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Edited by Wayne E. Wright, Sovicheth  
Boun, and Ofelia García

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# The Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education

Edited by

*Wayne E. Wright, Sovicheth Boun,  
and Ofelia García*

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*Dedications*

*To my dear wife Phal Mao, and our beloved children Jeffrey Sovan,  
Michael Sopat, and Catherine Sophaline Wright  
(Wayne E. Wright)*

*To my mother Sivantha By and my father Saing Hak Chea  
(Sovicheth Boun)*

*Para Ricardo, Eric, Raquel y Emma, y por un futuro de nietos bilingües  
(Ofelia García)*

Valdés, G. (1997). Dual language immersion programs: A cautionary note concerning the education of language-minority students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67, 391–429.

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## 13 Translanguaging, Bilingualism, and Bilingual Education

OFELIA GARCÍA AND LI WEI

Bilingual education distinguishes itself from other forms of language education in that content and language learning are integrated; that is, two languages are used as a medium of instruction. In 1974 Wallace Lambert proposed what became the two classic models of viewing bilingualism in schools during the twentieth century—*subtractive bilingualism* and *additive bilingualism*. Subtractive bilingualism is what happens when schools take away the home language of the child who speaks a minoritized language and substitute it with a majority language. Additive bilingualism, on the other hand, builds on the child's home language as the additional language is learned. However, these models of bilingualism have proven to be insufficient in the twenty-first century, with interactions increasingly occurring in contact spaces such as schools between speakers of different origins, experiences, characteristics, and histories. Bilingual education cannot be simply subtractive or additive, for there are no homogenous groups using the same language practices.

García (2009a) has proposed another two types of bilingualism for schools—recursive bilingualism and dynamic bilingualism. *Recursive bilingualism* refers to the complex and dynamic nature of the bilingualism of ethnolinguistic groups who have undergone substantial language shift as they attempt language revitalization. For these groups, *immersion revitalization bilingual education* programs are organized to move their very different language practices (some speakers having experienced more loss than others) into a bilingual future. *Developmental bilingual education* programs also embody this recursive bilingualism because the ethnolinguistic group is not monolingual to start with, but rather has diverse language practices and multiple identities. These programs are usually found in language-minoritized communities that have undergone some degree of language loss, but have not suffered the language shift of those who need immersion revitalization bilingual education programs.

*Dynamic bilingualism* refers to the multiple language interactions and other linguistic interrelationships that take place on different scales and spaces among

multilingual speakers. Today most bilingual education programs include children who have various language practices and who are from many dominant and non-dominant groups. Bilingual education types known as *dual-language, two-way bilingual education, two-way immersion, poly-directional bilingual education, bilingual immersion*, deliberately include students with diverse language practices. Beyond these programs, some countries aspire to have their entire population fluent in at least three languages. In these places *multiple multilingual education* uses three or more languages as media of instruction and in literacy instruction. As in other programs, the students are not assumed to be homogeneous.

In this chapter, we discuss how a *translanguaging* lens has the potential to transform structures and practices of bilingual education.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis on the “trans” aspects of language and education enables us to transgress the categorical distinctions of the past. In particular, a “trans” approach to bilingual education liberates our traditional understandings and points to three innovative aspects in considering language on the one hand, and education on the other:

1. Referring to a *trans-system and trans-space*; that is, to fluid practices that go *between and beyond* language and educational systems, structures, and practices to engage diverse students’ multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities.
2. Referring to its *transformative nature*; that is, as new configurations of language and education are generated, old understandings and structures are released, thus transforming not only subjectivities and identities, but also cognitive and social structures. In so doing, orders of discourses shift and the voices of others come to the forefront.
3. Referring to the *transdisciplinary* consequences of the languaging and education analysis, providing a tool for understanding not only language on the one hand, and education on the other, but also human sociality, human cognition and learning, social relations, and social structures.

## Translanguaging in education

The term translanguaging was coined in Welsh by Gen. Williams to refer to a practice of deliberately changing the language of input and the language of output. Williams (2002) further clarifies that translanguaging in education refers to using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and in order to augment the *pupil’s activity, in both languages* (p. 40, as cited in Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012b, our emphasis). “Translanguaging,” as used by Williams, refers to a pedagogical theory that involves students’ learning two languages through a process of deep cognitive bilingual engagement. Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012a, 2012b), following Williams, point out that the cognitive processing involved in translanguaging is more relevant for *retaining and developing bilingualism*, rather than just for emergent bilinguals at the initial stages of the bilingual continuum. As Colin Baker (2011) explains: “To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be

processed and ‘digested’” (p. 289). Translanguaging not only promotes a deeper understanding of content, but also develops the weaker language in relationship with the one that is more dominant. In addition, translanguaging promotes the integration of those who are emergent bilinguals with those who have fuller use of bilingualism in a classroom (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012b). In parts of the world where bilingualism is valued, translanguaging for the purposes of sustaining bilingual practices is moving to the educational mainstream.

