Challenging the translingual turn: TESOL student teachers' perceptions, practices and networks

Lavinia Hirsu and Sally Zacharias

BRITISH COUNCIL

Teaching**English**

University *of* Glasgow

www.britishcouncil.org

Challenging the translingual turn: TESOL student teachers' perceptions, practices and networks

Lavinia Hirsu and Sally Zacharias

About the authors

Dr Lavinia Hirsu is a Lecturer at the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. Her research and teaching are multidisciplinary as she works at the confluence of digital literacies, theories of cultural diversity and social inclusion, academic writing, and translingual pedagogy. She has recently been involved in international projects in contexts of migration, displacement and other unstable environments. Together with her colleague, Sally Zacharias, she has developed a series of continuing professional development workshops on translingual pedagogy: https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/gc/creativepracticestranslang/

Lavinia.Hirsu@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Sally Zacharias is a Lecturer at the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, where she teaches on the TESOL and teacher training programmes. She has over 20 years of teaching experience in a variety of contexts, including primary, secondary and tertiary education. She taught English as a foreign language in Germany and France for a number of years before moving to the UK. She's interested in the role of language in educational settings, applied cognitive linguistics, including metaphor studies, cognitive diversity and teaching in diverse environments.

Sally.Zacharias@glasgow.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank all the participants in this study who generously shared their time, materials and thoughts throughout the project. Our group of student teachers showed sustained commitment and great reflective skills, as they transitioned from an intense period of study to an unsettling time of searching for new jobs, studies and future trajectories.

Abstract

Whether discussed as an ideology, orientation, practice or pedagogy, translanguaging has been embraced for its potential to build inclusive environments where language differences are celebrated and worked through in dynamic and fluid ways. If many studies focus on where and how translanguaging occurs, very few studies have looked into the ways in which practitioners new to the term respond to it. What happens when student teachers in a TESOL programme first encounter the term and have to (re)negotiate beliefs, practices and connections in light of new learning and teaching experiences? To address this question, the present research followed nine TESOL student teachers over the course of a year and a half as they studied for their masters' and moved into new environments afterwards. Drawing upon translingual research and cognitive approaches to language, the researchers conducted a thematic and metaphor analysis into students' language ideologies, their evolving conceptualisations of what languages are and how they are used, their language practices and networks. Findings reveal that student teachers negotiate complex ideological configurations that make translanguaging an alternative yet hard-to-implement framework, especially in the context of classroom teaching. Given student teachers' language histories, and the current demands of teaching and learning, they tend not to make strong ideological and practical commitments and recognise that context is the primary determinant of their beliefs, practices and networks. While this flexibility is necessary and useful for current global contexts, it also potentially leaves new teachers with multiple unresolved, contradictory and, at times, problematic language positions and practices.

A note on terminology

Key terms have played a critical role in our data collection and analysis. Throughout this project, we have asked our participants to reflect on terms such as L1, L2, first and second language, native and non-native, multilingual, translingual, mother tongue, etc. Instead of having a predetermined view of what each term meant, we, as researchers, were open to our participants' views and explanations of the terms. We were particularly interested in how they understood and engaged with the terms in different contexts. As readers review our findings, they should consider the use of each term carefully as we intended to avoid any simplistic equivalences between terms used and situations in which they were applied. For instance, the use of the term L1 in the interview data sometimes indicated a monolingual language orientation, while in other contexts it was used within a multilingual context, as a placeholder or label term for multiple languages used simultaneously and in integrated ways. In some cases such terms aligned well with students' language ideologies; in others, they had no other personal significant connotation beyond institutional naming conventions, having been used in students' programmes of study.

Contents

1

Introduction

Used in education, applied linguistics, writing and composition studies, translanguaging has become more than an appealing scholarly term. A rich multidisciplinary literature has established its impact on current conversations about language difference, learning and inclusive education. This body of work indicates that we have not only gained a new term, but we have also taken a 'translingual turn' (Horner et al., 2011) in how we approach contexts of language learning and teaching. This entails the exploration of multiple definitions of what 'translanguaging' means, as well as the consideration of many other related terms, including translingualism, translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), translinguistics (Dovchin and Lee, 2019) and translingual literacy (Lu and Horner, 2013). In Leung and Valdés' (2019) view, the 'trans turn' is part of a larger ecology of more general terms, including transnational, transcultural, translocal, transpatial and transmodal, which together mark an ethos of our current scholarly conversations. What translanguaging and all other related terms aim to capture are complex, fluid and dynamic relationships established between various communicative resources in highly diverse contexts.

In an attempt to understand the term, many studies have approached it by asking questions such as: What is translanguaging? How does it manifest itself in students' and teachers' practices and/or in everyday life? How can it be used as a pedagogy of language inclusiveness? Because translanguaging has been viewed as part of ordinary daily acts of languaging (Dovchin and Lee, 2019), the majority of studies aim at explaining what translanguaging enables teachers and learners to do. Very few studies, however, have taken up the challenge of interrogating the translingual turn from the perspective of new teachers' uptake; for example, what happens when teachers encounter the term for the first time? What transformations, if any, does translanguaging enable teachers to go through in their understanding of what languages are and how they should be taught? To what extent can you stand outside a translingual paradigm?

In this study, we investigated the ways in which nine student teachers enrolled at a UK university in a TESOL master's degree have encountered the term translanguaging and responded to it. Since we believe that the uptake of the term is intrinsically linked to what language practitioners believe language and language practices should encompass, we wanted to find out how our student teachers positioned themselves vis-à-vis translanguaging and other key terms that informed and framed their ideologies and practices. We engaged with our participants for the duration of their course and for six months after the completion of their studies. In our research, we aimed to address the following questions.

1. What are student teachers' understandings of translanguaging over the course of their studies and into new learning and teaching environments?

2. To what extent do student teachers' conceptual understandings of language, practices and networks change as they consider a translingual turn in their teaching practice?

In order to address these questions, we decided to:

a. investigate and map participants' language ideologies based on self-reported experiences with language learning and teaching, as well as based on an innovative metaphor analysis

b. identify participants' evolving and emergent language conceptualisations, practices and networks

c. explore the understanding, take-up and use of translanguaging throughout the participants' studies and into their new environments.

2

Literature review

For language teachers and practitioners, translanguaging raises two critical questions.

1. What is the meaning of the term and how does it challenge established beliefs about language and meaning making in the classroom?

