

Translanguaging: Definitions, Implications, and Further Needs in Burgeoning Inquiry

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Abstract

The term translanguaging has appeared with growing frequency in research about the education of linguistic minority students. Amid increasing application of the term, concern emerges regarding the consistency of its definitions and characterizations, specifically with respect to the term's social justice implications, which risk dilution. Early instances (García, 2007, 2009a) position the term as both a pedagogical strategy for supporting multilingual learners and a critique of existing conceptualizations of language and bilingualism that have historically marginalized particular speech communities. In this review of recent literature, I analyze 53 texts published between 1996 and 2014 for their definitions, exemplifications, and attributed implications of translanguaging, as an ontological perspective on language and as a set of teaching practices. In the review, I find that although the term has largely maintained its sociolinguistic critique, its ties to critical pedagogy appear only sporadically. I close this review by proposing avenues for new research.

Keywords: *translanguaging, multilingualism, bilingual education, critical pedagogy*

Language classification has been a construct to control variety and difference and thus it excludes mixed language practices, creoles and other ways of using languages in multilingual networks.... And the question we should be asking is not whether code-switching is an appropriate responsible pedagogy, or whether 'translanguaging' is valuable in itself or whether 'Spanglish' should be accepted in the classroom. If language is an invention, then we must observe closely the way in which people use language and base our pedagogical practices on that use, and not on what the school system says are valuable practices. (García, 2007, p. xiii)

Translanguaging, or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices, is an approach to bilingualism that is centered, not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable. These worldwide translanguaging practices are seen here not as marked or unusual, but

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rather are taken for what they are, namely the normal mode of communication that characterizes communities throughout the world.

[...] bilingualism is strongly linked to social and political constructions, and cannot therefore be analyzed without reference to the social order. (García, 2009a, p. 71)

I first encountered the concept of *translanguaging* as a doctoral student in the above-cited texts in 2010. The term offered an opportune framework for wresting the language practices of bilingual (and sometimes multilingual) students from monolingual paradigms of language proficiency. Moreover, it offered a lens through which to view the language practices of bilingual Latinx students as valuable, generative, and powerful, rather than in need of remediation. Nevertheless, as the term gained circulation, I perceived some dulling of its rejection of both the concept that language is an object to be acquired—rather than as a social practice replete with agency and meaning—and corresponding social hierarchies. I worried that in this dulling, *translanguaging* would be reduced to a means for closing achievement disparities, thus losing questions about the broader historical hierarchies and neoliberal socioeconomic imperatives from which these disparities emerge.

This worry emerged from the manner in which neoliberal discourses, touting free-market principles and the privatization and commodification of skills and resources, co-opt ideas disruptive to existing hierarchies. Indeed, this phenomenon has already been described with respect to bilingual education as bilingualism becomes valuable not for its ability to affirm and sustain minority languages and increase access for their speakers, but rather for its role of creating capable workers in a globalized 21st century economy (Flores, 2013b; Petrovic, 2005). Coupled with the simultaneous neoliberal impulse to promote English as a world language of commerce and scholarship (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, 2013), coopting discourses that praise bilinguals, while undermining the transformative potential of bilingual education in politically monolingual societies, can actually reinforce the marginalization of linguistic minority communities. These policies and practices work at odds by placing them in more globalized competition (Mori & DiBello Takeuchi, 2016) while simultaneously continuing to undervalue their particular communicative practices. The concern with the dilution of *translanguaging*'s more critical theoretical tenets must therefore be considered in light of this context, whereby the inequalities and injustices of current economic regimes will simply be perpetuated rather than interrogated for their complicity in language hierarchies.

I fear this fate of a diluted critical stance for *translanguaging* as the term becomes increasingly prevalent in meetings of researchers and practitioners, and I am not alone in this concern. In a comprehensive and critical review of the literature across disciplines, Canagarajah (2011b) points to inconsistencies in the ways that *translanguaging* is positioned vis-à-vis time, place, and practice, with undue emphases on modernity, Western languaging, and oral language, and with little direct pedagogical application. Flores (2014), likewise, introduced his clarion call for the scholarly community on his blog, "The Educational Linguist," by denouncing this same reductionism:

The term no longer seemed to have the political edge it did when I was first learning about it as a graduate student. At first I assumed that I had become so acclimated to the term that it no longer felt revolutionary to me in the ways that it did before. But the more I heard, the more I realized that it was, in fact, being used in ways that were disconnected from the larger political struggles where I always situated the term. (para. 2)

Indeed, while some of the literature demands a shift to the recognition and normalization of multilinguals' language practices in place of inaccurate monolingual paradigms, elsewhere translanguaging appears as a repackaging of *code switching*², or as one of several scaffolds for facilitating the scholastic achievement of linguistic minority students without disrupting prevalent ideologies of language and power relations among linguistic communities. In contrast to code switching, which describes language users' strategic and contextually responsive alternation between features of distinct languages, translanguaging stresses that language users select linguistic features from their single repertoire generatively in ways that foment new linguistic and social possibilities (Wei, 2011a). This shift in perspective seeks not only to foster resource pedagogies that incorporate learners' familiar language practices into learning, but also to overtly challenge and overturn ideologies of language rooted in racist, classist, and imperialist histories of language standardization (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Further, it shifts the focus from the language to the language user, calling attention to their agency, intelligence, and creativity in communicative acts while questioning the social hierarchies that would undermine such traits.

I do not presume that nefarious forces seek to deliberately undermine the theoretical foundations of translanguaging, or to reduce it to one of many best practices that anyone can implement regardless of philosophical and ideological positioning. Rather, I argue that the cumulative effect of article after article, presentation after presentation, workshop after workshop, and lecture after lecture is a blurring of the sharpness of the original intent, like a photocopy of a photocopy. As Walter Benjamin (1968) observed about art designed for reproduction and mass consumption, "by making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced" (p. 4). Correspondingly, I worry that offering translanguaging as a pedagogical framework, without its accompanying critical, social, and linguistic stances, allows it to be employed in diluted form. However, I recognize the many pressures weighing upon scholars and teachers seeking to describe and/or promote translanguaging and its pedagogical connections. Entrenched attitudes about language proficiency, second language acquisition, and bilingual education must be confronted for translanguaging to hold traction in the bilingual education sphere, where the separation of languages has

² Although *code switching* refers to a framework of language use that assumes separate codes being interwoven—and translanguaging frameworks eschew such boundaries—I nevertheless use the term when referencing particular literatures on the subject or, for brevity, describing the particular subset of translanguaging practices that involves oral alternation of features associated with particular named languages.

been a key principle of instruction for decades (García, 2014b). Likewise, broader language ideologies among a prevalently monolingual teaching force (and society at large) that prioritize standardized varieties of English must be subverted for the core of translanguaging as a stance, and as a set of practices, to take hold.

