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Translanguaging

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Summary and Keywords

Translanguaging is a theoretical lens that offers a different view of bilingualism and multilingualism. The theory posits that rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts. Translanguaging also represents an approach to language pedagogy that affirms and leverages students' diverse and dynamic language practices in teaching and learning.

Translanguaging theory builds on scholarly work that has demonstrated how colonial and modernist-era language ideologies created and maintained linguistic, cultural, and racial hierarchies in society. It challenges prevailing theories of bilingualism/multilingualism and bilingual development in order to disrupt the hierarchies that have delegitimized the language practices of those who are minoritized.

Translanguaging concepts have been deepened, built upon, or clarified as scholars have compared and contrasted them with competing and complementary theories of bilingualism. Scholars debate aspects of the theory's definition and epistemological foundations. There are also continued debates between scholars who have largely embraced translanguaging and those who resist the theory's premises or have accepted them only partially.

The use of translanguaging in education has created the most interest, and yet the most disagreement. Many educators working on issues of language education—the development of additional languages for all, as well as minoritized languages—have embraced translanguaging theory and pedagogy. Other educators are weary of the work on translanguaging. Some claim that translanguaging pedagogy pays too much attention to the students' bilingualism; others worry that it could threaten the diglossic arrangements and language separation traditionally posited as necessary for language maintenance and development.

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Translanguaging as a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic theory has much to offer to our understandings of the languaging of bilinguals because it privileges bilingual performances and not just monolingual ones. As a pedagogical practice, translanguaging leverages the fluid languaging of learners in ways that deepen their engagement and comprehension of complex content and texts. In addition, translanguaging pedagogy develops both of the named languages that are the object of bilingual instruction precisely because it considers them in a horizontal continua as part of the learners' linguistic repertoire, rather than as separate compartments in a hierarchical relationship.

Keywords: bilingual education, sociolinguistics, theory of bilingualism, translanguaging pedagogy, dynamic bilingualism, multilingualism, linguistic repertoire, multilingual turn

Origins of the Term

Structuralist language ideologies developed during colonial and modernist periods have been dominant in the study of language. Those ideologies privilege Western European notions of “one language, one people” and reinforce the power of state-endorsed named languages (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). These language hierarchies and ideologies precipitated dominant models of bilingualism throughout the 20th century, which characterized named languages as static, standardized competencies one might “acquire.”

Working within modernist notions of whole, pure languages, Lambert (1974) characterized language education for bilingual populations as following a “subtractive” or “additive” model. Subtractive bilingualism was characterized by the bilingual speaker’s replacement of their minoritized language with the society’s dominant language. The subtractive model has been imposed upon many indigenous and low-income racial- and language-minoritized peoples all over the world. For the elite, privileged members of society, and in periods and places characterized by linguistic tolerance, an “additive” model of bilingualism has been more accepted. In this model, a person (usually a member of the language majority group in society) who is already “proficient” in one language adds a second language to their repertoire, maintaining both. While the additive model may demonstrate more respect for the language perceived as an individual’s first language, like the subtractive model, it operates within a monolingual and monoglossic frame of reference. Bilinguals are expected to be balanced, and operate as two monolinguals in one (Grosjean, 1982); that is, they are assumed to perform exactly as would a monolingual speaker of each language.

Despite the fact that the complex multilingualism of Asians and Africans has ancient roots (see, e.g., Canagarajah & Liyanage, 2012; Khubchandani, 1997), sociolinguistic studies in the West have only recently taken a multilingual turn (May, 2013), as globalization and mass migration have made obvious the “superdiverse” linguistic environments in which speakers operate (Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2015; Blommaert, 2010; Jørgensen, 2008). Both the subtractive and additive models have proved insufficient to account for the nonlinear ways that bilinguals actually use and acquire language, leading García (2009) to propose that bilingualism might be better perceived as dynamic. Given that bilinguals’ language practices are learned in specific social contexts and are “multiple and ever adjusting to the multilingual multimodal terrain of the communicative act” (García, 2009, p. 53), individuals’ languaging repertoires are unique to them.

