

## Literature Review about Translanguaging

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### Abstract

Translanguaging has been regarded as a pretty new concept and a multidisciplinary research field in recent years. This paper is based on 25 high quality research articles that include 15 foreign language articles and 10 Chinese articles, which are respectively selected from two authoritative journal websites: Web of Science and CNKI (National Knowledge Infrastructure). It tries to make a comprehensive literature review about the new emerging idea: translanguaging, and it includes three parts. We find that domestic research articles mainly focus on the explanation of the concept of translanguaging, which include the historical development of translanguaging, the future develop trends of translanguaging and the pedagogical implications of translanguaging under Chinese educational contexts. Only a few studies pay attention to empirical application of translanguaging to different contexts. And this is also the direction that Chinese researchers should working for. Foreign researchers pay more attention to the application of translanguaging to various contexts such as second language acquisition, daily communication and minority language preservation, etc. In addition, foreign research articles also explain the concept of translanguaging from different disciplines such as applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive science, etc. They have formed a relatively complete system about translanguaging. Chinese researchers should also develop own specific theoretical foundations of translanguaging and pay more attention to the actual functions of translanguaging so that it can better promote language learning and curriculum reformation.

### Keywords

Translanguaging, Second/Foreign Language Acquisition, Applied Linguistics, Code Switching.

### 1. Introduction

Translanguaging as an emerging new concept has been applied to multiple discipline such as pedagogy, psychology, cognitive science, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, etc. Williams (1994) pointed out that this concept first originated from the Welsh Language Revival Movement and referred to bilingual teaching practice. The original orthographic form of "Translanguaging" is "Trawsieithu". Then this concept was translated and introduced into the field of education by England bilingual educator Baker (2001).

In recent years, this concept has been paid greater and greater attention by scholars from different research fields. By elaborating two key concepts related to Translanguaging: Translanguaging Space and Translanguaging Instinct and presenting a series of actual examples: New Chinglish, Li (2018) has pointed out that Translanguaging can be regarded as a practical theory of applied linguistics and discussed the theoretical motivations for the concept of Translanguaging. Wang and Chen (2022) discussed the theoretical orientations and philosophical origin of Translanguaging Studies. And they pointed out that conceptually translanguaging entails the non-solidity of language itself and the integrated feature of linguistic repertoire, and the theoretically studies in the area show the orientations of the dynamic, hybrid view of language, the orchestrated, harmonious view of communication, the

synchronous, integrated view of language acquisition, and the interactive, negotiable view of language pedagogy. Wang (2020) talked about the differences between code switching and Translanguaging, provided a new perspective for us to think about the intrinsic question of the foreign language teaching and enlarged the research scope of applied linguistics.

This paper will be divided into three parts. The first part mainly discusses the definitions of Translanguaging; the second part clarifies two key concepts related to the Translanguaging: code switching, and languaging; the last part mainly presents a literature review about translanguaging and discusses the various applications of Translanguaging to the Second Language Acquisition and its influences on the SLA.

## 2. Basic Definition of Translanguaging

There are various versions of the definitions of Translanguaging. At we have mentioned earlier, “Translanguaging” is first proposed by Williams (1996) and is referred to bilingual teaching practice. García (2009) defines translanguaging as multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds. This definition emphasizes the bilinguals’ automaticity and their own world of sense making. Cenoz (2017) points out that this definition refers to discursive practices not only in the classroom, but also outside of school, which implies that translanguaging is paid attention in diverse contexts and is not confined to educational context. Lewis et al. (2012) also point out that translanguaging is first used as a pedagogical strategy in bilingual schools in Wales and its purpose is to protect and inherit the local language of Wales. They explain that the original meaning of translanguaging is regarded as a pedagogical strategy, which alternates the languages for input and output activities inside the classroom. This explanation highlights the functions of translanguaging and emphasizes its pedagogical applications, but it just describes the practice of translanguaging inside the classroom and overlooks other contexts that translanguaging could also occur.

Baker (2011) discusses translanguaging as the process of “making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages”. This definition does not regard translanguaging as a static and fixed concept but emphasizes the dynamic and fluid aspect of translanguaging. Under this perspective, Lewis et al. (2012) evaluate that languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate understanding, speaking, literacy, and learning. Translanguaging is regarded as a useful and practical strategy to enhance language learning, communication and interaction. Cenoz (2017) defines the term “translanguaging” as discursive strategies in the context of bilingual and multilingual education in other parts of the world. This definition emphasizes the contextual factors that translanguaging could occur and regards translanguaging as a kind of discursive strategies, which is similar to García’s definition. However, it is a general definition of translanguaging since it just emphasizes the educational aspects of translanguaging and does not point out the intrinsic features or characteristics of translanguaging.