The worry, of course, is that by negotiating these tensions and disproportionately representing particular groups as study participants or particular practices as examples of translanguaging, scholarship on the matter has offered an incomplete picture. That is, while no individual author or teacher may expressly or intentionally restrict the definition of translanguaging, repeated emphasis on select communities or forms may explain the observable reduction of the term's original implications in latter iterations and, especially, at the time of application. In this literature review, I examine the breadth of translanguaging research with three main questions in mind:

1. How, if at all, is translanguaging defined in the many works that have taken up the term?
2. How, if at all, is translanguaging exemplified in these works? Specifically, which language users are studied, and which language practices are identified as translanguaging?
3. What, if any, implications for, or applications to, teaching practice are communicated in the work?

I begin with an overview of related literature, briefly exploring the emergence of post-structuralist perspectives on language, bi/multilingualism, and second language acquisition. I follow with an explanation of the methodology for selecting publications for review, and with a brief descriptive categorization of the 53 analyzed texts. Subsequently, I present findings from the analysis that address the aforementioned research questions. Finally, I reconcile the findings by noting that, while the term *translanguaging* has mostly maintained its sociolinguistic critique of prior language conceptualizations, its connections to a critical pedagogy are more sporadic in the literature. I close by proposing avenues for future research with these observations in mind.

The Multilingual Turn and Translanguaging

In this segment of the paper, I provide the context for the origins and emergence of *translanguaging* as a term and as a political stance. I begin with an overview of scholarship linking the ideological construction of standardized, enumerable languages with the emergence of nation-states and the consolidation of power. After highlighting the invented nature of language as an object, I present important works stemming from this theoretical root in the fields of second language acquisition and critical applied linguistics, before closing with an overview of related terms describing similar linguistic phenomena and critiques of language purism.

Translanguaging entered the discourse on the education of emergent bilingual³ students through the work of Cen Williams (1994, as cited in García, 2009a; García, 1996, 2000, 2002). Studying the schooling contexts of youth in Wales learning both English and Welsh, Williams noted that by using one language as an input (e.g., by the teacher to ask questions or to provide information) and the other as the output e.g., in students’ responses or reactions), students more deeply engage with content and more easily sustain and develop features and practices of Welsh. This development occurs despite the fact that Welsh language practices typically occupy a lower status in the diglossic organization of school, with a distinct separation in the status and domains for bilinguals’ languages. As Figure 1 demonstrates, however, the term entered much wider circulation in publications in the 21st century, particularly in the period from 2009 to 2014. (Criteria for study selection in this review is provided in the Methods section below.⁴) In this era, the term, as it is used by scholars, interacts with other emerging discourses around the nature of language, second language acquisition, and bilingualism that reflect post-structuralist thinking and a more critical consideration of the role that power relations, based on the nation-state and colonialism, play in language ideologies.

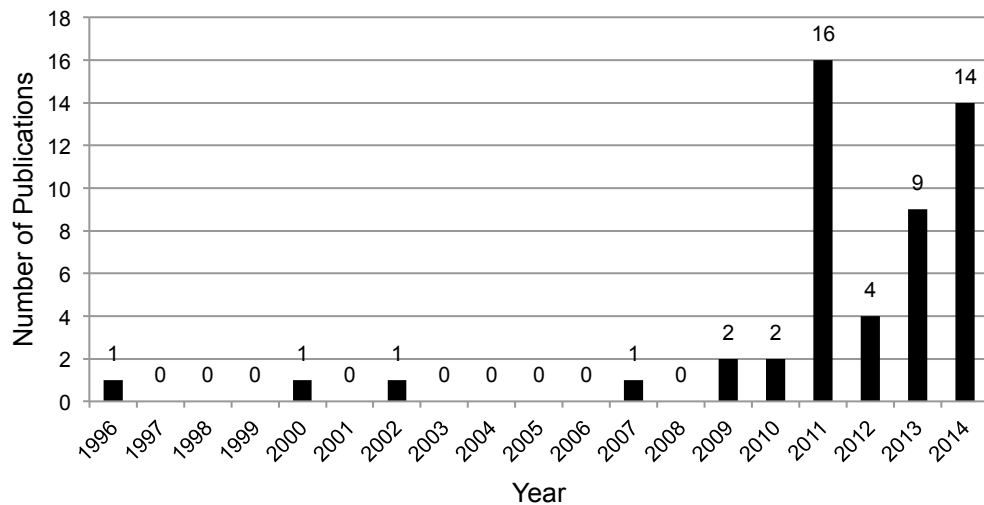


Figure 1. Publications addressing translanguaging, 1996–present

³ García, Kleifgen, and Falchi (2008) introduced the term *emergent bilingual* in place of *English Language Learner* to avoid the deficit perspectives implicit in the label for students developing the dominant language of schools, particularly English in the US.

⁴ Figure 1 represents the time period under analysis in this work. Searching ERIC shows another 16 instances of *translanguaging* in peer-reviewed literature in 2015, while a Google Scholar search for the same year generates 874 results (Google Scholar also cites chapters, dissertations, and conference presentations and proceedings). Moreover, in 2016, two new practitioner-oriented books were published (García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2016; García & Kleyn, 2016), reinforcing the growing salience of the term in the education of emergent bilinguals.

These emerging discourses call attention to the constructed nature of language, which is deeply tied to the organizing impulses of the state, by which the language practices of the political elite in urban centers became intertwined with the formation of a national identity. Thus, language practices of those outside the empowered urban center—whether in the national periphery or in colonized territories—were subjugated, devalued, or repressed (Anderson, 2006; Scott, 1998). In many nation-states, extensive centralized planning placed one language variety atop all others as the exclusive variety for use in official channels and then diffused this variety by way of media, schooling, and coercion through allocation of educational and occupational opportunities to users of prestige varieties over others.

