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INTRODUCTION



Translanguaging in School Contexts: International Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at translanguaging and its development and summarizes the articles in this special issue. The difference between code-switching and translanguaging is explained as related to an emerging paradigm in the study of bilingualism and multilingualism. This paradigm implies a holistic conceptualization and a new vision of languages, speakers, and repertoires. The diversity of contexts in which bilingual and multilingual education takes place can shape teachers' and researchers' perspectives on translanguaging. In this article, a distinction between pedagogical translanguaging and spontaneous translanguaging is proposed. Pedagogical translanguaging refers to specific teaching strategies and spontaneous translanguaging refers to discursive practices used by bilingual and multilingual speakers. The studies in this special issue exemplify the way in which translanguaging can offer more learning opportunities and negotiate social identities. They also show that there are important contextual differences regarding the medium of instruction, language, societal and educational aims, and the typical type of child.

KEYWORDS

Bilingual education;
multilingual education;
multilingualism;
translanguaging

The concept of *translanguaging* is widely used in educational contexts in different parts of the world. Translanguaging was first used as a pedagogical strategy in bilingual schools in Wales (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012), and nowadays it is often used to refer to discursive practices in the context of bilingual and multilingual education in other parts of the world. The term *translanguaging*, particularly among researchers who work on bilingual education in the United States, is often used to refer to code-switching, but translanguaging implies a different perspective. García and Li Wei (2014) explain the difference in the following terms:

Translanguaging differs from the notion of code-switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages, but to the speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire. (p. 22)

According to García and Li Wei (2014), code-switching and translanguaging are different. Code-switching takes as its starting point separate grammars for each of the languages, and translanguaging focuses on the language practices that are used in bilingual communication. Translanguaging implies a holistic conceptualization of bilingualism and multilingualism and can be understood as part of an emerging paradigm in the study of bi/multilingualism and language acquisition. This paradigm is characterized by using a holistic view of language and implies a new vision of language, speakers, and repertoires. The boundaries between languages are becoming softer and the multilingual speaker's specific resources are seen as an important resource. Multilingual speakers are no longer expected to be ideal native speakers of several languages. This emerging paradigm is showing a substantial expansion in bilingual and multilingual education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Cummins, 2017; Escamilla et al., 2014; García, 2009; Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Lyster, Quiroga, & Ballinger, 2013; May, 2014), but it is also spreading to other areas such

as TESOL (Lin, 2013; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013), English as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2015), and second language acquisition (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Kramsch, 2012).

Translanguaging is related to other theoretical contributions that aim at softening hard boundaries between languages and have proposed that additional languages are best taught not as separate and autonomous entities but in interrelationship with the learner's existing language features and practices (see e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, 2015; Coste & Simon, 2009; Levine, 2011; Lyster, Collins, & Ballinger, 2009; May, 2014; Moore & Gajo, 2009). It is also related to breaking away from what Cummins (2007) has called *the monolingual solitudes* within bilingual and multilingual education.

Translanguaging can include a variety of discursive and pedagogical practices and it can be understood from different perspectives. Lewis et al. (2012) explain the original meaning of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy that alternates the languages for input and output activities inside the classroom. According to García (2009), translanguaging involves "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (p. 45). This definition refers to discursive practices not only in the classroom, but also outside of school. Cenoz and Gorter (2017a) bring together the original use of translanguaging as a specific pedagogical strategy and the broader use of translanguaging as discursive practices when they distinguish between pedagogical and spontaneous translanguaging. *Pedagogical translanguaging* is planned by the teacher inside the classroom and can refer to the use of different languages for input and output or to other planned strategies based on the use of students' resources from the whole linguistic repertoire. *Spontaneous translanguaging* refers to fluid discursive practices that can take place inside and outside the classroom. Translanguaging is usually associated with bilingualism and multilingualism, but in a recent publication, Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) go further and explain that translanguaging is "applicable to bilinguals and monolinguals" because translanguaging "refers to the act of deploying all of the speaker's lexical and structural resources freely" (p. 297).

In fact, translanguaging has become a very engaging term that is used in different ways (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017b). This is certainly related to the diversity of contexts in which bilingual and multilingual education takes place and the way contexts can shape teachers' and researchers' perspectives. Baker (2011) used four indicators to create a typology of bilingual education that could be used to identify and compare different types. The four indicators are the following: the medium of instruction, the language aims, societal and educational aims, and the typical type of child. If we look at these indicators in the four contexts of the studies included in this special issue, we can get an idea of the diverse contexts that can explain to a certain extent the different uses of the term translanguaging. The contexts are bilingual education Welsh-English in Wales (UK), multilingual education Basque-Spanish-English in the Basque Country (Spain), English-medium instruction in Hong Kong (China), and two-way English-Spanish dual language bilingual education in the southwestern United States. The four indicators used by Baker (2011) can be used to show the diversity of contexts in the studies included in this issue.

