

## Translanguaging and Multiliteracies in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Classroom

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In our extremely technologized world, enabling students to use a variety of media and modes in learning is an important component of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education. It is necessary to foster communication with diverse audiences and to encourage students to become critical designers of technologically mediated communications. Translanguaging and multiliteracies as approaches in applied linguistics hold promise to achieve these goals in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classroom. This article discusses translanguaging as a concept, its use in the classroom, and its development as pedagogy. The article also examines the teaching of reading and writing, literacy, multiliteracies, and how the latter relates to the 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Further, the article discusses the intersections between translanguaging and multiliteracies while drawing out some implications for the ESOL classroom.

**Key words:** translanguaging, multiliteracies, ESOL, language education

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The field of applied linguistics was founded on grammar-based, psycholinguistic approaches to language associated with the established modern linguist Ferdinand De Saussure's vision of formal structural linguistics. The same approaches underpinned the understanding of language learning and teaching during the field's inception in the 1960s. Over the decades, various trends in applied linguistics have seen a departure from a view of language as a system (a linguistic approach) and language-in-the mind (a psycholinguistic approach), to language as a tool for meaning-making (a communicative approach), to situated language use as embedded in specific sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts (a sociocultural approach). This then continues with a critical approach which views language and language use being shaped by and reinforcing pervasive social, cultural, and political ideologies that result in inequitable power relations (García & Wei, 2014; Hawkins, 2011; Pennycook, 2010).

From sociocultural and critical perspectives, language does not stand alone. A language cannot be conceived as a mere fixed, codified set of grammatical structures and lexical items. Rather, languages shift. They change across context, users, places, and time. Languages are social, and even within traditionally named languages (e.g., English, Indonesian, Spanish), there are varieties that are used in different contexts for different purposes with different interlocutors. Linguistically speaking, no languages are inherently "better" than others, but they gain value from the specifics of their use within broader societal ideologies. Ideological values are attached to languages to the extent that some hold higher status than others, and this often leads to situations where languages serve to empower some people while disempowering others.

Within the complex and hierarchical forms of society in which it is used, language is entangled with other semiotic resources to convey meaning in virtually every communication. How meanings are constructed does not solely depend on linguistic structures; rather, they depend largely on cultural models of communication and cultural interpretations of semiotic resources.

One movement reflecting this change of view indicates that language is no longer understood as the use of a discrete set of grammatical rules, phonetic features, and lexical forms, but rather it is a fluid movement between semiotic resources in specific situated interactions, as appropriate to audience and context. New terms have been introduced and are associated with this movement, from crossings (Rampton & Charalambous, 2012), code-switching (e.g., Romaine, 1989), codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011), metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010), to translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018). In this article, *translanguaging* is understood as the most widely used term to represent the movement. Translanguaging does not refer to moving between identified language codes as

in code-switching; rather it hypothesizes that each person has one unitary repertoire consisting of all of the semiotic resources at their disposal, and they draw on them in a fluid manner in social interactions (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018).

Another movement relates to the written form of language; it is in the domain of literacy. Back in the mid 1990s, the New London Group (1996) proposed New Literacy Studies to explain that literacy is not simply the ability to encode and decode the written word. The Group conceptualized *multiliteracies* in literacy studies to address the “realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness” (New London Group, 1996, p. 61). This movement views multiliteracies as the requisite knowledge and skills to send and interpret messages through multiple media and modes in rapidly changing local and global contexts, and to align meanings within situated social practices. In other words, multiliteracies suggests the ability to make meaning, both receptively and productively, across an array of texts, through diverse resources.

This article examines translanguaging and multiliteracies and their implications for ESOL classroom. First, the article introduces the reader to translanguaging, covering its conceptual framework, its use in the language classroom and how it has developed as translanguaging pedagogy. Second, the article examines multiliteracies. It analyzes the development of literacy from the teaching of reading and writing, how literacy develops into multiliteracies, and how multiliteracies pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has emerged. Third, the article discusses the intersections between translanguaging and multiliteracies while drawing out some implications for the ESOL classroom. Finally, it provides a conclusion.

## 2. TRANSLANGUAGING

### 2.1. From Language to Translanguaging

Languages have been increasingly seen as mere social constructions with ideological values attached to them. Indeed, traditionally named languages have actually been invented by Western nation-states as a political strategy to define the abstract linguistic systems by which people engage in social and cultural practices (see Makoni & Pennycook, 2007).

