
Translanguaged TESOL in Transit

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A review of the development of translanguaging in TESOL in the last decade since the publication of the inaugural issue of *NYS TESOL Journal*, the article considers the scholarship around translanguaging that has emerged and what we have learned, especially from scholars in the Global South. At the same time, it names what we still have to learn, especially with regard to the colonial logic of dominance that has surrounded the teaching of English around the world.

Keywords: translanguaging theory, translanguaging pedagogy, unitary repertoire, TESOL and the Global South, colonial logic

Ten years ago, when I wrote “TESOL Translanguaged” for the first issue of the *NYS TESOL Journal* (García, 2014), the concept of translanguaging was, as Taylor (2009) had said, contentious. A decade later, translanguaging work has exploded. Li Wei (personal communication, 10/19/2022) reports that if you type translanguaging into Google, you get over 800,000 hits; and Google Scholar shows over 27,000 publications with translanguaging in the title or abstract. The TESOL field has increasingly leveraged translanguaging pedagogical practices to increase the learning potential of students learning English. And yet, despite its popularity, translanguaging is still contentious and misunderstood.

When I reread what I wrote in 2014, I still believe the points I raised:

1. That English is not a system of structures
2. That native English speakers are neither the norm nor the objective fact
3. That learning English does not proceed from scratch, it is not linear, and does not result in English monolingualism
4. That it is neither fair nor useful nor helpful to see bilinguals simply as speakers of a first and a second language
5. That the teaching of English cannot be enacted in total separation from other language practices

In this paper I look at the understandings that have developed about translanguaging as a theory that goes beyond traditional understandings of bilingualism/multilingualism, as well as at the pedagogical practices that are attributed to it. I consider what we have learned and not learned in a decade concerning these two aspects. I address two sets of questions:

- What has been clarified about translanguaging as a transformative theory of our understandings of language and bilingualism/multilingualism? What are the points that are still contentious?
- How are practitioners taking up translanguaging in language education throughout the world, and especially in TESOL? What are still some remaining misunderstandings?

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On What We Have Learned (and Not Learned)

My book on translinguaging with Li Wei and published by Palgrave appeared in 2014. The book consisted of two parts. The first part was conceptual and attempted to describe the epistemological differences between traditional understandings of language and bilingualism, on the one hand, and translinguaging, on the other. The second part focused on education and translinguaging, looking at what translinguaging meant for learning and teaching.

Scholarship on translinguaging as pedagogy has exploded since the publication of my book with Li Wei (see, among others, Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; García et al., 2017; Juvonen & Källvist, 2021; Paulsrud et al., 2017; Tian et al., 2020; Vaish, 2020). Yet, there has been little attention paid to the concept of translinguaging itself as an alternative to traditional sociolinguistic theory of language and bi/multilingualism or to the critical/decolonial nature of translinguaging's theoretical roots. I see this as problematic, for without a theoretical basis, translinguaging as pedagogy simply becomes strategies that may continue to perpetuate misunderstandings about bilingual speakers and the ways in which they do language.

On Translinguaging as Theory of Language and of Bi/Multilingualism

Cen Williams had proposed the term *trawsieithu* (translated to English by Baker, 2001) to name a bilingual pedagogy that he was developing in Wales, using one language as input and the other as output. The term translinguaging enabled me to think beyond the ways I had been socialized into language and bilingualism as a student of the great sociolinguist Joshua A. Fishman. It was after reading Makoni and Pennycook's (2004) *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages* that I had the courage to question my conceptualization of bilingualism. I said in 2009 that translinguaging was "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" (García, 2009, p. 44). I described translinguaging further by saying that it referred to "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds." (García, 2009, p. 45) and is "the communicative norm of bilingual communities" (García, 2009, p. 51).