In the education of bilinguals, the tradition of language separation in teaching became questioned in contexts where language-minoritized groups wanted to maintain and develop their bilingualism. In Wales, Cen Williams first coined the term *translanguaging* (in Welsh) to refer to pedagogical practices in which English and Welsh were used for different activities and purposes (i.e., reading in one language, writing in another). Colin

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Baker (2001) then translated the term into English as *translanguaging*. In studying bilingualism in education throughout the world, García (2009) used the term *translanguaging* to also refer to how bilingual people fluidly use their linguistic resources—without regard to named language categories—to make meaning and communicate. Translanguaging is not just something bilinguals do when they feel they are lacking words or phrases needed to express themselves in a monolingual environment. The *trans-* prefix communicates the ways that multilingual people’s language practices in fact “go beyond” use of state-endorsed named language systems (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 42; Li Wei, 2011).

The concept of translanguaging has taken root in education circles. Besides the Welsh educators who have continued the early work started by Williams (see, e.g., Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012A, 2012B), Blackledge and Creese (2010) and Creese and Blackledge (2010) used the concept of translanguaging in studying complementary schools—centers where children develop their skills in home languages other than English outside of mainstream school hours—in the United Kingdom. Canagarajah (2011) and Hornberger and Link (2012) explored connections between translanguaging and literacy. In the past several years, the use of translanguaging in education has been rapidly expanding.

Theoretical Foundations and Assumptions

There are three core premises that undergird translanguaging theory:

1. It posits that individuals select and deploy features from a unitary linguistic repertoire in order to communicate.
2. It takes up a perspective on bi- and multilingualism that privileges speakers’ own dynamic linguistic and semiotic practices above the named languages of nations and states.
3. It still recognizes the material effects of socially constructed named language categories and structuralist language ideologies, especially for minoritized language speakers.

Taken together, these premises seek to challenge previous models of bi- and multilingualism, and in so doing, to elevate the status of individuals and peoples whose language practices have been traditionally minoritized and labeled as being “non-standard.”

To elaborate on the first point, the theory of translanguaging posits that all speakers have a singular linguistic repertoire composed of features that are selected and deployed in different contexts (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). This is a departure from previous conceptualizations of bilingualism. The traditional cognitive theory of bilingualism, called the “Separate Underlying Proficiency” model, argued that bilinguals had two separate language systems in their minds that corresponded to nationally sanctioned, standard,

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named languages, such as English, French, Chinese, etc. The theory posited that only exposure to and instruction in a second language (L2), and not instruction in a first language (L1), would lead to proficiency in L2 (Cummins, 1980). The theory of Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) led to the spread of misconceptions about bilinguals in the form of the “balance effect”—the idea that given limited linguistic capacity in the brain, bilingual individuals would have to share this capacity between their languages, leading to less proficiency in each. Another misconception that grew out of SUP stated that when a bilingual’s proficiency in one language (depicted as a balloon in the brain) “grew,” proficiency in the other would “shrink” (Cummins, 1980).

Canadian scholar Jim Cummins drew on research conducted in immersion French/English classrooms in Montreal to challenge the Separate Underlying Proficiency theory and its related misconceptions. Instead of viewing a bilingual’s two languages as separate balloons in the brain, Cummins used an iceberg metaphor to describe how they might interact: while at the surface, a bilingual might be seen as performing in two separate languages, below the surface, there is a “common underlying proficiency,” the development of which gets promoted through reading, writing, listening, and speaking in one or both of the languages. In his theory of Linguistic Interdependence, Cummins posited that linguistic or metalinguistic practices learned in one language could be transferred to another (Cummins, 1979). For example, if a child is familiar with finding the main idea of a text in one language, that child will be able to transfer that competency to a new language. While this theory does destabilize the idea that languages are stored completely separately in the brain, it relies on the assumption that a bilingual person has a dual linguistic system and that he or she transfers competencies between those systems (García & Kleyn, 2016).