2. What are appropriate pedagogies that can enact and reflect translingual principles and values?

Theoretical and practical conversations have put forward a wealth of responses to these two questions. For instance, teachers can enter the classroom with the goal of engaging learners' 'translingual dispositions' (Lee and Jenks, 2016: 317) or their full linguistic repertoire (Leung and Valdés, 2019: 363; Vogel and García, 2017: 4). Language learners actively use their semiotic resources, and the classroom can be a transformative and transdisciplinary space where they can deploy a wide range of 'skills, knowledge, experience, attitudes and beliefs' (Wei and Hua, 2013: 519).

At the same time, the translingual turn has not been only about new pedagogical approaches. The concept has emerged as a political and ideological intervention meant to challenge and reject 'monolingual curriculums' (Gilyard, 2016: 284). Teachers and language practitioners are called upon to review their approaches to language teaching and learning in order to support inclusive learning environments where the privilege of certain languages is questioned and recalibrated. With the increasing number of studies aimed at tracing and unpacking these issues, Luis Poza (2017: 102) cautions against the dilution of the critical intervention that translanguaging was meant to bring in. To maintain this critical dimension, research studies need to investigate not only how teachers implement translanguaging as 'practical theory of language', but also what they believe in and how they position themselves vis-à-vis old and new ideological commitments to language and language teaching (Wei, 2018).

As Deroo and Ponzio (2019) point out, this is an area in need of research. If pedagogy is supported and informed by language beliefs, norms, expectations and values, teachers and practitioners need to be able to inquire and reflect on the foundations of their practices. If translanguaging is to make an enduring impact on pedagogy while delivering its socio-political message, we need to understand how teachers and practitioners change their language ideologies in relation to classroom practices and learners' experiences. Few studies have taken up this line of research and fewer still have looked into the experiences of those teachers who are just entering the profession.

For junior teachers, aligning language ideologies and practice is a complex and challenging process. As Wiese et al. (2017) show, the shift from a monolingual to a translanguaging orientation sits within an 'ecological relationship' where teachers need to continuously negotiate competing stances. This process is complicated by the difficulty that new teachers have in understanding the concept of translanguaging and its many dimensions (theoretical, practical and/or personal). Personally, teachers tend to exhibit an openness towards translanguaging as it resonates with their beliefs and experiences in multilingual environments. Such openness translates into a positive disposition 'towards a pluralistic approach to teaching' (Lundberg, 2019: 278). However, these personal beliefs often clash with existent structures, policies, prior formal learning experiences, institutional expectations (Deroo and Ponzio, 2019; Allard, 2017) and misunderstandings of the terms (Lundberg, 2019).

Even when efforts are made to implement translanguaging in the classroom, the multiple ways of enacting its principles reveal a multitude of understandings. In Pacheco et al.'s (2019: 1) study, preservice teachers understood ideologies of translanguaging as a 'bridge for connecting languages, a scaffold for participation, and a sign of students' linguistic expertise and understandings of content'. Faced with local constraints that drew upon monolingual orientations to language teaching, the teachers used translanguaging more as a 'transgressive practice' rather than a sustainable and sustained approach (15). For this reason, in our study, we aimed to gain a better understanding of the transformational processes that junior teachers undergo as they encounter the term, as well as the challenges that they encounter as they move from one learning environment (the TESOL programme) to new learning environments (home, employment, postgraduate studies).

Methodologically, most of these studies have adopted a wide range of instruments to gather and analyse data regarding teachers' language ideologies and practices. Studies have applied discourse analysis (Deroo and Ponzio, 2019), phenomenology (Pacheco et al., 2019) and action research (Holdway and Hitchcock, 2018), to name a few. The present study has taken an innovative analytical approach by employing metaphor and thematic analysis to identify not only the social dimensions of teachers' experiences, but also the cognitive conceptualisations that frame and inform these experiences. Given that the literature on teachers' language ideologies identifies understanding of the concept of translanguaging as critical to how teachers respond to and enact the concept in their contexts, in our research we placed this understanding of the term at the forefront of our analytical approach (see the next section for more details).

3

Research design

The data collection for this project took place between September 2017 and May 2019 over four different stages at a UK university, in the context of the TESOL programme. In the first stage, we conducted an initial analysis of student teachers' language learning histories, ideologies and practices. During this stage, the entire TESOL group enrolled in the one-year master's programme completed a survey that gathered information about language learning and teaching experiences. The survey had been developed internally as a tool to gather general information about the group's prior experiences. Individual survey answers were extracted from this survey based on voluntary participation and interest in the next stages of the study.

The second stage of data collection took place during the second term of the master's academic year, after our participants acquired new language-related knowledge, conducted practice teaching, completed assignments and became familiar with the concept of translanguaging and its applications. Through individual interviews and mapping exercises (see Appendix), participants shared with the researchers their views on language ideologies,[1] teaching and learning practices. We also collected their assignments to track and better understand how our participants applied and enacted their beliefs. Before the participants completed their studies, the researchers met them face to face and via Skype to share preliminary results and gather feedback.

During the third stage, we followed our participants' journeys beyond the completion of their degree. As some moved into the workplace, continued with doctoral studies or explored their options on the job market, the researchers conducted individual interviews and interviewed stakeholders in the participants' new environments (supervisors, colleagues and friends). Where relevant, participants shared experiences from their new teaching contexts, including lesson plans and updates on their changing views about language.

Throughout the three stages of data collection, the researchers and the participants shared a WhatsApp group where written messages and photographs captured instances of language in use. The group was meant to strengthen our connections throughout the study and to provide an outlet for immediate sharing. The majority of messages were posted during stage two of the project when participants were most actively engaged with the research project.

---

1. Although a contested and critiqued term, in this project we use the notion of language ideologies to describe a wide range of evolving and dynamic cognitive patterns, social practices and networks which contribute to a set of shared beliefs and values about what language(s) are and how they are to be deployed within specific material-socio-political contexts.

4

Participants

The survey distributed initially to the TESOL group was completed by 26 student teachers: 17 enrolled in the MSc track (no teaching experience) and nine student teachers enrolled in the MEd programme (a minimum of two years of teaching experience). While all the students in the programme were given the opportunity to participate in the research project, 12 expressed an interest and nine participants completed consent forms and voluntarily agreed to be part of the study. Given the relatively small number of participants, we were able to conduct in-depth case studies and develop a strong understanding of our participants' experiences, challenges and aspirations.

