



# Translanguaging in Teaching/Learning Languages

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A major issue in language teaching is which languages are used in class. While early language teaching involved translating from the students' language to the target language (TL), later methods used only the TL. More recently, the pendulum has shifted back to permitting the student's language, usually the official language of instruction, but nowadays also home and local languages (Cummins, 2007; Mahboob & Lin, 2016). In this shift, translanguaging pedagogy has emerged as a promising approach for language teaching, particularly for teaching in multilingual contexts because it builds on a common practice of multilingual communities known as translanguaging.

Put simply, translanguaging can be described as people's multicompetence in all of their linguistic tools in their communication. As Canagarajah (2011:1) stated, "For multilinguals, languages are part of their repertoire that is accessed for their communicative purposes." Accordingly, a multilingual speaker might use only the single language common to all while interacting in monolingual contexts, but that same speaker could employ a much greater range of their linguistic repertoire in contexts where the interlocutors also speak the other languages. Further, individuals do not translanguage in a vacuum but translanguage in concert with other people who are also translanguaging to negotiate meaning. (Canagarajah, 2011). Hence, translanguaging is a social phenomenon as well as an individual one.

The strategic use of translanguaging in teaching, or translanguaging pedagogy, is promising in a constructivist framework for two reasons. First, constructivism involves starting where the learners are, i.e. with what they know and with their experiences. Teachers activate students' prior knowledge to teach new knowledge and skills. Whether learners are monolingual or multilingual, they already know and use at least one language. For the goal of adding an additional language,

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translanguaging pedagogy should be ideal since it scaffolds learners as they develop their linguistic repertoire for their own purposes. Translanguaging pedagogy also fits well with a second aspect of constructivism, that learning is a social activity because learners must test the knowledge they have constructed themselves with other people's knowledge, and this examination occurs through social interaction. Hence, the social nature of translanguaging leads educators naturally to consider translanguaging pedagogy.

Despite these reasons, translanguaging pedagogy is not common globally, nor is it taught in many teacher preparation programs, adopted by many educational systems, nor been examined extensively across varied contexts. Research is needed on how speakers negotiate the process of translanguaging, which translanguaging teaching and learning strategies are effective, and what attitudes stakeholders have toward translanguaging and translanguaged communication in order to ascertain how it can and should be employed in education.

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## The Research Questions

1. What translanguaging teaching techniques are effective for helping students enhance language skills, vocabulary, and/or grammar?
2. What translanguaging strategies do learners make use of? Which of these are effective?
3. Can translanguaging strategies be developed (i.e. taught and/or learned)?
4. How different is student achievement in the TL between using the home language, the language of instruction, all languages, and the TL only? (This could be a replication of Khanyakham, P. (2018). *The Effect of Translanguaging Pedagogy for Vocabulary Learning*. M. A. Thesis, Roi Et Rajabhat University. Paper in Proceedings of 2nd National and International Research Conference 2018: 2nd NIRC 2018, February, 2018, Buriram Rajabhat University).
5. To what extent will previously known languages (home, local, official, etc.) be strengthened when used as bridges to learn a TL?
6. How does translanguaging pedagogy affect learners' attitudes toward their ownership of the languages they use?
7. Does translanguaging pedagogy facilitate confidence, engagement, or WTC?
8. Does translanguaging pedagogy have an effect on metalinguistic awareness?
9. Does translanguaging pedagogy help literacy skills if the learners' languages have similar or different orthographic systems?
10. What kinds of assessment are useful in a translanguaging pedagogy model?

## Suggested Resources

**Canagarajah, S. (2011). *Translanguaging in the Classroom: Emerging Issues for Research and Pedagogy*. *Applied Linguistics Review* 2, 1–28.**

Much of Canagarajah's work is relevant to researchers of translanguaging. However, this article can serve as an overall introduction to translanguaging and to the research that has been conducted and could be conducted on the subject. Canagarajah presents a broad view of the translanguaging from various disciplines and introduces the alternative terminology used in those fields as well. His critical analysis of previous scholarship will benefit those who research this topic. Also, extremely useful is his discussion of the areas that have lacked scholarship and need to be studied, such as the process of translanguaging (rather than the product), the strategies and possible stages in the process, how translanguaging operates in non-face-to-face genres, such as in writing and in social media, and people's attitudes toward translanguaging. Finally, Canagarajah provides a case study that examined how one writer navigated the process of translanguaging.

**Creese & Blackledge (2010). *Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom: A Pedagogy for Learning and Teaching?* *The Modern Language Journal* 94, 103–115.**

In this article the authors describe four “interlocking case studies” that examined multilingual schools, the complementary or community language schools, across various cities in the UK. The research investigated how bilingualism operated in these schools and, in particular how translanguaging was enacted as a bilingual pedagogy. The extracts and analyses afterwards clearly demonstrate how speakers use their full linguistic repertoire to create an inclusive social situation as well as to convey meaning to their audience. Examples also illustrate how teachers and students negotiate language use and identities in a language lesson. In addition to the research findings, this article is also valuable for its brief discussion of various bilingual approaches that preceded translanguaging pedagogy as well as its summary of insights and skills developed in a translanguaging classroom.

**Garcia, L. Ibarra Johnson, S. & K. Seltzer. (2017). *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing.**

Many works by Ofelia Garcia will be useful to researchers of translanguaging. Although this book was written as a guide for teachers or pre-service teachers in how to develop their translanguaging pedagogy practice, it also would be useful to the researcher. Anyone who wants to understand how theories of language acquisition support translanguaging pedagogy will benefit from reading the first two

chapters, and those who plan to conduct classroom research will find the entire work an invaluable resource for the study because of its clear explication of the authors' instructional design cycle, the lesson plans, the dynamic assessment process, the teacher stance, and the teaching strategies. In addition, the supplemental materials and activities at the end of each chapter encourage reflection and may thus assist those who are trying to narrow their research questions.

**MacSwan, J. (2017). A Multilingual Perspective on Translanguaging. *American Educational Research Journal* 54(1), 167–201. <https://doi.org/10.3012/0002831216683935>.**

This article provides a critical examination of the literature on the nature of translanguaging and counters the prevailing viewpoint that multilinguals have a unitary system in their mental model rather than separate grammars for each named language. MacSwan uses examples from scholarship on code-switching, bilingualism, and neurolinguistics to argue that the research in these latter fields points to differentiation of languages even among young bilinguals. In this article, MacSwan proposes an alternative mental model, a “multilingual perspective on translanguaging.” He suggests further that codeswitching is an instance of translanguaging and concludes with various benefits of translanguaging pedagogy. In addition to providing an alternative view of translanguaging theory, this article also includes many sources in the text and reference list.

**2016 Special issue of *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* (Volume 16 Number 4).**

This special issue contains six articles on translanguaging pedagogy. First, Cenoz provides an overview of trends in translanguaging theory and translanguaging pedagogy. She also proposes a difference between pedagogical translanguaging and spontaneous translanguaging. The next two articles both report on using translanguaging to promote bilingualism and to protect minority languages: Jones studied protecting Welsh from English while Leonet, Cenoz, and Gorter studied protecting Basque from Spanish and English. Next, Lin and He examined the natural translanguaging that occurs in a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) classroom in Hong Kong with minority students and discuss the implications for CLIL. Garcia-Mateus and Palmer also consider minority language students, but their research concerns identity. Their results indicate that translanguaging helped develop bilingual identities as well as metalinguistic awareness. Finally, Garcia discusses the theoretical basis for translanguaging pedagogy and argues that language policies must be flexible to promote multilingualism.

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