

Translanguaging

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Translanguaging from a linguistic perspective

The linguistic practice of multilingual people is known as *translanguaging* in current multilingualism research, and this approach is the one used here. *Translanguaging* is used to express the fact that multilingual people operate within one single language system, namely their own, which they use to create sense and meaning. The now common terms *code-mixing* and *code-switching*, on the other hand, imply a change between two different language systems. While *translanguaging* takes the internal perspective of the speaking subject, *code-mixing* and *code-switching* represent an external perspective from the position of the language system.

When they learn, multilingual pupils employ the different elements of their linguistic repertoire to acquire the content and language of lessons and to understand both the complex world being presented to them, and themselves. They do so either openly and undisguisedly, or covertly and secretly. García uses the image of a river to describe this practice (García et al 2017, 21). A river appears to separate two areas of land just as the languages of a multilingual person are perceived as separate – one language, that spoken at home, on one bank, and the other, the language of teaching, on the opposite bank. Yet the river flows over a river bed we cannot see, and that river bed is connected; the two areas are in fact part of a whole. Such a river – a *translanguaging corriente* – runs through lessons or school and, like the water itself, is not a constant: it is rather constantly changing as a result of the linguistic practices of pupils and teachers, and adapts to changing circumstances.



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Translanguaging: educational practice

As a teaching strategy, translanguaging enables bilingual and multilingual children to use as much of their linguistic repertoire as possible in their learning processes without the teacher's losing sight of curricular requirements. The aim is to make and have the pupils make flexible use of the entire linguistic repertoire of multilingual pupils in class in order to teach both the content of the lesson and the teaching language. It allows those pupils for whom the language of teaching (or possibly the style and register used) are not part of the continuum of their own linguistic repertoire to acquire and develop that teaching language through the use of the language they speak at home. This is done in each individual lesson.

The following approach is key:

- The primary goal of each and every lesson is meaningful action.
- The lesson must be designed in terms of language in a way that allows learners to participate, even and above all if they are still in the process of acquiring the language of the lesson.
- Language serves first and foremost the speaking subject, and the lesson should help them to expand their linguistic repertoire and develop their own voice.
- Any tools that enable this are allowed.

The many tools or mini-strategies that teaching staff can use in multilingual classes to ensure that their pupils can participate include: Google-Translator for teachers and pupils, the translation of instructions, the translation of learning outcomes, the translation of key passages of text, the use of dictionaries and glossaries, exchange and interaction with other pupils, multilingual word walls, books in the pupils' languages, involvement of families, scaffolding (as described in Gibbons 2015), visual aids, buzz groups (in pairs) at strategic points in the lesson,

work in tables and group work in which the use of all languages is permitted,



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regular alternation between group work and general class discussion to deal with any

questions and ensure that new content is accessible to all pupils, encouraging pupils to express themselves in their family language and have classmates translate, creating space to express opinions and feelings and for unanswered questions on the topic, reading and writing together, creative writing¹ and role-play.

Bibliography

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¹ cf. Belke (2016) for the German-speaking world.



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