TRANSLANGUAGING SPACE: PROLEGOMENA TO AN INTEGRATIONAL CRITIQUE

ESPAÇO DE TRANSLINGUAGEM: PROLEGÔMENOS PARA UMA CRÍTICA INTEGRACIONISTA

EL ESPACIO DEL TRANSLENGUAJE: PROLEGOMENA A UNA CRÍTICA INTEGRACIONISTA

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ABSTRACT: In an article entitled *Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space: Discursive Construction of Identities by Multilingual Chinese Youth in Britain*, Li Wei (2011) unfolds his primary account of translanguaging. Providing a set of influential theoretical explanations, the piece enjoys a fundamental status in translanguaging theorisation. However, this theoretical effort is not unproblematic. This article contends that the notion of translanguaging space and its alleged functions/values cannot be taken for granted. Taking issue with the notion of translanguaging space, the present work will outline an introductory critique from an integrational perspective (see HARRIS, 1996), to delineate the integrationist position. The critique also aims to contest the validity of the purported functions of translanguaging space and promised values of the translanguaging perspective. The work will shed light on preliminary questions about the notion of translanguaging space, which will hopefully invoke further discussion. In terms of significance, this article will highlight the limitations of translanguaging theory and contribute to an integrational critique on a hybrid linguistic theory, that is, translanguaging.
KEYWORDS: Translanguaging space. Translanguaging. Integrational linguistics.

RESUMO: Em um artigo intitulado *Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space: Discursive Construction of Identities by Multilingual Chinese Youth in Britain*, Li Wei (2011) expõe sua concepção de translinguagem. Fornecendo um conjunto de definições muito citadas e mantras teóricos influentes, o texto goza de um status fundamental na teorização da translinguagem. No entanto, esse esforço teórico primário e influente não é isento de problemas. Este artigo defende que a noção de espaço de translinguagem (*translanguaging space*) e suas alegadas funções/valores não podem ser tomados como garantidos. Discordando da noção de espaço de translinguagem, o presente trabalho delineará uma crítica introdutória a partir de uma perspectiva integracionista. A crítica também visa contestar a validade das funções supostamente do espaço translinguagem e dos valores

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prometidos da perspectiva da translinguagem. O trabalho lançará luz sobre questões preliminares sobre a noção de espaço de translinguagem. Este artigo irá destacar as deficiências da teoria da translinguagem e contribuir para uma crítica integracionista sobre a teoria linguística híbrida, ou seja, a translinguagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Espaço translinguagem. Translinguagem. Linguística integracional.

RESUMEN: En un artículo titulado *Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space: Discursive Construction of Identities by Multilingual Chinese Youth in Britain*, Li Wei (2011) desarrolla su explicación principal del translenguaje. Proporcionando un conjunto de definiciones muy citadas y mantras teóricos influyentes, la pieza disfruta de un estatus fundamental en la teorización del translenguaje. Sin embargo, este esfuerzo teórico primario e influyente no está exento de problemas. Este artículo sostiene que la noción de espacio translenguaje (*translanguaging space*) y sus supuestas funciones / valores no pueden darse por sentados. En desacuerdo con la noción de espacio translenguaje, el presente trabajo esbozará una crítica introductoria desde una perspectiva integracionista. La crítica también apunta a cuestionar la validez de las supuestas funciones del espacio translenguaje y los valores prometidos de la perspectiva translenguaje. El trabajo arrojará luz sobre cuestiones preliminares sobre la noción de espacio translenguaje. Este artículo destacará las deficiencias de la teoría del translenguaje y contribuirá a una crítica integracionista de la teoría lingüística híbrida, es decir, el translenguaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Espacio translenguaje. Translenguaje, Lingüística integradora.

1 TRANSLANGUAGING AND PREVIOUS CRITIQUES

Translanguaging, put simply, refers to an intellectual appeal in linguistics to think between and beyond language boundaries (GARCÍA; LI, 2014; LI, 2011). Within the discipline of linguistics, a simple sketch of its emergence and development can be offered as follows: The term translanguaging has its origin, as specialists claim, in Cen Williams' works in 1994 and 1996, in which translanguaging is primarily known as a descriptor for the pedagogy of using two languages in class (GARCÍA; LI, 2014; LI, 2011). By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the term had been extended to different definitions in a series of scholarly works (e.g., BLACKLEDGE; CREESE, 2010; CANAGARAJAH, 2013; GARCÍA, 2009; LI, 2011). Based on these previous efforts, the past ten years has witnessed a significant increase in research output on translanguaging. Enjoying high prestige in this network, Li Wei is recognised as one of the founders of the trans-framework in linguistics. The works of Li and his co-authors are prized, circulated, much-cited, influential and highly acclaimed (e.g., GARCÍA; LI, 2014; LI, 2011).