Translanguaging theory, in relying on a conceptualization of bilingualism as dynamic, argues that there are not two interdependent language systems that bilinguals shuttle between, but rather one semiotic system integrating various lexical, morphological, and grammatical linguistic features in addition to social practices and features individuals “embody (e.g., their gestures, their posture), as well as those outside of themselves which through use become part of their bodily memory (e.g., computer technology)” (García, 2016). People deploy those multimodal features under different circumstances and to accomplish different communicative and expressive ends (García & Li Wei, 2014). Those linguistic and communicative features are learned dynamically through an individual’s activities and experiences in the physical and social world.

To make this argument, translanguaging theory draws a distinction between the way society labels and views an individual’s use of two named languages (the external perspective), and the way a speaker actually appropriates and uses language features (the internal perspective) (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). Traditional conceptions, such as “Language 1 (L1)” and “Language 2 (L2),” “native speaker,” the notion of the pure, static “language,” and even named languages such as “French,” “Spanish,” and “Hindi,” are common terms society uses to describe people’s language practices, but in fact, these are social constructions and not linguistic facts (Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Heller, 2007; Otheguy,

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García, & Reid, 2015). Individuals primarily consider context and purpose in selecting what features to use when—for instance, for bilingual communities in the United States it becomes sometimes necessary to use features from what is called the English language; other times, features from what societies call the Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, and other languages are more appropriate or purposeful. Often, because of the dynamism of language in use, the features people deploy cannot be described by any one particular external label—their practices go beyond such language categories and people *translanguage*.

The internal/external distinction made within translanguaging theory is especially useful when describing bilinguals' language practices. From an external perspective, which takes stock in socially constructed linguistic categories, when bilinguals select and deploy features without regard to named language categories, it appears as if they are using two separate codes to communicate, or are code-switching. Taking the internal view, however, bilinguals' flexible and fluid use of language is recognized as going beyond the socially constructed boundaries of named languages, and is thus termed translanguaging (García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). This particular aspect of the conceptualization of translanguaging has changed over time. In García (2009) code-switching was referred to as a practice that could be encompassed by translanguaging, whereas in later works (García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015), the two concepts were found to be epistemologically at odds because while code-switching preserves named language categories intact, translanguaging theory dismantles named language categories and takes up an internal perspective to describe the languaging of speakers who are said to be bilingual or multilingual. Through its theoretical foundations, which seek to dismantle named language categories, translanguaging counters ideologies that position particular languages as superior to others and the language practices of monolinguals as superior to those who are said to speak with linguistic resources that go beyond the strict boundaries of named languages. Translanguaging theory recognizes that all people—including those whom society views as monolinguals and those viewed as bilingual or multilingual—have one linguistic repertoire, learned through dynamic social interactions, and from which they select and deploy features to make meaning in context. In so doing, it views the language practices of monolinguals and bilinguals through the same lens of selection of linguistic features. At the same time, however, translanguaging theory recognizes that the linguistic repertoire of the bilingual includes features from what society would view as more than one named language. These named languages carry different statuses and impose different social expectations and constraints upon bilinguals; thus for bilinguals, there is a “more complex socio-cultural marking of which features to use when and where” than for monolinguals, who most often speak with the language conventions of the society in which they live (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015, p. 13).

As evidenced by the use of terms like “bilingual” and “monolingual” in scholarly work about translanguaging, this conception does continue to recognize the external, social utility of terms that reify languages. In so doing, translanguaging theory embeds within it

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the notion that while named languages and traditional language ideologies are socially constructed, they still have material effects. Traditional language conceptualizations about language purity and verbal hygiene (Cameron, 1995) have become enmeshed with ideologies concerning racial, class, and gender superiority to support colonial projects waged over time and throughout the world (Quijano, 2000; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Today, dominant societal language ideologies continue to correspond to and reinforce the racial status of speakers (Alim, Rickford, & Ball, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015), as well as their class positions and other social markers. Translanguaging theory grapples with this tension, at once aiming to dismantle socially constructed linguistic categories while also recognizing these categories' real material effects.

