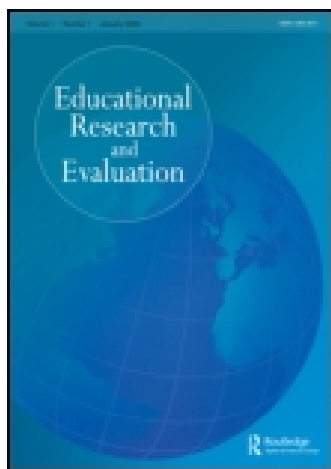


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Translanguaging: origins and development from school to street and beyond

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Translanguaging: origins and development from school to street and beyond

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The article traces the Welsh origins of “translanguaging” from the 1980s to the recent global use, analysing the development and extension of the term. It suggests that the growing popularity of the term relates to a change in the way bilingualism and multilingualism have ideologically developed not only among academics but also amid changing politics and public understandings about bilingualism. The original pedagogic advantages of a planned use of translanguaging in pedagogy and dual literacy are joined by an extended conceptualisation that perceives translanguaging as a spontaneous, everyday way of making meaning, shaping experiences, and communication by bilinguals. A new conceptualisation of translanguaging is in brain activity where learning is through 2 languages. A tripartite distinction is suggested between classroom translanguaging, universal translanguaging, and neurolinguistic translanguaging. The article concludes with a summary of recent research into translanguaging with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: translanguaging; bilingual education; Wales; translation; code-switching

Introduction

Translanguaging is a new and developing term. First used as a Welsh word in schools in Wales in the 1980s particularly by Cen Williams (1994), it was popularised, in particular but not exclusively, by two books: Baker’s *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (2001, 2006, 2011) and Ofelia García’s (2009a) *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century*. As a provisional and developing idea, “Translanguaging is the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011, p. 288). Thus, both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organise and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning. Translanguaging concerns effective communication, function rather than form, cognitive activity, as well as language production.

The aim of this article is to trace the origins of “translanguaging” in education (some of which was written in Welsh) and analyse how the term has grown and

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expanded. There is a related article on how translanguaging relates to similar ideas such as code-switching and multicompetence, and an analysis of pedagogic translanguaging (see Lewis, Jones, & Baker, in press, which includes research, related classroom strategies such as translation, constraints such as a child's language competence, relationship to the subject curriculum including for Deaf students, and contextualisation issues). The article also aims to share how recent research into translanguaging in the classroom has further elucidated the notion of the term. In doing this, the essential assumption is that there can be no exact or essentialist definition as the meaning of translanguaging will become more refined and increasingly clarified, conceptually and through further research.

The aim of the article is also to suggest that the growing popularity of the term relates to a change in the way bilingual and multilingual education, bilingualism, and multilingualism have developed not only among academics but also amid changing politics and public understandings about bilingual education and bilingualism. This is where we begin: the context in which the term developed.

Background

Wales

In the context of Wales, the first 1980s' use of "translanguaging" was in education. This needs to be understood in terms of a reaction against the historic separation of two "monolingualisms" (Welsh and English) with a difference in prestige. The portrayal of Welsh and English had often been about conflict, oppression, and suppression, of English language dominance and Welsh language endangerment. Expressions such as "language struggle", "fighting for survival", and "treachery" suggested a language battleground. When Welsh language revitalisation began to become successful in the final decades of the 20th century, it opened up the possibility of the two languages being seen as mutually advantageous in a bilingual school, person, and society. The positive concept of a competently bilingual child and adult developed post-1960s with many growing positive associations (e.g., communication, cognition, cultural, curriculum, and employment – see Baker, 2007). A symbolic example of this is the 1920s' belief that bilingualism caused mental confusion (Saer, 1922, 1923), to Jones (1959), who found bilinguals at no disadvantage in "intelligence" to monolinguals, to the publicising in Wales of the research of Peal and Lambert (1962) in the 1970s and 1980s that showed a few of the cognitive rewards of being bilingual. By the 1980s, the idea of Welsh and English as holistic, additive, and advantageous was beginning, allowing the idea of translanguaging to emerge – firstly, within education in North Wales and, subsequently, developing within that educational context especially at classroom level.

