concepts discussed in class. Although translanguaging has previously been researched as a pedagogical strategy, the particular language context of Puerto Rico and the use of some American Sign Language with hearing, emergent bilingual students makes this research truly unique. Throughout this research I used questionnaires, video recordings and interviews to collect data, explain the results and justify my claims regarding translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy and language use in the Basic English 3101 classroom. My hope is through this study, educators can evaluate and challenge their language policies in English classrooms with emergent bilingual students. Furthermore, they consider translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy which educators can adopt and adapt to address the collective needs of the class and individual needs of each student.

### **Research Questions**

As a way to develop a deeper understanding towards students' lack of communication in class, this study implements translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy to challenge the use of

language in the Basic English 3101 course. Through the use of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language, students were given the opportunity to communicate using diverse forms of communication. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, two questions guided the research. The first question investigated the use of some American Sign Language as a form of translanguaging in a Basic English 3101 classroom, focusing on the implementation of five signs which were used to initiate communication in class. The second question explored the impact these signs had in the classroom environment.

The research questions which guided the study of some American Sign Language as a form of translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom were the following:

1. How does the use of some American Sign Language become a form of translanguaging in an Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez?
2. What impact does the use of some American Sign Language have in the Basic English 3101 classroom environment at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez?

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

### **Puerto Rico's Language Context**

Puerto Rico's language history is complex and extremely unique. Before the United States of America invaded Puerto Rico in 1898 and established it as its' colony, Spanish was the official language of the island. Following the Spanish American War, from 1898 to 1948, the paradigm of Americanization, attempted to change the country's language, administrative structure, legal system and culture. The United States' objective for Puerto Rico was "Americanization" and the Department of Education was the perfect tool for this strategy (Schmidt, 2014). As a result, since 1900 there have been at least seven different policies for the teaching of English in Puerto Rico (Bou, 1966). However, the policies did not encompass a philosophy of education or a cohesive plan of action.

As the United States of America took over the island, continuous efforts were made to implement English in the education system and consider it as an official language (Barreto, 2001). However, in 1991 the *Official Language Act* selected Spanish as the only official language of the island. Spanish is part of Puerto Ricans' culture, values and identities. Forcing a new language onto an established culture, created a resistant environment among Puerto Ricans and their relationship with English and the United States of America. Despite the attempts to maintain Spanish as the sole language, with a change of government in 1993, English was reestablished as an official language, alongside Spanish. This change generated an Americanized movement in which English took on a co-official role. The English language was then associated with social status and high economic resources among Puerto Ricans, ideologies which still remain rooted in our culture (Barreto, 2001).

Many Puerto Ricans have developed a negative perception and resistance towards English partly in face of economic and social hegemony represented by English and the United States. Hence, these attitudes are reflected in the English classrooms in Puerto Rico. English educators have a difficult task; part of their mission is not only to build knowledge on the language, but in order to do this, they first have to break down the barriers which come with learning the English language as well (Barreto, 2001). The internal conflicts between languages and cultures at times limit students' performance in class by developing stress, insecurities and self-doubt. Instead of viewing these languages as separate entities, one of which is superior to another, teachers should promote and celebrate languages as culturally rich channels through which meaning is created. Also, they should avoid the implementation of strict language policies which could raise students' stress levels and lower class participation. Not only this, but through the integration of students' first language, as educators, we acknowledge their culture and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, allowing students to use their language repertoires freely to voice and express their opinions in class, could foster a rich and diverse learning space.

Therefore, integrating the use of both English and Spanish along with some American Sign Language to help students communicate, could develop a class environment which breaks down the barriers set by the English language, while increasing student participation, communication and at the same time it would benefit students' language learning outcomes.

### **Puerto Rico's Deaf Context**

It is not clear when an organized deaf community emerged in Puerto Rico, yet Williams and Parks (2012), draw attention to the chicken pox epidemics and plagues which were brought by Spaniards and Africans, which contributed to an increase in the deaf population. The 2000 national census estimates 150,000 deaf people in Puerto Rico, however Sordos de Puerto Rico,

Inc. (Puerto Rico Deaf Association), announced there are 340,000 people with hearing loss and 80,000 who could be considered profoundly deaf. Moreover, Simons and Fennig, (2017), editors of the website *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* indicate around 8,000–40,000 deaf persons scattered around the island. Yet, the U.S. Census Bureau explains based on the American Community Survey data, as of February 2014 the population from ages 18 to 64 in Puerto Rico with hearing difficulty, which includes from deafness to difficulty hearing on the phone, is 58,198. The contradictory information presented above reflects the lack of joint efforts by the government toward the deaf community to assess and address the population. Furthermore, it was only as of 2006 that newborn-hearing screening was required in Puerto Rico, in the hopes of developing more accurate statistics revolving the deaf Puerto Rican population (Williams & Parks, 2012).

As a United States territory, Puerto Rico is required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is in charge of promoting and protecting the right of all Deaf people to quality education, starting at birth and throughout life, establishing Deaf children have the same right to education and full access to quality education. The WFD highlights the right to education, which is detailed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, indicating states need to take measures in order to facilitate the learning of sign language as well as the emphasis on aiding and developing the linguistic identity of the deaf community. Therefore, governments must ensure education for the deaf in appropriate languages and environments.

Also, UNESCO (2015) clarifies that according to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) “everyone has the right to education” (p. 5). Thus, this requires “reasonable accommodation” of the individual learners needs which means, the school



environment must be accessible, and must provide educational material in accessible formats, facilitating the learning of sign language. However, in September 2000, representatives of deaf-related organizations protested against the violations of the ADA, the refusal to provide interpreters in private and government agencies, poor educational opportunities for deaf children and discrimination in the workplace. Also in 2008, representatives of the deaf community picketed the WAPA-TV, protesting the exclusive use of Spanish closed captioning on TV which does not sufficiently meet their linguistic needs, because Spanish is not the first language of many deaf Puerto Ricans. According to the SIL survey report of 2012, many deaf people are still unaware of their legal rights.

As for the availability of resources including interpreters, there are at least four interpreting agencies in Puerto Rico and a variety of relay service options, including both text and video. In 2009, there were reportedly only 50-60 certified interpreters in Puerto Rico, which is not enough to provide services to all deaf Puerto Ricans (Williams & Parks, 2012). Although there are multiple agencies in charge of providing interpretation services to the deaf community, there are still very few interpreters left for education, government offices, or other face-to-face meetings. Those interpreters who are certified, are usually employed by relay companies such as, Sprint, Hands On Video Relay Service and ASL Services: Latino. Due to these reasons, it is evident the lack of importance the deaf community experiences in Puerto Rico, which prompts a lack of information, educational opportunities and resources available for deaf and hard or hearing communities in the island.

Throughout this study, integrating American Sign Language and Deaf culture in a classroom with hearing students could raise awareness towards a community who has been marginalized and ignored by government agencies and hearing communities in Puerto Rico.

Much like the teaching of English as a second language in Puerto Rico, while students face criticisms and judgement due to their low English proficiencies, many people who belong to the deaf community face these struggles everyday due to the lack of education and normalization of Deaf culture in Puerto Rico. Thus, by integrating American Sign Language and Deaf culture into the Basic English 3101 classroom, hearing students are challenged to normalize signed languages as repertoires and resource regardless of the ability to hear.

### **Translanguaging**

Translanguaging is a term which was first used by Cen Williams (1994) a Welsh educator, and was implemented in schools in Wales. It can be defined as the action of creating meaning, experiences and gaining understanding by the use of two or more languages (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012). This term aims to enhance communication, as well as language production. The first use of the term translanguaging in education describes Welsh and English bilingual schools during the 1980's. When the Welsh language regained momentum, it allowed the possibility of integrating two languages as mutually beneficial in schools and society. During the first half of the twenty first century translanguaging broke away with many misconceptions about bilingualism, which was considered to negatively affect the use of the first language. However, with the growing popularity of translanguaging, this view is being replaced by thinking of bilingualism as additive, when one language adds to another, instead of subtractive bilingualism which is replacing one language with another (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). As a result, bilingualism began to be viewed as an advantage instead of a disadvantage, from separating languages in the classroom to using two or more languages to increase communication, maximize understanding and increase performance.

Translanguaging within bilingual classrooms is a pedagogical practice which allows for deliberate shift of the input and output of languages, for example reading a text in English, yet discussing it in Spanish. This practice permits pupils to naturally use two languages in order to maximize their learning (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012). Translanguaging can also help pupils develop two languages by using the first language to increase skills and knowledge of the target language. For bilingual pupils, this is a practice which is considered natural and as a result, increases understanding, processing and meaning within the class lesson. It focuses on students and what students are able to achieve with the use of two languages rather than the teachers' role, even though translanguaging may be engineered by the teacher (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

By using translanguaging as a pedagogical practice it could promote deeper understanding of the subject matter, applying Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" which establishes further learning as pre-existing knowledge which serves as a base for new found knowledge (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012). Therefore, it could be argued that translanguaging enables this process as well, and as a result, the use of two languages maximizes the access to and use of pupil's linguistic and cognitive abilities (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012). Translanguaging is also beneficial in order to increase the development of the emerging language and improve integration of advanced pupils with early learners (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Ofelia García (2009) extended the term going beyond pedagogical practices, redefining translanguaging as a strategy which bilinguals use to make meaning, shape experiences, gain knowledge and understand their bilingual words by translanguaging on a day to day basis. The expansion of the term was based on observations of translanguaging practices in bilingual communities in New York. These observations allowed García (2009) to view translanguaging

as a bilingualism approach which occurred naturally and if implemented properly in schools, it enhances cognitive, language and literacy abilities (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012).

Furthermore, García and Sylvan (2011), further developed translanguaging as an effective means of learning by using research in the United States International High Schools. They found that children in these schools speak over fifty-five different languages, therefore they suggest translanguaging works best when teachers and students collaborate with each other, the classrooms are learner-centered, language and content integration are both present and inclusive plurilingual use from students is encouraged (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012). Research projects in dual use of languages in Welsh classrooms, focusing on translanguaging, observed one hundred bilingual classes in twenty-nine Welsh primary and secondary schools. Researchers interviewed teachers and pupils, they consulted with experts and developed workshops in order to observe translanguaging. Their findings demonstrated multiple examples of students using two languages to increase understanding, by completing a task in Welsh, yet using the Internet in English. Therefore, translanguaging has the potential for cross-language transfer, as well as flexibility in language allowing students ideas to flow easily and well understood (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012).

Colin Baker, one of the most influential scholars in bilingual education, observed how translanguaging helped students make meaning, gain knowledge and understanding (García & Lin, 2016). Baker also identified four potential advantages for students when using translanguaging for educational purposes. Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy promotes a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter, helps in the development of a weaker language, facilitates home-school links and co-operation and helps with the integration of fluent speakers with early learners. Moreover, Welsh researchers concluded that when “both languages

are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning” (García & Lin, 2016). Therefore, the combination of languages allows the lesson and task to move forward by using repetition, translation and the use of simultaneous literacies, creating the concept of a translanguaging space where the interaction of multilingual pupils breaks down the societal and individual barriers of learning a language.

Translanguaging focuses as well on social practices by mixing symbol systems as creative improvisation to adapt to the needs of context and situations. Using both the speakers’ shared linguistic repertoire as well as symbols, gestures and body language in order to maintain, increase and develop a fuller understanding of the subject matter. In an Arabic-Hebrew bilingual kindergarten in Israel, Schwartz and Asli (2014) describe how both the children and their teachers use translanguaging. They used Baby Sign Language, along with Spanish and English showing how infants use simultaneous translanguaging practices in the bilingual classroom.

Literature on translanguaging in higher education is scarce; most studies which explore translanguaging are done in primary and secondary classrooms. Similar to this study, Carroll and Sambolín (2016) studied translanguaging in an ESL Basic English classroom at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. In the study, a bilingual instructor implemented translanguaging throughout a month-long unit to enhance understanding of the reading *The Boy Without a Flag*, by Abraham Rodríguez Jr. (Carroll & Sambolín, 2016). The instances in which translanguaging was used were when reading a text in English while discussing the context in a combination of English and Spanish. Also, translanguaging was used when writing responses about the text, using Spanish or a combination of English and Spanish. Therefore, this research promoted translanguaging and languages as resources for learning in a higher education setting (Carroll & Sambolín, 2016).

Translanguaging within this study aims to not only enhance understanding, but to fill a gap and create a space where strategic language choices are made to improve teacher-student communication. As Mazak (2017) pointed out, “translanguaging is a pedagogical stance that teachers and students take on that allows them to draw on all of their linguistic and semiotic resources as they teach and learn both language and content material in classrooms” (p.6). Hence through the implementation of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language, students can use these languages as resources to further understand the course lessons and build language skills. Not only this, but through the incorporation of some American Sign Language students can develop interest towards learning another language and building their linguistic repertoire. Therefore, in this study the use of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom is deliberate, and it is meant to allow connections to form and teacher-student relationships to expand.

### **Nonverbal Communication**

Language is communication, which Canale (1987) defines as “the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols” (p. 469). These nonverbal cues may include body language, hand gestures and facial expressions, which show language is plurimodal. It is estimated that at least sixty-five percent of meaning in a social situation is conveyed nonverbally. It is also determined that in classroom setting, eighty-two percent of teachers’ communications are nonverbal (Allen, 1999).

Researchers suggest that continuous interplay between verbal and nonverbal communication must be taken into account in order to determine how language is acquired. Verbal and nonverbal communication complement each other and can help pupils develop communication skills (Gullberg, 2010). A study by Moskowitz indicates how outstanding

foreign language teachers use more nonverbals than typical foreign language teachers. Therefore, a great significance is given to the use of nonverbal communication within classrooms settings and human interaction (Allen, 1999).

Nonverbal communication can assist students with language encoding by creating a visual for pupils to recall words, thoughts, images and ideas (Allen, 1999). For example, Berkowitz uses hand motions in teaching the intonation pattern of French, he asks students to read while simultaneously following his circular hand motions. Thus, the use of nonverbal communication in this lesson, relieves students' self-consciousness about how they sound, hence creating a warm and intimate class environment (Allen, 1999). Another way in which language encoding could be useful for pupils is by allowing them to convey their thoughts smoothly. When trying to communicate, learners can indicate intention or desire to continue speaking while looking for a particular word, they may snap their fingers or use hand movements which illustrate them plucking words out of thin air. Students could also use hand movements in order to explain how to give directions, how to disassemble something or how to define concepts. Learners could indicate disinterest, enthusiasm, understanding or confusion by the use of body language, hand movements or facial gestures (Allen, 1999).

In order to demonstrate language encoding, Galloway recorded ten second-semester undergraduate Spanish speaking students speaking on a randomly drawn question. The native Spanish participants in the study indicated how nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, hand and body movements were perceived as an increased desire to communicate. However, nonverbals could also be used to decode and comprehend messages. Facial gestures can contribute message comprehension by heightening attention, providing context, providing imagery and facilitating recall (Allen, 1999). In the foreign language classroom, nonverbals can

activate concepts which are stored in students' memories as mental representations, as a result, enhancing comprehension by providing visuals and additional contextual information. Using gestures can help students convey meaning of specific words, such as the word *grand*. If a student hears the word *grand* and sees the teacher using an accompanying gesture, the gesture may trigger knowledge on the concept, therefore a pupil could infer its meaning (Allen, 1999).