A number of historians and social theorists have described the processes of language planning in the consolidation of national power. Benedict Anderson (2006) recounts language standardization in several European states as the Catholic Church ceded authority and national vernaculars grew in prestige. James Scott (1998) similarly describes the process in France:

The implicit logic of the move was to define a hierarchy of cultures, relegating local languages and their regional cultures to, at best, a quaint provincialism. At the apex of this implicit pyramid was Paris and its institutions: ministries, schools, academies (including the guardian of language, *l'Academie Francaise*)...Standard (Parisian) French and Paris were not only focal points of power; they were also magnets. The growth of markets, physical mobility, new careers, political patronage, public service, and a national educational system all meant that facility in French and connections to Paris were the paths of social advancement and material success. It was a state simplification that promised to reward those who complied with its logic and penalize those who ignored it. (p. 73)

Scott's depiction notes the rewards and penalties behind the imposition of language norms. This echoes the work of critical theorists such as Michel Foucault, whose work on governmentality addresses the complex of institutions, tactics, organizing knowledge, and security apparatuses by which government exerts control over the population (Foucault, 2007, p. 108); and Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) writings on language as a tool of symbolic power and the allocation of opportunity and status to those with the communicative skills valued in the linguistic marketplace. Researchers in the field of critical applied linguistics soon adopted these notions and offered scathing critiques of language policies and language education structures.

Numerous authors in the field of critical applied linguistics seek to undermine the hegemonic ideologies that view languages as structures of predictable component parts (e.g., grammars, lexicons, and sentence-level rules), particularly those that place language varieties in a hierarchy. Alastair Pennycook (2003, 2007, 2010) advances the construct of *global Englishes* to explore the adaptive and negotiated nature of language, emphasizing that language should be seen as local, situated practice. Makoni and Pennycook (2007), in an oft-cited edited volume, offer contributions from scholars all over the world who present research on how the language practices of people who are multilingual reject the boundaries placed around idealized constructions of "standard" language or languages

and instead draw from complex repertoires of linguistic features to negotiate meaning and understanding with interlocutors. In the field of second language acquisition, Larsen-Freeman (1997, 2011) analogizes language development to chaos/complexity theory, while de Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007) use the framework of dynamic systems theory, two perspectives from the physical sciences and mathematics, respectively, that emphasize dynamic relationships between variables. These cross-disciplinary comparisons serve to highlight the non-linear and highly context-responsive nature of second language acquisition. Ortega (2014), meanwhile, advocates for a usage-based study of linguistics that places speakers' experiences and uses of language at the center of analyses of language learning and language change. All together, these theories comprise a viewpoint that various scholars (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009a) describe as *heteroglossia*, drawing on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), in that it recognizes the multiplicity of languages and meanings in communicative interactions. Certainly, these critiques should be considered in their broader context, recognizing that modernity and the nation-state system have brought with them growth in universal, compulsory schooling projects tied, in part, to discourses of human rights and human rights education (Meyer, Bromley, & Ramirez, 2010; Suarez & Ramirez, 2007). Nevertheless, these heteroglossic views remind us that there is progress yet to be made, given the prevalence of "appropriateness" discourses (Flores & Rosa, 2015) that devalue the communicative practices of particular social groups for not conforming to monolingual paradigms.

These heteroglossic perspectives reject entrenched ideologies that frame monolingualism as a norm in human communication, and that uphold a native speaker paradigm for language proficiency (Cook, 1997, 1999; Grosjean, 1989, 2010). Comprising what May (2014) has called *the multilingual turn*, this emerging discourse in critical applied linguistics captures "the dynamic, hybrid, and transnational linguistic repertoires of multilingual (often migrant) speakers," and argues "instead for the more complex, fluid understandings of 'voice,' (Makoni & Pennycook, 2012) 'language as social practice,' (Heller, 2007) and a related 'sociolinguistics of mobile resources' (Blommaert, 2010)" (p. 1). It is from within these conversations that translanguaging emerges in its critical, liberating frame.

It further warrants acknowledging that the idea of translanguaging is not new, even if the dramatic popularization of the term is fairly recent. Ideas of translingual practice have long been studied and documented, particularly in the context of social life and in non-Western nations where societal multilingualism is more frequent and valued. Stephen May (2014) cites the work of Kachru (1994) and Sridhar (1994), both of whom offered early critiques of monolingual bias in second language acquisition research by pointing to the lack of attention given to situations of stable bi/multilingualism. Indeed, preceding and overlapping with the growing attention to translanguaging, a number of other terms describe both the practices of interweaving linguistic features across supposed boundaries, and the ontological position of language as a social practice that users negotiate from a single, complex repertoire. Creese and Blackledge (2011b) refer to *flexible bilingualism* to describe the language practices of bilingual students at various British complementary schools, positioning this linguistic flexibility as counter to the schools' mandates for language separation, yet instrumental to learning tasks and school events. Similarly, Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Álvarez, and Chiu (1999) and Gutiérrez,

Baquedano-López, and Tejeda (1999) use the label *hybrid language practices* in regard to bilingual students' meaning-making and identity work through communication in an after-school program. Characterizing the communication of transnational individuals, Jørgensen (2008) uses the term *polylingual languaging* for the way "language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal with the intention of achieving their communicative aims" (p. 169), and Jacquemet (2005) refers to *transidiomatic practices* for languaging in times of modernity and globalization. Young (2004, 2007), Young and Martinez (2011), and Canagarajah (2009, 2011a) all use the term *codemeshing* to describe similar practices in writing and composition. Canagarajah (2012) also uses the term *translingual practice* to refer to more multimodal communication, while Otsuji and Pennycook (2010) speak of *metrolingualism* in reference to the complex language practices within urban centers.

Among these many labels and descriptors, I concern myself with translanguaging for two principal reasons. First and foremost, it is the first of these terms to be codified in educational manuals used in teacher training and curriculum design. This work has been carried out through the City University of New York-New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals (CUNY-NYSIEB), whose guides I analyzed as part of this review. With the principles of translanguaging now informing pedagogy in various populous and linguistically diverse schools in New York City, it is imperative that the principles of translanguaging be solidly understood and widely discussed, as they are increasingly being utilized in practice. Second, multiple iterations of translanguaging in the literature have positioned it not only as a descriptive term capturing bilinguals' language practices and challenging prior conceptualizations of language, but also, specifically, as a vehicle for "liberating the voices of language minoritized students" (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200). This explicit concern with social justice and linguistic inequality is a paramount distinction between *translanguaging* and other similar terms, given the oppression and marginalization of national and colonial subjects that accompanied the rise of earlier language ideologies. This narrow focus on translanguaging, while useful for these and other reasons, carries with it two lamentable limitations. First, it ignores the many other conceptualizations of translingual practice aforementioned, most notably at the expense of much non-Western scholarship. Second, it reduces the scope of the work largely (although certainly not exclusively) to U.S. research on bilingual education because this is the field in which the particular term *translanguaging* has most conspicuously taken hold. While other terms and lines of inquiry (e.g., identity formation, social relationships, composition and writing) have largely adopted some of the terms mentioned above, to comprehensively study all of them in similar fashion would be a rather daunting and quite different task.