The term translinguaging was appealing to me not only because it disrupted monolingual instruction for bilingual students, but also because for me as a Cuban American, it echoed the term *transculturación*, coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940/1978). Ortiz saw *transculturación* as a process in which "a new reality emerges, compounded and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of characters, not even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent" (pp. viii-lix). We explain in García and Li Wei (2014) that likewise,

Translinguaging does not refer to two separate languages nor to a synthesis of different language practices or to a hybrid mixture. Rather translinguaging refers to new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories, and releases histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation-states. (p. 21)

Translinguaging rests on the emergence of the concept of *linguaging* coined by Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1984) to refer to the simultaneous process of continuous becoming of ourselves as human beings and our language practices, as we interact and make meaning in the world. Language is not simply a static system of syntactic, semantic, and phonetic rules. Linguaging refers to the ways in which we *do* language to manipulate interactions.

García and Li Wei (2014) and Li Wei (2011, 2018) refer to translinguaging as a practical theory of language, as bilingual students use all their available resources creatively

and critically. Translanguaging posits that speakers *do* language with a unitary repertoire of features and practices that they assemble as they interact in different worlds and make meaning for themselves in the *entre mundos* in which they live (Anzaldúa, 1987). This repertoire with which bilinguals do language consists of what is called “the linguistic,” but also of what is seen as multimodalities, that is, the performances with gestures, body movements, drawing, music, all of which are part of the process with which human beings make meaning. As Block (2014) has pointed out, a broadened semiotically based way of looking at what people do when they interact would include “an active engagement with embodiment and multimodality” (p. 56).

Translanguaging focuses on practices of speakers that *go beyond* the traditional understandings of named language as discrete entities that have been reified by countries, schools, and prescriptive grammar books (García & Li Wei, 2014; Leung & Valdés, 2019; Li Wei, 2011, 2018; Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019). As Otheguy et al. (2015) have said, “translanguaging is the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages” (p. 281). Angel Lin (2019) has emphasized the trans-semiotizing aspects of translanguaging, as the verbal is intertwined with many other semiotic resources (e.g., visuals, gestures, bodily movement) that mutually elaborate each other.

In focusing on how speakers *do* English, on how they engage in *linguaging*, and not on whether they *have* a language named English with only certain characteristics, translanguaging theory makes visible the power of English and the colonial logic that has constructed it as such. English as an entity with specific linguistic characteristics has been a product of colonization and the resulting coloniality that continues to operate in present subjugation processes (Quijano, 2000). Named languages like English and Spanish have been often used as a tool to subjugate people racialized as inferior non-native speakers.

Lest someone misunderstands me (and because some insist on misunderstanding what some of us are saying), English (and Spanish and other languages) have important social realities. In fact, English has had (and continues to have) significant material and social consequences for its users. That is why the teaching of English and TESOL is important and has spread throughout the world. Named languages exist as social entities and are important for identity, for nationhood, for citizenship, for learning, for participation in society. But the artificial boundaries that have been drawn around named languages in nation-states and their schools often leave out the very diverse language practices of people and speakers within national borders and the walls of schools. It is the boundaries that have been constructed. The language of people, of speakers, goes *beyond* those boundaries.

Translanguaging Theory: Flattening Hierarchies and Acting With a Unitary Repertoire

To validate the linguistic practices of bilinguals, we must take up what the decolonial theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) has called “non-abysal thinking.” Non-abysal thinking enables us to perceive the world not just through the eyes of those with institutional power, but through the eyes and ears of those who were made invisible through the colonial process of producing categories of subjugation like race, language, and gender. Acting on translanguaging is then, as Nelson Flores (2014) has said, always a political act, an act of ensuring that racialized bilingual speakers’ lives and languaging are valued as meaning-making systems that are not only legitimate, but also academic (see the language education manifesto in García, Flores, Seltzer, Li Wei, Otheguy, and Rosa, 2021). Taking up translanguaging flattens the hierarchies produced when named languages are attached to national or social groups that are always ranked on a social scale. By focusing on *speakers* and how they do language, and not on languages as handed down by nations and schools, the hierarchies disappear, and the complexity of diverse language practices are brought to the surface.

