



Translanguaging

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What is it?

The root term in translanguaging is languaging, referring to the storage, use, and processing of linguistic resources. Translanguaging describes what happens when people go beyond monolingualism (use of one language). The focus is on how speakers employ their linguistic resources while negotiating the circumstances in which they find themselves. Many speakers use multiple languages during a single interaction, choosing which is relevant due to content, context, and participants. Each person has an idiolect (their unique way of speaking) which may combine multiple languages.

Translanguaging does not replace terms such as code switching or language crossing, which also refer to multilingual behavior. It contains but goes beyond these to designate how speakers make meaning through orchestrating languages and language varieties (as well as other semiotic, multi-modal, and cognitive resources).

Who uses the concept?

Translanguaging was developed to describe practices in the context of language learning but has been adopted by sociolinguists and applied linguists, and occasionally by intercultural scholars. Advertisers use it when commercial entities mobilize and commodify various (global and local) linguistic and semiotic assets. Ethnographers embrace it to examine how language embodies cultural performances.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Translanguaging is about managing linguistic and cultural resources and assumes that participants have multiple languages and cultures available. Monolingualism and

monoculturalism are challenged in a time of mobility and superdiversity. Intercultural dialogue is relevant any time there are multiple languages and cultures in play.

What work remains?

The majority of the work to date has emphasized speech rather than communication more generally. There is much yet to be learned about multi-modal resources (body movements, use of space, images, objects, etc.). There is also much work yet to be done in a broader range of locations – so far most has been done in Europe or the UK.

Resources

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