Many beginning learners rely on nonverbal context in order to comprehend verbal cues, therefore nonverbal strategies can supplement, reinforce and modify communication. The use of these strategies also complements verbal communication or it can even replace it in order for students to cope with high stress levels due to second language learning (Allen, 1999). If pupils want to communicate their feelings or doubts towards the lesson with the teacher, by using nonverbal communication they would be more likely to do so, because a set of mutually agreed upon hand gestures, signs, or symbols could reduce students' communication anxiety and stress. Therefore, avoiding fear of speech or self-consciousness to interfere with their language learning abilities.

There are various instructional models which incorporate the use of nonverbal communication in order to develop deeper knowledge on the subject matter, and increase communication levels. Teaching methods such as The Silent Way, use hand gestures to indicate further work and elicit responses. While in Total Physical Response, language (i.e., speech comprehension) and body movements are synched in order for students to determine meaning. Therefore, incorporating nonverbal communication strategies, in order to enhance students' rapport in second language acquisition (Allen, 1999).

Nonverbal communication contributes to create a classroom environment in which teachers and students interact continuously, in order to enhance pupils learning skills. Educators



may enrich learners' exposures to second language input and increase participation by designing specific activities in which pupils would feel comfortable expressing themselves. If students viewed learning as a social practice, a classroom as a space for contribution and nonverbal communication as a tool for acquiring knowledge the classroom environment would promote active learning and enrich interaction space (Ikeda, 2011).

Goldin-Meadow (2003), suggests that nonverbal communication has a great impact on teaching and learning. Students use nonverbal strategies to communicate doubts or questions to their teachers, therefore they can serve as an assessment measure. Also, educators can use nonverbal strategies to affect what students learn in the classroom (Ikeda, 2011). Lazaraton (2004) examined ESL instructor's use of hand gestures when teaching new vocabulary. It was evident how gestures were a fundamental aspect of the teachers' pedagogical repertoire and played an important role in providing input for second language learners (Ikeda, 2011). The use of hand gestures is very closely connected to speech production, and many studies have demonstrated that these gestures are integral to second language speakers' competence and are constructed as part of speech production. Therefore, these nonverbal resources serve to emphasize and highlight classroom interaction.

### **Translanguaging using Sign Language**

As it was established previously, language is communication which could be conveyed using verbal and nonverbal expressions, or by the constant translanguaging of vernaculars. However, the concept of translanguaging could also apply to the use of verbal and nonverbal expressions in order to increase knowledge and communication. Within the context of a Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, the use of verbal and nonverbal strategies in order to increase teacher-student communication could be considered as a

form of translanguaging. Moreover, the continuous use of English with American Sign Language (ASL) could allow pupils to foster inclusion (Blommaert & Rampton 2011) and participation among students who are hesitant towards communicating in the target language, build rapport, develop deeper understanding and complement language skills (Heslinga & Nevenglosky, 2012).

American Sign language is a visual language composed of hand and facial gestures as well as body movements to communicate and convey meaning. When integrating American Sign Language into an ESL classroom in order for pupils to communicate, it can decrease students stress factors verbal or spoken languages can create. It can also develop literacy skills and add a visual level of understanding through signing ideas and concepts (Heslinga & Nevenglosky, 2012). By helping learners use and understand nonverbal communication it can aid the socialization process within the classroom (Heslinga & Nevenglosky, 2012). Brereton's (2008) study affirmed how pupils become empowered when realizing communication is not limited to spoken languages, as well as how the incorporations of signs builds a cooperative environment, enthusiasm for expressions and a strategy for quick assessments of student comprehension (Heslinga & Nevenglosky, 2012).

Although multiple studies and investigations have been developed within the field of nonverbal communication, very few studies integrate the use of American Sign Language as a form of nonverbal communication in the learning space with hearing ESL pupils. Even so, previous research does not consider the use of signed and spoken languages as a form of translanguaging. Hence, this research focused on the use of American Sign Language as a form of translanguaging in a Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, and its potential to help ESL students by increasing in-class communication and therefore creating a class environment which promotes inclusion of verbal and nonverbal

languages (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). As a result, this study promotes classroom participation, improving pupils' language skills and learning outcomes through the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy (Heslinga & Nevenglosky, 2012).

### **Third Space**

Managing diversity in the classroom is a difficult task, according to Bonfiglio (2010), when particular grammar and pronunciation established by the bourgeois is set as "the norm." To students, the teacher is the bourgeois and he or she creates "the norm" in the classroom, which defines the teacher student relationship. This relationship, where a more correct and standardized language is preferred, does not create a space for diversity and will greatly impact the classroom environment (Flores & García, 2013). Yet, translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy, is based on the notion bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they strategically select specific features to communicate effectively (Celic & Seltzer, 2011). Translanguaging creates a space for bilingualism to be the norm and allow bilinguals to strategically use their language repertoires to make meaning. As a result, by incorporating translanguaging as a pedagogical practice, teachers could reach and facilitate conversations with students who are linguistically different (Flores & García, 2013).

Linguistic third spaces are created by teachers when traditional conceptions of literacy and instruction are challenged and are replaced with pedagogical stances which benefit and acknowledge students' needs (Gutiérrez, 2008). In the Basic English 3101 course, the integration of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language as translanguaging could enable linguistic and cultural constructions that transcend the nation-state relationships of power. The use of translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom, could develop a third space where students might feel comfortable expressing their doubts and questions. Therefore, making

possible the development of language and challenging the existing hierarchies in the Basic English 3101 classroom. (Flores & García, 2013).

Throughout this study, each language had a role and serves a purpose. English was used to discuss the class lesson yet, throughout the lesson five signs in American Sign Language were implemented as a quick assessment tool for students to communicate if they understood the concept explained. The signs for “yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question” were taught to encourage students to communicate. However, if pupils had a specific doubt or question, this was asked and discussed in Spanish. Flores and García (2013) affirm incorporating translanguaging as a pedagogy requires willingness to engage with students, become equal participants and equalize power relations (p. 255). Hence within the study, translanguaging facilitated the lesson throughout initial, developmental and the concluding stages.

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **Justification**

This study sought to answer the research questions through a case study, which was conducted with a group of students enrolled in the Basic English 3101 course, in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. This course aims to improve students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English, while increasing their vocabulary and grammar accuracy. The class was held three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays), for a length of fifty minutes each day. Since the inquiry of this research attempts to look at American Sign Language as a form of translanguaging and its effects on the classroom environment, qualitative research methods were integrated in the study. This specific course and student population was purposefully chosen for my convenience as a researcher. This is a course I was teaching at the time, therefore my accessibility allowed the study to occur successfully. On the other hand, the student population who participated in the study was one with the lower scores in the college entrance exams hence, the integration of some American Sign Language in the class lessons and activities could potentially benefit these pupils by expanding on their previous knowledge (Gwyn, Jones & Baker, 2012).

### **Data Collection**

In order to collect the data for this study and aim to answer the research questions, I used video recordings, a questionnaire and conducted interviews. During the first two weeks of the study, the video recordings focused on students learning and implementing the signs. These video recordings were evaluated using a rubric which aimed to identify student's level of engagement and participation with American Sign Language during the class (see appendix E). Each class consisted of fifty minutes, which were carefully planned to cover the course

objectives, while also implementing the use of five signs in American Sign Language and engaging students in active participation. After this, the participants of the study completed a questionnaire (see appendix C), this questionnaire focused addressing the research questions and support the findings of the video recordings in relation to pupils' level of engagement and class participation.

### **Focal Participant Selection**

Once students had completed the questionnaire, I compared the findings on the video recordings and the survey, analyzing and comparing the results in order to select four focal students who were interested and willing to participate in the study. Out of these four participants, two were pupils who seem interested, motivated and extremely involved with the integration of American Sign Language. However, the rest of the participants were selected because they seemed uninterested, unmotivated and uninvolved with the idea of incorporating some American Sign Language in the classroom. The purpose of selecting participants with contradicting views of the study was to take into consideration potentially opposite perspectives of students' views towards the topic in order to collect data which most accurately answered the research questions.

After selecting the participants, I conducted four semi-structured interviews with the focal participants of the study. The reason for incorporating a semi-structured interview format (see appendix D), was to allow myself to adjust the interview process based on the data received by the participants. The first interview included all of the focal participants, the second was a paired interview with the two participants who were interested, motivated and extremely involved. The third focused on the two participants who were uninterested, unmotivated and uninvolved with the use of some American Sign Language in class. For the purposes of the

study, the focal participants were classified as interested or uninterested with the use of some American Sign Language in class due to their answers on the questionnaire and the observations made from the video recordings. The motive behind pairing up the participants who shared similar opinions on the study was to allow them to feed off each other's comments, thoughts and views of the implementation of some American Sign Language. Therefore, allowing the participants to express themselves without the fear of having other participants put down their feelings on the study. However, due to scheduling differences the third interview involved only one of the participants and a fourth interview was scheduled conducted with the remaining participant of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The questionnaire was charted and graphed to identify and select the focal participants of the study. Four focal participants were chosen, two who's answers reflected interest towards the use of some American Sign Language and two who showed little interest. Along with the questionnaires, video recordings of the class lessons were used to identify the focal participants. In order to transcribe the videos, they were uploaded to my personal YouTube account under private settings so only I had access to them. An analysis according to qualitative methods was implemented through YouTube's video manager tool, which allows the use of multiple enhancement and editing features. YouTube's video manager tool was used to mark up the videos with annotations and time stamps. The transcription of the videos was done using open coding and as mentioned previously, by uploading the videos to my private You-Tube account. A written play by play of the videos was done to facilitate coding and allow the analysis of significant observations. Although open coding was implemented, the data was studied according to the objectives of the study, following specific themes which aimed to answer the

research questions. The focal participants selected were those who attended class during the data collecting period, were visible in the video recordings and were active participants during the development of the Basic English 3101 class. After the focal participants were selected, four semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews were analyzed and coded using qualitative methods, identifying common themes and patterns between the four focal participants, taking into account their interests towards the use of some American Sign Language in class. The interviews were also a tool for students to explain any contradicting answers in their questionnaires.

### **Possible Ethical Issues**

This study was approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) committee (see appendix A) of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. The research conducted presented minimal risks for the participants of the study. It is imperative to clarify the participants were fully informed upon the process of the study and received and filled out a consent form (see appendix B), which established the video recordings remained under lock and key in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. Also, only I had access to the videos and they were not uploaded to any social media sites. The five classes were recorded using a digital camera on a tripod, which was placed in a front corner of the classroom to allow the recording of the students' participation and interactions in American Sign Language. Hence this setting allowed students who did not desire to participate to be recorded, thus upon requests their faces could be blurred on the video recordings using a video editor. Yet, these recordings form a key part of the research since American Sign Language is a nonverbal form of communication, therefore, the implementation of video recordings was the only way I was able to attempt to collect data, as well as seek an answer to the research questions.



Considering I held both the position of researcher and instructor within the Basic English 3101 course, to address this issue I made clear that participation in the study was voluntary and students who opted not to be part of it, at any point during the data collection would not be penalized. I also explained that participating in the study would not give students an advantage in the class and it would not have an influence on their final grades.

Further ethical concerns could include students' hesitation to participate in the study, this issue was addressed by emphasizing on the fact that their participation or lack of, was not going to impact their grades. Students' participation was completely voluntary and they had the option to cease participation at any point in the semester. If a student decided to cease participation at any point in the semester, although the class would still be recorded, the student would not be considered part of the study and upon request his/her face would be blurred. Also, the participants received a description of the study and their participation since the first day of class, ensuring they were well-informed, and had the liberty to discuss any questions or concerns. Moreover, to ensure complete confidentiality, after following this discussion the participants signed a consent form, which prevented the use of any information or data collected to be used or displayed without the participants' consent.

## **Chapter IV: Focal Participants, Classroom Context & Lessons**

### **Focal Participants**

As mentioned previously, the participants of the study were basic English students enrolled in one of my sections of the Basic English 3101 course. The section was composed of twenty-three students. The majority of these pupils were first year undergraduate students, who were experiencing their first courses at the university level. Their proficiency varied, yet they were all considered basic English learners due to their college entrance test scores. In the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, pupils from all majors are required to enroll and complete twelve credits of English courses. As a result, the participants of the study varied in academic majors and interests, however, the English course was mandatory for them.

The majority of students in the Basic English 3101 course shared a Puerto Rican heritage and Spanish as their first language. Yet, there was diversity in socioeconomic backgrounds and schooling. Although the four focal participants had previously studied in public schools, there were students in the Basic English 3101 course who had studied in private schools. Also, the students enrolled in the course were from different regions in Puerto Rico.

There were four focal participants chosen for this study, two focal participants were chosen due to their apparent interest towards the use of some American Sign Language in class, and two due to their apparent lack of interest. To determine the focal participants' interest towards the use of some American Sign Language in class, students had taken a questionnaire (see appendix C) which was scored according to the students' answers. The four focal participants were also chosen because they were present during the five classes in which some American Sign Language was used and because the students were visible in all of the video recordings taken during the data collection period.

*Table 1. Focal Participants Description*

<i>Focal Participants:</i>	<b>Andrea</b>	<b>Nadia</b>	<b>Juan</b>	<b>Guillermo</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>	F	F	M	M
<b><i>Cultural Background</i></b>	Puerto Rican	Puerto Rican	Puerto Rican	Puerto Rican
<b><i>First Language</i></b>	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
<b><i>Prior Schooling</i></b>	Public School	Public School	Public School	Public School
<b><i>Year</i></b>	First year	First year	First year	First year
<b><i>Degree</i></b>	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
<b><i>Major</i></b>	Political Sciences	Nursing	Agricultural Sciences	Kinesiology
<b><i>ASL Knowledge</i></b>	Prior knowledge	Prior knowledge	No prior knowledge	No prior knowledge

The focal participants of this study were Andrea, Nadia, Juan and Guillermo (pseudonyms). The two focal participants who were chosen due to their apparent interest for the use of some American Sign Language in class were Andrea and Nadia, while the two focal participants who were chosen for their apparent lack of interest were Juan and Guillermo. It is important to highlight the four focal participants share a common cultural background, as they were all born and raised in Puerto Rico, hence they also share Spanish as their first language. Prior to enrolling at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, the four focal participants had completed their primary, secondary and high school education in the public-school system of Puerto Rico.

During the time of the study Andrea, Nadia, Juan and Guillermo were experiencing their first semester as undergraduate students at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. Their

interests varied. Andrea was majoring in Political Sciences, Nadia's major was Nursing, meanwhile Juan was focusing in Agricultural Sciences and Guillermo was majoring in Kinesiology. Regarding the focal participants' prior knowledge and experiences with the use of American Sign Language and the awareness towards Deaf culture, Andrea and Nadia had been exposed to Deaf culture and American Sign Language prior to the study, while Juan and Guillermo had not.