Translanguaging resists the colonial logic that has shaped the ways we understand language and different speakers, ways of understanding that Flores and Rosa (2015) have called *raciolinguistic ideologies*. By focusing on the mutually constitutive process of language and race, Flores and Rosa remind us that named languages can never be neutral, for they have been used to construct deficient non-human subjects who could then be subjugated. By focusing on ideologies, Flores and Rosa emphasize that it is most important to transform the stances and mindsets of “white listening subjects,” that is, subjects who have institutional power and privilege and have been constructed as white.

Bilingualism has been traditionally understood as two named languages that have been assigned social ranks. The linguistic practices of bilingual speakers often fall outside of the established norms of these named languages that have different social rankings. In contrast, translanguaging focuses on the bilinguals’ ability to manipulate a *unitary* linguistic competence so as to engage with their full repertoire of linguistic/semiotic resources (see especially Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019). Cognitively, bilinguals do not simply have two named languages. Bilinguals do language with a single extended repertoire of features and practices that they assemble through socialization with other speakers. In speakers’ repertoires, all language resources are always available to support thinking and being. The idea of the unitary competence in translanguaging theory (Otheguy et al., 2019) is related to dynamic systems theory, which posits that there are no separate language systems and that bi/multilingualism produces a change in the systems involved, as well as in the degree of metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness of the speaker (Herdina & Jessner, 2002; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008).

Translanguaging theory includes a view of the unitary repertoire which I, and many other scholars, espouse (see García et al., 2021; Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019). In this view all linguistic resources are disaggregated and exist in a horizontal plane (and not hierarchically as boxed entities called languages) where they are always readily accessible for speakers to select or suppress in accordance with their audience to maximize meaning and interaction. In contrast, Jeff MacSwan and some of his colleagues (see, for example, MacSwan, 2022) have insisted that bilinguals do NOT language with a unitary repertoire. MacSwan (2017) proposes the term *multilingual translanguaging*. I take exception to this understanding of the term translanguaging, for, in effect, it leaves intact the colonial logic behind named languages and multilingualism. And it preserves the prestige and power of those languages that are said to belong to more dominant nations and groups. Translanguaging disrupts traditional ideologies about language, bilingualism, and multilingualism, and makes it possible to listen to racialized and colonized bilingual speakers on their own terms, not through the lens of multiple languages, but through their own languaging. Under translanguaging theorizing, the language hierarchies are flattened because we fill in the colonial abyss and disrupt raciolinguistic ideologies by focusing not on the structure of multiple named languages, that is, on traditional multilingualism, but on the ways in which bilingual speakers language and leverage their unitary linguistic competence to perform their own selves.

Translanguaging Theory and Shifting Understandings of English and Multilingualism

Under translanguaging theory, speakers and learners in TESOL cannot simply be seen as multilingual in the traditional sense, as if the named languages in a speaker’s repertoire were separate boxes with English being one of the boxes. Translanguaging in TESOL must reach beyond the artificial boundaries of languages, especially those of English, that preserve hierarchies of power. English users throughout the world develop coordinated language practices that do not fall squarely within the artificial boundaries of what are seen as the norms of an entity called English. Their language reflects the ways in which they

assemble all their semiotic resources to generate meaning for themselves in their own context.

The TESOL profession has grown throughout the globe, bringing it to confront issues of social equity that cannot be addressed unless it continues to take up “English,” not as a simple system of linguistic structures, but in relationship to the sociopolitical context of its speakers, users, and learners. That is, the focus of TESOL is shifting from teaching English as a *language*, even if done in relationship to other languages, to teaching English to bi/multilingual *learners/speakers* who act with their unitary language repertoire to make meaning.

What does this then mean for teaching English (and other languages)? What are translanguaging pedagogical practices?

