

Translanguaging classroom discourse: pushing limits, breaking boundaries

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In fond memory of Professor Peter Martin (1949-2009) and Professor Gunther Kress (1940-2019).

In March 2009, Li Wei and Peter Martin published a special issue of the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Volume 12, Number 2) on 'Conflicts and Tensions in Classroom Codeswitching' that they jointly edited. Peter passed away unexpectedly shortly after that, on 24th April. The present volume is a sequel to that special issue and a tribute to Peter. He was a great friend of ours, and a scholar who devoted much of his life to bilingual education and social justice.

The overarching aim of the 2009 Li and Martin volume was to bring together a range of studies, from different contexts, on the conflicts and tensions between language policy and codeswitching practices in the classroom. This was important because, as stated in the introduction (Li and Martin 2009 Li, W., and P. Martin. 2009. "Conflicts and Tensions in Classroom Codeswitching. A Special Thematic Issue of The." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12: 2.[Web of Science®], [Google Scholar]), whilst bilingual language users routinely switched between different languages in their everyday social interaction, in educational contexts, especially in the classroom, codeswitching was deemed inappropriate or unacceptable, as a deficit or dysfunctional mode of interaction, and in many cases prohibited by policy. Indeed, the studies in that special issue showed the conflicts and tensions between the way codeswitching in the classroom occurred and the language policies imposed from above which were 'imbued with and influenced by pervasive and persistent monolingual ideologies' (p. 117). In particular, teachers who allowed their pupils to use their mother tongues that were not the school's language of instruction, or in Probyn's words 'smuggling the vernacular into the classroom' (2009 Probyn, M. 2009. "'Smuggling the Vernacular into the Classroom': Conflicts and Tensions in Classroom Codeswitching in Township/Rural Schools in South Africa." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12 (2): 123–136. doi:10.1080/13670050802153137.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science®], [Google Scholar], 123), were accused of being guilty of sabotaging the pupils' learning (see also Martin 2005 Martin, P. (2005). "'Safe' Language Practices in Two Rural Schools in Malaysia: Tensions between Policy and Practice." In *Decolonisation, Globalisation: Language-in-education Policy and Practice*, edited by A. M. Y. Lin and P. W. Martin, 74–97. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.[Crossref], [Google Scholar], 76). Angel Lin collaborated with Peter in critiquing the language-of-instruction policies in many post-colonial contexts (Lin and Martin 2005 Lin, A. M. Y., and P. Martin, Eds.. 2005. *Decolonisation, Globalization: Language-In-Education Policy and Practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]) and provided further evidence of the conflicts and tensions between policy and practice in classroom interaction involving bilingual learners and teachers.

Ten years on, the tensions and conflicts between everyday flexible multilingual practices of the individual, including teachers and pupils, and the societal-imposed policies of language-of-instruction in schools still remain in most parts of the world, despite all the efforts by researchers and practitioners to promote the benefits of multilingualism. More work that focuses on the classroom is therefore needed. Readers will notice a new term, namely, Translanguaging. No doubt people will have questions about the significance of adopting this term in place of Codeswitching (Lin, Wu, and Lemke forthcoming Lin, A. M. Y., Y. Wu, and J. L. Lemke. forthcoming. "It Takes a

