



Castledown

 OPEN ACCESS

Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics

ISSN 2209-0959

<https://journals.castledown-publishers.com/ajal/>

Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 3 (1), 1-10 (2020)

<https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.v3n1.283>

Introduction to the Special Issue: Translanguaging as a Resource in Teaching and Learning



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Introduction

Many teachers who see the multilingual and multicultural nature of society reflected in their classrooms seek inclusive and effective teaching strategies that go beyond conventional monolingually and monoculturally conceived approaches. Translanguaging, as communicative and cognitive practice which draws on a speaker's full multilingual repertoire, is a valuable resource for teaching and learning in contemporary linguistically diverse classrooms. When enacted in teaching and learning, translanguaging supports students not only to employ their full range of linguistic and cultural knowledge in the learning process to enable deeper and more connected understanding of content and language, but also contribute to the learning of their peers and teachers and bridge spaces between educational institutions, families and communities.

This special issue addresses the role and use of translanguaging as a resource for students and teachers in a range of education settings including institutions and systems operating under a monolingual mindset (Clyne, 2008) in English-speaking countries including USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The studies present examples of practice from early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education settings, encompassing students from all walks of life in mainstream education, introductory language centres and heritage language classrooms. Discussion of multilingual and translanguaging practice, learning and pedagogy, case studies of linguistic and educational practice, and principles for translanguaging in teaching and learning will interest and inform educators in all roles, including teachers, teacher educators and researchers.

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within this paper.

It has long been recognised that a key characteristic of quality teaching is the ability of teachers to connect with and build on students' prior understandings, experiences and background knowledge. This may be easily achieved for students whose experience and knowledge aligns with the dominant perspectives represented in the curriculum and conventional pedagogy, which in Anglophone countries of the global North, is often an unquestioned assumption of monolingualism as the norm, diagnosed by Gogolin (1997) as the "monolingual habitus." However, when the reality in these societies is a multilingual and multicultural one, many teachers who see this diversity reflected in their classrooms seek more inclusive and effective teaching strategies.

Such a search coincides with a "multilingual turn" in linguistic scholarship, described by May as increasing attention to "the dynamic, hybrid, and transnational linguistic repertoires of multilingual (often migrant) speakers in rapidly diversifying urban conurbations worldwide" (2013, p. 1). Although this attention may be increasing, diversity and multilingualism itself is long established and widespread (Heugh, 2014). Despite this, in many places a monolingual, monocultural orientation towards educational policy, curriculum and pedagogy still dominates. This creates both an opportunity and a responsibility for those bridging the banks of linguistics and education to develop and disseminate approaches to teaching and learning which make use of multilingual resources and practices to support learning.

Multilingualism should be understood not as one person's ability to speak two or more languages with native-like proficiency, as described by the "two solitudes" assumption (Cummins, 2008), but rather, the totality of an individual's knowledge and skills related to language can be considered as a "multilingual repertoire" (Busch, 2012) in which different varieties, metalinguistic skills and knowledges are connected in a single, complex, dynamic and flexible system. An individual's "multilingual resources" may include extensive expertise in some languages, proficiency in aspects of other languages, sociolinguistic skills, metalinguistic processes, and knowledge learnt through a range of languages (Cummins, 2009; Saxena & Martin-Jones, 2013). Amongst these resources are the linguistic, metalinguistic and social aspects of translanguaging.

There is much current interest in translanguaging as a mental process, pedagogy and social practice. In simple terms, translanguaging can be understood as cognitive or communicative linguistic activity that combines features of multiple languages. Processes such as translating, code switching, mixing or meshing and hybridising languages, can thus be considered translanguaging practices. At another level, translanguaging can be seen as a subset of broader multilingual practices which also include separate language competences (Slembrouck & Rosiers, 2018). Translanguaging may be a cognitive process or a communicative one, in speech or in writing, interacting with an interlocutor or presenting to an audience, or across electronic media (Canagarajah, 2011). Another defining feature is that people translanguange with flexibility and intent, selecting linguistic resources to suit their context, purpose and audience.