Parallel with this view, the term ‘translanguaging’ has arisen. Originally coined in the mid 1990s by Williams (1994). *trawsieithu* was understood as a way to develop Welsh students’ bilingualism by engaging in tasks that required them to use Welsh and English in alternation between receptive (i.e., listening, reading) and productive skills (i.e., speaking, writing). The term was translated into English as “translanguaging” by Baker (2011) who defined it as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (p. 288).

Though both see language as a verb rather than a noun, the term ‘translanguaging’ extends beyond the notion of *linguaging*, the latter basically understood as a process of making meaning of our world by communicating in interaction (Swain, 2006). The prefix *trans-* in *translanguaging* implies that when bilinguals translanguage, they transcend traditionally named languages by going beyond them (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018). Indeed, ever since Williams introduced the concept, translanguaging has been taken up and extended by many scholars to refer to the use of language not as a system with politically and ideologically defined boundaries, but as a dynamic and fluid linguistic repertoire (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015; Wei, 2011, 2018).

Instead of a focus on language forms (and accurate use of them), translanguaging focuses on language-in-use, that is, on how interlocutors fluidly leverage semiotic resources in communication in order to make meaning. Rather than discrete linguistic forms and resources, the emphasis of translanguaging is on the performativity, using the full range of semiotic resources at one’s disposal in communication with others to represent, interpret, and negotiate meaning (Wei, 2018). In translanguaging, bilingual speakers select features from a unitary system, rather than linguistic systems which are understood as traditionally named languages. In García’s words: “I think what the translanguaging lens makes clear is that for a bilingual child, what is happening is really not that he or she is going from one language system to another language system (because those are social constructions); what is happening is that they’re drawing from one linguistic repertoire” (as cited in Orellana & García, 2014, p. 387).

García and Wei (2014) view translanguaging as extending beyond an additive view of bilingualism (Baker, 2011), or interdependence of languages, or hybridity of languages. Translanguaging encompasses complex exchanges between individuals with different histories and backgrounds that are not constrained by fixed, traditionally defined languages. This explains why translanguaging is different from code-switching. Code-switching is like switching different keyboards when one is texting on an old mobile phone. Given that one has to select a conventional language and can only use one set of spell-checks and alphabets at a time while texting, a switch between languages constrains the original, complex interrelated language practices. It does not permit bilingual individuals to employ their entire linguistic repertoire, instead requiring them to choose only one code at a time. Translanguaging, on the other hand, would imply that in creating a text message, we could draw on all our language tools as needed and spontaneously, without the added effort of keyboard-switching (García, 2014; García & Wei, 2014). Further, those adhering to a translanguaging theory consider the bilingual speaker as drawing from a dynamic and fluid repertoire that is not compartmentalized into two separate named languages the way code-switching sees it. Grosjean (1989) explains that, “the bilingual is an integrated whole which

cannot easily be decomposed into two separate parts. The bilingual is NOT the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific linguistic configuration” (p. 6). This view allows us to understand bilinguals holistically; they are not double monolinguals. Their language practices are seen as the deployment of different features from a unitary language repertoire for diverse social interactions.

## 2.2. Translanguaging in the Language Classroom

Translanguaging posits that individuals select and deploy features from a unitary linguistic repertoire in order to communicate, and this view has been taken up in the language classroom (García & Wei, 2014; Vogel & García, 2017). As such, translanguaging is “the process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices in order to ‘make sense’ of, and communicate in, multilingual classrooms” (García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 45). Translanguaging becomes the dynamic exchanges in which teachers and students engage as they draw on and choose from multiple languages and linguistic varieties.

This requires those enacting translanguaging in education to open up a translanguaging space (Wei, 2011). To do so, teachers need not be bilingual, but they must understand how language is much more than the linguistic code reified in school. They must develop awareness of how school epistemologies about language are power infused. A classroom that supports translanguaging has the potential to be transformative because, as Wei (2011, 2018) explained, it creates a translanguaging space for learners by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief, and ideology. The space also maximizes learners’ cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, making it into a lived experience.

Given that translanguaging focuses on the complex languaging practices of bilinguals, it allows for the freedom of a speaker to language in a way that is not necessarily aligned with how languages are defined socially and politically. Indeed, translanguaging takes up a perspective on bilingualism that privileges speakers’ own dynamic linguistic and semiotic practices above the named languages of nations and states (Vogel & García, 2017). This marked a significant contrast to the sociolinguists who generally consider named languages the most important. Sociolinguists generally work on the premise of the social, political, and ideological construction of named languages. For example, “English” is known as it is, a language spoken by people in the Great Britain, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and it is the global lingua franca. Such an understanding also explains why “Bahasa Indonesia” and “Bahasa Melayu” are identified as two separate languages based on the political decisions of Indonesia and Malaysia, respectively, even though the languages are, linguistically speaking, dialects of the same linguistic variety (i.e. Malay). Language educators who base their work on translanguaging theory acknowledge such sociolinguistic

distinctions, but they do not believe that a named language can be added whole as a second language to the language system which a student already has. For García and Kleyn (2016), translanguaging for educational purposes “means that we start from a place that leverages all the features of the children’s repertoire, while also showing them when, with whom, where, and why to use some features of their repertoire and not others, enabling them to also perform according to the social norms of named languages as used in schools” (p. 15).