García’s use of the Welsh-inspired term translanguaging (2009a) goes beyond the use of two separate autonomous languages in education:

“Translanguaging, or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices, is an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on *the practices of bilinguals* that are readily observable. These worldwide translanguaging practices are seen here not as marked or unusual, but rather taken for what they are, namely, the normal mode of communication that, with some exceptions in some monolingual enclaves, characterizes communities throughout the world. (p. 44, our emphasis)

She continues, “translanguaging is *multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*” (2009a, p. 45, emphasis in original). Translanguaging, García says (2011a), goes beyond code-switching and translation in education because it “refers to the *process* by which bilingual students perform bilingually in the myriad multimodal ways of classrooms—reading, writing, taking notes, discussing, signing etc.” (p. 147, emphasis added). Translanguaging is not only a way to “scaffold instruction, to make sense of learning and language; rather, translanguaging is part of the metadiscursive regime that students in the twenty-first century must perform” (García, 2011a, p. 147). Describing the work of the International Network of Public High Schools in the United States, García and Sylvan (2011) refer to the fact that students use “diverse language practices for purposes of learning, and teachers use inclusive language practices for purposes of teaching” (p. 397). In the context of U.S. bilingual classrooms for immigrant students who are developing English, García and Kleifgen (2010) describe how educators encourage emergent bilinguals to translanguage in order to think, reflect, and extend their inner speech. García (2009b) describes the role of translanguaging in the process of developing students’ bilingualism in the following way:

“Emergent bilinguals do not acquire a separate additional language, but develop and integrate new language practices into a complex dynamic bilingual repertoire in which translanguaging is both the supportive context and the communicative web itself. (n.p.)

In education, García and Kanq (2014) say, translanguaging is “a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include ALL the language practices of ALL students in a class in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality.”

Hornberger and Link (2012) explicitly connect translanguaging to Hornberger's continua of biliteracy, enabling the potential "to explicitly valorize all points along the continua of biliterate context, media, content, and development" (p. 268). Drawing on ethnographic research in complementary schools in the United Kingdom, Creese and Blackledge (2010; also Blackledge & Creese, 2010) describe how the students' flexible bilingualism, their translanguaging, is used by teachers to convey ideas and to promote "cross-linguistic transfer." That is, as a flexible bilingual pedagogy (Blackledge & Creese, 2010), translanguaging offers learners the possibility of accessing academic content with the semiotic resources they bring, while acquiring new ones.

The notion of translanguaging highlights two concepts that are fundamental to education, but hitherto under-explored dimensions of multilingualism, namely creativity and criticality. Li Wei (2011a, p. 1223) defines *creativity* as "the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language." Creativity is about pushing and breaking the boundaries between the old and the new, the conventional and the original, and the acceptable and the challenging. *Criticality* refers to the ability to use available evidence appropriately, systematically, and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social, and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations. These two concepts are intrinsically linked: one cannot push or break boundaries without being critical, and the best expression of one's criticality is one's creativity. Translanguaging, as a socioeducational process, enables students to construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values, as they respond to their historical and present conditions critically and creatively. It enables students to contest the "one language only" or "one language at a time" ideologies of monolingual and traditional bilingual classrooms.

Translanguaging in education also pays attention to the ways in which students combine different modes and media across social contexts and negotiate social identities. Kenner (2004) reports on how bilingual/biliterate young children in the UK learn different writing systems (Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish) at home, in complementary schools, and in the mainstream primary school. Her work illustrates how a focus on different modes, including the children's sets of linguistic resources, can foreground the different culture-specific ways multilingual children mesh the visual and actional modes (i.e., make use of shape, size and location of symbols on the page, directionality, type of stroke) in the process of learning how to write in two languages. Moreover, such a focus shows the different ways multilingual children combine and juxtapose scripts as well as explore connections and differences between their available writing systems in their text making. By translanguaging, that is, drawing on more than one set of linguistic and other modal resources to construct bilingual texts in settings where multilingual communication was encouraged, Kenner (2004, p. 118) argued, children could "express their sense of living in multiple social and cultural worlds."

Translanguaging in schools not only creates the possibility that bilingual students could use their full linguistic and semiotic repertoire to make meaning, but

also that teachers would "take it up" as a legitimate pedagogical practice. Rather than just being a scaffolding practice to access content or language, translanguaging is transformative for the child, for the teacher, and for education itself, and particularly for bilingual education.

Although translanguaging is simultaneously transformative, in the next section we consider how translanguaging transforms bilingual education structures and practices, before we review its effects on learners, enabling them to engage with cognitively difficult material and to construct multiple and valid subjectivities. We then look at how translanguaging is transformative for the teacher, able to use translanguaging strategically to cognitively engage every child in the class, to make herself understood, and to truly assess what students know. We start, however, by exploring the meaning of adopting a translanguaging space when working within bilingual education structures.

### Translanguaging and bilingual education structures

As national education systems have adopted more responsibility for educating all children, and not just those of dominant majorities, translanguaging has been increasingly used to transgress monolingual education structures. And as bilingual education has increasingly incorporated children with different languaging practices, translanguaging has disrupted school structures. Translanguaging in classrooms is precisely a way of working in the gap between, on the one hand, the global designs of nation-states and their monoglossic education systems, and on the other, the local histories of peoples who language differently.

For monolingual education, adopting a translanguaging lens means that there can be no way of educating children inclusively without recognizing their diverse language and meaning-making practices as a resource to learn and to show what they know, as well as to extend these. This is so for language minorities, and most especially for language majorities who need a translanguaging space that would enable them to build dynamic plurilingual practices for the twenty-first century. Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López and Alvarez (2001) have convincingly demonstrated the diversity of, and interplay between, linguistic codes and literacy practices in the familiar and ever present multilingual classrooms of the twenty-first century.

For bilingual education, adopting a translanguaging lens means that we would build flexibility within strict language education policies to enable children to make meaning by engaging their entire linguistic repertoire and expanding it. Many bilingual education types, and most especially immersion and two-way dual language bilingual programs, pride themselves in controlling carefully the language use within the different spaces they construct. The argument is made that children need to be given opportunities to practice languages as if they belonged to different nation-states of different speech communities. In so doing the two languages remain in what Cummins (2008) calls "bilingual solitudes." But in the twenty-first century language has been deterritorialized as diasporic communities interact with other communities of practice in what Mary Louise Pratt