Andrea's high school program allowed her to graduate prepared to work as a secretary, hence after high school she had the chance to work as a secretary in her hometown. One of her roles was to arrange workshops and resources, thus she arranged a workshop with resources from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez to teach American Sign Language to her coworkers. This is why when some American Sign Language was incorporated in the Basic English 3101 course, Andrea recalled her experience in the workshop and showed interest in the use of American Sign Language in class. Meanwhile, Nadia had always wanted to learn American Sign Language because her mom has two cousins who are deaf. Nadia expressed she wants to help people and as a future nurse; she does not want any of her patients to feel excluded due to her unwillingness to learn American Sign Language. Although Nadia has not been able to take courses in American Sign Language, she has learned to sign some letters of the alphabet through interactions with the deaf community in her town.

However, prior to their experiences with American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course, focal participants Juan and Guillermo had no knowledge or experience regarding Deaf culture or American Sign Language. When the class was informed they would learn some American Sign Language, focal participant Juan reacted in a positive way. Juan explained his first reaction was positive since he thought using some American Sign Language in class could

help express himself in a different way and that signs could serve as references to recall class lessons. Yet, focal participant Guillermo was surprised when he was informed of the integration of some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course. Guillermo voiced he expected a “typical” English class, yet the integration of some American Sign Language is a good technique and it makes the class more interesting for him.

Although the four focal participants share a similar cultural background and education system, their experiences or lack of experiences with the Deaf culture and American Sign Language are evidently diverse. As established previously, while Andrea and Nadia had learned about Deaf culture and American Sign Language prior to the study, Juan and Guillermo had not. This could have potentially played a role in the focal participants’ opinions and interaction with the use of some American Sign Language in class, as well as the lesson on Deaf culture. However, the four participants were chosen taking into account their answers on the questionnaire, their visibility in the video recordings and their lack of absences during the data collection period.

### **Classroom Context**

The student population of the Basic English 3101 course were undergraduates, generally in their first year of college. These students have been placed in the course due to their scores in the college entrance exams and have been categorized by the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez as less English proficient than other students. For many students Basic English 3101 is the first English course they take at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, unless they are repeating the course. The Basic English 3101 class is a face to face course, which meets for fifty minutes three times a week over the course of a seventeen-week semester at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. The course serves the students’ primary needs, which include learning

grammar rules, expanding their vocabulary, and developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills which serve their academic life and future careers. While the study was being conducted, the course addressed writing skills through the creation of journal entries, expanded vocabulary through the discussion of phrasal verbs and studied grammar rules of the simple present and present progressive verb tenses.

Students were taught five signs through a series of five lessons. Each fifty-minute lesson was carefully planned to incorporate the teaching and implementation of a sign, a video regarding Deaf culture and the class objectives. Throughout the class discussion students were prompted to communicate using the signs learned, hence opening a channel of communication through a nonverbal language. Furthermore, students were also encouraged to use Spanish and English when they felt the need to expand or develop their communication within the topic being discussed. The play on languages allowed students to better communicate, contribute to the class discussion and understand the material being taught. A detailed description of each lesson follows.

## **Lessons**

### ***Lesson 1: Journal Entry***

The first lesson focused on students' writing skills, introducing American Sign Language and Deaf culture in the classroom. Prior to this lesson, students had already filled out consent forms and they knew some American Sign Language was going to be incorporated in class. However, this lesson was the first time I introduced the topic of Deaf culture in the classroom. Hence, I wanted this first lesson to impact and allow students to question their current thoughts regarding deafness. During the initial activity students were placed in groups of four and completed a K-W-L chart. This chart served as a graphic organizer to develop awareness of

students' knowledge before, during and after the lesson. The topic which students were prompted to think about was Deaf culture. The chart consisted of three columns, in the first column students responded to the prompt, *what do you know about this topic?* In the second column students reflected about what they wanted to know about this topic. The third column prompted students to write about what they learned after the lesson. However, students were instructed to leave the third column blank, since they would complete it after the lesson was over. Students were given ten minutes to work together and complete the chart, although their writing was in English, students were encouraged to discuss their experiences, doubts and questions in Spanish. After students completed the first two columns, each group briefly discussed with the class their current knowledge of Deaf culture as well as what they hope to learn.

During the development activity students watched the video, *Watch: What It's Like to Read Lips*, which was published in National Geographic's YouTube channel and is based on the essay "Seeing at the Speed of Sound" by Rachel Kolb (See Appendix F). Rachel narrates and stars in the immersive short which challenges viewers' assumptions regarding lip-reading. Once students watched the video, they went back to discussing the prompts amongst themselves and completing the third column of the chart. After students completed the chart, the class served as an open discussion where I answered students' questions regarding the video, *Watch: What It's Like to Read Lips*, American Sign Language and Deaf culture. There were three key misconceptions concerning the video, *Watch: What It's Like to Read Lips*, American Sign Language Deaf culture which were discussed during the closing activities of the class. The first addressed people who are deaf. There was a common misconception among the students enrolled in the Basic English 3101 course, where they referred to a person who is deaf as deaf-mute. I wanted my students to understand there are many degrees of deafness and being deaf does not

automatically mean the person cannot speak as well. Hence, the correct term when referring to someone who cannot hear, is deaf. The second misconception among my students revolved around signed languages, many students in the course were unaware American Sign Language is one variety among the many signed languages used throughout the world. It was important for students to understand there is no universal sign language. The third misconception dealt with the limitations of being deaf. Although being deaf in a hearing world may cause some limitations, this does not mean people who are deaf are limited in their abilities to succeed in life. Through this discussion students learned people who are deaf can drive, they can listen to music, sing, dance, learn other languages, model, act, teach, work, fall in love and so much more, the only thing they cannot do is hear.

Signs were not introduced during the lesson, this class served as an introduction to Deaf culture and to demystify common misconceptions regarding American Sign Language. A one-page journal entry was assigned for students to further develop their English writing skills and to prompt a self-reflection on their prior knowledge and experiences with Deaf culture and their experience in class demystifying common misconceptions.

### ***Lesson 2: Phrasal Verbs***

The second lesson was planned to introduce the Basic English 3101 course vocabulary and the signs “yes” and “no.” The initial routines of the class involved reviewing the material discussed the previous class and reintroducing Deaf culture. In order to do this, students watched the video, *Things Not to Say to a Deaf Person*. The video was published in BBC Three’s YouTube channel and it featured people with diverse degrees of deafness answering commonly asked questions regarding Deaf culture (See Appendix F). The video touched on the three misconceptions (the term deaf-mute, the concept of a universal sign language and the limitations

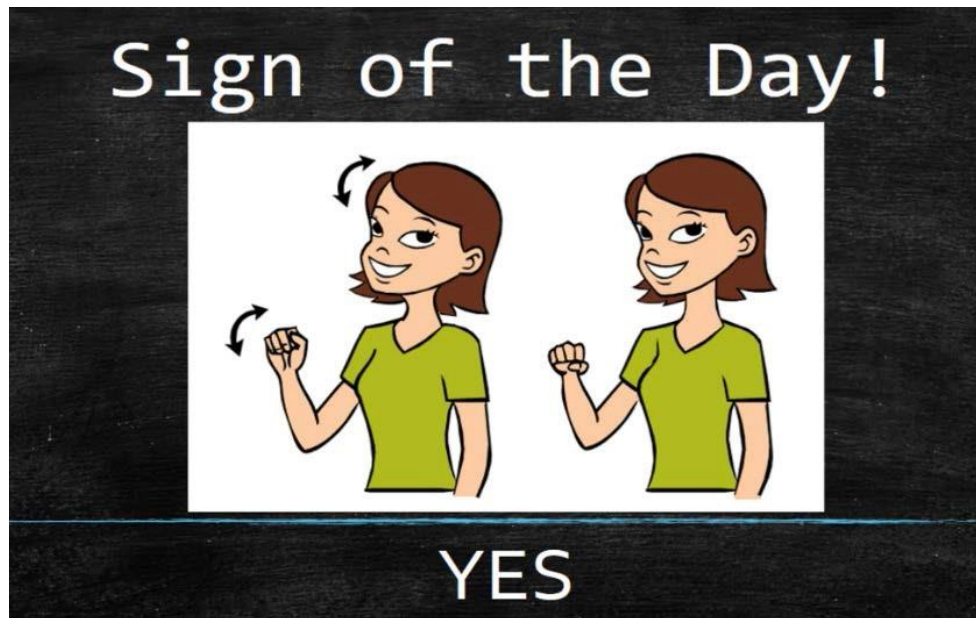


of being deaf) discussed the previous class, however students were now informed of the misconceptions by people who belong to the deaf community. In the video, British Sign Language and British English were used by the participants of the video to answer questions, offer advice and clarify doubts or questions regarding their daily lives within the Deaf culture. After watching the video, students were informed the sign language used in the video was British Sign Language (BSL), yet they would be learning five signs in American Sign Language (ASL).

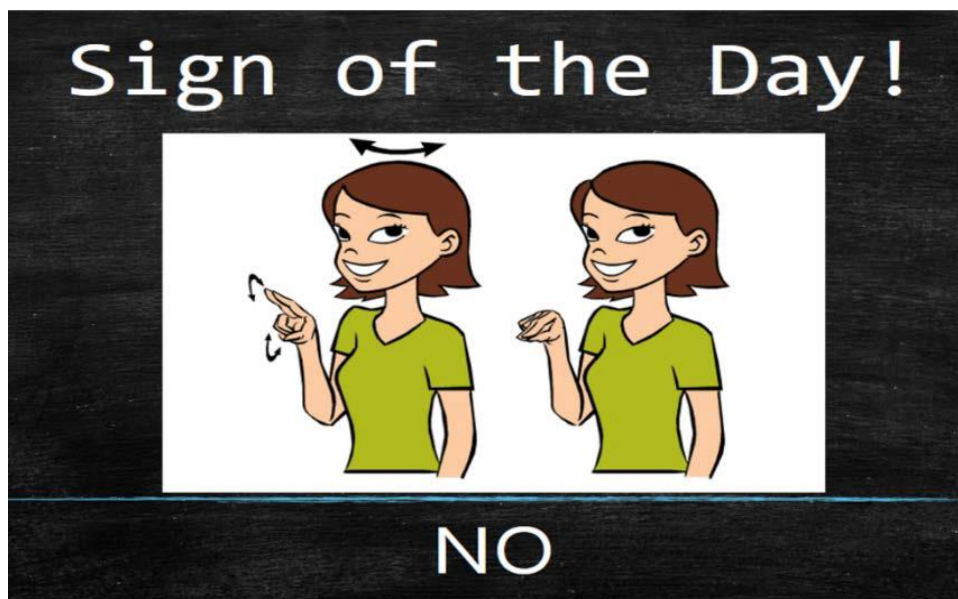
Before teaching students the signs of the day, they were taught about hand placement. When signing students were instructed to use their dominant hand, students were also taught the arm positioning should be comfortable and when signing the arm cannot cover their faces. This is because facial expressions form the grammar component of American Sign Language. Thus, the arm positioning should occur by lifting the lower part of the arm and placing the hand five to seven inches away from the shoulder, finding a centered yet comfortable spot to sign.

Once students learned about hand placement, the sign for “yes” was taught. In American Sign Language, the sign for “yes” is done by closing your hand into a fist, which represents your head, as you raise and lower your fist, it represents your head nodding “yes”. As the instructor, I would model the sign for students and correct their hand movements and placements. To provide students with visual cues, images describing the sign were included in the class presentations, hoping students can recall signs quickly and prompt self-correction of the signs. After students learned the sign for “yes,” the sign for “no” was modeled and explained as well. In American Sign Language, “no” is signed by extending the index and middle finger together and in a downward motion connecting the two fingers with the thumb. The sign for “no” can be used with one motion to express firmness and certainty, or it can be used with two polite motions. As

students practiced the signs for “yes” and “no” in class, they were encouraged to use them throughout the phrasal verbs lesson as a way to improve teacher-student communication.



*Figure 1.* Sign for “yes” in American Sign Language.



*Figure 2.* Sign for “no” in American Sign Language.

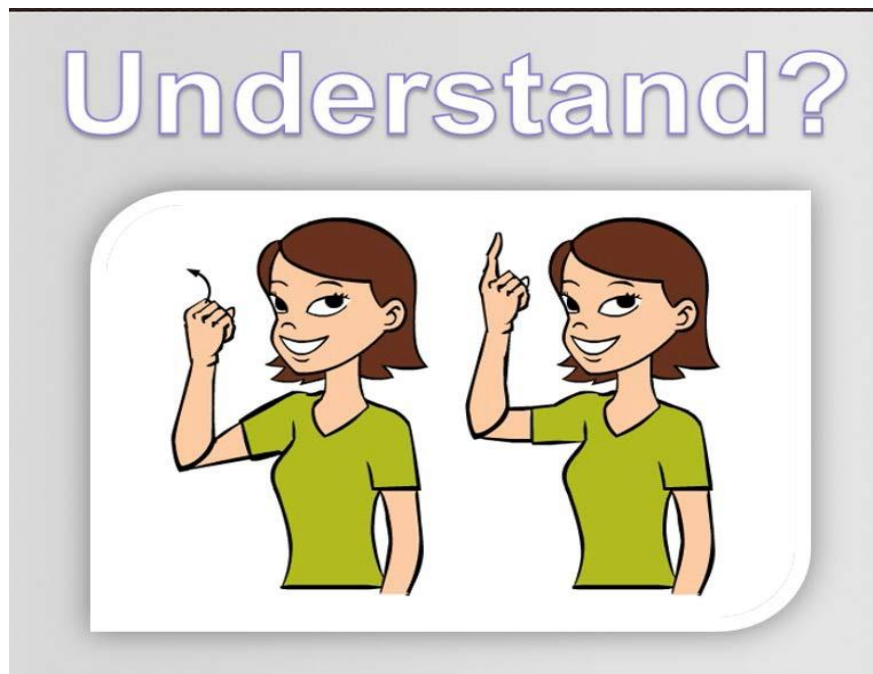
The developing activity of the class, consisted of expanding students' knowledge of phrasal verbs. In order to achieve this, students were first taught what phrasal verbs were and given some examples of phrasal verbs. Afterwards, students were given a worksheet in which they had to match the given verbs with their correct particles according to the definition provided. Since many of the students enrolled in the Basic English 3101 course were initially not familiar with the vocabulary, the worksheet was completed through the collaborative learning strategy, think, pair and share (TPS). Although think, pair and share is a strategy where students work individually first, I prefer to arrange students in pairs. Therefore, students worked for seven minutes in pairs, then they were arranged into groups of four to compare and contrast their work. Once time was up, each group shared their answers with the class. During the activity, students would communicate with each other in Spanish, however the worksheet was completed in English. Later on, the phrasal verbs were discussed through a Power Point presentation, throughout this discussion students were periodically asked if they understood the vocabulary words, hence prompting them to practice answering using the signs for "yes" and "no." The main objectives of this lesson were to further students understandings of phrasal verbs through collaborative work, while also establishing the idea of using American Sign Language as a quick assessment tool in class to improve student-teacher communication.

### ***Lesson 3: Simple Present***

The third lesson covered the simple present tense and prompted students to use the signs "yes," "no," "understand" and "do not understand" to communicate throughout the grammar discussion. The initial activities during this third class consisted of reviewing and practicing the signs "yes" and "no." Furthermore, students also used this time to clarify doubts, questions and concerns regarding the signs taught and Deaf culture. Once students had reviewed the signs and

clarified their doubts, two new signs were introduced, “understand” and “do not understand.”