Translanguaging recognizes the material effects of socially constructed named language categories and structuralist language ideologies, especially for minoritized language speakers (García & Wei, 2014; Vogel & García, 2017). One may speak of the addition of named languages as sociocultural and political units, but ESOL educators must think of the affordances they must provide so that emergent bilingual learners can add new linguistic features to their existing linguistic repertoire in order to expand it.

### 2.3. Translanguaging Pedagogy

Translanguaging pedagogy refers to the ways in which bilingual students and teachers engage in complex and fluid discursive practices that include, at times, the home language practices of students in order to ‘make sense’ of teaching and learning, to communicate and appropriate subject knowledge, and to develop academic language practices (García, 2014, p. 112).

A translanguaging pedagogy alters ideologies about language, positioning named languages in their important sociocultural and political plane while allowing for the expansion of learners’ linguistic capacity to make meaning. This means that Arabic, English, Indonesian, Spanish, and so on, have an important social role in the world; however, for human beings, learning a named language means so much more. Learning a named language means flexing one’s existing language repertoire while expanding it with new features. It also means reflecting on how the different features are useful to communicate with different audiences, acting on different selection processes, and evaluating the success of communication based on the selection of different features. These are the basic tenets of translanguaging pedagogy (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018).

In translanguaging pedagogy, the focus of teaching is not the language and its structure per se. Rather, the focus is on the development of the learner’s language repertoire as they add new features that become their own, and as they develop understanding of which features are appropriate for communication. This is so because translanguaging does not restrict itself to the existing knowledge systems about language and bilingualism prescribed in schools. Instead, a translanguaging pedagogy extends beyond them, questioning prevailing epistemologies about languages as systems of domination (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018).

This implies that translanguaging pedagogy challenges many prevailing language education policies which often favour the domination of certain languages or linguistic varieties. In disrupting established monolingual language and literacy understandings to make room for translanguaging, teachers engage in acts of social justice. This is because around the world monolingual language and literacy understandings have developed to constrain learners' linguistic human rights in using the full extent of their repertoire. Often language policies are developed based on such understandings, which in many ways limit learners' potential to express themselves in a language which best cultivates their intellect. To combat such policies is an issue of social justice; therefore, teachers with a translanguaging orientation engage in acts of social justice. They provide marginalized multilingual learners opportunities to act as literate multilingual learners who are able to use their entire repertoire.

This line of reasoning implies the emergence of three strands to a translanguaging pedagogy, as postulated by García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017). These are a translanguaging stance, a translanguaging design, and a translanguaging shift. First, teacher's translanguaging stance refers to their beliefs and ideologies about emergent bilingual students and their language practices, regardless of the named language or linguistic variety. For translanguaging to fulfil its full potential, teachers must view all linguistic features and practices of any given student as a resource in general and for their learning in particular. This view places translanguaging as a right of the students to fully bring themselves into the classroom in order to excel academically. In the context of the ESOL classroom, this also transforms students' positioning. They would transform from being inferior English monolinguals to students with extensive language practices that are outside of mandated standards and standardized exams. This transformative stance seeks to disrupt hierarchical structures of power and differs significantly from an instructional scaffolding stance that solely includes translanguaging as a mere transitional intervention to help students achieve English proficiency.

Second, teachers' translanguaging instructional design includes the design of strategic plans that are informed by learners' diverse language practices and ways of knowing. It engages bilingual students as active learners assembling the different forms of semiotics that make up their entire repertoire. Teachers provide bilingual students with extended resources which are useful in literacy development. These include print, video/audio, new media and digital technologies, and their own bodies. Teachers also design lessons using these resources and guide students to individually and collaboratively use these resources to create meaning by fully utilizing their linguistic repertoire. When they design the learning environment in this way, teachers paved the way for more personalized student agency.

