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## Translanguaging *Décloisonnement*: An Epilogue

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# Translanguaging *Décloisonnement*: An Epilogue

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## 1. Introduction

- 1 It is always enlightening to read work on translanguaging when it is done with people's own societal epistemologies. This is the case of the present issue of *Lidil*, focused on *pratiques translangagières*, which teaches us much about theories of language that in my speaking-English world I have called *translanguaging* (García & Wei, 2014; García et al., 2021; Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019). The authors from the English-speaking world have studied *pratiques translangagières* in very different French-speaking national contexts—France, Switzerland and Canada. Each context has its own challenges and passions. In some, these practices are found in foreign and second language classrooms; in others, in bilingual education, some with immersion. Yet in others, these practices are found in the school use of what are considered dialects. There are examples of *pratiques translangagières* in *école maternelle*, among *élèves entre 6-8 ans et 11-14 ans*, and in the *formation des enseignants*. The use of *pratiques translangagières* are found when teaching language, math, science. And they are found among *élèves*, as well as *enseignants*. *Quelles sont alors les pratiques translangagières?* What do these authors and French-speaking scholars mean by *pratiques translangagières*? And what type of learning and development do these engender?
- 2 The authors in this collection provide some definitions. Auger and Pépiot tell us that it consists, among other things, of “*passer d'une langue à l'autre*”; Guérif, Savoy, and Dango tell us that it is to mobilize “*deux ou plusieurs langues dans la construction et l'appropriation de savoirs et compétences disciplinaires*”. And Dall'Aglio, Fonseca, Favre, Gajo, and Vaissière tell us that it consists of “*la présence de plus d'un langage, dialecte ou registre*”. Indeed, this use of two or more languages is the way in which translanguaging practices have been studied in much education research. And this collection contributes much to these understandings. I start first by pointing out the

contributions these authors make to understandings of *pratiques translangagières*. I end by extending these understandings with my own theoretical ones. I wonder what it would mean to take up *pratiques translangagières* in education not simply as *passer d'une langue (ou un dialecte ou registre) à l'autre*, but to transcend language to ensure the equitable education of all. And would this be an objective of the plurilingualism that these authors' cultural and societal context promotes?

## 2. Contributions of *pratiques translangagières*

- 3 That language is not only a means of communication, but that it also encodes cultural practices and ideologies is evident when one reads about *pratiques translangagières* in French, and not English. For me, ESL meant English as a Second Language, but Auger and Pépiot remind us that for them it stands for *Enseignements sensibles aux langues*. The traditions of *l'Éveil aux langues*, and the work of Michel Candelier (2000), have greatly impacted the work of French and other European applied linguists, perhaps much more than that of scholars in the U.S. Furthermore, throughout the papers, the ideology of plurilingualism advanced by the European Union is present in the work on *pratiques translangagières*. More than other applied linguists throughout the world, those in Europe have advanced plurilingualism in ways that deconstruct old ideas about balanced bilinguals and multilinguals. The goal has been to advance plurilingualism, that is, the ability to use many languages, albeit to different degrees, so that European citizens can travel, study, and work throughout the European Union. With the increased arrival of migrants, refugees and asylum speakers, the interest in developing plurilingual citizens has been extended to this population, although often without recognizing the complex language practices and the different understandings of multilingualism held by these people. It is thus not surprising that the work on *pratiques translangagières* in the French-speaking world might emphasize an ideology of plurilingualism and of *l'Éveil aux langues*, which I will contrast with my own understandings in the next section.
- 4 The weight of the context and situation of these French-speaking researchers is evident by another way in which their work is different and important. One is pleasantly surprised by the collaboration of researchers from different disciplines and national/linguistic-origins, as well as agencies/companies from other contexts and other nations. Sauvage, Auger, and Dalle report on a *projet franco-canadien* between researchers in France and Canada. Geiger-Jaillet and Schlemminger write on collaboration between France and Germany. Auger and Pépiot's work took place avec 14 *partenaires européens*, with researchers from nine universities in seven countries (France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Slovenia, and Lithuania). Guérif, Savoy, and Dango look at the project conducted in Burkina Faso and Guatemala, as it relates to work in Suisse Romande. And finally, Dall'Aglio, Fonseca, Gajo, and Vaissière consider the work in a bilingual Français-Occitan school in Moissac, France, as well as in a partial immersion in a German program in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.
- 5 It is also impressive how many organizations, and funded projects are involved in efforts to develop students' plurilingualism; for example, Enfants du Monde, an ONG Suisse that supports health and education throughout the world and supports bilingual projects around the world by producing *Séquences didactiques* (Guérif et al.). PRIMA, Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area, supports partial

