

Ricardo Otheguy\*, Ofelia García and Wallis Reid

# Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics

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**Abstract:** The concept of *translanguaging* is clarified, establishing it as a particular conception of the mental grammars and linguistic practices of bilinguals. Translanguaging is different from *code switching*. Under translanguaging, the mental grammars of bilinguals are structured but unitary collections of features, and the practices of bilinguals are acts of feature selection, not of grammar switch. A proper understanding of translanguaging requires a return to the well known but often forgotten idea that named languages are social, not linguistic, objects. Whereas the idiolect of a particular individual is a linguistic object defined in terms of lexical and structural features, the named language of a nation or social group is not; its boundaries and membership *cannot* be established on the basis of lexical and structural features. The two named languages of the bilingual exist only in the outsider's view. From the insider's perspective of the speaker, there is only his or her full idiolect or repertoire, which belongs only to the speaker, not to any named language. Translanguaging is *the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages*. In schools, the translanguaging of bilinguals tends to be severely restricted. In addition, schools confuse the assessment of general linguistic proficiency, which is best manifested in bilinguals while translanguaging, with the testing of proficiency in a named language, which insists on inhibiting translanguaging. The concept of translanguaging is of special relevance to schools interested in the linguistic and intellectual growth of bilingual students as well as to minoritized communities involved in language maintenance and revitalization efforts.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, code switching, named languages, idiolects, language education and assessment

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\*Corresponding author: Ricardo Otheguy, Graduate Center, City University of New York, New York, USA, E-mail: rotheguy@gc.cuny.edu

Ofelia García, Graduate Center, City University of New York, New York, USA

Wallis Reid, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA

# 1 Introduction

Since first coined by researchers in Wales, the term *translanguaging* has been increasingly adopted by scholars to describe the linguistic practices of speakers labeled as bilingual or multilingual, and to describe as well the many ways that those practices are leveraged for a variety of purposes, especially in education (Blackledge and Creese 2010; Canagarajah 2011a, 2011b; Creese and Blackledge 2010; García 2009; García and Wei 2014; García and Otheguy 2015; Hornberger and Link 2012; Lewis et al. 2012a, 2012b; Wei 2011; Lin 2014; Sayer 2013; Williams 1994). The new term aimed to overturn the conceptualization of the two languages of bilinguals (which for us includes multilinguals) as clearly distinct systems normally deployed separately, but occasionally deployed in close, alternating succession under a practice known as code switching. But the attempt to overturn has not been successful. As the term translanguaging gained adherents in sociolinguistics and education, it began to drift toward covering essentially the same conceptual terrain as code switching. The notion of code switching, understood by most informed scholars in a dynamic and creative fashion as the expressive transgression by bilingual speakers of their two separate languages, endows these speakers with agency and often finds in the very act of switching elements of linguistic mastery and virtuosity (Auer 1999, 2005; Gumperz 1976, 1982; Myers-Scotton 2005). But no matter how broadly and positively conceived, the notion of code switching still constitutes a theoretical endorsement of the idea that what the bilingual manipulates, however masterfully, are two separate linguistic systems. It was the attempt to set aside this dual conception that in part prompted the coinage of translanguaging, and that in part motivates us to offer a new clarifying explication of the term here.

More broadly, the new explication is needed because the adoption of translanguaging has not produced, in our view, a sufficiently strong challenge to prevailing understandings of language and linguistic behavior in speakers generally, and especially in bilinguals. Part of the problem is that the challenge that we envision is not embodied in the concept of translanguaging alone; it requires, additionally, that we, as others have before us, directly problematize the notion of ‘a language’. For, as we have come to realize, it is the uncritical acceptance of this foundational term that has kept us from fully grasping the implications of translanguaging for our understanding of bilinguals and of the schools charged with their education and assessment.

A second reason for the clarification of translanguaging proposed in this paper is the need to dispel the belief, taking root in some quarters, that translanguaging works against the efforts of minoritized communities to protect and revitalize their

languages and linguistic practices. On the contrary, translanguaging, as we understand it, helps to disrupt the socially constructed language hierarchies that are responsible for the suppression of the languages of many minoritized peoples. As we will show here, translanguaging does this by insisting on the well-known, but almost always forgotten, postulate that a named language is a social construct, not a mental or psychological one, and on the radical implications of this position for one's theoretical conceptualization of bilingual individuals and societies.

We will suggest that a full understanding of what is meant by translanguaging and an accurate take on what is meant by 'a language' allows us to graduate from the goal of 'language maintenance', with its constant risk of turning minoritized languages into museum pieces, to that of sustainable practices by bilingual speakers that thrive in spatial and functional interrelation with the sustaining linguistic practices of other speakers (Fishman 1964; García 2011). Translanguaging, then, as we shall see, provides a smoother conceptual path than previous approaches to the goal of protecting minoritized communities, their languages, and their learners and schools.

As a presentational device, and because we have learned how difficult it is to get our point across, we make use of a simile based on a culinary tale. We first use the culinary tale to expose the fable of the named national cuisine that so many hold dear, and proceed thereafter to debunk the myth of the lexically and structurally defined named national language that so many hold dearer still. We then use these tall tales of kitchen and tongue as the basis for restating the definition of a named language as a socially constructed rather than a linguistic object (Heller 2007; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Makoni and Pennycook, 2010). The definition of a named language as a social construct, as we shall see, logically precedes our new explication of translanguaging. With the culinary fable and the restated definition of a named language in place, we will be able to define translanguaging as *the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages*.

This more fully articulated definition of translanguaging will provide us, then, with the framework that is necessary for a radical critique of the many language assessment and teaching practices that work to the detriment of bilingual children worldwide. The article ends by proposing translanguaging practices for both assessment and teaching that would nurture all bilingual students. These translanguaging educational practices, as we see then, will further the growth of students in both content education and linguistic proficiency, including proficiency in the many situations where the watchful adherence that we've just mentioned ought to be relaxed, and in the relatively rare, but still unarguably important situations where it is to be engaged.

The new explication of the concepts of ‘translanguaging’ and ‘a language’ offered in this paper contributes most directly to the debate over the type of cognitive representation of linguistic features that it makes sense to theorize for bilinguals, and over the type of instruction that follows from assuming one or another type of representation. But the discussion here, as we shall see presently, encompasses not only language in bilinguals and in the educational institutions that serve them, but also language in general, in all speakers, including monolinguals. It is in that sense that the proposal advanced here about language and translanguaging is to be seen, for the limited range of problems in its purview, as not only a theory of bilingual education and bilingualism, but more generally also as a theory of language.