Medium of instruction

According to Baker's indicators, the language of instruction can be a majority or a minority language. In the contexts reported in the articles in this special issue there are important differences. The majority language, English in Wales and the United States, is used as one of the languages of instruction in these two situations. However, while Spanish is the majority language in the Basque Country (Spain), it is not used as the language of instruction but only as a school subject in the project reported here. The language spoken by the majority of the population in Hong Kong is Cantonese, but English is also an official language and the language of instruction in the context of the research study reported in this issue. English is not the majority language in Hong Kong, but if we consider its use in education and business in Hong Kong it cannot be regarded as a minority language, either. In contrast to the other situations, the minority language, Basque, is the main medium of instruction for most students in the Basque Country. The situation of the Basque Country and Wales share some similarities because they both involve a regional minority language with an official status, but the role of English is different. English is the majority language in Wales and the third language in the Basque Country. Due to the increasing

importance of English, Basque education has moved from bilingualism to multilingualism and has three languages in the curriculum at all levels. Studying a third language is more important in the Basque Country than in Wales, where all students can already speak the majority language, English. The importance of English can be seen in Hong Kong as well, where it is often used as the medium of instruction. This trend is also becoming very popular in the Basque Country, where English is becoming an additional language of instruction. So far, we can see that even if we only refer to four situations reported in the articles in this issue, there are very important differences regarding the use of the majority or the minority language as the medium of instruction.

The language aims

The four contexts in this special issue aim at multilingualism rather than monolingualism. They all have English in the curriculum but its importance is higher in the countries where it is the majority language and in Hong Kong than in the Basque Country. The language aims regarding the minority language are very high in the Basque Country, where the number of speakers competent in Basque has increased from 24.1% to 33.9% in the last 25 years due mainly to the extensive use of the minority language in education. Basque is the language of most subjects in university entry examinations and Basque is used extensively as a language of instruction at the university level along with Spanish. The language aims for the Welsh as a minority language are slightly lower in Wales, and the use of Welsh at the university is very limited. In the United States, the minority language, Spanish, is not used as the language of instruction to teach content at the university level. In Hong Kong, English is widely used at the university. In sum, the four contexts aim at multilingualism, but the role of the majority and minority languages is different. Furthermore, Spanish is a minority language in the context of the study in the United States, but a majority language in the study from the Basque Country.

The societal and educational aims

The contexts reported in this issue can be considered as having enrichment as an aim at the classroom level, but there are differences regarding the long-term societal and educational aims. The aim of assimilation is likely to be strong in the case of immigrant students in the United States and Hong Kong and for immigrant minorities in Wales and the Basque Country. On the other hand, the educational programs for local minority students in Wales or the Basque Country have enrichment as an aim, and they are based on strong language policies to protect and extend the use of the minority language.

Typical type of child

There is also great diversity regarding the type of student not only when the four contexts are compared, but also within each of the contexts. The students in Welsh- and Basque-medium education have typically been local students who may use the majority or the minority language as home languages. Nowadays, there are also some second-generation-immigrant students with different home languages but many immigrant students choose to have the majority language, English in Wales or Spanish in the Basque Country, as the language of instruction. The study from Hong Kong focuses on ethnic minoritized students from South Asian countries who learn through the medium of English. The study from the United States analyzes interactions between two students: one is a second-generation Latino immigrant and the other an African American student.

The diversity of contexts can be seen by using the four indicators from Baker's (2011) typology, but there are many other differences as well. The types of bilingual and multilingual education are not limited to the contexts of the studies included in this issue. The number of languages in the multilingual speaker's repertoire can also be much larger in some contexts than in others. The intensity of exposure to home languages can be very limited in some contexts and extensive in others. Taking into account the diversity of situations, translanguaging may aim at reinforcing multilingual identities and empowering minority

students in some cases, but may highlight the developing of language skills in other cases. Translanguaging may empower minority speakers by legitimating their discursive practices in some contexts and may be perceived as a threat for minority languages in others (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017a).

The studies in this special issue exemplify the way in which translanguaging can offer more learning opportunities and negotiate social identities. The four articles investigate translanguaging in school contexts and adopt a holistic perspective by taking into account the students' multilingual and multimodal repertoire as a whole.

