



[← BACK TO SHAPED\(HTTPS://WWW.HMHCO.COM/BLOG\)](https://www.hmhco.com/blog)



What Is Translanguaging in the Classroom?

October 03, 2017

Drs. Yvonne and David Freeman

Authors, On Our Way to English, Professors Emeriti, University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley ([/people/yvonne-and-david-freeman](https://people.yvonne-and-david-freeman))

Imagine being a student in a new country where you only speak a few words in the new language. You go to school, and your teacher is teaching about the water cycle. Even though you don't understand the teacher, you know what the topic is because of the labeled diagram on the board, so you use what you already know about the water cycle, information you learned in your home language, to make sense of the instruction in the new language.

 [TWEET](#)

 [SHARE](#)

 [PIN](#)

 [CONNECT](#)

Definition of Translanguaging

[Sign In](#)

[Solutions](#) What you are doing is *translanguaging*

[Cart](#) 0



[Support](#) (García & Wei, 2014)



(<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15235882.2014.965361>);

[Creese & Blackledge, 2010](#)

(<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/26c0/32139c250cd9e9a3ed733c5c57a55>;

You are using all your linguistic and cognitive resources to make sense of the academic content being delivered in a language you are just starting to learn. You are what is now called an emergent bilingual (García, 2009 (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19313152.2011.539491>)).

You are becoming bilingual. As you learn a new language, you are not forgetting what you already learned in your home language; rather, you are leveraging it to learn the target language. And if your home language and the new language are related, you might even recognize some words, especially academic words with a Latin base like *precipitation* and *evaporation*.

Translanguaging is a normal practice in bilingual communities, and educators are beginning to realize that it should also be a strategy teachers can use to help students draw on all their linguistic resources as they read, write, and discuss academic subjects in a new language. A student's home language can serve as a scaffold in the process of acquiring additional languages and a scaffold for learning academic content in the new language.

But Isn't Translanguaging Just Code Switching?

[Sign In](#)

[Solutions](#)

[Cart](#) 0



[Support](#) Linguists have used the term *code switching*



to describe the process of moving from one language (or linguistic code) to another. Code switching was often seen as a weakness, a lack of proficiency in a language. As a result, educators were encouraged to limit all classroom communication to English, because the commonly held belief was that more English instruction would lead to more rapid English acquisition.

However, research in sociolinguistics and neurolinguistics has shown that bilinguals do not have two separate languages ([Grosjean, 2010](#)

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13670050.2010.538192?journalCode=rbeb20>); [Bialystok, 2011](#)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4341987/>)).

Instead, they have what is now referred to as one linguistic repertoire that consists of features of the languages they speak.

Bilinguals are not simply two monolinguals in one person. Rather, they are individuals whose language includes features (phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic) of all the languages they speak. Effective instruction involves using strategies to draw on all the language resources every student has.

holistic view of bilinguals. This view

[Sign In](#)

[Solutions](#)

recognizes that bilinguals have just one

language system, not two or more, and that

[Cart](#) 0

[Support](#)

effective instructional practices. Finding ways to

help students draw on all their linguistic

resources, their full repertoire, to learn

academic content in a new language. While

students do need solid and extended

instruction in English to acquire English,

strategic use of their home language can

accelerate both their acquisition of English

and their understanding of math, science,

social studies, and language arts being

taught in the new language.

What Are Some Effective Translanguaging Strategies?

Some educators have thought that

translanguaging is like translating. In some

classes, bilingual teachers have tried to help

their emergent bilingual students learn

academic subjects by translating everything

they say. This concurrent translation,

however, does not help students. There

simply isn't time to translate everything that

should be taught, and even if there was

enough time, students would tune out the

English and just wait for the translation into

their new language. They wouldn't acquire

much English, and they wouldn't learn much

academic content either.

emergent bilinguals' home languages

without direct translation of the content.

[Solutions](#)

[Support](#)

Research has shown how good teachers, whether they are bilingual teachers, English

as a second language (ESL) teachers, or

mainstream teachers with emergent

bilinguals in their classes, find ways to help all

their students use their full linguistic resources

as they read, write, and discuss academic

subjects ([García et al., 2013](#)

([\[NYSIEB-Framework-for-EB-with-Low-Home-\]\(#\)](http://www.nysieb.ws.gc.cuny.edu/files/2013/05/CUNY-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

[Literacy-Spring-2013-Final-Version-05-08-](#)

[13.pdf](#)); [García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer,](#)

[2017](#)

(<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09500782.2016.1255224>)).

[Sign In](#)

[Cart](#) 0



HMH

HMH | English 3D™
Provide targeted academic language support to multilingual learners.
[LEARN MORE](#)

(</programs/english-3d>)

A Translanguaging Example: How It Looks in Class

In a math class with students from six different language backgrounds, the teacher was teaching students how to determine the volume of different three-dimensional figures. Students kept a journal in their home language or in English to answer the questions “What is volume?” and “How do we determine volume in a figure?”

The teacher began by reviewing some basic math vocabulary: *volume*, *cone*, *prism*, and *cylinder*. She held up various objects and asked students, "What is this figure?" and "What are some examples of these figures in real life?" For each figure, she asked students with different home languages how to say the word in their own language and to write the word on the board. In some cases, the students recognized that the word in their language was a cognate or an English word. For example, the Spanish words *cono* and *cilinder* are cognates of the English terms *cone* and *cylinder*.

As students solved problems to find the volume of different figures, they sat in same-home-language groups. They were told that they could use their home language or English as they discussed how to solve the problems. They also had access to electronic translation resources they could use to help understand the problems. When they were finished, each group reported in English how they had solved the problem, and they wrote down their solution in English.