On Translanguaging as Pedagogical Practice

As I said before, the term translanguaging was coined by Cen Williams to refer to a pedagogical practice that used two languages, English and Welsh, during the same instructional period. Angela Creese and Adrian Blackledge (2010) used the term translanguaging to refer to the practice by teachers in complementary community schools of Gujarati, Turkish, Cantonese and Mandarin, and Bengali in the UK to accept all the languages of the children. Whereas Williams invoked a teacher-directed pedagogical translanguaging, Creese and Blackledge documented pupil-directed translanguaging in classrooms, with teachers responding to students’ dynamic bilingual practices. In effect, pupil-directed translanguaging (even if not called with this term) has been the norm in many classrooms with bilingual students, especially in colonial contexts (see, for example, Lin & Martin, 2005).

But for pedagogical practices to be generative and sustainable, they must be theoretically grounded. Translanguaging has offered the theoretical and epistemological support to understand bi/multilingualism differently, and thus to teach differently. As I said before, García and Li Wei (2014) attempted to show the importance of linking translanguaging as a critical theory of language and bilingualism to pedagogical practices, although this has not always taken place.

Xin et al.’s (2021) comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the academic output on translanguaging in the last 20 years shows the explosion of work on translanguaging pedagogy. Since 2014, much work on translanguaging pedagogical practices has emerged, but much remains decoupled from the critical unitary perspectives of translanguaging theory that I have described in this paper. To me, this is the most important lesson that we have yet to learn.

Translanguaging pedagogical practices must respond to the ways of languaging of bilinguals. It must remain critical and political, pushing back on the colonial logic that creates hierarchies of power through named languages, and that continues to delegitimize linguistic practices that do not fall squarely within the boundaries of languages in school.

Translanguaging pedagogical practices are always in tension with the language-in-education policies, practices, and ideologies in schools, for they respond to speakers’ characteristics and practices, to the bilingual’s unitary repertoire, and not to what schools and nation-states have constructed as appropriate academic language(s). Translanguaging pedagogical practices involve learning to negotiate this tension, while always putting the speaker and their practices and experiences at the center of teaching and learning.

I start by reviewing some of the work on translanguaging pedagogical practices in language education in the Global North.¹ Often these practices are not firmly grounded in

¹ The concept of Global North and Global South refers to a grouping of countries largely on socio-economic characteristics, with the Global North associated with countries that have had more economic development, and

the critical aspects of transanguaging theory, even when they are used to teach minoritized bilinguals in bilingual education classrooms. It is in the Global South, however, where transanguaging pedagogical practices, especially in the teaching of English, have been tightly linked to the critical aspects of the theory. This has to do with the focus on the development of English by formerly colonized subjects. I then offer examples of how transanguaging pedagogical practices have been taken up in the Global South in decolonizing ways.

Transanguaging Pedagogical Practices: The Global North and the Development of Bilingualism/Plurilingualism²

Transanguaging pedagogical practices in the Global North are often used to develop the bilingualism/plurilingualism of learners. This bilingualism sometimes includes English. I review here transanguaging pedagogical practices used to develop learners' plurilingualism, whether this means the development of what is considered a language other than English, English itself, or both languages.

The transanguaging perspective that I described in 2009 and was developed in the 2014 book with Li Wei took root in schools and classrooms in the US with the CUNY-NYSIEB project, a professional development project carried out by a large team of scholars and educators in New York State (see City University of New York – New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals, 2020; García & Kleyn, 2016). The work was not solely in bilingual education, but in classrooms where there were large numbers of emergent bilinguals, including many English as a Second Language classrooms, English Language Arts, and other content classrooms. The CUNY-NYSIEB team produced teacher guides, videos, papers, and briefs that documented the transanguaging pedagogical work done with the teachers by the team. The website, www.cuny-nysieb.org, holds much of this material, as well as the many articles and books that have resulted from the collaboration. The negotiation of the team with schools and their policies resulted in much understanding of when it was possible to open up transanguaging spaces and the reasons for doing so. Sánchez et al. (2017) described three types of transanguaging spaces that were possible:

- 1) transanguaging rings, that is, spaces for scaffolding of instruction for individual students,
- 2) transanguaging documentation spaces for valid assessment and evaluation of what students know and can do, and
- 3) transanguaging transformation spaces to shift the students' subjectivities of inferiority as English Language Learners.