Village to Research a Village': Conversations with Jay Lemke on Contemporary Issues in Translanguaging." In *Critical Plurilingual Pedagogies: Struggling toward Equity Rather than Equality*, edited by S. Lau and S. V. V. Stille. Switzerland: Springer. [Google Scholar]). This is not the space to give a full historical account of the development of the concept of Translanguaging. Readers are referred to the two articles by Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012a Lewis, G., B. Jones, and C. Baker. 2012a. "Translanguaging: Origins and Development from School to Street and Beyond." *Educational Research and Evaluation* 18 (7): 641–654. doi:10.1080/13803611.2012.718488.[Taylor & Francis Online] , [Google Scholar], 2012b Lewis, G., B. Jones, and C. Baker. 2012b. "Translanguaging: Developing Its Conceptualisation and Contextualisation." *Educational Research and Evaluation* 18 (7): 655–670. doi:10.1080/13803611.2012.718490.[Taylor & Francis Online] , [Google Scholar]) that trace the origins and developments of the term. Significantly, (i) the term came out of bilingual education, particularly minority language revitalisation (in the case of Cen William's original work, 1994 Williams, C. 1994. 'Arfarniad o Ddulliau Dysgu ac Addysgu yng Nghyd-destun Addysg Uwchradd Ddwyieithog, [An evaluation of teaching and learning methods in the context of bilingual secondary education], Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wales, Bangor doi:10.3168/jds.S0022-0302(94)77044-2[Crossref] , [Google Scholar]) and the education of minoritised learners (in Ofelia Garcia's work, 2009 Garcia, O. 2009. *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Wiley. [Google Scholar]); and (ii) it was coined, by Baker (2001 Baker, C. 2001. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 3rd ed. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. [Google Scholar]), by adding trans to languaging, a concept that had been in existence for some time and associated with a different group of researchers in the sociocultural theories of second language acquisition (most notably Swain's work, e.g. 2006 Swain, M. 2006. "Languaging, Agency and Collaboration in Advanced Second Language Learning." In *Advanced Language Learning: The Contributions of Halliday and Vygotsky*, edited by H. Byrnes, 95–108. London: Continuum. [Google Scholar]), Systemic and Functional Linguistics (e.g. Halliday 1985 Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). "Systemic Background." In *Systemic Perspectives on Discourse*, Vol. 1: Selected Theoretical Papers from the Ninth International Systemic Workshop, Benson and Greaves (eds). Praeger [Google Scholar]), anthropological linguistics (e.g. Becker 1991 Becker, A. L. 1991. "Language and Languaging." *Language and Communication* 11: 33–35. doi:10.1016/0271-5309(91)90013-L.[Crossref] , [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]), and distribution language and cognition (e.g. Love 2004 Love, N. 2004. "Cognition and the Language Myth." *Language Sciences* 26 (6): 525–544. doi:10.1016/j.langsci.2004.09.003.[Crossref] , [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]; Thibault 2011 Thibault, P. J. 2011. "First-Order Languaging Dynamics and Second-Order Language: The Distributed Language View." *Ecological Psychology* 23 (3): 210–245. doi:10.1080/10407413.2011.591274.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]). These two basic facts are significant in that the pedagogical practices that the term advocates are intrinsically linked to the way language is conceptualised, a way that is quite different from how language is conceptualised and operationalised in codeswitching research and practice.

Swain (2006 Swain, M. 2006. "Languaging, Agency and Collaboration in Advanced Second Language Learning." In *Advanced Language Learning: The Contributions of Halliday and Vygotsky*, edited by H. Byrnes, 95–108. London: Continuum. [Google Scholar]) used the term Languaging to describe the cognitive process of negotiating and producing meaningful, comprehensible output as part of language learning as a 'means to mediate cognition', that is to understand and to problem-solve and 'a process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language' (p. 97). Halliday (1985 Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). "Systemic Background." In *Systemic Perspectives on*

Discourse, Vol. 1: Selected Theoretical Papers from the Ninth International Systemic Workshop, Benson and Greaves (eds). Praeger [Google Scholar]) regarded language as a 'meaning potential' and linguistics as 'the study of how people exchange meanings by languaging' (p. 193). Becker (1991) [Becker, A. L. 1991. "Language and Languaging." *Language and Communication* 11: 33–35. doi:10.1016/0271-5309(91)90013-L.[Crossref], [Web of Science®], [Google Scholar]] argued that 'there is no such thing as Language, only continual languaging, an activity of human beings in the world' (p. 34). He reiterated Ortega Y Gasset's (1957) [Ortega Y Gasset, J. 1957. "What People Say: Language. Toward a New Linguistics." In *Man and People*, Ch. II, edited by W. R. Trask, 222–257. W.W. Norton. [Google Scholar]] argument that language should not be regarded 'as an accomplished fact, as a thing made and finished, but as in the process of being made' (p. 242). Love (2004) [Love, N. 2004. "Cognition and the Language Myth." *Language Sciences* 26 (6): 525–544. doi:10.1016/j.langsci.2004.09.003.[Crossref], [Web of Science®], [Google Scholar]] set out to challenge what they call 'the code view' of language that sought to identify abstract verbal patterns, morphosyntax, or lexicogrammar, divorced from cognitive, affective, and bodily dynamics in real-time and specify the rules for mapping forms to meanings and meanings to forms. He regards language thus identified and specified as a second-order construct, the product of first-order activity, languaging, an activity that is 'radically heterogeneous and involves the interaction of processes on many different time-scales, including neural, bodily, situational, social, and cultural processes and events' (Thibault 2017) [Thibault, P. J. 2017. "The Reflexivity Of Human Languaging and Nigel Love's Two Orders Of Language," *Language Sciences*. 61: 74–85. doi:10.1016/j.langsci.2016.09.014[Crossref], [Google Scholar], 76). The languaging perspective sees the divides between the linguistic, the paralinguistic, and the extralinguistic dimensions of human communication as nonsensical and emphasizes therefore what the researchers call the orchestration of the neural-bodily-worldly skills of languaging. In particular, it highlights the importance of feeling, experience, history, memory, subjectivity, and culture. As Li (2018) [Li, W. 2018. "Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language." *Applied Linguistics* 39 (1): 9–30. doi:10.1093/applin/amx039.[Crossref], [Web of Science®], [Google Scholar]] points out, although these specific scholars do not talk about ideology and power, it is entirely conceivable that these too play important roles in languaging.