However, what follows the increasing popularity of translanguaging in recent years is a growing critical awareness regarding its theoretical value. As a theoretical framework, translanguaging is held to offer a new understanding of language and communication (GARCÍA; LI, 2014). Yet, critics have pointed out that translanguaging as well as other related terminologies are "new lingualisms" but "old codes" (ORMAN, 2013; ORMAN; PABLÉ, 2015). These critiques have exposed that the emerging terminological innovations fail to completely depart from traditional code-based views of language and communication, casting scepticism on the theoretical coherence of translanguaging constructs. Whilst the critiques suggest that translanguaging shares a kinship with previous linguistic theories, translanguaging scholars eagerly defend the status of translanguaging as a valuable theory of language and communication which offers new insights (e.g., LI, 2018a). Yet what is new and innovative in the theorisation and how to justify it? The continuous debate over the validity of translanguaging theory implies that the question of its value has not been solved yet. Thus, this paper is to take the discussion of translanguaging theory further, with a particular focus on the notion of translanguaging space (the reasons for this focus will be discussed in the following parts).

Despite a nascent corpus of critical responses, there remains a gulf in output between translanguaging advocates and its critics. Furthermore, compounding this purely numerical imbalance, the critiquing efforts related to translanguaging are mostly visible within a constellation of other recent constructs with prefixes such as super-, poly-, etc. (e.g., JASPERS; MADSEN, 2016; ORMAN,

2012, 2013; ORMAN; PABLÉ, 2015; PAVLENKO, 2018). This means that there are few critiques that directly take issue with translanguaging or specific trans- constructs (For the specific critiques, see Jaspers, 2018; Kramsch, 2018). Additionally, one major group of critics do find their analysis of translanguaging (or other constructs alike) within a broader discussion of academic trends, such as the influence of the digital era on academic discourses (KRAMSCH, 2018), the tendency of academic sloganisation (PAVLENKO, 2018), or the influence of critical pedagogy and an ideological dilemma in theory making (JASPERS, 2018). This group therefore critiques translanguaging within the context of broader discussions surrounding intellectual theorisation. Whilst this positioning helps inform the problems faced by translanguaging, it is important to put more emphasis on that translanguaging is primarily a theory of language and communication, and therefore, a deep reflection on the nature of language and communication is required for a more comprehensive analysis. This is where an integrationist perspective is useful, with its focus on understanding the nature of communicational experience and the fundamental difficulties in studying language and communication (see HARRIS, 1996).

Against this background, the present article aims to carry on exposing the problems of translanguaging research. This study will be conducted in an integrationist lens, starting with an assessment of the notion of translanguaging space, introduced by Li Wei in his 2011 study entitled *Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space: Discursive Construction of Identities by Multilingual Chinese Youth in Britain* (from this point, *Translanguaging Space*).

2 INTEGRATIONISM AND SEGREGATIONISM

Integration is believed to be the foundation of communication, on which integrationism has developed as a theoretical stance since the 1980s (see e.g., HARRIS, 1981). In this theoretical vein, the communication process is recognised as a complicated integration of different forms of human activities and abilities, which is structured by time, contextualised in specific situations, and experienced by the situated individual (HARRIS, 1996). Moreover, this complex integration has effect on the study of language. In *Signs, Language and Communciation*, Harris (1996) proposes that the study of language should start with an understanding of the fundamental difficulty in the study of communication. This difficulty resides in the complexity of communicative experience, which results from its integrational character. For Harris, this integrational character is so fundamental that the failure to acknowledge it will lead to misrepresentation of language and communication. The theoretical consequence means there is a divide between segregational and integrational approaches to ideas about language and communication.

Segregationism is regarded as a representative position held by mainstream modern linguists. Segregational beliefs underlie the postulations that lead to the segregation between linguistic and non-linguistic domains of inquiry, which ignores the fact that linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge are integrated into daily communication (HARRIS, 1998). According to Harris (1998), there are specific segregational assumptions: (1) Languages as systems; (2) Communication as a consequence of the use of language; (3) Languages as user-independent systems. The integrational counterpropositions include: (1) Language is not a knowing in advance system; (2) Language is the product of communication and should be studied within communicational situations; (3) Communication always involves specific individuals (HARRIS, 1998).

However, the opposition between these two approaches is not always taken seriously. There is thus a hybrid form of theorisation, which compromises the two approaches. As Harris observed (1998, p.13) "[…] one common reaction to the segregational/integrational opposition […] is to seek some compromise between the two approaches". Yet, as the two approaches give "ontological priority to a quite different order of 'facts'" (HARRIS, 1998, p.14), a compromising stance not only leads to a paradoxical theoretical account, but also finally entails settling on either a refined segregationism, or a disoriented integrationism. As Harris (1998, p.14) states, "the beginning of wisdom in linguistics is to recognise the fundamental dichotomy". Because the

discourse about communication is already problem-fraught, more confusion would not help the situation but leave us with a theoretical mess (HARRIS, 1996). This is why a hybrid theorisation is of critical interest to an integrationist and why a hybrid theory should be subject to critical scrutiny.

Thus, the underlying assumption of this paper is that an indecisive and compromising attitude on the dichotomy would have consequences on theoretical claims and their further application. This paper thus takes an integrationist perspective to examine the hybrid theorisation of translanguaging and to clarify the dichotomy. The reasons for this paper's focus on the translanguaging scholarship and particularly the study *Translanguaging Space* are as follows: (1) Li and his co-authors advocating a translanguaging perspective are apparently aware of integrationism and they consciously align with Harris' integrational approach (see e.g., LI; HO, 2018, p.36); (2) in *Translanguaging Space*, the attention to the role of time and the personal perspective in communication touches on some integrational ideas, although superficially; (3) the 2011 study provides a primary account of influential definitions and widely accepted premises in the translanguaging discourse. Therefore, *Translanguaging Space* provides an important text with which an integrational critique can illuminate the hybrid nature of translanguaging theorisation and respond to the superficial alignment with an integrational approach.