This special issue offers a unique international perspective and shows that translanguaging can be an important pedagogical tool in different situations involving multilingual speakers. The four studies combine a wide range of situations in three different continents. As we have seen, some of the languages are official languages that are promoted at school but are in a minority context such as Welsh in Wales or Basque in the Basque Country. These situations involving regional minority languages and national languages (Welsh-English or Basque-Spanish) share the aim of promoting the minority language in education, but the use of Basque in education is more extensive than the use of Welsh. Furthermore, the role of the third language is much more important in the Basque Country where the third language is English. The role of English, along with Cantonese and Putonghua, is also very important in Hong Kong. The school situation for minoritized South Asian students learning through the medium of English is even more complex. A better known case is that of Spanish-English in the United States, where Spanish does not have a status as an official language but is widely used both inside and outside of schools. The articles in this special issue pay attention to the differential impact of a translanguaging approach for language majority learners acquiring a "foreign," "second," or "minority" language or language minority learners acquiring a majority language or developing or revitalizing their own language practices. Students in these four situations are emergent multilinguals who speak different home languages and are exposed to two or more languages at school, as well.

The first study by Bryn Jones, "Translanguaging in Bilingual Schools in Wales," looks at translanguaging and language policy in the context of bilingual Welsh- and English-medium education, where the concept of translanguaging was originally developed in the 1980s. Welsh is a regional minority language that is officially recognized and used in education. Jones analyzes the situation of translanguaging nowadays in schools where bilingual education through the medium of Welsh is at the same time a language maintenance program for Welsh L1 students and immersion education for speakers of English (or other languages) as L1. Jones provides different examples of translanguaging activities and distinguishes between *teacher*-directed translanguaging and *pupil*-directed translanguaging. He also refers to translanguaging cues, which is information given by the teacher about the language that should be used for each activity. Jones also brings up the issue of the possible risks that translanguaging could have for the minority language, which is also discussed in the second study by Leonet, Cenoz, and Gorter. Jones explains that even if translanguaging was first used in the context of Welsh bilingual education, language separation at the classroom level is still very common. He also explains how this policy is related to the idea of safeguarding the Welsh language.

The article "Challenging Minority Language Isolation: Translanguaging in a Trilingual School in the Basque Country," by Oihana Leonet, Jasone Cenoz, and Durk Gorter, also examines translanguaging in the context of a regional minority language, but in the contexts of trilingual education in the Basque Country. The study investigates the impact of translanguaging on the minority language by looking at feedback provided by the teachers. This article describes an intervention based on using translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in a school in which the minority language, Basque, is the main language of instruction for students with Basque, Spanish, or other languages as home languages. The pedagogical intervention aims at developing language awareness and metalinguistic awareness as well as communicative and academic competences in Basque, Spanish, and English. The specific aim of the article is to see whether this type of translanguaging intervention is compatible with the protection and development of the minority language. Individual guided interviews and a focus-group discussion were carried out with the three language teachers who took part in the intervention. Teachers consider that translanguaging pedagogies can be a rich experience but also feel that Basque should be reinforced more than other languages.

The article “Translanguaging as Dynamic Activity Flows in CLIL Classrooms,” by Angel M. Y. Lin and Peichang He, looks at translanguaging in the multilingual context of Hong Kong, where English is increasingly used as the language of instruction. Lin and He analyse how translanguaging can be used as a pedagogical strategy to engage ethnic minoritized students from South Asian countries to utilize multilingual repertoires. These students come from Pakistani, Nepali, and Indian communities and their home languages are not used at school. The academic languages are Cantonese and English, and Puntonghua is also being used at school. In the context of this research study, students and teachers are expected to speak only English in class. Ethnographic naturalistic observations and interviews were carried out in a science class with English as the language of instruction. The results of this study show that translanguaging was used in classroom interaction and classroom activities. The analysis carried out shows that translanguaging can be a valuable pedagogical tool to improve communication, motivate learning, and affirm the identities of ethnic minority students.

Finally, “Translanguaging Pedagogies for Positive Identities in Two-Way Dual Language Bilingual Education,” by Suzanne García-Mateus and Deborah Palmer, explores how translanguaging can reinforce academic and translingual identities and empower bilingual children in the context of a two-way-dual-language program. The data are based on observation and interviews with students and their teacher. In this article, García-Mateus and Palmer analyze the interaction between two first-grade students. One of the students has English as his dominant language and the other, Spanish. The two students work together in a bilingual pair when completing academic tasks, and each student acts as an expert in his home language. The students can be described as emergent bilinguals because they are in the process of becoming bilingual and biliterate. The analysis of the interaction between the two students shows how translanguaging pedagogies can develop cross-linguistic awareness and empower bilingual identities.

The special issue concludes with a brief epilogue by Ofelia García, who synthesizes conclusions from the studies and outlines future directions for research in this area. The four studies in this issue look at translanguaging in different contexts and provide new and wider perspectives in its study. The studies are related to the topical areas of diversity in education, minority languages, the formation of identities in education, educational practices that promote educational equity, and language ideologies in education. The issue shows how translanguaging is a pedagogical tool that can leverage the entire language repertoire and improve school performance.

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