The term "translanguaging" is most often attributed to Williams (1996), who coined the Welsh *trawsieithu* to describe using different languages for input and output in Welsh-English bilingual education, applying principles of transfer and purposeful code switching (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). Beyond this, ideas and terminology associated with translanguaging can be traced from several points of origin, connected with the use of "linguaging" as a verb by Mignolo in the same period, who portrayed "transnational linguaging" and "transimperial linguaging" as practices that constitute individual and group opposition to dominant power (Mignolo, 1996, p. 183). In North America, Swain brought to prominence the idea of linguaging as an individual practice, using "language" as a verb to emphasise the human-centredness of language use, as an act which carries intent and expertise, responds to context, and mediates thought (Swain, 2006). More recent work from scholars such as

García and Li (2014) and Blackledge and Creese (2010a) has expanded translanguaging research into globalising English-dominant contexts, generally with a focus on translanguaging as an individual practice which combines features from different languages, as a cognitive process and also as linguistic production (Li et al., 2016, p. 7). When it comes to translanguaging as a resource in teaching and learning, although the clearest connection is to the pedagogical function of translanguaging, the cognitive and social aspects are also pertinent and feature in this special issue.

Hornberger asserts that “bi/multilinguals’ learning is maximised when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in two+ languages) rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices” (Hornberger, 2005, p. 607). The work of Cummins in theorising multilingual cognition provides a foundation to understanding learning in this way, and translanguaging as a model of multilingual processing and pedagogy. According to the Interdependence Hypothesis, a Common Underlying Proficiency of linguistic and academic proficiencies is shared across an individual’s languages (Cummins, 1981, pp. 24–25). Students learning in an additional language can transfer these skills, providing the home language is sufficiently supported and transfer of both concepts and skills is explicitly scaffolded (Cummins, 2009, p. 24).

The multilingual approach to learning is complemented by Moll’s notion of “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), referring to bodies of cultural knowledge that occur within students’ household or social networks. Moll argues that when teachers tap into this type of knowledge through building relationships with their students and their wider social networks, they allow for rich and meaningful learning opportunities. Teaching practices that build on multilingual ways of reading, writing and speaking allow students to access the cultural resources that enhance the personal significance of their classroom work. Translanguaging allows teachers and students to engage with pedagogies that harness the full range of learners’ linguistic and cultural knowledge and practices.

Finding ways to engage translanguaging as a resource in teaching and learning is not an endeavour restricted teaching at the classroom level, but also connected to language policy at the levels of institution through to state. According to Ruiz’s notion of orientations, language in policy can be constructed as a problem, a right or a resource (Ruiz, 1984). Conventional monolingually-focussed education propagates a pedagogy of language separation, in which languages other than the target are seen as causing interference with learning (Cummins, 2007), in a language-as-problem orientation. In contrast, a language-as-resource orientation, language is constructed as “a resource to be managed, developed and conserved” to further social and economic progress (Ruiz, 1984, p. 28, see also Ruiz, 2010).

Language in policy does not have to be confined to named languages, but as Agnihotri suggests, “multilingualism is an asset and can be used as a resource, a teaching strategy, and a goal” (2007, p. 82). In asserting the status of multilingualism as a resource, de Jong and colleagues state that “In a globalized, interconnected, transnational world, it is multilingualism rather than proficiency in one language that becomes a resource for economic and political access, cultural and civic engagement, and social cohesion” (de Jong, Li, Zafar, & Wu, 2016, p. 209). Thus, the language-as-resource orientation can be expanded to include multilingual practices, including translanguaging, as resources. Lo Bianco (2001) has articulated six dimensions in which language operates as a resource, namely as an intellectual, cultural, economic, social, citizenship and rights resource. In taking a resource orientation towards translanguaging in teaching and learning, this lens proves an illuminating one, and each of these dimensions can be identified in the collection of studies in this issue.

Although translanguaging is a normal, and integral, aspect of multilingualism (García, 2009, p. 62), it

has “traditionally been frowned upon in educational settings” (Blackledge & Creese, 2010b, p. 203). An increasing number of voices now call for translanguaging to be used as a resource in settings where monolingual norms otherwise prevail (May, 2013), and Cummins expresses his dismay at the “squandering of bilingual resources in mainstream contexts” (2005, p. 585), arguing for the need to develop pedagogies that teach explicitly for two-way cross language transfer and acknowledgement of flexible approaches to language teaching. To fully realise this aim, we need many more examples of what translanguaging pedagogies look like in the classroom. Despite considerable research pointing to the importance and benefits of incorporating translanguaging pedagogies into classroom practice, few studies actually depict how this may be done deliberately and systematically in lesson planning and lesson delivery, particularly in linguistically heterogeneous settings where teachers may not share the multilingual repertoires of their students. Educators in all roles need more focus on how to use translanguaging as a resource in discerning, purposeful and practical ways.

