



Editorial

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Introduction to the special issue on translanguaging in the age of mobility

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This special issue offers different perspectives on translanguaging in an age of increased and shifting modes of mobility in diverse European contexts. Linguistic diversity has long been at the heart of European Union policies (e.g., Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union 2012); however, the surge of migration in Europe in recent years has resulted in new opportunities and challenges across public institutions, including schools as well as healthcare, the legal system, immigration services, and workplaces. Changing mobility patterns and increasing digitalization, including new patterns of communication that involve diverse languages and modalities, have impacted on people's lives. Within increasingly normalized multilingual practices in the European context, with the “blurring [of] the lines between languages and nations” (Choudhury 2017: 109), the notion of translanguaging offers a relevant perspective for understanding the linguistic, semiotic, and sociocultural aspects of ever-changing realities, thus making the studies in this issue timely. The aim of this special issue is to illuminate how a translanguaging lens can be used to understand language practices in different European settings characterized by mobility. In this introduction, we provide a short overview of the concepts of *translanguaging* and *mobility*, before briefly exploring their intersections in the contributions to this special issue.

The concept of *translanguaging* is firmly established as theory and pedagogy among both scholars and practitioners in contexts within bilingual education and multilingual learning settings (e.g., García 2009; Juvonen and Källkvist 2021; Lewis et al. 2012a, 2012b; Paulsrud et al. 2017). As a theory, translanguaging offers a means “to dismantle named language categories and counters ideologies that position particular languages as superior to others and the language practices

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of monolinguals as superior to those who are said to speak with linguistic resources that go beyond the strict boundaries of named languages” (Vogel and García 2017: 6). Focusing on pedagogical translanguaging, researchers have highlighted the approaches that involve and develop the multilingual repertoires of students (and teachers) in different educational contexts (Cenoz 2017; García and Kleyn 2016; Mazak and Carroll 2017), thus creating spaces where students can acquire and demonstrate knowledge (Khote and Tian 2019) in which all linguistic resources are promoted as legitimate for learning (García et al. 2017; Svensson 2021).

As with similar notions such as *plurilingualism* (García 2009; see also García and Otheguy 2019) and *polylingualism* (Jørgensen 2008), translanguaging is part of a multilingual turn, with a critical view of monolingual ideologies (Conteh and Meier 2014; May 2014). By challenging monolingual norms based on an understanding of languages as separate, in favor of a holistic understanding of languaging based on the experiences of the speakers, “[t]ranslanguaging brings into focus *practice*, that is, what people do with their linguistic and semiotic repertoires, rather than isolated competences in named languages” (Paulsrud and Rosén 2019: 3, original emphasis). As such, research on practices outside the classroom has increasingly included translanguaging as a theoretical perspective for understanding languaging in diverse settings (e.g., Creese and Blackledge 2019; Mazzaferro 2018) with a focus on understanding fluid linguistic boundaries (c.f. Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg 2018). Studies, for example, on translanguaging spaces in the marketplace (Zhu et al. 2017), communication in sports activities in the multicultural inner-city (Callaghan et al. 2017), and a child’s perspectives on a multilingual family language policy (Paulsrud and Straszer 2018), have all revealed the potential that a translanguaging lens has to help us decipher complex linguistic situations.

Criticism toward a monolingual bias and the emergence of new concepts that embrace a more dynamic understanding of language use have often been linked to mobility and migration in society (e.g., Blommaert and Rampton 2016). Whereas migration refers to human mobility (forced or voluntary) the term *mobility* can be applied to all kinds of movement (Canagarajah 2017), including that of capital, information, and ideas. As Canagarajah (2017: 34) further argues, mobility implies not only human movements between countries and geographical areas, but also “the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space”. These cross-border flows of people, texts and ideas, and ties between languages and specific spaces and places are fluid (Blommaert 2010).

People who moved in mobility flows in the late 1800s and early 1900s cut their ties to their previous social relations and homeland culture (e.g., Basch et al. 1994). However, when people today move from one country to another, they

create networks, activities and patterns of life that encompass both or often more than two societies (e.g., Canagarajah 2017). Thus, they become *transmigrant* as “immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – that span borders” (Basch et al. 1994: 7; see also Faist 2013). Their changing mobility patterns together with increasing digitalization result in new experiences in human communication and encounters with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In transitional life, the role of language becomes more significant as people both continue to have contact with their spaces of origin as well as the people that inhabit those spaces (Straszner et al. 2020). At the same time, different contacts and novel types of interactions are created in the new locations, in the diaspora (e.g., Darvishpour and Westin 2015; Faist et al. 2013). As such, patterns of mobility affect our understanding of languaging as innovative communicative practices are made visible (Canagarajah 2017).