Table 1: Participants' profiles

No.	Pseudonym	Country of origin	Age	Programme	Gender	Language repertoire*
1	Duncan	Ireland	24	MEd	Male	English, Spanish, French, Gaeilge
2	Maya	Sweden	33	MEd	Female	English, Swedish, Spanish
3	Connor	USA	27	MEd	Male	English, German, Korean
4	Barbara	China	22	MSc	Female	English, Chinese
5	Yorhyou	China	22	MSc	Female	English, Chinese, Spanish
6	Chad	UK	29	MEd	Male	English, Chinese, French
7	Yoshi	China	22	MSc	Female	English, Chinese, Japanese
8	Xini	China	25	MSc	Female	English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish
9	Ying	China	23	MSc	Female	Chinese, English, Japanese

*Note: While we find problematic such language/country categorisations, we indicate them here only to point to some of the language repertoires that our participants were drawing upon.

5

Data analysis

To analyse the data, we adopted a multi-level analysis grounded in the overarching framework of dynamic systems theory (DST) (deBot et al., 2013). DST looks at systemic changes via interactions with the environment, broadly defined, which lead to reconfigurations of these systems. In this study, we used DST to analyse changes in our participants' language ideologies, practices and networks. We were particularly interested in the transformations that occurred in response to translanguaging and its principles, values and practices, and we conducted our data analysis along two analytical streams. First, we developed a thematic analysis, identifying key themes emerging primarily from the interviews and the mapping exercises. The thematic analysis followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for identifying and coding themes in qualitative data, as well as Maguire and Delahunt's (2017) guidelines.

Talking about language, language learning and language practice meant that our participants were frequently asked to conceptualise complex and abstract concepts that were potentially difficult to make sense of and communicate. Much of what was said was expressed, therefore, metaphorically; in other words, abstract ideas were talked about in terms of something they were more familiar with.

Drawing upon cognitive approaches to language, we applied the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) approach in our second level of analysis whereby we identified, traced and analysed the metaphors that our participants used to frame their understandings of what languages are and how they are used in various contexts. While research on translanguaging has recognised the role of cognitive frameworks in shaping beliefs and practices about language learning (García and Wei, 2014), these frameworks have not been systematically used as approaches to data analysis within our field of enquiry. By investigating the metaphors our participants used to discuss their experiences, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their positions vis-à-vis their linguistic resources. Drawing from the field of cognitive linguistics (see Ungerer and Schmid, 2006), we acknowledge that translingual practices can be interpreted not only through a social lens that looks at the social uses of communicative resources in various contexts. Equally important is a cognitive lens that may reveal how meaning can be structured by using multiple language metaphors to conceptualise and communicate our inner worlds. By engaging with cognitive research, we expand the scope and understanding of what constitutes translingual practices in various contexts.

6

Ethical dimensions

Before the implementation of the data collection stages, the two researchers designed all the project instruments in line with institutional ethical guidelines and procedures. Ethical approval was obtained via the university ethics committee and all data instruments, including the interview protocols and the collection of assignments and WhatsApp data, have been evaluated and approved as appropriate for the study. Given the length of this study and the changing contexts in which our participants found themselves, we observed participants' right to remain in the research project for as long as they were able and felt comfortable.

Although initially we intended to interview stakeholders in the participants' new working or teaching situations, we discovered that this was possible only in the contexts of half of our participants. It was fundamentally an ethical decision for us to respect our participants' wish to share as much information as they felt pertinent. Our participants were open to share with us their stories of job searching and their teaching experiences in the classroom and beyond. They offered to conduct interviews with us multiple times over the course of the project and shared email updates.

However, during these conversations we understood that the period immediately after the completion of their studies is a period of heightened insecurities, challenges and vulnerabilities. Therefore, we decided to move forward with stakeholder interviews only in the case of those participants who felt confident and comfortable with us reaching out to them for their views on language teaching and practice. It is important to note, though, that this ethical choice became an important research finding as well, with significant implications for teaching and training practices. These issues will be explored in more detail in the Discussion section of this report.

7

Findings

Our findings from this study reveal that student teachers negotiate and navigate a wide range of ideological positions and language practices depending on the contexts in which they find themselves. In the sections below we present the most important and relevant themes and language metaphors that address the research questions. We present these with the hope that they will open up future conversations about strategies for how to support TESOL student teachers and other language practitioners who might benefit from reflecting on the terms they use, as well as the metaphors that help them make meaning out of their communicative practices.

7.1 Language themes

7.1.1 Languages as label terms

The interview questions asked participants to reflect on a series of key terms that they might have come across during their language learning and studies such as L1, L2, first and second language, mother tongue and language itself, with the purpose of understanding how they position their experiences, beliefs and practices. While our participants had a variable degree of familiarity with each of these terms, languages as labels emerged as a theme in itself. Our student teachers talked about and experienced languages as labels that applied to experiences involving multiple levels of interaction and communicative resources in action. For instance, Chad shared how he became aware of the term 'mother tongue':

> Well, mother tongue, well, I could probably go back to primary school or something like that, it's a kind of metaphor that you're familiar with from when you're young that idea of mother tongue and what it means – it's the language that you speak, not even just English – the Glaswegian dialect could be a mother tongue, so that's a term I was familiar with from a young age.

Chad seems to have a broad understanding of what counts as language, referring to both English and the Glaswegian dialect as 'mother tongues'. He recognises that the term was a label that he became aware of early in his education and it was meant to refer to a full experience of living in that language or dialect. Interestingly, Chad calls 'mother tongue' a metaphor that has identified the language that he spoke as a child. In this sense, Chad hints not only to a label but also to a conceptualisation of mother tongue as distinct and identifiable — characteristics that we will return to in our metaphor analysis in the following section.

If for Chad, languages as labels seem to name lived experience, for Duncan, the same theme is quite limiting:

> I'm not sure if I entirely agree with it, but as with everything in life, something needs to be placated on it, and so it's easier to say L1, L2 even if it doesn't bring all the facets into it. But we need to have something to label because we humans need words and while it's an oversimplification, much of teaching is oversimplifying everything.

Seen as a convention, L1, L2 or any other label that identifies a language represents an act of oversimplifying languaging experiences. Duncan justifies these labels under the human drive to use words to make sense of complex experiences. In the act of naming languages, Duncan also identifies a loss because arbitrary labels do not capture all the aspects of what communicative acts encompass. By extension, he also indicates that teaching languages undergoes a similar reductive process whereby a teacher can only cover certain aspects of language(s) but never the full complexity of what languages are.

