

# Translanguaging and Language Policy in the Global South: introductory notes

## *Translinguagem e política linguística no Sul global: notas introdutórias*

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There seems no doubt in our view that translanguaging has taken a center stage as a viable strategy to transform learning and teaching practices that have historically followed the one-oneness ideology of the European Enlightenment. From the seminal work of Ofelia García (2009) on concept expansion and Li Wei and García (2014, 2022) on delineated pedagogical framings, and Makalela's (2016, 2022) cultural competence model of *Ubuntu*, translanguaging can no longer be ignored especially in the education domains globally. A plethora of studies in the recent years have demonstrated the efficacy of adopting translanguaging as both a theoretical and pedagogical practice (e.g., LI WEI; LIN, 2019) that sit at the center of decoloniality and transformation for the Global South ways of acting, knowing and being (e.g., NDHLOVU; MAKALELA, 2021). Here, we use Global South as a geopolitical space of marginalization that was orchestrated by the grandiloquent narratives of the West and acts of colonization and slavery. In this connection, choices around language use are the epicenter of such marginalization. Although huge strides have been made of translanguaging as an alternative well suited for the Global South, its interface with orthodox language policies have not been cogently addressed. At best, it is diffused, unclear, and limited in what seems like a translanguaging paradox where a distinction between socially named languages and the individual repertoires grounded in actual languaging practices becomes both necessary and unnecessary at the same time. We conceived of this Special Issue to specifically solicit the state-of-the-art views on this



argumentative dialogue in the hopes of directing future scholarships on this very important milestone in translanguaging as a decolonial and emancipatory language regime for the Global South contexts.

One of the core findings in the field of translanguaging is that it mirrors cultural competence that resonates with some of the Global South epistemologies and value systems more than it is conceived as a Global North parameter of knowledge. Well documented is that the one-ness ideology mirrors the Platonic thought of hierarchies and pyramids that dominated European cultural thought processes that led to nation-statism (NKADIMENG; MAKALELA, 202-?). Translanguaging, on the other hand, resonates with the most of the Global South's worldview of the universe as an organic cosmos. Because of this view, we are able to discern the cultural systems such as the Latin American philosophy of *Buen Vivir* (WALSH, 2018), which emphasizes community well-being, reciprocity, and solidarity with Mother Earth. In Sub-Saharan African countries, where 80% of the people speak Bantu languages, Makalela (2016, 2018, 2022) proposed a version of translanguaging that goes beyond overlaps between two languages to something more complex. He refers to this Southern theoretical apparatus as *Ubuntu* translanguaging based on the African value system of *Ubuntu* – an interconnectedness of empirical beings found in the slogan: “I am because you are; you are because I am” (MAKALELA, 2016, p. 191). This value system shows infinite and transversal relations of dependency between languages in the same way that the local people's organic cosmic order is structured. These two examples and many others provide a case for translanguaging as in essence a natural construct that is embedded in the cultural logic and epistemologies of the Global South. This special issue thus taps on this very important and critical aspect of translanguaging not only as a decolonial tool but a cultural asset that predates colonization.

As alluded above, the central question is whether this collective and unbounded way of making sense of the world has implications on formulations of language policy statements. One of the obvious contributions of the Special Issue is that current language policies are mimics of the Western enumeration of languages, which does not favor the sociolinguistic matrix of fluid multilingualism prevalent in the Global South countries such as Brazil. This logic of one-ness has, invariably, permeated policy constructions and supported ideologies of one-ness that are found in post-colonial contexts, despite the practical realities of translanguaging expressions. This Special Issue addresses the need to re-interpret policy from a translanguaging perspective where no one language is considered complete without the other.

The first article, “*Learning from Ryuko Kubota: Applied linguistics, race, identity and critical approaches*” is at the core of critical applied linguistics and celebrates the scholarly work of Ryuko Kubota, whose contribution to critical applied linguistics epitomizes relevant scholarship of the Global South epistemologies to question the Western hegemony on teacher development, multilingualism, and pedagogies. Kubota's antiracist pedagogy stance, in particular, is in alignment with Paulo Freire's work on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This article shows the need to leverage on decolonial discourses that were initiated by scholars from the Global South as the article demonstrates with Ryuko Kubota who was in turn inspired by Paulo Freire, among others. Answers around the relationship between translanguaging and language policies in the Global South should be found, in essence, from the scholarship of the Global South, instead of looking for answers from the West.