Third, teachers enact translanguaging shifts, adjusting to a fluid translanguaging practice. Translanguaging shift is about teachers' ability to flexibly make changes to one's

instructional plans and practices and to give feedback to learners. Teachers encourage bilingual learners and acknowledge the spontaneous and impromptu performances and the emergent quality of translanguaging. Teachers who are able to shift in response to bilingual students' dynamic translanguaging are transformational. They can move beyond traditional standards and curricula into a pedagogy that liberates students' languaging to think, imagine, feel, and learn while employing the full features of their linguistic repertoire.

Although discussions of translanguaging have often focused on the flexible linguistic practices of bi/plurilinguals, it is important to note that translanguaging is fundamentally multimodal (where language is one of the many available modes) (García & Wei, 2014). Scholars such as Melo-Pfeifer and Chik (2020) have introduced multimodal translanguaging as “conscious, situated and integrated use of semiotic resources that build up a multi layered repertoire of diverse modes in the process of meaning-making, that requires a multimodal production and interpretation” (p. 15). And as such, translanguaging is closely linked to multiliteracies. In a multiliteracies framework, “all meaning making is multimodal...[and] texts are designed using the range of historically available choices among different modes of meaning” (New London Group, 1996, p. 81). This brings our discussion to the next section.

### **3. MULTILITERACIES**

#### **3.1. From Reading and Writing to Literacy**

Back in the 1960s, there was an assumption that reading and writing were secondary to communication. But some scholars advocated the urgency of reading and writing for communication. This set the stage for comprehension-oriented models such as those developed by Krashen and colleagues (e.g., Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, & Herzog, 1984), postulating that reading was an important source of comprehensible input that necessarily preceded language production, i.e., speaking and writing. The primary purpose of reading, according to this line of scholarship, was to foster the natural acquisition of language from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) through an active cognitive processing.

However, scholars such as Schulz (1984), Wolf (1993), and Knutson (1997) took issue with the way comprehension was seen as a purely cognitive process. They argued that comprehension was not a purely cognitive process but tied to questions of communicative purpose. Further, they disagreed with the assumption that learners' L1 reading skills would directly transfer to their L2. They also argued that reading in an L2 must be explicitly taught and that practical strategies for facilitating reading comprehension were necessary. Other scholars advanced the argument, asserting that reading should not be disconnected from the



social contexts of use. Terry (1989), for example, argued that students must be taught to write for communicative purposes that reflect language use in the real-world.

This scholarship movement continued to grow all the while the importance of background knowledge was advocated by its proponents (e.g., Hauptman, 2000; Melendez & Pritchard, 1985). Drawing from research in L1 and English as a second language contexts, scholars made a case for “bottom-up” rather than “top-down” approaches to literacy (e.g., Carrell, 1983; Rumelhart, 1980). This entailed a recognition that learners should attempt to understand new information by first trying to fit it into what they already know about the world. This includes not only topical background knowledge, but also cultural schema related to language use. As a result, new pedagogical purposes for L2 reading grew, highlighting the idea that post-reading exercises should be designed to move beyond the factual, and thus expanding learners’ appreciation of the target culture. Another growth was seen in the assertion that students must be pushed to go beyond the level of descriptive content (who, what, when, where) to interpretation and analysis.

Meanwhile, the traditionalist view which treated reading and writing as separate skills and made reading as preparatory to writing had been called into question. In the second half of the 1990s, a shift started to take place with reading and writing increasingly viewed as interconnected communicative modes. Integrative approaches to literacy gained prominence, as greater attention was being paid to consideration of cultural and textual schema. There was also increased awareness of the importance of developing abilities that are more analytical and conceptual rather than focusing simply on comprehension and functional use. This grew in parallel with critical approach to literacy, one that “[considers] reading and writing in their contexts of use, [frames] reading and writing as complementary dimensions of written communication, rather than utterly distinct linguistic and cognitive processes” (Kern, 2000, p. 2). Communication in literacy classroom here is important but is not understood as uncritical and unconscious language use. Rather, it is one that integrates critical framing and transformed practice at all instructional levels.

### 3.2. From Literacy to Multiliteracies

The phenomena of mass migration and the emergence of digital communications media that defined the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century prompted the New London Group (NLG) to call for a broader view of literacy and literacy teaching. In its 1996 manifesto, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures*, the NLG argued that literacy pedagogy in education must reflect the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the contemporary globalized world. The NLG also argued that literacy must account for the new kinds of texts and textual engagement that have emerged in the wake of new information and multimedia

technologies. In order to better capture the plurality of discourses, languages, and media, they proposed the term *multiliteracies*.