## 2 A culinary fable

A Japanese professor who had hosted Ofelia and Ricardo in Osaka came to visit them in New York last year. While in Osaka she had served them wonderful meals each evening. When she came to New York, Ofelia and Ricardo, who were born in Cuba, served her a meal of *ropa vieja* (shredded beef), black beans, and rice, ending with *flan* (custard) as dessert. The second evening they served a bowl of New England clam chowder, then grits, fried chicken, and green peas, ending with a dessert of pumpkin pie. The Japanese guest watched Ofelia in the kitchen intently. Upon her return to Japan, she would have been able to describe the meals to her friends, how they looked and tasted, and how they were prepared. But she would not have been able to tell them what named national cuisines the two meals represented. This is because named national cuisines such as ‘Cuban’ and ‘American’ (as many New Yorkers, and perhaps many readers, may have described the two meals) are not defined by observable similarities among dishes; for instance, *ropa vieja* and black beans are not Cuban because they share ingredients or taste alike. Instead, named national cuisines are culturally and politically defined categories; each cuisine consists of a large collection of ways to prepare dishes that are grouped together on the basis of the regional or national affiliation of the people who initially developed them.

This fact can be seen more clearly in what Ofelia and Ricardo did on the third evening. They told their Japanese guest that on the first evening she had been served a Cuban meal and on the second evening an American meal. They then served her a meal of blackened catfish, gumbo and french fries, followed by a devil’s food cake. When they were finished eating, there was a pop quiz. They asked her what national cuisine this third meal represented. Was it Cuban like the first one, or American like the second one? Being told that the first meal

was Cuban and the second was American did not help her to know that the third one was also American. The reason is that the first American meal – New England clam chowder, grits, fried chicken, peas and pumpkin pie – would not allow her to extrapolate to general features of American cuisine that would help her decide that the third meal – blackened catfish, gumbo, french fries, devil's food cake – was *also* an instance of American cuisine. What makes those two meals American is that both consist of dishes developed and served in the United States, not that they have features in common. Similarly, the only thing that makes both bouillabaisse and frogs' legs sautéed in butter and garlic count as French cuisine is that both dishes are prepared and eaten mostly in France.

As a cook, Ofelia almost never plans meals with an eye to making them purely Cuban or purely American. For instance, on the fourth evening Ofelia and Ricardo served a meal of turkey with gravy, *congrí* with yucca, and mashed potato. To foody New Yorkers in the know, it is clear that this meal does not count as either purely Cuban or purely American; yet it did not strike the Japanese guest as strange or poorly planned. She did not recognize this fourth meal as being fundamentally different from the first three.

The first lesson here, then, is that the failure of the Japanese visitor to identify the provenience of the meals was not because there was anything wrong with her sense of taste; she simply lacked the cultural knowledge of what counted as Cuban dishes and what counted as American dishes. We note a second lesson. The ability to construct a meal of dishes that all represent a single named national cuisine is rarely a consideration in deciding whether Ofelia or anybody else is a good cook. This is because a good cook is someone who can prepare attractive, exciting, delicious, intriguing meals in which each dish complements and balances the others. After all, one could be very good at adhering to cuisine boundaries and yet still be a lousy cook.

To recap: we have seen that particular dishes and named national cuisines are quite different things.

- National cuisines are large collections of recipes and ingredients for the preparation of particular dishes. The basis for grouping the recipes together as Cuban or American (or French, Mexican, Russian or anything else) is *the cultural or national affiliation of the original cooks*, not similarities among the recipes.
- Whether or not a meal falls into any one single category of national cuisine has little to do with how good the cook is or how enjoyable the meal.

So what does this culinary fable have to do with understanding the serious limitations of the notion of 'a language' that constitutes the necessary preamble to our new explication of translanguaging? The next section makes the answer to this question evident.

### 3 Deconstructing named languages

The point is simple: *a named national language is the same kind of thing as a named national cuisine*. Like a named national cuisine, a named language is defined by the social, political or ethnic affiliation of its speakers. Although the idea of the social construction of named languages is old in the language fields, it is often not understood. The point that needs repeating is that a named language *cannot* be defined linguistically, cannot be defined, that is, in grammatical (lexical or structural) terms. And because a named language cannot be defined linguistically, it is not, strictly speaking, a linguistic object; it is not something that a person speaks.

The culinary analogy serves to press against named languages the charge of lexical and structural essentialism. A particular named language, as we see it, cannot be defined in terms of a set of essential lexical or structural features, any more than a cuisine can be defined by a set of essential ingredients or recipes. This charge of essentialism merits some elaboration, as it challenges the familiar demarcation and enumeration of named languages, and the connection that these have to the comfortable understanding of bilingualism that prevails in many scholarly and educational circles, and that we seek to undermine.

We start by reaffirming the distinction between (a) languages as the names of enumerable things that are socially or socio-politically constructed, maintained, and regulated (names such as ‘Arabic’, ‘Basque’, ‘Bulgarian’, ‘English’, ‘Mandarin’, ‘Navajo’, ‘Spanish’, ‘Swahili’) and (b) languages as entities without names, as sets of lexical and structural features that make up an individual’s repertoire and are deployed to enable communication. Due to its familiarity, the distinction between senses (a) and (b) seems simple at first. Sense (a) of language, the social sense, encompasses the countable and easily enumerated entities that are tightly associated with established peoples or nations, and often additionally with established or aspiring states (‘Arabic is the language of Egypt, Syria, Tunisia’; ‘Spanish is the language of Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay’, ‘Euskara is the language of the Basque nation,’ ‘Hawaiian is the language of indigenous Hawaiians’). Sense (b) of language, the mental or psychological sense, encompasses the billions of individual linguistic competences of speakers the world over, irrespective of whether we call them monolingual or multilingual.

Simple though it is, the distinction is seldom maintained by linguists or educators with the vigilance and persistence that the seriousness of the matter requires. Assenting to the distinction when it is raised, and doing so often with impatience (and even annoyance!), linguists and educators tend nevertheless to immediately set the distinction aside once the real work begins of analyzing

linguistic structures, researching pedagogical approaches, or evaluating assessment policies. But we ignore the two senses of language at great intellectual peril to ourselves, and at enormous practical peril to the populations whose linguistic and educational practices we research and whose interests we aim to protect.

