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A look at contemporary competing paradigms: Metrolingualism, translingual practices, and translanguaging

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Abstract
This article surveys contemporary concepts used to describe multilingual practices such as metrolingualism, translingual practices, and translanguaging in various environments.
Keywords: *multilingualism, metrolingualism, translingual practices, translanguaging.*

Una mirada a tres paradigmas contemporáneos en pugna: metrolingüismo, prácticas translingües y translingüismo

Resumen
Este artículo lleva a cabo una revisión de conceptos contemporáneos tales como metrolingüismo, prácticas translingües y translingüismo que se utilizan para describir las prácticas de hablantes multilingües en diversos ámbitos.
Palabras clave: *multilingüismo, metrolingüismo, prácticas translingües, translingüismo.*

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Introduction

This article surveys contemporary concepts used to describe multilingual language phenomena such as metrolingualism, translingual practices, and translanguaging. Metrolingualism, the first on the list, has gained limited currency. It is a concept based on Maher's "metroethnicity," (2005) understood as "a reconstruction of ethnicity: a hybridized "street" ethnicity deployed by a cross-section of people with ethnic or mainstream backgrounds who are oriented towards cultural hybridity, cultural/ethnic tolerance and a multicultural lifestyle in friendships, music, the arts, eating and dress" (Maher, 2005, p. 83): In short, this concept involves the shift from examining our identity as the site of historic struggle to focusing on what we can achieve as individuals (Maher, 2005, p. 84). He also defines the concept as a performative style based upon and derived simultaneously from the symbols of both disaffiliation and association (Maher, 2005, p. 84). Individuals may distance themselves from their ethnic group and language spoken by the group; such self-assertion, made on their own terms, challenges mainstream assumptions and constructs. Looking onto the present, and maybe the future, they may even break away from the past to construct a new self who may not show language loyalty or commitment to ethnic struggles (Maher, 2005, p. 84). They minimize commitment to ethnicity and ethnic language while "recognizing ethnic affiliation as something that can be usefully deployed: fashion, music, lifestyle, and so on" (Maher, 2005, p. 84). We thus witness the reification of hybridity.

Contrary to popular beliefs, hybridity is not restricted to certain regions but may very well be a worldwide phenomenon. For instance, Bosire (2006) explains that the hybrid languages of Africa are contact outcomes evolving in a "postcolonial situation that included rapid urbanization and a bringing together of different ethnic communities and cultures with a concomitant exposure to different ways of being" (Bosire, 2006, p. 192). Though not in a recent postcolonial situation, Mexico has undergone some major changes that have included rapid industrialization and ensuing migration from rural to urban areas, where young people are exposed to different social constructs. As Bosire elaborates, younger generations are caught up in a transition as they belong to two worlds and find ways to express their duality. The youth are caught up in this transition; they are children of two worlds and want a way to express this duality, their new ethnicity (Bosire, 2006, p. 192), and as the world is "getting smaller" it is indeed easier to draw on multiple influences, even if far away, at once: a hybrid identity is consequently created as if it were a collage or a multilayered pastiche.

Relative to this so-called urban hybridity, Otsuji and Pennycook propose "metrolingualism" as a cover term for "a product of modern and often urban interaction, describing the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language" (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 240). During the interactions that take place "the use of both fixed and fluid linguistic and cultural identities is part of the process of language use" (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 241); consequently, language users may "move away from ascriptions of language and identity along conventional statist correlations among nation, language, ethnicity," culture and even geography (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015, p. 3); hence the fluidity and the different forms that belonging may take far from the established correlations and ownership of language. In these respects, there exist some similarities with Rampton's ideas of interethnic (or interracial) crossing. Otsuji and Pennycook describe a man with an antagonistic view towards pre-given fixed ascriptions of cultural identities who shifts from a fixed to a fluid cultural identity in his search of belonging to Japanese culture while code-switching between Australian English and Japanese.

The linguistic, cultural, and social practices endorsed by metrolingualism and characterized by hybridity, fluidity, and crossing in urban interaction are also captured by translanguaging, which in turn, supersedes the grasp of metrolingualism by going beyond urban environments and by having a wider inclusiveness.

Translingual practices

This increased ethnic, social, and cultural diversity of industrialized societies is one of the consequences of globalization (Kramsch, 2004, p. 4), which has also prompted an increased demand for the flexibility to move in and out of frames within professional encounters and to deal with cross-cultural misunderstandings (Kramsch, 2004, p. 4). Driven by new technologies and by a neoliberal economy, the new patterns of global activity are not only characterized by intensive flows of people but also by capital goods and discourses (García & Wei, 2014, p. 9).

