Translanguaging and translingualism – what do they mean for TEFL... if anything?

Discussion

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Translingual theorising

- language is not seen as discrete systems: 'languages', but as a set of communicative or linguistic repertoires that are drawn upon as required in specific contexts (Pennycook, 2008; García, 2009; Sridhar, 1994)

- language stops becoming a thing, and becomes a process: 'languaging' (Jørgensen & Møller, 2014)

- code-switching is replaced by code-mixing, code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2014) or… just communicating

- 'languages' are viewed as socio-political constructs (e.g. Makoni & Pennycook, 2005)

- politically defined language borders are not respected = translingual activism (Cronin, 2003)

- specific grammars/varieties acknowledged as 'sedimentation of certain forms/patterns' (Canagarajah, 2013: 16) or 'entrenched features' (Jørgensen and Møller, 2014: 68)

Initial implications for the language classroom (Pennycook and Canagarajah)

- monolingual/multilingual dichotomy ceases to exist (Canagarajah, 2014)

- translingual practices 'take us beyond the ugly and simplistic labels of grammar-translation versus communicative language teaching that have reduced English to a language used and taught only in its own presence' (Pennycook, 2008: 30.7)

- communicative competence is replaced by performative competence (Canagarajah, 2014), a translingual competence that includes a key concept of 'alignment' (accommodation?), and focuses on the *how* rather than the *what* of communication.

- '[teachers] have to focus more on negotiation strategies, rather than on form. Or rather they should treat form as negotiable. Students will develop language awareness to cope with the new indexicalities and emergent grammars of contact situations, rather than focusing only on mastering the preconstructed grammars of a single variety.' (Canagarajah, 2013: 191–92).

Translanguaging

- coined by Cen Williams (Baker, 2011), a Welsh researcher
- involves learners moving between different languages for different communication channels (e.g. reading a text in one language, and writing a summary in another)
- taken up by Ofelia García, in US esp. Spanish/English bilingual classes – her 'translanguaging' is 'the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximise communicative potential' (García, 2009: 140) - i.e. v. similar to translingual practice, and can occur in the classroom
- competence of such speakers described as 'dynamic bilingualism' (2009: 144) is very similar to Canagarajah's performative competence
- issues of identity, language affinity and language politics are all foregrounded, as in translingual practices (García and Li Wei, 2014)

Implications for (foreign/second) language learning and teaching

1. Linguistic competence can no longer be seen or analysed monolingually - each learner's linguistic resources are seen to incorporate 'English' as they learn it (cf. V. Cook's multi-competence e.g. 1995) – 'interlanguage' is untenable as a concept.

2. Translanguaging within bilingual education is both learning practice and learning outcome.

3. Communicative competence, the much modified, implicitly understood, yet ambiguous (and essentially problematic – Widdowson, 2003) goal of CLT may need to be rejected in favour of performative competence.

Discussion

- Refer to the questions on the handout. Discuss whichever ones you think are most interesting / relevant to you.

- Don't expect the answers at the end!

Some interesting questions

Translingual theory

1. Are translingual practices increasing (due to movement of people and contact between languacultures[1]) or decreasing (due to convergence/standardization of language varieties) and how (e.g. mass media and online social networking)?

2. Is the current increase in discussion on translingual practices a result of:
   a) an increase in such practices (e.g. in contact zones between 'languacultures' and in [often urban] areas of greater cultural diversity)?
   b) a (perhaps distorted) reflection of the contexts in which sociolinguists and theorists are working (i.e. predominantly [capital] cities, where such practices may be more common than in countries at large)?
   c) simply a reflection of the ideological and political biases of (socio)linguists?

   and if it's a combination of these, what is the driving force that is bringing this to the surface of the discussion?

3. Are borders between 'languages' blurring more, or are they 'shoring up' but sharing resources? What about spoken (often diverging) vs. written (often standardising) forms, and the influence of IT on the latter?

The influence of translingual theory on language learning and classrooms

1. One implication is that if we accept that translingual practices and translanguaging are increasing, especially in the urban metropolises and online environments where learners may ... be aspiring to (and modelling) monolingual

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Performative competence

- interaction-based and procedural, rather than a set of learnt (propositional) resources as in communicative competence.

- key concept - alignment: 'connecting semiotic resources, environmental factors and human subjects in relation to one's own communicative needs and interests in order to achieve meaning.'

Translingual interaction:

- start from your own positionality;

- negotiate on equal terms;

- focus on practices, not forms;

- co-construct the rules and terms of engagement;

- be responsive to joint accomplishment of goals;

- reconfigure your norms and expand your repertoire.

(all: Canagarajah 2013: 174-5)