Global

In a more international context, the growing popularity of translanguaging in education can be seen as emancipation from many negative ideas about bilinguals and bilingualism in the first half of the 20th century. This includes: additive (where a second language adds to rather than replaces the first language) rather than subtractive bilingualism (García, 2009a; Lambert, 1974), holistic rather than

fractional conceptualisations of bilinguals (Grosjean, 2008, 2010), code-switching as natural in early childhood language development compared with strict one parent – one language (OPOL) compartmentalisation strategies (Baker, 2010). Recently, neurolinguistic studies have shown that both languages remain active when just one of them is being used and can be easily accessed and used by a bilingual speaker (Hoshino & Thierry, 2011; Thierry & Wu, 2007; Wu & Thierry, 2010). Thus overall, “bilingualism” moved in the 20th century from being viewed (by many but not all) as a disadvantage to an advantage, from causing mental confusion to the benefits of dual language capability, from solitudes to synergies.

In education, separating languages in the classroom by subject or topic, teacher, time (half days, whole days) has hitherto been fashionable. An example is Two Way Immersion in the United States, where languages (e.g., Spanish and English) are kept separate, in theory, by being used on alternate days, half-days, or lessons (Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2005; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). The idea of language compartmentalisation in bilingual education appears to relate to, for example, (a) giving increasing time to the majority language when assimilation is predominant; or (b) giving protected and sometimes maximal time to an indigenous or heritage language to optimise fluency, literacy, confidence, and positive attitudes around that language; (c) avoiding inefficiencies in translation and duplication; and (d) prejudices about bilinguals becoming mentally confused if two languages are active.

The tide is slowly moving away from separating languages in the classroom to the use of two or more languages in the same lesson (Baker, 2010; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009a; Fortune, Tedick, & Walker, 2008; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008; Met, 2008). This reflects the idea that children pragmatically use both of their languages in order to maximise understanding and performance in the home, street, and school. It also reflects the growing belief that content and integrated language learning (CLIL) is preferable to second language learning lessons both for successful language learning and the potential academic achievement gains when both languages are utilised in a lesson. Thus, separating languages in classrooms has begun to move towards more concurrent and integrated use of two or more languages (Baker, 2010).

Having provided a brief sketch of the historical context in which translanguaging developed in education, we now turn specifically to the origin of the term and how it has developed from the 1980s to the present.

Development of the term “translanguaging”

Cen Williams and the Welsh origins of “translanguaging”

The term “translanguaging” was created by Cen Williams, a well-known Welsh educationalist, in the 1980s, for the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson (Baker, 2003, 2011; Williams, 1994, 1996). Coined as a Welsh word “trawsieithu” by him and a colleague (Dafydd Whittall) during an in-service course for deputy head teachers in Llandudno (North Wales), it was later translated into English as “translinguifying” but then changed to “translanguaging” following a conversation between Cen Williams and Colin Baker.

The term “trawsieithu” (translanguaging) was initially coined to name a pedagogical practice which deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms: “translanguaging means that you receive information through the medium of one language (e.g., English) and use it yourself through the

medium of the other language (e.g., Welsh). Before you can use that information successfully, you must have fully understood it” (Williams, 1996, p. 64). The term remains an important feature of Welsh bilingual education, having also been adopted in other parts of the world as a key modern concept in some bilingual classrooms and communities (García, 2009a, 2009b) “capturing the imagination of those who believe that teachers and particularly students naturally use both languages to maximize learning” (Baker, 2011, p. 288).

“Translanguaging” was invented by Williams but is linked to Jacobson’s (1983, 1990) concept of purposeful concurrent uses of two languages in a bilingual classroom and Faltis’ (1990) discussion of 16 cues for switching the language medium of teaching. However, Williams (2002) emphasised that translanguaging refers to a different use of the two languages from that outlined by Jacobson and Faltis, a skill that is natural for any bilingual individual: “translanguaging entails using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and in order to augment the pupil’s ability in both languages” (p. 40). He goes on to describe the process from the child’s perspective: pupils internalise new ideas they hear, assign their own understanding to the message/concept, and simultaneously and immediately utilise the message/concept in their other language(s). In doing so, they augment and supplement the message/concept through dual language processing.