The sign for “understand” is done by holding your hand near your forehead, your index finger is bent and the tip is touching your thumbprint. Once you have this hand placement, you flick your index up while nodding “yes.” The sign for “do not understand” is done in the same way, only while you nod your head “no.” The purpose of introducing these signs were for students to feel comfortable expressing their understandings of the grammar lesson throughout the class. Since American Sign Language is a nonverbal language, students would be able to communicate without being singled out or fear of using the target language. This class was the first grammar lesson of the semester, thus creating a space where students could express understanding or lack of understanding was key, as the simple present tense would serve as the base for learning the past and future tenses further along in the semester. Before starting the grammar discussion, students were told to use the signs for “yes,” “no,” “understand” and “do not understand” to respond when asked if they understood the grammar concept. If students would express a lack of understanding, I would reteach the grammar concept to the class.



*Figure 3. Sign for “understand” and “do not understand” in American Sign Language.*

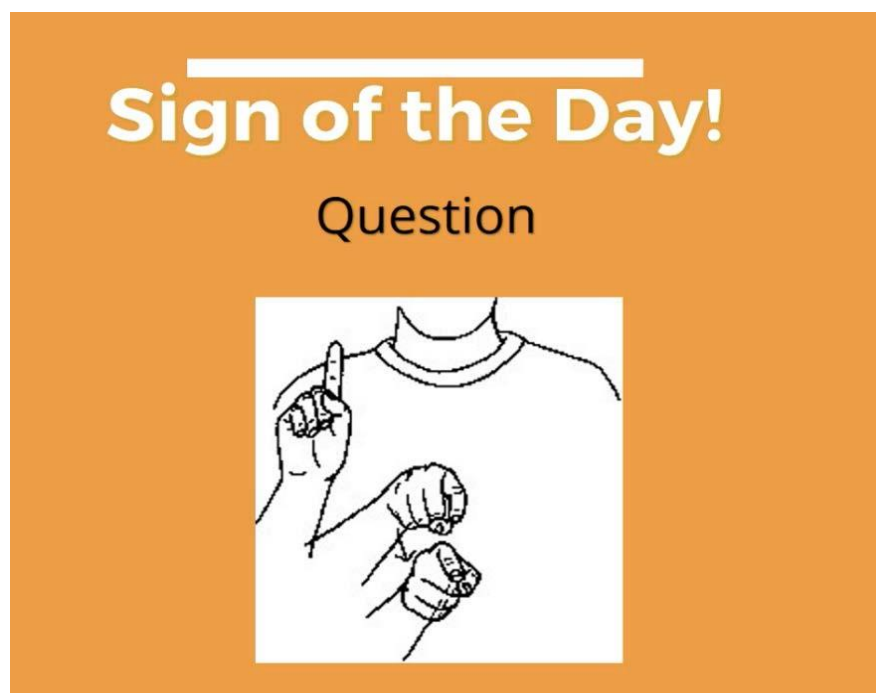
After the initial activities, the simple present tense was introduced by showing students the sentence, “Yo jangeo en Jaranas todos los jueves,” [ I hang out at Jaranas every Thursday.] Once students read the sentence and were asked to translate it to English in their notebooks, three students were asked to read their translated sentences and write them on the board. Each sentence was discussed focusing on the pronoun, verb, time, frequency and purpose of the sentences. As students developed understanding of the simple present tense they were given the sentence, “Johanna jangea en Jaranas todos los jueves,” [Johanna hangs out at Jaranas every Thursday.] Students were asked to read and translate this sentence as well in order to differentiate how different pronouns change the verb in the simple present tense. Throughout the grammar discussion students were periodically prompted to express if they understood or did not in American Sign Language, hence students would use the signs “yes,” “no,” “understand” and “do not understand” to answer according to their understanding of the grammar concept. After the discussion of the simple present tense, students answered grammar exercises in their notebooks and they were discussed as a group, clarifying remaining doubts and questions regarding the use of the simple present tense. This class served to further promote the use of the signs “yes,” “no,” “understand” and “do not understand” to enhance classroom communication between the students and the teacher. During this lesson students did not watch a video regarding Deaf culture since I wanted them to focus on understanding the simple present tense and allow sufficient time to incorporate American Sign Language throughout the class.

#### ***Lesson 4: Present Progressive***

The fourth lesson aimed to further students use of American Sign Language in class while teaching the present progressive tense. Through the initial stage of the class, students

practiced the signs for “yes,” “no,” “understand” and “do not understand,” focusing on their hand placements and movements. Once students had finished practicing, they watched the video, *Mandy Harvey: Deaf Singer Earns Simon's Golden Buzzer with Original Song - America's Got Talent 2017*. The video was published by America’s Got Talent YouTube channel and it features Mandy Harvey’s audition for America’s Got Talent (See Appendix F). Throughout the video Mandy Harvey tells her story, at eighteen years old she lost her hearing due to a connective tissue disorder and gave up singing. Later on, she figured out she could sing by using muscle memory and visual tuners. Now, at the age of twenty-nine she auditions and earns a Golden Buzzer from Simon Cowell with her original song "Try." The video attempted to challenge students’ misconceptions of Deaf culture and the abilities of people who belong to the Deaf community.

After students watched the video, the sign for “question” was taught. In American Sign Language, the sign for “question” is done by using your index finger to create a question mark. Students were instructed the purpose of using this sign in class was to communicate in a nonverbal way when they need to ask a question during the grammar discussion. Therefore, if a student had a question while a concept was being discussed they would use the sign and then ask the question in either English or Spanish, however they felt comfortable. Once the sign was taught, a space was opened for students to ask question related to American Sign Language. Hence a student wanted to know the sign for “perfect” and another student wanted to know how to sign “okay,” both signs were discussed and students were prompted to use the signs throughout lesson to enhance communication as well. It is important to clarify, the signs for “perfect” and “okay” were not part of the study, they were taught due to students’ interest and initiative.



*Figure 4.* Sign for “question” in American Sign Language.

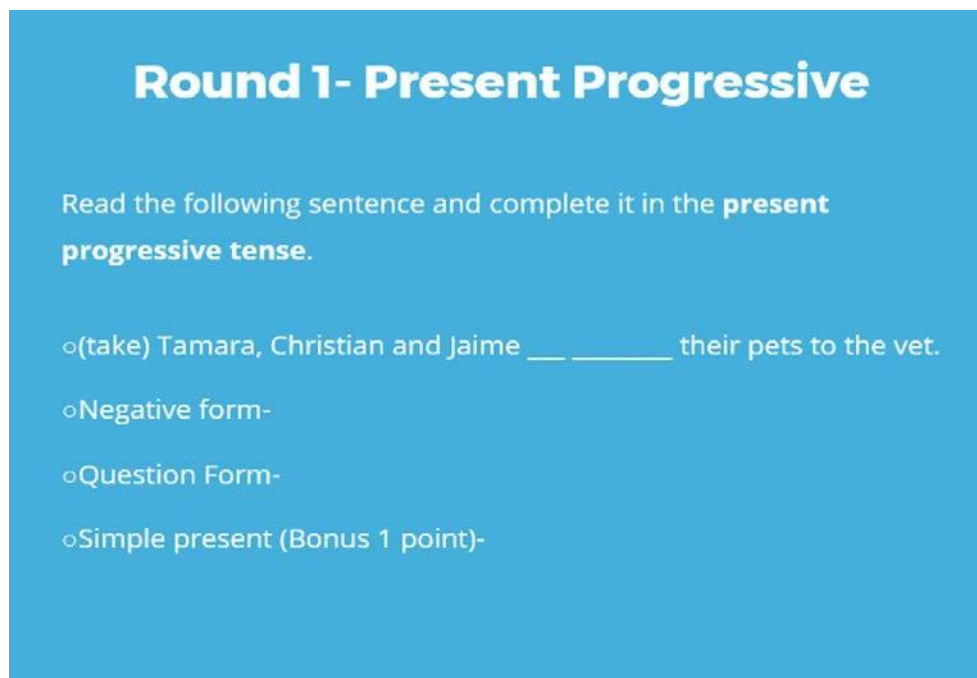
The development activities of this class included reviewing the simple present tense and introducing students to the present progressive tense. The simple present tense was reviewed by having students write in their notebooks a sentence in the simple present tense. After this, three students shared their sentences and the rest of the class work together to identify the rules of the simple present tense. Subsequently, the present progressive tense was introduced by showing students the sentence “Yo me estoy comiendo un Pancho sandwich,” [I am eating a Pancho sandwich.] Once students read the sentence they were asked to translate it to English in their notebooks, three students were asked to read their translated sentences and write them on the board. Each sentence was discussed focusing on the pronoun, verb, time, frequency and purpose of the sentences. After students had written the translated sentence on the board, they were asked to compare and contrast the present progressive tense with the simple present tense. Once the differences were established the present progressive tense was discussed more in depth through a

power point presentation. Throughout the discussion of the present progressive tense, students were prompted to use the signs “yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question” according to their needs throughout the lesson.

Once the present progressive tense was discussed, students worked in groups of four to complete grammar exercises on the board. The four-round grammar activity consisted of having students compete in teams of four to answer grammar exercises correctly. The student who completed the exercise correctly the fastest would win the round. Students were arranged in teams of four, each student in the team had to complete one grammar exercise on the board. However, each student chose the round in which they wanted to compete. For each grammar exercise students had to identify the appropriate verb to be, change the verb tense correctly and recreate the completed sentence in the negative and question forms. The formats of these grammar exercises were used throughout the discussion of the present progressive tense therefore, students were familiar with the instructions and previous to this activity students had been taught how to complete the exercises. Throughout the activity, almost all of the groups would interact and discuss the grammar exercises in Spanish, meanwhile they completed the exercises in English on the board. The closing activities for the class involved reviewing the present progressive tense and discussing doubts or questions.

This lesson focused on teaching prescriptive grammar hence, the use of some American Sign Language facilitated teacher-student communication throughout the lesson, thus prompting students to communicate doubts or questions to truly understand the concepts being discussed. Also, by arranging students in groups and allowing them to interact amongst themselves in Spanish to further understand the lesson promotes a class environment where students’ first language is acknowledged and valued as an equal learning tool.





**Round 1- Present Progressive**

Read the following sentence and complete it in the **present progressive tense**.

- o (take) Tamara, Christian and Jaime \_\_\_\_ their pets to the vet.
- o Negative form-
- o Question Form-
- o Simple present (Bonus 1 point)-

*Figure 5.* Present progressive grammar exercise.

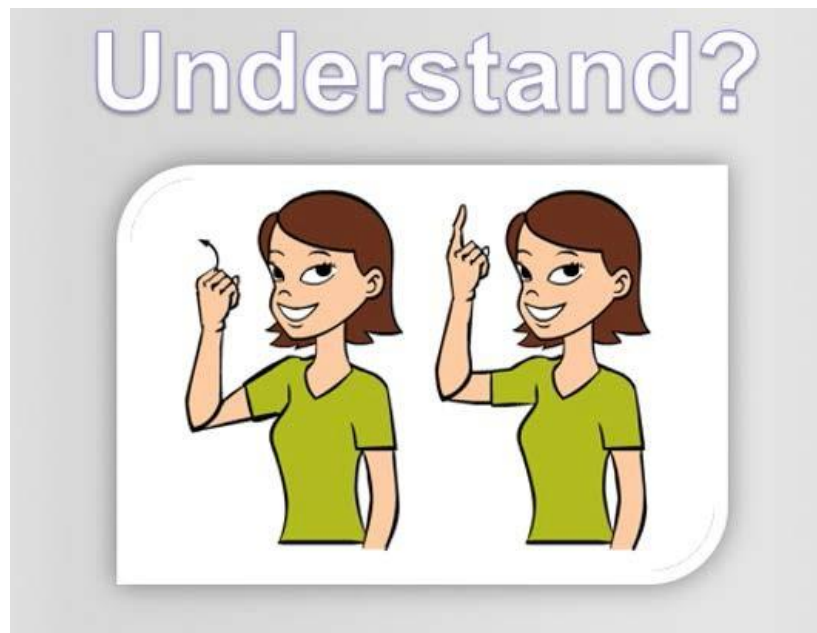
### ***Lesson 5: Phrasal Verbs***

The fifth lesson aimed towards reviewing the five signs taught during the past lessons and incorporating them in class to enhance teacher-student communication. The initial activities consisted of revising the five signs learned, “yes,” “no,” understand,” “do not understand” and “question.” After students revised the five signs taught during the last four lessons, the sign for “hello” in American Sign Language was introduced. In American Sign Language “hello” is signed by placing your extended fingers on the side of your forehead and crossing your thumb underneath the palm of your hand. Then, extend your hand outward from your body in one swift movement. This sign was not part of the study, yet multiple students had expressed their desire to continue to learn basic signs, hence the sign for “hello” was taught. Once students practiced the sign for “hello,” they reviewed the present progressive tense by completing two grammar exercises in groups of four. Once students finished, the grammar exercises were discussed and

doubts were clarified. Throughout the initial review of the material, most students interacted amongst themselves in Spanish and answered the grammar exercises in English. The five signs taught were incorporated to create a space for teacher-student communication during the grammar discussion.

Subsequently, the development activities included reviewing phrasal verbs and having students identify verbs according to the definitions and the particles given. First, the definition and the rules which encompass phrasal verbs were reviewed. Afterward students were arranged in pairs to identify verbs which matched the definitions and particles which belonged to the vocabulary being discussed. After ten minutes, students were arranged in groups of four to compare and contrast their list, identifying differences and similarities in the verbs and noticing how these affected the meaning of the phrasal verb. Many students who worked together would use Spanish to brainstorm verbs and connect with one another, while their answers were in English. Some students would use the sign for “question” to indicate when they needed feedback on their choices or a Spanish to English translation on a verb. Once students had finished comparing and contrasting their lists of verbs, the phrasal verbs were discussed through a power point presentation. In the presentation, one slide was dedicated to each phrasal verb which contained the definition two written sentences as examples and an image for students to associate with the phrasal verb. Throughout the discussion, students were encouraged to communicate using the five signs taught by including specific slides in the presentation which prompted students to pause, think and express with the signs learned whether they are understanding the lesson or not. During this time, students could use the signs “yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question” to express themselves. After, the phrasal verbs were discussed,

students took a questionnaire regarding the use of some American Sign Language in class (see appendix C).



*Figure 6.* Slide which prompted students to communicate their understanding of the lesson.

As the course instructor, I designed and implemented the lessons described above in an effort to create a space for teacher-student communication and to attempt to answer the research questions of the study. This study aimed to include five more lesson in which the use of the signs “yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question” and topics on Deaf culture were supposed to be implemented throughout the lessons and class activities. However, due to Hurricanes Irma and María classes in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez were canceled for eight weeks after these lessons were taught. Once classes resumed, the integration of these lessons became a challenge for myself and students since the lessons took up class time from the already compromised semester. Therefore, the data collection of this study revolves around these five lessons and the focal participants experiences with the implementation of American Sign

Language and Deaf culture in the Basic English 3101 class. The focal participants were interviewed two weeks after classes resumed.