As for a road map, firstly, this article will provide some background knowledge of translanguaging space. This part will highlight the interrelationship between the notion of translanguaging space and the definition of translanguaging, to show the status of translanguaging space in the theoretical discourse. Then, focusing on the study *Translanguaging Space*, the article will proceed to outline the ambiguities in its explanation and reveal the hybridity inherent in the translanguaging approach, from an integrationist viewpoint. Finally, to further an integrational critique, a set of preliminary questions is offered for consideration.

3 AN ENCOUNTER WITH TRANSLANGUAGING SPACE

In 2011, Li published the study *Translanguaging Space*. The article, in Li's (2011) words, retells a story of three Chinese-British students, showing a selected corpus of their language use and their discourse about culture or identity, combined with the analyst's interpretations.

Via this case study, Li developed the notion of translanguaging space. What is translanguaging space? At first glance, the metaphor of space is scattered in the analysis. Translanguaging space may refer to a physical place such as the University in the UK that the three informants attend. Used interchangeably with multilingual space, it implies a safe space (or comfort zone) for using different languages. It also refers to a social space and serves as a metaphor for social networking. For a clearer view, the notion of translanguaging space can be explained in two aspects. Firstly, it refers to the phenomenon under investigation, i.e. "[…] a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging" (LI, 2011, p.1222). Secondly, translanguaging space is an analytical notion, informed by various scholarly works related to Space and Spatiality (LI, 2011). Particularly, as an analytical perspective on multilingualism, it is put forward to capture (1) a sense of connectedness created via multilingual practices, which is held to consequently influence the identity positioning of the three young people, and (2) the creative and critical language use of multilinguals (LI, 2011). This primary effort in theorising the notion of translanguaging space provides a foundation for subsequent studies by translanguaging proponents.

Li's study in 2011 is his first theoretical attempt to explain translanguaging space as well as translanguaging. The explanation in this study provides a collection of definitions that is cited in the consecutive works by Li and other translanguaging advocates (e.g., GARCÍA; LI, 2014; LI, 2016, 2018A, 2018B; LI; ZHU, 2019; ZHU; LI; LYONS, 2017). Given the status of *Translanguaging Space*, it is interesting to see how the ideas of translanguaging and translanguaging space interact with one another. As Li (2011, p. 1222) claims, translanguaging is "[…] both going between different linguistic structures and systems and going beyond them". This

beyond-ness can be connected to the rhetoric of transcendence:

> It includes the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend [emphasis added] the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities and relationships. The act of translanguaging then is *transformative* [emphasis added] in nature; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience. (LI, 2011, p. 1223)

I would like to draw attention to the idea of transformation and transcendence. If one could temporarily suppress the scepticism about how the analyst penetrates the minds of language users and find out their purposes, s/he would soon find another difficulty in comprehending the proposal of transcendence. While alternation between the aforementioned aspects is relatively easy to imagine, the proposal of a *transformative* and thus *transcendent* point, which implies something new, emerging, and unknown, is rather abstract to grasp. What on earth is the transformed that goes beyond the combination or alternation? It is from here a tangible form of transformation is required for explanation: Arguably, Li (2011) thus visualises/conceptualises the transformation by introducing the notion of *translanguaging space*. In other words, the translanguaging space resembles a chemistry bottle where personal, historical, environmental resources come together and react with each other. Then, observing and analysing this translanguaging space can thus provide evidence for transcendent/transformed "things" in communication and therefore certify that the translanguaging act is transformative. In this way, the study of translanguaging space(s) can be regarded as a pivotal link to the essential value of translanguaging, i.e. being transformative as well as offering a sense of "beyondness" as an "innovative" theoretical construct.

Apart from this transformative character of the translanguaging space and translanguaging, there are other claims that Li seeks to establish, which are of interest to an integrationist. To offer a preview, of particular relevance are:

(1) Translanguaging invites us to see the momentariness and the fleeting aspect of human activities, including communication;

(2) Translanguaging values the individual's perspective in the communication process.

(3) A translanguaging space and translanguaging (act) are *in nature* transformative.

However, as the following discussion will disclose, it is contentious whether Li (2011) successfully supports and coherently upholds these claims. While the extent to which *Translanguaging space* achieved to defend these claims is under investigation, it is debatable whether the subsequent adoption of these values/functions of the translanguaging approach or the translanguaging space extracted from this piece is reliable. Also, it is argued in this paper that, regarding the understanding of ephemeral and personalised communication experiences, the translanguaging approach is rather different from an integrational approach.

4 AN INTEGRATIONAL CRITIQUE

Previous integrational critiques have indicated the possible flaws of the translanguaging theory, for example, the reliance on notions of codes and systems despite a superficial rejection of the segregational assumptions (see more from MAKONI, 2012; ORMAN, 2012, 2013). For an integrationist, additional ambiguities, potential paradoxes and points of contention in translanguaging theory are as follows.