Debates in the Field

Concepts within translanguaging theory have been deepened, built upon, or clarified as scholars compare and contrast it with competing and complementary theories of bilingualism. Scholars debate aspects of the theory's definition and epistemological foundations. There are also continued debates between scholars who have largely embraced translanguaging and those who resist the theory's premises or have accepted them only partially.

How scholars view the notion of translanguaging depends on whether or not they believe that named languages have linguistic reality and specific grammars. Those who adhere to the linguistic reality of named languages defend the notion of code-switching (see, e.g., MacSwan, 2014). Although MacSwan (2017) uses the term *translanguaging*, he argues that each language has a specific grammar, whereas Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) maintain that there is only one language system, one grammar, from which speakers select features. This selection of features is guided not by grammar, but by the social information that each individual speaker has regarding the particular communicative context in which the social interaction takes place. Others claim that there is no need for the concept of translanguaging, arguing if we abandon the notion of named languages, the concepts of bilingualism and multilingualism also need to be discarded, and that the term "linguaging" might be sufficient (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). García and Li Wei (2014) argue for keeping the "trans" and acknowledging that translanguaging has to be understood alongside societal, and especially schooling's, conceptions of bilingualism. As Mignolo (2000) has said, speakers "cannot avoid 'being born' in one or more language(s), to have them inscribed in your body" (p. 229). Bilinguals have more linguistic features than monolinguals. The more extended linguistic repertoire of bilinguals, and the more complex decisions concerning selection of linguistic features they have to make in order to interact in society and schools, demands recognition. Translanguaging theory also makes obvious the injustice of forcing bilingual students to perform academically with

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less than half of their full linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging and bilingualism are enmeshed, but one cannot simply supplant the other.

Translanguaging is one of many competing terms being used to capture the heteroglossia involved in language (Bakhtin, 1981). *Polylingualism* (Jørgensen, 2008), *metrolingualism* (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2015), and *translingual practices* (Canagarajah, 2013) are all terms that have been offered to capture the notion that languages are mobile resources within social, cultural, political, and historical contexts (Blommaert, 2010). Translanguaging has much in common with these terms, although, as García and Li Wei (2014) have said, translanguaging is “part of a moral and political act that links the production of alternative meanings to transformative social action” (p. 57).

Another debate in the field has to do with whether translanguaging might unwittingly advance “the neoliberal subject” whose multilingualism is seen as a boon to globalization and as a means of providing labor markets with flexible workers. In this framing, translanguaging might be simply an extension of Euro-American regimes of coloniality of knowledge (Flores, 2013, 2017). Kubota (2015) also questions how the multilingual turn might be associated with neoliberalism. Canagarajah (2017) has engaged with this criticism, pointing out that in order to view fluid languaging as a resource that goes beyond neoliberalism, it is important for critical sociolinguists to focus on developing subjectivities that engage with power and inequality. García and Li Wei (2014) pointed to the potential of translanguaging “to transform not only semiotic systems and speaker subjectivities, but also sociopolitical structures” (p. 43). How translanguaging is used has been especially controversial in education.

Translanguaging and Education

The study of language in society in all its aspects has been extended to encompass a critical poststructuralist lens that includes translanguaging (see, e.g., García, Flores, & Spotti, 2017). But it is in education where translanguaging theory has proved most fertile, and perhaps most controversial.

Formal educational environments throughout the world tend to uphold structuralist notions of language use. Throughout the world, educators, school leaders, and policymakers continue to view bilingualism through subtractive or additive prisms. But as globalization intensifies, and especially as more bilingual students enter schools, translanguaging is being identified as a practice in classrooms around the world. Throughout Europe, the interest in promoting “plurilingualism” for European unity as “the ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes” (Council of Europe, 2000) is also fueling the interest in translanguaging. Translanguaging has been identified as a practice in classrooms with immigrant and

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refugee students, but also in traditional language classrooms with students who want to learn additional languages.