## **Chapter V: Data Results & Analysis**

### **Translanguaging with Purpose**

Translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom was strategically and dynamically incorporated throughout grammar, vocabulary and writing lessons in an attempt to enhance teacher-student communication. The languages incorporated in the Basic English 3101 course were English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language (“yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question”). For five lessons throughout the semester, I used English as the medium of instruction in the classroom, Spanish to clarify doubts and questions and to draw attention to key points of the lesson and reiterate important information. I also used Spanish to further connect with students and develop a professional, yet trusting relationship. The five signs in American Sign Language were used to challenge students’ fear of addressing doubts or questions during the lessons. The implementation of translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom meant going between diverse linguistic structures, systems and modalities (speaking, signing) as well as beyond them (Li, 2011, p. 1223).

Students placed in the Basic English 3101 course often voiced frustration with English because they had studied the language during elementary school, secondary school and high school, yet they were still labeled as “basic” at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. During my time teaching Basic English 3101 my students would tell me, “yo no sé hablar inglés” [I do not know how to speak English] or “yo no se inglés” [I do not know English]. However, most of the time students would express this in English, meaning students could be underestimating their English skills and creating mental barriers, hence developing fear and anxiety when attempting to communicate in English. For these reasons, students might be holding back when asked to share their doubts or questions in class. Thus, this lack of

communication affects their abilities to understand the Basic English 3101 lessons and limits teacher-student communication. In their study, Soto, Mazak and Rivera (2015) mentioned that lack of participation, reluctance to answer in English and general silencing are factors which indicate students' discomfort in English classrooms. Therefore, by introducing and incorporating translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in the Basic English 3101 classroom, the strategic use of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language aimed to challenge students' lack of communication.

To understand the impact of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in the Basic English 3101 classroom, the four focal participants (Nadia, Andrea, Guillermo and Juan) were asked to explain how they used English, Spanish and American Sign Language to communicate in the Basic English 3101 course. The focal participants also reflected on the impact of using English, Spanish and American Sign Language and how it influenced their understandings of the lessons. The following excerpts were taken from the focal participants' group and individual interviews.

*Table 2. Focal Participant Language Use*

<i>Focal Participant Guillermo</i>	
<i>Language</i>	<i>Purpose/Use</i>
<i>English/Spanish</i>	<p>“Yo pienso que los tres (lenguajes) están bien. Porque yo hago los trabajos en inglés, pero entonces yo voy a preguntar algo y no sé cómo decirlo en inglés, pues te lo pregunto en español y tú me dices.”</p> <p>[I think the three (languages) are okay. Because I do my work in English, but then if I am going to ask something and I do not know how to say it in English, well I ask you in Spanish and you answer me.]</p>
<i>American Sign Language</i>	<p>“A mí me gusta mucho porque la mayoría del tiempo cuando un profesor pregunta, ¿tienen dudas? Muchos la tienen y no se atreven a decirlo.</p>

Entonces con lenguaje de señas, sin que nadie te vea tú puedes decirlo (que tienen una duda o pregunta).”

[I like it a lot (American Sign Language) because most of the time when a professor asks, do you have doubts? A lot of people have them and they are afraid of asking them. So, with sign language, without anybody seeing you, you can say it (say you have a doubt or question).]

Regarding the language practices in the Basic English 3101 classroom, when focal participant Guillermo was asked if he preferred a particular language he expressed that he favored all three (English, Spanish and American Sign Language). This was because he did the class work in English, but when he had a doubt or question which he did not know how to express in English, he could ask in Spanish. Focal participant Guillermo’s objective was to learn English and he is aware of this, but he was also aware that through Spanish he could ask questions to successfully complete his tasks in English (Soto, Mazak & Rivera, 2015). Furthermore, Guillermo voiced that although many students had doubts or questions in his classes at UPRM, students were afraid to ask them. Hence Guillermo explained, by incorporating American Sign Language as a quick assessment tool it was harder for students to identify what each person responded since all of the students answered at the same time. Besides this, by incorporating American Sign Language (ASL) there were other factors which provided students with a sense of privacy when expressing they did not understand the lesson. The five signs taught (“yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question”) are done close to the body, thus it was hard for students to see each other’s signs. Also, for most students this was their first experience learning American Sign Language, so it was harder for them to identify their peer’s signs. This could mean many students are unwilling to express their doubts or questions due to their fears of being judged by their classmates. Since American Sign Language is a nonverbal

language it provided students with an opportunity to voice their doubts or questions and challenged their fears of being judged.

*Table 3. Focal Participant Language Use*

<i>Focal Participant Nadia</i>	
<i>Language</i>	<i>Purpose/Use</i>
<i>English</i>	<p>“Yo pienso también los tres porque como dice Guillermo la clase es en inglés, pero podemos contestar en español. Pero si alguno de nosotros no se atreve, pues está el lenguaje de señas y puedes contestar.”</p> <p>[I also think the three (languages) because like Guillermo says the class is in English, but we can answer in Spanish. But, if one of us is afraid, well there is sign language and you can answer.]</p>
<i>Spanish</i>	<p>“Poco a poco de español ir aprendiendo inglés, para así mejorar el inglés...”</p> <p>[Little by little learn English from Spanish, this way we improve our English.]</p>
<i>American Sign Language</i>	<p>“A mí me gustó la idea (de integrar lenguaje de señas), uno se siente más seguro porque no tienes que estar contestando hablando ni nada por el estilo. Si no como que con el lenguaje de señas puedes comunicarte.”</p> <p>[I liked the idea (of integrating sign language), one feels safer because you do not have to answer by speaking or anything like that. Instead with sign language you can communicate.]</p>

In response to Guillermo, focal participant Nadia said she also preferred English, Spanish and American Sign Language, because even though the class was in English, she could answer questions and participate in Spanish. Therefore, Nadia and Guillermo both used Spanish as a stepping stone to improve their English. Translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom “includes the use of many meaning-making resources to negotiate understanding in multilingual and multicultural higher education contexts” (Mazak, 2017, p. 8). This means that through Spanish, Guillermo and Nadia were able to further understand the English lessons, allowing them to contribute and participate throughout the class. Concerning the use of some American



Sign Language in the classroom, Nadia mentioned the use of American Sign Language provided a sense of security for her. Meaning, if Nadia feared expressing herself verbally, she could use one of the five signs to indicate her understanding of the lessons. As a result, integrating the five signs in American Sign Language, created a nonverbal space where students like Nadia could express a doubt or question.

Through Guillermo and Nadia's experience with translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom, it could be inferred that each language served a particular purpose. These purposes were similar, yet particular within their resemblance. For example, while the use of American Sign Language provided focal participant Guillermo with privacy, to focal participant Nadia, American Sign Language gave her more of a sense of security. Although the use of some American Sign Language for Guillermo and Nadia were distinct, it provided both of them an opportunity to express their doubts, questions and understandings of the lessons in class.

*Table 4. Focal Participant Language Use*

<i>Focal Participant Andrea</i>	
<i>Language</i>	<i>Purpose/Use</i>
<i>English</i>	<p>“Yo pienso también que los tres (lenguajes), pero nunca olvidarnos del inglés porque es con lo que estamos batallando.”</p> <p>[I also think the three (languages), but to not forget about English because it is what we are fighting for.]</p>
<i>Spanish</i>	<p>“Yo con el español, porque sentía la seguridad que tenía en mi clase de “high.”</p> <p>[For me with Spanish, because I felt the security I had in my high school class.]</p>
<i>American Sign Language</i>	<p>“Yo pienso que (lenguaje de señas) es más beneficioso para nosotros (los estudiantes) que para el profesor o el instructor que lo dé, porque nos ayuda a nosotros a aclarar y a entender más el tema.”</p>

[I think (sign language) is more beneficial for us (students) than for the professor or instructor that teaches it, because it helps us clarify and better understand the topic.]

Focal participant Andrea also thought all three languages were purposeful in the Basic English 3101 classroom, yet she emphasized English. To Andrea, the connections made in Spanish should facilitate learning in the English language. This establishes a pattern with the purpose of Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom. Focal participants Guillermo, Nadia and Andrea have used Spanish as an instrument to develop their English skills. As Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2015) explained, “there is probably no better way for bilingual students to deeply understand new content than to use their language of strength (in this case, Spanish), as an instrument for discussing, analyzing, and reflecting on the concepts they are learning” (p. 706). Hence, the use of Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom served as a valuable and strategic tool, which provided students with the opportunity to understand the lessons.

Moreover, to Andrea the use of Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom allowed her to feel the same security she felt in her high school English classes. Throughout high school, Andrea’s English courses focused on developing her writing skills and reading comprehension. Andrea mentioned her teacher allowed students to express themselves in Spanish to discuss the readings of the class. Thus, her teachers’ flexibility regarding language policies made Andrea feel secure, a feeling which has reoccurred when using Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom. Making it clear that instructors who believe in strict language practices potentially miss out on valuable discussions where students are able to reflect on the lessons using both Spanish and English (Carroll & Sambolín, 2016).

The integration of some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom played a beneficial role for Andrea. Andrea believed it was valuable for students since it helped

her clarify doubts, thus better understanding the lesson or topic discussed. When comparing Andrea's feelings towards the use of some American Sign Language with Guillermo and Nadia, it is evident that American Sign Language provides all of them with an opportunity to express their doubts, questions and understandings of the lessons in class. However, for Guillermo American Sign Language was important due to the privacy he felt when communicating doubts or questions. For focal participant Nadia, American Sign Language made her feel safe since she did not have to worry about her pronunciation.

Table 5. Focal Participant Language Use

Focal Participant Juan	
Language	Purpose/Use
English	<p>“Tiene que haber ese esfuerzo que yo te explico en inglés y en español hasta que puedas entender. Luego el esfuerzo va en inglés.”            [There has to be that effort where I explain to you in English and in Spanish until you can understand. Then the effort is put in, in English.]</p>
Spanish	<p>“Usar bastante el inglés, es bueno. Pero ya cuando tu entiendas algunos puntos claves que tengas que utilizar el español para explicarlo mejor. Vendría bien utilizar el español para explicar esos puntos claves.”            [Using a good deal of English is good. But when you know there are key points where you have to use Spanish to explain it better. It would be good to use Spanish to explain those key points.]</p>
American Sign Language	<p>“Lenguaje de señas como lo estamos utilizando, cuando tu terminabas (de explicar) preguntabas si entendieron o no, si tenían alguna duda, si están bien o no. Algo más dinámico, eso es como una dinámica pequeñita para poder estar como que en <i>confianza</i>.            [Sign Language how we were using it, when you finished (explaining something) you asked if we understood or not, if we had any doubts, if we were okay or not. It was something more dynamic, it was like a short dynamic to be able to feel <i>confianza</i> (trust).]</p>

Focal participant Juan was also aware of the role Spanish played within developing his English skills. Juan explained that although the class and content were in English, there was key information which should have been discussed in Spanish. What is interesting about Juan's response is that he emphasizes on the use of Spanish for the instructor to better explain the material, instead of using Spanish to clarify his doubts or questions. Juan's thoughts on the role of Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom provided an inverted perspective, which differed from the rest of the focal participant's views. While Guillermo, Nadia and Andrea used Spanish to express themselves, for Juan Spanish should have been used by the instructor to better explain the class lessons. Juan's claim then stresses the fact that "classes taught in English-only often "lose" students as they completely disengage because of a lack of understanding" (Soto, Mazak & Rivera, 2015, p. 12). In the Basic English classroom, although the lessons were taught mostly in English, Spanish was used when lessons, materials, activities and instructions needed to be clarified or reiterated. Spanish was also used to interact with students and connect with them on a deeper level. Thus, the use of Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom was multifaceted and provided students with opportunities to understand the lessons, contribute and participate in class and ask doubts or questions.

The five signs in American Sign Language were strategically integrated throughout the lessons when asking students to express their understandings of the material being taught. When addressing the use of American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course, focal participant Juan expressed that incorporating American Sign Language in the class served as a dynamic which helped him express his doubts or questions but also feel *confianza* [trust]. Juan's reaction towards the use of American Sign Language in the Basic English classroom adds another layer to the potential benefits or functions of introducing a nonverbal language to

enhance teacher-student communication in bilingual classrooms. The term *confianza* and its implications in the Basic English 3101 classroom will be further discussed in the following section.

To conclude, when comparing the focal participants' usage of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom similarities and differences were found. Regarding the use of English, the four focal participants established that their objective was to further develop their English skills and proficiencies, hence establishing English as the primary medium instruction. However, the use of Spanish served as a stepping stone for students to develop their English skills. Hence, Spanish in the Basic English 3101 classroom was used to express doubts or questions, provide a sense a security and for the instructor to better explain the lessons. Meanwhile the integration of some American Sign Language helped students feel their privacy was respected when expressing their understandings of the lesson. The use of American Sign Language also made students feel safe, since they did not have to worry about their English pronunciation when expressing they had a doubts or question. Finally, integrating five signs in American Sign Language developed *confianza*, a sense of trust between the students and myself in the Basic English 3101 classroom. Even though the focal participants found diverse uses for each language, each use contributed to their learning and acquisition of the English language. Through the chameleonic qualities of translanguaging, English, Spanish and America Sign Language provided verbal and nonverbal opportunities for students to develop deeper understandings of the lessons, contribute and participate in class discussions, ask doubts or questions and enhance teacher-student communication.

## Confianza

Previous studies have explored feelings of mutual respect and personal bonds, *confianza* was described by Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) as mutual trust and reciprocity developed in zones of comfort. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (2005) mentioned *confianza* as mutual trust which is essential to the reciprocal practices of knowledge exchange. In the study *Confianza: The Emergence of the Zone of Proximal Development in a University ESL Course*, Soto, Mazak and Rivera (2015) defined *confianza* as “...a feeling of mutual understanding, respect, and emotional closeness...” (p.11). According to the participants in Soto, Mazak and Rivera’s (2015) study, *confianza* embodies feeling trust, comfort and support. However, the emergence of *confianza* has yet to be linked to translanguaging.

In the Basic English 3101 classroom students’ bilingualism and fear of English pronunciation was acknowledged through the integration of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice. Hence, by creating opportunities for students to communicate, the use of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language was integrated in the classroom. The feeling of *confianza* in the Basic English 3101 classroom emerged through translanguaging and when trusting students were capable to mold the language practices implemented in the classroom to fit their particular needs. As *confianza* played a role in the classroom, students were not silenced and “they felt they could use Spanish in their pursuit of learning English” (Soto, Mazak & Rivera, 2015, p.18). Moreover, students’ feelings of *confianza* were linked to the integration of five signs in American Sign Language. This was because the use of some American Sign Language addressed students fear of pronunciation in the English language and provided students a safe and private space where they could express their understandings of the lessons. In the Basic English 3101 classroom *confianza* is a feeling of mutual understanding between the

students and the instructor, which developed feelings of safety, privacy and respect through the integration of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice. Hence, providing students with opportunities for deeper understandings of the lessons and enhancing teacher-student communication through the strategic use of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language.

Although the initial purpose of this research aimed to improve teacher-student communication, through the incorporation of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy, it was also found that a deeper understanding of the lesson was created. Using English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom created opportunities for students to communicate, thus enhancing teacher-student communication. As a result of enhancing teacher-student communication, students were able to express their doubts or question in class, thus students better understood the lessons being taught. The process of language learning is social, this means interactions between people (teachers, students) are necessary, making learners integral to the learning process (Soto, Mazak & Rivera, 2015). Therefore, communication needs to exist in order to attempt to successfully cover the objectives of the Basic English 3101 course.

