

Chapter 14

Indian Multilingual Education: Reviewing Translanguaging Pedagogy for Reading

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the scope of language education in the Indian multilingual context. It reviews the construct of translanguaging and its usefulness in language classrooms with special attention to reading, the cornerstone of primary education. It presents a critical summary of translanguaging practices across the globe followed by teacher-learner practices in Indian classrooms with children from low socio-economic status and/or from migrant workers' families. The review of Indian classrooms with translanguaging practices helps to understand the purposes of use of this pedagogic strategy and its impact on language learning and reading. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the role of using the socio-constructivist theory to scaffold reading through peer interaction. This chapter is a precursor to the next chapter that presents the design of a translanguaging-based reading model built with the help of peer interaction to scaffold reading development in young multilingual learners.

INTRODUCTION

Bi/multilingual education, a growing field worldwide, has faced its share of opportunities and challenges based on a range of variables such as contextual factors, low socio-economic status (SES) of families and a history of migration (Erling et al., 2017; United Nations Education and Scientific Cultural Or-

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ganization, 2003). Studies have shown that when bi/multilingual children enter school they have some advantages related to metalinguistic awareness but face challenges with features of formal or academic language proficiency in the target language required for school success (Bialystok & Craik, 2010; Cummins, 2017). Therefore, the 2003 UNESCO report urges mother tongue based instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the existing knowledge and experiences of multilingual learners and teachers.

The Transition from Bilingualism to Translanguaging in Pedagogy

Bilingualism in pedagogy emerged in the North American context owing to large-scale migration in the 19th and 20th centuries. In Canada, it was implemented through the bilingual immersion programme, which was one of the most successful additive bilingual projects (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Thereafter, Cummins' model of additive bilingualism gained recognition and popularity where he advocated for a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) due to which knowledge and metalinguistic awareness in one language (L1) could be drawn upon when working in another language (L2), provided learners acquired a threshold level proficiency in the target language (1981). Cummins further argued that conceptual knowledge acquired in one language could be used to create input in the target language and that the teacher's metalinguistic awareness of learners' language knowledge and conceptual understanding would help in developing an appropriate pedagogy (2017).

Traveling from monolingualism to additive bilingualism educationists and researchers have reached a third phase where languages are no more seen as separate entities inside the brain but rather a conglomerate of linguistic repertoire that formed the basis of a pedagogy called translanguaging (Garcia, 2009; Garcia et al., 2012). This shift occurred with the advancement of cognitive theories in second language learning and post-structural notions, which postulate that a bi/multilingual brain can process or extract from an unbounded language reservoir. Bilingualism or multilingualism is now recognized as "an interconnectivity or multiplicity grounded not only vertically but also horizontally" (Garcia, 2009, p. 143). In keeping with the arguments of this theorization, bilingual education programmes have expanded to include increasing diversity and heterogeneity. In India, where language identities are distinct and yet fluid (Mohanty, 2006), bi/multilingual practices in social communication are an accepted norm. When such practices are used strategically, they can capture the linguistic range in class and create an increased tolerance for multiple language practices within the schooled context. Translanguaging as an educational strategy, thus, has the potential to expand the multilingual discursive practices to construct meaning, make sense of academic concepts, mediate learning, and acquire various methods of languaging (Garcia, 2009).

TRANSLANGUAGING: A MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

The learning of multiple languages in most multilingual countries is not horizontal, rather hierarchical owing to power, prestige and validation certain languages have over others. In most national education policies, institutional validity is given to the majority language, which then becomes the ascribed medium of instruction (MoI), while minority languages and dialects struggle for recognition and validation in the educational space. This hierarchical representation of languages in education has negatively affected linguistic minorities, socially and economically disadvantaged groups in their academic pursuits,

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