Both the trans- prefix and the – ing suffix in Translanguaging are significant. Garcia and Li (2014) [García, O., and W. Li. 2014. *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.[Crossref], [Google Scholar], 3) talked about three senses of the trans-: (1) a trans-system and trans-spaces that facilitate fluid practices that not only go between but more importantly go beyond socially constructed language and education systems, structures and practices to engage diverse students' multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities. (2) its transformative nature; i.e. 'as new configurations of language practices and education are generated, old understandings and structures are released, thus transforming not only subjectivities, but also cognitive and social structures. In so doing, orders of discourses shift and the voices of Others come to the forefront, relating then translanguaging to criticality, critical pedagogy, social justice and the linguistic human rights agenda' (p. 3). (3) 'the trans-disciplinary consequences of the languaging and education analysis, providing a tool for understanding not only language practices on the one hand and education on the other, but also human sociality, human cognition and learning, social relations and social structures' (p.3). At the same time, the – ing suffix urges us to focus on the

momentariness, instantaneity and the transient nature of human communication, in the present case, the ongoing activities in the classroom setting.

The original discussion of Translanguaging as a pedagogical practice by Williams and Baker included modalities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As it has been developed as a theoretical concept, Translanguaging embraces the multimodal social semiotic view that linguistic signs are part of a wider repertoire of modal resources that sign makers have at their disposal and that carry particular socio-historical and political associations (Kress 2015 Kress, G. 2015. "Semiotic Work: Applied Linguistics and a Social Semiotic Account of Multimodality." *Aila Review* 28 (1): 49–71.[Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]). It foregrounds the different ways language users employ, create, and interpret different kinds of signs to communicate across contexts and participants and perform their different subjectivities. In particular, Translanguaging highlights the ways in which language users make use of the tensions and conflicts among different signs, because of the socio-historical associations the signs carry with them, in a cycle of resemiotization and transformation. In a similar effort, Angel Lin builds on Halliday's notion of 'trans-semiotic' (2013 Halliday, M. A. K. 2013. "Languages, and Language, in Today's Changing World." *Research Seminar Delivered at the University of Hong Kong* 23 (October): 2013. [Google Scholar]) and develops the term 'trans-semiotizing' to highlight the tension-filled yet seamless flow of entanglement of multiple meaning making resources (Lin 2019 Lin, A. M. Y. 2019. "Theories of Trans/Languaging and Trans-Semiotizing: Implications for Content-Based Education Classrooms." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 22 (1): 5–16. doi:10.1080/13670050.2018.1515175.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]). Hawkins (2018 Hawkins, M. R. 2018. "Transmodalities and Transnational Encounters: Fostering Critical Cosmopolitan Relations." *Applied Linguistics* 39 (1): 55–77. doi:10.1093/applin/amx048.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]) proposes the notion of 'transmodalities', linked to critical cosmopolitanism, to embrace the processes of semiosis across place, space, and time that transcend the local, to become translocal and transnational, indexing the diversity of actors engaged in new configurations of communicative engagements in a globalized, technologized world.

In the last ten years or so, ample studies have shown that Translanguaging can be an effective pedagogical practice in a variety of educational contexts where the school language or the language-of-instruction is different from the languages of the learners. 'By deliberately breaking the artificial and ideological divides between indigenous versus immigrant, majority versus minority, and target versus mother tongue languages, Translanguaging empowers both the learner and the teacher, transforms the power relations, and focuses the process of teaching and learning on making meaning, enhancing experience, and developing identity (Garcia 2009 Garcia, O. 2009. *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Wiley. [Google Scholar]; Creese and Blackledge 2015 Creese, A., and A. Blackledge. 2015. "Translanguaging and Identity in Educational Settings." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35: 20–35. doi:10.1017/S0267190514000233.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar])' (Li 2018 Li, W. 2018. "Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language." *Applied Linguistics* 39 (1): 9–30. doi:10.1093/applin/amx039.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®] , [Google Scholar]).

