

Translanguaging in a multilingual classroom

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Poststructural and postmodern viewpoints triggered a new era in applied linguistics which is characterized by the emergence of novice approaches making their way into classrooms. One such approach is translanguaging, widely debated in literature by its proponents and critics. Translanguaging reconceptualizes bi/multilingual practices by disrupting borders between languages and going beyond the artificial language separation usually adopted in educational programmes. The inclusion of translanguaging practices is especially promising in a multilingual classroom, where a special social space is established by bringing together learners' and teachers' different linguistic backgrounds.

Recent research in translanguaging focusing on its implementation and use in a multilingual classroom demonstrates positive outcomes for young bilinguals acquiring a third language. For example, translanguaging practices applied in a bi/multilingual classroom help young learners construct meaning (Otheguy et al., 2019), develop metalinguistic awareness (Leonet et al., 2017), deepen knowledge (García & Wei, 2015) and shape experiences (Baker, 2011). Although there is growing research interest in translanguaging as implemented in schools, progressively showing its efficacy for young learners, it is still unclear if multilingual adult learners benefit from translanguaging.

This ongoing study aims to fill this gap by examining the use of translanguaging in a Russian language classroom for adults. The participants are Catalan/Spanish bilinguals and Russian language teachers. Each participant possesses more than 1 additional language in their linguistic repertoire so that all of them can deploy at least three languages in the classroom. The study adopts a qualitative approach paradigm which is widely approved in research on translanguaging. The data will be collected through classroom observations permitting to gather information about participants' behavior in naturalistic settings. Fieldwork will provide useful insights into processes taking place in the classroom, addressing the questions of whether (a) translanguaging practices are applied in a classroom, (b) the whole linguistic repertoire is used by participants or solely part of it, (c) translanguaging is used naturally or teacher-directed, (d) there is a correlation between the use of translanguaging and progress in a target language. Additionally, classroom observations will shed light on purposes translanguaging practices serve in a classroom (e.g. meaning-constructing, experience sharing, etc.).

References

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