Though we all may have an idea as to what globalization entails, it is convenient to look at what experts say. Globalization of the world economy denotes a process in which national and international markets are combined into a single complex whole for goods, services and factors of production, including capital, labor, technology and natural resources, covering all countries and economic regions (Bozyk, 2006, p. 1), and "from a theoretical point of view, globalization means an unlimited access to these markets for all interested businesses regardless of country of origin

and economic region, and an increased feedback between these markets" (Bozyk, 2006, p. 1). For these interactions, global languages like English and Spanish are needed, but regional languages may also play a part in regional markets and in agreements such as MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) which recognizes Spanish and Portuguese, two major international languages, and Guaraní, a minority, regional language (MERCOSUR, 2018). As diversity increases and globalization extends, so do contact zones, the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). Pratt's metaphors describe some of the possible processes that take place when cultures come into contact, but her description can also be applied to the social spaces where language contact occurs, where linguistic practices of different sorts take place, and, in that regard, translingual practices are no exception: though constrained by power, they are open to renegotiation in Pratt's contact zones perspective (Canagarajah, 2013a, p. 30). Though a different term, more in the realm of literacy and translation, its prefix renders it akin to 'translingual' and the dynamics of language contact involved undergo a similar process as languages interact with different outcomes.

In an attempt to cause a paradigm shift from the dominant monolingual orientation to a translingual orientation, Canagarajah has come up with his own construct: translingual practices. Though it may seem a novel term, translingual practices have always characterized the practices of diverse communities in the past (2013b, p. 2). He thus justifies the need for a new term:

> Terms belonging to the monolingual orientation are informed by values and philosophies that gained dominance during a particular historic period in relation to particular social conditions. These values in fact became dominant very recently—specifically, eighteenth-century modernity. They are also associated with a particular geographical and cultural location—namely, Western Europe (2013a, p. 19).

He adds that "existing terms like *multilingual* or *plurilingual* keep languages somewhat separated even as they address the co-existence of multiple languages;" a fact that also implies that competence "involves distinct compartments for each language one uses" whereas the term he proposes "enables a consideration of communicative competence as not restricted to predefined meanings of individual languages, but the ability to merge different language resources in situated interactions for new meaning" (2013b, p. 1). Language constitutes hybrid and fluid codes labeled

only in the context of ownership ideologies when people "shuttle across languages, communicate in hybrid languages and, thus, enjoy multilingual competence" (2013b, p. 2). Despite normativity, language resources come into contact in actual use and shape each other (2013b, p. 2) as meaning is constructed in diverse and creative ways.

In those respects, 'translingual' seems to harken back to translanguaging. The term may also allow us to go beyond the dichotomy mono/multi or uni/pluri as these concepts may give the impression that cross-language relations and practices matter only to those considered multilingual when, in fact, they matter in all acts of communication that involve mono and multilingual speakers; though widespread in communities and everyday communicative contexts, translingual practices are ignored or suppressed in classrooms (2013b, p. 2). This oversight may also take place in language teaching as the standard is the vehicle: anything else is plainly a deviation: e.g., categories of speakers remain simplistically black-as-marked, as in the case of African-American Vernacular English, and white-as-unmarked/normative, also seen as the basis of race ideology in the United States (Urciuoli, 2001, p. 195). As Kramsch puts it, "the language learner herself is an idealized, standardized, non-native speaker anxious to abide by the rules of the standard native speaker" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 180; Kramsch, A'Ness and Lam, 2000, p. 81).

Canagarajah´s words also echo those of Liu (1995), whose goal when she first used the term 'translingual' was to "reconceptualize the problematic of 'language' in a new set of relationships that is not predicated on some of the familiar premises of contemporary theories of language, which tend to take metropolitan European tongues as a point of departure" (Liu, 1995, p. 27). Her aim was also to move away from Eurocentric language ideologies while suggesting that "the study of translingual practice examines the process by which new words, meanings, discourses, and modes of representation arise, circulate, and acquire legitimacy within the host language due to, or in spite of, the latter's contact/collision with the guest language" (Liu, 1995, p. 26). Anticipating Makoni and Pennycook (2007), she writes that meanings are not so much "transformed" when concepts pass from one language to another as *invented* within the local environment of the latter (Liu, 1995, p. 26; my emphasis).

