

**TRANSLANGUAGING AS AN EMERGENT PRACTICE
AND PEDAGOGY AT MULTICULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL
UNIVERSITIES**

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Abstract. The global mobility has reached the stage that sociologist S. Vertovec called ‘super-diversity’. World universities striving to internationalize become sites with an increased cultural and linguistic complexity. Such universities are spaces where a complex multilayered social interaction between people with different cultural context takes place. There, as sociolinguists N. Flores and M. Lewis argue, forms of mixed multilingualism emerge. Universities engage with this super-diverse environment differently. Some universities acknowledge and integrate forms of a flexible multilingualism such as trans- and polylinguaging into their policies and practices. Other universities observe shifts in language use without reflecting upon them. The objective of this paper is to study how accidental practices of translanguaging, which emerge in multilingual classrooms, as compared with deliberately introduced pedagogy of translanguaging, effect students’ motivation and their belonging to learning. As M. Kalantzis and B. Cope put it, belonging is the most important condition for learning. To learn meaningfully, students have to feel that a certain type of learning is for them, that learning content is in their zone of proximal development, and that the learning space is comfortable. Researchers, who support translanguaging practices as pedagogy for multilingual education, argue that their use increases students’ sense of belonging to learning by affecting their identities. This study suggests that deliberate practice of translanguaging increases students’ sense of belonging, yet its emerging use may result in demotivation for learning. Observation of translanguaging practices took place at Roskilde University (RUC) in Denmark and at Ural Federal University (UrFU) in Russia. The main data for this study are the opinions of local lecturers and local and international students of the two universities expressed and recorded during semi-structured interviews. At RUC, translanguaging is the pedagogy used in the Language Profiles Program, and at UrFU it is used occasionally during English-medium classes of the Russian Area Studies Master’s Degree course. Both programs under investigation are not part of the language education. The RUC program is a supplementary class for undergraduate students of humanities and social sciences. It aims at

developing cultural and language skills of Danish students who studied other foreign languages along with English at school. Often, international students join the program as well. The students taking the Language Profiles program develop bridge-building skills, since the bridge-building competence is mentioned in the RUC strategy of internationalization. Translanguaging is used as the course methodology, which aims at developing students' interactional and social goals. At UrFU, translanguaging emerges spontaneously when students initiate its use during in-group discussions. The teacher switches between Russian and English, as she thinks that this is the way to facilitate learning for the students with insufficient command of English. Students react to the use of translanguaging differently: in the case where there was no formal introduction of translanguaging, some were in favour of it, while others were not. On the other hand, when translanguaging was systematic and the part of pedagogy, students responded affirmatively. Students recognized that translanguaging as a method of learning contributed to their personal and cultural transformation and the development of their bridge-building competence. Translanguaging research argues that it facilitates learning and affects students' identities in a positive way. This study reveals that emergent translanguaging might be discouraging. On the other hand, if translanguaging is a part of learning design, it increases students' belonging to learning and maximizes their communicative potential. In the academic super-diverse spaces it is important to recognize that mixed multilinguality is prone to emerge. Universities' policies and teaching approaches need to consider these emergent polylinguaging in order to increase students' motivation and to create linguistically inclusive educational settings.

Keywords: translanguaging as an emergent practice, translanguaging as pedagogy, multicultural and multilingual university

Introduction

The world today is characterized by diversity. Some researchers say that in some societal spaces the observable cultural and linguistic variety went beyond the situation of diversity and reached the level of super-diversity. Introducing this term, the sociologist S. Vertovec meant to render an account of global migration complexity surpassing anything previously experienced. Migration became a dynamic interplay of variables including country of origin, migration channel, legal status, migrants' human capital, and access to employment, locality, and other factors (Vertovec S., 2007). While super-diversity may not result from all kinds of mobilities to the same degree, academic mobility is the kind, which rapidly increases linguistic and cultural complexity of universities striving for internationalization (Bruen J.,