However, through the research of translanguaging integrating English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom, it was discovered that language practices were not the only factor influencing students' willingness and abilities to communicate. Through this case study, students voiced how *confianza* in the Basic English 3101 classroom also played a role in facilitating understanding of the lessons and enhancing teacher-student communication. My claim is that through translanguaging and the feelings of *confianza*, students were able to develop deeper understandings of the lessons and the focal participants'

willingness to communicate doubts or questions was challenged through the integration of five signs in American Sign Language.

The word *confianza* first emerged in my research during the focal participants' group interview. The four focal participants were asked their thoughts on integrating the combination of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language for different purposes. To answer this question focal participant Juan expressed,

“me gusta la idea porque desde la superior en lo que se enfocan es, tiene que ser inglés, tiene que ser inglés, tiene que ser inglés. Y no te dan la oportunidad como que de tener *confianza* y al tu hacer ese tipo de técnica (translanguaging), creas una *confianza* que hace que por ejemplo en mi caso, piense mejor y reflexione mejor las cosas. La *confianza* crea ese ambiente más cómodo para poder seguir influyendo en la clase.” [I like the idea because since high school what they focus on is that it has to be in English, it has to be in English, it has to be in English. They do not give you the opportunity to have *confianza* and by implementing this type of technique (translanguaging), you create *confianza* that at least in my case, it makes me think and reflect things better. *Confianza* creates that comfortable environment to be able to keep contributing in class.]

Out of the four focal participants, Juan was the first to mention the term *confianza* to describe the effects of the integration of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom. In Juan's high school English courses, monolingual language practices were implemented, meaning Juan was not able to use any other language except English to talk, communicate or ask doubts or questions. Hence, the forceful implementation of English only policies did not provide Juan the opportunities to develop *confianza* in his high school English classrooms. Juan expressed that through the integration of English, Spanish and



some American Sign Language *confianza* was created, allowing him to think and reflect better. As Soto, Mazak and Rivera (2015) establish, “only if students feel comfortable with their instructor and classmates are they able to use what English they know...” (p. 12). For Juan, *confianza* created a comfortable environment, enabling him to use his English skills along with Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language to keep contributing in class.

Previous research by Soto, Mazak, and Rivera (2015) conducted at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, identified *confianza* as a factor that increased students’ English language learning through developing the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The emergence of *confianza* in their study resulted in collaborative language learning within the classroom. In this study, *confianza* emerged after the integration of translanguaging through English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom.

When focal participant Juan was interviewed individually, he was prompted about the term *confianza*, specifically its ties to the language practices implemented in class. Juan was asked if his development of *confianza* in the Basic English 3101 classroom originated from the strategic uses of English, Spanish or some American Sign Language. Juan responded,

“sí, pero no toda la presión viene de que tienes que hablar el inglés. Por ejemplo, como me sucedía en la superior, yo estuve tres años con el mismo profesor. Era un profesor, porque no era maestro, era bien fuerte. Era un hombre veterano ya desde el diez teníamos que hablarle inglés oblia’ y eso como que no me dejaba concentrarme bien. Lo que hacía era que el miedo me ganaba, me bloqueaba.” [Yes, but not all of the pressure originates from being forced to speak in English. For example, what happened to me in high school, I took classes with the same professor for three years. He was a professor,

because he was not a teacher, he was very strict. He was a veteran and since tenth grade we were forced to speak English, and that did not allow me to concentrate. What happened was fear would win, and I would mentally block myself.]

Although Juan expressed the strategic uses of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom contributed to create *confianza*, another major factor which influenced Juan's *confianza* was the perception of his teacher. Throughout high school, focal participant Juan had the same English professor. Juan perceived and labeled his high school English teacher as a professor due to his strictness. What also influenced Juan's perceptions was the fact that his teacher had served in the military. Since tenth grade Juan and his classmates were forced to speak in English in class, this did not allow Juan to concentrate. Thus, his perception of the teacher along with the monolingual language practices developed a fear in Juan, creating a mental barrier which limited his learning.

Additionally, Juan mentioned that since his high school English classes promoted English only policies, it limited his opportunities to acquire vocabulary and practice his speaking skills. Therefore, due to monolingual language practices Juan associated feelings of fear and stress to his English language speaking skills. This lead Juan to avoid mentioning his doubts or questions in English in the Basic English 3101 course, until the use of some American Sign Language was introduced. During the group interview Juan mentioned that he attributed his fear and stress to English only language policies, yet with the integration of American Sign Language he could challenge his feelings. Juan voiced, "estuve tres años haciendo el esfuerzo, pero nunca, nunca. Tener esa flexibilidad, como la que tengo contigo (usar lenguaje de señas), me fluye mejor todo." [I made an effort for three years, but never, never. Having that flexibility, like what I have with you (of using American Sign Language), everything flows better.] Even though Juan spent three

years attempting to better his English language skills, he felt like he could not progress. This could be due to the absence of *confianza* in his high school English classes. Hence, through creating nonverbal opportunities for students to express their doubts or questions, the feeling of *confianza* emerged. Therefore, Juan's *confianza* in the Basic English classroom surged from the opportunity to express his doubts or questions through the five signs in American Sign Language.

As Juan opened up about his fears towards the English language, focal participants Guillermo and Andrea did as well. The focal participants were asked about their hesitation to speak or express themselves in English in the Basic English 3101 course. In response, focal participants Guillermo and Andrea voiced it was because they fear others (teachers, students) might judge their English pronunciation. Focal participant Guillermo voiced, “uno le da miedo decir un disparate. La mayor parte que yo voy a hablar con alguien en inglés yo sé que la otra persona sabe y tengo miedo a decir un disparate. Voy a quedar como un ridículo. No me atrevo.” [I fear expressing a foolish remark. Most of the time when I am going to talk to someone in English I know that they know the language and I fear expressing a foolish remark. I will look ridiculous. I do not dare.] Guillermo is reluctant to speak in English because he fears expressing a foolish remark and how others might judge him because of this. Pronunciation is a key part of Guillermo's unwillingness to participate and express himself in English in class.

After Guillermo expressed his fears regarding English pronunciation, focal participant Andrea expressed similar thoughts, “por lo menos mi pronunciación es terrible. Yo entiendo todo lo que tú me dices. ¡pero contestarte! La pronunciación no.” [At least my pronunciation is terrible. I understand everything you are saying. But answering! No pronunciation.] Although

Andrea can understand the English Language she is also unwilling to express herself in it since she believes her English pronunciation is terrible.

Upon reflecting on Andrea, Guillermo and Juan's beliefs regarding their fear of expressing themselves in the English language, it is evident their fears revolved around pronunciation. Thus, a link between pronunciation anxiety and willingness to communicate is a common theme for most of the focal participants of this study. However, it was focal participant Nadia who pointed out that Juan, Guillermo and Andrea's fears might affect their ability to learn the English language. Nadia voiced, "quizás eso (el miedo) afecta al aprendizaje." [Maybe that (the fear) affects learning.] This is why it is important to address the focal participants' feelings of fear and anxiety in the Basic English 3101 classroom, because it affects their opportunities to further develop their English language skills. According to Baran-Lucarz (2014), anxiety and self-confidence are vital feelings which determine students' willingness to communicate. Students feelings of embarrassment and apprehension towards pronunciation in the English language might explain why Basic English 3101 students avoided participating and communicating in English in the classroom. Thus, the role of American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course is to challenge students' feelings of fear and anxiety by providing them with opportunities for nonverbal communication.

The integration of some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom opened the channel of communication and it was a key factor in achieving *confianza*. During their paired interview, focal participants Andrea and Nadia were asked to explain the role of American Sign Language within *confianza*. Nadia expressed, "para decir no entendí." [To express I did not understand.] While Andrea added, "me da la *confianza* (para decir no entendí)." [It gives me the *confianza* (to say I did not understand).] Both Nadia and Andrea voiced that the

integration of some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom gave them the opportunity to express their understandings of the lessons. Not only this, but the feelings of stress and anxiety which they felt in their past English classes could have been challenged through *confianza*. Both Nadia and Andrea mentioned they preferred to express themselves in American Sign Language in class, particularly because they did not have to worry about their English pronunciation. Hence, through the use of five signs in American Sign Language (ASL) both Nadia and Andrea felt a sense of privacy and safety. They felt their privacy was being respected since when communicating their understanding or lack of, other students could not hear their answers. In addition, Andrea and Nadia felt safe since they did not have to worry about their English language pronunciation.

Furthermore, during the focal participants' group interview Guillermo voiced similar feelings regarding the role of American Sign Language within *confianza*. Focal participant Guillermo mentioned,

“con lenguaje de señas, sin que nadie te vea tú puedes decirlo (que tienes dudas y preguntas). Te da más confort porque eso (el miedo a la pronunciación) es comprensible. [With sign Language, without anyone seeing you, you can say it (that you have doubts or questions). It gives you comfort because it (fear of pronunciation) is understandable.]

For focal participant Guillermo, the integration of five signs in American Sign Language allowed him to feel privacy, just like Andrea and Nadia had previously mentioned. However, Guillermo expressed that the role of American Sign Language within *confianza* also allowed him to feel comfortable and at ease in the Basic English 3101 classroom. This could be attributed to the fact that most students expressed their understandings of the lessons at the same time and in the same way (ASL). For the focal participants, the strategic integration of some American Sign

Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom addressed their concerns regarding English pronunciation, and provided them opportunities to express their understandings of the lessons. Therefore, the role of American Sign Language within the feeling *confianza* is complex and multidimensional as it not only created channels of communication, yet it challenged students' feelings of anxiety and fear. Thus, transforming the Basic English 3101 classroom into a safe, secure and comfortable space where students' learning was not limited by their fears, yet students' fears were understood.

The focal participants of the study related similar experiences regarding the impact of *confianza* in the Basic English 3101 classroom. In Soto, Mazak and Rivera's (2015) study, the development of *confianza* is attributed to four main factors. These factors are relationship building, fluid physical space, emphasis on bilingualism, instructor availability and instructor-student rapport (Soto, Mazak & Rivera, 2015, p.4). In this study the most prominent factors for the development of *confianza* among the focal participants were developing feelings of privacy and safety when expressing understandings of the lessons and creating opportunities for nonverbal communication through the integration of five signs in American Sign Language. Hence, through translanguaging and the feelings of *confianza*, students were able to express themselves and their willingness to communicate doubts or questions was challenged.

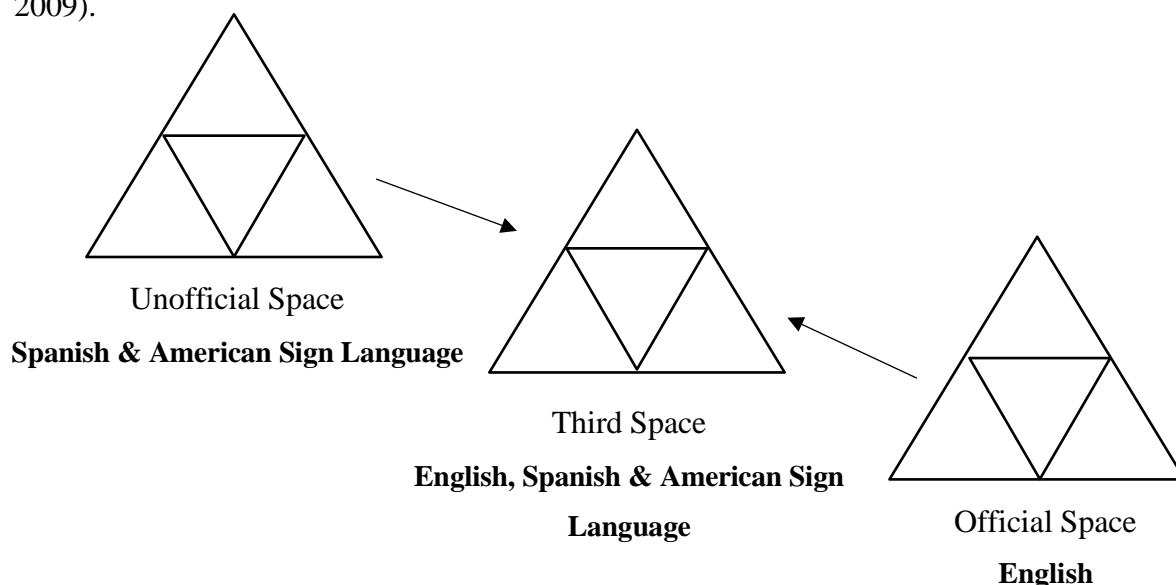
### **Third Space**

According to Bhabha (1994), third space is a space created by formerly colonized people which resists limitations imposed by oppressive forces. Third space is where self-improving strategies are created through innovation and collaboration. Therefore, instead of setting limiting boundaries, a new space is created where these boundaries are challenged and destabilized (Benson, 2010). For the purposes of this study, third space will be considered a space created by

colonized people which aims to challenge monolingual ideologies in the Basic English 3101 classroom. Thus, in an attempt to understand and challenge my students' resistance to communicate in class, translanguaging was implemented as a pedagogical strategy. As a result, by incorporating English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language in my classroom, a third space was created. Through the integration of multiple and diverse language practices, the emergence of a third space was promoted, creating zones of development and expanding learning (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López and Tejeda, 1999). In the Basic English 3101 classroom the strategic integration of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language created a space where students were able to develop a deeper understanding of the class lesson through enhancing teacher-student communication.

As a participant observer and instructor of the Basic English 3101 course, I used English as the principal medium of instruction, while texts, materials, resources and evaluations were mainly in English as well. I used Spanish in instances when lessons, materials, activities and instructions needed to be clarified or reiterated. Spanish was also used to interact with students and connect with them on a deeper level. Meanwhile American Sign Language was used as a quick assessment tool during specific parts of the lessons to engage students to communicate their understanding of the lessons in nonverbal way. However, these language practices were not static and my students individually modified the language practices to fit their individual language skills and needs. As a result, unintentionally creating a third space, where official spaces and unofficial spaces interacted. The following section, demonstrates how English, Spanish and American Sign Language played a role into creating a third space in the Basic English 3101 classroom.

Throughout my experiences as an Instructor of Record teaching the Basic English 3101 course, creating opportunities for students to communicate doubts or questions in class was always a challenge. According to Mozafari (2009), "if intersection—or effective communication—does not occur, a common goal cannot be met" (p. 47). When students did not communicate their doubts or questions in class, attempting to teach vocabulary, grammar content and meet the course objectives was an uphill battle. As I taught the course, most students in the Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez would express to me that they feared communicating in the target language. While other students would underestimate their English skills by voicing, “yo no sé inglés” [I do not know English]. These attitudes and beliefs could be attributed to Puerto Rico's political language structures and monolingual language policies in Puerto Rico’s ESL classrooms. Third space theory acknowledges the limitations set by monolingual ideologies by recognizing students' willingness to communicate and abilities to understand the lesson. Hence, by creating a third space where official and unofficial spaces meet, emergent bilingual students can develop deeper understandings of class lessons and better communicate their doubts or questions (Mozafari, 2009).