The multiliteracies approach paves the way for a multimodal framework which accounts for all modes (words, gestures, images, sounds) in literacy practices. Therefore, the approach highlights new techniques, including long-term exploration of a complex of text types drawn from across the curriculum, the unpacking of text exemplars, and creative negotiation of text features. Multiliteracies also asserts the importance of designing texts using a range of design elements: linguistic, visual, spatial, audio, oral, tactile, and gestural, while encouraging knowledge processing that moves from passively comprehending texts to critically analyzing them. This is so because the philosophical underpinning of NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies dictates that language and other modes of communication are dynamic resources. They are seen as "available designs", which are meant for meaning making that undergoes constant changes in the dynamics acts of language use, or called "designing". As learners attempt to achieve their own purposes when reading, they contribute again to the cycle of available designs ("the redesigned"). This broader view of literacy yields a new understanding where learners are no longer seen as "decoders of language" but rather "designers of meaning." According to the NLG, meaning is not necessarily viewed as something that resides in texts. Rather, deriving meaning is an active and dynamic process in which learners combine and creatively apply both linguistic and other semiotic resources (e.g., visual, gesture, sound, etc.) with an awareness of "the sets of conventions connected with semiotic activity [. . .] in a given social space" (NLG, 1996, p. 74).

The NLG maintained that learning develops in social, cultural, and material contexts as a result of collaborative interactions. This view highlights that teaching and learning involves drawing on a range of student centered, active-learning principles. Accordingly, multiliteracies puts a premium on student agency where learners take risks, collaborate, solve problems, advise, and mentor one another in equal, healthy partnership (Healy, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

Practically speaking, the NLG group asserted that instantiating literacy-based teaching in classrooms calls on the complex integration and interaction of four pedagogical components that are neither hierarchical nor linear but can often overlap. These are situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. What is meant by situated practice is that learners are guided to tap into their designing experiences as they engage in authentic activities related to texts. In overt instruction activities, learners, with active intervention of the teacher, develop a metalanguage of design, acquiring the forms and conventions of texts so that they better recognize the connections between form and meaning, understand how texts are constructed, and discern how ideas are framed. At the third stage, critical framing, learners connect meanings to their social contexts and purposes. They also engage in constructive criticism of what they learn and consider its implications. In transformed

practice activities, learners demonstrate their ability to apply reflectively the knowledge that they have developed through overt instruction and critical framing activities. They do so in new and creative ways “embedded in their own goals and values” (NLG, 1996, p. 87).

It is evident that the NLG argued for moving away from a perspective on literacy as passive consumption of texts to understanding and enacting literacy practices. This involved youth actively recognizing and using the “available resources” of multiple modalities as dynamic representational materials and tools for “designing” and then critically “redesigning” their identities, opportunities, and futures as global citizens of an increasingly connected yet diverse world. This vision appeared at a time when the field was becoming less anchored in theories of L2 acquisition and more interested in the social practice of language education itself. The vision was also important for legitimating new literacy practices in pedagogy and research, particularly with the rise of digital technologies where the production of multimodal texts has become more prevalent.

### 3.3. Multiliteracies Pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Nowadays, teachers have increasingly recognized that there are foundational skills that learners need to be able to draw on in order to begin the process of becoming literate. These foundational literacy skills are the abilities to recognize letters, sounds, some everyday words, as well as the abilities to use language to tell and retell events and everyday practices. It is virtually impossible to engage with the more complex skills required to become literate, if a learner does not have these prerequisite skills. The focus of teachers is therefore on ensuring how these skills can be used in context and not in isolated and mechanical applications, and how they can have purpose and be tailored to suit the needs of an audience.

In doing so, teachers shall bear in mind that nowadays the foundational literacy skills do not come without a multimodal face. It is given that becoming literate in a variety of multimodal contexts (oral, aural, linguistic, visual and kinaesthetic) with both printed and digital resources are essential to being able to function effectively in contemporary societies. Literacy in multimodal contexts has become an increasingly rich grounds for facilitating what are now called “21st-century skills” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009), namely creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. They are regarded as being more important for learners than merely knowing (or memorizing) a large number of facts.

The increasing popularity of multiliteracies is in line with the need to develop a cohesive framework for literacy in language teaching as well as criticality. First, there is a need to address the issue of bifurcation which separates literacy and language teaching. The Modern Language Association (2007) called for “a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole” (p. 3). It is argued that curricular and instructional frameworks and the kinds of textual work need to be instantiated

in classrooms to develop literacy, not as language only but as an integrated set of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural skills. Scholars such as Crane (2006), Maxim (2009), and Troyan (2016), for example, proposed the idea to organize the foreign language curriculum according to a genre- and discourse-based orientation that would reflect a social understanding of language in use through a careful selection of written and oral texts appropriate for students at various levels.