Along these lines, members of the CUNY-NYSIEB team have developed important work on the role of transanguaging pedagogy and literacy/biliteracy development (see, for example, España & Herrera, 2020; Espinosa & Ascenzi-Moreno, 2021). And others have looked at how transanguaging contributes to the development of computer literacies (Vogel et al., 2020).

Focusing on the US, *The Transanguaging Classroom* (García et al., 2017) spells out what transanguaging pedagogical practices may mean for a bilingual teacher, an English as a Second Language teacher, and an English Language Arts teacher. The book develops the three components of what the authors consider to be a transanguaging pedagogy:

the Global South corresponding mostly to those with low income, including Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

² I use here the term plurilingualism instead of multilingualism because I take up the view espoused by the Council of Europe and European scholars which I develop in this section. I use bilingualism when referring to the work in the US. For more on the difference between plurilingualism and transanguaging, see García & Otheguy (2020).

- the translanguaging stance
- the translanguaging design
- the translanguaging shifts

Throughout Europe, translanguaging pedagogies have been especially supported to conform to the plurilingual ethos propelled by the Council of Europe (2001) for European integration. Plurilingualism focuses on the ability to engage in intercultural interactions with whatever resources the speaker can access. Both in traditional Foreign/Second Language Education programs, as well as those known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) where language and content are integrated, translanguaging pedagogical practices facilitate the students' intercultural interactions that plurilingualism values. In Italy, Carbonara and Scibetta (2020) have documented the effects of translanguaging pedagogical practices on the engagement and plurilingual development of students in five multilingual schools in a research project known as L'AltRoparlante. In Germany, Duarte (2019) documented how multilingual students in secondary schools learned more content and language when they were encouraged to engage in translanguaging in interactions. Translanguaging pedagogical practices have also been of particular interest to Nordic scholars who have edited books that encompass different national contexts and address the value and challenges of these practices (Juvonen & Källvist, 2021; Paulsrud et al., 2017).

Although some European nation-states have only started receiving multilingual students recently, others have always had a highly multilingual population. This is the case of Luxembourg, where education takes place initially in Luxembourgish, then German and French, and where very young children attend pre-schools. The original mandate for pre-schools was to work/teach through Luxembourgish only, since the national language was not spoken in many homes. But a 2017 multilingual policy for early childhood education has propelled translanguaging pedagogical practices as a possible way of integrating the multilingual repertoires and identities that children bring into classrooms. Aleksic and García (2022) and Kirsch and Mortini (2021) report on the efforts, many times futile, to help pre-school teachers understand what translanguaging pedagogical practices entail.

As interest in translanguaging pedagogical practices has taken hold, the work is not always constricted to one national context or one ethnolinguistic/raciolinguistic group. In their 2022 edited book, Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter show how translanguaging is being used in classrooms around the world to shift monolingual ideologies and increase interactions and production of diverse language practices among students. This work on translanguaging pedagogical practices is grounded in Cenoz and Gorter's lives in the Basque Country, where the development of Euskara and Spanish in education is paramount. Translanguaging pedagogical practices are shown to protect and develop the regional minoritized local language, Euskara, with respect to the national language, Spanish. In more recent work, Cenoz and Gorter have taken up translanguaging pedagogies as an instrument to promote the trilingual education of children in the Basque Country, developing English practices, as well as those associated with Basque and Spanish (Cenoz & Santos, 2020). Translanguaging pedagogical practices are increasingly being used throughout Europe not just to teach for intercultural communication among different national groups, but also for more intracultural purposes, such as in the case of the multilingual education of Basque children. A most interesting case is the use of translanguaging in the education of Roma children whose language practices are not standardized (Heltai, 2020; Heltai & Tarsoly, in press).

