

The Origin and Development of Translanguaging and Its Implications for Foreign Language Pedagogy

Jiaying Li

Beijing Forestry University School of Foreign Languages Beijing 100083

Abstract: Translanguaging has been a heated topic in applied linguistics and foreign language pedagogy in recent years. It was put forward by Cen Williams as a bilingual teaching practice, and then it was gradually developed by other scholars. This thesis will introduce the origin and development of the theory translanguaging, previous studies of translanguaging and its implications for foreign language pedagogy. Although translanguaging has been applied into the teaching practice abroad, its application and ways of practicing still need to be improved so as to better adapt to the domestic teaching environment.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Code-switching; Multimodality; Pedagogy

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background and statement of the problem

Over the past 30 years, globalization has not only enriched the connotation of applied linguistics, extended the scope of its research, but also enabled more and more people to master two or more language codes (Zhao, 2012). With a majority of people mastering 2 or more languages, monolinguals have gradually become a minority. In daily life, work, and study, bilinguals and multilinguals will naturally use more than one languages, their first language, sometimes their second language or third language, or even they will use multimodality and multisensory language to express their idea in a sentence according to context, topic, communication needs, etc. This research is a review study, aiming to use the present literature at home and abroad to explore the concept of translanguaging, including its origin, development and its application as well as the future development.

1.2 Significance of the research

The term Translanguaging seems to have captured people's imagination. It has been applied widely to pedagogy, everyday social interaction, cross-modal and multi-modal communication, linguistic landscape, visual arts, music, and transgender discourse (Li, 2018: 9). The study of this new widely used concept can not only enrich our knowledge, improve our language proficiency, but can deepen our understanding of its role in pedagogy by observing its practice in other countries, and then promote its practice in Chinese foreign language pedagogy.

1.3 Objectives of the research

The purpose of the study is to trace the origins of "translanguaging" in education and analyse how the term has developed and to discuss its related conception such as code-switching in order to better understand the notion of this term. And also this thesis aims to share how recent research into translanguaging in the classroom has further explained the notion of the term.

1.4 Organization of the thesis

This thesis concludes five parts. The first part is a general introduction to research background, significance and objectives. The second part two is concerned with the literature review. This part will explore the definition of translanguaging, previous studies of translanguaging and a summary of the previous studies. The third part presents the implication for Pedagogy and suggestions for promoting the practice of translanguaging in classroom. The fourth part comes to the conclusion. Findings and limitations are concluded in this part. In addition, more researches will be needed for the further studies in this area.

2. Literature review

2.1 Definition of terms

Baker (2011) ^[3] defines translanguaging as the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages. And then Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012). extend the definition and believe that both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning (qtd. In Wang 57). Therefore, translanguaging is the process whereby multilingual speakers use their languages, often simultaneously as an integrated communication system. In short, translanguaging is the process that bilinguals or multilinguals use different languages intentionally and systematically when learning knowledge.

2.2 Previous studies

Copyright © 2021 Jiaying Li

doi: 10.18282/l-e.v10i2.2289

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Translanguaging is a new and developing term. First used as a Welsh word “Trawsieithu” in schools of Wales in the 1980s particularly by Cen Williams (1994). (qtd. In Lewis et al, 2012: 641), which focuses on the Pedagogy in primary and secondary schools in Wales. Williams proposed the use of the teaching strategy of translanguaging, that is, in the course of classroom teaching, teachers intentionally and consciously use two languages in the same class: one language for information input and the other for output activities. And later Baker (2001)^[1] also pointed out that “In translanguaging, the input (reading or listening) tends to be in one language, and the output (speaking or writing) in the other language.” For instance, students are asked to read English texts and write in Welsh, or read texts in Welsh and write in English (Liang & Wang, 2020: 86). In short, in the teaching process of the course, teachers should construct a bilingual teaching model intentionally and systematically. Later, the word Trawsieithu was formally translated into the English vocabulary “Translanguaging” by Baker (2010)^[2] who enriched the definition. And the definition of translanguaging was completed by Lewis, Jones & Baker and Canagarajah (2011) who believes that translanguaging refers to the ability of multilinguals to use different languages, but these languages belong to a comprehensive system. Lewis et al. (2012) Conducted a large-scale field survey on the effect of hyperlingual teaching practice in Wales. They used video and audio to record the teaching situation of language courses in primary and secondary schools in Wales. It was found that in the teaching process, students can best understand what they have learned, so they can last long. Effectively maintain the bilingual advantage. Then Canagarajah (2013), Cenoz & Gorter (2019), and Creese & Blackledge (2010) found that translanguaging encourages students to make full use of their repertoire to develop their competence of bilingualism and multilingualism.