7.1.2 Language depends on the person you talk to

While our participants admitted to using multiple languages in the classroom and their daily lives, they often preferred one language over another at any one point in time, depending on the person they engaged with. Such an individualised practice was interesting because, as researchers, we hoped that these language uses had the potential to translate into translingual practice. Yet, when our participants attempted to account for their language choices, they justified them by saying that the person they talked to determined them to use one language at a time, in quite discrete ways (also see the next section on language metaphors):

> I've got friends that I speak to in China who are from many different places in the world, so from talking to them I'll usually just speak in English. Usually speak to my girlfriend in English as well. But if I'm speaking to old colleagues or if I'm sending out a message, say it's Chinese New Year, you know you're saying '新年快乐 (xīn nián kuài lè)' then you know there's that kind of, a wall kind of function on WeChat where it's like Facebook and you can post a message and people can like it and reply to it and all that. So for that kinda thing I would write Chinese, but probably most of the time I'm still using English on it, but depending on who I'm talking to I will use Chinese.
>
> (Chad)

While one could make the case that Chad's description of his online practices in fact reflects a dynamic use of all communicative resources that he has in a contextualised manner, Chad understood his practices in slightly different terms. Even when using multiple language resources, he saw these deployed independently to serve quite specific situations and contexts. For New Year's greetings, Chinese, as a language entity on its own, seems to be the appropriate language to use, but, for everything else, English tends to become more prominent.

A similar pattern could be identified in other participants' accounts and practices. For instance, Ying discussed three different online platforms that she is using with friends and acquaintances:

> Interviewer: *So if we talk about the three platforms (Weibo, WeChat and Facebook), in what languages do you communicate on them?*
>
> Ying: *It depends on who I speak to and what I use. If I speak to those people who are not from China I will use English and if they are Chinese I will speak Chinese for them.*

For Ying, the categories are clear: her interactions in Chinese are determined primarily by those who are from China. English seems to be the default language for anyone else who does not speak Chinese and no cross-language practices are mentioned. It is important to note that, even if the researchers would have defined these instances as part of a holistic portrait of a translingual individual, Ying did not explain her experiences in these terms. As we wanted to investigate our participants' perceptions of what each term and practice meant for them, we refrained from adding our own interpretation of Ying's languaging practices. Finding out that language choice is defined by the interlocutor and such practices are not viewed as part of a translingual repertoire of activities was very informative and helped us to better understand our student teachers' beliefs and practices.

7.1.3 Mixing languages happens in private

Given that translanguaging revises boundaries between languages, as seen in the literature review, we were interested in our participants' experiences of using multiple communicative resources dynamically in a wide range of contexts. As the interview data revealed, such experiences were not often discussed. When various communicative resources were drawn upon, these experiences tended to reveal languaging practices that occurred in private or in personal encounters. For instance, Yorhyou explains how she integrates English in Chinese even when she is talking with Chinese peers. Because English words had been acquired in an English-speaking context, she does not translate but weaves English into her Chinese sentences:

> We said, 'We don't know', because we learn these words in the UK so it's really weird to translate into Chinese even when we speak with a Chinese person. And so I think sometimes they are mixed, totally mixed, especially for the personal.

For Yorhyou, the practice of combining language resources represents an act of mixing and it is quite common 'for the personal' level. However, beyond this context, languages maintain their specific contexts of use and tend to be assigned particular situations. Even in the classroom context, 'mixing' is used as a strategy for peer-to-peer interaction and as a disguise tactic for giving the impression of using English in the language class:

Interviewer: *That's really interesting. So you don't speak Mandarin or Cantonese?*

Barbara: *Oh, Mandarin. If the teacher is beside of you we will say Chinglish, if the teacher doesn't come to me we will say Mandarin, yeah.*

Interviewer: *Mandarin. Here?*

Barbara: *Yeah, yeah.*

Interviewer: *OK, good. And why would you use Chinglish if the teacher is around?*

Barbara: *Because the teacher requires us to speak English but we don't know how to speak that word, so we will use Chinglish.*

Although Barbara's example is set in a classroom context, she justifies the use of Chinglish for personal reasons. Whenever she and her Chinese peers need to address topics that they cannot fully express in English, they integrate Chinglish in their exchanges as a way to negotiate meaning and continue conversations. This creative tactic is mentioned as a coping strategy for giving tutors the impression that the students are using English. At the same time, Chinglish is a personal communicative channel among peers from China and, as such, it serves not only the aim of conveying course information but also of linking students though a shared linguistic identity.

7.1.4 Multimodality as a vehicle to learn languages

If 'mixing' languages seemed to be valued at a personal level, the role of multimodality appeared to be a significant component of language learning experiences. Our participants acknowledged that they had multimodal opportunities to learn language(s), ranging from learning via sound, image and body language to using multimodal forms of conveying meaning in online platforms (including memes, emojis, photographs, etc.):

I learned the Japanese after I went to Japan, because when I was in college I was crazy about Japan animations and those TV shows always help me a lot to learn something about Japanese.

(Xini)

Scholarship on translanguaging and translingualism (Wei and Hua, 2013; Martín, Hirsu, Gonzales and Alvarez, 2019) aims at providing a more encompassing definition of what languages are by moving away from languages as definable and bounded systems to the totality of communicative and expressive resources that an individual can draw upon to convey and make meaning. This definition includes multimodality as an integral element of translingual practice. In other words, multimodal forms of communication are not different or separate from constructing sentences in a particular language and need to be taken into account together. Translingual practice means the seamless synergy between all these forms of communication and resources that create meaning at a particular point in time. However, in the interview data, our participants mentioned multimodality as a vehicle conducive to language learning rather than an integral component of languaging itself:

Our teachers will play some very short and easy-to-understand songs for us to listen to and sing along with. But we never had a test for that. Maybe for young students it is a bit difficult for them. And when we go to the high school it is a very important course. If we can't do well in this course, we still don't have a chance to enter the top universities and English teachers always put very heavy tasks for us to learn English. We have memory tests and many homework to do.

(Ying)

Ying associates language learning with command of language itself, as well as language testing. While the use of songs is acceptable for young learners, Ying suggests, such multimodal forms of learning are not suitable for older students who have different expectations and demands. Reflecting on the end goals of her language courses, which relied heavily on complex tasks and homework, Ying does not consider songs or other forms of languaging useful strategies for meeting the needs of passing the language tests. The relationship between language learning practices and strong language performance is not surprising given Ying's Chinese background where learning for the test was at a premium.