4.1 THE ROLE OF TIME

Moment analysis is proposed as a methodology "to investigate translanguaging space empirically" (LI, 2011, p.1224), with an emphasis on the role of time in communication. Li (2011, p.1224) attaches significance to the "[…] spontaneous, impromptu, and momentary actions and performances of individual". Later, he highlights the fleeting, spur-of-the-moment feature of everyday activities that "all of us take in context" (LI, 2018b, p.26). In a recent presentation by Li (2020), he explains that the suffix of translanguaging, -ing, brings to the fore the "momentariness, instantaneity and the transient nature of human communication". One may notice the string of words that describes the subtly different duration of time and ask for further clarification. However, the point here is to see that the theorist realises the importance of time which continually shapes and reshapes communicational experience. More importantly, my intention here is to highlight that the definition of translanguaging, or more precisely, its value connects to the understanding of time, thus to moment analysis: the momentariness of communicative activities is seen as the essential quality of translanguaging. As such, if moment analysis fails to coherently explain the momentariness of communicational events, Li's conception of translanguaging and the translanguaging perspective would fall short of its proposed values.

Indeed, moment analysis acknowledges the temporal dimension of communication while fails to uphold the idea of temporality as a fundamental principle for the communicational experience. As Li (2011) claims, his study is conducted through a collection of creative and critical moments. Moments, in this fashion, presumably refer to the data for the empirical study of the translanguaging space. To be specific, the paradoxical explanation of the momentariness is demonstrated when Li (2011, p.1224) defines a moment as follows:

> A moment can be a point in or a period of time which has outstanding significance. It is characterised by its distinctiveness and impact on subsequent events or developments. People present at such moments would recognise their importance and may adjust their behaviour according to their interpretation of them. Once it has occurred, a moment becomes a reference point or a frame; patterns can be detected by comparing the frequency and regularity of such moments. [...] Moment Analysis focuses on the spur-of-the-moment actions, what prompted such actions and the consequences of such moments including the reactions by other people.

It seems Li exploits the notion of moment with two layers of meaning: (1) a moment as a point or a period of time, referring to the temporal aspect of communicative events, (2) a moment as a communicative event/act. The role of time begins to be puzzling when Li defines these moments as linguistic acts that show patterns to an observer via frequency and regularities. Since, to identify the frequency and regularity of a moment (a linguistic act), the presupposition is that the moment (the linguistic act) remains the same to the analyst-observer. In other words, the linguistic act is held to be invariant for the *post hoc* detection for the convenience of data collection on the part of the analyst i.e. to remain unchanged over time.

To an integrationist, what is odd lies in the idea of wedding the notion of momentariness with data collection. From an integrational perspective, firstly, if it is true that communication is time-bound, "[…] every linguistic act is integrated into the individual's experience as a unique event, which has never before occurred and will never recur" (HARRIS, 1990, p. 48). Therefore, data collection based on the analyst's identification of the same linguistic acts strikes an integrationist as paradoxical to the ephemeral aspect of communicating experience. In addition, one of the reasons for the uniqueness of every moment lies in the complex integration between "linguistic" and "non-linguistic" events in daily experience, which renders the situation non-repeatable. What are repeatable, i.e. recorded and analysed, are often linguistic events that are segregated from the concurring situation i.e. non-linguistic events. Thus, this integrationist insistence on *cotemporality* is to reject the segregational view that there is a distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic domains (HARRIS, 1998). On the contrary, in Li's collection of "creative moments", it is exclusively the linguistic corpus that is collected and segregated from the contextualised non-linguistic events – a linguistic corpus of puns, nicknames, translations, etc. The momentary acts are derived from specific situations. Finally, what

underlies the moment analysis is still the segregational assumption i.e. linguistic events can be studied independently of non-linguistic factors. In the similar vein, other moments represented in the study *Translanguaging Space* are also problematic in terms of the loss of uniqueness and situatedness due to the change of time. In this sense, an integrationist comment would be that *each* of the moments extracted as data are not the original episodes that are instantly integrated with a personal history and contextualised with non-linguistic factors, which can only be known to the situated individual *him/herself*. To be more explicit, Li's (2011) idea of moments may be more about a supplementary tacit for a micro-level of the study of interaction than an attempt to defend the ephemeral and transient nature of communication: As he later suggests, the traditional approach revealing "general patterns or trends" is a product of the era of big data while moment analysis is proposed to reorient the analytic attention towards small moments and small stories (LI, 2018B, p.25-26). The role of time in the translanguaging theory is ambivalent and the implied assumptions about communication are thus incoherent. Also, this proposal of moment analysis within an empirical framework is incompatible with the integrationist principle of cotemporality.

4.2 THE ROLE OF THE FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVE

Another difficulty in the study *Translanguaging Space*, from an integrational viewpoint, is visible in dealing with the respective prioritisation of an analyst's perspective and an individual participant's perspective.