Otheguy (2015) defines 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. This definition emphasizes the functional aspects of translanguaging and blurs the clear boundaries between different languages. Under this explanation, translanguaging can help to protect the minority languages since this definition disrupts the socially constructed language hierarchies, which are responsible for the suppression of the languages of many minoritized peoples. Li (2017) discusses the relations between translanguaging and multimodality and points out that translanguaging reconceptualizes language as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making, and the multilingual as someone who is aware of the existence of the political entities of named languages and has an ability to make

use the structural features of some of them that they have acquired. This clarification makes it clear for us to capture the features of translanguaging and emphasizes the multimodal aspect of translanguaging. It is different from Otheguy's definition in that Li does not blur and overlooks the boundaries between different languages. And under Li's perspective, translanguaging admits the existence of named languages, highlights the multilinguals' abilities to shift from different languages and their flexibility of using different language to construct and understand meanings. According to García and Wei (2014), they discuss that the concept of translanguaging is based on radically different notions of language and bilingualism and clarify that "translanguaging refers to new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories, and release histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation-states." Under their perspective, translanguaging is transformative, creative and has great potential in making meanings.

From the above-mentioned definitions, we can find that the connotations of translanguaging is also intertwined with some other key concepts such as code switching, and languaging. In the next part, we will talk about these closely related concepts in order to make the concept of translanguaging clearer and more explicit.

### **3. Some Key Concepts Related to Translanguaging**

#### **3.1. Code Switching**

Many scholars discuss the distinction between translanguaging and code switching, even some argue that these two concepts are same and regard translanguaging as another form of code switching. In fact, they are two different concepts. García and Wei (2014) explain that translanguaging differs from the notion of code switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages, but to the speaker's construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire. Cenoz (2017) points out that under the perspective of translanguaging, the boundaries between languages are becoming softer and the multilingual speaker's specific resources are seen as an important resource. We can infer that under the perspective of code switching, the boundaries between languages are clear and the shift between languages could show the process of the speakers' identity construction.

Shi (2017) argues that bilinguals can show their national identity through code switching in that languages are specific symbols of nations and countries. Wang (2020) also compares code switching to translanguaging and argues that there are three major differences between them: the concept of languaging space, the connotation of linguistic repertoire, and the perspective of epistemology. García (2009) points out that translanguaging stands for a new epistemological paradigm. Li (2018) also argues that translanguaging reconceptualizes language as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making. We can infer that the epistemological paradigm of translanguaging is based on a pretty new practical theory and is different from code switching. Code switching emphasizes the shift between two or more languages; the speakers have two different languages systems from the perspective of code switching; while translanguaging pays more attention to the dynamic thinking ways of the speakers and their abilities to transform between two languages; and the speakers only own one language system from the perspective of translanguaging.

#### **3.2. Languaging**

Li (2018) argues that his initial idea of translanguaging came from a different source, namely, the notion of Languaging. This view is different from what we have discussed at the beginning

of this article, which argues that the term “translanguaging” originates from Welsh Language Revival Movement. By plus the suffix “-ing” to “language”, Li regards language as a specific action and emphasizes its fluid and dynamic aspect. Gasset (1957) also argues that language should not be regarded as an accomplished fact, as a thing made and finished, but as in the process of being made. Bao and Li (2022) talk about the origins of translanguaging and think that the structure of translanguaging can be divided into three parts: “trans”, “language”, and “ing”. This view redefines language and makes “language” as a verb, which regards speaking as a specific act and whatever we speak, our behaviors are language practices. They also argue that “languaging” refers to the process that language users incorporate various resources together including physical, cognitive, and semiotic resources to achieve the purpose of communicating with each other.

Halliday (2009) points out that language is meaning potential and it is the result of the integration of the material and conscious processes of human experience. Meaning potential embodies the dynamic and conversational nature of meaning, interaction between speakers and listeners in the process of communication, and identities construction through semiotic resources. We can combine “meaning potential” with “languaging” together in order to better understand the concept of “translanguaging”. Under this perspective, languaging is creative and productive. Brownlie (2021) argues that languaging involves the purposes of communication, interactional relations between participants and modes of communication. Therefore, we can find that the concept of languaging emphasizes the dynamic and productive aspects of language and provides a pretty new perspective for us to understand language and its connotations. What’s more, the concept of languaging adds more layers of meanings to language and pays more attention to the functional aspect of language such as creating various meanings, prompting communication, understanding and interaction between speakers.