This special issue offers new insights on translanguaging in the age of mobility through different approaches to translanguaging, different methodologies, different named languages, and different language policies, ideologies, and practices, based on both ephemeral and long-lasting processes in Europe. In their study on professional spoken interaction, **Khalin, Keevallik, Söderlundh, and Weidner** explore how workers from different European countries make use of their varied linguistic resources on site. They reveal how these resources are mobilized together with embodied resources for meaning-making in the social space the workers construct shuttling between (or beyond) different linguistic structures. **Taibi and Badwan**, in turn, focus on the impact of spatial, temporal, and virtual mobility in their study of an academic sojourner languaging offline and online. Spotlighting the notion of chronotopic translanguaging, their study shows how mobile individuals may be affected by fluid interactions across time and space. Several studies in this issue focus on how increased and shifting patterns of mobility affects educational practices, with diverse settings from the preschool level to the higher education level represented. In **Duarte and Günther von der Meij**'s study, the authors present a transition program in Dutch higher education for highly skilled refugees, showing how teachers' translanguaging practices in this program have specifically developed to make use of students' multilingual repertoires. Engaging in language comparisons and raising language awareness, the teachers attempt to create ways to encourage students' multilingualism in this specifically Dutch-language environment. **Carbonara** presents a study on the implications of professional development for preschool teachers in an Italian preschool context, illustrating how a translanguaging pedagogy has affected their understanding of language ideologies and their own agency. She also highlights the transformative power of translanguaging for the immigrant minority children

and their families in the preschool. **Norlund Shaswar** explores the concept of *translanguaging pedagogy* in relation to the articulated and embodied language norms in teacher talk and practice in a Swedish as a second language classroom for adult immigrants, revealing both challenges and opportunities. **Wedin** shows how students' varied linguistic resources are used – or not – in a Language Introduction Programme for recently arrived students in an upper secondary school in Sweden, exploring the conflicted ideologies revealed in the schoolscape. These studies illustrate different educational responses to an increased mobility in different European contexts and how a translanguaging lens may be used to illuminate the *de facto* language use in these contexts. The studies also raise questions regarding the potential of such teaching approaches to create spaces for creative and dynamic languaging that can empower students, as well as challenge and transform linguistic norms in education (see also Jaspers 2018).

The studies presented in this special issue contribute to our understanding of the multifaceted nature of translanguaging as a concept in contexts characterized by mobility, revealing how language resources and repertoires are acknowledged and put into use (or not) in both physical and digital spaces. When we editors set out on the journey to compile this collection, little could we know of the uncertainties that would appear due to the pandemic. This ongoing pandemic, with its violent outbreak in early 2020 in Europe as well as globally, has made the changeable nature of mobility visible – and made immobility nearly normalized (Blommaert 2021). The impact of borders on the flows of people as well as goods was made evident as conditions for mobility changed radically almost overnight. The research that is presented here is mainly conducted before the global pandemic emerged, although limitations and changed forms of data collection were necessitated in some studies. The pandemic is likely to continue to affect patterns of mobility, and in turn our understandings of national borders, human social relations, and political and economic situations. This rapid change from extreme mobility to mobility restrictions will also affect people's languaging, their social lives, and communicative conditions, perhaps inducing a new twist on the multilingual turn that is already foreshadowed in recent research on (im)mobilities and language practices (De Fina and Mazzaferro 2021). As Blommaert (2021: 271) argued, we will need to acknowledge “the relationship between mobility-as-possibility and immobility-as-impossibility as twins” in a “sociolinguistics of mobility”. His call to reflect on the complexities of (im)mobilities resonates in this collection of studies that have set out to explore what people are really doing with their languages.

As Mazzaferro notes in his commentary in this issue, mobility is a well-established concept in the field of applied linguistics and has been studied in relation to circulation of language resources, linguistic repertoires, and

practices – thus making translanguaging a useful complementary concept. While this special issue provides a timely exploration of the intersection and the complex nexus between translanguaging and mobility in a European context, we envision further studies with new questions on translanguaging in the age of (im)mobility globally.

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