Second, criticality in multiliteracies arises as a set of instructional approach that has been widely applied in language art and literature classes in English as an L1 context, such as those in the UK and the US. The approach goes beyond the traditional curriculum that narrowly focuses on the learning of a language without paying due attention to the bigger social context in a modern world which has been increasingly driven by digital technologies, multimedia, and abundant texts in all forms (Stevens & Bean, 2007). The approach sets a standpoint to engage learners in the meaning-making process for human related issues and personal interests by employing all language modalities and mediums without being confined to the classroom context.

A number of research studies have tackled the bifurcation of language and literacy and place emphasis on criticality. For example, Ryshina-Pankova (2013) argued that the critical interpretation and production of different visual genres such as films, posters, and paintings ought to be promoted in the language classroom to “enable learners to uncover prevalent representational motives, metaphors, and symbols in texts” (p. 164). Drawing from the multiliteracies framework, Brown, Iwasaki, and Lee (2016) employed clips from Korean television dramas and talk shows “to enhance learners’ multimodal competence, promote critical literacy, and empower students in their use of the target language and development of second language identities” (p. 162). Meanwhile, Goulah (2007) used digital video as a mediational tool to promote “critical multiliteracies and transformative learning regarding geopolitics and the environment” (p. 62) among learners of Japanese. These studies make a telling conversation on the most appropriate approaches to merge language and content and move beyond a language-based view of communication to offer a view of how to best realize the goals of language education.

## **4. TRANSLANGUAGING AND MULTILITERACIES: INTERSECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1. The Intersections**

Though now developing as separate sub-fields with their own diverging sets of literature, translanguaging and multiliteracies stem from the same discipline of applied linguistics.

Both were conceived as a result of the apprehensions about the structuralists' view of language and the unitary form of printed text as the sole precursor of literacy development. Nowadays, both translanguaging and multiliteracies are seen as transformational in the way we see language and how it is channeled in media for communication.

Translanguaging and multiliteracies further intersect in a number of ways. For one, translanguaging includes incorporation of "semiotic assemblages," which refers not just to language, but also other multimodal cultural modes for communication, such as movement, images, and even music, as Pennycook (2017, p. 278) suggested. He espoused translanguaging as a process of grasping the relations among a range of forms of semiosis, including the multisensorial nature of our worlds. This implies the importance of multimodal features for communication in the language classroom. Thus, language comes to be recognized "as being multimodal itself", suggesting a disruption to traditional notions of languages that often marginalize semiotic meaning-making resources (Blommaert et al., 2018, p. 30). To put it simply, the interrelationship of modes and language suggests how individuals expand their literacy practices in order to make meaning.

The idea of translanguaging design makes the connection between translanguaging and multiliteracies more evident. Translanguaging design is underpinned by the idea of teachers making the most out of learners' linguistic repertoire and multimodality. This dictates the setting up of tasks or activities, be they in pair- or group-work, where learners can collaborate with speakers of similar home languages. It also requires the inclusion of a wide range of resources which are both multilingual and multimodal to exert on the full capacity of learners' linguistic repertoire. These include the multimodalities of linguistic, visual, audio, audio-visual, gestural, and spatial through the employment of printed texts, gestures, pictures, videos, recordings, gifs, and so on. That is how translanguaging pedagogy considers the use of multimodal texts.

An interesting thought is offered by Cárdenas Curiel (2017) who introduces the concept of *translanguaging multiliteracies pedagogy* to bridge the intertextual connections of various modes of texts with language practices which are dynamic and flexible. Cárdenas Curiel explains,

Translanguaging multiliteracies pedagogy observes how the teacher and emergent bilinguals are able to socially construct the juxtaposition of multimodal texts within and across content areas through translanguaging practices. The teacher and students draw from all their linguistic resources when making connections of multimodal texts in language arts, science, and/or social studies. Outlining these intertextual connections that happen unconsciously and naturally is the first step in designing a "new text" or a modified pedagogical

framework for the benefit of emergent bilinguals' success in the classroom (p. 185-186).

Cárdenas Curiel (2017) is an important endeavour to describe a successful pedagogical practice where a teacher kept bilingual students authentically engaged in designing, producing, and distributing multimodal texts. However, I find it premature to suggest a concept without providing clarity as to how it differs from or builds upon previous concepts. Given the unclarity of how translanguaging multiliteracies pedagogy specifically develops as a new approach distinctive from translanguaging and multiliteracies, and given the unclarity of how it rises as an amalgam of the two, I refrain from employing it as a fitting approach to merge the two seemingly close fields of study.