The papers in this special issue span a range of settings in which multilingual speakers engage with educational institutions functioning largely in the medium of English, with studies from the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. The research examines translanguaging practices in early childhood, primary, middle, secondary and tertiary settings, making connections between the expertise of teachers, multilingual learners and their communities. Classroom practice is centralised but there are connections to pedagogical theory, educational policy and social practice, all of which are vital in developing translanguaging as an effective resource for teaching and learning.

The issue opens with two papers highlighting the importance of grounding translanguaging pedagogies in a strong understanding of the experiences and practices of multilingual speakers. Tuba Yilmaz and Ester de Jong present a case study of Elif, a multilingual six-year-old in the USA, focussing on the way she draws on translanguaging to cross the boundaries between her home, mainstream school and Turkish heritage language school. Through interviews with Elif, her parents and teachers, and observations in each setting, the researchers analysed the different boundaries Elif faced and the mechanisms she used to cross them. They observed patterns of Turkish-monolingual practice at home, English-monolingual practice in the mainstream school, and Turkish-dominant bilingual practice in the heritage language school. This meant that linguistic practices at home and the Turkish heritage language school had the most cross-over, and Elif was able to manage this transition smoothly. However, with such different linguistic practices, the “insurmountable” boundary between home and the mainstream school caused Elif to experience discontinuities in communication and learning at school. Similarly, the significant differences between teachers’ practices at mainstream school and heritage language school, and the English-dominant practices of peers in both places created additional obstacles to Elif’s participation at mainstream school. The researchers found that at each boundary, translanguaging served as a crossing mechanism, creating bridges between spaces and connecting cultural and linguistic practices. Translanguaging gave Elif a voice through which to share her knowledge, experience and expertise with students and teachers, it scaffolded her learning, and it allowed Elif to demonstrate her identity. Elif’s case is a demonstration that it is important for teachers to understand their students’ entire multilingual repertoires, including the practices they engage with in other discursive spaces.

The study by Constant Leung and Jennifer Jenkins focuses on translanguaging practice as a part of a multilingual repertoire, particularly in mediating interactions. The research sites include an international student society of a London university and a business video conference, where the researchers recorded instances of mediating meaning through translanguaging. They analyse these complex multilingual interactions in relation to the rating scales for three categories of mediation described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The data include examples of multilingual speakers introducing and explaining translingual terms, negotiating the

meaning and use of translingual vocabulary, discussing grammar and building interpersonal relations through translingual play. However, the authors found that the current writing of the CEFR rating scales does not recognise the complexity and purposefulness of multilingual exchanges such as these. Rather, the CEFR model of mediation maintains a conception of multilingualism as “two solitudes,” focussing on convention and form of language with a native speaker model. The authors suggest that recognition of the “flexible and dynamic use of multilingualism” and a focus on communication through a dynamic multilingual repertoire would better represent contemporary understandings of multilingualism. Although the multilingual mediation scales are useful to some extent, they “need to recognise contingency and dynamism,” for example through more expansively written descriptors which enable the evaluation of multilingual mediation skills such as co-construction of meaning, intercultural understanding and accommodation.

These are followed by six research projects set in school classrooms, which exemplify and analyse translanguaging teaching practices with reference to students’ linguistic and knowledge repertoires, teacher expertise, institutional expectations and community practices. The first, by Sunny Man Chu Lau examines the interconnected use of multiple languages and semiotic resources in a Canadian English-French bilingual classroom for grades 4 to 6. The researcher and two teachers collaborated on a unit with the theme “Refugees and Immigrants” to facilitate biliteracy and critical learning through writing, drama, visual arts and interaction. The research drew on two years of collaborative action research cycles and collection of data from students and teachers. In relation to translanguaging pedagogies, this study found that although even bilingual teachers may feel trepidation about teaching a new and responsive translanguaging curriculum, being guided by students, making mistakes and learning alongside them is a successful model. One important role of teachers here is to “extend, revoice and refine students’ ideas” by modelling language and supplementing students’ own resources. Explicit teaching of school literacies and skills, through scaffolding oral to written language, and teaching visual grammar supported learning through multiple semiotic modes. In relation to critical biliteracy, Lau highlights that connecting multiple languages and modalities is key to learning, and that young students should be engaged in reflexive thinking in order to reflect on their own position and take action to help others. This study emphasises that a translanguaging classroom is created through the collaboration of teachers with each other, and with students. It also highlights the role of multiple languages and multiple modes in developing critical literacy, in which deep and personal understanding of a social issue creates the potential for action, leading to both linguistic and social outcomes.