At first sight, moment analysis is held to have "a clear focus on the individual" (LI, 2011, p.1224). The significance of moments derives from "actors and their subsequent actions" (LI, 2011, p.1222). As for the alleged rationale, Li (2011) explains that the proposition of moment analysis is out of his dissatisfaction with the traditional paradigm which is characterised as "frequency and regularity oriented, pattern-seeking approaches" (p.1224), a paradigm which ignores the original acts of individuals and specifics of individuals' experiences. In terms of the interview, the analyst also explains to the informants in advance that he "[…] wanted to know if there were any particular moments in their lives that they felt had a significant impact on the way they saw the world, the way they behaved and the decisions they made for themselves" (LI, 2011, p.1225). Li later emphasises the importance of the individual's perspective, saying that the momentary actions are particularly meaningful to "the participants themselves" (LI, 2018B, p.26). At this point, attention is drawn to the priority assigned to the individual's specifics and perspective. Thus, according to these explanations, it seems that personal experiences and personal perspectives are important to the study *Translanguaging Space*. This focus on the individual, as Li alleges, is so "radical" that he worries it "may appear to be ahistorical and asocial" but he insists that the focus is "a corrective and balancing act" (LI, 2011, p.1224).

Although Li (2011) shows his attention to personal communicative biographies, this acknowledgement does not accordingly follow a methodological priority of the unique perspective of individual participants. In Li's previous account, communication seems to be understood in terms of its unique aspect by particular individuals. Yet soon he opens Pandora's box by reclaiming the role of the analyst. Li (2011, p.1224) believes that after collecting the metalanguaging data, it is the analyst's job to "[…] detect any changes in the course of their presentation, themes and links that emerge from the narratives". Besides, it is worth noting that the study never provides any direct claim by the youth of their recognition of the particular significant moments i.e. the moments that are important to their subsequent activities, as previously emphasised by the analyst. It is a legitimate question here to ask whose recognition of these moments it is and whose interpretation of the meanings of these moments it is. Readers are also told, then, it is the linguist's responsibility to reveal the meaning of the translanguaging space, which manifests in these "moments" (LI, 2011). Therefore, the comments from the linguists are not particularly avoided to reduce the representative distortion from a third-person perspective, by which the authorial voice of the analyst is maintained.

It seems that, although Li emphasises the significance of a personal and individual perspective on one's own linguistic experience, the priority has never been genuinely given to the first-person perspective. Instead, the analyst's detection/grouping subtly replaces the reflective relevance that should have been provided by the individuals themselves. More curiously, the observer's

monologue reads "this paper retells the story of three Chinese youths in Britain" (LI, 2011, p.1222), "I thought of these interviews as open discussions and I believe they felt the same" (p.1225), and more demonstratively "the discussion is intermingled with my own interpretation and comments on what I observed and heard" (LI, 2011, p.1225). On the one hand, an integrationist would appreciate these honest claims about the interpretative role of the analyst in understanding others' communicational experiences. For it shows awareness of the fact that linguistic analysis is ultimately a creative interpretation that subjects to the analyst's viewpoint. On the other hand, an integrationist will point out that these claims do not follow a method avoiding the analyst's distortion: the analyst's narrative still monologises the different individuals' reflexive accounts by maintaining a monological authority who selects metalinguistic materials on behalf of the individuals and summarises one common theme of their communication experiences – to establish translanguaging spaces. It seems that the analyst has admitted the unique first-person perspective of each communicating individual but returned to the comfort zone – a third-person perspective of the linguist.

From an integrational viewpoint, what is problematic here is that the linguist-analyst is assumed to have access to the language user's perspective and be able to give a factual report of their linguistic experience. Although Li (2011) has indeed collected a set of metalinguistic commentaries, what the study shows is a process of recontextualisation and reinterpretation of these commentaries. It is still the linguist who is authorised to map out the relations among the metalanguage commentaries, previous language uses and the "inherent" thematic meanings, which together constitute the translanguaging space i.e. the spatialisation and visualisation of a group of linguistic and social "facts" organised from the analyst's perspective. The personal experiences are intermingled with the analyst's viewpoints and grouped according to the analyst's thematisation (LI, 2011, p.1226-1233). This move rules out the interference of the linguist in the communication process, i.e. when he interprets and groups these comments. To what extent a linguist can accomplish this is contentious. What the relevant contextual factors are and how they are captured by the linguist are also open to debate. What is certain for now is that the prioritisation of the linguist's perspective in linguistic analyses constitutes a segregational move which overlooks communication as a radically personal process.

How the prioritisation of a third-person perspective could render a factual report of first-person experience is at least debatable. For an integrational approach, it is impossible to access the first-person perspective as each individual has unique communicational experiences. Although Li (2011) claims that his work settles the problem of the gap between the individual and the societal in his interpretation of communicational experiences, how the analyst achieves the understanding of personalised experiences remains to be further discussed and cannot be accepted blindly.

4.3 THE UNDERSTANDING OF MEANING

In the study *Translanguaging Space*, the notion of meaning is blurry and marginal, as if how meaning comes into being in the communication process is assumed as a given. But is it an unproblematic given?