While Williams (1996) conceived of translanguaging as a pedagogic theory, he recognised that underpinning this was a cognitive process involving a two-language interchange, but having important educational outcomes. He suggested that the process of translanguaging uses various cognitive processing skills in listening and reading, the assimilation and accommodation of information, choosing and selecting from the brain storage to communicate in speaking and writing. Thus, translanguaging requires a deeper understanding than just translating as it moves from finding parallel words to processing and relating meaning and understanding (Williams, 1996).

Translanguaging thus commenced as a pedagogical theory, but with an emphasis on the child and not the teacher in parallel with the strong child-centred approach in most Welsh classrooms. Williams (2003) suggests that translanguaging focuses more on the pupils’ use of two languages (and what they are able to achieve by using both languages) than on the teachers’ role within the classroom, although it may be engineered by the teacher. Again, with an emphasis on a child’s development, Williams (2003) suggested that translanguaging often uses the stronger language to develop the weaker language thus contributing towards a potentially relatively balanced development of a child’s two languages.

There are boundaries when translanguaging can operate in the classroom that are less to do with age and nothing to do with a specific language, but about a child’s dual language competence. Consequently, Williams (2002) advocated that translanguaging is more appropriate for children who have a reasonably good grasp of both languages, and may not be valuable in a classroom when children are in the early stages of learning and developing their second language. It is a strategy for retaining and developing bilingualism rather than for the initial teaching of the second language:

it should be emphasised that the aim in Wales is to strengthen and to use both languages to a high level in order to develop balanced and confident bilingual pupils... The aim in the USA is different because there, the priority in education is to acquire the second language, English. (Williams, 2002, p. 47)

In the Welsh context, it is seen as a natural way of simultaneously developing and extending a child's bilingualism within a curriculum context whilst also deepening understanding of the subject area.

The advantages of translanguaging

Williams' publications and conference presentations became well known in Wales with dissemination in Welsh and English. In 2001, a close colleague of Williams publicised "translanguaging" through the third edition of *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, and this launched the term internationally (Baker, 2001). Developing Williams' conceptualisation of translanguaging, Baker (2001, 2006, 2011) discusses four potential educational advantages to translanguaging, thus arguing for the importance of the concept as a pedagogical practice:

- It may promote a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter.
- It may help the development of the weaker language.
- It may facilitate home-school links and co-operation.
- It may help the integration of fluent speakers with early learners.

Firstly, translanguaging may help students to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter. Taking the idea of the Vygotskian "zone of proximal development" that further learning is based on stretching pre-existing knowledge, plus the idea that the interdependence of two languages enables cross-linguistic transfer (Cummins, 2008), it can be argued that translanguaging is an effective and efficient way of enabling this:

It is possible in a monolingual teaching situation, for students to answer questions or write an essay about a subject without fully understanding it. Processing for meaning may not have occurred. Whole sentences or paragraphs can be copied or adapted out of a textbook, from the internet or from dictation by the teacher without real understanding. It is less easy to do this with "translanguaging". To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be processed and "digested". (Baker, 2011, p. 289)

Baker (2011) has recently argued that this fits into a sociocultural theory of learning (Drury, 2007; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011; Swain & Lapkin, 2005) which is very appropriate for the bilingual classroom: "the teacher can allow a student to use both languages, but in a planned, developmental and strategic manner, to maximize a student's linguistic and cognitive capability, and to reflect that language is sociocultural both in content and process" (Baker, 2011, p. 290).

The second potential advantage of translanguaging is that it may help students to develop competence (oral communication and literacy) in their weaker language, as it may prevent them from undertaking the main part of their work through the stronger language while attempting less challenging tasks in their weaker language. "'Translanguaging' attempts to develop academic language skills in both languages leading to a fuller bilingualism and biliteracy" (Baker, 2011, p. 290).

Thirdly, translanguaging may ease home-school links and co-operation, especially if the child is being educated in a language that is not understood by the parents. As translanguaging involves the reprocessing of content, it may lead to deeper understanding and learning, and this, in turn, allows the child to expand,

extend, and intensify what he has learned through one language in school through discussion with the parent at home in the other language (Baker, 2011).