As a way to solidify the idea that named languages are social constructs and not lexical or structural ones, we now remind readers of one of the best known consequences of this fact, namely the inability of grammarians, that is, of students of lexicon and structure (which in our usage includes phonology and morphosyntax), to be of much use in helping to adjudicate ‘one-language-or-two’ disputes. For example, grammarians interested in the Iberian world have always known that they have no lexical or structural basis for deciding whether the speech of people living in, say, Barcelona, and the speech of people living in, say, Valencia, count as instances of the same language or different languages. Nor do linguists have a basis for answering the question about people living in Madrid and Málaga, Madrid and Havana, Madrid and Lisbon, or Madrid and Rio de Janeiro. To be sure, laymen regularly give clear answers to these questions, in some cases with unanimity and in others with disagreement. But the grammarian can neither endorse the laymen’s unanimity nor mediate their disagreement.<sup>1</sup> The reason is that *nothing purely lexical or structural* went into making Catalan Catalan, Spanish Spanish, or Portuguese Portuguese. And this in turn follows from the simple fact that the student of the grammatical properties that underlie the speech of individuals, that is, the student of language in sense (b) above, has no theoretical basis for adjudicating disputes about separability and namability, since these are social and political matters that pertain only to language in sense (a).<sup>2</sup>

The grammarian cannot adjudicate these disputes (even though the layman is often happy to) for the same reason that the Japanese guest couldn’t decide which of the meals counted as Cuban and which as American, even though most laymen in New York can easily tell which is which. The question for the

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1 The point has a long history, having been already clearly enunciated in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, who insisted that neither languages nor dialects have natural boundaries (Saussure 1916 [1986], Chapter III, Sec. 3–4). So once again here, we are not advancing a new idea, but rather insisting that our explication of translanguaging requires us to pay close attention to an old one.

2 The point made here about the Iberian realm applies to situations all over the world, including the United States, where a generation ago there were heated debates as to whether what some took to call ‘Ebonics’ was the ‘the same language’ as ‘English.’ Here too, no more than in the Iberian examples, the student of lexicon and structure has no technical tools to settle the debate.

Japanese guest was not a culinary one, was not about the meals themselves: about what ingredients they consisted of, how they were prepared, how they tasted. Rather, it was a question about the classification of meals according to their place of origin. This was an item of cultural knowledge that the Japanese guest lacked. Similarly, linguists cannot tell us whether or not to count the speech of Barcelona and Valencia (or Madrid and Havana, or Madrid and Lisbon) as versions of the same language because these are not really linguistic questions. Rather, they are questions about the political and cultural identities of speakers, an item of cultural knowledge that is widely shared: laymen usually recognize Madrid and Havana as speaking the same language because of historical and cultural factors connecting Spain and Cuba; they usually recognize Madrid and Lisbon as speaking different languages because historical and cultural ties have become loosened for several centuries now; and they argue about Barcelona and Valencia because the historical and cultural factors are too complicated to allow for easy settlement. A linguist can join the laymen in stating these bits of cultural knowledge, and may, as a citizen, take part in these debates, but cannot, *qua linguist*, that is, *qua student of lexicon and structure*, weigh in with a technical position on the matter.<sup>3</sup>

## 4 Idiolects

Given that grammarians *cannot* legitimately address matters relating to language in the social sense of the term, it is useful for our explication to point out what it is that grammarians *can* do. Grammarians can analyze speech and text and describe linguistic features: such things as phonemes, morphemes, words, nouns, verbs, grammatical constructions or rules, tense systems, pronoun systems, case distinctions, gender distinctions, syntactic structures, or what have you. (And depending on their theoretical orientation, they can study whether these things are universal, whether they're innate, and so forth; moreover, and depending on their interests, they can describe them synchronically or diachronically.) And they can study, at least under some theories, the ways people deploy these linguistic resources in speech and writing, that is, they can study the language user's strategies of communication.

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<sup>3</sup> For an example in which some of us have played the role of citizen advisors on debates relating to language names and boundaries, see Otheguy (2009), Otheguy and Stern (2011, 2013), and Urciuoli (2013).

When properly understood, all these things belong to what linguists call *idiolects*. An idiolect is for us a person's own unique, personal language, the person's *mental grammar* that emerges in interaction with other speakers and enables the person's use of language. An idiolect is language in sense (b) above, language viewed from the internal perspective of the individual, language seen separately from the external perspective of the society that categorizes and classifies named national languages. Idiolects are structured lists of lexical and grammatical features, that is, they are lists subdivided in components (e.g. lexicon, phonology, morphosyntax) and subcomponents (words belonging to one noun class or another, systems of tenses, systems of case endings or pronouns, etc., and, in some theories, movement, feature checking, etc.). Given the importance to the field of the writings of Noam Chomsky, the idiolect may be regarded by some as parallel to the I-language (Chomsky 1986). But the parallel is quite limited. For us the idiolect is a mental grammar that is acquired primarily through, and deployed mostly in, social and personal interaction; the idiolect is thus rather different from Chomsky's I-language, which unfolds primarily as an instinct and is mostly deployed to generate introspective intuitions of grammaticality.

An idiolect, then, is the system that underlies what a person actually speaks, and it consists of ordered and categorized lexical and grammatical features. Those are the things that linguists actually analyze and study, *not a named language* even when, confusedly, they use named languages to report on their research. For example, one of the authors of this paper wrote his dissertation on two past tenses, the *passé simple* and the *imparfait*; Wallis later wrote a whole book on the noun plural -s and the third person -s on verbs (e.g., the -s on *walks* in *he walks*). Another one of the authors wrote a dissertation on the articles *el*, *la* and *lo*; Ricardo later wrote a book on the use of the personal pronouns *yo*, *tú*, *él/ella*, etc. Now, linguists are quite aware that what we have just said is not how works such as Wallis's and Ricardo's are normally described; one usually says (as they themselves said) that their dissertations were respectively on the *French* tenses and the *Spanish* articles, and that the books were respectively on *English* nouns and verbs and on *Spanish* pronouns. But that is precisely our point, that what these authors were doing, as linguists, and despite the titles of their own works, *did not really involve, properly speaking, the notions of French, English, and Spanish*. These categories are not linguistic but socio-cultural, and as such are extraneous to the enterprise of analyzing the idiolectal features that occupied their analytical efforts.<sup>4</sup>

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4 For some of Ricardo's and Wallis's works on these topics, see Otheguy (2015), Reid (1991, 2011), Otheguy and Zentella (2012), Otheguy et al. (2007), and Shin and Otheguy (2013).

As we understand them, idiolects are personal and unique; no two are identical, even the idiolects of siblings. Speakers are mostly quite unaware of this fact, for two reasons. First, the differences between idiolects rarely impede communication and so escape notice; secondly, when they are noticed they are dismissed as of no consequence because of the belief that ‘we speak the same language’. Nevertheless, the ways idiolects differ are important linguistically because they involve underlying structural differences in people’s mental grammars. Here are some examples of what we mean.