According to Canagarajah, the label translingual highlights two key concepts of significance for a paradigm shift. Firstly, communication transcends individual languages and, secondly, it

transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances (Canagarajah, 2013a, p. 6). In short, communication is an alignment of words with many other semiotic resources involving different symbol systems (i.e., icons, images), modalities of communication (i.e., aural, oral, visual, and tactile channels), and ecologies (i.e., social and material contexts of communication) (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 2). He tackles the dynamics of current societies as he pinpoints social relations and communicative practices in the context of late modernity, which is characterized by migration, transnational cultural, economic, and production relationships, digital media, online communication, and globalism. All of which "facilitate a meshing of languages and semiotic resources" as increasing contact is taking place between languages and communities (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 2) not only in border areas but everywhere.

As for the definition of translinguals, Canagarajah applies the term to speakers who "have the capacity to use English in relation to the other codes in society and their personal repertoires" or, in short, a capacity for translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013a, p. 16); the term also treats practices "as hybridizing and emergent, facilitating creative tensions between languages" (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 2). Of course, English is given as an example, but it very well can be any other language. As in translanguaging, one linguistic repertoire could never be split into one or another language as all resources appear to work as a unit, in unison unlike code-switching, in which languages are theoretically kept apart as different systems; thus, "the term moves us beyond a consideration of individual or monolithic languages to life between and across languages" (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 1).

In reference to the latest tendencies in sociolinguistics, García and Wei (2014) explain that "a critique of nation-state/colonial language ideologies has emerged, seeking to excavate subaltern knowledge", and that these poststructuralist critical language scholars (Canagarajah, Makoni, and Pennycook among others) treat language as contested space – as tools that are reappropriated by actual language users (García & Wei, 2014, p. 10). They further argue that the "goal of these critiques is to break out of static conceptions of language that keep power in the hands of the few, thus embracing the fluid nature of actual and local language practices of all speakers" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 10) with a focus on linguistic practices of language users in which the speakers' agency is the means to create meaning, a far cry from elitist normative practices that also serve purposes such as gatekeeping and keeping everyone in their place. Moreover, Trim (2002) reminds us that the dynamic forces at work in the everyday activity of language communities are far

more powerful than conscious, ideologically motivated policies (Spolsky, 2004, p. 7). Even where there is a formal, written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed nor consistent (Spolsky, 2004, p. 8).

Speakers in Tijuana are taught Standard Spanish at school, while a standard variety of English (General American) is also taught as a foreign language. Those who study in San Diego learn English either as ESL or as the language of instruction. At any rate, speakers swing between two standard languages, each dominant on one side of the border, while their linguistic practices display traits that defy traditional expectations as these include besides different dialects of Mexican Spanish and possibly some dialectal levelling, code-switching, translanguaging, transfer, play on words--Homo Ludens at work, style shifting, register changes between languages that evidence their linguistic repertoires in action without even thinking about languages as separate systems but as ways of achieving different ends, be it communicative, humorous, financial, a display of in-group solidarity, or strategic, when it comes to exclusion.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging was originally introduced as 'Trawsieithu' by Cen Williams in the 1980s (Williams, 1994, 1996) for use in Welsh high schools and research in Wales (Baker, 2001, p. 281; García & Wei, 2014, p. 64) and refers to how input (e.g., reading and listening) and output (e.g., writing and speaking) are deliberately in a different language and systematically varied to help students enhance their skills (Baker 2001, p. 281; Baker, 2003, p. 82; García, 2011, p. 147; Williams, 2002, p. 40). *Translanguaging* competes for academic discourse space with some of the terms covered earlier in this chapter and seems to have wider currency than rivalling terms like *codemeshing*, *flexible bilingualism*, *heteroglossia*, *hybrid language practices*, *metrolingualism*, *multilanguaging*, *polylanguaging*, *polylingual languaging* and *translingual practice* (Jaspers, 2018, p. 1; Wei, 2017, p. 1).