The next three papers report on research in secondary school classrooms, each presenting different contexts, examples and frames of analysis of teachers’ and students’ use of translanguaging as a resource in learning. Saskia Van Viegen sets out a “three-dimensional matrix for organising translanguaging pedagogy,” inspired by Hornberger’s (2003) continua of biliteracy. The need for such a tool reflects a move away from monolingual constructions of language and learning, towards a view of English language education which reflects the dynamic, flexible and responsive nature of the resettlement and identity formation experiences of refugee students. Van Viegen describes teaching and learning approaches that engage translanguaging practices, uncovered through ethnographic methods of participant observation and interview with teachers and their students at different secondary schools in Canada. These are learning spaces in which English is but one of the languages voiced in the classroom, and teachers value and facilitate translanguaging approaches which support language and literacy learning. The author identifies that successful strategies include creating a translanguaging space in which students use their home languages, and their peers and teachers use each other’s languages. Modelling metalinguistic inquiry and connecting learning to students’ daily lives are also key strategies for teachers. Van Viegen proposes three axes of practice that can be applied to analysing or planning translanguaging pedagogy. The first of these is the extent to which

translanguaging in the classroom is initiated by the teacher or the student. The second continuum refers to planned and spontaneous engagement with translanguaging, and the third is between translanguaging as a scaffold or a resource for learning. Additionally, Van Viegen's study emphasises that teachers who take a translanguaging stance and align their teaching to the existing practices of students, position their refugee students as having legitimate voices, experiences and ways of learning.

Sue Ollerhead, Rebecca Kirk and Isobel Crealy investigated a translanguaging approach to teaching academic English language in a multi-age secondary classroom for newly arrived students to Australia. In this school, though the student body is multilingual and multicultural, an English-only approach dominates and multilingualism is seen through a "language-as-problem" lens (Ruiz, 1984). The researchers analysed classroom practice, with a focus on the pedagogical function of languages and the impact on student engagement when teachers facilitated use of multiple languages. Part of a larger collaboration between researchers and classroom teachers, this paper focusses on a Health Sciences class where the teacher incorporated students' multilingual repertoires and funds of knowledge into written and visual resources, group activities, oral tasks and written work with the aim of teaching students to "write like scientists." She also facilitated plurilingual awareness and built a multilingual classroom by having students teach each other their languages. Although the teacher described feeling out of her comfort zone, the study showed that her translanguaging teaching strategies successfully supported students to write in English with depth, accuracy and confidence. The descriptions of translanguaging classroom resources and activities provide useful examples for teachers and draw attention to the role of students as experts in home languages and multilingual practices. This study highlights the importance of placing students' languages into school practice and policy, and contributes examples of translanguaging pedagogies to support content and language learning.

The paper by Mei French and Janet Armitage outlines how teachers in two Australian high schools seek ways to incorporate multilingual pedagogies into conventional curriculum, mainly in EAL/D classrooms. They give examples from multilingual students who engage their diverse linguistic resources in learning and assessment tasks, and delineate the roles of teacher and student in developing multilingual pedagogies. Students bring expertise as users and managers of language in family, community and educational settings, while teachers' expertise is concentrated in learning design, teaching strategies and classroom management. French and Armitage suggest principles for multilingual approaches in linguistically diverse classrooms which address the horizontal and vertical dimensions of multilingualism (Heugh, 2018), often by incorporating students' horizontal multilingual resources and practices in the content, process and products of learning, while maintaining explicit attention to vertically organised text types and language structures expected in the existing curriculum. Additional principles for learning design and pedagogy include negotiation of tasks and connection with the students' lifeworlds, as well as engagement of family members or multilingual school staff in understanding content and producing texts. Additionally, the authors suggest multilingual curriculum be developed by adjusting existing units of work rather than creating wholly new tasks. One key force in successful multilingual classroom practice in these contexts is agency – of students and teachers. Student agency in enacting and sharing multilingual practices in the classroom underpins multilingual teaching activity. Teachers exercise agency in the innovative and responsive ways in which they interpret, create and enact multilingual policy and pedagogy.

