

Understanding Multi-Competence and Translanguaging.

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**Future of English Language
Teaching Conference** **ONLINE**



Agenda

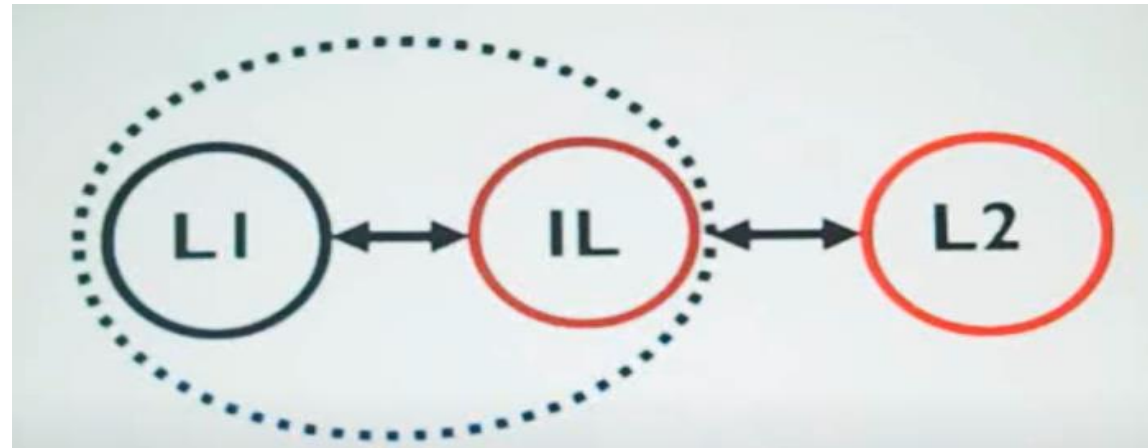
- Multi- Competence
- How MC reconceptualises the concept of language?
- Redefining Language
- Translanguaging
- TL in multilingual classroom
- Role of teachers in TL classroom

Defining multi-competence

- The term “**multi-competence**” was first coined by Vivian Cook.
- Multi-competence
 - is the knowledge of two (or more) languages in one mind
 - is the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language



Multi-competence----->





Multi-competence

- is not a theory or model of second language acquisition but rather a **perspective, or a way of looking** at acquisition and use of multiple languages.
- is a dynamic perspective that accounts for the natural ebb and flow of a person's native language as well as other languages in various stages of development. (Scott 2010).

What does “bilingual” mean?

There are at least 37 definitions of “bilingual”



Several definitions

- Balanced bilingual = mastery of two languages is roughly equivalent
- Covert bilingual = someone who hides knowledge of another language because of an attitudinal disposition
- Dominant bilingual = greater proficiency in one of the two languages
- Early bilingual = someone who acquired both languages in childhood
- Late bilingual = someone who became bilingual later than childhood
- Receptive bilingual = someone who understands but does not read or write
- Secondary bilingual = someone whose second language has been added to a first via instruction

Demystifying bilingualism

No one has the same level or same type of proficiency in two or more languages.



ich spreche
ich spreche

yo hablo

Rethinking bilingualism

Being bilingual means being able to

-use a language other than one's native language (L1) at **any level** for any purpose.
-exploit **whatever linguistic resources** one has for real-life purposes, such as reporting symptoms to a doctor, negotiating a contract, or reading a poem.
-stand **between** two languages (L1 and L2), even when apparently only using one
- have the resources of two languages (L1 and L2) **readily** available whenever needed.

(Taken from Cook, 2002).

Bilingual people....

- read a second language
- Write a second language
- Speak a second language



To varying degrees

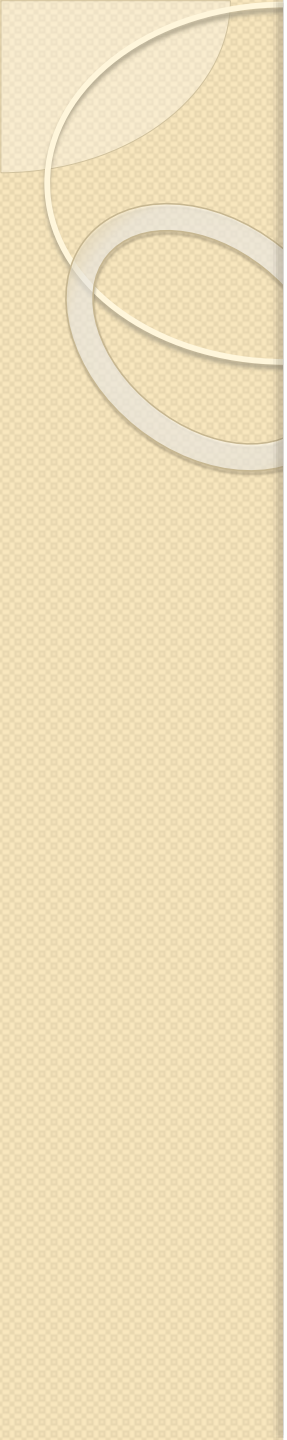
Bilingualism is not a state, but a process; not a goal but a continuum

Reconceptualizing the concept of language

1. **Is language a separate and discrete module** in the human mind in relation to other cognitive system such as memory, attention, emotion etc.?
2. If the multi-competent mind is a whole, **where**, if at all, does it divide into different languages?
3. If the human mind does not divide different languages or between language and other cognitive systems, should bilingualism and multilingualism research be **focused on how** the language users use the multiple linguistic and cognitive resources available in social interaction rather than which and how many languages they know and use?