immersion in German in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, as well as teaching through Occitan in Moissac, France (Dall’Aglio et al.). All research represented in this volume are supported by many organizations/institutions—Conseil de Recherches en Sciences Humaines du Canada (CRSH, Sauvage et al.), ABCM-Zweitsprachigkeit (Geiger-Jaillet & Schlemminger). The organizations have different purposes and promote various *dispositifs*.

- 6 BINOGI is a *dispositif* that provides a multilingual digital platform by which students have access to STEM content. Students have the choice to watch the video lessons and take the quizzes in different languages, including English, French, German and Spanish, but also Arabic, Somali, Tigrinja, and Dari. The research conducted on the use of this platform by Sauvage, Auger and Dalle involves both students who are francophones and want to learn an additional language, as well as those who need the support of another language to understand the lessons. These *pratiques translangagières* are observed among newly arrived students to France, those who arrived *depuis plusieurs années*, and also among those considered “native” speakers. The question the authors raise is whether the use of BINOGI as a multilingual digital platform *permet de dépasser le cloisonnement artificiel entre les langues utilisées*. Their study questions whether the *décloisonnement curriculaire* of languages that BINOGI supports gives more equitable access to learning for *all* students. They want to know whether accessing STEM content in students’ own languages would mean that they could then access what are called “*sections européennes*” in those subjects, usually very selective and not inclusive of different *pratiques translangagières*.
- 7 The research on *pratiques translangagières* reported here takes place in schools from *maternelle* to *université*, with students, teachers, and parents. The question for me is how much of this good work is now rooted in government-funded schools for all and how much remains experimental.
- 8 The volume also shares with readers a number of *dispositifs* which will be of much use to teachers who want to engage with *pratiques translangagières* in their classroom. A very useful one is the *Outils de réflexion théorique et pratique* developed by Auger and Pépiot to gather the reflections, *témoignages*, and representations of the *enseignants* with whom they work and enable other teachers to be sensitized to *pratiques translangagières*. Another example is the *Séquences didactiques* developed by Enfants du Monde that consist of *une mise en situation* of the communicative situation, workshops on different aspects of the text studied, and a final project (Guérif et al.).
- 9 A most important contribution of this volume is that it includes not only instances of *pratiques translangagières* when teaching an additional language, but also when teaching what is considered un dialect—Occitan (Dall’Aglio et al.), Alsatian (Geiger-Jaillet & Schlemminger). Geiger-Jaillet and Schlemminger describe the effort promulgated by the association ABCM Zweitsprachigkeit to teach German as a living and regional language in Alsace, France, as well as valuing and *sensibilisant* the students to Alsatian as a regional language. The program relies on *immersion complète* in regional language until the age of six, after which French is introduced 10 hours per week. During the period of complete immersion, the 4- and 5-year-old children are engaged in activities carried out in standard German for two days and Alsatian for another day. After that, French, standard German and Alsatian are used. Throughout, *pratiques translangagières* are observed.
- 10 Because the formation des *enseignants* is such an important topic, two articles focus on these efforts. The one by Auger and Pépiot is a multi-nation/multi-university effort

that developed a tool for teacher reflection concerning plurilingualism and *pratiques translangagières*. The effort was not only international and inter-universities, but also involved the co-construction of the instruments with teachers, both pre-service and in-service, as well as teacher education faculty. The tools were then used to offer teachers support to implement and leverage students' *pratiques translangagières* in their lessons.

