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**The Language of Translanguaging: Implications of Languaging about Language for Classroom Instruction in Multilingual Contexts**

During the past decade, the term translanguaging has come to dominate academic discussions regarding pedagogy in bilingual and second language (L2) immersion programs as well as pedagogy for multilingual and immigrant-background students in 'mainstream' programs taught through the dominant societal language. Central to the construct of translanguaging pedagogy is the position that the bi/multilinguals' languages should not be rigidly separated and taught in linguistic isolation, but rather connected instructionally within an integrated cognitive system. One of the theoretical precursors to the construct of translanguaging is the interdependence hypothesis, which posited a common underlying proficiency that supported transfer of academic knowledge and skills across languages (Cummins, 1981). This theoretical framework also incorporated a conceptual distinction between conversational fluency and academic language proficiency, the former representing everyday social use of language in face-to-face interpersonal contexts and the latter a fusion of conceptual and linguistic knowledge (e.g., understanding of the concept of democracy). The classroom implication of this framework is that instruction of multilingual students should aim explicitly to promote cross-lingual transfer of conceptual and academic knowledge and skills.

The presentation will discuss current conceptualizations of translanguaging with reference to implicit and explicit understandings of two core components of the construct, namely the nature of 'language proficiency' and the relationships that exist between the bi/multilinguals' languages. A reference point in this analysis is what the various theoretical conceptualizations both of translanguaging and its underlying components mean for classroom instruction in multilingual contexts.

Three sets of critiques of the interdependence hypothesis and the conversational/academic language proficiency distinction will be examined with reference to their implications for conceptualizing the construct of translanguaging. MacSwan et al., (2017), for example, dispute the legitimacy of 'academic language proficiency' on the grounds that it conflates language and language-related academic content matter (concepts), which they view as distinct. Lambelet et al. (2017) also reject their own strong evidence for linguistic interdependence on the grounds that the highly significant cross-linguistic relationships they observed in reading and writing skills reflect general conceptual abilities rather than linguistic abilities. As with MacSwan et al., there is a rejection of the proposition that 'academic language proficiency' represents a fusion of conceptual and linguistic knowledge. Finally, García and Wei (2014) question the notion of linguistic interdependence and a common underlying proficiency on the grounds that discrete languages don't exist and consequently we can now "shed the concept of transfer . . . [in favor of] a conceptualization of integration of language practices in the person of the learner" (p. 80).

The presentation will address these critiques from the perspectives of theoretical coherence, empirical evidence, and instructional implications. This latter perspective represents a classroom reality check. For example, to what extent is it reasonable to tell teachers that the term 'democracy' represents social studies conceptual knowledge and is independent of language proficiency? Is it
illegitimate for teachers to attempt to reinforce language across the curriculum? Similarly, if not teaching for transfer, how should teachers in a Spanish/English bilingual program conceptualize what they are doing when they draw students' attention to similarities between encontrar and encounter?

The presentation will conclude by arguing that the interdependence hypothesis and the conversational/academic language proficiency distinction are entirely consistent with dynamic conceptualizations of bi/multilingualism. Specifically, it will be argued that the empirical research supports the following propositions: although the boundaries between languages/dialects are fluid and socially constructed, the construct of language/languages is legitimate—in other words, languages do exist; as emergent bilinguals gain access to their two languages, cross-linguistic transfer of knowledge occurs and the languages become fused within an integrated cognitive system (common underlying proficiency); languages, languaging, and translanguaging are socially contested sites and encounters where the legitimacy of cultures and identities are negotiated; and school programs serving multilingual students should engage students' multilingual repertoire and explicitly teach for transfer across languages, including reinforcing students' knowledge of academic language across the curriculum.

References