*Figure 7.* Third space where official and unofficial spaces meet in the Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda, 1999, p. 292).

Within this study and taking into consideration the contexts of the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez and the Basic English 3101 classroom, English was considered the official language space. This might be since the focal participants' high school English teachers have treated English and Spanish as separate linguistic systems and have rarely been purposefully integrating language strategies to help students understand the lessons and communicate their doubts or questions. Another factor which could influence establishing English as the official language space could be the focal participants internal conflicts between language and culture, as the four focal participants expected the class to follow monolingual ideologies. Also, the four focal participants expressed in multiple occasions contradicting ideologies towards the language practices in the Basic English 3101 classroom, particularly with the use of English and Spanish. During focal participant Guillermo's' individual interview, he was asked if he preferred to use only English in the classroom, he disagreed. Guillermo voiced,

“Sí, pero no totalmente. Porque si tuviera que elegir, elegiría el inglés porque la clase es de inglés. Pero al usar solamente inglés, sé que en algún punto va a ser bien difícil y me voy a sentir como que no puedo (expresarme). Obviamente voy a buscar la solución, pero sé que van a haber momentos que no voy a poder (expresarme).” [Yes, but not completely. Because if I had to choose, I would choose English because it is an English class, but by only using English I know that at some point it is going to be very difficult and I am going to feel like I cannot (express myself). Obviously, I am going to find a

solution, but I know that there will be moments when I will not be able to (express myself).]

Focal participant Guillermo is aware that learning English is the focus of the Basic English 3101 course, yet he knows that by establishing English only language practices it will limit his opportunities to express himself in class. As Benson (2010) expressed, “instead of limiting thinking to boundaries set by outside institutions, oppressed people create a new space within official space that functions under rules more beneficial to them” (p.555). Instead of following monolingual language practices which limit students’ opportunities to learn, communicate and contribute in class, creative and dynamic spaces can be created where unofficial and official banks of knowledge meet. Guillermo continues to express that he will find a solution, what he means is find a way to express himself in the English language. However, despite attempting to find ways to better communicate in English, Guillermo knows there will be moments where he will not be successful. This is why incorporating Spanish and some American Sign Language as a pedagogical practice in the Basic English 3101 classroom aids students’ abilities to communicate.

Later on, in focal participant Guillermo’s’ individual interview he was asked about his answers in the questionnaire which was given after the fifth lesson of the study. In the questionnaire (see Appendix C), students were prompted to agree or disagree with twenty-five statements, yet it was the following statement which caught my attention, “I feel stressed if I am forced to communicate in English,” and Guillermo disagreed. Therefore, when interviewing Guillermo and noticing his contradicting ideologies regarding the role of English in the Basic English classroom, I asked what did he feel when being forced to communicate in English and Guillermo answered, “...si soy forzado a hablar inglés en una clase de inglés siento que no

puedo (hablar inglés) ... es normal. Por eso pienso que está bien.” [...if I am forced to speak in English in an English class, I feel like I cannot (speak in English) ...it is normal. Therefore, I think it is okay.]

Focal participant Guillermo voiced when being forced to communicate in English, particularly in an English classroom he feels in a way defeated, he simply cannot do it. What was most astonishing was that Guillermo had normalized this feeling of defeat throughout his experiences in English classrooms. Guillermo's' language experiences in his prior English classrooms created not only contradicting ideologies, but mental barriers which might have lead him to underestimate his English language skills. Hence, Guillermo's' beliefs could explain why the lack teacher-student communication in the Basic English 3101 classroom is a crucial obstacle to challenge; and when challenged benefits both teachers and students. Guillermo's' experiences are one of the many reasons why creating diverse opportunities for teacher-student communication is vital in the Basic English 3101 classroom.

While English was considered the official space, in the Basic English 3101 classroom Spanish was part of the unofficial space. This is because Spanish is the first language of the four focal participants therefore it holds close ties to their identity and culture. Also, the integration of Spanish as a purposeful and strategic language practice in the focal participants' high school English language classrooms was rare. Due to this, the incorporation of Spanish in the Basic English 3101 course legitimizes unofficial spaces by recognizing students' first language and culture (Mozafari, 2009, p.50). During the group interview with the four focal participants, I asked my students to reflect upon the language practices (English, Spanish and American Sign Language) integrated in the Basic English 3101 course. I also explained these language

interactions were strategically integrated to attempt to enhance understanding and teacher-student communication. To what focal participant Andrea expressed,

“es que yo pienso que por lo menos en los reportes orales, yo puedo decirte muchas cosas en español porque siempre pienso en español, yo no pienso en inglés. “So” si yo me aprendo un “oral report” y es en ingles solamente, yo te voy a decir lo único que escribí (memoricé). Porque si tú me preguntas algo, pues se me va a hacer difícil explicarte eso que me estas preguntando porque estoy pensando en español, no en inglés. Por eso me imagino que lo incluyen (translanguaging)...” [ I think in oral reports at least, I can tell you many things in Spanish because I think in Spanish, I do not think in English. So, if I memorize an oral report and it is only in English, I am only going to tell you what I wrote (memorized). Because if you ask me something, it is difficult for me to respond because I am thinking in Spanish. This is why I think it (translanguaging) is integrated.]

Andréa was describing how using translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy could serve as a tool to express her knowledge of the lesson or material discussed. Focal participant Andréa explained how in oral reports in English, she could only express what she wrote down and memorized. Yet, if someone were to ask her something, it would be difficult for her to respond in English. Therefore, by challenging monolingual language ideologies through the use of Spanish, focal participant Andrea can express or voice what at this point is too challenging for her to express in English. Thus, through the integration of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language a third space was created where the instructors’ expectations and students’ needs meet and negotiated. Therefore, a third space helped bridge the gap between official unofficial banks of knowledge, allowing students’ contributions and collaborations in class to surpass monolingual language policies and ideologies.

Furthermore, in an attempt to enhance teacher-student communication, five signs (“yes,” “no,” “understand,” “do not understand” and “question”) were incorporated in class and used strategically throughout lessons. This is because I believe the “teacher is not the sole conveyer or producer of knowledge. Students have control of the learning process as well” (Benson, 2010, p.556). Therefore, the decision to incorporate five signs in American Sign Language was deliberate and aimed to provide nonverbal opportunities for students to communicate doubts or questions. The five signs in American Sign Language used in the Basic English 3101 course were also within the unofficial space. This is since the focal participants of this study had not experienced the integration of American Sign Language or any other type of sign language in their prior English courses. Both Spanish and American Sign Language were part of the unofficial space because they defied common monolingual ideologies and English only policies in the Basic English 3101 course. Thus, incorporating American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course provided with a dynamic and different language practice which aimed to give students control of their learning process.

During the focal participants’ group interview, the four participants were asked about their opinions regarding the use of the five signs in American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 course. To this focal participant Nadia responded, “a mí me gustó la idea (de usar lenguaje de señas) porque de esta manera uno se siente más seguro, porque no tienes que estar contestando hablando, ni nada por el estilo, si no con el lenguaje de señas puedes comunicarte.” [I like the idea (of using American Sign Language) because through this, one feels safer because you do not have to answer by talking, or anything like that, with American Sign Language you can communicate.] Nadia expressed she felt safer when using the five signs in class because she did not have to talk, by using the five signs taught she could communicate. Thus, through the

implementation of some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom, interactions address students' needs. In this study, the use of five signs in American Sign Language created a space where students like Nadia felt safer when communicating doubts or questions. As Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López and Tejeda (1999) express, "some learning communities try to ignore, resist, and suppress these changes, whereas others recognize these points of disruption as the building blocks for potential learning" (p.286). The changes in language interaction in my Basic English 3101 classroom at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, recognized students' needs and promoted the use Spanish and American Sign Language as stepping stones for pupils to understand the class lessons.

Translanguaging in my Basic English 3101 classroom was incorporated throughout the interactions between English content, Spanish discussions and quick assessments to enhance teacher-student communication through the integration of five signs in American Sign Language. As a researcher, I believe languages are intertwined and help create meaning. García and Li (2014) argue bilinguals do not have two separate linguistic systems in the brain, instead one combined repertoire of linguistic and semiotic practices from which they constantly draw (Mazak, 2017). Thus, the integration of English, Spanish and American Sign Language in the Basic English classroom created more opportunities for students to be able to understand the lessons, communicate doubts or questions and contribute to the class discussions. Although this translanguaging practice was deliberately implemented for the purposes of this study, translanguaging can occur naturally in contexts with bilingual and multilingual students (Canagarajah, 2011). Hence, when my students strategically use their entire linguistic repertoires to learn, and I (as a teacher) deliberately use my entire linguistic repertoires to teach, a space is

created where teacher-student communication is enhanced and students can contribute to the class discussions.

### **Language Policies**

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) is considered a bilingual university where English-language texts and Spanish-medium classrooms have become a common theme in non-English courses. Policies regarding the language of instruction at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez can be found in the UPRM Undergraduate Catalogue and the official UPRM website. The UPRM Undergraduate Catalogue establishes Spanish as the language of instruction in most courses, yet it mentions students are required to have a working knowledge of the English language. However, the professor decides the language used in class lectures and student evaluations (University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Campus Undergraduate Catalogue, 2011–2012). Similarly, the official website of UPRM states classes at the university are offered in English or in Spanish, depending on the professors' preference (RUM: Información Común-Sobre Nosotros). This means, professors from different faculties and subject areas at UPRM have the freedom to select their preferred language of instruction, including books, material and resources. However, this freedom does not necessarily mean professors take into account how their language choices, strategies and practices affect students' learning.

This study has prompted me to believe language preferences established by professors at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez should consider students and their learning. During the first interview of this study, the four focal participants were asked to describe the Basic English 3101 class environment, bearing in mind the language strategies implemented with the use of English, Spanish and the five signs in American Sign Language. Focal participant Nadia voiced, “el aprendizaje es mayor porque usted nos está dando la *confianza* de poder expresarnos

en español, pero a la vez aprender el inglés porque no nos están obligando.” [The learning is greater because you are trusting us to be able to express ourselves in Spanish, but at the same time learn English because you are not forcing us.] In the Basic English 3101 classroom, translanguaging served as a pedagogical strategy, each language served a purpose and the implementation of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language was deliberate and aimed to enhance students’ understanding of the lesson and teacher-student communication. Hence leading me to believe, “...if language practices are thoughtful and student centered, open language policies can be quite advantageous” (Carroll & Mazak, 2017, p. 19). The open language policy of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez allows for translanguaging practices to exist, yet if these practices are not deliberate and learner oriented they might negatively affect students’ learning, thus hindering the benefits of translanguaging.

An example of how unmethodical language practices might negatively affect students’ learning could be explained when retelling Andreas’ experience in her history class at UPRM. After focal participant Nadia expressed her thoughts regarding the language strategies implemented in the Basic English 3101 course, focal participant Andrea reflected upon the language practices of her history class. Andrea expressed,

“para mí por lo menos es frustrante porque, aunque estemos todo lo que llevamos de vida estudiando inglés, llegamos a la universidad y como quiera los libros son en inglés y entonces la clase es en español. En mi clase de historia, la clase es en español y el libro es en inglés. Los exámenes son en español, pero entonces también tengo el factor de que ella (la profesora) no es de aquí de Puerto Rico. No lo habla igual (el español).” [It is frustrating to me at least, because even though we have been studying English all of our lives, we arrive to the university and the books are in English, but then the class is in



Spanish. In my history class, the class is in Spanish, but the book is in English. The exams are in Spanish, but the professor is not from Puerto Rico. She (the professor) does not speak the same dialect of Spanish.]

Andrea's frustration stemmed from the fact that although she has been taking English classes throughout her life, as an undergraduate she faced difficulties in her history class since her text was in English, yet her class was in Spanish. In Andreas' history class, Spanish was used as the language of instruction and evaluation, meanwhile the textbook was in English. Although this might seem as a common translanguaging practice, if clear connections and purposeful language transactions were not created in the classroom between the Spanish lesson and the English text, what could have been an acceptable academic practice might have led to confusion and misunderstanding of the lesson. Therefore, when purposefully incorporating translanguaging practices in the classroom educators should prompt and guide students to make connections within each language to create meaning. As Mazak (2017), explains, "the emphasis on process – the *-ing* – purposefully shifts the focus away from discrete 'languages' and makes the act of meaning-making central" (p. 2). Thus, if Andreas' history professor did not make clear connections between the English text and the Spanish lesson, meaning could have been lost. Educators need to keep in mind, language is an ongoing process, the constant connections which lead to meaning making experiences for students are necessary when incorporating translanguaging as a pedagogical practice (García, 2009).

Furthermore, Andrea points out her history professor speaks a different dialect of Spanish, hence making it challenging for her to understand the lesson. Andrea explains,

"...ella (la profesora) no pronuncia la "r", no diferencia las "l." Y es como que la entiendes a ella porque el libro, tienes que traducirlo. Cuando llegas a tu casa lo traduces

(el libro), si no, no puedo entender. Como es historia, no es una palabra con una definición, tienes que leer todo el párrafo para ver a que se refiere.” [...she (the professor) does not pronounce the letter “r,” and does not differentiate the letter “l.” You understand her because you translate the book. When you get home, you translate it (the book), if not I cannot understand. Since it is a history class, it is not just a word with a definition, you have to read the whole paragraph to see what it refers to.]

For Andrea to understand her history professor and the lesson being discussed, she needed to translate her book from English to Spanish. After class, Andrea would head home and translate the paragraphs or chapters discussed in the history book. This could mean the language practices implemented in Andreas’ history class defeated the purpose of combining language systems to transmit information and understanding (Li, 2011). In other words, when incorporating a dialect of Spanish as the medium of instruction and evaluation, differences in pronunciation need to be addressed since they can be confusing for students. In addition, including an English textbook in a Spanish medium class means purposeful connections should be made between the linguistic systems to create meaning. If language practices are not properly addressed or implemented, students like Andrea might face difficulties when attempting to understand the class lessons.

Many institutions of higher education within the bilingual nation-state of Puerto Rico are absent of any policy regarding the language of instruction (Carroll & Mazak, 2017). The University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, has an open language policy which gives professors the freedom to implement their own classroom language policies, thus creating potentially rich spaces for translanguaging practices. However, language practices implemented by professors should be purposeful and benefit students’ learning. As a bilingual university, professors at

UPRM should reflect upon their language practices, challenging their instructional benefit and how they address students' needs. Because of UPRM's open policy, I had the flexibility to challenge monolingual ideologies in the Basic English 3101 classroom, create and implement a translanguaging practice which aimed to enhanced teacher-student communication and understanding of the class lessons.

## Chapter VI: Conclusion

Previous research shows that bilingual interactions in classrooms are a normal and a necessary part of bilingual learning. Throughout this study, the incorporation of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language were carefully planned to allow translanguaging practices to challenge the lack of teacher-student communication in the Basic English 3101 classroom. The integration of each language was purposeful and guided students towards further developing their English skills. However, each language served particular purposes for each focal participant, as a result addressing their individual language needs in the classroom. Overall, for the focal participants English was established as the primary medium of instruction, while Spanish served as a stepping stone to improve their English skills. The five signs in American Sign Language provided the focal participants with a sense of privacy, security and *confianza*. This could be attributed to the nonverbal nature of American Sign Language and allowing students to communicate their understanding of the lesson in a nonverbal way.