García and Lin (2016) have referred to a strong and a weak version of translanguaging in education. The weak version upholds national languages but calls for a softening of those boundaries in education, calling for bilingual instructional strategies that leverage what society would call the students' L1 (first language). Cummins (2007) for example, has challenged what he calls the "two solitudes" and has called for flexible instructional strategies so that transfer between languages can occur. A strong version of translanguaging as linguistic theory, however, posits that bilinguals build a single linguistic repertoire from which they learn to select appropriate features (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). This version also emphasizes the role that schools have played in constructing exclusive language categories, regulating language use, and maintaining the notion of standard languages. For this, a "strong" version of translanguaging theory may help educators take up a critical stance with regard to the construction of standard languages. Only then can they leverage their students' full linguistic repertoire, help students develop their bilingualism, and support them in selecting features that are appropriate for different purposes, including those appropriate for academic contexts (García & Kleyn, 2016). Until all language educators develop a critical stance on named standardized languages, bilingualism for all will continue to elude us, regardless of whether instruction targets those who speak with minoritized or standard language practices. The acquisition of what is societally considered another named language relies on the recognition of students' translanguaging, as they appropriate new features into the unitary language repertoire that they learn to use in social interaction with others.

Much of the translanguaging that occurs in classrooms is *pupil-directed* (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012B). For example, in the U.S. bilingual kindergarten class described in García's (2011) study, students used translanguaging to mediate understanding, construct meaning within themselves, include and exclude others, and demonstrate knowledge, among other meta-functions. The edited volume by Gort (IN PRESS) also gives evidence of the presence of translanguaging in bilingual classrooms in the United States, whereas the contributions in the book edited by Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer, and Wedin (2017) include examples of translanguaging in other contexts, mostly Nordic countries. Translanguaging as a practice in schools is being recognized by scholars around the world, whether in South African classrooms (Krause & Prinsloo, 2016) or in classrooms of Quechua in Peru (Zavala, 2015). Among the edited volumes and journal articles discussing translanguaging practices in educational programs around the world are Blackledge and Creese (2014), Cenoz and Gorter (2015), and Cenoz and García (2017).

In the last several years, as translanguaging theory has been applied in different educational contexts, explicit *teacher-directed* pedagogical practices that leverage translanguaging are being developed (see, e.g., the work of CUNY-NYSIEB, and, in particular, Celic & Seltzer, 2013. See also García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Sánchez, 2015). Translanguaging pedagogy in higher education is the

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subject of Mazak and Carroll (2016). And in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain, Cenoz and Gorter have been developing translanguaging instructional material for a trilingual school (see, Leonet, Cenoz, & Gorter, 2017). The literacy approaches proposed by Fu (2009) and Escamilla et al. (2013), as well as Canagarajah's approach to translingual writing (2011), although not labeled translanguaging, can be said to fall within translanguaging pedagogy. In this pedagogy, teachers aim to build on students' diverse linguistic practices in order to support them in expanding their linguistic repertoires to include features needed to develop different kinds of literacies and subject-matter knowledge, and to perform in academic environments (García & Li Wei, 2014). In circumstances where teachers are—or are not—familiar with the language practices of their students, they can “set up the affordances for students to engage in discursive and semiotic practices that respond to their cognitive and social intentions” (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 93). Teachers have leveraged students' translanguaging to contextualize key words and concepts, help students develop metalinguistic awareness, create socio-emotional bonds with students, and also to provide opportunities for students to challenge language hierarchies and inequalities (García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012; García & Leiva, 2014; García & Li Wei, 2014; Garrity, Aquino-Sterling, & Day, 2015; Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Gort, 2015; Sayer, 2013).

Core components of teachers' translanguaging pedagogy have been identified in García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017):

- 1. *Stance*:** A belief that students' diverse linguistic practices are valuable resources to be built upon and leveraged in their education.
- 2. *Design*:** A strategic plan that integrates students' in-school and out-of-school or community language practices. The design of instructional units, lesson plans, and assessment are informed and driven by students' language practices and ways of knowing, and also ensure that students have enough exposure to, and practice with, the language features that are required for different academic tasks.
- 3. *Shifts*:** An ability to make moment-by-moment changes to an instructional plan based on student feedback.