Translanguaging Pedagogical Practices: The Global North and TESOL

The field of TESOL has had a major shift in the last 2 decades, with theorists and methodologists in English language teaching increasingly abandoning the monolingual assumptions that had taken hold in the field (for a review, see Hall, 2020). Little by little,

translanguaging pedagogical practices have been making inroads in TESOL classrooms for certain functions. Hall (2020) names three reasons for implementing translanguaging pedagogical practices in TESOL:

- 1) scaffolding the development of English
- 2) facilitating empathy, rapport, collaboration and interaction between learners
- 3) supporting learners in making connections between the classroom and their wider context, including the maintenance and development of their identities

Yet, as Sembiante and Tian (2020) point out, translanguaging pedagogical practices in TESOL remain controversial, a product of the neoliberal forces that benefit from monolingual English language teaching.

Translanguaging pedagogical research specifically in TESOL has been extensively carried out by Zhongfeng Tian and his colleagues (see Tian et al., 2020; Tian & King, 2023; Tian & Link, 2019; see also Paulsrud et al., 2021; Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2023). Much of this work focuses on teaching English to emergent bilingual students in TESOL programs in the US. Translanguaging pedagogical practices have also been documented in English Language Arts classrooms in the US where a range of different racialized and minoritized students learn together (see, for example, Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2021).

The work on translanguaging pedagogical practices to develop languages other than English, as well as English, has flourished in the US and Europe. But it is in the Global South where the work has shown a way forward. I turn to this perspective next.

Translanguaging Pedagogical Practices: The Global South and the Development of English

The major shift in TESOL's taking up translanguaging has been propelled by scholars in the Global South. As the TESOL profession grows and encompasses the world, it has come to terms with the bi/multilingual practices of the students they teach, as well as the ways in which their students' repertoire could be leveraged to teach them English. It has been particularly the impact of scholars from the Global South and their relationship to English as plurilingual former colonial subjects that has accelerated the transformation of the field. As Rajendram and García have said (in press),

Translanguaging has turned English studies on its head. Instead of teaching language from the perspective of white English-speakers, translanguaging pedagogical practices teach multilingual people from their own experiences and practices, increasing their critical consciousness and liberating them to learn English, and other named languages, starting from their multilingual racialized experience.

Whereas many times translanguaging pedagogical practices in the Global North are seen as just strategies, in the Global South they are seen as disrupting colonial practices and epistemes (Chaka, 2020; Severo et al., 2020). In the Global South, there is greater consciousness of the need to merge translanguaging and critical literacy, resulting in practices that combat social inequities while teaching English.

This greater critical consciousness has come to impact the TESOL profession. Two factors have been responsible for this turn. The first is greater recognition of World Englishes as we increasingly listen to English spoken by Nigerians, Indians, and others beyond the US, the UK and Australia, in media and in person. The second is the increasing use of English as intercultural medium of communication among people from different backgrounds. Scholars who have studied the intercultural use of English have promoted the work of what they call English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), ensuring that English language norms associated with "native" speakers are disrupted as English is used creatively in intercultural exchanges (Seidlhofer, 2001). Scholars such as Jenks and Lee (2020) have explored the relationship of translanguaging to World Englishes. In the recent past, the field of research known as Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) has emerged. The focus is

on preparing learners to use English with interlocutors from linguistically diverse backgrounds (Galloway & Rose, 2018). GELT also sees the English language not as a system of set meanings, but inseparable from human action and experience (Li Wei, 2018). Savski and Prabjandee (2022) have described the interface between GELT and translanguaging.