Method

This review considers published works that discuss translanguaging as an element of pedagogical practice, as a theoretical stance about conceptualizations of language, or as both. As stated, translanguaging first emerged in 1994 in Cen Williams' Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Wales. Although this work is often referenced precisely for its importance in generating the term, the first readily available publication appears two years later (Williams, 1996), and thus this analysis begins at this point.

I selected items for review from three sources. The first was a consultation of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database under the term *translanguaging*, which yielded 35 references to the term between 1996 and 2014. Recognizing, however, that the term is gaining important traction, this search was supplemented with a Google Scholar alert for the term *translanguaging*. This captured more recent publications on the matter through the latter half of 2014, during which time preparation of this manuscript was completed. Finally, acknowledging the importance of Ofelia García and colleagues' work in CUNY-NYSIEB in not only promoting translanguaging scholarship, but also in connecting it to teacher practice, I added the practitioner guides at www.cuny-nysieb.org that were not already included in ERIC. Analyzed works fell into four categories: (a) pieces in peer-reviewed journals (30 articles and one transcribed conversation); (b) book chapters in edited volumes (15); (c) single or co-authored books (4); and (d) guides for practitioners (4), for a total of 53 works.⁵ Of these, the majority reported data from original research, including works of historical analysis that investigated past policies and practices with regard to teaching emergent bilinguals or language education generally. Others offer summative recounting of past research and scholarship (most notably in the practitioner guides and single or co-authored books), literature reviews, or theoretical arguments. Table 1 presents the works and their general characteristics, noting that the data set includes 31 empirical studies, two literature reviews, eight summative textbooks or practitioner guides, and 12 theoretical essays.

As the connection between translanguaging and critical pedagogies for emergent bilinguals is a primary concern of this inquiry, works for review were selected based on two criteria. First and foremost, I was interested in works aimed at an educational research audience. Inclusion in the ERIC database ensured that the works were of this nature. In addition, practitioner-targeted literature was added to the analysis. Given their central role in an ongoing research project working with schools to implement translanguaging pedagogies, I included materials from CUNY-NYSIEB and from the website of one of its principal investigators, Ofelia García (www.ofeliagarcia.org). García's work, moreover, is frequently cited by subsequent works to define and explain translanguaging, further justifying its inclusion in this inquiry.

I then reviewed the collected texts with the research questions in mind. That is, I coded them with an a priori scheme to seek out definitions of translanguaging presented in the works, examples of translanguaging comprising data in empirical works, and applications or implications established for invoking translanguaging pedagogically. Moreover, given my particular interest in whether or not translanguaging is maintaining a critical and political dimension across time and instantiations, I proceeded with established categories as well. I coded definitions based on the explanation given for the term upon its first appearance in the text, and I coded examples based on established

⁵ By comparison, *codemeshing* has only four entries in ERIC for the period of analysis, *polylingual languaging* has zero, *languaging* has 24, *metrolingualism* has three, and *fluid lects* has none. Clearly, in educational research, *translanguaging* is a salient term to address linguistic diversity and fluidity.

patterns in the literature. Particularly important guidance in this respect came from the work of Li Wei (2011a), who notes,

Translanguaging is both going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going beyond them. It includes the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities and relationships. (p. 1223)

Table 1
Classifications, Quantity, and Authors of Analyzed Publications

Nature of Publication	Number of Citations	Citations
Empirical study	31	Canagarajah (2011a, 2011b); Cenoz & Gorter (2011); Creese & Blackledge (2010, 2011a, 2011b); de la Luz Reyes (2012); García (2009b, 2011a, 2014e); García, Flores & Chu (2011); García & Leiva (2014); García, Makar, Starcevic, & Terry (2011); García & Sylvan (2011); Hélot (2011); López-Gopar, Núñez-Méndez, Sughrua, & Clemente (2013); Madiba (2014); Makalela (2014); Martin-Beltrán (2014); Mazak & Herbas-Donoso (2014); Milu (2013); Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson (2014); Pandey (2013); Sayer (2013); Shohamy (2011); Vaish & Subhan (2015); Velasco & García (2014); Wei (2011a, 2011b); Williams (1996, 2000)
Literature Review	2	Lewis, Jones, & Baker (2012a, 2012b)
Summative Textbook/ Practitioner Guide	8	Ascenzi-Moreno, Kleyn, & Menken (2013); Baker (2011); Celic & Seltzer (2011); García (2009a); García, Herrera, Hesson, & Kleyn (2013); García & Kleifgen (2010); García & Wei (2014); Williams (2002)
Theoretical Essay	12	Crump (2014); Flores (2013a, 2013c); García (2007, 2011b, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d); García & Flores (2014); García & Menken (2014); Hornberger & Link (2012); Orellana & García (2014)
Total	53	

This provided a framework for coding examples of translanguaging to capture not only the combination of linguistic features, but also multimodality and generative languaging practices, such as the creation of new words for in-group communication, or the appropriation of symbols for new meanings. While summative works such as books

and practitioner guides generally do not report original research findings, they nevertheless rely on instances from other works (often by the same authors) to explain translanguaging and its value in linguistically diverse classrooms, and are thus included in the analysis of examples of translanguaging even if this results in the duplication of particular points that also appear in empirical articles. In addition, the trend demonstrated in Figure 1 suggests that although some more recent works have been omitted from the analysis (as they have yet to receive ample citation or publication at the time of writing), I believe the scope of this review is sufficiently comprehensive.

Results

In this section, I present the results of the review. Once more, the research questions asked how translanguaging was defined in the analyzed works, how the term was exemplified with regard to language users and language practices, and what implications or applications for teaching practices were offered. Findings regarding each question are addressed in sequence in the following three segments.

Definitions of Translanguaging

There is, of course, recognizable irony in trying to solidify a definition for a term that stresses the dynamic, evolving, and negotiated nature of language. My goal in this work is not to cement a definition for the term *translanguaging* but, per the initial research question, to investigate whether its critical and transformative dimensions have indeed been eroded with the term's increased circulation. If translanguaging is to be adopted as a social justice-oriented practice and theoretical stance, as early proponents advocated, its stated definition across publications is the first stage in this positioning. The term's definition, either as a transformative theory and pedagogy or merely as a description of bilingual language practices, frames the examples and applications of translanguaging offered thereafter in any work. Not surprisingly, the works analyzed here varied considerably in the attention they gave to defining translanguaging. It stands to reason that earlier authors had to elaborate more on the term than later ones, who benefited from the ability to cite and reference previous works. Therefore, in cases where the author(s) relied solely upon citations for its definition of translanguaging, the nature of the cited work and the framing of the selected citation also have bearing on its use.