The second article, “*Translanguaging as a clarion call and a war cry for the Global South*” provides an even more direct engagement with the politics of translanguaging. The author argues that translanguaging is the foremost approach that serves as an impetus for action against the hegemony of the Global North, which has historically disparaged the ideals and prospects of the Global South since the time of colo-

nization. When framed in this light, it is conspicuous that there are subversive aspects of translanguaging as a pedagogy and decolonial strategy for the Global South to commit to emancipation of local languages and celebration of fluid multilingualism as a cultural competence for the Global South societies.

The next article looks at the social justice angle of translanguaging. Specifically, the article reports on the place of emotion, silence, and meaning making through translanguaging in order to experience social justice. The author conducted her research among English language majors in a project that sought to decolonize English education. She draws heavily from Makalela's (2016, 2018, 2022) *Ubuntu translanguaging* as a model to emphasize the need for valorizing the social and human aspects of language instead of the technical aspect of English language acquisition. She argues that the notion of "I am because you are" from *Ubuntu* value system further entails "your pain is mine too". Within this parameter, language policies should value the interdependency of languages in meaning making processes rather than separated and bounded entities that have no connection whatsoever.

The fourth article, "Rolling out the red carpet..." cautions against neoliberal pretensions on bilingual education in Brazilian schools. Accordingly, young learners in Brazil are encouraged to enroll in private bilingual schools, but these promotions are invested in the commodification of English that is sold to the local people. Here, the authors show that it should not be taken for granted that all programs that promote multilingualism and bilingualism are neutral and innocent. Language teaching that promotes foreign languages may have unintended consequences such as promotion of the hegemony of colonial languages. In this instance, then, policy formulations will be outward oriented and commercially driven.

Beyond the commodification through foreign language teaching, the use of public spaces is a contested terrain between the local and excolonial languages. The authors of the next article show that the local languages and their speakers are often 'othered' through linguistic landscapes, which still represent hegemonic ideals of the West. They, therefore, ask a rhetorical question on who is afraid of the fluidity in languages to argue that the 'othering' and violent representation of the local people is an intentional act of fear that push back on decoloniality through translanguaging.

The sixth contribution to this volume, "Emerging translingual praxiologies in three English teacher professional development contexts in the Brazilian Midwest" uses a range of methodologies to make sense on translingual and fluid classroom interactions gained through personal narratives. Understanding the limitations of monolingual bias, the authors analyze uses of translanguaging in three different contexts and they conclude with a decolonial perspective that leverages fluid, versatile, and mobile repertoires.

Under the title, "Opportunities for and challenges to a translingual approach to ELT in Brazil", the authors of this article investigate meaning making productions in a variety of Brazilian educational segments. As would be expected, monolingual bias is found to be pervasive despite the plenty of opportunities that are in the daily language practice of the users. This study shows the depth of colonial and monolingual biases that dominate orthodox classroom teaching. Since there are opportunities for changes to be implemented, there is a need for a wholesale shift from ideology of one-ness not only in the classroom pedagogical practices but also in the materials and resources needed to facilitate fluid performances of language in Brazil.

"Thinking about languages between fixity and fluidity: what can a translingual perspective teach us about language policies in the Global South" is a report on research undertaken to look at the relationship between language policy and ideologies of language. Since translanguaging questions the autonomous and static conceptions of language, the traditional views on language policy are challenged. The authors thus use interviews on attitudes towards both the static and fluid nature of languages in post-colonial context to

drive home the finding that policies should oscillate between socially named languages and fluid repertoires. The practicalities of this ‘oscillation’ as an ideological stance change traditional views of language policies substantially. This means that policymakers should be guided by languaging (language as used for meaning making) to design their policy prescriptions. From a language management point of view, we start to see policies that state both the formal structure of a language (socially named languages) and go beyond these boundaries to acknowledge and give room for individual repertoires where more than one language can be used for learning, teaching, and assessment at the same time.

We conclude this introductory section of the Special Issue to restate that the relationship between language policy and translanguaging should be understood within the argumentative dialogue between socially named languages and the individualized repertoires that are guided by complex meaning making procedures. Managing this understanding harbors complexity in shifting mindset; yet it is attainable. The task is complex but attainable. As we move translanguaging to be at the forefront of language policy formulations and dialogues in the Global South, there is a glimpse of hope that translanguaging provides an epistemic rapture and liberatory policies that enable marginalized citizens of the Global South to chart their ways of being, acting and knowing devoid of the cultural traditions of the Global North which have to date represented colonialism, racism, epistemic violence, and systemic educational underdevelopment. We invite readers to take on this journey of decoloniality through this masterpiece on “Translanguaging and Language Policy in the Global South”.

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