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Zhongfeng Tian • Laila Aghai
Peter Sayer • Jamie L. Schissel
Editors

Envisioning TESOL through a Translanguaging Lens

Global Perspectives

 Springer

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Foreword: Cutting Through the Monolingual Grip of TESOL Traditions – The Transformative Power of the Translanguaging Lens

Since the publication of García and Li Wei's seminal work *Translanguaging* in 2014, translanguaging has become a buzzword in TESOL and Applied Linguistics conferences and an intellectual and pedagogical movement among language education communities. The 17 chapters collected in this book have further provided empirical evidence that the translanguaging lens can offer pedagogical affordances and a renewed sense of agency among both teachers and students. A social justice concern is also central to translanguaging pedagogies (see Sembiante and Tian; Robinson et al., and many other chapters in this volume). The authors in this book have spoken on a wide range of contexts and issues: from *translanguaging* [used as a transitive verb here] TESOL pedagogies, to *translanguaging* TESOL assessment design, to *translanguaging* TESOL/ESL/EFL teacher education courses.

Yet, some chapters in this book also documented some challenges facing the translanguaging intellectual and pedagogical movement, among which are the resistance, confusion, lack of confidence and strategies in trying out translanguaging pedagogies among some teachers, the rigidity and hegemony of (dominant forms of) English in high-stakes tests (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL), and the deep-rooted ideologies shaping teachers' orientation or stance towards translanguaging.

As Lau cautions:

Researchers on international development also need to exercise vigilance and humility in our understanding of what decolonization means to local communities (Darroch & Giles, 2014) and how our new theories and insights on language and language education might facilitate or hinder local agentive efforts to find creative solutions to make do with varied severe socio-political and economic demands. (Lau, this volume)

However, when local researchers and teachers themselves (e.g. the teacher in Seltzer and García's study, this volume) contribute to translanguaging theory and practice and speak to the agency that the translanguaging lens can afford them and their students in their own contexts, then it is not about some foreign experts imposing 'new' theories and pedagogies on other people, but about how local communities in different contexts begin to use the translanguaging lens to speak back to traditional TESOL theory and to bring back a focus on social justice, which has

been so sorely missing in the monolingual, monoglossic grip of the TESOL tradition for too long. When Sembiante and Tian (this volume) re-position the ‘E’, ‘SOL’ and ‘T’ through the translanguaging lens, they also start to break through this grip by using the translanguaging lens as a diamond that cuts through the mythologies/ideologies that have beset TESOL like an invisible curse (Lin & Motha, 2019).

While there is an emerging body of research studies contributing to the development of translanguaging theory and pedagogies, there have also been queries about the transformative power of translanguaging (Jaspers, 2018). Lin, Wu, and Lemke (2020) have summarized these queries heard among some critics and teachers as follows:

1. ‘What are the differences between translanguaging and code-switching/code-mixing or code alternation?’
2. ‘I cannot wrap my mind around the notion that there are no boundaries among languages; that a speaker only has one holistic repertoire and there are no internal differentiations in this repertoire. It goes against my gut feeling that I am speaking different languages... How does translanguaging theory explain the fact that I do feel that I am speaking different languages?’
3. ‘Translanguaging pedagogy is similar to existing pedagogical approaches that argue for the importance of valuing students’ familiar linguistic and cultural resources (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2007) and sociocultural theories of “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005); what’s new about it?’
4. ‘There is limiting potential of translanguaging to disrupt the hierarchy of languages: many of the translanguaging examples in conference presentations sound so much like previous examples of using L1 to scaffold the learning of the target language; the hierarchy is still there.’
5. ‘Translanguaging theory argues that the language boundaries are porous and that named languages are historical, social, political, institutional constructions. This idea cannot help minoritized linguistic and cultural groups who want to revive, maintain and uphold their heritage languages and linguistic identities. This is especially worrying in situations where minority groups want to revive their endangered languages under the domination of an institutionally powerful language (e.g. English).’ (Extracted from Lin et al., 2020)

In Lin et al. (2020), some possible responses to the above questions are explored and offered. One key to appreciating the paradigm shifting power of the translanguaging lens is to understand the different ontologies underpinning the translanguaging view and the traditional code view. As Seltzer and García put it:

Translanguaging also bridges understandings of language diversity for different types of students—those who are said to be bilingual and those considered to be multidialectal. *By focusing on linguistic features, and not language as an autonomous structure*, translanguaging theory makes it possible for African American and Latinx students to understand their language development as being part of the same process, despite the socio-political differences between what are seen as “varieties of English” and “different languages.” In so doing, students become better listeners for one another, engaging in developing each other’s repertoires without regard of whether students are said to be “bilingual” or “multidialectal!” (Seltzer and García, this volume; italics added)

In Fig. 1, I attempt to construe and visualize (albeit with some theoretical simplification) two different views of language learning. The traditional code view focuses on learning languages as bounded autonomous structures in compartmentalized spaces ('parallel monolingualisms') whereas the translinguaging lens embraces a *linguaging* (dynamic meaning-making process) view of language learning.

To conclude this foreword, I want to outline some urgent directions for research in the emerging field of translinguaging in TESOL:

1. If translinguaging performances can be conceptualized as including complex performances of trans-semiotizing (Lin, 2015; Wu & Lin, 2019), trans-registering, trans-styling, or trans-featuring even by 'monolinguals', how can we explore and describe the characteristics, structuring and patterning, and meanings of these complex dynamic performances? What would be the research methodological approaches to move the field forward?