Kelly N., 2016). It has been observed that although universities transform into multilingual and multicultural sites de facto, they do not always engage with their consequences (Pauwels A., 2014) by introducing new policies and practices. However, even without a sufficient engagement with the changed university scene, multilingual university settings generate ‘super-diverse’ language practices – “objects that are more complex by degree, not qua substance, compared to forms of intense mixedness and hybridization recorded in earlier times” (Blommaert J., 2013: 6). Such forms of a flexible multilingualism as translanguaging and polylinguaging are examples of ‘super-diverse’ language practices. Following the concept of sociopolitical emergence, which develops insights offered by the super-diversity approach to sociolinguistic research, we argue that these practices are emergent linguistic characteristics of multilingual university settings. The emergentist perspective conceptualizes language as the product of local social interactions. Social interactions are seen as “sociopolitical emergences that are shaped by the complex interrelationship between the historical and contemporary context of the interlocutors and the larger societies in which they are embedded” (Flores N., Lewis M., 2016: 110). One of the components of sociopolitical emergences is emergent linguistic practices – “continuously shifting uses of language of specific communities that are always open to change” (Flores N., Lewis M., 2016: 110).

Objectives of the study

The purpose of our study is to look at practices of translanguaging in the multilingual university settings. We intend to compare tacit or accidental practices of translanguaging, which emerge in the multilingual classrooms, with deliberately introduced practices, which are part of a learning design. This comparison is intended to find out how students and lecturers react to the introduction or emergence of translanguaging and how they evaluate its use in the classroom. Promoters of translanguaging as a pedagogy for multilingual education, such as C. Baker, A. Creese and A. Blackledge, W. Li, O. Garcia, S. Canagarajah and others, believe that it guarantees better understanding of the content for students, helps develop language skills and increases students’ motivation through the sense of belonging to the learning process, because it acknowledges their own languages and cultures and affects their identity (Creese A., Blackledge A., 2010; Canagarajah S., 2011; Wei L., Zhu H., 2013; García O., Wei L., 2014). Belonging is, as stated by M. Kalantzis and B. Cope, the main condition for learning. In order to learn, the learners have to feel that learning is for them: “They have to feel they belong in the content; they have to feel they belong in the community or learning setting; they have to feel at home with that kind of learning or way of getting to know the world. In other words, the learner’s

subjectivity and identity must be engaged” (Kalantzis M., Cope B., 2004: 40). For a learner, belonging is founded on three factors: 1. Do I feel that this type of learning works for me? 2. Do I know enough and do I want to learn more? 3. Do I feel comfortable in this particular learning space/environment?

The hypothesis of this study is that the explicit and systematic practice of translanguaging increases the students’ sense of belonging; whereas the accidental and embedded use does not influence their sense of belonging in a positive way and may occasionally demotivate students.

Methodology

The study of the tacit practice of translanguaging took place on the basis of the multilingual classrooms at Ural Federal University (UrFU) in Russia, whereas translanguaging as a pedagogic ideology was observed at Roskilde University (RUC) in Denmark as part of its Language Profiles program (LP). To explore students’ motivations and emotions, we used methods of an overt non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. At RUC, lecturers and creators of LP were interviewed both face-to-face and via Skype; for the students’ opinions we refer to the book *Hvis du ikke kan sproget... Om flersprogethed og læring på RUC's Sprogprofiler* (If you don't know the language...: About plurilinguism and learning in RUC's Language Profiles). This publication contains contributions from former students of the program expressing their views about the form and content of LP.

Ural Federal University has been introducing several study programs in English as part of its internationalization efforts since 2013. One of such programs for Master’s students, Russian Area Studies (RA), which was observed for the purpose of this study, involves both Russian speaking and non-Russian speaking students. The language of the program instruction is English. However, the presence of Russian-speaking students facilitates the use of a mix of English and Russian. At UrFU, the RA instructor was interviewed, as well as 23 students of this course from Denmark, the Netherlands, China and Russia.

At RUC, the Language Profile Program is offered as a supplementary class to undergraduate students of humanities and social sciences. It is mostly oriented towards Danish students who study French, German or Spanish at secondary level and want to develop language and intercultural skills. Some international students also chose to participate. The students in the program are invited to use translanguaging in order to achieve interactional and social goals (Daryai-Hansen P., Barfod S., Schwarz L, 2016). The language of the program instruction is a mix of Danish, French, German or Spanish, and English.