- One speaker may have more phonemes than another. Speakers who pronounce the words *which* and *witch* differently do so because they have a voiceless phoneme /w̥/ in addition to a voiced phoneme /w/, whereas speakers who pronounce *which* and *witch* exactly the same lack the voiceless one.<sup>5</sup>
- A speaker who says *I could’ve gone* has different verb morphology from that of a speaker who says *I could’ve went*.
- A speaker who says *I might could go* has a more finely calibrated modal system than a speaker who only says *I might go* and *I could go*.
- A speaker who says both *he be talking to me* and *he is talking to me* has a more semantically complex aspectual system than does a speaker who only says *he is talking*.
- A speaker who distinguishes *imply* from *infer*, *fewer* from *less*, or *blimp* from *dirigible*, has a lexicon differently structured semantically than that of a speaker for whom the pairs are synonyms.

All of these differences in the speech of people who are usually presumed to be speaking the same named language, English, are due to lexical or structural differences in their idiolects.

While no two idiolects are exactly the same lexically or structurally, there are, to be sure, large areas of overlap among the idiolects of people who communicate with each other. That is, we all share thousands of linguistic features with people with whom we interact a lot, such as family and friends, and with people who live in the same place as we do, or who live in countries that share a history with ours, or who more generally share some sort of linguistically mediated cultural or historical identity with us. Correspondingly, we do not share many lexical or structural features with people with whom we

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<sup>5</sup> Note this is not a purely local difference restricted to a single word, comparable to the fact that some speakers use the vowel of *seat* for the first vowel of the word *economics* while others use the vowel of *set*. Speakers who have both /w̥/ and /w/ also distinguish *where* from *wear*, *whale* from *wail*, *why* from *Y*, *wheel* from *weal*, *whether* from *weather*, in addition to *which* from *witch*.

interact less, or whose history is separate from ours. But this overlap gives us no warrant to conclude that named languages constitute lexically or structurally based categories. The reason is that the overlap is never coterminous with the boundaries that these sociocultural categories aim to demarcate.

For instance, most of the words Ofelia and Ricardo know and use are also known and used by their son and daughters: *friend, mother, tú, mueble, tree, come, sala, subway, viejo, casa, take, hablar, happy, niño, high school, tía, amigo, feliz, building, today, hoy, hola, hermano, uncle, primo, tenedor, tray*. In their conversations at home, these words are common, and they often appear in the same utterance. When they do, some people might say that this is a case of ‘mixing’ English and Spanish words, or of code switching. True enough: that is how it looks from the outsider’s perspective. But seen from the point of view of the speaker, that is, from the insider’s perspective, all these words together belong to Ofelia and Ricardo and their children, that is, to their idiolects, not to the English or Spanish languages as nationally or culturally defined. From the insider’s view, the question of which words belong to English and which ones belong to Spanish (and which ones to both) cannot be asked coherently. It is an apples-and-oranges question. All words that Ofelia uses are part of her mental grammar; they all belong, by definition, to the same idiolect. And an idiolect is a linguistic object whose constitutive elements are lexical and structural units, whereas a language is a cultural object defined by place, memory, identity, history, and, of course, a socially given (though sometimes contested) name. A question formulated about the former category cannot be answered in reference to the latter. Idiolects are what exist *before* one introduces distinctions between national languages that forcefully shoehorn people’s linguistically specified idiolects into culturally specified language categories.

Our insistence here that Ofelia and Ricardo are not mixing their languages when they use the words listed above in the same utterance is really the same point we made earlier: that there is no basis for including the speech of Cubans and Mexicans as instances of Spanish but excluding the speech of Brazilians. Languages are not true linguistic entities because their boundaries are established on non-linguistic grounds. Rather, they are groupings of idiolects of people with shared social, political or ethnic identities that, once so grouped, are described using linguistic terms that tend to give the mistaken impression that the grouping was based on linguistic grounds in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Note that we are not denying that there is an important linguistic difference between, say, the word *friend* and the word *amigo*: namely their history, their etymology. The word *friend* is a continuation of *frēond*, while *amigo* is a continuation of *amicum*. The word *frēond* is said to belong to the culturally defined category of Old English (culturally and anachronistically; the

## 5 Idiolects, bilingualism, and translanguaging

When Ricardo and Ofelia speak with their children, they use all the words they know because their children know and use them as well. However when they go to Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico or Spain to visit relatives, they monitor their speech to be sure they only, or mostly, use the words of their idiolect that their family tend to know and use. And when Wallis comes for dinner or to work on a paper, they avoid all the words they use in these places because he doesn't know any of them.

Notice we didn't describe Ofelia and Ricardo as speaking exclusively in Spanish in Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico or Spain, or as speaking exclusively in English to Wallis, or as mixing Spanish and English at home. We didn't say this because we are describing their language practices from their own internal perspective in terms of their idiolects. To be sure, their linguistic skills include making decisions as to which words can be usefully deployed in which settings: use this word in Cuba, but not in Spain; use this word in Spain, but not in Cuba; use this one when talking to Wallis, but not that one. (For one of thousands of examples: use *jugo* in Cuba but not in Spain; use *zumo* in Spain but not in Cuba; do not use *juice* in either Cuba or Spain; do not use either *jugo* or *zumo* with Wallis).

Now, and this is an important but often overlooked point, the relevance of social and locational constraints on idiolectal feature deployment is also a characteristic of the idiolects of the people we call monolingual. Use this word at home, but not at work, use that word when talking to children, but this one when talking to adults, and so on and so forth. (For one of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of examples: say *bugging me* at home but *bothering me* at work, say a *booboo* to a child but a *cut* to an adult). So in this respect the idiolects of monolinguals and bilinguals are not qualitatively different, only quantitatively different. The difference is that *the idiolects of bilinguals contain more linguistic features and a more complex socio-cultural marking of which features to use when and where*. Said another way, monolinguals and bilinguals are not that different linguistically -- they both have a mental grammar that guides sociolinguistic

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users of the word didn't call their language Old English). The word *amicum* is said to belong to the culturally defined category of Latin. But if one groups words according to etymological origins traceable to the culturally defined box where they originated, one still doesn't end up with languages. For example, the words of the single named language Spanish are derived from many different culturally named languages (Latin, Euskara, Arabic, French, English, etc.), just as the words of the single named language English have been taken from many different culturally (and again, often anachronistically) named languages (Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, Norman French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Latin and Greek).

interaction and is susceptible from the start to external input, and whose items are deployed selectively depending on interlocutor and context. Thus the difficulty in establishing the difference between a monolingual and a bilingual is not due simply to the fuzziness of boundaries between named languages. There is also the fact that in both types of speakers geographical and sociocultural considerations constrain the deployment of idiolectal features. The difference between a monolingual and a bilingual person cannot be established on purely linguistic grounds, but is justified only in sociolinguistic terms.