Consequences of MC perspective

- The MC concept urges us to rethink the ‘Modularity of Mind’ (MOM) theory (Fodor 1983).
- In terms of multilingual language users, there is increasing evidence that their **language experience** and **cognitive capacity** are closely **interconnected and mutually beneficial**.
- Language, from the MC perspective then, is a **multisensory and multimodal semiotic system** interconnected with other identifiable but inseparable cognitive systems.
- The MC perspective asks us to explore the human mind as a **holistic** multi-competence, and **not to count** the number of languages.

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- Though monolingual perspective on SLA is repeatedly critiqued by the applied linguistics, in practice, the non-native language learner is often put in a position where he or she is expected to be linguistically identical to native speakers.
 - challenging this, MC perspective argues that, **one is forever a language learner**, because no one could ever grasp a language, any language, to the fullest.

Redefining language

- labelling of languages is largely arbitrary and can be politically and ideologically charged.
- Language is a **multisensory and multimodal** resource that human beings use **in conjunction** with other **cognitive and semiotic** resources for thinking and for communicating thought.

New set of questions to be asked in MC perspective

- Does a developing language user become aware of the different labels, usage norms and structural differences, and what are the consequences of that awareness, or the lack of it, on language processing?
- How does a developing language user create new structures and convey meaning with limited resources?
- How does a multi-competent language user coordinate multiple semiotic resources and cognitive systems to construct and convey meaning?
- How do the roles of different linguistic and non-linguistic resources in language production and comprehension change over time

From Multi-competence to Translanguaging

- Cook's conception of [multicompetence](#), 'knowledge of two or more languages in the same mind,' questioned both the treatment of languages as two separate entities as well as the competence of bilinguals as a sum total of their competence in two separate languages.
- Along with it, Grosjean (1989) argued for a ['wholistic'](#) view on bilingual repertoire, which is evident in bilinguals' communications such as code-switching, translation etc. It questioned native speaker proficiency as a measure to assess bilinguals' competence.
- ['Dynamic systems theory'](#) proposed by Herdina & Jessner (2002), and Vespucci and Lowie (2007) took a new turn in approaching multilingual repertoire. They advocated a fluidity of languages in mental organization rather than an overlap of CUP. According to this model, Multilingual repertoire is non-linear and reversible.
- The latest formulation of bilingual pedagogy was postulated by **Garcia** (2009). It accepts translanguaging as [dynamic pedagogy](#) for bi/multilinguals

Understanding Translanguaging

- The term "translanguaging" was coined in the 1980s by **Cen Williams** (applied in Welsh as *trawsieithu*) in his unpublished thesis titled “*An Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Methods in the Context of Bilingual Secondary Education.*”
- They came up with the term ‘trawsieithu’ to describe reading or hearing input in one language (e.g. English) and writing or speaking about it in another (e.g. Welsh, or vice versa).
- The term was translated into English (and popularised) as ‘translanguaging’ by his supervisor **Colin Baker**.
- 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 **maximize communicative potential**. Ofelia García (2009: 140)

Understanding Translanguaging

- we communicate using language
- What is it to communicate? It means we need to be understood by the listener.
- Key question: what do we do to in order to be understood? Anything like use words, phrases, sentences, smile, use gestures, expression. (it means we are using any part of the semiotic system we have)
- Example by Nicholas and Starks (2014) 'I (heart sign in red) NY' would be read as 'I love New York' rather than 'I heart New York'

Translanguaging pedagogy

- Translanguaging pedagogy challenges what Jim Cummins (2008) called the ‘two solitudes’ approach to bilingualism, in which languages were kept strictly separate.