7.1.5 Translanguaging is sporadic or happens elsewhere

Our participants, when asked specifically about translanguaging, indicated that the term may refer to accidental or unplanned situations. These moments were not frequently mentioned and, in some cases, our participants indicated that translingual practices happened elsewhere rather than in their immediate environment:

> World English – now this is how I'm interpreting the term, because in China it's a very different English that is used in Glasgow, so this is kind of bridging the gap and then stepping over into China, L2 I would say that Chinese is my second language now, which is my non-native language, showing elements of bilingualism depending on who you're talking to and also there's a lot of English speakers in the … service industries in certain parts of China, so you can say something in Chinese and throw in an English word sometimes and they'll get it, you know.
>
> (Chad)

While talking about his language experiences in different countries, Chad refers to World English as a bridge between contexts. Language use shifts for him depending on where he finds himself located and who his interlocutors are. Although Chad refers to 'elements of bilingualism' to describe those moments when more than one linguistic resource is used for communication, he does not fully embrace the term and, instead, focuses on their accidental nature. Throwing in a few English words while speaking in Chinese is something that happens 'in certain parts' rather than on a regular basis or in daily interactions. Barbara embraces a similar view when she describes the language practices of people in Hong Kong:

> Translingual, maybe, they are some – how to say – mix between the language. Such as people in Hong Kong they will say some Chinese. Most of them speak English but most of them will speak some Chinese between the sentences.

In this case, Barbara does not use the language of translanguaging, although what she describes seems to be a good example of the seamless integration and creative use of multiple language resources. Chinese and English are used together but, for Barbara, they remain quite distinct labels and bounded entities. As we will see in the next section, the difficulty of understanding these episodes as translingual practice is also reflected in the participants' choice of language metaphors that help them make sense of their experiences outside of a translingual orientation.

7.2 Language metaphors

The metaphor analysis revealed the most recurrent metaphors that our participants used to make meaning of their language ideologies and practices. While many of the metaphors were conventional and may therefore not necessarily be perceived as a metaphor by the language user at the time when they shared it with us, the metaphors nonetheless provide insight into our participants' conceptual architecture and belief system (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Figure 1 presents the range of these metaphors, while examples from interview data are provided to illustrate the ways these metaphors manifested in our data.

Figure 1: Language metaphors
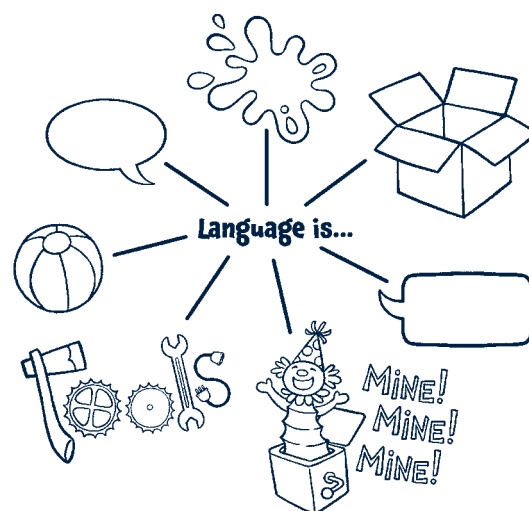
© Elizabeth O, Dulemba, 2019

7.2.1 Language as a tool/object/instrument

One of the most recurrent metaphors was that of languages as tools that revealed how our participants expressed their *use* of languages in different contexts. The association between languages and tools or instruments seemed to be closely connected with references to L1, L2, foreign and first language. The metaphor of the tool revealed the importance of the function and purpose of languages that our participants deploy individually, depending on the situation. The metaphor also uncovered the potential of each language to be used discretely and independently of other language resources:

> Because foreign language for me is a language that I totally don't know, or I just know a little bit of them. But second language maybe I can communicate with people by this language – I can use this language so it could be a second language.
>
> (Barbara)

When I went to university we did one semester course in Spanish. I <u>used a little bit</u> after I was travelling in Spain for a little while so <u>I tried to use as much as I could.</u>

(Chad)

In Barbara's words, a second language enables the users to reach out to others while building communicative links between people. At the same time, in Chad's case, language is not only a tool that a user can put into practice, but also something that can be used incrementally. The little Spanish he learned in a dedicated course enabled him to transfer some of the knowledge gained in that class to everyday practice. In this way, Chad justifies his choice of the term 'second language' by making reference to the *usage* of the term.

7.2.2 Language as a container

Another frequent metaphor that serves similar purposes as the metaphor of the tool/object/instrument is that of language as a container. Many of the activities conducted and shared by our participants are done *in* a language. For instance, while discussing her experiences with languages in her school, Xini remembers that her classes were sometimes conducted in different languages:

Maybe on Monday I will learn geography <u>in Chinese</u> and on Friday we learn it <u>in English</u>.

In this context, Xini seems to conceptualise her languages as separate containers of knowledge. The content in geography would be delivered *in* Chinese and *in* English, depending on the day of the week, as if such a material had a physical consistency and was presented within a particular mould or container. What is particularly interesting here are the attributes that this metaphor entails. Containers are discrete items that are used to separate their contents from the outside. In this context, the timetable and the structure of the school correspond to the wall of the container; each language is partitioned off and is conceptualised as a separate entity.

For some of our participants, the metaphor of the container was applied not only to languages but also to accents. For instance, Duncan notes: 'Plus my mum being half English, I can go into a London accent quite OK.' In this context, the London accent becomes not only a container which one can use as an option for communication, but also a destination, a place that one can inhabit:

It all started with, in high school I had to take a language, and I got my papers in late, so <u>I ended up in German</u> instead of Spanish.

(Connor)

Connor talks about his experience in terms of a container as well. Language classes are understood in this instance as *things* or *places*, in metaphorical terms, that you *end up going into*. It is important to note that Connor's experience is associated with an obligation to take language classes. In other words, language learning was not an option but something imposed that he had to address during his high school experience.

7.2.3 Language as a possession

The individual significance of languages is also expressed in the metaphor of language as a possession. For four of our participants, talking about the languages in use means talking about these linguistic resources as their personal belongings:

I learned French in secondary school. Which is … c'est très interessant et amusant, *and all that. It's a very seductive language, French, so that was something that interested me, but I would say by birth Irish and English are my languages.*

(Duncan)

Although in the middle of his sentence Duncan moves seamlessly from English to French, he presents both Irish and English as *his* languages. These languages are presented as linguistic legacies that he has inherited by birth and is very proud to have. They mark Duncan's rich repertoire and appear to define his multifaceted identity. In the rest of the interviews, Duncan often refers to his Irish and English identities as two important dimensions of who he is.