In this part, we have talked about two key concepts that are closely related to translanguaging: code switching and languaging. After we have a clear understanding of these two concepts, we can also know the deep meaning and connotations of translanguaging. By adding the prefix “trans” and suffix “ing” to “language”, it highlights the dynamic and fluid aspects of language, emphasizes the creative and productive features of language and outlines the characteristics of translanguaging: transformative, functional and practical.

#### **4. Literature Review about Translanguaging and Its Applications to SLA**

The literature review will be divided into two parts: domestic literature review and foreign literature review.

The domestic investigations can be divided into three categories. The first research category is literature review, which mainly focus on the clarifications of basic concepts. Most of the domestic researchers pays more attention to the basic explanations of translanguaging such as its theoretical background, definitions, applications, etc. in that this concept is pretty new and is introduced into China in recent years. Liang and wang (2020) mainly explore the origin of translanguaging and its implications for foreign language pedagogy. They distinguish translanguaging from code switching/ code meshing, explain the origin of translanguaging and provide some practical suggestions for language teaching. Qin and Wang (2021) use the Biblioshiny package run by R and conduct bibliometric analysis on the literature of translanguaging research from SSCI and A&HCI journals. By constructing a huge research corpus, this article argues that translanguaging research is in the ascendant through the efforts of five groups of researchers mainly in the UK and the USA and predicts the development trends of translanguaging research such as pedagogical translanguaging, the protection of minority languages by using translanguaging, and multimodal aspect of translanguaging, etc. Li and Shen (2021) introduce the concept of translanguaging from three aspects: its origins, developments

and future directions. By reviewing the developments of the concept of translanguaging in different fields and exploring the applications of translanguaging to language education, applied linguistics, and sociolinguistics, this article provides a comprehensive explanation of translanguaging and is thought provoking. What's more, this review could dispel some misunderstanding about the concept of translanguaging and could prompt the applications of translanguaging to Chinese educational contexts such as the changing of language policies, the protection of minority languages, and the combination of multimodal with translanguaging etc. Zheng and An (2022) select a total of 439 pieces of journal articles published in the past decade and focus on two categories of translanguaging: theoretical translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging. They provide a pretty clear explanation about the basic definitions of translanguaging and its theoretical background from the sociolinguistic and applied linguistic perspectives. They also predict the future development of translanguaging with Chinese context and provides us some deep-thought reflections about the applications of translanguaging to pedagogical practice.

The second category of domestic investigations is the discussion of philosophical origin of translanguaging studies. Wang and Chen (2022) argue that there are no relevant studies explaining the theoretical value and development trends from the philosophical aspect. Therefore, they discuss translanguaging from the perspectives of conceptual development, theoretical orientations, philosophical base and future prospects. This article provides a pretty new perspective for us to understand the concept of translanguaging and is a supplement to the former studies from the epistemological perspective.

The third category is empirical studies, which mainly refer to the pedagogical applications of translanguaging. Zhao et al. (2021) explore how emergent bilingual students in China deploy translanguaging and mobilize their identity repertoires to engage in critical learning. By using the conversational analysis, they analyze the linguistic data and find that students translanguage between their first language and second language to construct different identities. Also, identity construction can also be used as a strategy for language learning. This article has its limitations because it is only based on a small scale of linguistic data (just four representative dialogues between students, however, it can also provide practical experience for Chinese learners and educators to properly use translanguaging to prompt language learning and teaching. Song and Lin (2021) study on how international students in Chinese-medium-instruction Master's degree programs translanguage when learning the discipline-specific Chinese for academic purposes and disciplinary knowledge in four departments of a Shanghai university. The research article suggests that translanguaging can help international students to construct specific learning systems and enhance their learning abilities. Compared to Zhao's research, this study enlarges the scope of their research objects and adopts the form of interview, which can directly observe the students' feelings/attitudes towards the application of translanguaging to language teaching and learning. In addition, this research can also provide new perspectives for other researchers to pay more attention such as the plan of language policy in international educational contexts, the development of teaching and learning models for multilinguals under various situations, and the construction of language learning systems of learners by applying translanguaging to pedagogical practices.