As Rajendram and García (in press) show, research into translanguaging pedagogical practices has grown exponentially in Asian contexts (for example, in China, Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; in Hong Kong, Jian et al., 2022; Tai & Li, 2021, Wu & Lin, 2019; in Nepal, Phyak, 2018; Sah & Li, 2020; in Malaysia, Rajendram, 2019, 2021; in the Philippines, De Los Reyes, 2019; in Singapore, Vaish, 2020). Translanguaging has also received much attention especially in South Africa where Makalela (2017) introduced the notion of ubuntu translanguaging, based on the South African philosophy of “I am because you are; you are because we are” (see also Charamba & Zano, 2019; Maseko & Mkhize, 2019; Ndlangamandla & Chaka, 2020).

In the complex multilingual Asian and African contexts, the term translanguaging is a more accurate description of speakers’ dynamic multilingualism than that of the additive bilingualism espoused in the west or even the concept of plurilingualism that is championed by the Council of Europe. But translanguaging pedagogical practices often fall short of what is needed in linguistically complex societies. In Nepal, for example, teachers understand translanguaging as a way to resist the English-only policy of English Medium Instruction (EMI), making room also for the national language, Nepali. However, as Sah and Li show (2020), there is little recognition of the translanguaging practices of students whose language practices include other indigenous languages. This is also what Rajendram (2021) found in her study of Malaysian EMI classrooms. Despite teachers leveraging translanguaging in the EMI classrooms, the language practices of Malay and Tamil students were not equally leveraged, reflecting the power struggles between speakers of these languages.

The Future of Translanguaging in TESOL

TESOL could lead the world in developing translanguaging pedagogical practices that fit the heteroglossic ways in which plurilingual speakers language. After all, English is the language most taught throughout the world, and it is taught to learners with very different language practices. English is also increasingly used in interactions with interlocutors who themselves have different language practices. The box named English is larger than the boxes that have other language names. By being bigger, it is more dominant and holds more power. And yet, this bigger box that has been drawn about what are known as Englishes contains more diverse features because its speakers have various different characteristics – social and national. In a way, then, English language teaching could be more inclusive of differences, although it seldom is right now.

The teaching of English as a dominant colonial language must include the development of learners’ critical consciousness about their own relationship to the ways of languaging that are considered English. In disrupting traditional sociolinguistic concepts of a named language, such as a first/second language distinction, and such as additive bilingualism and diglossia, translanguaging flattens the power hierarchies, making it possible to combat the social inequities that the use of English often produces.

English continues to be the object of desire of many learners across the world, especially those who are colonial subjects and have suffered processes of racialization and poverty. To teach English equitably, across all populations, requires a translanguaging stance, that is, the understanding that English is not simply a linguistic entity, but an instrument of power and dominance which must be deflated. We develop a translanguaging stance by focusing on the practices of the many speakers of English, and not simply by describing written edited texts that have been constructed to consolidate the power of native speakers of English. These shifts would be facilitated if TESOL educators throughout

the world paid attention to scholars and educators from the Global South who view the language practices of their multilingual populace differently, as translanguaging. Only by perceiving English through a translanguaging lens will we understand that learners add new features that are said to be from English, but that speakers transform and make their own by integrating them into their unitary repertoire. Designing translanguaging pedagogical practices relies then on leveraging these very different practices, on making users conscious of which features from their unitary repertoire they should select to interact with the interlocutors with whom they engage.

I am grateful to NYS TESOL for inviting me 10 years ago to reflect on the relationship of translanguaging to TESOL, and to have done so again now, 10 years later. Ten years ago, I spoke of translanguaging work in New York State. Today, the work has exploded and expanded, bringing to bear the complex multilingual realities of the Global South and the critical aspects of the theory. TESOL has an important social mandate, one of creating social equity conditions that will never come about unless we flatten the power of a named language like English by focusing on its speakers/users/learners. I trust that over the next decade, more will be done to develop the translanguaging pedagogies that would advance the social equity of all learners of English throughout the globe. Translanguaging pedagogical practices offers to NYS TESOL the possibility of developing a counter-hegemonic epistemic approach that, by centering the translanguaging practices of multilingual speakers, would advance the social equity of all in our state.

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