Translanguaging in the Basic English 3101 classroom also benefitted me. As the instructor of the Basic English 3101 course, my teachings were not limited by monolingual language practices. Thus, through Spanish I was able to reiterate important information and further explain the lesson while acknowledging my students first language (Spanish). Meanwhile the integration of some American Sign Language helped bridge the lack of teacher student communication, providing me with key insights regarding students' comprehensions of the lessons (Carroll & Sambolín, 2016). As educators enforce monolingual language practices, they limit students' opportunities to comprehend lessons and communicate in the classroom as well as their own. Translanguaging opens a door to allow the exchange of information from one language to another and it is the stepping stone for developing understanding and promoting the

fluid movement of ideas from one language to another, acknowledging this may be the first step to achieve *confianza*.

Previous research at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez defined *confianza* as “...a feeling of mutual understanding, respect, and emotional closeness...” (Soto, Mazak and Rivera, 2015, p.11). Although previous studies have researched feelings of mutual respect and personal bonds, the term *confianza* has not been linked to translanguaging. The translanguaging practices in the Basic English 3101 classroom created the ideal settings for *confianza* to develop. Through the strategic integration of English, Spanish and some American Sign Language students were not silenced and could use American Sign Language to express their understandings of the lessons without feelings of fear and anxiety. Students were trusted and deemed capable to mold the language practices implemented in the classroom to fit their particular needs, and a feeling of mutual understanding emerged between the students and myself as the instructor. Thus, through the feelings of *confianza* opportunities for deeper understandings of the lessons and teacher-student communication were enhanced.

Moreover, in this study a third space was created by challenging the limitations of monolingual ideologies through the strategic integration of English, Spanish and American Sign Language. Through the integration of English, Spanish and five signs in American Sign Language, students were able to understand the lesson, communicate doubts or questions and contribute to the class discussions. This led to students strategically using their entire linguistic repertoires to learn and myself (as the instructor) to deliberately use my entire linguistic repertoires to teach. Therefore, monolingual language practices and ideologies in Basic English 3101 classrooms were challenged.

The reshaping of language practices in the Basic English 3101 classroom prompted me to evaluate how the language policy at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez affected students' learning. The University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez is considered bilingual and the language policy gives professors the freedom to establish Spanish or English as the medium of instruction and evaluation. Although this freedom allows for translanguaging practices to occur, it could also allow for the misuse of language practices to benefit professors instead of students. Hence this study invites departments, faculties and professors at UPRM to reevaluate their language practices and consider translanguaging as a pedagogical language strategy which could invigorate their classrooms.

The use of some American Sign Language in the Basic English 3101 classroom was integrated for many reasons, as it not only provided students with opportunities for nonverbal communication, but it exposed them to a new language and culture. The students in my Basic English classroom and deaf individuals might have much in common as they both struggle with the languages and life styles imposed by society. While many students in my classroom have been forced to learn English throughout their lives, deaf individuals are forced to live in a hearing world which at times refuses to adapt to their needs, much like some of the focal participants' high school teachers. Thus, American Sign Language was integrated so that students could identify their language struggles with the Deaf community. Additionally, exposing students to some American Sign Language and Deaf culture created awareness towards the needs of the Deaf community and as future professionals allowed them to reflect upon their roles within society and how by learning American Sign Language or any other type of signed language they could impact and provide services for deaf individuals. Furthermore, the integration of some American Sign Language was also meant to break the binary. Most of the

students in the Basic English 3101 Classroom had only previously studied Spanish and English, by introducing American Sign Language students' language experience is challenged and they learned English and Spanish are not the only two existing languages in the academic field.

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## Appendix A



**Institutional Review Board**  
**CPSHI/IRB 00002053**  
University of Puerto Rico – Mayagüez Campus  
Dean of Academic Affairs  
Call Box 9000  
Mayagüez, PR 00681-9000



February 2, 2017

Ashley Miranda Negrón  
Department of English  
RUM  
Dear students:

As Director of the Institutional Review Board of the University of Puerto Rico - Mayagüez Campus, I have considered your application for the project titled Translanguaging: Using Sign Language in the Basic English Classroom (Protocol num. 20170202).

After evaluating your research protocol and supporting documents, I have determined that your research represents minimal risk to participants and qualifies under Category 7 of 45 CFR 46.110 for an expedited review process. Likewise, after evaluating your request for exemptions of standard informed consent procedures we approved the following exemptions:

- Adult Consent Form in Child Investigation

For this reason, we are approving your project with the above exemptions effective today and expiring February 2, 2018. We also remind you that our approval does not exempt you from complying with other institutional and governmental requirements related to your research topic and/or funding source.

Federal regulations demand that our office supervise all active research projects. We consider a research project to be active if participants are still being recruited or if recruitment has ceased but data gathering and analysis are not yet complete. If you anticipate that your project will be active beyond the approval expiration date, we ask that you submit an application of extension no later than one month before your approval expires.

Attached please find copies of your consent form stamped with our committee's official seal of approval. We ask that you use these documents during your research project. We remind you that you need to hand a copy of the signed consent form to all research participants.

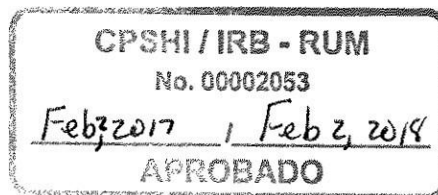
Any modifications or amendments to the approved protocol or its methodology must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before they are implemented, except in cases where the change is

necessary to reduce or eliminate a potential risk for participants. The IRB must be informed immediately if an adverse event or unexpected problem arises related to the risk to human subjects. The IRB must likewise be notified immediately if any breach of confidentiality occurs.

We appreciate your commitment to uphold the highest standards of human research protections and remain.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rafael A. Boglio Martínez  
President, Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
University of Puerto Rico,  
Mayagüez Campus



Telephone: (787) 832 - 4040 x 6277, 3807, 3808 - Fax: (787) 831-2085 -Webpage: [www.uprm.edu/cpsht](http://www.uprm.edu/cpsht)  
Email: [cpshi@uprm.edu](mailto:cpshi@uprm.edu)

## Appendix B

**University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez**

**Consentimiento para participar en un estudio de investigación**

**Participantes adultos (profesor)**

**Formulario de conducta social**

**Título del estudio: Translanguaging: Using American Sign Language in the Basic English Classroom**

**Investigador principal: Ashley A. Miranda Negrón**

**Número telefónico del contacto del estudio: 787-436-3699**

**Correo electrónico del contacto del estudio: Ashley.miranda2@upr.edu**

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**¿Cuáles son algunas de las cuestiones generales que usted debe saber sobre los estudios de investigación?**

Se le solicita que participe en un estudio de investigación. La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Puede negarse a participar, o puede retirar su consentimiento para participar en el estudio, por cualquier motivo, sin sufrir sanciones. Los estudios de investigación están diseñados para obtener nueva información. Es posible que esta nueva información ayude a las personas en el futuro. Es posible que no reciba ningún beneficio directo por participar en este estudio de investigación. También pueden existir riesgos asociados con la participación en estudios de investigación. Los detalles sobre este estudio se analizan a continuación. Es importante que entienda esta información de modo que pueda decidir en forma fundamentada acerca de la participación en este estudio de investigación. Se le entregará una copia de este formulario de consentimiento. Debe preguntar a los investigadores mencionados anteriormente, o a los miembros del personal que los asisten, cualquier consulta que tenga acerca de este estudio en cualquier momento.

**¿Cuál es el objetivo de este estudio?**

El objetivo de este estudio de investigación es evaluar la efectividad de la comunicación, al utilizar español, inglés y lenguaje de señas en la sala de clases.

**¿Cuánto tiempo participará en este estudio?**

El estudio se llevará a cabo desde febrero 2017 hasta mayo 2017. Su participación fuera del salón de clases sería dos horas máximo.

**¿Qué ocurrirá si participa en este estudio?**

Durante su clase de inglés, la investigadora observará las diferentes combinaciones de idiomas (español, lenguaje de señas e inglés) usadas en el salón por sus estudiantes (incluyendo los materiales, libros de texto, Power Points, etc.). También participará en dos entrevistas (30 minutos cada uno).

Su identidad se mantendrá anónima en caso de publicación o presentación de los resultados.

**¿Cuáles son los posibles beneficios por participar en este estudio?**

No hay ningún beneficio por participar.

**¿Cuáles son los posibles riesgos que implica la participación en este estudio?**

Los riesgos de participar en este estudio son iguales que los riesgos de participar en su clase de inglés.

**¿De qué manera se protegerá su privacidad?**

Los participantes no serán identificados en informes o publicaciones sobre este estudio.

- **Grabación de video:**

Las cintas serán guardadas bajo llave.

Se podrá solicitar que se interrumpan las grabaciones de video si ello es necesario para el estudio.

**¿Le costará algo la participación en este estudio?**

No existirá ningún costo por participar en este estudio.

**¿Qué sucede si desea formular preguntas sobre este estudio?**

Tiene el derecho de preguntar, y que le respondan, cualquier duda que tenga acerca de esta investigación. Si tienen preguntas o inquietudes, deben ponerse en contacto con los investigadores mencionados en la primera página de este formulario.

-----  
**Acuerdo del participante:**

He leído la información proporcionada más arriba. He realizado todas las preguntas que tengo en este momento. Acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio de investigación.

- ☐ Acepto estar grabado en entrevistas y observaciones de clase.
- ☐ No acepto estar grabado, pero si quiero participar.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del participante de la investigación

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del participante de la investigación en imprenta

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento en imprenta



## Appendix C

Numero secreto: \_\_\_\_\_

Bachillerato: \_\_\_\_\_ Cuestionario:

### **Translanguaging: Using American Sign Language in the Basic English**

#### **Classroom**

El siguiente cuestionario tiene el propósito de informar al instructor sobre las actitudes de los estudiantes de Inglés Básico hacia la clase y su contenido. Su participación es voluntaria y anónima, el participar en este estudio no afectara su nota final en el curso.

No	Pregunta	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Desacuerdo	Completamente desacuerdo
1	Prefiero utilizar una combinación de español, inglés y lenguajes de señas para comunicarme dentro de la sala de clases.				
2	Prefiero utilizar solo español para comunicarme dentro de la sala de clases.				
3	Prefiero utilizar solo inglés para comunicarme dentro de la sala de clases.				
4	El lenguaje de señas me ayuda a entender y recordar las palabras de vocabulario discutidas en clase.				
5	El aprender lenguaje de señas es un buen uso de mi tiempo en clase.				
6	Entiendo que significa cada seña y como realizar la seña.				
7	El lenguaje de señas me ayuda a comunicarme con mi instructora.				
8	Me gustaría continuar aprendiendo lenguaje de señas.				
9	Utilizar lenguaje de señas me ayuda a aprender el material de la clase.				
10	Recomiendo la integración de lenguaje de señas en las clases de inglés a otros instructores y estudiantes.				

11	Integrar lenguaje de señas me motiva a participar en clase.				
12	Lenguaje de señas me ayuda a comunicar mis ideas en clase.				
13	Utilizar lenguaje de señas me ayuda a entender el material de la clase.				
14	Cuando se utiliza lenguaje de señas, estoy más interesado(a) en el material de la clase.				
15	Me siento motivado(a) en clase.				
16	Utilizar lenguaje de señas me está ayudando a aprender.				
17	Utilizar el lenguaje de señas como un visual, me ayuda a memorizar palabras de vocabulario.				
18	Utilizar lenguaje de señas en clase me va a ayudar obtener mejores notas.				
19	Participo más en clase cuando utilizo lenguaje de señas.				
20	Al utilizar lenguaje de señas, puedo comunicar mis dudas y preguntas libremente.				
21	Siento estrés si soy forzado(a) a comunicarme en inglés.				
22	No comunico mis dudas al(a) instructor(a) si soy obligado(a) a hacerlo en inglés.				
23	No le comunico al(a) instructor(a) mis dudas o preguntas en inglés porque pienso que juzgan mis habilidades al hablar el idioma.				

24	Integrar lenguaje de señas reduce el estrés que normalmente siento en clase.				
25	Me da temor el hablar inglés.				

## Appendix D

### **Translanguaging: Using American Sign Language in the Basic English Classroom**

#### Student Interview Protocol 1

[Interview will be given in Spanish or English, as the student desires.]

1. Have you ever avoided asking a doubt or question about something you did not understand in class because you had to speak in English?
2. Do you feel stressed if you have to communicate in English? Why?
3. Do you prefer to communicate in English, Spanish or Sign Language during class? Why?
4. What did you think when the professor said she would be using sign language during English class?
5. What do you think about using different languages to develop understanding of a lesson?
6. How would you describe the classroom environment while incorporating the three languages?
7. Did you participate in class using sign language? Why or why not?
8. Do you ask questions in class in English? Why or why not?
9. Do you ask questions in class in Spanish? Why or why not?
10. Would you recommend the use of sign language in English class to other teachers and students?
11. Do you know of the term called “translanguaging?”

## Appendix D

### **Translanguaging: Using American Sign Language in the Basic English Classroom**

#### Student Interview Protocol 2

[Interview will be given in Spanish or English, as the student desires.]

1. Why do you feel *confianza*?
2. Do you feel *confianza* because of Spanish, English & Sign Language?
3. Would you describe the classroom environment of other classes with the term *confianza*? Why?
4. Even though we do not use Sign Language now, do you still think *confianza* is present in class? Why?
5. Which language did you prefer for communicating in class?
6. You talk about the term “igual”/same to describe past English classes, are you referring to the content, or your learning?

## Appendix E

### Rubric for Assessing Students Participation and Level of Engagement with American Sign Language\*

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Tesis: **Translanguaging: Using Sign Language in the Basic English Classroom**

Criteria	Comments
Number of students signing.	
Number of signs used.	
Frequency of participation in Sign Language.	
Class engagement.	
Student's body language.	
Number of students participating in discussion.	
Comments about sign language.	
Number of students who are not signing.	
Student's language use (Spanish, English, Sign Language).	
	Additional comments:

## Appendix F

### Links to Videos Watched in the Basic English 3101 Course

#### **Lesson 1: Journal Entry**

The video, *Watch: What It's Like to Read Lips* was published in National Geographic's YouTube channel and is based on the essay "Seeing at the Speed of Sound" by Rachel Kolb.

Link: <https://youtu.be/n1jLkYyODsc>

#### **Lesson 2: Phrasal Verbs**

The video, *Things Not to Say to a Deaf Person* was published in BBC Three's YouTube channel and it featured people with diverse degrees of deafness answering commonly asked questions regarding Deaf culture.

Link: [https://youtu.be/SarMSwv\\_aHI](https://youtu.be/SarMSwv_aHI)

#### **Lesson 4: Present Progressive**

The video, *Mandy Harvey: Deaf Singer Earns Simon's Golden Buzzer with Original Song - America's Got Talent 2017* was published by America's Got Talent YouTube channel and it features Mandy Harvey's audition for America's Got Talent. The talented artist sings her original song "Try."

Link: <https://youtu.be/ZKSWXzAnVe0>