The specific practices and activities in my composition classroom vary from class to class. At UTEP some classes are made up of students that are mostly bilingual, but prefer to concentrate on writing and practicing writing in English. Other class consists of groups of students that fret over grammar, and vocabulary because they feel inconsistencies in those areas impact the effectiveness of them communicating their ideas in a paper written in English.

Students I’ve taught can typically switch between speaking in English and Spanish easily. They will often use a mix of both in conversation. However, they are usually accustomed to being limited to only writing in English. Because of this common occurrence they usually have only been allowed to write in English, or there is the expectation that they must write in English throughout their writing process. To promote linguistic diversity in my classroom I attempt to create an environment that places value upon the students’ diverse linguistic practices.

One way of doing this is to regularly encourage students to work in Spanish if possible during their writing process. Of course, this is a choice the student makes, but I make it clear that they have options. Due to the proximity to Ciaudad Juarez students often take an interest in political, and socioeconomic issues that are common in Juarez, and the border region. For students researching and writing about topics that are relevant to the border area they are encouraged to use sources written in Spanish. This is beneficial when students are analyzing sources, but is also helpful when students are researching becausse they are likely to encounter a different point of view. The use of sources written in Spanish has been specifically helpful to students that struggle with beginning to research a topic, and/or writing their thoughts and ideas in English. In my experience, my students have benefited from entering discourse on their topic in a language they feel more comfortable. This provides the agency to synthesize information to their topic, and attempt to use it to strengthen their research. If the assignment calls for my student to use credible sources to help them establish ethos, and strengthen their analysis, or research, then perhaps what matters most is that they are able to connect the information and ideas to the topic, and not that the sources are written in English. If they can successfully synthesize and enter discourse, then they are more likely to write and communicate their thoughts effectively.

This is a brief example of what can be done, but it is a habit I see as beneficial to my students. Moreover, it can help students become more comfortable in their writing, while simultaneously placing value on the diverse linguistic skills they possess.

A second example?

Here is my arrow of thought:

Promote multiple/diverse/or something linguistic practices in a composition classroom. 🡪 not mandatory 🡪 options give students different starting points (if they have trouble with entering discourse on their topic) 🡪 multiple perspectives (variety of sources) 🡪 It’s about playing to the comfort level of the student while positively awarding their diverse/multiple/IOENO linguistic practices 🡪 giving them a chance to use them (if they choose) 🡪 ??? (Trying to figure out how to work in my does it matter the language of the source so long as they can relay/synthesize/connect information to their topic