The final paper reinforces the importance of developing translanguaging pedagogical resources grounded in research, and serves as an example of how this can be achieved through a collaborative process. Corinne Seals, Vincent Olsen-Reeder, Russell Pine, Madeline Ash, and Cereace Wallace report on the process of researching translanguaging and creating translingual children's books for early childhood learners in te reo Māori and Samoan language revitalisation settings in New Zealand. Through a microethnographic study of a Māori early childhood centre (puna reo), the researchers

sought to identify features of translanguaging practices in the community as the basis for writing pedagogical translanguaging resources. The authors found that translanguaging in the puna reo was a normal part of interaction which not only supported language development but also access to tikanga Māori, or Māori world view. In creating translanguaging resources for early childhood centres, the authors identified and applied principles of translanguaging grammar, including building vocabulary across both languages, repeating ideas intersententially and maintaining fluidity intrasententially, and using three types of translanguaging, namely repeating oneself, moving between languages intrasententially and recasting the ideas of others. Speaker acceptability judgements were used as a basis to further improve the texts, and the authors also incorporated tikanga Māori and Samoan worldviews into the children's books. The researchers report that use of the translanguaging materials in classrooms encourages children to use their minority languages more. This study highlights that classroom translanguaging, like any pedagogical strategy, needs to be supported by purposefully designed resources. It puts forward important principles for producing translanguaging learning materials, as opposed to bilingual ones, that are grounded in the real-world translanguaging practice and values of the community.

Key ideas which emerge from this diverse collection of studies include factors from inside and outside of the classroom which influence ways in which translanguaging can be activated as a resource for teaching and learning. There are implications not only for educational policy and practice, but also for the direction of future research. All of these papers illustrate the central role of students in shaping the way translanguaging resources can be effectively used for teaching and learning. The resourcefulness of multilingual speakers of all ages is apparent, and this has been applied to teaching resources and classroom approaches in all of the classroom studies. In these classrooms, not only do students bring their knowledge of languages and translanguaging, but also their expertise in social and learning practices and the knowledges and values central to their own lifeworlds.

Some commonalities can also be seen in the influences on teachers as they engage translanguaging in their teaching and learning. It is apparent that there is a scarcity of teaching resources or principles on which teachers can build effective translanguaging pedagogy. In responding to this need, a balance should be struck between in-situ trialling and adaptation of teaching strategies on one hand and the theoretically grounded development of pedagogical resources on the other. A responsive and creative approach to translanguaging in the classroom necessitates that teachers entrust their students with a certain amount of control over learning activities, and then learn alongside their students. In doing this, teachers experience vulnerability and uncertainty, which may ultimately be rewarded by increased engagement and successful learning for multilingual students. As much as teachers may learn through experience, developing classroom resources based on sound linguistic and pedagogical theory is also of prime importance. What draws these approaches together, and this is reflected in all of the studies, is building educational translanguaging on an understanding of the real life translanguaging practices of multilingual speakers – whether this understanding is applied to the language, content or processes of learning.

Beyond the practice of individuals, the interaction between classroom practice and broader policy is a key consideration. The understanding of language at an institutional level shapes the way translanguaging and other multilingual practices can be valued and enacted in the classroom. To become a pedagogical resource, translanguaging must be recognised as a sociocultural skill and a legitimate dimension of linguistic and cultural practice outside and inside the school. Beyond the institutional level, there is a clear impact of educational language policy on whether translanguaging pedagogies are restricted or enabled within schools. This includes policy governing the language(s) to be used on school sites, in the curriculum and for assessment.

These studies are also connected by research approaches. Ethnographic and case study approaches have proven particularly fruitful in the majority of these studies, with multiple sources of data including participant observation and interviews, and analysis often taking a grounded approach. Additionally, collaboration between teachers and researchers through collaborative/participatory action research approaches has yielded valuable examples of classroom practice as well as enabling innovation of translanguaging pedagogies.

We hope that the diverse perspectives reflected in these studies as well as the connections between them support further development of research and practice which engages translanguaging as a resource for teaching and learning. The examples of translanguaging pedagogy and principles for analysing and planning translanguaging approaches to teaching presented in this special issue can form a starting point for teachers to develop practice which responds to their own context. There are opportunities for further research indicated in each of these studies as well as the spaces between them – such as ethnographic studies which expand on translanguaging practices in the settings examined here or address new contexts, or action-research collaborations which analyse, innovate and refine ways in which translanguaging can be used as a resource for teaching and learning.

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