To avoid misunderstanding, a brief parenthetical clarification is in order regarding terminology. Because we recognize the importance of the scholarly, political, and sociolinguistic distinction between monolinguals and bilinguals, we are not simply abandoning the distinction or scuttling the concepts of language and bilingualism, as Pennycook (2010), and Makoni and Pennycook (2007) have urged. For the same reason, we continue to talk in some settings about languages and even about a particular language. We recognize that these notions have had, and continue to have, real and material consequences in the lives of many people, especially in the lives of minoritized people and those who engage with us in advocacy on their behalf and their ways of speaking. But we stress that, in accepting terms like ‘language’, ‘a language,’ ‘monolingual’, and ‘bilingual’, we are using categories that have nothing to do with individuals when seen from their own internal linguistic perspective, categories that have nothing to do, that is, with the billions of the world’s idiolects, which exist in a separate, linguistically unnamed and socially undifferentiated mental realm. When it comes to the concepts of named languages, monolingualism (or monolingual), and bilingualism (or bilingual), we are not denying their existence; rather, we are restricting them to their proper domain of discourse. These terms are appropriate and legitimate in discussions of social identity and sociolinguistic behavior because they are defined socially. But these concepts are not appropriate for discourse dealing with mental grammar. That is, they are not appropriate for discourse concerning lexical and structural matters (concerning linguistic or psychological matters narrowly defined) because they cannot be discovered and defined using either purely lexico-structural or psychological criteria.

When the three authors of this paper say that we ‘speak English’, we are acknowledging the importance of an outsider’s perspective and reflecting a social norm having to do with how others perceive us. We are recognizing that each of our different idiolects partially overlaps lexically and structurally with those of other speakers who all think of themselves as English speakers, and who count us as one of them. The same is true when some of us say that we ‘speak Spanish.’ And the same is true for anyone who says that he or she speaks

any language. For example, saying that Ofelia and Ricardo are English – Spanish bilinguals from the U.S. simply means that her idiolect and his share many features with each other and with the idiolects of three groups of people with different though partially overlapping cultural identities. One group thinks of themselves as English-speaking Americans, Australians, British, etc.; the other thinks of themselves as Spanish-speaking Latin Americans or Spaniards; and the third thinks of themselves as English – Spanish bilingual speaking U.S. Latinos.

It follows from our discussion that from the standpoint of lexicon and structure, the only thing anyone actually speaks is his or her own idiolect, something that no one else speaks. In other words, given that a named language is a collection of the only partially overlapping idiolects of people *who share a common cultural identity* (and who manage to communicate with greater or lesser success); and given that the idiolects that comprise a named language are all ultimately different, it follows that no one really speaks a named language. For, as we have mentioned, the set of shared features of any two speakers that the society dubs as belonging to the same named language is unlikely to ever be the same set; each speaker-dyad, even among the closest of relatives or friends, most likely shares a slightly different set.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, and this is the point that is at the heart of the matter, the common features that are seen to be shared by idiolects emerge only *after* the idiolects have been classified on a cultural basis as belonging to the same named language. Put another way, linguists couldn't discover (and they certainly have not discovered) the features that constitute the 'Spanish language' or the 'English language', or any other language, by starting from scratch. They must first be told whose idiolects count as 'Spanish,' that is, they must first be told that the idiolects of most people living in Cuba and Spain are to count but that those of most people living in Brazil and Portugal are not. Only then can linguists find and describe the lexical and structural features shared by those idiolects of 'Spanish'.

The idiolect, which as we have seen is similar if not the same in kind in bilinguals and monolinguals, is the cornerstone sustaining the concept of trans-languaging. The similarity between monolinguals and bilinguals, it will be recalled, resides in that the idiolect is, in both types of speakers, comprised of large numbers of organized lexical and structural features. The features have no

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<sup>7</sup> For example, speaker A and speaker B could share a common phonemic system and a common tense system but operate on different pronominal systems, while speakers B and C could share a common tense system and a common pronominal system but operate with a different set of phonemes.

inherent membership in any named language. And they are deployed selectively depending on context and interlocutor. The *difference* between monolinguals and bilinguals is that monolinguals are allowed to deploy all or most of their lexical and structural repertoire mostly freely, whereas bilinguals can only do so in the safety of environments that are sheltered from the prescriptive power of named languages. This is simply another way of saying that monolinguals are almost always and everywhere allowed to translanguage, whereas bilinguals are only allowed to translanguage in a limited number of protected settings. We want to clarify and elaborate this point because it will be crucial, when we turn our attention to education, to our critique of current tests of linguistic proficiency.

The clarification and elaboration involves a brief historical excursus that will be useful for both scholars and educators. Let us recall how what we call English got its words. We have already mentioned what philologists anachronistically call Old English, the now named language that covers the idiolects that the Anglo-Saxons brought to the British Isles around 450 AD. Then, as is well known, in 1066 William the Conqueror from Normandy defeated King Harold at Hastings. For two hundred years England was ruled by kings who spoke what society at the time referred to as French. As the language of the kings spread to the Courts and the Church, the upper classes began to incorporate into their idiolects more and more of the words belonging to culturally defined French. Consider the first four lines of *The Canterbury Tales*, written in 1387.

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Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote	When April with his showers sweet [with fruit]
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,	The drought of March has pierced unto the root
And bathed every veyne in swich licour	And bathed each vein with liquor that has power
Of which vertu engendred is the flour,	To generate [therein] and sire the flower;

---

The words in bold below all came from the idiolects of the kings that had come from Normandy and that society referred to as French:

Whan that **Aprill** with his shoures soote  
 The droghte of **March** hath **perced** to the roote,  
 And bathed every **veyne** in swich **licour**  
 Of which **vertu engendred** is the **flour**,

Now what can we say about these four lines? Are they an example of mixing English and French, of code switching? Or are they an example of what

philologists today call Middle English? As we have insisted, this question has no linguistic answer (no answer based on lexicon and structure), for it assumes societal judgments regarding the features that a named language should or should not contain. At the level of the individual English poet, we can say that Chaucer's idiolect contained both words brought to England by the Anglo-Saxons and words brought by the Normans; and he used them all with no apparent consideration of their history, just as Ricardo and Ofelia freely use all the words they know at home. Whether Chaucer is code switching or writing in what is called by some philologists Middle English is a question about how he and his poem are perceived by others; it is not really a question about either Chaucer himself – his idiolect – or his poetry. This distinction between what societies view as language and what individuals do with their lexical and structural features leads us to the further elaboration of the notion of trans-languaging to which we now turn.