In this article, I continue to using translanguaging and multiliteracies as two approaches which aptly intersect. I return to my earlier standpoint that translanguaging and multiliteracies share common traits. Studies have shown that out of school ESOL students are engaged in multimodal communications for entertainment, friendship, and family bonds in transnational settings and affinity groups online (Kim, 2015; Lam & Warriner, 2012). What is evident is that their communications are often translanguaging processes that blend and reblend the so-called traditionally defined “languages” alongside different genres, modalities, and styles. These literacy practices often lead to learners’ development of semiotic competences and more opportunities to express their identities with expanded meaning-making resources, not to mention the expanded agency to represent themselves while learning English (Cimasko & Shin, 2017; Nelson, 2006). Further, the intersection between translanguaging and multiliteracies is evident in the employment of semiotic resources. Translanguaging takes into account participants’ simultaneous use of multiple semiotic resources that mutually elaborate each other (Goodwin, 2000) and it is understood as a way to broaden the focus to analyze language as intertwined with many other semiotic resources (e.g., visuals, gestures, bodily movement) in the process to make meaning (Lin, 2019).

The intersection between translanguaging and multiliteracies is also evidenced by their shared goal. Leveraging the translanguaging literacy potential of multilinguals means encouraging readers and writers to investigate and create plural texts with diverse language and literacy practices. It deepens multilingual readers’ and writers’ connections across what are perceived as traditionally named languages, also “forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 26).

## 4.2. Implications for the ESOL Classroom

Many countries around the world have imposed policies which require the use of English only in the ESOL classroom; for example, Teaching English through English (TETE) in South Korea. The success of these ‘English-only policies’, however, varies considerably due to a number of factors ranging from teachers’ lack of confidence to limited grassroots support. Such language policies remain in place despite continuing resistance (see Choi, 2015, and Kim, 2008, for the case of South Korea; Gill, 2014 for the case of Malaysia). In line with the resistance, the advent of translanguaging and multiliteracies suggests radical changes to how the ESOL classroom should be set out and how pedagogy should be carried out.

First of all, there is a need to revamp the linguistic landscape in which ESOL classroom is situated. The linguistic landscape of a classroom (and a school) is made up of the signage, bulletin boards, student work, visuals, as well as printed, audio, and audio-visual resources. This linguistic landscape speaks volume to what and who is valued, or else. A linguistic landscape where everything is in English brings a clear message that English is the only traditionally named language that is accepted and valued, whereas emergent bilingual learners’ full linguistic repertoire (which may encompass Korean, Chinese, Indonesian, English, etc.) is neither appreciated nor included. The point is although ESOL settings aim to improve learners’ English language abilities, there is no reason classrooms should be policed English-only spaces. On the contrary, when the linguistic landscape also exists in the home languages of the emergent bilingual learners, when instructional resources are available in a variety of languages, and when learners and teachers collaboratively use multimodal resources creatively to analyze and produce new texts, it would be evident that ESOL spaces are not English-only, but represent an array of linguistic practices. The physical space, combined with the classroom and school culture, set the stage for translanguaging and multiliteracies.

Secondly, there is a need to alter pre-conceived ideological views about the English language. In this respect, only seeing students as “English learners” is both insufficient and problematic. ESOL students come from a variety of backgrounds where named languages other than (and sometimes including) English are spoken. Prior ideological clarification is necessary, thereby allowing for a series of discussion where students are asked about the language practices in their homes and communities. The teachers, whether they speak the same named languages of the students or not, can then create spaces to include the students’ linguistic practices both in the surrounding linguistic landscape and in instruction. Further, ESOL teachers must learn about the basics of language, including vernacular dialects and registers, understand the sociopolitical context of their language patterns and use (how they are or are not publicly valued), and work to create an environment where all language and literacy practices are recognized and valued. That way ESOL students could leverage all of

their ways of languaging and engaging to learn, using what they know as a foundation to enhance their literacy.

Similarly, a shift in emphasis from presenting English as an autonomous language structure to thinking about the human capacity to make meaning is needed. Seen in this way, English cannot be foreign or second or third. Language refers to the human capacity to make meaning that human beings desire in order to broaden their meaning making and embrace worlds of ideas. The employment of translanguaging and multiliteracies means that ESOL is not merely about teaching English. Instead, it is about teaching human beings who will be users of English, while continuing to be bi/plurilingual. Whether it is visible or not, emergent bilingual learners in ESOL classrooms are always translanguaging. They are always in the continuous process of incorporating new linguistic features into their existing repertoire. It is time for sheltered English to step out into the plurilingual world where learners could demonstrate abilities to use their knowledge of different languages in varying degrees of proficiency through multimodal resources. A significant change will occur when the TESOL field sees students not as “second language” or “foreign language” learners, but when they are allowed from the outset of their learning to use all of their linguistic repertoire to make meaning. The change is transformational when the students are evaluated not on how the new features are used in comparison with monolingual speakers, but on how these new features are used competently to make meaning in any fields of life they aspire to be part of.