2.3 Summary of the previous studies

Translanguaging was put forward by Cen Williams as a teaching practice in Wales, which need teachers use two or more languages in the Pedagogy, intentionally promote learners development of language competence. Then the definition of translanguaging was gradually enriched and completed. In recent years, translanguaging theory has been supported by many empirical studies. In 2002, Williams further clarified the advantages of translanguaging in Welsh education, namely, in the Welsh primary and secondary school classrooms, using two languages to deepen students’ understanding of what they have learned and enhance students’ ability to participate in classroom activities with two languages. He believes that translanguaging is a teaching theory that enables students to achieve deep cognition and strengthen understanding through bilingual intervention. In 2003, Williams reaffirmed that translanguaging classes can help children develop a balanced development of two languages. And by observing the real teaching cases in a school of Wales, they all believe that the practice of translanguaging in classrooms is beneficial for students expressing themselves and getting a better understanding of what they have learned. However, there is a lack of specific suggestions about how to better implement the practice of translanguaging in classrooms, which needs further consideration.

3. The related concepts and implication for teaching

About the origin of translanguaging, there are several consideration: First, the term translanguaging comes from the Welsh revival movement. Second, the term comes from languaging; Third, it correlates with code-switching. Concerning the Welsh revival movement, Lewis et al. (2012) have stated that expressions such as “language struggle”, “fighting for survival”, and “treachery” are used to express the relations between English and Welsh. When Welsh language revitalisation began to become successful in the fifinal decades of the 20th century, it opened up the possibility of the two languages being seen as mutually advantageous in a bilingual school, person, and society. (Lewis et al, 2012: 642)· which contributes to the emergence of translanguaging. As Li Wei states, his initial idea of translanguaging came from a different source, namely, the notion of languaging. (Li, 2018: 16). He regards languaging as a verb which is fluid, and he believes that the concept of “languaging” means that people’s use of language is a process and a social behavior, rather than just possessing language objects and their structures. Meanwhile, Becker’s (1991) years of multilingual teaching practice and research around the world also prove that language can be regarded as a verb, which itself is a dynamic process, a continuous fluid process, and language is a dynamic society, the product of behavior. This has a different connotation than language as a noun—noun means language is neutral and bounded, and involves a set of rules or structures. Psychological research has changed the language from noun to verb, challenging the view that “language exists as an isolated system outside the speaker and social life”.

3. Conclusion

This thesis discusses the origin, development and related concepts of translanguaging and its implication for foreign language pedagogy. Translanguaging can not only help students better understand what they have learned in classes but help enhance students’ ability to participate in class activities with two or more languages. Translanguaging enables bi-/multilinguals to use their language resources to successfully complete language communication and knowledge acquisition. Meanwhile, translanguaging enriches the connotation and extension of the study of code-switching. With the advantage of emphasizing multi-modal language practices across languages, in language research and application, especially language teaching, we can establish a translanguaging teaching mode, and create a translanguaging classroom to help students better understand what they’ve learned in school and promote their language capacity. However, there are some limitations, for instance, there are less implementation of translanguaging teaching practice in China, where more proper ways needed to be taken in order to develop the translanguaging practice. Meanwhile, there is a lack of concrete suggestions or steps on how to design a translanguaging class, which is still a concern of many teachers. Therefore, more researches need to be conducted in this field so as to promote the application of the theory “translanguaging”.

References:

-
- [1] Baker, C. (2001). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. (3rd edn). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- [2] Baker, C. (2010). Increasing Bilingualism in Bilingual Education. In D. Morris (Ed.), *Welsh in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 61-79). Wales: Cardiff University of Wales Press.
- [3] Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th edn.). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.