In reading the 53 texts, three categories of definitions for translanguaging emerged. I present these findings in Table 2. The first category, language alternation, reflects the original use of the term and refers simply to an alternation between languages, with minimal or no attention to post-structuralist approaches to language or language learning presented by the multilingual turn. Such definition occurred rather infrequently, with only seven instances.

The second category, heteroglossic views tied to sociocultural learning theories, was the most prevalent with 27 cases. These texts defined translanguaging as very much part of an emerging conceptualization of language and an overturning of prior conceptualizations and linguistic norms—particularly those around language separation in schooling environments—but with no broader social justice agenda other than to ameliorate achievement gaps through a more socioculturally informed pedagogy. That is, this definition of translanguaging implicitly argues that equity can be achieved within the

schooling system through pedagogical techniques without concurrently advancing more structural or fundamental critiques.

Table 2
Definitions of Translanguaging in Analyzed Publications

Definition Category	Number of Cases	Examples
Language alternation	7	<p>“<i>Translanguaging</i> refers to the combination of two or more languages in a systematic way within the same learning activity” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, p. 359, emphasis in original).</p> <p>“Translanguaging simply means (i) receiving information in one language and (ii) using or applying it in the other language. It is a skill that happens naturally in everyday life” (Williams, 2002, p. 2).</p>
Heteroglossic views tied to sociocultural learning theories	27	<p>“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 dynamically 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” (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012b, p. 641).</p> <p>“Translanguaging posits that bilinguals have <i>one linguistic repertoire</i> from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively. That is, translanguaging takes as its starting point the <i>language practices of bilingual people as the norm</i>, and not the language of monolinguals, as described by traditional usage books and grammars” (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, p. 1, emphasis in original).</p>
Heteroglossic views with schooling and societal implications	19	<p>“Translanguaging does not view the languages of bilinguals as separate linguistic systems. The term stresses the flexible and meaningful actions through which bilinguals select features in their linguistic repertoire in order to communicate...In fact, translanguaging becomes the framework for conceptualizing the education of bilinguals as a democratic endeavor for social justice” (Velasco & García, 2014, p. 7).</p> <p>“Translanguaging is related to other fluid languaging practices that scholars have called by different terms...But what makes translanguaging different from these other fluid languaging practices is that it is transformative, attempting to wipe out hierarchy...Thus, translanguaging could be a mechanism for social justice, especially when teaching students from language minoritized communities” (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200).</p>

Finally, the third definition of translanguaging, heteroglossic views with schooling *and* societal implications, occurring in 19 texts, situated translanguaging within a heteroglossic perspective that upends traditional language ideologies and norms and simultaneously counters established relations of power. In other words, beyond simply redressing academic achievement issues, this last definition also proposes a reimagining of social relations and power structures. This challenge to dominant power relations was posited as possible through overt action, as was the case in the work of Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2014), who showed Puerto Rican students' translanguaging as a rejection of the hegemony of English in scientific discourse or, in a more cognitive sense, as in the work of Li Wei (2011a), whose attention to moment analysis and the translanguaging space offered insights into psycholinguistic dimensions of translanguaging, wherein speakers' languaging practices disrupt imposed identities. Here, an additional clarification is warranted, in that in this portion of the analysis I focused simply on the definitions offered in the introduction and presentation of the term in each text. I later discuss the implications of translanguaging presented in analyzed texts, wherein a greater share of the analyzed works argued for the transformative potential of translanguaging.

While the findings presented in Table 2 point to a significant portion of works (46 of 53, or about 87%) emphasizing not only heteroglossic perspectives but also social justice orientations, it is important to note that those primarily aimed at classroom practice (pedagogical guides and comprehensive books, rather than academic journals) disproportionately communicated only the first or second categories of definitions. Williams (1996, 2000, 2002) clearly holds that boundaries between languages are constructs, even while blurring the boundaries in language use during academic work and instruction. Similarly, guides for teachers of emergent bilinguals in New York initially offered structuralist perspectives on language, stating, for instance, that "all instruction, whether in the home language or in English, should include translanguaging strategies" (García, Herrera, Hesson, & Kleyn, 2013, p. 14), and that "[long term English learners] frequently engage in translanguaging practices, moving between English and their home language" (Ascenzi-Moreno, Kleyn, & Menken, 2013, p. 1). These guides, however, targeted those working with specific student sub-populations, and were embedded within the framework of the CUNY-NYSIEB translanguaging guide (Celic & Seltzer, 2011), which indisputably offered a heteroglossic approach. Such organization, of course, runs the risk that a reader will not be as familiar with the overarching translanguaging framework as with the guide for their specific student population, and exemplifies the challenges in adopting translanguaging as a perspective and pedagogy amid entrenched conceptualizations about language, language proficiency, and bilingual language acquisition.

As mentioned, however, introductory definitions insufficiently captured a text's discussion of translanguaging and its broader political and pedagogical implications. Even if definitions limit themselves and do not encompass heteroglossic views, or do not connect such views to a broader undermining of linguistic, racial, and national ideologies, the examples of translanguaging practices provided may help to round out the picture. In this vein, it is necessary to consider who is translanguaging and what is counted as

translanguaging. Thus, I turn to the second central question of this inquiry: How, if at all, is translanguaging exemplified in the works under study?

Examples of Translanguaging

The examples of translanguaging seen in the literature both narrowed and expanded upon the offered definition, making them integral to our understanding of the term. If translanguaging is indeed more than just a scaffold for emergent bilinguals acquiring societally dominant language practices in schools, then evidence of it should be found across ages, communicative contexts, and social standing. Likewise, if it is more than just oral code switching, it should be manifest in literacy and composition. Thus, it is important that examples of translanguaging encompass a broad range of language users and, further, that uses of the term and its associated pedagogies avoid relegation to a purely remedial pedagogy.

The first dimension I explored in this portion of the analysis was who practices translanguaging. In particular, I focused on the age of research participants and, by proxy, their social context. I divided the age of subjects into three categories for the purpose of organization: basic education (preK–12), tertiary education, and professional level. Certainly, this categorization imposed a linear progression that is not inherent. College students and graduate students may in fact be older than professionals, but I relied on this aggregation because it represented a comprehensive breadth of communicative environments (schools, workplaces, and social spheres) in which translanguaging could be considered, as well as a range of stages in the development of a multilingual repertoire. Moreover, these categories were rather broad in not distinguishing primary and secondary education, or undergraduate and graduate students at the tertiary level. These omissions accounted for learning environments that may bring together students across these levels (e.g., after-school programs and academic interventions that group students by language proficiency). Additionally, a number of studies reported data across a range of ages that bridged these categorical divisions, notably by addressing multiple learning environments within the same study.⁶ In texts containing such cases, each represented category was counted to capture the breadth of examples provided, although each category was only counted once per piece, regardless of how many different schools or participants were discussed. I present the tabulation of these instances in Figure 2.