Fourthly, the classroom integration of fluent first language (L1) speakers and second language (L2) learners of various levels of attainment can be facilitated by translanguaging. Furthermore, L2 ability and subject content learning can be developed concurrently if a sensitive and strategic use is made of both languages in class (Maillat & Serra, 2009). This advantage was particularly important in Williams' (1994, 1996) original discussion of translanguaging in that he argued that it develops a student's minority language, be it their first or second language.

Dual literacy and translanguaging

In Wales, the term “translanguaging” was promoted in education at the turn of the 21st century not just by academics and their writing but through central government and “official” channels, giving it acceptance and promotion and educational and professional legitimacy, alongside the concept of “transliteracy” (Baker, 2003). Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, in the discussion paper *Developing Dual Literacy* (2002) argued that “the skills involved in dual literacy are sometimes called ‘translanguaging’ or ‘transliterative’ skills” (p. 3). In this document, “dual literacy” is defined as the ability to speak, read, and write easily in both languages together with “the added ability to move confidently and smoothly between languages for different purposes” (Estyn, 2002, p. 1). The paper goes on to outline the importance of developing dual literacy from three perspectives:

- It assists individuals' intellectual development by refining their ability to think, understand, and internalise information in two languages.
- It prepares individuals to learn additional languages, by developing flexibility of mind and a positive approach towards other languages and cultures.
- It prepares individuals effectively for situations where they need to use both languages and transfer from one language to the other. (Estyn, 2002, p. 2)

Estyn emphasised that dual literacy (and “translanguaging”) in the classroom is relevant to any two or more languages, with its features of speaking and listening, reading, and writing being the same whatever the languages. As these language modes are interdependent, they are best developed in an integrated way at different levels, as exemplified below (in the context of Welsh and English):

- Speaking and Listening
 - use personal or factual detail heard in one language to give the gist of it in another;
 - express information or opinions in a formal register to a group of people who speak different languages by switching easily from one language to the other as required.
- Reading
 - use sources of information in both languages and summarise main points or opinions for different purposes, orally or in writing;
 - read a text or part of a text in one language and complete a number of tasks based on it in another language;

- Writing
 - communicate information, read or heard, from one language to the other in writing;
 - summarise information received in one language and present it accurately in writing in another language.

Estyn (2002) noted that pupils with dual literacy should demonstrate an increasing ability to:

- draw on their linguistic resources in Welsh and English to reinforce their skills in both languages;
- take full advantage of communication in both languages to transfer from one language to the other in order to fulfil specific tasks that need an understanding of both languages. (p. 4)

Extending the term beyond education: García, Hornberger, and Creese and Blackledge

What began in Wales in the early 1980s, and has developed in Welsh education circles from the 1980s to the present, has very recently caught the imagination of expert North American and English educationalists. In particular, the term has been generalised from school to street, from pedagogical practices to everyday cognitive processing, from classroom lessons to all contexts of a bilingual's life.

Ofelia García (2009a, 2009b) valuably extended the term “translanguaging” beyond pedagogy to mean more than pedagogic variation of input and output. She regards it as a strategy that bilinguals use to make meaning, shape their experiences, gain understanding and knowledge, and make sense of their bilingual worlds through the everyday use of two languages: “translanguaging is indeed a powerful mechanism to construct understandings, to include others, and to mediate understandings across language groups” (García, 2009a, pp. 307–308). Indeed, she argues that it is impossible to live in communities such as New York and communicate among multilinguals without translanguaging (García, 2009b, p. 151). Based on observation of translanguaging practices in bilingual communities, García's considerations of translanguaging generalised the concept from academia to the more complex everyday realities of home and street (García, 2009a).