To support her emerging bilinguals in this exercise, the teacher didn't speak all the home languages of her students, but helped them learn important math concepts and to acquire academic English by using these effective translanguageing strategies.

1. She asked students to share the name of the figures in their home language. She had them find cognates where possible; in some cases, the written language was very different but the sounds were similar.

Solutions

Support

Sign In

Cart 0

HMH



HMH Support is here to help you get back to school right. **Get started** (<https://support.hmhco.com/s/>)

2. She provided students with multilingual resources to support their work.

3. She placed them in same home-language groups to discuss problems using their home language, English, or both.

4. She allowed students to make journal entries in their home language or in English.

Solutions

Support

Sign In

Cart 0



As this translanguaging example shows, translanguaging strategies designed to draw on students' full linguistic repertoires require careful planning by the teacher. She doesn't simply translate. Instead, she finds ways for her students to use all their cognitive and linguistic resources to learn academic English and academic content in English. At the same time, she recognizes and builds on their bilingual identities. As a result, her students are engaged and fully involved in her math class.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of HMH.

[Professional Learning \(/blog?tags=professional-learning\)](/blog?tags=professional-learning)

[Literacy \(/blog?tags=literacy\)](/blog?tags=literacy)

[English Learners \(/blog?tags=english-learners\)](/blog?tags=english-learners)

Be the first to read the latest from *Shaped*.

**SUBSCRIBE TO SHAPED
([HTTPS://LEARNING.HMHCO.COM/SUBSCRIBE-TO-SHAPED](https://learning.hmhco.com/subscribe-to-shaped))**

[Solutions](#)



Teaching Fact vs. Opinion: Tips, Activities, and Resources

Journalist and educator Esther Wojcicki provides tips, resources, and activities to help students differentiate between fact and opinion in an era where misinformation is prevalent.

Esther Wojcicki

Journalist and Teacher; Founder, Palo Alto High Media Arts Program

October 08, 2021

[.https://www.hmhco.com/blog/teaching-fact-versus-opinion](https://www.hmhco.com/blog/teaching-fact-versus-opinion)

What is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in Education? Insights and Resources for K-12 Educators

Discover what research says about the importance of SEL and how best to improve its integration in schools.

Jordan Friedman

Shaped Editor

October 04, 2021

[.https://www.hmhco.com/blog/what-is-social-emotional-learning-insights-and-resources-for-teachers](https://www.hmhco.com/blog/what-is-social-emotional-learning-insights-and-resources-for-teachers)

HMH Support is here to help you get back to school right. [Get started \(https://support.hmhco.com/s/\)](https://support.hmhco.com/s/)
[About HMH \(https://www.hmhco.com/about-us\)](https://www.hmhco.com/about-us)

[Research \(https://www.hmhco.com/research\)](https://www.hmhco.com/research)

[Blog \(https://www.hmhco.com/blog\)](https://www.hmhco.com/blog)

[Events & Webinars \(https://www.hmhco.com/events-webinars\)](https://www.hmhco.com/events-webinars)

[Homeschool \(https://www.hmhco.com/classroom-solutions/homeschool\)](https://www.hmhco.com/classroom-solutions/homeschool)

[International \(https://www.hmhco.com/hmh-international\)](https://www.hmhco.com/hmh-international)



Get the latest from HMH



Houghton Mifflin Harcourt® (L)



[_ \(https://www.twitter.com/HMHCo\)](https://www.twitter.com/HMHCo)



[_ \(https://www.facebook.com/houghtonmifflinharcourt\)](https://www.facebook.com/houghtonmifflinharcourt)



[_ \(https://www.instagram.com/houghtonmifflinharcourt/\)](https://www.instagram.com/houghtonmifflinharcourt/)



[_ \(https://www.linkedin.com/company/houghton-mifflin-harcourt/mycompany/\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/houghton-mifflin-harcourt/mycompany/)



[_ \(https://www.pinterest.com/HMHco/\)](https://www.pinterest.com/HMHco/)



[_ \(https://www.youtube.com/c/Hmhco\)](https://www.youtube.com/c/Hmhco)

[HMH Education \(https://www.hmhco.com/\)](https://www.hmhco.com/) [HMH Books & Media \(https://www.hmhbooks.com/\)](https://www.hmhbooks.com/) [Customer Support \(https://support.hmhco.com/s/\)](https://support.hmhco.com/s/)

[ICLE \(https://leadership.hmhco.com/\)](https://leadership.hmhco.com/) [Careers \(https://careers.hmhco.com/\)](https://careers.hmhco.com/) [Newsroom \(https://www.hmhco.com/about-us/press-releases\)](https://www.hmhco.com/about-us/press-releases)

[Heinemann \(https://www.heinemann.com/\)](https://www.heinemann.com/) [Investors \(https://investors.hmhco.com/investors/default.aspx\)](https://investors.hmhco.com/investors/default.aspx)

[Math Solutions](#)

SOLUTIONS

HMH Support is [here to help you get back to school](https://helpyougetbacktoschool.com/) right. [Get started \(https://support.hmhco.com/s/\)](https://support.hmhco.com/s/)

Literacy
Solutions

<https://www.hmhliteracy.com/>

[Sign In](#)

[Cart](#) 0



[Support](#)

HMH

© 2021 Houghton
Mifflin Harcourt.
All rights reserved.

[Terms of Purchase \(https://www.hmhco.com/terms\)](https://www.hmhco.com/terms)

[Privacy Policy \(https://www.hmhco.com/privacy-policy\)](https://www.hmhco.com/privacy-policy) [Site Map \(/sitemap\)](#)

[Trademark Credits \(https://www.hmhco.com/trademarks\)](https://www.hmhco.com/trademarks)

[Permissions Request \(https://customer care.hmhco.com/contactus/Permissions.html\)](https://customer care.hmhco.com/contactus/Permissions.html)