One direct reference to meaning is found in the remarks that "it is part of the individual's cognitive capacity to […] give meaning to the choice and alternation between languages" (LI, 2011, p.1225) and "indexical meanings" (LI, 2011, p.1224) in the translanguaging space. Where does this understanding come from? As Li (2011) suggests, he based the study *Translanguaging Space* on his previous works on language choice and code-switching, in which one key argument is that language choice is a deliberate act and thus meaningful in communication (see e.g., LI, 1994). This understanding of meaning is taken for granted, based on the idea that language choice (i.e. code-switching, language mixing, or translanguaging) has its own symbolic meaning (see also LI; WU, 2008). Thus, it is firstly worth noting that this notion of meaning is an ideological artefact i.e. meaning is what an analyst is primarily interested in and aims at revealing. Secondly, it is hardly an adequate account of meaning in terms of daily communication experiences. Since, to the participants, even they are observed using or choosing between different "languages" in speech, what is meaningful does not have to be (exclusively) the intended choices they made. It also involves a question concerning the perspective from which the utterance is meaningful.

One may find that the analysis also suggests an account of meaning produced in interactions. For example, a episode captured by Li offers a conversation among the three students:

Chris: 以后工作就当"白领狗"，给人公司打工！

(In the future (I will) work as a "white-collar dog", working for someone's company.)

> *Lawson and Roland both laugh.*

> Roland: you are already a bilingual.

> Lawson: Good one.

> Chris: That's what I mean. (LI, 2011, p.1226)

The transcript, as Li (2011, p.1126) interprets, shows the making of a pun, which "Chris evidently intended and which is understood by the other two to good effect". In Li's (2011) explanation, the pun works as follows: the Chinese phrase "白领狗" (pronounced as bai ling gou) sounds similar to the English word "bilingual"; when Chris uttered the Chinese phrase "白领狗", he was assumed to intend its relation to the English word "bilingual". The linguist believes that the other two students decoded this relation. How does the analyst know that this intention is detected by Lawson and Roland? The analyst later provides the following reasoning: The recognition of the implication of "白领狗" as "bilingual" is indicated in Lawson and Roland's laugh (LI; ZHU, 2013, p.523). Also, it seems to be suggested that Roland's reply of "you are already a bilingual" also confirms his successful decoding of the pun. Similarly, Lawson's "good one" also confirms his decoding of Chris' intended pun-making. In other words, the intended meaning of "白领狗" is held to be "bilingual" from the start of this episode and it is believed that the episode captures the meaning/intention-transference from Chris to the other two students.

However, a no less sound interpretation of this transcript can be offered as an alternative, which hopefully would help reveal the problem underlying. The alternative is discussed as follows. One alternative point to start with is that the first utterance by Chris invokes laughter because "白领狗" is a sarcastic phrase, in which the Chinese word "狗"(dog) could suggest a low living standard, i.e. living like a dog. The second alternative point is that, if there is an association between "白领狗" and "bilingual", it more likely starts from Roland's speech, who relates the Chinese phrase to the English word "bilingual" in this episode. As Li himself mentioned, he is uncertain about whether Lawson understood immediately about Chris' intention or after Roland's "prompt" (LI, 2018B, p.26). The questions are: What if Roland's speech is not a "prompt" but the creation of the pun? How could the analyst rule out this possibility? The study does not provide answers. Thus, it is uncertain whether Chris intended "白领狗" (bai ling gou) as a pun on the pronunciation of "bilingual" (unless Li confirmed afterwards with Chris, which is at least not presented as the case). As for reasons for the alternative interpretation of this episode, Chris' reply, "that's what I mean", is not necessarily a robust verification of the "fact" that the pun is intended by himself (e.g., imagine the tonal difference between an emphasis on "I" and no emphasis at all, which is not provided by the linguistic transcript). In this transcript, Chris' last utterance could have been a reply to Roland's mention of "bilingual". In other words, Chris could have not intended to link the Chinese phrase to the English word. In his last utterance, he simply agreed on Roland's association between Chinese and English (here, the utterance of "that's what I mean" could be an alternative of "I agree" or could imply that the association drawn "works for me"). In a similar vein, Lawson's reply "good one" could be a response to Roland's utterance.

The point of this alternative interpretation is not to argue for a "true" report of this episode but to unveil the assumed theory of meaning lurking behind the analysis in the 2011 study. This alternative reading suggests that the comments "good one", "that's what I mean", and the behaviour of laughing do not point towards the one "true" meaning of this episode as interpreted by the linguist, unless it is presumed that the meaning is determinate and is shared by each of the participants, including the analyst. Again, the analyst fails to offer a genuine first-person perspective but assumes a third-person perspective instead, from which the recognition of the so-called linguistic or social facts is contentious.

From an integrational viewpoint, what is overlooked in Li's analysis is that the meaning could be different to different participants. The meaning must be determinate, as Li's analysis assumes. In his analysis, the meaning is held to be intended in the beginning and the communication process is regarded as the circulation of the intention. This consequently shows a lack of theoretical effort in explaining communication as well, which remains entrenched in segregational assumptions. The integrationist will point out this mode of thinking is *intentionalist* (HARRIS, 1996). The intentionalist understanding of meaning assumes that the question of how A communicates with B is about how one's feeling and experience (intention) can get through to others (HARRIS, 1996). This model of communication then reveals the translanguaging analysis to be based on a segregational assumption that communication is user-independent in the sense that there are no individual differences in the meaning-making process. As there is no accounting for the individual differences in communication, this mode of thinking in *Translanguaging Space* also thwarts the previous promise to highlight individual specifics in the analysis of the meaning-making process.