García (2009a, p. 2011) views translanguaging – “or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices” (2009a, p. 44) – as an approach to bilingualism that is centred not on languages but on the observable, natural communicative practice of bilinguals and, if properly interpreted and understood and practiced in schools, as a means to enhance pupils' cognitive, language and literacy abilities:

Translanguaging includes code-switching, the shift between two languages in context, and it also includes translation; however it differs from both of these simple practices in that it refers to the *process* by which bilingual students perform bilingually in the myriad ways of classrooms – reading, writing, taking notes, discussing, signing etc. Translanguaging is not only a way to “scaffold” instruction, to make sense of learning and language; rather, translanguaging is part of the metadiscursive regimes that students in the twenty-first century must perform (García, 2011, p. 147)

In accord with the Welsh educational origins of translanguaging, García includes the classroom as an environment where translanguaging is observed but suggests that in a bilingual curriculum, translanguaging is more flexible and evident than that described by Williams (García, 2009a, p. 302). She argues that translanguaging is not just a matter of arranging language input and output as it occurs naturally in a bilingual classroom where children move between their languages spontaneously and pragmatically (García 2009a, 2009b). She suggests that translanguaging is increasingly and serendipitously prevalent in many bilingual classrooms:

Despite curricular arrangements that separate languages, the most prevalent bilingual practice in the bilingual education classrooms is that of translanguaging. Because of the increased recognition of the bilingual continuum that is present in schools and communities that are revitalizing their languages, or schools where more than one language group is present, linguistically integrated group work is prevalent in many bilingual classrooms. Here, students *appropriate* the use of language, and although teachers may carefully plan when and how languages are to be used, children themselves use their entire linguistic repertoires flexibly. Often this language use appropriation by students is done *surreptitiously*. (García, 2009a, p. 304)

García and Williams agree that translanguaging is a most effective means of learning, with García arguing that translanguaging is important in a movement from relatively monolingual or separatist language practices in the classroom to the cognitive and communicative advantages of translanguaging:

It is important for bilingual educators and bilingual students to recognize the importance and value of translanguaging practices. Too often bilingual students who translanguage suffer linguistic shame because they have been burdened with monoglossic ideologies that value only monolingualism ... And too often bilingual teachers hide their natural translanguaging practices from administrators and others because they have been taught to believe that only monolingual ways of speaking are “good” and valuable. Yet, they know that to teach effectively in bilingual classrooms, they must translanguage. (García, 2009a, p. 308)

García and Sylvan (2011) have further developed the notion of translanguaging as an effective means of learning by research in United States International High Schools, where, for example, children speak over 55 languages, and hence “dynamic plurilingual pedagogy” is essential. They suggest that translanguaging best operates in a context where seven principles are engaged: heterogeneity in language is celebrated, collaboration among both teachers and students, learner-centred classrooms, language and content integration, inclusive plurilingual use from students, experiential learning, and local autonomy and responsibility. In terms of “plurilingualism from the students”, García and Sylvan define this as “Rather than having a structure where language practices are controlled by a rigid external language education policy, the students use diverse language practices for purposes of learning, and teachers use inclusive language practices for purposes of teaching” (p. 397).

Another eminent US educationalist has recently joined García in both substantiating and extending the meaning of translanguaging. Nancy Hornberger (2003) and Hornberger and Link (2012) provided a theoretical framework in which translanguaging can be conceptualised and contextualised while noting its importance in education. Drawing on her *Continua of Biliteracy* (Hornberger,

2003), it is shown how educational contexts can “offer new spaces to be exploited for innovative programs, curricula, and practices that recognize, value, and build on the multiple, mobile communicative repertoires, translanguaging and transnational literacy practices of students and their families” (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 274).

From a similar ethnographic and ecological perspective to Hornberger, UK scholars Creese and Blackledge (2010; also Blackledge & Creese, 2010) profitably utilise the multilingual context of England to extend the importance of translanguaging in the classroom. Drawing on their ethnographic research in complementary schools (established by a language community outside the state sector to encourage the learning of a heritage language and culture) using Bengali, Mandarin Chinese, Gujarati, and Turkish, they endorse translanguaging in the bilingual classroom as a flexible bilingual pedagogy for learning and teaching. Based on ecological perspectives, they portray the language fluidity and movement in classrooms that is endemic to “translanguaging” and “heteroglossia”. They argue that this “flexible bilingualism is used by teachers as an instructional strategy to make links for classroom participants between the social, cultural, community, and linguistic domains of their lives” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 112). Blackledge and Creese (2010) suggest that code-switching in classrooms has hitherto been seen as “embarrassing”, “wrong”, “dilemma-filled”, “bad practice”, “feelings of guilt”, “squandering our bilingual resources” as the two languages “contaminate” each other. Sometimes, the socioeconomically disadvantaged children in the classroom are the ones most using code-switching, thus giving language mixing less desirable associations. Instead, translanguaging has the potential for cross-language transfer, flexibility in language and pedagogic classroom approaches, ideas more easily conveyed, understood, and relayed, and the permeability of learning across languages.

