Translanguaging

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Introduction

Coined in Welsh as *trawsiethu*, and translated into English by Baker (2001), the term "translanguaging" was first used by Cen Williams (1994) to describe pedagogical strategies in bilingual classrooms that did not strictly separate the use of two languages in instruction. Gradually the term also became used to describe the language use of students in bilingual and multilingual classrooms (see, for example, Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012a, 2012b; Sayer, 2013) and, by extension, the language practices of bilinguals/multilinguals in general. As more scholars started studying bilingualism and multilingualism through a translanguaging lens, its theoretical propositions have been expanded. Today, translanguaging refers to the use of language as a dynamic repertoire and not as a system with socially and politically defined boundaries. With the focus on actual language use, translanguaging necessarily goes *beyond* the named languages such as Chinese, English, or French (García & Li Wei, 2014; Li Wei, 2011, 2018; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015, 2018). Instead, it privileges the language of speakers as a semiotic system of linguistic and multimodal signs that together make up the speaker's own communicative repertoire. This repertoire does not always correspond to the strict parameters of one named language or another established by grammars, dictionaries, and schools. As a critical sociolinguistic theory, translanguaging has had the most application in language education, especially in the education of language-minoritized students and in bilingual education, and increasingly in foreign language programs. It is argued that the theoretical lens of translanguaging may have the capacity and potential to transform the way language professionals see, use, and teach language, literacy, and other subjects.

This entry first discusses the meanings of translanguaging theory and its implications for a theory of language. It focuses on how translanguaging transforms our understandings of bilingual/multilingual people, as well as the familiar concepts that have been used to study them, specifically language contact, code switching, additive bilingualism, and plurilingualism. The second part then turns to how translanguaging has impacted language education, transforming how we teach students *for* bilingualism, as well as how bilingual students learn. It discusses how translanguaging informs and can transform language policies in classrooms, as well as pedagogies.

Translanguaging and Language Theory

Language has been mostly understood as a named standardized entity—English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and so on— that is a product of sociopolitical constructions of nation-states and institutions such as schools. But language *also* refers to the widely distributed human capacity to relate to others and to communicate ideas through a semiotic (meaning-making) repertoire that includes linguistic features (words, sounds, structures, etc.) and multimodal features (such as gestures, images, sounds, etc.). This broader view of language, as a semiotic

system, recognizes the speaker's agency to select and deploy the features that are considered to be the most effective hints to communicate a message to a listener. The act of selecting and deploying features from this repertoire is constrained by social factors, for example, the positioning of the speaker in society. And the success of the communication can also be constrained by social factors having to do with the overlap of features between speaker and hearer in the communicative act, as well as the degree to which the speaker, and especially the listener, is willing to exert the effort in both the selection of features, as well as the interpretation of those features.

Although all speakers use language in this way, speakers who speak two or more named languages can be stigmatized for acts of selection and deployment which sometimes do not strictly match a named language or the ways in which a message is communicated in a society where monolingualism is considered the norm. Bi/multilinguals have a more extended semiotic repertoire (they have more linguistic features and more multimodal features) and, metaphorically speaking, they live their lives in borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) that do not neatly correspond to two different worlds each with its assigned named languages. They are therefore often criticized because their use of language is simply different from an imagined and idealized monolingual norm. But it is important to recognize that the stigmatization of most of what is considered bi/multilingual speech and the acts of translanguaging that it encompasses is simply a *social* judgment, and not a cognitive or linguistic one. This judgment, made on what may appear to be a linguistic basis, is in fact a product of what Flores and Rosa (2015) have called "raciolinguistic ideologies," a social stigmatization of the language of those considered the Other—colonized, immigrant, refugee, yellow, brown, and black bodies (see also Rosa & Flores, 2017).

A translanguaging perspective then disrupts a view of bi/multilingualism that in the 21st century continues to be shaped by the 20th-century work of pioneers in the field like Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953). Weinreich introduced the concept of "languages in contact" and referred to "interference" as "deviations from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals" (p. 1). Translanguaging takes exception to the concept of interference as deviations. Although it acknowledges the importance of the named languages for schooling and life in general, it emphasizes that monolingual norms are not natural and that they have been socially constructed (Heller, 1999) to exert power and as a means of what Foucault (1972) calls governmentality. Translanguaging theory unsettles the idea of languages in contact. Instead, it takes up the "arts of the contact zone" (Pratt, 1991), in which speakers use all their meaning-making potential to mean and communicate in what Li Wei (2011) calls a translanguaging space. In that space of contact and continuity, in those borderlands in which bilingual speakers live today, speakers of all types weave their art, the art of language that enables them to represent their meaning to interlocutors, sometimes using the features (words, structures, images, etc.) of what is considered the language of "the Other," sometimes using those that are considered those of "their native language," but always weaving features of *their own* semiotic repertoire, those that are truly the ones that are "propios" of "their own selves."