THE SEPARATE
UNDERLYING PROFICIENCY
(SUP) MODEL OF
BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY



Figure 1.
The Separate Underlying Proficiency Model

THE COMMON
UNDERLYING PROFICIENCY
(CUP) MODEL OF
BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY

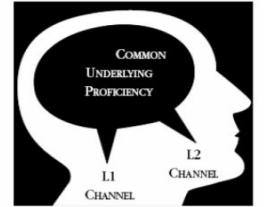
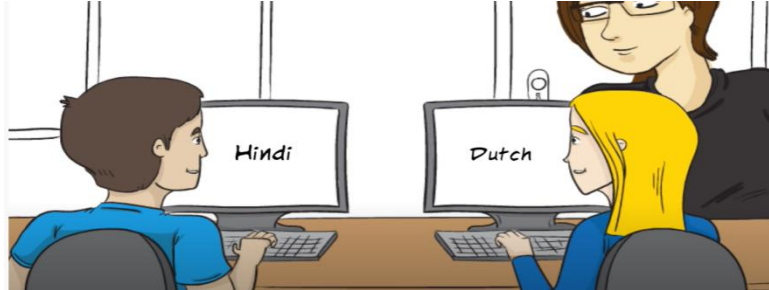
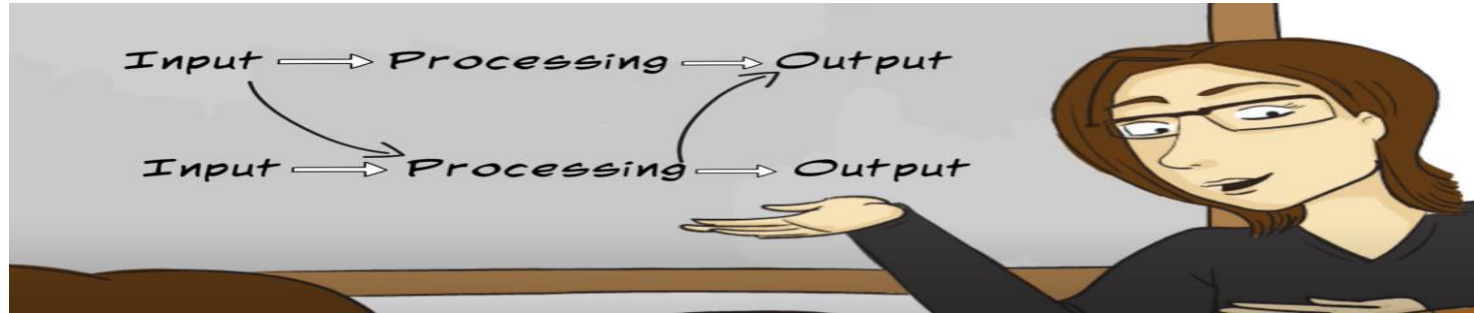


Figure 2.
The Common Underlying
Proficiency Model

- It sees languages as a *property of the community*.
- This separates the languages of the classroom community and home language.
- But Translanguaging is a Dynamic Bilingual Pedagogy, which uses entire linguistic repertoire of the learners to negotiate for meaning (Garcia, 2009). Translanguaging encourages systematic use of learners’ mother tongue in the pedagogy and rejects all kinds of monolingual bias that are prevalent.

How is TL integrated in classroom



Role of teachers in TL classroom

- Teachers must model linguistic curiosity and metalinguistic awareness (an ability to think about language and structure objectively.) to their students.
- Teachers must include translanguaging text in the curriculum (NEP 2020)

Take away points from TL

- If students can create comprehensible output, unconcerned about grammatical mistakes, and free to use their first language, that is sufficient. Here the goal is to get students into the game into the beautiful linguistic struggle that is needed to learn language.
- By allowing students to use their own languages in academic work, students will synthesise all the cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge they bring to class.
- Language is not just set of rules. It has context attached.
- This context is understood in a learning environment created by teacher in classroom who commonly uses mother tongue and therefore TL comes in.
- Supports deeper and more varied understanding of the studied theme
- Supports the development of the weaker language and facilitates connections between home and school
- Brings together language users of different levels

How is TL different from code switching?

- Code switching questions why there are different boxes in our brain.
- It human tendency that we form boxes for everything in brain

Example 1. when I say “ there was a time when. . . . “

Example 2. “ how many languages do you know?”

From Cummins Model it is clear that we have linguistic interdependence and L1 has inescapable influence on L2. So it is completely ok to switch languages.

Now what is TL?

Instead of looking at people who know two languages, consider them as “**languagers**” who can move from a unified set of linguistic features. Therefore no more boxes.

Code switching: There are boxes and each box is for each language.

These activate and deactivate when we speak different languages.

Translanguaging: no boxes at all. It is “**languager is languaging**”.

How to evaluate TL practices?

- **Peer evaluation** is the key.
- The main aim is “**Performative competence**” (how learners communicate rather than what they communicate) (cannagarajah 2013).
- Learners should be evaluated based on their **performance**.
- If peer can understand what his friend is trying to communicate using two languages, it means that friend performed well

Pedagogical implications

- ❖ Translanguaging strategies in pedagogy transforms traditional ideas of language separation. It implies **softening of language boundaries**. This will enable teachers to use resources from different languages to construct the pedagogical practices which are effective for learners meaning-making processes.
- ❖ **Structured and systematic use** of translanguaging strategies increase the efficiency of classroom teaching practices in Multilingual classroom contexts.
- ❖ **L1 can be used as a scaffolding tool** for instructions, assessments and collaborative learning tasks, which can increase the cognitive and academic input in the instructional context, converting it into a natural set for learning.

Multi-competence and Translanguaging

- Translanguaging is the dynamic process whereby multilingual language users mediate complex social and cognitive activities through strategic employment of multiple semiotic resources to act, to know and to be (Garcia and Li Wei 2014).
- In line with the MC perspective, Translanguaging emphasises the interconnectedness between the traditionally and conventionally understood languages and other human communication systems.

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Special Thanks

Chelsy selvan

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