

Chapter 11

Dynamics of Translanguaging Practices

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ABSTRACT

Translanguaging is a process by which people draw from all of their semiotic resources to co-construct meaning, thus learning from each other. While scholars tout translanguaging as being advantageous for work environments and cognitive development, educational practices often do not include translanguaging. Teaching of and through language traditionally adheres to the boundaries of separate language systems. Additionally, students may not want to code-mesh because traditionally, languages have been treated as distinct systems and individuals take on identities based on these systems as they provide membership in specific groups. Drawing on data from two different educational contexts, this chapter highlights some ways educators can legitimize translanguaging in the classroom in concrete ways. Suggestions offer new spaces to be explored when designing curricula and learning environments that value the language practices of students and families.

INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging is a communicative practice defined as a performed act whereby individuals “access different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (García, 2009, p. 140). Naturally, languages in contact mix during interactions. Translanguaging is a process by which people draw from all of their semiotic resources to co-construct

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meaning, thus communicating effectively and learning from each other (Willingham, 2009). The move from using language with traditional boundaries to a fluid, natural practice of mixing language raises many ideological questions such as:

- As we shift from the constraints of single and distinct language systems in learning and societal practices to a more blended use of language, what does this mean for languages, cultures, and identities?
- To what extent might translanguaging eliminate a dominant power group language?
- How can translanguaging alleviate some of the inequities that bilingual students face in monolingual education systems and even in some bilingual education programs?

Utilizing natural practices of language also raises questions in classrooms such as

- How do we design instruction to utilize translanguaging AND increase academic language?
- How do we legitimize translanguaging as a new form of linguistic capital in a more concrete way in today's classrooms?

Though the literature offers some guidance in addressing these questions, implementation is not comprehensive.

BACKGROUND

Translanguaging Today

While scholars tout translanguaging as valuable in work environments and cognitive development (Canagarajah 2011; Hornberger & Link 2012), educational practices often do not purposefully include or allow translanguaging. Teaching of and through language traditionally adheres to the boundaries of separate language systems. Additionally, students may not want to *code-mesh*; because traditionally, languages have been treated as distinct systems (Canagarajah, 2013) and identities are associated with each language (Hall, 2013). Translanguaging studies administered in school environments have had a range of foci such as:

- Investigating language in preschool through higher education (Gort, 2015; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Johnson, García, Seltzer, 2019).

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