⁶ For instance, Hornberger & Link (2012) presented data from primary schools and a university as a foundation for a theoretical essay, while García & Wei (2014) presented data from students at multiple elementary and secondary schools as well as universities.

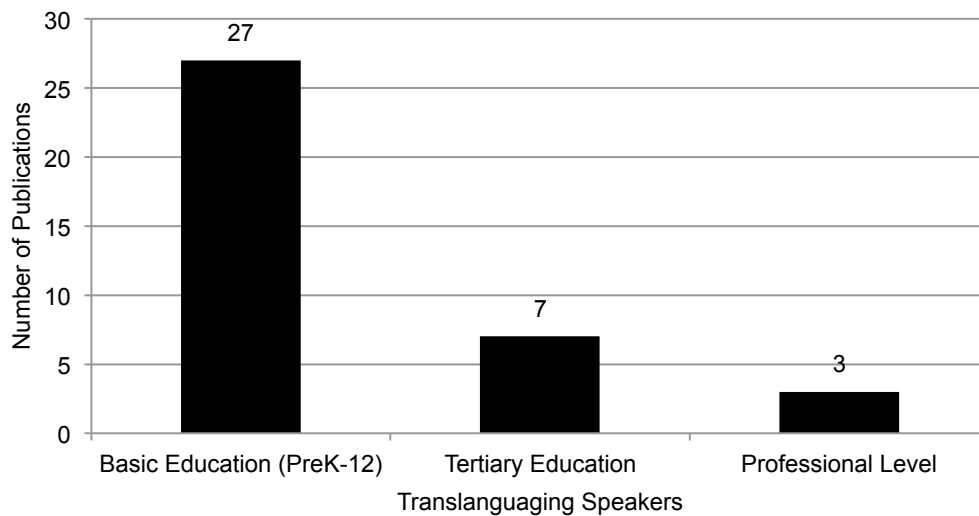


Figure 2. Examples of translanguaging by speakers' age in publications presenting empirical data

All together, 37 of the 53 analyzed texts presented empirical data on translanguaging, either through transcripts of oral language or through samples of written language. Works that did not analyze or discuss participants' translanguaging, even though they may have cited or alluded to empirical studies and their findings, included literature reviews (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012a, 2012b), historical analyses (García 2011a, 2014e), summative works and guides aimed at practitioners (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2013; Baker, 2011; García, 2009a; García et al., 2013; García & Kleifgen, 2010), and theoretical essays or articles (Crump, 2014; García, 2009b, 2011b, 2014a, 2014c; García & Flores, 2014; Orellana & García, 2014). With 27 instances, preK–12 school settings accounted for the majority of examples of translanguaging, and within this sample, the primary grades were particularly well represented. This was unsurprising given that much of the scholarship on translanguaging has looked at bilingual programs which, given the emphasis on transitioning students to monolingual English instruction in U.S. schooling, are much more common in K–8 settings than in secondary schools. Moreover, insofar as translanguaging is particularly framed as a pedagogical strategy and not as a sociolinguistic phenomenon nor as an ontological orientation to language, it further stands to reason that traditional preK–12 school settings would comprise most of the data.

Although there were few reported cases analyzing communicative practices in adult populations outside of tertiary education, the few instances of adult translanguaging in the data were nevertheless instructive. By examining translations of children's literature in France (Hélot, 2011), the lyrics of Kenyan hip-hop artists (Milu, 2013), and written correspondences between professionals in India (Pandey, 2013), these cases offered a microcosm of the complex multimodal linguistic practices that both sustain and generate cultural elements. Moreover, such variation in languaging practices represented in the

literature begged the second question within this portion of the analysis: What serves as an example of translanguaging?

Given that a primary concern in the work on translanguaging involved distinguishing it from simple code switching, we would expect examples to demonstrate the multimodality and variety that constitute much of this difference. Certainly, translanguaging included oral code switching in all the definitions analyzed earlier, and such practices are in fact evidence of language users' strategic use of repertoire features. However, representation of a broader array of linguistic practices in the data would be beneficial, especially with regard to literacy practices, which are the increasingly central preoccupation of schools under test-based accountability regimes and increasingly demanding academic standards.

Reassuringly, this analysis points precisely to such a breadth of practices exemplifying translanguaging in the literature. The results of this portion of the analysis are shown in Figure 3. While eight pieces exclusively showcased alternation of features in oral communication (what would be called code switching in a framework based on distinct codes), and four explored similar alternation of features in written work, 25 pieces presented examples of translanguaging in both verbal interactions and in literacy practices. Of these, 23 presented connections across verbal and literary modalities, wherein conversation supported understanding and production of text, and/or translanguaged text informed later class discussion and oral language skills.

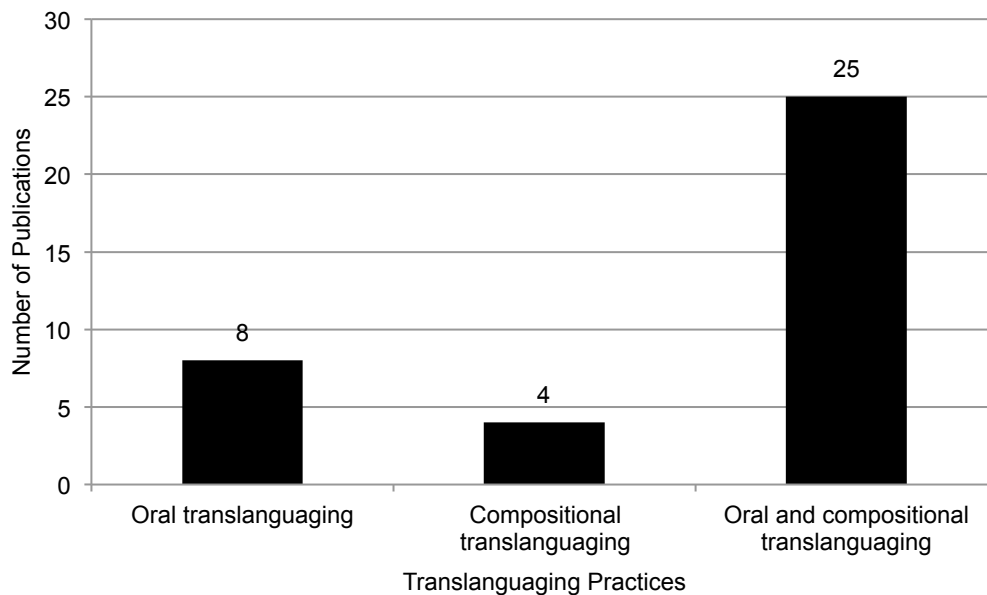


Figure 3. Practices exemplifying translanguaging in analyzed publications

Not only did the cited practices vary in their general categorization between oral language and literacy tasks, but they also varied within these categories. Translanguaging