The notion of translanguaging has been further expanded to include the language practices of bilingual people (García, 2012, p. 1), otherwise explained as "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages" (García, 2009, p. 141). The term is also used to "describe the usual and normal practice of 'bilingualism without diglossic functional separation'" (Baker, 2003, p. 72; García, 2007, p. xiii), which means that traditionally the languages spoken by bilinguals or multilinguals have been viewed as separate systems as previously mentioned. Instead, translanguaging is

viewed "as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 2). Jaspers elaborates on this further and affirms that actual language use and people's perception of it do not always correspond with the distinct (national) languages we conventionally identify and that these labels hide significant variation between different idiolects (Jaspers, 2018, p. 2). Instead of speaking a so-called language speakers engage in 'languaging', a process through which they combine sets of linguistic resources that may, or may not, agree with canonically recognized languages, codes, or styles. However, languaging does not stop there as these resources are deployed alongside other semiotic resources such as signs and gestures (Jaspers, 2018, p. 2). However, there is also a growing discussion of the fluidity of codes, and such codes are perhaps better described from an ideological perspective than from a linguistic one (Bailey, 2007; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Summing up Williams' theory, Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) state that "translanguaging requires a deeper understanding than just translating as it moves from finding parallel words to processing and relaying meaning and understanding" (Jones & Baker, 2012, p. 644) but it seems uncertain whether translation requires the same or not. Translation is not only about finding parallel words because it is not restricted to words for it involves more complex structures such as sentences and longer chunks of discourse, images like metaphors and similes, finding equivalent sayings, proverbs and idiomatic expressions that may be at play which involve intercultural knowledge, history and the like, and it also involves relaying meaning and understanding by applying translation techniques such as ommission, transposition or explicitation. I would rather think that translanguaging may involve translation but essentially involves working with a linguistic repertoire functioning as one instead of two separate codes as it is the case of translation and interpretation for that matter.

For Wei (2011, p. 1223), translanguaging includes "going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going beyond them". These represent the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users that transcends the combination of structures, the alternation between systems (the so-called languages), the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities, and relationships (Wei, 2011, p. 1223). He also argues that translanguaging is

transformative in nature as it creates a social space for the multilingual language user where different identities, values and practices combine to generate new identities, values, and practices (Wei, 2011, p. 1223).

A broader definition of translanguaging, which includes monolinguals, suggests that translanguaging is "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for the watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy. García & Reid, 2015, p. 281). After all, a named language is a social construct, not a mental or psychological one (Otheguy. García & Reid, 2015, p. 283).

According to Otheguy. García and Reid (2015, p. 281) named languages are social, not linguistic, objects. In contrast, individuals speak *idiolects*, linguistic objects defined in terms of lexical and structural features. As for named languages, their boundaries and membership cannot be established based on lexical and structural features alone, and as such exist only in the outsider's view. From the insider's perspective of the speakers, there is only their full idiolect or repertoire, which belongs only to the speakers, not to any named language (Otheguy. García & Reid, 2015, p. 281). Such tenet runs counter to traditional views of language that we have been taught.

García posits translanguaging as "multiple discursive practices in which bilingual engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds (García, 2009, p. 45); that means that individuals translanguage not only in the classroom but also to communicate within their families and communities. García uses the term in a comprehensive way to cover multilingual practices which have traditionally been described as translation, borrowing, codeswitching, code-mixing, crossing, creolization, foreigner talk. These multilingual practices also include discourse in the form of text, and strictly speaking, texts are part of literacy or discursive practices.

Though other terms have been used for multilingual discourse such as *languaging* and *metrolingual practices* (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 86), the term *translanguaging* (García, 2009) seems more appropriate with the "trans" prefix than *languaging,* and does not give the idea of restriction to cities like *metrolingualism* may suggest; as for terms which enjoyed wide currency in the past such as *code-switching* or *code-mixing*, these have fallen out of use as they imply a normative monolingual ideology which is at odds with current research trends in language contact.

In sum, translanguaging first began in Welsh bilingual educational contexts as input and output that had to do with literacy practices, that is, reading was conducted in one language and writing in another language, and speaking and listening, the two other major skills in language teaching, took turns. Ever since then, the concept has been expanded, and because it included literacy practices it was a matter of time before it was applied in other settings. Translanguaging then appears as a new approach to multilingualism that "tries to capture flexible and dynamic multilingual practices" not only in interaction but also in physical landscapes; as such, translanguaging can be applied to "foreground the co-occurrence of different linguistic forms, signs and modalities" like those present in the linguistic landscape (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015, p. 56). The discursive texts the linguistic landscape conveys, qualify as literacy and linguistic practices that may reflect translanguaging where multilingualism and language varieties exist.

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