To take a different example, Xini discusses her first language in terms of a personal possession as well:

First, my first language or mother tongue is Chinese. I use it in my everyday life, and I see myself as a monolingual learner because I don't think I'm so good at speaking English or any other language.

The use of the metaphor of possession in Xini's case is particularly interesting as it is linked to other key word choices and associations that she makes between her languages and the language ideologies that she embraces. Xini acknowledges Chinese as something she possesses because it is her *first* and *mother* tongue. In this instance, Xini does not only refer to *her* language, she also puts it in a context of *use* and within the larger framework of monolingualism. Because Xini lacks confidence in her abilities to be 'good at speaking' English, she does not consider the English language as *hers*. Xini understands monolingualism as having excellent skills in using one language and, although she recognises that she is able to integrate English in the context of her studies, the fact that she is not using this language consistently outside of classes does not give Xini the confidence to describe her language experiences by any other terms.

7.3 Metaphors linked to translanguaging

In this study we were interested in the take-up of and response to translanguaging as a new language ideology, term and practice in our participants' experiences, and consequently we wanted to find out if any metaphors emerged in relation to this term. For instance, based on the literature review presented in the first part of this report, if student teachers were to embrace a translanguaging turn in their thinking and practice, we expected to uncover metaphors that would associate languages with *fluids*, constant *reworkings* of resources and *doings* (i.e. *language as an action verb*). Translanguaging as an approach to language learning and teaching is construed via such metaphors, so we wanted to investigate if these metaphors would make their way into our participants' experiences. Of course, these are not the only possible metaphors that we could use as conceptual foundations for translanguaging, and we were open to any new metaphorical configurations that our participants put forward when sharing their perspectives on translanguaging.

The metaphor of *language as a liquid* appeared only in the case of one of our participants. As Duncan mentioned a few times in his interviews, language is everything and often classroom spaces or lessons narrow the multidimensional capacities that are found through a language:

> *You follow the flow of the rhythms whether that's code-switching or language rhythmic or seismic, I don't know.*

> *Means of communication, by which I would include body language and silence – the language of silence involved. So I guess language is everything, isn't it? There's the language of art, there's the language of academia … I'm just looking for various things around the room. I think language is everywhere and everything – we don't have to understand it, we just have to flow with it.*

Duncan recognises the fluidity with which we use communicative resources and he identifies different kinds of languages, e.g. language of art, body language and language of academia. Unlike previous categorisations where languages were labelled by our participants in relation to territory and identity categories, Duncan's classification is less conventional and more imaginative. It also includes not only the production of words, signs, and artistic expressions, but the role of silence as language.

Because Duncan believes that classifications of any kind can be reductive, his examples of languages in this case do not serve the purpose of identifying different types, but of exemplifying the potential richness of what might be considered language. His examples collectively confirm his perspective that 'language is everything' and any attempt to parse it and label it does not capture the holistic and fluid nature of languaging.

Duncan's view, though, was quite unique among all our participants. Other participants in our group had a hard time understanding the term translanguaging, be it in simple terms or via metaphors. While they had been exposed to the concept, read about and attended lectures on what translanguaging is and how it could be applied in the area of applied linguistics, they could not explain the concept in their own terms. They had difficulties trying to conceptualise and apply the concept to their context. For example, Xini includes in her discussion of her language map the term 'translanguaging', yet, when prompted to explain what she means by the term, she replies, 'Actually I'm still confused about the idea of translanguaging. Is this similar to translation?'

At the same time, later in one of her interviews, Xini does use a new and insightful metaphor, language as a way of being, with great potential for capturing translanguaging principles. Speculating about the meaning of translanguaging, Xini suggests the following explanation:

> Xini: *So it looks like the integration of two different languages or cultures?*

> Interviewer: *Yes, but if you say 'integration of two different cultures' that assumes that the two cultures are separate. Translanguaging says there is no separation. You don't bring one and two and integrate them, they're already there, like this.*

> Xini: *OK, so it means where people all live in the same village around the globe.*

In this instance, the interviewer attempts to help Xini formulate an understanding of the concept by describing fluid relationships between languages. Xini's response associates translanguaging with a way of living and the scale she takes into account is the global village. However, later in her interview, Xini is keen on maintaining a monolingual framework to account for her own beliefs and practices, and she drops any further mentions of translanguaging.

Maja also turns to the metaphor of *language as a way of being* when she shares her experience of learning and using English in the US. At the beginning of the interview, Maja mentions that English is her first language at the moment but her memories of learning English are related to living with and through the language:

> Maja: *I've lived in the States and I've also lived in England – I spent a semester in Brighton studying at the university.*
>
> Interviewer: *And that doesn't make English feel the same as for your pupils?*
>
> Maja: *Maybe to some? I have more personal connection to English than they do.*
>
> Interviewer: *And when you say personal, you mean – personal relationships that led you into the language? Or?*
>
> Maja: *Memories of being in the culture, of experiencing the culture. Being able to go to a stand-up comedy show and understand everything, I think that a lot.*

For Maja, English represents a personal life experience that adds to her life events lived through Swedish. Even when Maja teaches language classes, she is convinced that her students do not engage with language in the same way she does, because they do not have memories of living in that language. Exposure to the English language in a course or language classroom is not enough experience for a language learner to actively live through that language. As Duncan mentions in his interview, you can dream in a different language and that demonstrates an immersive engagement with a language. Notice, though, that Maja's references are very much in relation to notions of English as a self-contained unit, as an identifiable entity rather than an open space for linguistic resources to be used fluidly. While the metaphor of *language as a way of being* might have great potential for moving student teachers into a translingual framework, in our data it only appeared as a way of describing the experiential dimensions of living through languages.

8

Discussion

The themes and language metaphors we have identified in this study have provided us with a complex picture of the ways TESOL student teachers make sense and engage with language terms, ideologies and practices. At the beginning of this project, we raise two main research questions (RQs) and, while analysing our data, we have gained the following insights.

RQ1: To what extent do student teachers take up a translingual turn over the course of their master's TESOL studies and into new learning and teaching environments?

By taking part in this study, our participants were able to reflect on what languages meant for them as learners and future teachers in a variety of contexts (be they daily interactions, academic practices, pedagogical approaches, etc.). This contributed to the development of what García (2017) calls a 'critical multilingual awareness'. While notions of translanguaging and translingual practice were often labelled as 'interesting' approaches to understanding languaging experiences, most of our participants maintained distance vis-à-vis the term. With one exception, the remaining eight participants were uncertain about the potential immediate implications of the term for their practice and thinking about language learning and pedagogy. The awareness of the term did not translate into consistent practical take-up by the end of the study. This finding was quite surprising given that, during the interviews and on WhatsApp, our participants mentioned many instances that we, as researchers, would recognise as representative of dynamic and fluid use of communicative resources. For instance, in one of his messages on the WhatsApp group, Connor shared the following experience:

> Went to a performance that was mostly in English, but some parts were presented in Arabic, then translated, leading to what the performers called 'bilingual laughter' when the Arabic speakers in the audience got the joke before the rest of the audience.