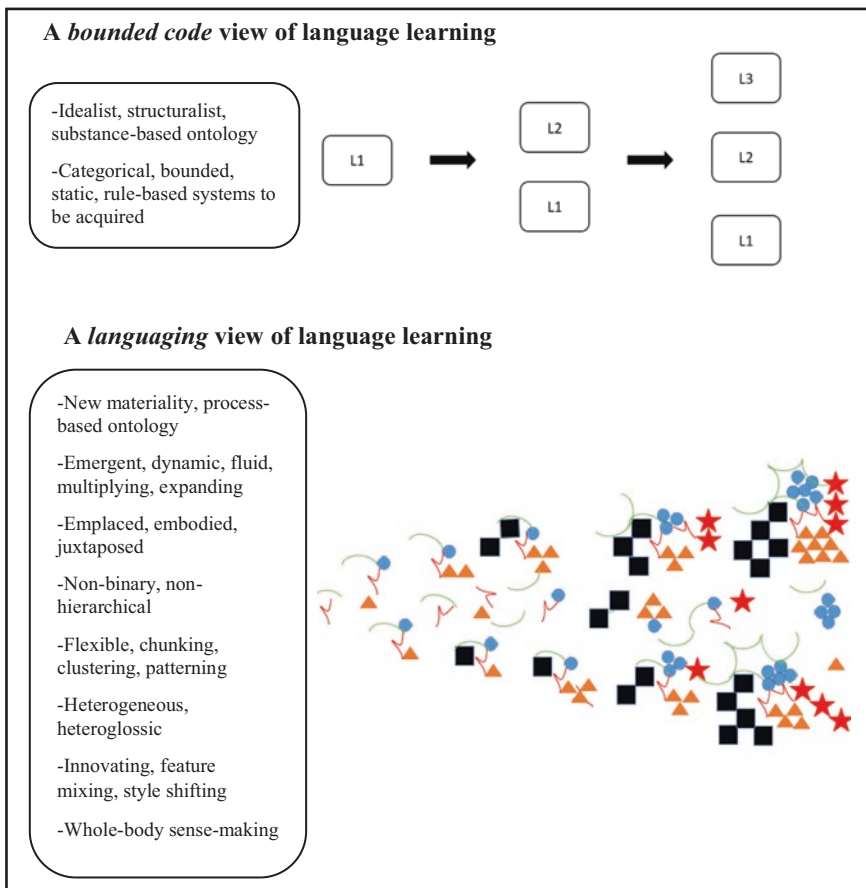


Fig. 1 Construing two different views of language learning. (Adapted from Lin, 2017)

2. How to *translanguage* TESOL assessment at different levels (e.g. K-12, tertiary)? What are the theoretical, implementational and policy advocacy issues involved? How to tackle them?
3. How to *translanguage* TESOL teacher education? What are the possible processes that can lead to changes in some of the deep-rooted beliefs, stances and orientations among teachers, students, parents and school administrators?
4. Drawing on Janks' (2000) question: "How does one provide access to dominant forms, while at the same time valuing and promoting the diverse languages and literacies of our students?" (p.176). What are the ways in which translanguaging pedagogies can disrupt the hierarchy of languages while providing access to dominant forms that will enable students to survive the monolingual high-stakes tests?

As the saying goes, 'It takes a village to research a village', it would take different parties (e.g. researchers across different disciplines and generations, policy makers, teachers, students, parents, school administrators), voices and viewpoints (Lemke, 2000) co-contributing to the discussion and research on translanguaging in TESOL. I see this book that comprises 17 chapters from over 25 authors working in different contexts in different continents of the world as a breathtaking, ground-breaking work in this direction.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks go to Dr. Peichang (Emily) He for her invaluable assistance in constructing and visualizing the two different views in Fig. 1.

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Preface

Our aim is to open a critical conversation about English teaching and learning by re-examining TESOL through a translanguaging lens. The contributions reflect diverse views in TESOL scholarship from five continents. The authors respond to the multilingual turn in language education and challenge the monolingual orthodoxy and the native-speakerism paradigm by valuing the linguistic resources or repertoires of individuals holistically. Through bringing theoretical and pedagogical orientations of translanguaging into TESOL, teachers and learners' full linguistic repertoires become integral to the teaching and learning of English. This shift serves to transform the roles of teachers and learners in TESOL.

This book is intended for educators and language teachers in the fields of TESOL and foreign language education. Additionally, this book is intended for graduate and undergraduate students seeking a degree in second language teaching, teaching English as a second and foreign language, and applied linguistics.

The conceptualization of this volume was particularly inspired by the thinking and work of Ofelia García. Her theorization of the notion of translanguaging was instrumental in our own thinking of how to envision the possibilities of TESOL classrooms, and beyond the citations, the imprint of her ideas is everywhere across the chapters. We would also like to thank Francis Hult, the Educational Linguistics series editor at Springer, for his supporting in moving the idea for this book forward. Finally, we want to thank the contributing authors. The overwhelming response we received from the call for proposals convinced us that this topic had struck a chord, and we greatly appreciate the authors' hard work and timeliness in making this volume possible.

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