Foreign studies could be mainly divided into two parts. The first part is about theoretical translanguaging and the second part is about applied translanguaging. MacSwan (2017) discusses translanguaging from a multilingual perspective and argues that the political use of language names should be distinguished from the social and structural idealizations used to study linguistic diversity. This paper provides a special perspective to view language and proposes that multilinguals have a single linguistic repertoire with rich mental grammars. However, this viewpoint is abstract in that it relates cognitive science to translanguaging and mental grammar is hard to measure. MacSwan's view has its specific theoretical foundations.



However, his view is objected by Otheguy's research. Otheguy et al. (2018) discuss the linguistic system of bilinguals from the view of translanguaging and argue that bilinguals and multilinguals do not have correspondence in a dual or multiple linguistic system. They object MacSwan's monolingual system view, and propose that the linguistic system of bilinguals and multilinguals is unitary by explaining the concept of translanguaging. García et al. (2015) clarify translanguaging and deconstruct named languages from the perspective of linguistics. They distinguish translanguaging from code switching, explain some basic concepts such as idiolects, named languages, and discuss the relation between translanguaging and language education and assessment. Their research provides a comprehensive introduction about translanguaging and make it clear for readers to have a basic and fundamental understanding of this concept. García and Otheguy (2019) discuss the commonalities and divergences between plurilingualism and translanguaging. They argue that though these two concepts have different socio-political grounding, they both make contributions to language learning for bilingual students. This paper could help readers to have a clear conceptual distinction between plurilingualism and translanguaging. By presenting some practical examples, this article suggests that translanguaging disrupts the concept of named languages and the power hierarchies in which languages are positioned. These research articles have one thing in common: they all discuss the theoretical aspect of translanguaging and enrich the connotations of the concept of translanguaging.

The second part is applied translanguaging. Creese and Blackledge (2015) present a single example from their recent empirical research in a Panjabi complementary school in Birmingham, UK. The main purpose of this school is to teach Panjabi to young people of "Panjabi heritage", which is similar to the Welsh Language Revival Movement. Cenoz and Gorter (2022) discuss pedagogical translanguaging and its application to language classes. They define pedagogical translanguaging as the use of different planned strategies based on activating students' resources from their whole linguistic repertoire. They point out that pedagogical translanguaging is associated with educational contexts including primary and secondary school as well as students that are at the university level and they argue that the application of translanguaging can promote the activation of the learners' multilingual repertoire. In addition, they also discuss the challenges that teachers might encounter during the process of applying the translanguaging to language teaching such as the fixed ideologies of language separation, which believes that language is used to distinguish national identity or signal certain status, what the primary aim of language teaching and learning is (whether language learning is to achieve the linguistic level of native speakers or to just meet the purpose of daily communication). This research article provides a clear explanation about pedagogical translanguaging, points out the functions of translanguaging in language learning, for example, it can help learners to have a deeper understanding of academic language, and to develop metalinguistic awareness and multilingual competence and sheds light on the future trends of translanguaging. Wing and Kevin (2021) discuss translanguaging in digital learning. By focusing on two online English lessons posted on YouTube and their comments, this paper talks about how and what translanguaging spaces are constructed and the influence of translanguaging spaces on online language learning. Their research combines multimodality with translanguaging and presents an innovative analysis of the application of translanguaging to online educational contexts, which can also provide guidance for online teachers to better design novel learning practices.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the basic definitions of translanguaging, two concepts that are closely related to translanguaging: code switching and languaging, and domestic and foreign

literature reviews about translanguaging. There are two hypotheses about the origin of the concept of translanguaging: one holds the view that “translanguaging” originates from the Welsh Language Revival Movement and the original form of “translanguaging” is “trawsiethu” (Williams, 1996; Baker, 2001). Another view proposes that “translanguaging” originates from the concept of “languaging”, which regards language as “a thing in the process of being made”(Becker, 1991; Gasset 1957; Li, 2018). Though these two hypotheses are different, they both emphasize the fluid and dynamic aspects of language, which can be regarded as the core features of the concept of translanguaging. According to our finding, domestic journal articles mainly focus on synthetic literature review and only a few research papers discuss the application of translanguaging to language teaching in Chinese contexts. There are two limitations of domestic research. The first is the deficient of own specific theoretical foundation; the other is the deficient of actual empirical studies about the application of translanguaging. These are also the research directions for Chinese scholars to pay more attention. Instead, foreign research articles not only focus on the basic theories of translanguaging, they also pay attention to practical experiences in different contexts, which can provide solid evidences for educators to promote the application of translanguaging to language teaching and learning.

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