However, such examples were not mentioned consistently and had not been integrated into the wider belief systems that our student teachers seemed to adhere to.

Only one of our participants situated her values and practices within an explicitly monolingual framework. The other participants in our study placed their ideological commitments within a multilingual framework whereby they acknowledged engaging with languages in many ways. Because language experiences have carried our participants from one environment to another (for example, from a monolingual home context to a multilingual UK context), student teachers had to develop the capacity to deploy communicative resources to meet various needs. Nevertheless, the themes and language metaphors framing these experiences tend to maintain boundaries between languages, making our student teachers strategic language users with a high degree of flexibility and awareness of their needs in particular contexts.

RQ2: To what extent do student teachers' conceptual understandings of language, practices and networks change as they consider a translingual turn in their teaching practice?

The time we spent with our participants over the course of this project allowed us to capture some degree of change along the following lines. Our participants became more aware of the multiple frameworks that inform their values, beliefs and practices of language learning and teaching. Discussing the terms at different stages in the study gave them the space to name their experiences and interrogate the terms that they use. They were also able to see that their languaging activities changed depending on the context and the communicative situation, and that an individual doesn't have to be fully 'proficient' in a particular language in order to call themselves a bilingual or multilingual person:

> I've learned more about these terms and it seems like the threshold to be, to count as either bilingual or translingual or multilingual, sorry, the level is not so steep, it's not so much difference, the requirement of level of third language – it's not as high as I thought it would be.

> (Maja)

However, in the case of two of our participants, this realisation was met with a difficult reality when our participants returned to their home countries. The teaching environment they encountered was not conducive to new initiatives and approaches and, for this reason, translanguaging as a pedagogical approach was seen as appropriate for contexts 'elsewhere', rather than in their immediate environment. For instance, reflecting on the difference between the UK and Chinese systems, Yoshi concluded:

> Education in UK and in China is quite different, so some approaches may not be well accepted by Chinese students or schools … I feel that I can't change anything.

Re-entering the Chinese educational system, Yoshi acknowledges that the testing culture in China may limit her abilities to try out new approaches in the high school classroom, whereas at the college level teachers may have a bit more flexibility. In the end, Yoshi seemed quite sceptical about her abilities to apply what she learned in the UK context and any immediate opportunities for making any substantial changes in her teaching beyond what is required in the context of her school.

Overall, the TESOL experience helped our participants to have a clearer picture of their pedagogical and practical options. At the same time, this awareness was often met with a resigned attitude towards change. Our participants still had to address unresolved tensions between what they practised in their daily lives (i.e. a richness of semiotic resources) and what they could do in the classroom. The classroom space seemed to open up to a limited range of pedagogical approaches very much informed by school policies and long-lasting traditions of language learning and teaching that valued grammar, testing and the need to meet certain levels of language competencies and skills. To determine if these attitudes and outcomes will persist in time, we call for longitudinal and wider-scale research that would focus on junior teachers' trajectories across multiple contexts.

9

Ways forward

This study recorded TESOL student teachers' experiences as they progressed through their course and engaged with a range of language ideologies and practices. Particular focus was directed at the participants' understanding and response to the concepts of translanguaging. If a rich scholarly literature has already established the potential and relevance of translanguaging for everyday practice and classroom applications, the current research project aimed to complement this work by showing how participants engage *with* rather than *from within* a translingual framework. Through a thematic and metaphor analysis, we were able to identify a wide range of language metaphors that aligned with complex ways of understanding how individuals learn and teach languages.

As the findings of this study show, translanguaging is quite a difficult concept that junior student teachers need substantial time and practice with. Language metaphors associated with translanguaging are still emerging and their use in practice is yet to be fully realised. In contrast, the most recurrent metaphors that helped our student teachers conceptualise their language practices and beliefs tended to present languages as discrete entities (be they tools, objects, instruments, containers or possessions). While, as many scholars have pointed out, translingual practices can be identified in the most ordinary interactions, for a classroom context translingual practice remains quite a theoretical term that needs to be further unpacked.

As researchers and language teachers on the programme, we have introduced our student teachers to new pedagogical frameworks and language ideologies with the hope that these would carry over into the workplace beyond the completion of the master's programme. We were happy to see that our interventions have raised our participants' awareness of the multiple ideologies and metaphors that they inhabit. At the same time, we realised how important it is for us to train future teachers on how to deploy their newly acquired knowledge into new contexts. As our participants entered the job market,

even during a short period of time (less than six months since graduation), they seemed to approach it with caution, trying to understand expectations and to meet local guidelines. Our participants did not feel ready to implement any changes or align their beliefs with their classroom practices beyond what was expected of them. The temporary nature of some of their teaching jobs and their junior status left them with unresolved tensions between ideological commitments and practices regarding language learning and teaching in the classroom and beyond.

Based on our findings, we would like to propose the following considerations for future practice to better support language teachers and practitioners.

- Use language metaphors strategically to help teachers and practitioners understand their positions, beliefs and practices vis-à-vis language(s).

- Invite teachers and practitioners to reflect on the relationships between language ideologies and pedagogies (e.g. how do my beliefs about language learning align with the ways I am using my own language resources? How do I deploy communicative resources in the classroom and how do these match my own beliefs about language learning?).

- Invite teachers and practitioners to put forward their own language metaphors to show how they understand the concept of translanguaging. (This exercise may illustrate misunderstandings or new ways of conceptualising translanguaging.)

- Help teachers and practitioners recognise, understand and apply language metaphors to their practice. (For example, how can we teach languages if we were to consider them as fluids rather than systems of grammar rules or discrete objects that we possess?)

- Provide teachers with various teaching scenarios so they can be better prepared to navigate unpredictable and sometimes disempowering professional environments.