in verbal interactions included informal exchanges between students or between students and adults during unstructured spaces in the classroom or social spheres (Milu, 2013; Wei, 2011a), formal lesson delivery and assembly addresses (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014; Williams, 1996, 2000, 2002), and conversations about academic content during collaborative work (López-Gopar, Núñez-Méndez, Sughrua, & Clemente, 2013; Martin-Beltrán, 2014; Sayer, 2013). Likewise, translanguaging in literacy included translating and clarifying texts (Hélot, 2011; Vaish & Subhan, 2015); codemeshing in composition to establish an author's voice or to convey complex ideas academically or in online social network forums (Canagarajah, 2011a, 2011b; Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Makalela, 2014); and consulting texts (both printed and online) in multiple languages during research (Martin-Beltrán, 2014; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014; Sayer, 2013). In addition, multimodal texts featured in this category, including music videos (García & Leiva, 2014), and compositions that included images and symbols (Canagarajah, 2011a, 2011b; Velasco & García, 2014), to aid in conveying meaning and constructing authorial identity. Importantly, the practices described in many of these works resulted from deliberate planning by teachers and researchers who incorporated translanguaging supports for discussions about text, encouraged students to deploy translanguaging in planning writing or oral presentations, and allowed translanguaging in assessment (for specific examples of translanguaging in assessment, see Shohamy, 2011). In short, translanguaging was exemplified through a range of practices across oral language and literacy-based interactions, as well as through activities that demonstrated and built upon interdependence across modalities.

Such breadth of examples attenuates concerns that translanguaging and code switching have become interchangeable in the conceptualization of the term. After all, readers are presented with a rich, multimodal array of bilingual languaging practices beyond simple oral alternation of languages. Nevertheless, this breadth does not, by itself, point to a significant reorientation of values with respect to language practices allowed and supported in classrooms, nor to a subversion of oppressive language ideologies. To appreciate whether the instances highlighted in research signal inclinations toward, and opportunities for, “liberating the voices of language minoritized students” (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200), we must also consider the applications and implications, both for teaching and for social organization in general, that authors attributed to translanguaging in their works.

Implications of Translanguaging in Pedagogy

If translanguaging were expected to serve as a critical, liberating pedagogy and perspective, then scholarship on the matter would be expected to point to applications beyond remediation and scaffolding for historically oppressed linguistic communities towards success within the status quo of an inequitable society that will still undervalue students' linguistic practices and racialized identities (Flores & Rosa, 2015). We should expect that translanguaging would be positioned as a tool, both for improving educational outcomes, and for asserting and creating identities, as well as for questioning and subverting hegemonic linguistic norms. In this portion of the analysis, corresponding to the third and final research question, I consider implications and applications to practice offered in the texts. Reviewing the discussion sections of the literature, three principal

codes emerged for classifying the implications attached to translanguaging perspectives. Examples of each code are offered in Table 3 while tabulated results are presented in Figure 4. These three principal codes distinguish works that (a) simply connected translanguaging to scaffolding for improved educational attainment without contesting conceptualizations of language; (b) linked translanguaging to rethinking language and bilingualism as part of a resource-based pedagogy or sociolinguistic critique; and (c) connected translanguaging to an educational and social justice agenda of critical pedagogy that challenges contemporary linguistic norms and the ideologies of race, state, and/or colonial subjectivity in which these norms are grounded.

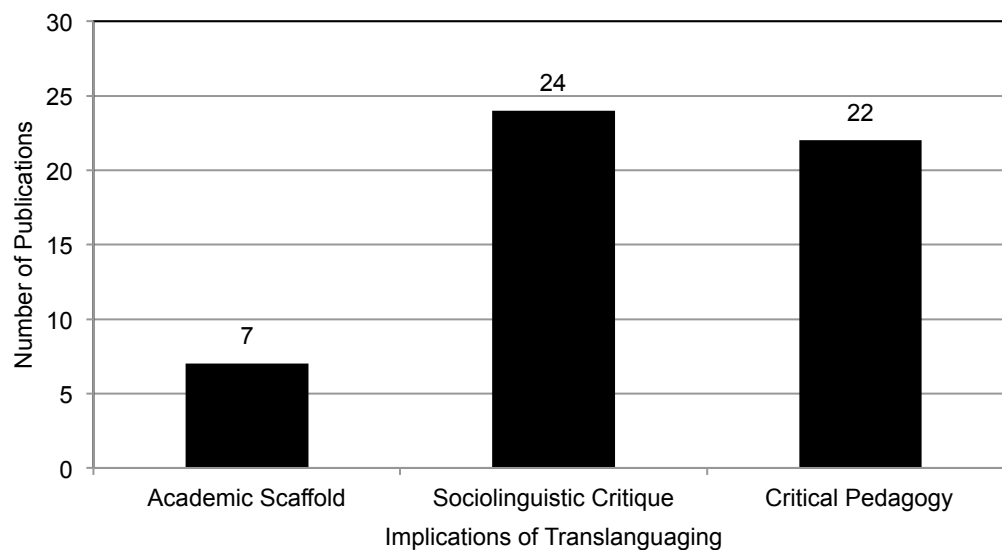


Figure 4. Implications of translanguaging in analyzed publications

There are undoubtedly flaws in attempting to neatly categorize the implications that any text offers for translanguaging. Just as offered definitions may be narrow, but cited texts within a work may expand the conceptualization in any given piece, so too might these citations implicitly broaden the implications. Thus, while the study by García, Flores, and Chu (2011) quoted in Table 3 offered an instance of the second categorical code (translanguaging as pedagogy and critique of prevalent conceptualizations of language), there is no doubt that these authors see translanguaging as corresponding to the third category (translanguaging as sociolinguistic critique and critical, liberating pedagogy) when their other work is placed in conversation with this piece. Accordingly, it bears noting that the quantity of contributions by these very authors, particularly García who is most frequently cited for bringing translanguaging into conversation with post-structuralist perspectives on language, and who accounts for several works within the data set, partially explains the accumulation of works with social justice orientations, despite the fact that one representative quote falls into the second category in Table 3. That is, the number of pieces reflecting this critical pedagogy lens was disproportionately

large compared to the number of authors espousing it. Nevertheless, the visibility and influence of García’s full body of work, both in its sheer volume and in its frequent citation throughout the literature, justified its influential presence in this data as well.