- 11 Also important in this volume are the different methodologies by which the researchers go about finding answers to their questions about *pratiques translangagières*. Many of the studies rely on ethnographic research (Dall'Aglio et al.), others on questionnaires, some online (Guérif et al.). Most studies use a combination of questionnaires, focus groups, entretiens (Sauvage et al.). The study of the formation des *enseignants* relies on recherche action, and includes observation, focus group, interviews (Auger & Pépiot). Perhaps the study with the most innovative methodology is that of Geiger-Jaillet and Schlemminger. Because the study was conducted with *maternelle* students from the *grande section* (5-year-olds), their study relied on a game of Memory, as well as a text read to the students. The documentation of *pratiques translangagières* requires qualitative methodology, and ways of looking that go beyond traditional research methodology (Wei, 2022).
- 12 In summary, this volume advances understandings of pedagogical practices that support the development of plurilingualism, especially focusing on the role of *pratiques translangagières* in doing so. By providing examples from different contexts, we start understanding the important role of *pratiques translangagières* for students, as well as for *enseignants*. The articles all contribute to the *décloisonnement* of languages in instruction that has dominated efforts to develop students' plurilingualism. By focusing on this *décloisonnement*, this volume advances understandings of how these practices support and match the goals of plurilingual education.

### 3. Extending *pratiques translangagières*

- 13 In many ways, the reading of the contributions in this volume reminded me of how important it is to understand what the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1914) has called “mi circunstancia” (p. 12). *Mi yo y mi circunstancia* form a unity, but as Ortega y Gasset clarifies, human beings have logos, and can question why and how we are. So, my extension of this work here is about questioning the reasons for different understandings of *pratiques translangagières* in the present volume and my own understandings of translanguaging.
- 14 My sense of translanguaging derives from my long commitment to language of minoritized and racialized populations in the U.S., and most especially people of Latin American descent—conquered and colonized people of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin who have peopled the U.S. for generations, often from its beginning, joined by recent immigrants. It also started simply by observing language practices among Latinx New Yorkers in mostly bilingual communities, and in the schools where the children were schooled. On the street and in parks, Latinx communicative practices certainly go beyond the ways that language and bilingualism are described as autonomous double entities with boundaries beyond which people “switch”. In the minds, hearts, and mouths of these bilingual Latinx, their language practices do not have borders, except when they are faced with monolingual institutions such as schools.