In the title of the present special issue, Translanguaging is used as a verb in present progressive and without the preposition 'in'. As William's and Baker emphasized in their conceptualization of Translanguaging, it is not an object or a linguistic structural phenomenon to describe and analyse; it

is a practice that involves dynamic and functionally integrated use of different languages and language varieties, but more importantly a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond language(s). It takes us beyond the linguistics of systems and speakers to a linguistics of participation (Li 2018 Li, W. 2018. "Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language." *Applied Linguistics* 39 (1): 9–30. doi:10.1093/applin/amx039.[Crossref], [Web of Science®], [Google Scholar]). Translanguaging pedagogy therefore cannot and should not be reduced to allowing the pupils to use their non-language-of-instruction L1s in class, nor to mixing and switching between linguistic codes only. It is an action to transform classroom discourses, including both the discourses by the participants of the classroom activities and the discourses about the classroom. When we talk about the classroom, we tend to have an immediate image of a confined physical space with specified and often hierarchical role sets and planned learning objectives and tasks. Translanguaging classroom discourse is not only about encouraging fluid multilingual practices within the limits and boundaries set up by these role sets, objectives and tasks, but to aim at challenging and transforming them. Whilst we fully accept that Translanguaging pedagogy alone cannot solve the larger issues of racism, classism, colonialism, and domination of reified standard codes and unequal power relations that stigmatize students' communicative repertoires (García and Lin 2018 García, O., and A. M. Y. Lin. 2018. "English and Multilingualism: A Contested History." In *Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*, edited by P. Seargent, 77–92. London: Routledge.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]), it nonetheless stands a good chance of disrupting the hierarchy of languages, transforming both teachers and students' attitudes towards their diverse meaning making resources, and enabling students' full participation in knowledge co-making (García and Lin 2016 García, O., and A. M. Y. Lin. 2016. "Translanguaging in Bilingual Education." In *Bilingual and Multilingual Education (Encyclopedia of Language and Education)*, edited by O. García, A. M. Y. Lin, and S. May, 117–130. Switzerland: Springer.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]). We want to see the classroom as a process through which learning takes place as well as a space for co-participation in the co-construction of knowledge by the pupils and teachers.

The present issue gathers together a range of studies based in a variety of sociolinguistic, economic-political and educational contexts. Margie Probyn, who contributed to the Li and Martin (2009 Li, W., and P. Martin. 2009. "Conflicts and Tensions in Classroom Codeswitching. A Special Thematic Issue of The." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12: 2.[Web of Science®], [Google Scholar]) volume, examines the process of construction of science knowledge in a multilingual classroom in South Africa and demonstrates how pedagogical translanguaging challenges the monoglossic and post-colonial orthodoxies. The study shows that despite significant policy changes over a quarter century into the democratic era, the historic imbalances and inequalities of apartheid education have remained. The educational achievement gap between the majority of learners from working class and poor families who attend historically black township and rural schools and comprise 80 per cent of the school-going population a minority of middle class learners who attend well-resourced schools that were formerly reserved for white learners and some formerly Indian and 'coloured' schools is very wide. And this gap is most notable in science education. Probyn argues that the prevailing monoglossic orientations to education that originated in the apartheid era are a major contributing factor to the gap. Through the analysis of classroom data, Probyn suggests that pedagogical translanguaging would be important and necessary in supporting learners' opportunity to learn science. However, Probyn warns that translanguaging on its own is not a sufficient condition for the improvement of the disadvantaged learners' learning of

science. Broader issues of access, equity and social justice need to be dealt with to provide a safe space for translanguaging pedagogies which in turn open up opportunities for science learning.

Also dealing with the educational and social inequalities in the South African context, Leketi Makalela shows how translanguaging is effective in deepening comprehension and cultivating a high sense of self. His study reveals a high prevalence of translanguaging in the classroom that reflects infinite relations of dependency between various linguistic resources employed by both teachers and students. Such dynamic practice is interpreted within the African value system of ubuntu (I x We): I am because you are. Makalela argues that this cultural competence can be leveraged for successful learning and teaching. He makes a number of recommendations on how the universals of Ubuntu translanguaging as a regime for multilingualism becomes transformative in enhancing epistemic access and identity positions of multilingual students.