Table 3
Implications of Translanguaging Described in Analyzed Publications

Category of Translanguaging Implications	Examples
Higher educational achievement for linguistic minority students	<p>“The LSP [Learning Support Programme], despite its strengths, is in need of reform to accommodate those children who are extremely low achieving in reading. Translanguaging, which is an attempt to customise the LSP, is a way forward” (Vaish & Subhan, 2015, p. 352).</p> <p>“The aim of this chapter was to show how a translanguaging approach can be used to provide a scaffold for concept learning among multilingual students in South African universities. The multilingual glossaries concept literacy project clearly demonstrated how multilingual students employ translanguaging to deepen their understanding of economics concepts” (Madiba, 2014, p. 84).</p>
Resource-based pedagogy and revision of language conceptualizations	<p>“The practices in these two small schools show us how bilingualism in the 21st century has to be reconceptualized, understanding that bilingualism is not about the linear addition or subtraction of two autonomous languages within rigidly defined programs but of the dynamic use of bilingual practices that characterizes all bilingual communities in the 21st century” (García, Flores, & Chu, 2011, p. 17).</p> <p>“Engaging in translanguaging may hold transformative power to shift students’ and teachers’ dominant monolingual ideologies toward more pluralist understandings of the wider linguistic repertoire students bring to literacy practices and beyond” (Martin-Beltrán, 2014, p. 226).</p>
Pedagogical and sociolinguistic perspective challenging linguistic and social ideologies	<p>“Emergent bilingual and bilingual students bring to the foreground language practices that differ significantly from the ways in which standard academic English is used in school. Additionally, these different language practices are often manifestations of social, political, and economic struggles. Critical multilingual awareness programs build students’ understandings of the social, political, and economic struggles surrounding the use of many languages (see Fairclough, 1992, 1999; García, 2008; Kleifgen, 2009). Shohamy (2006) reminds us that it is important for all students to reflect on ways in which languages are used to exclude and discriminate” (García & Kleifgen, 2010, pp. 64–65).</p> <p>“It emphasizes the capacity of the multilingual individual as active agent in social life. Multilingual speakers are not simply responding, rationally or not, to broader social forces and structures, but are creating spaces for themselves using the resources they have. In doing so, they have the capacity to change society” (Wei, 2011a, p. 1234).</p>

Discussion

In this review, I demonstrated that definitions, examples, and attributed implications of translanguaging indeed vary across publications, although likely not to an extent that gravely threatens the term's implied critique of language conceptualizations and oppression of linguistic minorities. That is, concerns about the concept's critical dimensions being diluted amid widespread adoption and adaptation to pedagogical practice can, at this time, be mostly put to rest. Certainly, although some works presented the term as a pedagogic scaffold still rooted in monoglossic understandings of language, the majority of works recognized and touted the shift to a heteroglossic perspective and many also positioned translanguaging pedagogies as ways to democratize school curricula and the social contexts of schooling through critical consideration of linguistic hierarchies and the ideological regimes from which they emerge. Of course, vigilance is required in order to assure that translanguaging pedagogies sustain their transformative aims, and further research is still needed with respect to translanguaging pedagogies.

Many questions remain about translanguaging pedagogies, especially regarding their implementation and outcomes. If a translanguaging perspective is to comprise part of contemporary critical pedagogy, then future research must be done to investigate teachers' attitudes and understandings when presented with translanguaging as a theory and its accompanying classroom practices. Such work would consider teachers' understandings of language, bilingualism, and language development as their familiarity with translanguaging increases, as well as the extent of their implementation of translanguaging pedagogies with their students. In addition, future work must also consider outcomes of translanguaging pedagogies for students when they are implemented in a systematic manner. Although much of the existing literature demonstrates that translanguaging serves as a crucial meaning-making tool in student discussion, composition, and research, as well as a valuable aid in the delivery of instruction in impromptu and sporadic situations, little scholarship thus far analyzes its programmatic use to support sustained academic growth, let alone its role in fostering critical understandings and dispositions that reject existing monoglossic perspectives and linguistic hierarchies within schools.

This latter gap in the research regarding attitudinal change is particularly salient if one is asking about members of society's dominant groups, given that almost every study in this analysis considered language users acquiring the societally dominant language practices in schools or workplaces. Dismantling entrenched language hierarchies and ideologies also requires reaching those who benefit from them, and thus research is direly needed with regard to how critical multilingual pedagogies are received in the classrooms of the privileged, and what, if any, impact they have on students' long term views of linguistic pluralism. Given that answering such questions requires longitudinal study, and that this is a relatively new field of inquiry, such gaps are not surprising, and this may explain why translanguaging is still often mistaken simply for code switching when many first encounter the term. Studies that look beyond single exchanges and learning activities to the broader patterns of interaction over time will prove immensely valuable in this pursuit.

Finally, it bears repeating that *translanguaging* is but one term among many for the translanguaging practices that current scholarship seeks to highlight and value in its work

with multilingual populations. Similar inquiry is perhaps warranted with respect to the various terms mentioned early in this work (*global Englishes, flexible bilingualism, hybrid language practices, polylingual languaging, transidiomatic practices, codemeshing translanguing practice, and metrolingualism*) and with respect to terms that preceded them, like *jointfostering* (Faltis, 2001), and, of course, *code switching* (Auer, 1995; Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1988). That said, although investigating the differences across these conceptualizations may reveal important distinctions, some broader perspective is also in order. It is uplifting that so much attention is being given to the normalization of multilingual communicative practices and to the disruption of language hierarchies tied to standardization.

As I have shown in this review, *translanguaging* (and related terms) is increasingly utilized in academic literature and in curriculum materials for teacher education and professional development. The cognitive and social benefits of bringing translanguaging into classrooms for linguistically diverse students resound across a range of interactions and academic tasks exemplified in these publications. It is incumbent upon us, as scholars in the various fields in which this multilingual turn is taking place (e.g., bilingual education, second language acquisition, linguistic anthropology, TESOL), not to get mired in what Christian Faltis (2016) has dubbed a *terminological turn* with the risk of creating adversarial camps over minor disagreements. Rather, building upon our shared concern for the rights and opportunities of linguistically oppressed communities, we must assure that such perspectives and the pedagogies emerging from these conceptualizations maintain their critical, liberating stance in scholarship and applications to practice.

Author Biography

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