Derived from the work of both Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953), scholars of bilingualism have come up with categories of what are seen as linguistic interference or deviations: loans are defined as "foreign" words in what is considered another named language; loanshifts or calques is a category that refers to using one named language according to the structure of another named language; and code switching is the term given to what is seen as changing named languages within a sentence or between sentences. But all these categories are conceptualized by treating language as simply named languages. By privileging the political, ideological construct of named language and ways of using language modeled on powerful speakers who mostly interact within one nation-state, and not on the language of people who reside in contact zones, in borderlands, many linguists study these

phenomena simply as "interference" in relation to a constructed monolingual norm. By privileging the languaging of bi/multilingual people, and not what the grammar books prescribe for their speech, translanguaging disrupts constructs such as interference. Validating the speech of those considered bilingual or multilingual requires linguists and educators to change the ways they look at language externally and cease to take into account its use in one nation-state or social group. Translanguaging brings forward the heteroglossic aspects of language, taking on Bakhtin's dictum (1981) that language is heteroglot from top to bottom. And in this heteroglossia, translanguaging dissolves the monoglossic concept of single entities named English, or Spanish, or Chinese. Instead, it focuses on the selection of features that speakers, and especially those who live in the contact zones of the borderlands, make from their own/their propio language repertoire. In contrast to code switching, which takes on the external perspective of named languages with their power hierarchies, translanguaging stems from the internal perspective of all human beings and focuses on their agency to select features from their entire language repertoire in social interactions.

Translanguaging also rests on a dynamic concept of bilingualism, rather than on a traditional additive one (Cummins, 2017; Lambert, 1974). Additive bilingualism refers to the ability to simply add a "second language" to a "first language." Dynamic bilingualism, however, rests on the interrelationship of all semiotic features, linguistic and multimodal. Speakers become bilingual and multilingual by "adding," but they add features to their own language repertoire, not simply named languages as autonomous entities.

Although translanguaging is related to the concept of "plurilingualism," defined by the Council of Europe as the ability of speakers to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes, it is not an equivalent term. Plurilingualism takes up a dynamic view of bilingualism; however, its ontology is in the protection of named languages of European states, although shared across national borders. The purpose of the term "plurilingualism," in fact, is to promote the ability of all citizens of European nations to communicate in named languages, although to varying degrees (Hélot & Cavalli, 2016). In contrast, translanguaging refers to the human capacity of speakers to add and select different linguistic and semiotic features to their communicative repertoire. Whereas plurilingualism emphasizes the varied use of named languages of nation-states, translanguaging proposes a disaggregated view of language as the meaning-making features that human beings use. These, of course, sometimes are bundled together in what we know as named languages, but sometimes fall beyond the constructed definition of a single named language (García & Li Wei, 2014; Li Wei, 2011, 2018).

Because much of schooling has to do with the learning and teaching of language, it is in classrooms where translanguaging theory has made the most impact, questioning the ways in which we teach language, especially to students who have been linguistically minoritized.

Translanguaging in Education

If translanguaging refers to the use of a dynamic linguistic repertoire, rather than simply the use of named languages of nation-states, then all students carry translanguaging with them into classrooms. Students who are middle class and considered monolingual build a repertoire that is made up to a great extent of linguistic and semiotic features that overlap with those valued in most schools. But students who are refugees, immigrants, poor, and who are said to be bilingual or multilingual have a meaning-making repertoire that does not closely match that of those in authority in schools. From a translanguaging perspective, the achievement gap of students in schools is not innocent. Named standardized language is used to exclude ways of knowing and ways of speaking of those considered "Other." In this sense, language is used as a mechanism for exclusion, as a way of not allowing other

meaning-making systems to enter the classroom. Students who are linguistically and culturally different remain silent and dismissed in school.

Translanguaging pedagogy has been proposed as a way of acknowledging the students' flexible and dynamic language practices, whether they appear at the surface and are visible or not, and as a means to leverage the meaning-making communicative system of all students from the beginning of schooling. The goal is to ensure that students are engaged in learning at all times and that they add new linguistic and semiotic features as they expand their meaning-making repertoire. Translanguaging also has the potential to transform the ways in which language is used in school as students are given practice selecting appropriate features to make meaning for themselves. Translanguaging pedagogy insists in keeping both senses of language visible— the *external* one, the named language(s) that is the medium of instruction, and the *internal* one, the language repertoire of students. Whereas traditional pedagogy privileges the external named languages, translanguaging pedagogy privileges the internal language of learners. It does so by combining spaces/times where/when the named language is privileged, and spaces/times where/when students are given freedom to express themselves using their entire language repertoire.