## 6 Translanguaging

In his most famous speech, Martin Luther King proclaimed: 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.' The alliteration of *color*, *content* and *character* emphasizes the parallelism of the two *by* phrases, making it sound as if 'skin color' and 'content of their character' stand on a par. King was using skin color as a metaphor for his children's race, a socially defined category. In contrast, the children's character was something personal and intrinsic to them. So King was saying that he wanted his children to be judged for their unique internal identity – who they *really* were – not their external, social identity. King knew well the point we're making. Just as a named cuisine is not a food based category and a named language is not a lexically or structurally based category, and just as they are both socially based constructs, so is race not a biologically based category but a social one that is external to any person of any race.

This distinction between treating a person as an individual and treating a person as a member of a socially defined category is central to what we are trying to say about language. It is the distinction between describing a person's speech in terms that uniquely pertain to that person, and describing it in terms of external societal criteria. For the latter, society provides a plethora of terms, some sensible ones and others of dubious validity: 'English', 'Spanish', 'Portuguese', 'Spanglish', 'Portuñol,' 'code switching,' 'language mixing', etc. But what terms do we have for the former?

This is where the notion of *translanguaging* comes in, where the analyst transcends the named language, language in sense (a) above, and returns the focus to the individual's language, language in sense (b) above, that is, to the idiolect. Translanguaging, in the definition offered above that we now know is applicable to bilinguals and monolinguals, refers to the act of deploying all of the speaker's lexical and structural resources *freely*. To repeat, translanguaging refers to *using one's idiolect, that is, one's linguistic repertoire, without regard for socially and politically defined language labels or boundaries*. It is true, as we have said, that there are no speakers, even monolingual ones, who translanguage everywhere and at all times, that is, who regularly use their full idiolects completely freely; all speakers, even monolinguals, monitor their speech to some extent in order to adapt to the interlocutor and social situation at hand. Our point has been that since bilinguals have idiolects with larger sets of lexical and structural features than monolinguals, and since they are often of necessity in situations where they must communicate with monolinguals, more of the language features of their idiolects are often of necessity suppressed, that is, their monitoring is more intense than is usually found in monolinguals. For most monolinguals, to deploy all, or nearly all, of their linguistic resources, that is, to translanguage, is closer to normal everyday behavior, because monolinguals are usually granted license to operate at full or nearly full idiolect. But for bilinguals, the deployment of full linguistic resources can run up against strong norms articulating the sharpness of linguistic boundaries. Only in situations that overcome these norms, that is, only in the translanguaging mode where their entire repertoire is appreciated as a tool for rich and unfettered expression, are bilinguals granted license to operate at full or nearly full idiolect.

We stress, then, that translanguaging and using a named language constitute two different relations. Translanguaging involves the relation of full deployment between a person's idiolect and his or her speech or writing production. Speaking a named language is a relation of partial overlap between a person's idiolect and the idiolects of others. This overlap enables, under the right social and historical conditions, the establishment of externally named boundaries. We have said from the beginning that the difference boils down to one of perspective. Translanguaging adopts the perspective of the individual, the view from inside the speaker; it offers a description based strictly on the internal categories of lexical and grammatical structure. The named language adopts the view from outside the speaker, a perspective from which the speaker has to fit as a member of a set group; it offers a description based on external categories that emanate from, and in turn reaffirm, sociocultural or national (and often also political) structures.

To repeat, there is nothing inherently wrong with the categories of named languages; on many occasions and with many interlocutors, it may make sense to talk in those terms. Such talk is perfectly acceptable so long as we remain aware that the named language categories have been ultimately constructed throughout history for social purposes that bear a well-known and well-documented connection to the imposition of political power. Similarly there may very well be times when it may be legitimate to use terms like code switching and language mixing, which are ultimately based on named language categories. The use of these terms may be acceptable so long as we remain aware that they express the outsider's perspective and cannot therefore be assumed to describe a duality in the individual's personal linguistic competence.<sup>8</sup>

Translanguaging, then, is not for all discussions of all topics at all times. It is to be used when the topic at hand and the participating interlocutors feel the need for, and become invested in, theoretical coherence. It becomes most useful when we want to loosen the grip of social categories and describe the speakers' idiolects and the actual linguistic behaviors, their language practices. There is often less call to do this when studying monolinguals (though it can be very helpful, especially when speakers' idiolects have features that have been left out of the named standard language). But when carrying out research on bilinguals, and especially bilingual students, the big referential difference between translanguaging and named languages is of crucial importance, because failing to uphold it leads to considerable confusion and redounds to the detriment of the speakers whom we study.

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**8** The dual linguistic competence assumed in code switching is part of a long and productive research tradition (for current work see references above). But we should bear in mind that this dual competence is not usually arrived at by researchers as a result of linguistic analyses that start out neutrally, that is, without any assumption of duality. Rather, the duality is assumed a priori, and it is established in a manner that mirrors directly the bifurcation of the socially named language categories. That is, from the inception of research in code switching, examples of switches held to be grammatical like *estamos typing the paper* 'we are typing the paper' or *Carlos y su esposa bought the house* 'Carlos and his wife bought the house', or held to be ungrammatical like *estamos typeando el paper* or *ellos bought the house* 'they bought the house' have operated under the assumption that the data come divided up into already-identified stretches of one language or the other. In this case, the underlined segments are assumed to be 'English' and the others are assumed to be 'Spanish,' an assumption that is clearly unwarranted for bilingual speakers. It is an assumption, and this is the point, that makes the conclusion of internal duality of competence to a large extent pre-ordained by the dual tagging of the data, a tagging performed on the basis of the external named language categories. When there is so little distance between assumptions and conclusions, the validity of the latter tends to be diminished.

The concepts of translanguaging and idiolect allow us to more clearly connect our efforts on behalf of minoritized communities with the charge of essentialism that we have leveled against the notion of the named languages; for once we stop focusing on the task of preserving or strengthening an essentialist set of lexical and grammatical features that has been given the name Euskara or Māori or Hawaiian (or English, French, or Spanish, or whatever), we can more clearly see the object of our advocacy. The struggle is not to preserve a pure, well-bounded and essential collection of lexical and structural features, but rather a cultural-linguistic complex of multiple idiolects and translanguaging practices that the community finds valuable. It is toward the affirmation and preservation of these complexes, and not of named essentialist objects, that maintenance and revitalization efforts are properly directed.

The next two sections consider how a translanguaging perspective can change the understanding that educators bring to language proficiency assessment and language education in general, and how it can contribute to the educational growth of students and the intellectual growth of the field.