Translanguaging has gained its critical theoretical space quite firmly and its relevance for language users has been demonstrated in many contexts. However, if translanguaging is to stand as a language ideology of *fluid* relationships between language users, of *dynamic* practices that move beyond the word and the print mode, and as *a way of being*, the term calls for its teachers and practitioners to inhabit new metaphorical spaces. As Deroo and Ponzio (2019: 16) note, exposure to translanguaging alone is not enough to revise and transform deep-seated biases and/or official discourses which may go against it. Those who are entering the profession need time to find their place vis-à-vis the term; they need support to (re)negotiate language beliefs, values and practices, and guidance on how to find safe and secure spaces where they can implement activities that align with translingual principles. This is the work that we advocate for in the training of student teachers and in discussions with senior practitioners who seek to explore new ways of *languaging*. The success of a translingual turn is in the hands of those who will carry it forward in their classrooms, daily activities, and the metaphors they employ to make sense of their practices.

References

Allard, EC (2017) Re-examining teacher translanguaging: An ecological perspective. *Bilingual Research Journal* 40/2: 116–130. DOI: 10.1080/15235882.2017.1306597

Braun, V & Clarke, V (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3/2: 77–101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Canagarajah, S (2013) *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations.* London: Routledge.

deBot, K, Lowie, W, Thorne, SL & Verspoor, M (2013) 'Dynamic Systems Theory as a Theory of Second Language Development', in Mayo, M, Gutierrez-Mangado, M & Adrián, M (eds) *Contemporary Approaches to Second Language Acquisition.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 199–220.

Deroo, MR & Ponzio, C (2019) Confronting ideologies: A discourse analysis of in-service teachers' translanguaging stance through an ecological lens. *Bilingual Research Journal.* DOI: 10.1080/15235882.2019.1589604

Dovchin, S & Lee, JW (2019) Introduction to special issue: 'the ordinariness of translinguistics'. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 16/2: 105–111. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2019.1575831

García, O (2017) 'Critical multilingual awareness and teacher education', in Cenoz, J, Gorter, D & May, S (eds) *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (third ed). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing: 263–280.

García, O & Wei, L (2014) *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gilyard, K (2016) The rhetoric of translingualism. *College English* 78/3: 284–289.

Holdway, J & Hitchcock, CH (2018) Exploring ideological becoming in professional teachers of multilingual learners: Perspectives on translanguaging in the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 75: 60–70.

Horner, B, Lu, M, Royster, JJ & Trimbur, J (2011) Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach. *College English* 73/3: 303–21.

Lakoff, G & Johnson, M (1980) *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee, JW & Jenks, C (2016) Doing Translingual Dispositions. *College Composition and Communication* 68/2: 317–344.

Leung, C & Valdés, G (2019) Translanguaging and the Transdisciplinary Framework for Language Teaching and Learning in a Multilingual World. *The Modern Language Journal* 103/2. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12568

Lu, M & Horner, B (2013) Translingual Literacy, Language Difference, and Matters of Agency. *College English* 75/6: 582–607.

Lundberg, A (2019) Teachers' beliefs about multilingualism: Findings from Q method research. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 20/3: 266–283. DOI:10.1080/14664208.2018.1495373

Maguire, M & Delahunt, B (2017) Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J* 8/3: 3,351–3,354.

Martín, C, Hirsu, L, Gonzales, L & Alvarez, S (2019) Pedagogies of Digital Composing through a Translingual Approach. *Computers and Composition* 52: 142–157.

Pacheco, MB, Kang, H & Hurd, E (2019) Scaffolds, signs, and bridges: Language ideologies and translanguaging in student-teaching experiences. *Bilingual Research Journal.* DOI: 10.1080/15235882.2019.1596179

Poza, L (2017) Translanguaging: Definitions, implications, and further needs in burgeoning inquiry. *Berkeley Review of Education* 6/2:101–128.

Pragglejaz Group (2007) MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically Used Words in Discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol* 22/1: 1–39.

Ungerer, F & Schmid, HJ (2006) *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics.* London: Routledge.

Vogel, S & García, O (2017) 'Translanguaging', in Noblit, G & Moll, L (eds) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wei, L (2018) Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language. *Applied Linguistics* 39/1: 9–30.

Wei, L & Hua, Z (2013) Translanguaging Identities and Ideologies: Creating Transnational Space Through Flexible Multilingual Practices Amongst Chinese University Students in the UK. *Applied Linguistics* 34/5: 516–535. DOI:1 0.1093/applin/amt022

Wiese, H, Mayr, K, Krmer, P, Seeger, P, Müller, H-G & Mezger, V (2017) Changing teachers' attitudes towards linguistic diversity: Effects of an anti-bias programme. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 27/1: 198–220. DOI: 10.1111/ijal.2017.27.issue-1
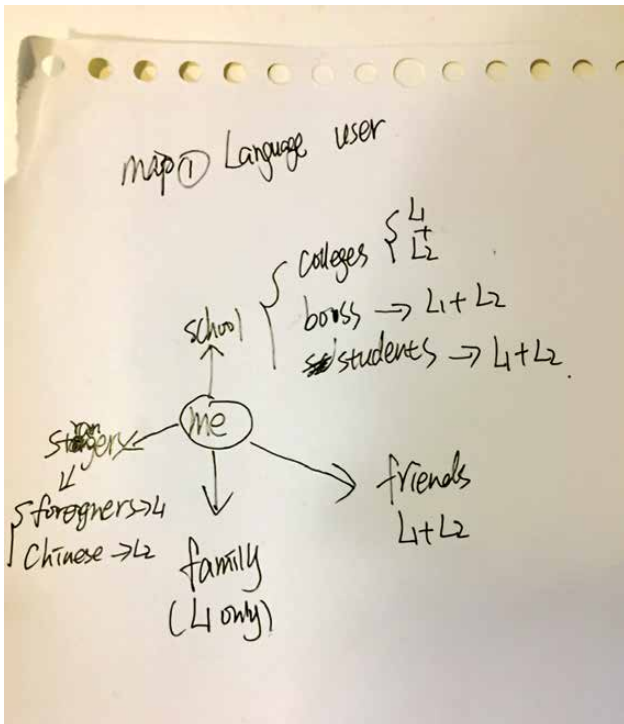
Appendix

Prompt

L1, L2, native language, non-native language, foreign language, first language, second language (e.g. ESL), additional language, world English, [qualifier] English (e.g. Chinglish or Indian English), mother tongue, bilingualism, monolingualism, translingualism, dialect, multilingualism

Create a map or drawing of yourself as a language user. You can use the words above to describe the way you use languages or you can draw yourself using languages in different contexts. Your map/drawing can contain words, images or any other symbols, signs and/or markings. You can be as creative as you want.

Example of language map

© Lavinia Hirsu, 2019