Third, in the context of the ESOL classroom, translanguaging and multiliteracies suggest that in order to optimize learning, classrooms be based on interactive tasks and activities in which students draw on all of the resources at their command to convey, interpret, and negotiate meanings together. Various mediums may be used to employ translanguaging and multiliteracies in curriculum and instruction; for example, digital storytelling, graphic novels, multimedia posters, PowerPoint, social media, performance. To engage with these mediums, students are led to engage in activities which promote abilities to choose and assemble the configuration of modes that best conveys meaning to an audience. In order to do this, students must understand the meanings carried by individual modes and how modal configurations can best be designed. This further calls for understanding the audience, that is, how messages and modes are positioned in the world, how they are perceived by different groups of people, and how they can be critically interpreted.

Once this stage is achieved, it is important to bear in mind a set of guiding principles. These include: 1) Affordances, where teachers provide students with multimodal resources: printed texts, video/audio, new media technologies, and their own bodies; 2) Collaboration, where teachers encourage collaborative literacy practices among students; 3) Production, where teachers mobilize students to leverage their translanguaging as they engage with spoken, written, gestural, and other meaningful resources at hand in order to produce new texts; 4) Evaluation, where teachers develop formative and summative assessments to



evaluate students' literacy practices; and 5) Reflection, where teachers activate students' critical multilingual awareness, allowing them to reflect on their translanguaging and multiliteracies.

The principles above provide a guidance for implementing translanguaging and multiliteracies in the ESOL classroom by which strategies can then be devised. The strategies may appear with variations and in no specific sequential order. ESOL teachers could take the extra step to either provide emergent bilinguals with directions and/or learning objectives in their home language, through using an electronic translation site, or by asking peers to assist each other. Teachers could also watch a film in English, take notes in their home language, and then talk through the concepts with their peers while translanguaging or referring to a translated version of a text to ensure understanding. They could then produce a synopsis in the home language using a combination of text and audio-visuals, allowing for the use of their linguistic resources in a literacy-based activity.

A series of activities aimed to build language awareness as well as for language production may also be offered. For example, teachers could use PowerPoint to explain a grammatical feature of English (e.g., *Present Perfect*), and in doing so translanguaging in English and the home language. This is then continued with a grammar activity done in pairs where students also translanguaging, followed by a reading passage on 'Global Warming' which contains the *Present Perfect*, followed by a group discussion where the grammatical feature is used. Students are then required to complete a graphic novel narrating a story with the *Present Perfect* included. Finally, the students are required to work in groups to create a digital story on 'Global Warming' containing sentences with the *Present Perfect*.

Finally, teachers could use a set of multimodal texts (e.g., recordings, video, magazine articles) to build awareness of learners of linguistic diversity. In particular, multicultural texts which can support the development of academic content, assist scaffolding to obtain English literacy skills, and provide opportunities for the development of cross-cultural understanding may offer a great value. Engagement with multimodal, multicultural texts sets the background for learners to embark upon a collaborative inquiry-based learning, as they explore dialects, registers, and forms of language and literacy practices. Such a collaborative exploration would allow learners to understand how languages and literacies work in the world, for whom, and to what effect. The outcome of the learning processes could be a film project where students are allowed to present ideas in multiple codes using multimodal resources. Such a project could lead learners to be "fluent" in multiple codes, with multiple resources at hand for communication. This is a prerequisite for learners to be able to choose which communicative resources to leverage in situated interactions. In doing so, learners would be able to fulfil the full potential of translanguaging as "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically

defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, et al., 2015, p. 283).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In our extremely technologized world, enabling students to use a variety of media and modes in learning is an important component of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Such a practice gains more importance when it fosters communication with diverse audiences and encourages students to become critical designers of technologically mediated communications. These are the major tenets of translanguaging and multiliteracies in the ESOL classroom. The employment of translanguaging and multiliteracies in the ESOL classroom holds promise for the continuous intertwining and shifting of modes and language practices. It provides the impetus for mutual elaboration of not only different modes, but also of what are viewed as traditionally named languages. It promotes engagement among bi/plurilinguals in the way they assemble meaning-making resources and form relations among a range of forms of modalities to comprehend, analyze, and produce texts.

Applicable levels: Early childhood, elementary, secondary, tertiary

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