Wu and Lin take us to content-language-integrated learning (CLIL) classrooms in Hong Kong. Using Lin's notion of 'trans-semiotizing', they offer a fine-grained multimodal analysis of the interactions and activities in a biology class to show the teacher used embodiment and spatial repertoire, as well as multilingual resources, to co-construct knowledge with the learners. Post-lesson interviews and survey support their argument that such practices had a positive impact on the students' learning and their development of a positive attitude towards multilingualism.

Despite the positive effects of translanguaging pedagogies as the studies in this collection show, there are real challenges in practice. And Viniti Vaish's study clearly illustrates the difficulties in implementing a translanguaging pedagogy in an English reading class in Singapore. Although most of the pupils in the class in question from multilingual backgrounds and have languages other than English at home, they seem to have a strong negative view towards the teacher's attempt to use the mother tongues of the pupils in the learning support programme. The dominant ideologies and educational systems are as such that even a limited understanding of translanguaging in the sense of using the pupils' other languages to help improve their vocabulary, grammar and comprehension in English is being resisted. This study has important implications for teachers, policy makers and advocates of translanguaging pedagogy that unless the ideologies and systems changed, multilingual education where all languages are equally valued, learners with languages other than the dominant national one will continue to struggle with access to the process of knowledge construction.

Fallas Escobar's paper presents an analysis of a translanguaging by design activity he himself has conducted with students on an EFL program at a Costa Rican university. He used multimodal cues to stimulate discussions amongst the students using their multilingual repertoire. Follow-up interviews reveal some of the affordances and constraints of purposefully bringing translanguaging into educational programs that have been dominated by monolingual language ideologies. The study is an attempt at transforming translanguaging from a furtive to a purposefully planned practice, which is needed in challenging monolingual and language separation ideologies in EFL programs generally and in disrupting the trend in EFL education to view students simply as learners, and not as emergent bilinguals with a complex linguistic repertoire and intricate language skills.

Josh Prada's study explores how translanguaging serves as vehicle to help re-configure linguistic attitudinal and ideological structures in a university Spanish course in the US for heritage speakers. It focuses on the links between exposure to and engagement in classroom translanguaging and the participants' challenging of traditional monoglossic ideologies governing folk imaginary regarding

language purity, standard, and appropriate academic discourse. Using ethnographic observations and semi-structured individual interviews, the study unveils what Prada calls 'a double-action' whereby translanguaging creates a sociolinguistic frame that challenges widely held linguistic attitudes and ideologies about the nature of flexible linguistic practices, as it stimulates their normalization and inclusion in a context that has traditionally been closed to such practices.

Carla Jonsson carried out an ethnographic study of four English language lessons in a so-called bilingual school in Stockholm, Sweden, where languages are kept separate as parallel monolingualisms in planning and in the schedule and where the language competences of the teachers are also 'separated' in the sense that teachers who use Spanish as their main medium of instruction are expected to understand and speak Swedish whilst the teachers of Swedish and other subjects are not expected to understand or speak Spanish. Jonsson shows, however, that Translanguaging is a common practice employed both by the teacher and the students, especially in their out of class interaction. Nevertheless, these practices are used seemingly without reflection and are not made explicit in the language classroom. There remains a struggle between translanguaging in classroom discourse and parallel monolingualisms. Jonsson advocates making the pedagogical gains associated with translanguaging explicit by discussing the joint communicative repertoire between the teachers and the students and encouraging them to move across and beyond languages to acquire and co-construct knowledge and competences in new languages and to negotiate linguistic and semiotic resources, making links between and across them as well as integrating and entangling them.

Also in Sweden, Annaliina Gynne examines multilingual interactions in an upper secondary Language Introduction Programme (LIP) classroom. The programme offers recently arrived immigrant youth (ages 16–19) education where the emphasis is on the majority language of the surrounding society, Swedish, but where teaching can also include other subjects. Drawing on ethnographic data and micro-analysis of classroom interaction, Gynne shows the ways in which students and teachers engage in (trans)languaging and language policing processes, and reflects upon the tension between seeking to teach and learn through linguistic diversity and participants' understandings of what kind of languaging is appropriate.

We are extremely grateful to Ofelia Garcia who took time to read and comment on the contributions in this special issue. Her powerful Coda reminds us what motivates the growing research on Translanguaging classroom discourse.

As we completed the editing of this volume, we lost a dear friend and colleague Professor Gunther Kress on 20 June 2019. His social semiotic view of language deeply influenced our work.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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