Translanguaging pedagogy has the potential to transform relationships between students, teachers, and the curriculum. In recognizing that students come to the classroom with linguistic knowledge that teachers may not have, translanguaging necessitates a co-learning space (Li Wei, 2013) where teachers and students learn from each other, and all language practices are equally valued.

García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) identify four purposes for the strategic use of translanguaging in education:

- 1. Supporting students as they engage with and comprehend complex content and texts,**

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2. Providing opportunities for students to develop linguistic practices for academic contexts,
3. Making space for students' bilingualism and ways of knowing,
4. Supporting students' bilingual identities and socioemotional development.

These four translanguaging purposes then work together to advance social justice.

Translanguaging pedagogy has gained ground in the education of minoritized students, both in bilingual education and in more traditional "second language" programs. In the United States, for example, translanguaging has been taken up by educators in English as a second language programs as well as in mainstream English classrooms.

Translanguaging operates in these classrooms usually to provide the much needed scaffolding that emergent bilinguals need (see, e.g., García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; as well as the chapters by Ebe and Woodley in García & Kleyn, 2016). But translanguaging is also being increasingly accepted as promising in more traditional approaches to the study of additional languages, including foreign language education (Turnbull, 2016) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (see, e.g., Nikula & Moore, 2016). Scholars are simply acknowledging that despite the traditional stance that only the target language is to be used in language education programs, students' language practices have always been incorporated.

Scholars and educators working in all types of immersion bilingual education programs have perhaps been the most reluctant to accept translanguaging pedagogical approaches. And yet, scholars studying these programs are also increasingly documenting the use and value of translanguaging pedagogy (see, e.g., Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014; Esquinca, Araujo, & de la Piedra, 2014, for dual language immersion programs in the United States).

It is perhaps in the education of the deaf where translanguaging holds its most promise. The multimodal nature of deaf communication means that scholars have been increasingly interested in translanguaging theory as they study how the deaf are taking the creation of meaning "literally into their own hands" (Bauman & Murray, 2017). Ruth Swanwick (2016, 2017) gives examples of how deaf children translanguage in their own lives and proposes this as a relevant framework to enhance pedagogical approaches to the education and assessment of bimodal deaf children.

As we have said, translanguaging pedagogy is not without controversy. Educators who are committed to eradicating bilingualism see translanguaging pedagogy as a threat, a way of "sneaking in" bilingualism in education. Educators who are committed to developing bilingualism fear that translanguaging may destroy the diglossic arrangements that had been posited as the only way to maintain and develop two languages (Fishman, 1966). But diglossic arrangements have been increasingly questioned by critical sociolinguists as simply a way to naturalize the hierarchies of the hegemonic power of languages as defended by nation-states (see Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Williams, 1992). García has repeatedly said that although it is important to protect

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minoritized language practices in education so that the majority language does not extinguish these practices and promote language shift, it is essential that the minoritized language not be isolated. The difference between protection and isolation is important. Just as bilinguals' use of the majority language often exhibits features that are said to belong to the other language, their use of what is said to constitute the minority language also shows traces of what is seen as the majority language. Even bilingual educators display complex language ideologies, at times expressing preferences for so-called proper or academic varieties of the non-dominant language over the translanguaging practices of local communities (Ek, Sánchez & Quijada Cerecer, 2013), even as they may also hold or enact counter-hegemonic ideologies in their classrooms (Martínez, Hikida, & Durán, 2015). Unless educators understand that students are always translanguaging, that is, selecting appropriate features from their language repertoire in functional interrelationship with each other, they will promote the students' linguistic insecurity, leaving them in limbo as they evaluate their practices according to isolated monolingual standards and practices. An insistence on isolating named languages in all types of language education classrooms will result in the students' failure to acquire new linguistic features and will not develop their bilingualism.

A translanguaging pedagogy is capable of developing both of the named languages that are the object of bilingual instruction precisely because it considers them in a horizontal continua as part of the learners' linguistic repertoire, rather than as separate compartments in a hierarchical relationship. As Einar Haugen (1972) told us so long ago, if concerned about protecting language, it is better to bend than to break.

