Micro-Paper 63: *Translanguaging*

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Defining the Term

Translanguaging is the integration of two or more languages in a same context and moment used by bilingual and multilingual speakers to communicate and interact with other people, and cultures. It requires the use of our semiotic repertoire, that is to say, while we are talking with someone or writing something, we do not stop our process to think about what language we should use. On the contrary, it is a spontaneous choice of those resources (including gestures) that will help us to have translanguaged communication.

Translanguaging tries to break the conception that your L1 should move out while learning a L2, it means that when learning second languages, you do not take away you first language, but you take elements or features from both languages and incorporate them to build an effective communication.

Translanguaging goes beyond the term of code-switching. It is not only to change from one language to another, but to integrate them in a selective and dynamic process in order to learn, understand, and communicate with others in a situation where you get to use both.

Connecting it to LSLP

Translanguaging has become a supporting concept for our research on urban and gaming literacies. However, we are not using translanguaging as a stand-alone concept. Our current work is situating translanguaging as a complementary concept to polylanguaging, placing them as ends of a continuum to explain the progression of multiple languages and the different levels of language coexistence we keep finding in Medellín.

In this sense, using both concepts, aided by geosemiotics (in the case of urban literacies) and multimodality (in the case of gaming literacies), is helping us trace the complexity of language interactions, the different levels of appropriation in physical and virtual spaces and communities, and the different ways in which language becomes more present in different contexts.

Expanding Second Language Research

When learning a second language teachers are sometimes encouraged to ignore the students' mother language to only focus on the target language. This has been the constant scenario in most of the institutions, not only the ones specialized on teaching a second language, but also governmental and private high schools and universities.

In that sense, understanding the term translanguaging will allow institutions, and people in general, not to see the process of learning a L2 as an insulated event of our native language, but to perceived it, and teach it as a natural part of our interaction and communication with the world.

References

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