## 7 Translanguaging and language assessment

What are the implications for language proficiency assessment of the distinction between speaking a named national language and translanguaging? In a nutshell, it is this: testing the proficiency of children *in a language* must be kept separate from testing their proficiency *in language*. Assessing the size, development, flexibility, richness, complexity, and agility of deployment of an idiolect must be kept separate from testing the ability to recognize and adhere to politically defined boundaries in the deployment of the idiolect. The former is a true assessment of linguistic proficiency; the latter is an assessment of cultural and political proficiency. When these two things are conflated so that the student is tested for both, the results will be determined by, and be a reflection of, the student's cultural identity as much as his or her linguistic and communicative proficiency. Accuracy of measurement is a bedrock value in the context of educational testing. Yet forbidding bilinguals to translanguage, or assessing it negatively, produces an inaccurate measure of their language proficiency. If proficiency assessment is to be accurate and informative, it must adopt the inside perspective that will reveal the linguistic condition of the individual student's idiolect, irrespective of the social rules that qualify or disqualify some or all of the idiolect as belonging to a particular named language.

To be sure, being able to communicate with audiences of different linguistic backgrounds and being able to behave in linguistically acceptable ways in a variety of social settings (including the settings that devalue translanguaging) are valuable skills, especially for older students. But they shouldn't be confused with general linguistic skill. This skill involves the ability to express complex thoughts effectively, to explain things, to persuade, to argue, to give directions, to recount events, to tell jokes. If schools want to test students' linguistic ability – their ability to do these things with language – it doesn't make sense to ask them to perform using only some of their linguistic repertoire; it doesn't make sense to ask them, that is, to deploy only a portion of their idiolect. And it certainly doesn't make sense to compare them to monolingual children and adolescents, who are permitted to use all or most of their linguistic repertoire – their whole idiolect – in doing those things.

The negative valuation of translanguaging in assessment doesn't make sense for the same reason that it doesn't make sense to judge the culinary skills of cooks by asking them to create a meal while limiting their choice of dishes to just those of a single named national cuisine. That skill, as we saw earlier, has little to do with being a good cook and producing tasty, tasteful and satisfying meals. A culinary restriction of that sort would give an unfair advantage to cooks who, for whatever reason, normally cook under national cuisine restrictions, while disadvantaging all those cooks, amateur and professional, who produce their terrific meals heedless of national cuisine boundaries. The former, the ones who are used to operating under the national culinary restriction, can choose from what is in fact their full repertoire of recipes and ingredients, while the latter must set aside what may be their best recipes. That is, they must keep in the kitchen what could very well be the best dishes they could put on the table. Similarly, when students are tested for their ability to do things with language, it doesn't make sense to insist that some of them should, in addition, try to restrict their repertoire (which amounts to insisting that they try to pass for people with a different cultural identity and personal history). Yet that is exactly what is being done, for example, when Spanish-English bilingual children are told that while speaking or writing 'Spanish' they are never to use their 'English' words.

Whether one takes the internal individual perspective of the idiolect or the external social one of the named language, and whether one assesses bilingual students with reference to monolingual ones are matters that bear elaboration. In schools in general, but especially during testing, bilingual students, to their great disadvantage, are kept from using their entire language repertoire, are compelled to suppress a big part of their idiolect; are not allowed to translanguage. In contrast, monolingual students, to their great advantage, are forced to suppress only a small fraction of their idiolect (the part that is interpersonally inappropriate);

are regularly allowed to translanguage. Both types of students are asked to be part of a teaching and testing game that each ends up playing under different rules. It is small wonder that the monolingual side usually comes out on top.

To make sure that we are not misunderstood, we stress that we regard the ability for the bilingual to perform as a fluent user of a named language as a valuable skill, a worthwhile educational goal, and a legitimate thing to test for. Our point is that this is a specialized ability that is *independent* of general linguistic proficiency. Bilingual students who, irrespective of the labels that society puts on the lexical and structural features of their idiolect, can express themselves accurately, pleasantly, and successfully in the variety of communicative tasks we mentioned above, should be evaluated as possessing excellent linguistic proficiency. This positive assessment would be separate and independent of whether or how much these students translanguage. That is, the positive assessment would be issued regardless of how well these students, by suppressing a large part of their idiolect, are able to pass for people with a cultural identity that, no matter how highly valued by others, is not their own.

## 8 Translanguaging and language education

Language education has focused on teaching a version of a named language known as the standard. Such standards do not embrace all the features conventionally associated with the named language. Rather, they make room only for those features that index social prestige, that is, only those idiolectal features found in the speech of those who share a superior class membership, political power, and, in many cases, an ethnic identity. The linguistic canon that rules the teaching of what schools call native language arts, second languages, additional languages, foreign languages, and bilingual education has been shaped by acts of selective legitimation that license only linguistic features associated with powerful speakers and states.

This means, then, that schools everywhere seek to limit translanguaging in all students; even monolingual students are penalized for deploying idiolectal features that fall outside the sanctioned set. But it is especially in the case of teaching students who are learning to speak what are considered two languages that the rejection of translanguaging has the most deleterious social and educational consequences. For in monolingual students, the school-sanctioned set of lexical and structural features constitutes a very large proportion of the total monolingual idiolect, whereas in bilingual students it is usually less than half. We have expressed this point by saying that schools for the most part allow monolingual students to operate at full (or nearly full) idiolect, but forbid bilinguals from doing

so. This deprivation of speaking at full idiolect keeps the bilinguals silent and unengaged, in classrooms where they are placed at a clear disadvantage.

By insisting on an externally inspired partition of the bilingual's idiolect and on the suppression of one of its parts, traditional teaching of what are considered new languages does not encourage learners to integrate the new linguistic features and practices into their own repertoire of features and practices. The result is that the new features fail to become integrated as part of the learner's idiolect. That is, they seldom reshape their mental grammar through these new interactions, seldom shape their speech in ways that uniquely pertain to them and come to enhance their repertoire.

Bilingual education programs have experienced considerable growth over the past fifty years. But most of these programs have been built on standardized versions of named national languages rather than on the idiolects that bilingual children bring into classrooms. Bilingual education programs tend to separate their two languages, in an effort not to 'contaminate' the other named language. In other words, these programs usually aim to discourage or eliminate translinguaging. This is true even in programs that are the product of struggles by minoritized communities; here too the schools isolate minoritized speakers from the full idiolects and translinguaging practices that already exist in the community. Minoritized idiolects and practices need protection in order to grow, but growth cannot take place when we isolate them from the interactions of authentic speakers whose idiolectal repertoires hold much more than what the schools are willing to license. The prevention of translinguaging in many language classrooms has had the pernicious effect that one would unfortunately come to expect. It has resulted in the schools' inability to truly develop the multilingual capacities of students. And this in turn has prevented many bilinguals from becoming successful creative and critical learners (Wei 2011).