However, Blackledge and Creese (2010) add a note of caution in connection with the development of bilingual strategies and pedagogies based on flexible bilingualism, with the importance of responding to local circumstances being emphasised. “Although we can acknowledge that across all linguistically diverse contexts moving between languages is natural, how to harness and build on this will depend on the socio-political and historical environment in which such practice is embedded and the local ecologies of schools and classrooms” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 107). This is particularly true in the context of a minority language co-existing with a majority language in and outside of the classroom. For example, in Welsh-medium schools in anglicised areas, the promotion of flexible language arrangements such as translanguaging could easily encourage pupils to focus more on the majority language (English). In such situations, teachers are cautious about its use in order to preserve and safeguard the minority language within the classroom (Jones & Lewis, *in press*).

A threefold distinction in translanguaging

The above discussion of the development of the term shows it is dynamic, and that the concept is likely to continue to develop in meaning and be more fully articulated as it becomes examined in varying sociolinguistic arenas, and benefits from cross-disciplinary consideration by linguists, sociolinguists, educationalists, and neurolinguists. Its effectiveness as a classroom practice is still only beginning to be

understood with the effectiveness of translanguaging strategies yet to be researched, evaluated, and critiqued.

For the moment, a tripartite distinction may be helpful. The historical development of the term suggests that it began with (a) classroom translanguaging, and this has become a new line of inquiry in education research (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Jones & Lewis, in press; Lewis et al., in press; Menken & García, 2010). (b) Various scholars discussed above have extended the term from the life of a classroom to the lives of bilinguals irrespective of context and particularly for gaining understandings, everyday communication, and achievement in interactions irrespective of site. A plethora of similar terms (e.g., metrolingualism, polylinguaging, polylingual languaging, heteroglossia, codemeshing, translingual practice, flexible bilingualism, multilinguaging, and hybrid language practices) makes this extension of translanguaging appear in need of focused explication and more precise definition. Such varied terms are competitive with translanguaging for academic usage and acceptance (Lewis et al., in press).

(c) The most recent development is the study of translanguaging at the neural level. Guillaume Thierry (<http://bilingualism.bangor.ac.uk/people/GThierry.php.en>) is currently using neuroscience methods such as event-related potentials (ERPs) to test the effect of processing input in one language followed by content-relevant production in another language. The experiment involves manipulating the languages used by bilinguals and monolingual control groups at encoding and retrieval. In a unilingual sequence, participants encode definitions presented in one language and retrieve related object names in the same language. In the translanguaging sequence, subjects encode definitions in one language but retrieve and produce names in their other language. ERP measures that index semantic integration efforts in the brain (the N400 wave) are collected to study the quality of the neural representations constructed in the unilingual and translanguaging conditions. Early findings show that semantic relatedness is greater for objects learnt in translanguaging encoding-retrieval than in monolingual encoding-retrieval. This suggests that translanguaging allows more effective learning due to cross-language semantic remapping that occurs when the encoded information in one language is retrieved to enable production in the other language.

Thus, a classification in the use of the term “translanguaging” may be: (a) Classroom Translanguaging (planned and serendipitous) with a pedagogic emphasis; (b) Universal Translanguaging with cognitive, contextual, and cultural aspects. While Universal Translanguaging includes the classroom as one context among many, retaining “classroom translanguaging” enables a discussion about learning and teaching style and curriculum planning. (c) Neurolinguistic Translanguaging is a new field that researches brain activity modulations when both languages are activated, and holds much for the future.