- 15 In schools, Latinx children are often forbidden from speaking in what is said to be Spanish. When they are fortunate enough to be schooled “bilingually”, they are expected to produce “Spanish” exactly as do the white population with institutional power in Spain or Latin America. And they are expected to produce “English” in the same ways of white English-speaking monolinguals. Of course, this ideology surrounding language is precisely what produces the failure of racialized Latinx bilinguals in schools where they are expected to engage in languaging that does not match their bilingual use. The *circunstancia* of being perceived as racially and linguistically inferior means that those whom Flores and Rosa (2015) have called “white linguistic subjects”, that is, those with institutional power continue to listen to them as deficient, although their languaging prowess matches that of other students. Language in school has been, as Valdés (2018) says, “curricularized”. This construction of language is what is perceived by educators as the “standard” and the “appropriate” language, leaving out the practices of those without institutional power.
- 16 Because my *circunstancia* is one of a life lived as a U.S. Latina who arrived in New York City with her Cuban parents at the age of 11, I have been immersed in ways of speaking, doing, and schooling of other Latinx people. Their language and cultural practices are familiar and the norm in my bilingual family, now with third-generation grandchildren. The future of bilingualism in the U.S. will never be that of plurilingualism in Europe, for the U.S. has had little interest in the teaching of languages other than English. But there’s a growing presence of bilingual Americans, now spanning many generations, who are not simply shifting to English as they had done in the past. This American bilingualism has slowly entered the mainstream, heard not only in Latinx communities, but in the streets of most U.S. cities and neighborhoods. As we all grow familiar with this Latinx bilingualism, we start viewing it not through a monolingual monoglossic lens, but through the heteroglossia that characterizes all language, and that becomes obvious in the speech of bilinguals.
- 17 For me, translanguaging is not just about going across languages, for I know that when my 4-year granddaughter tells me things like: “It’s a journal para estudiantes que write”, she is not confused; she is not mixing languages or switching. She is simply producing her language with all the features of the repertoire that is available to her. That is, her competence is unitary, for she is not drawing from two separate cognitive/linguistic boxes, but from one (García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015). Of course, at four, my granddaughter is starting to understand the social value of language. She understands that when she speaks to her other grandparents, she cannot use her full repertoire, but she must select features that society calls “English”. But with me, she knows she can leverage all the features of her repertoire because her linguistic competence is unitary, not dual. She is bilingual only in a social sense, important for identity purposes. But cognitively, she is drawing from a *unitary* repertoire.
- 18 The concept of viewing translanguaging in the sense of languaging with a unitary competence that draws from a single repertoire that is the speaker’s own is important, for it reminds us that racialized/colonialized bilinguals can never language in one named language or another exactly as those who are monolingual. The repertoire of these racialized bilinguals is simply more extensive and used with more social and cognitive complexity than those of others.

## 4. Conclusion

- 19 We have much to learn from the different *circunstancias* in which we live and do scholarship. European applied linguistic scholarship, and this volume in particular, remind me of how societal valuing of plurilingual citizens leads to improved language teaching and development of a multilingual society. *Pratiques translangagières* is a welcomed support for these efforts. With little societal support, recent bilingual scholarship in the U.S. has focused on the racism that silenced the languages of enslaved African Americans, of banished Native Americans, of conquered Mexican Americans, and of poor immigrants, especially from Latin American, Asia, and Africa. Some applied linguistic scholars have then focused on bringing some measure of social justice to these populations. Translanguaging, with its unitary focus, has emerged as a tool to question the social construction of named languages that leaves many of these racialized bilinguals “languageless” (Rosa, 2019). *Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia*. But we have an obligation to go beyond our own *circunstancia* and to try to see and understand beyond what the Portuguese decolonial scholar, Santos de Sousa (2007), calls “the abyssal line” that has rendered everything on the other side of the *colonial line* invisible. As García et al. (2021) said: “By rejecting abyssal thinking and focusing on the vast linguistic complexity and heterogeneity of people and language, we challenge the line itself, rather than simply try to help people live with or overcome it”. (p. 3)
- 20 As this volume makes clear, European efforts to develop its citizens’ plurilingualism has meant that the language separation approaches of the past are being challenged, as students and enseignants engage in *pratiques translangagières* in a *décloisonnement* process. But as the colonizer countries, the colonial line was never neatly historically drawn within European nation-states. In the European case, the line drawn by the establishment of nation-states, was geographical and national. As a U.S. Latina scholar, grounded in Latin American decolonial theory, as well as sociology of language, my understandings of translanguaging have been produced by a challenge to the colonial line that was established in colonial societies through race, language, and gender. Epistemologically then, at least for me, translanguaging goes beyond *pratiques translangagières*, although in practice they often look the same.
- 21 The contributions in this volume are important because they enable us to clearly see the challenges, limitations, potentials, and promises of how translanguaging is taken up. It is up to us as scholars to engage in the *décloisonnement* that little by little will produce new understandings of the potential of the *pratiques translangagières*/ translanguaging of all plurilingual people in the world.

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