The analysis of the documents available at RUC and UrFU websites shows that neither translanguaging nor other forms of multilingualism are mentioned in the policies or strategic papers of UrFU and RUC. However, as respondents mention, LP is part of the RUC internationalization and outreach strategy, because it is aimed at preparing graduates as bridge-builders between Danish and foreign companies and organizations (Strategy New RUC). Respondents at UrFU say that although English skills are important for UrFU development, there is no explicit language policy. Both programs, RA and LP, are not part of the language education.

Findings

RA program at UrFU is a multidisciplinary course for local and international students who are interested in the complex competence in cultural, political, historical, and linguistic areas. The majority of the RA students are Russians and lecturers are Russian speaking. At the time of observation, there were 23 students in the class: 10 students from Russia, six full-time students from China, and seven exchange students from the Netherlands and Denmark who joined the course for one semester. The course is a mix of short lectures (15 to 25 minutes) and small group work (4-5 students in a group). The results of group work are presented in the classroom by one of the participants and are followed by a Q&A session and discussion. The language of instruction is English. The level of the students' English varies from B1+ to C2. The students from the Netherlands and Denmark demonstrate a significantly higher command of English than the majority of Russian and Chinese students. All the international students study Russian as a foreign language.

At first, the RA lecturer used translanguaging. As the interview revealed, the lecturer had no intention to use a mix of Russian and English in the course. However, after several classes she noticed that the students used their languages to communicate during group works, mostly with their compatriots, and to discuss meanings of the words or expressions in their mother tongue with other nationals. The lecturer noticed that groups preferred participants with a better command of English to present results of their group work. At this moment, the lecturer thought that she could suggest elements of language mix during presentations to enable students with lower levels of English to speak in forum, too. There was no formal explanation of the new rules of language use, just a suggestion to use other languages in difficult situations. Sometimes, the lecturer switched to Russian during lectures, mostly to express emotions or to tell jokes. The students evaluated the translanguaging practices of the course differently. Some, especially students with lower levels of English, welcomed it. They said it facilitated communication and made the course livelier. They felt

more engaged and enjoyed the course. The students with higher command of English said that, although they liked the course in general, there should have been less use of Russian because the course was supposed to be in English. As they observed, this accidental language mix made the course less academic and serious.

At RUC, translanguaging is part and parcel of the LP. The LP' original idea was to ensure that Danish academics would be in touch with research and political, cultural and economic debates in the areas of German, French and Spanish. The LP was introduced because of the trend to use only English and the marginalization of other traditional foreign languages. On the secondary level, Danes study other languages along with English, which assumed the position of a compulsory subject at schools. The respondents say that there were concerns that Anglicization might lead to a narrow view of the society and knowledge that is produced only in English. As one of the respondents put it, "the use of language is the way to understand respective societies from within". To achieve this, however, we do not need the ideal command of languages as much as a more pragmatic approach: bridge-building. Bridge-builders are able to qualify their language to a specific subject field. Translanguaging is formalized as LP pedagogy. As experience of the LP participants shows, they blend languages in communication if they feel this need. As the students observed, using translanguaging strategies is one of the bridge-building skills. The students who graduated from LP, as shown in their essays for the book «If you don't know the language...», could benefit in their carriers not only from their language competence, but also from cultural and analytical skills they acquired from the participation in the LP. The students approve of translanguaging practices as it is integrated in the development of the bridge-building competence.

Discussion

As follows from the respondents' opinions, emergent practices of translanguaging that spontaneously spring up in multilingual classrooms are not always motivating for students. Accidental switch to another language, no formal introduction of translanguaging as a method tend to irritate. On the other hand, if translanguaging is practiced as part of the pedagogy, respondents characterize it as transformative: it takes them to new places and acts as an agent of personal and cultural change (Kalantzis M., Cope B., 2004). The deliberate translanguaging practice increases students' belonging to learning. However, forms of mixed multilingualism are prone to emerge in multilingual university settings. The rapidly diversifying and increasingly complex linguistic environment necessitates changes in pedagogy as well as construction of language policies at internationalizing universities (Gudova M. Y., Guzikova M. O., 2018). Institutionalizing multilingualism as an

embedded part of the university learning space will increase students' motivation and belonging to learning.

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