Research into translanguaging

Current pedagogic research in Wales

Various recent articles have shared some of the early research into translanguaging in the pedagogic setting (Canagarajah, 2011a, 2011b; Creese & Blackledge, 2010, 2011; García & Sylvan, 2011; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Wei, 2010). From Wales, two recent publications have shared the results of a 5-year research project into dual use of languages in Welsh classrooms for content learning, especially

translanguaging (Jones & Lewis, in press; Lewis et al., in press). The researchers observed (semistructured, nonparticipant) 100 “bilingual” lessons in 29 Welsh primary and secondary schools plus interviewed teachers and pupils, consulted with experts, and ran workshops to mutually explore ideas of translanguaging. While translation was frequently witnessed, and while students influenced the language approach in a lesson more than expected, translanguaging was present in approximately a third of all lessons as the only or dominant approach. For example, 10–11-year-old students watched an English medium DVD, discussed the content in Welsh, and completed written work in Welsh. The teacher deliberately used translanguaging to enable language development in both Welsh and English, and to optimise cognitive development and content learning.

There were also plentiful recorded examples of students themselves purposely using both languages to increase understanding. For example, in completing a task in Welsh, they used the internet in English (and then discussed in Welsh). Statistical and qualitative analyses of the 100 lessons also showed that translanguaging was related to: primary classrooms in the age range 7 to 11 more than secondary classrooms, plus arts and humanities content rather than sciences, mathematics, inter-disciplinary, and practical areas of the curriculum.

Future research

The above discussion suggests that translanguaging has begun to be researched in terms of teaching and learning style, and, previously, the ongoing experiments on translanguaging and brain functioning have been outlined. A wealth of future research is needed to establish when, where, and how translanguaging is a suitable teaching approach. The discussion in this paper is designed to help conceptualise such research (e.g., age of children, language proficiency of the students, subject/discipline, curriculum aims and goals, language balance of the classroom, language aims of the school and society, student motivations and preferences).

There are wider themes also for classroom translanguaging research. For example, how does translanguaging extend to the education of Deaf children using sign language and literacy in another language? For children with different forms of special needs (e.g., dyslexia, language delay, stammering, less cognitively able), does translanguaging work for them as well? Does translanguaging have benefits with homework (e.g., when a parent speaks a different language to the school language)? How does translanguaging relate to performance and achievement in academic outcomes, for example, tests, assessments, and examinations? To what extent, and in what way, does it allow more effective learning? Does it help emergent bilingual students gain both a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter as well as develop competence in a weaker language, or is it more of one rather than the other? Is it appropriate at preschool and in higher education as well as primary and secondary schooling? Is it appropriate in multilingual classrooms where three languages are being utilised, or in classrooms without teachers who are fully competent bilinguals? When one of the classroom languages is an “immigrant” language, then how does translanguaging enable a balance to be kept alongside the higher status dominant language?

When universal translanguaging is researched outside the classroom (e.g., playground, sports field), then the context, site, purpose, and nature of translanguaging is particularly open to ethnographic approaches as there are social,

situated, and status dimensions, for example, that join the cognitive and communication dimensions that García (2009a) discusses. There are questions such as: How consciously aware are bilinguals in using two languages for purposeful use of two languages that goes beyond the linguistics of code-switching and into improving understanding, ease of conceptualisation, and transmission of thinking? How do we depict everyday translanguaging that occurs in thinking, interpersonal negotiations, understanding of meaning and is situated within changing scenery, co-actors, audience, expected lines of a play, and a moving and not static storyline? Initially, universal translanguaging has been about efficient and effective communication and cognitive processing. However, a sociolinguistic and anthropological approach needs adding to make research on translanguaging multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary.

This suggests that while translanguaging is a new and developing term, the idea that both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organise and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning needs multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. While such research will be qualitative and quantitative, multimethod, and multilingual, the origins as a reaction against fractional bilingualism, two solitudes and the ideology of language separation in early childhood development, dual language schooling and in diglossic language planning, is a reminder that translanguaging is also a valued view of bilinguals that relates to policy, planning, and politics at home and school, regionally and globally.

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