García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) have proposed that a translanguaging pedagogy consists of three elements: a translanguaging stance, a translanguaging design, and translanguaging shifts. Above all, a translanguaging pedagogy requires that teachers develop what García et al. (2017) have called a juntos/together stance, an understanding that human beings make meaning by using the features of their entire language repertoire in interrelationships. But beyond a stance, it is important to design lessons and assessments taking translanguaging into account. Finally, all teaching relies on creative acts and a translanguaging pedagogy requires that teachers shift linguistic practices in relation to how students are making meaning.

For students whose language repertoires differ from the accepted school norm, teachers who take up a translanguaging pedagogy use it in two ways: (a) as scaffold, so that students understand the meaning of academic texts; and (b) as transformative, so that students are given the freedom to represent themselves not in reference to the "school-other" but as themselves.

Translanguaging as scaffold is particularly relevant when teaching students who cannot make meaning through the language of instruction. A teacher who uses translanguaging as scaffold for these students provides them with, for example, readers in a language they understand, creates listening centers where they can hear the school text in a language they understand, or uses more visuals and gestures. Often teachers and students use electronic translations and other technology as scaffold. Many teachers allow students to write with the features that they have until a later time when students have added and appropriated relevant features of the new language. Some teachers also allow students to perform or draw their meanings. The purpose of translanguaging pedagogy as scaffold then is simply to help students during a transition phase while they are adding and appropriating the necessary features that are required to complete the academic task in one or more named languages.

Other times, however, translanguaging pedagogy is more transformative. This is especially so in situations where bilingualism is recognized as the norm. In trying out Welsh and English within the same lesson, Cen Williams was transforming the relationship of the two languages, histories, and cultures, and putting the education of bilingual bicultural students at the center of instruction and not simply adhering to an English plus Welsh curriculum. Since then, efforts to use translanguaging to transform the education of linguistically minoritized students have grown. Bilingual students, to use W. E. B. Du Bois's term in describing African American students, are born with what Du Bois called a "double consciousness." The veil with which African Americans are born, says Du Bois, always

keeps them responding to the Master and representing themselves only through the Master's eyes. For language-minoritized students, a translanguaging pedagogy is able to lift the veil, allowing them to represent themselves as they are, and not through the eyes of what is traditionally considered as their "first/native" language or even a "second" language. A translanguaging pedagogy allows and encourages students to use language creatively, that is, not within the confines and boundaries of named languages, as well as critically, aware of the sociopolitical reason for the creation of the boundaries (Li Wei, 2011). And it supports students in using multimodalities beyond spoken, signed, or written language, to make meaning for themselves.

Although a translanguaging pedagogy can be particularly helpful for language-minoritized communities, it is not without its critics. Some language-minoritized communities worry about the protection of their ancestral language, and the important role that it has in their history and cultural projections. Some bilingual education teachers have also been critical, worried that the minority language has to be protected. Translanguaging pedagogy puts the student at the center of the educational efforts, and not the named language. In doing so it also protects an instructional space where students can get input and provide output in a named language. But at the same time, a translanguaging pedagogy acknowledges that named languages are used by mobile speakers; they can be protected, but not isolated (García, 2009). Thus, it provides flexibility in the language allocation policy for individual students who cannot yet make meaning in that named language. In this way, translanguaging expands the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) for individual student learning, even if instruction takes place through a language that students do not understand at present, enabling them to add new linguistic features precisely because they become meaningful. In addition, a translanguaging pedagogy respects a formal transformative space where students are encouraged to be their own agents in selecting appropriate features to communicate their meaning. Some teachers open up this transformative translanguaging space once a day, whereas others do it once a week. But the opportunity is given to the students to use language (their full communicative repertoire) in their own image, and not that of some or others. In providing a space where named languages come together, the teachers also provide opportunities for serious metalinguistic and critical multilingual awareness work, engaging students in becoming critical sociolinguists. The strict language allocation policy of most language education programs needs to acquire some flexibility. (For how this can occur in what are called dual language bilingual education programs in the USA, see Sánchez, García, & Solorza, 2017.)

Conclusion

Translanguaging has grown out of pedagogical strategies that enabled and empowered bilingual learners and teachers to engage in knowledge construction through flexible use of their linguistic repertoire irrespective of what named languages they know. In doing so, translanguaging has prompted applied linguists to rethink of language as a complex semiotic resource, rich in sociocultural history and interactional capacity, for sense and meaning making. It has transformed the way language professionals see, use, and teach language. The added value of the concept lies in the fact that it *transcends* socially constructed boundaries of language systems and structures to engage diverse multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities; it *transforms* not only the language structures, but also social relations and social structures, as well as individuals' cognition; and it works across the traditional divides between linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education in a genuinely *transdisciplinary* way.

SEE ALSO: Assessing Multilingualism at School; Bilingualism and Bilinguality; Code Mixing; Code Switching; Code-Switching Pragmatics; Multilingualism and Identity; Multilingualism and Ideology; Multilingualism and Metalinguistic Awareness; Multilingualism and Philosophy; Using the First Language and Code Switching in Second Language Classrooms

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