5 TRANSLANGUAGING SPACE AS A SUPER SPACE

As the discussion shows above, the study *Translanguaging Space* keeps falling back on old segregational assumptions and thus fails to coherently support the "new insights" into ephemeral and personalised experiences. *Translanguaging Space* gives priority to the construction of a data-based space over time, priority to a third-person perspective over a first-person perspective.

Moreover, is there such an object as a translanguaging space that can be empirically investigated? Or is it primarily an abstraction? The amalgamation between an analytical notion and the phenomenon under investigation has hinted at the answer. As an analytical abstraction, the notion of translanguaging space created by the linguist is not impartial. The rather heavy-loaded intellectual investment in the notion of space, inevitably implies the presumed interests of the analyst-observer. Besides, the correspondence between the analytical abstraction of a translanguaging space and the phenomenon investigated as a translanguaging space cannot be taken for granted as a "fact" simply waiting for the analyst's detection. The questions that one should bear in mind are (1) whether what the linguist observes as a "fact" is the same for the informant(s) and (2) whether the essential function proclaimed by the linguist is sensible and desirable for every individual at any point in their lives, given the fact that translanguaging values are generalised in the consecutive works of translanguaging scholars. If there is a hesitation before the utterance of an answer, then the generalised values, benefits, and functions of the translanguaging space are open to debate.

The translanguaging space can be seen as a super space because it is made to operate on the supra-level above specific individuals and situations, especially when it is theorised as a self-evolving space. As Li repeats in his work, it is the translanguaging act in this space that "enables *criticality* and *creativity* in the language user" (LI, 2016, p.8). Later, Li explicitly claims that "[…] Translanguaging Space has its own transformative power because it is forever evolving and combines and generates new identities, values and practices" (LI, 2018a, p.23). In this account, one could notice Li's personification of the translanguaging space. It is clothed with the capability to transform the sign, subjectivities, individuals, languages, cultures, and societies; it is even self-evolving and productive (see GARCÍA; LI, 2014; LI, 2016, 2018a). While this account is reinforced through consecutive publications, it is not clear that why the translanguaging act is inherently transformative and encourages creativity and criticality. Although the analyst assumes the translanguaging space to be an analytical tool *to focus* on a creative and critical act in the 2011 study, it does not follow that translanguaging act itself is in nature creative, critical, and even transformative. Overall, a very subtle manoeuvre is that the creative and critical capability of meaning-makers, sign-makers, or language makers is transplanted onto an abstraction i.e. the translanguaging space.

From an integrationist point of view, the translanguaging space as an abstraction ignores the fact that a translanguaging space (if there is one experienced/ "seen" by the participants) as a phenomenon is primarily a product of communication. Outside the specific communicational continuum, there is no transformative power essentially attached to this space. It is thus misleading to

say that the translanguaging space (or translanguaging) itself is capable of the changes in meanings, the signs, the lives of individuals, and even in society, etc. Although attaching this abstract power to the translanguaging space can be beneficial in that it promotes the benefits of communication in "different languages", it does so by employing a distorted view of communication as the leverage of a translanguaging strategy. For an integrationist, there are no abstract skills or strategies of communication that could survive without the consideration of the ever-changing circumstances. This is where an integrational perspective departs fundamentally from the translanguaging perspective.

After all, communicating and reflecting on communication are constant and endless processes, in the way that we do not only develop the necessary skills of sign-making, but more importantly "[…] acquire the sole, the permanent, the ineluctable responsibility for making these processes work" (HARRIS, 1996, p. 264). If translanguaging pedagogy is devoted to applying one strategy to all possible communicational situations, it is problematic. This is because the implications are (1) following from this super space, what is needed is to provide as many translanguaging spaces as possible; (2) The individual's responsibilities to learn from the specific situation in which they find themselves and to develop suitable skills accordingly are assumed to be replaced by the power of the translanguaging space.

6 FURTHERING AN INTEGRATIONAL CRITIQUE

There is certainly more to do, after the integrationist critique laid out in this paper. The overarching question that follows is: in the end, if there is no coherent understanding of language and communication, what is left for translanguaging as a theory *of* language and communication? It is one thing to propose an appeal with good intentions but quite a whole other thing to provide theoretical support to the appeal.

Although the present critique has been carried out from an integrational perspective, this work does not propose an integrational monologue but intends to initiate a dialogue with translanguaging scholars. Via the preliminary comparison between the two frameworks, the difference between an integrational approach and a translanguaging approach has been laid out: An ambiguous and indecisive attitude between integrational and segregational assumptions about communication experience is not acceptable for an integrationist. However, for discussion, an integrationist would suggest several questions for translanguaging scholars: (1) what is the translanguaging theory of communication and meaning? (2) what is the semiological basis for the understanding of language in a translanguaging approach? (3) what are the theoretical status of the ephemeral aspect of communication and personalised perspective, respectively? Again, these questions suggest the criteria for being an integrational approach is a matter of explicit choice but not of extent. They require clear answers before translanguaging scholars claim an integrational approach.