Future Directions

Studies of multilingualism today increasingly focus on the heteroglossic linguistic practices of individuals, that is, what Otsuji and Pennycook (2015) have called multilingualism from below, not on the use of two or more named languages. Poststructuralist sociolinguists focus on the complexes of resources that "reflect the polycentricity of the learning environments in which the speaker dwells" (Blommaert & Backhus, 2013, p. 20). This view, and the concept of translanguaging, is reshaping major areas of the study of language and society, from the study of language policy (see, e.g., Menken & García, 2017; Wiley & García, 2016) to language teaching and learning. Building on Foucault's notion of microphysics of power (1977), language practices, and not simply named languages, are being studied in relationship to the socio-historical, political, and economic conditions that produce them. The purpose is to develop new subject-positions for language users that challenge standard language ideologies.

But although this is all happening in communicative spaces where people with different personal trajectories, activities, and repertoires interact with ease (the marketplace, e.g., in the work of Otsuji & Pennycook [2015] or of Blackledge, Creese, & Hu [2016]),

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institutions such as school demand that attention be paid not to the practices of the speakers, but to the practices imposed and reified in schools as “academic language.” It is then in institutions, and especially in schools, where understandings of translanguaging are key. The implications of translanguaging for inclusion and equity in teaching and learning need attention.

Some translanguaging instructional practices are being developed. Assessment, and especially summative assessment, will also require attention in the future, as little progress has been made in this area, although some work is being done (see, e.g., López, Turkan, & Guzmán-Orth, 2017). On the one hand, assessment of content areas often requires monolingual production in the dominant language, penalizing most bilingual students. On the other hand, assessment of language arts often is limited to linguistic conventions, castigating those who translanguage and do not suppress features that are seen as being from another language system (García & Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016).

Perhaps the most exciting developments in translanguaging are the connections to multimodalities and human-technology interaction. Based on a case study of an emergent bilingual student’s interactions with machine translation software, Vogel, Ascenzi-Moreno, and García (2018) argue for an expansive definition of translanguaging that encompasses not just the linguistic resources individuals draw upon to make meaning, but also the unique social actions enabled by technology use that become part of the individual’s semiotic repertoire. Calling for more attention to multimodalities in the study of translanguaging, Ari Sherris writes that “when we generate the conditions for translanguaging to reflect and constitute our students’ heteroglossic repertoires, their voices index their embodied social histories and identities as well as the local flavors, smells, textures, music movements, and objects that are part of their semiotics” (personal communication, August 15, 2017). Translanguaging theory and pedagogy is expanding beyond a strictly linguistic repertoire, encompassing all the multimodalities that form part of users’ semiotic meaning-making repertoire.

Conclusion

Translanguaging transforms the conversation about the language use of bilingual and multilingual speakers, and especially emergent bilingual students and other bilingual learners. Although it holds much promise to transform multilingual subjectivities in ways that equalize opportunities to participate in society, it continues to be seen by many as suspicious. For some it legitimizes bilingual practices, the grassroots multilingualism (Mohanty, 2013) of speakers. For others it blurs the boundaries of named languages that shape traditional understandings of bilingualism.

The simultaneous interaction of local, global and virtual contexts in which we perform language today requires that we pay attention to the translanguaging of speakers, and at the same time that we continue to develop ways of using language that respond to societal conventions. It is the tension produced between the two that creates the energy that moves speakers from the cages and boundaries of the languages of nation-states into a space in which they become agents and builders of their own language. Language belongs to speakers, not to political states. And translanguaging is the motor that frees us from the constraints of having to use language only according to certain conventions and privileging only the communicative modes favored in schools—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Linguistic creativity is then given back to speakers and especially students, as they chart their own learning and lives.

Links to Digital Materials

Online guides and resources to support translanguaging pedagogy from the City of New York: **New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals**.

Video web series on translanguaging pedagogy: ***Teaching Bilinguals (Even If You're Not One)***.

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