

# Chapter 3

## Embedding

### Translanguaging Into

### ESOL Teacher Education

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter summarizes the logistics and findings of an exploratory study designed to familiarize pre-service ESOL teacher candidates with the concept of translanguaging while also collecting and analyzing information regarding their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the course unit along with their views on improving the course unit moving forward. The chapter begins with an overview of translanguaging and its importance for multilingual learners of English and moves to a review of previous literature exploring the integration of translanguaging into language teacher preparation. Next, the chapter outlines the components of a course unit on translanguaging as part of an applied linguistics course, the data collection and analysis procedures, emergent findings, and implications of the study for both educators and researchers.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

English language learners can be understood as “students who first learn a language other than English in their home and community (U.S. born or immigrant) and then learn English as a new language” (Genesee et al., 2005, p. 364). This student population has traditionally been seen from a deficit-based perspective (Valencia, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999) in that they often do not possess the same background

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knowledge and experiences as their native-speaking peers. The funds of knowledge approach, however inverts this paradigm by visualizing these students from an asset-based stance (Bartlett & García, 2011) in that they do indeed retain a wide variety of funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) (i.e., abilities, expertise, proficiencies, skills) that are not necessarily identified, understood, or valued. Thus, it is essential to incorporate instruction in educator preparation programs concerning English language learners' funds of knowledge in order to not only prepare future teachers for the linguistically- and culturally-diverse in which they will likely teach but also support them in identifying and appreciating these students' funds of knowledge.

One avenue for capitalizing on these students' linguistic funds of knowledge is translanguaging, or "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of...autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (García, 2009, p. 140). Thus, translanguaging not only capitalizes on the strengths English learners possess but also empowers them and educators alike to restore the power differential that has traditionally been stacked against this student population. Consequently, translanguaging is conceivably one viable means for empowering English language learners by sustaining them in embracing their linguistic identities and strategically positioning them to challenge and resist traditional monolingual norms still prevalent in today's society. Translanguaging assists educators in establishing the contexts and situations necessary for students, including English learners, to find their own voice and challenge existing hierarchical and ideological structures that disempower them.

The origins of translanguaging are often traced to the work of Williams (1994) who utilized the term *trawsieithu* to refer to the instructional practice that commonly took place in revitalization efforts concerning the Welsh language in the 1980s in which educators would frequently utilize Welsh in their teaching while students responded predominantly in English. Alternatively, students would often initially receive input in English via texts, videos, etc. and subsequently produce output by responding to these materials in Welsh. Rather than viewing such language shifts as inherently wrong or inferior, Williams instead visualized these students' efforts from an asset-based and strength-focused perspective (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). Later, Baker (2001) coined the term "translanguaging" to designate a situation in which "the input (reading or listening) tends to be in one language, and the output (speaking or writing) in the other language" (p. 281). Other scholars arrived at the concept of translanguaging via Becker (1991) who posited that utilizing language is an inherently human activity that is not fixed or stable but is instead always changing and evolving (Li, 2018); one might thus conceivably argue that a given person's very existence is formulated and circumscribed by virtue of their use of language. In this vein, Becker (1988) contends that "ours is a world experienced in

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