To take on contemporary and recent constructs such as the translanguaging theory, a more nuanced, detailed integrational critique is required to offer up-to-date and specific analyses on the particular theorisation trajectories. Firstly, for example, in terms of translanguaging, an integrationist critique needs to develop an insight with regard to its pragmatic orientations and sociopolitical commitments, which is helpful in debunking the rationales of the theoretical moves made by translingual scholars. Besides, an integrational response can be addressed to the claim of the interpretative approach in translanguaging discourse. It has been observed that one of the key features in the tradition of modern linguistics is the pursuit of scientific objectivity, in the account of the defenders of linguistics as science (see more discussion about objectivity, DUNCKER, 2019). Yet, different from the previous segregational forerunners, translanguaging scholars explicitly dismiss the need for an accurate explanation of linguistic phenomena and opt for an interpretative approach to linguistic phenomenon (see e.g., LI, 2018a). Then, there is a divergence, or at least a sense of complexity, in the motivations behind the theoretical twists and turns: for translanguaging scholars, it is no longer the rationale at work to simply preserve inner conceptual coherence or correspond to an independent reality which is perceived as an ideal object in the sense of natural sciences. Instead, driven by the desire or anxiety to bring about a change in society via a

political campaign in linguistics and/or language education, the validity of translanguaging theory inclines towards sociopolitical implications and thus an anticipated, futuristic "reality" (see LI, 2018b; LEE, 2018). Then, the question is what translanguaging scholars are seeking, if not (wholly) scientific objectivity.

One possible answer is suggested here: the translanguaging discourse explores *artistic objectivity* in representing the communication experiences of individuals. Instead of objectivity in the sense of natural sciences, i.e. with a presumably perspective-neutral and thus ideally independent object for observation and measurement, I suggest translanguaging research could be looking for a different understanding of the object of study, i.e. in an artistic sense. In this sense, the object is acknowledged as represented and interpreted, not independent from the interpreter's viewpoint. Then, the represented reality in translanguaging research may imply the idea of finding the value of truth and thus validity in (the process of realizing) the translanguaging belief. For example, Li (2018a) conveys the idea of verifying the value of the translanguaging perspective in the application of translanguaging theory. Besides, in terms of *Translanguaging space*, the analytic writing that is presented as re-telling of a story to some degree resembles a literary narrative. Also, the tendency to create more opportunities for the researched to speak on behalf of themselves via metalanguage data reminds one of the literary form of "polyphonic novels", which is believed to offer freedom to different individuals' "ideological voices" (BAKHTIN, 1984 [1929]). This parallel between artistic (literary) creation and the analytic representation may explain what translanguaging scholars are exploring, if not scientific objectivity in analysis. However, then the questions for translanguaging scholars include (1) whether linguistic research would allow an artistic structure of representation and avoid authorial conclusions and (2) whether translanguaging advocates would wholly abandon the quest for scientific objectivity. If the answer to the second question is no, would this quest be compatible with artistic objectivity?

Overall, within the scope of this paper, an integrational critique reveals the theoretical weakness/difficulty of the translanguaging construct in offering a new theory of communication that is decisively different from a segregational one. It is worth repeating that the integrationist does not deny the usefulness of the notions in the translanguaging theory in certain circumstances. Here, the main points of contention are (1) whether the theorisation provides a valid basis for the bright promises offered by the translanguaging perspective, and (2) what is at the expense for the theoretical strategies, which provide translanguaging scholars with an escape from a coherent explanation of language and communication. Beyond the discussion of this paper, the questions offered above expect answers from translanguaging scholars.

7 A CONCLUDING REMARK

Space is a dangerous metaphor. For space constitutes the desires of the observer – what the observer sees in a space are the questions and answers he/she desires (CALVINO, 1997). In the discipline of linguistics, "spaces" occur in the form of theories, created by linguists with their questions and anticipated answers, including the notion of the translanguaging space.

To conclude, the notion of the translanguaging space is worthy of an integrational critique and further interrogation. The study *Translanguaging Space* acknowledges the importance of momentary and personalised aspects of communicational experience. Yet, the study does not accordingly support these claims with a decisive departure from segregational assumptions about communication and meaning-making process; the analysis also fails to understand communication as radically contextualised according to temporal and personal differences. These are all fundamentally different from Harris' integrational approach. Moreover, the translanguaging perspective and its relevant functions in reorienting the analysis towards the transient and personalised communication experiences, derived from the notion of the translanguaging space, could be problematic or at least ambiguous. The status of the translanguaging space as a transformative site for the theory of language and communication, individuals and society is also contentious.

An integrational critique here firstly clarifies the integrationist position towards the purported/potential similarity of the translanguaging approach and secondly sharpens awareness of the possible directions and limitations of the translanguaging theory in linguistics. Additionally, in *Translanguaging Space*, the tension between the realisation of some integrational principles of communication and the failure to defend them suggests more to discuss between the two frameworks: the study of translanguaging space epitomises the difficulty in dealing with the integrational principles of communication and thus provides an example with which an integrationist can offer further inquiries for both sides to ponder on.

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