

Chapter 3

Translanguaging in the Multilingual Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Given today's culturally diverse classrooms, incorporating new perspectives and pedagogies must be considered of value. This should be primarily considered in the language classroom. Considering multilingualism as a rule, but simultaneously also considering how marginalized many individuals have been, especially in the language classroom; the inclusion of newer pedagogies which resist, and conjointly empower, emergent bilinguals, should be considered. The current chapter aims to highlight relevant literature which may enlighten the use of translanguaging practices in the language classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Given today's culturally diverse classrooms, incorporating new perspectives and pedagogies must be considered of value. This should be primarily considered in the language classroom. Considering multilingualism as a rule, but simultaneously also considering how marginalized many individuals have been (Palmer et al., 2014), especially in the language classroom, the inclusion of newer pedagogies that resist and conjointly empower emergent bilinguals should be considered. Therefore, the current chapter aims to highlight relevant literature which may enlighten the use of translanguaging practices in the language classroom.

For the purposes of the current chapter, translanguaging is to be understood as presented by García and Wei (2014). The authors state:

Translanguaging is the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, and gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages. Translanguaging, for us, goes beyond the concept

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of the two languages of additive bilingualism or interdependence. Translanguaging is the enactment of language practices that use different histories but are now experienced against each other in speakers' interactions as one new whole. (p. 20)

Building from this, García and Kleyn (2016) continued the conversation by explaining, “Translanguaging asserts that bilingual speakers draw from one integrated linguistic repertoire to make meaning with their environment. In contrast to code-switching, which assumes separate linguistic systems corresponding to each language” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 64). Consequently, for the current chapter, translanguaging will entail not only those practices (linguistic, social, and cultural) that emergent bilinguals and multilingual speakers engage in but also the contributions that such dynamic practices represent in the (language) classroom. In this sense, this chapter aims to reconceptualize emergent bilinguals’ needs to present them as an asset rather than a deficiency.

BACKGROUND: A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TRANSLANGUAGING

Opposite to today’s views of translanguaging, historically, the first conceptions of bilingualism were governed by the belief that languages were not meant to interact or be interrelated. Originally, “bilingualism was said to be additive, as if one autonomous language entity with explicit boundaries could be added to another. The two languages, corresponding to nation-states’ sociopolitical construction, never met or interacted in the language of bilinguals” (García & Kleifgen, 2020, p. 3). This section of the chapter will illustrate how the perspectives about translanguaging have been evolving and the origins of such views.

The first instances where languages started to merge within minoritized societies were found amongst the Welsh, who proclaimed that their language was in decline for an extended period of time. Although bilingualism during the 20th century was evidently and strictly separative, some schools attributed their success to the inclusion of newer pedagogical approaches. Following these changes, in 1994, a Welsh educator named Cen Williams decided to start merging languages in a different way, where Welsh and English would interact during the same lesson, giving room for the creation of the term *trawsieithu* (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021). Like Williams, it was evident that academics and educators started questioning language separation in the classrooms at some point, leading researchers and practitioners to start working toward newer strategies and perspectives (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). In other words, the one-language-at-a-time perspective started to seem irrelevant (García & Kleifgen, 2020) and, more importantly, insufficient while caring for today’s emergent bilinguals. During the early 2000s, authors (Lin & Martin, 2005; 2006) had already started showing the world some of the positive pedagogical implications of what, during those days, was known as code-switching. Soon after, Ofelia García started approaching the importance of multilingualism and pluriliteracies (García et al., 2007; García, 2008) to start theorizing about translanguaging (García & Kleifgen, 2020; García & Leiva, 2014; Kleyn & García, 2019; Vogel & García, 2017) in the ways which are presented in this chapter.

As addressed earlier, language teaching was historically based on monolingual approaches. Scholars (Kleyn & García, 2019; Lin, 2013) have noted how particularly the field of ESL (English as a Second Language) was initially inclined to focus on the mastery of native-like pronunciation and, perhaps, understanding too; the imitation and memorization (Raimes, 1983) of basic well-structured sentences represented the norm for years for many of these classrooms. Nevertheless, unfortunately, these teach-

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