Clearly, learning to deploy one's idiolect so as to be considered a speaker of English or Spanish or Euskara or Hawaiian is an important sociolinguistic accomplishment and a valuable social skill. But learners must first be allowed to speak freely, so they can develop the lexical and structural features for the different social contexts in which they are expected to interact. Only then, when all semiotic practices are licensed as valuable, will there be new speakers of minority languages (O'Rourke et al. 2015), as well as majority languages.

## 9 Summary and conclusion

This article has offered clarification of the term translinguaging as it applies to both education and the use of language in general. We have defined

translanguaging as the use of one's idiolect or linguistic repertoire without regard for the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages. In order to clarify the meaning of translanguaging, we have distinguished between two senses of 'language', one pertaining to the social construct of the named language and the other to the collection of individual (ordered and categorized) linguistic features of the mental grammar. These considerations apply the concept of translanguaging not only to languaging in education, but to languaging in any setting, and to monolinguals as well as bilinguals. Thus the theoretical scope of the discussion is not only language in education but encompasses language more generally.

Of the two senses of language mentioned above, we have compared the first, the social construct of the named national language, to a named national cuisine. We have shown that neither a national cuisine nor a national language is defined on the basis of essential traits, be they cooking ingredients or linguistic features, so that a named language is no more a linguistic entity than a cuisine is a culinary one; they are both social entities. We have recalled that the collection of individual lexical and structural features is traditionally called an idiolect. And we have insisted that the only thing that anyone actually speaks is his or her idiolect. Moreover, it is only the idiolect that the grammarian studies, even when penning titles having to do with 'French' tenses, 'English' number, or 'Spanish' pronouns. The tenses, the number, the pronouns, and all other linguistic features postulated by a linguistic theory are, in most cases, true idiolectal properties that can be subjected to analysis by the linguist. The 'French' and the 'Spanish' are familiar labels whose purported use is to communicate but whose more frequent actual outcome is to confuse, because they reaffirm the false claim that the features being studied are part of a larger linguistic object.

To help make the point, we have recalled the inability of the grammarian, the student of lexicon and structure, to settle 'one-language-or-two' disputes. This inability stems from the simple fact that languages are not isolated, identified, or defined in lexico-structural terms. Rather, they are established on the basis of the identity and shared history of the people who speak different but partially overlapping idiolects that are, by convention, and only when certain social and historical conditions obtain, gathered together under a single linguistic rubric. When the social and historical conditions inspire consensus, the layman finds a language and the grammarian goes along; when they inspire conflict, the ensuing dispute, being of a social and historical nature, cannot be settled using the tools of the grammarian, which are lexical and structural, and pegged to idiolects, and thus unsuitable for addressing matters of history and identity pegged to social groups.

Since named languages are social constructs, and bilinguals are usually defined as possessing two such constructs, it follows that the terms language, monolingual and bilingual refer to social, not lexico-structural objects. Our interest is not to deny their existence. Rather, we wish to preserve them for the useful and important roles that they can play in the life of speakers and scholars alike, while stressing that we need to understand the grounds that justify their existence in the first place.

Once named languages have been properly allocated to the socio-historical realm of boundary-making efforts by actual or emerging nations (or by existing or aspiring states), and once idiolects are situated in the individual idiolectal realm of lexico-structural repertoires, we are able to define translanguaging as the full implementation of the latter without regard for the former; as the full use of idiolectal repertoires without regard for named-language boundaries. That is, once the proper allocation of named languages and idiolects is accomplished, we are able to see that to translanguage is to set in motion all of one's idiolectal features, heedless of the social walls erected by the named languages. We have explained that, to be sure, neither monolinguals nor bilinguals ever engage in fully unfettered translanguaging, for the trivial reason that monolinguals regularly suppress those features of their repertoire (usually lexical ones) that are inappropriate for certain settings or interlocutors. But we have noted that the suppression involved in refraining from translanguaging (in not acting at full, or nearly full, idiolect) is necessarily much greater in bilinguals who, owning a larger repertoire, are regularly called to set aside larger portions of it, including structural parts, when not translanguaging. The larger the suppression, the larger, and the more necessary, the gain and liberation represented by translanguaging, especially in educational settings.

We have also argued that translanguaging offers a way to fairly and accurately sustain the named languages of bilingual minoritized groups. The traditional named language approach to the protection of the language practices of minoritized groups is constantly colliding with the power of the dominant named language (or languages). This dominant language constitutes a powerful sieve that is interposed between the student and the school to trap many idiolectal features and toss them aside as inappropriate or illegitimate. In contrast, a translanguaging approach invites speakers to deploy all their linguistic resources, both lexical and structural, freely, incorporating new ones and using them without restraint as a part of their idiolect. Because of this, translanguaging offers support for the sustainability of what are considered threatened or endangered languages. In addition, in both assessment and instruction, translanguaging provides a more accurate measure of learners' linguistic abilities, and a fairer and more expeditious way to teach both content and the social construct of named languages.

For scholars and advocates in language minoritized communities who may still recall Max Weinreich's famous, and somewhat tongue-in-cheek, definition of a language, we may say that we stress the connection between the language and 'the army and the navy' (we have stressed the social character and definition of the named language that is the object of advocacy). We then propose that we need to, if not decommission the tanks and sink the ships, at least find the proper place to quarter and mothball them, so as to be able to value the individual soldiers and sailors instead. That is, we need to give the named minority language a rest so that we can more urgently, and more effectively, advocate on behalf of the minoritized speakers.

Clearly language education and language assessment are social matters. But appealing to the social context has failed to convince educators that it is unfair and inaccurate to teach and assess bilingual students, and especially language minoritized students, with monolingual approaches that rely on the standardized version of the named language as the guiding category. Translanguaging offers an epistemologically different alternative, one that is based on the individual learners' idiolect, and it offers as well the potential to expand and free up all the learners' linguistic and semiotic resources. Translanguaging evens the playing field, giving bilingual students the same opportunity that monolinguals have always had, the opportunity to learn and grow while enjoying the intellectual and emotional benefits of all of one's linguistic resources.

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## Bionotes

### Ricardo Otheguy

Ricardo Otheguy is professor of linguistics at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in the Ph.D. Program in Linguistics and the Ph.D. Program in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages. His theoretical work is in sociolinguistics, language contact, and sign-based linguistic analysis; his applied work is in the teaching of Spanish to U.S. Latinos.

### Ofelia García

Ofelia García is professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in the Ph.D. programs in Urban Education and Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages. Her most recent work has focused on the potential of translanguaging in language education contexts, and particularly in bilingual education.

### Wallis Reid

Wallis Reid holds a doctorate in linguistics from Columbia University. For thirty-three years he taught at Rutgers University in the Graduate School of Education. His interests are in linguistic theory and sign-based linguistic analysis.

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