Amorphous language as alternative model for multilingual education in the Philippines

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Abstract: In 2009, the Department of Education of the Philippines released a directive to use the mother tongue as a medium of instruction from kindergarten to third grade. Among Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines pioneered the formal adaption of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE). However, the policy is beset with both structural and theoretical challenges. Unless an alternative language model accompanies MTB-MLE, its prospects for success remain bleak. While the directive is emancipatory, it fails to optimise this possibility due to serial monolingualism. Employing Michel de Certeau’s work on the practice of everyday life, the paper proposes amorphous language as an alternative model to serial monolingualism and contributes to the theorisation of translanguaging as a tactic in a language classroom.

Keywords: translanguaging; mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE); serial monolingualism; amorphous language; tactic

1. Introduction

Poststructuralism took root in literature departments much earlier than in applied linguistics (AL). In the 1960s, literary studies was a hotbed of radicalism through its borrowing from philosophy, social sciences, and even quantum physics. Hence, it transformed itself into an avant-garde,
paradigm-changing enterprise admired for its intellectual contrarianism but ridiculed too for its jargon. Regardless of history's verdict on the state of literary criticism at the latter half of the twentieth century to the present, its contribution to the development of interdisciplinarity is undeniable.

While the writings of Jacques Derrida on language have been widely cited, critiqued, and expounded in literary studies, AL remains predominantly positivist and focused on practical issues of the language classroom. There was more theorising of language teaching (LT) than of language itself. Only lately has Derrida been given serious attention in AL (McNamara, 2010). Similarly, Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984) heteroglossia and dialogism are gaining currency much recently, thanks to multilingualism and translanguaging.

Poststructuralism is employed here as a convenient handle to describe the intellectual ferment of the 1960s onwards and its offshoot (postmodernism, postcolonialism, queer theory, post-marxism, anti-humanism, among others). However, the term does not obliterate the differences in focus and political commitment across these “turns.” They are best considered using the metaphor of family resemblance insofar as they are an intellectual development after structuralism and a critique of Saussurian linguistics.

The importation of poststructuralism to AL may be characterised as covert. The work of Fairclough (2001) and Fowler (1991), for instance, combined the study of language with power. Critical discourse analysis contributed to expanding the frontiers of AL beyond language teaching. The “neutral” position of AL as a discipline gave way to a self-critique of its ideological complicity (Pennycook, 2010a).

Morgan (2007) believes in the possibility of productive confluence of AL with poststructuralism. The latter may familiarise itself with specific issues of LT and discourse practices in LT research. AL, in turn, could learn from poststructuralism’s jouissance (pleasure) with plurality. Indeed, AL may develop enough “tolerance of paradox” (McNamara, 2010, p. 39) to give allowance to poststructuralism’s disruptiveness.

One notable attempt to connect a postist approach to LT is postmethod pedagogy, which aims to “search for alternative to method rather than alternative method” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 32–33). Classroom contingencies compel teachers to combine approaches and methods holding diverse fundamental assumptions about language, language learning, and language teaching. Informed eclecticism works quite well in their class. Hence, sticking to an exclusive LT approach or method may win a few loyal followers.

This article responds to the need for more theory-driven research questions in AL (Lin, 2013) and encourages sustained openness with poststructuralism in our field. Through a poststructuralist lens, we examined the language model operating in the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) program of the Philippines. We argue that MTB-MLE needs an alternative language model to serial monolingualism. Much has been written about multilingual education in the Philippines (Burton, 2013; Dekker & Young, 2005; Tupas, 2015; Tupas & Martin, 2017; Young, 2011). However, discussion on the language model for MTB-MLE is yet to be desired. We propose amorphous language as an alternative model which more accurately captures how people in a multilingual setting improvise and deploy linguistic repertoire. Amorphous language contributes to theoretical support for the practice of translanguaging.

Li (2018) proposes translanguaging as a potential theory of language practice. This manifests confidence in AL as its own source of theory. Rather than merely an application of linguistic theory, AL is rather “a theory of the practice” (Kramsch, 2015, p. 455). Although sustained effort at theorisation is a welcome development, it is premature to consider translanguaging as a theory. We must first address how we can avoid the dissolution of translanguaging as practice into a description of practice. Hence, this article employs the term translanguaging as a practice, rather than a theory of practice.
2. MTB-MLE in context: reform beset by bureaucracy

The Philippines recognises English and Filipino as official languages in the (Republic of the Philippines, 1987) Constitution. While bilingual in outlook, it nevertheless recognises the role of home languages in primary education. They serve as “auxiliary languages” (Article XIV, Section 7). Unfortunately, this is only good on paper as “inequalities of multilingualism” (Tupas, 2015) prevail in a country where languages are ranked by prestige and internationalism.

The marginalisation of home languages seemed to change. The Department of Education or DepEd (2009) released DO 74 implementing MTB-MLE across the country. Under MTB-MLE, the mother tongue is taught as a subject and also used as a medium of instruction (MOI) from kindergarten until third grade (K-3). When children reach fourth grade onwards, English and Filipino are used as MOI and are taught as subjects. DepEd (2012) cites Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Component as a successful experiment on multilingual education in the country. A three-year project initiated by Greg and Diane Dekker in 1998, the Lubuagan project was not the first foray into mother tongue education. In 1948, the Ministry of Education (DepEd’s previous name) experimented with the use of Hiligaynon as MOI (a language spoken in Panay Island) in the first and second grades (Fonacier Bernabe, 1987). The experiment lasted seven years and yielded positive results. Yet, why did DO 74 wait for another project—fifty years later—before it decided to formally implement MTB-MLE?

To understand MTB-MLE and to predict its prospects, we must examine it within the bureaucratic culture which a reform must inevitably face. In 1953, Cresencio Peralta sent out questionnaires to investigate the use of vernacular as medium of instruction (MOI) among 52 school divisions and eight cities. Of the 36 divisions that responded, 12 continued teaching with home language while 24 stopped. Superintendents discontinued using it for the following reasons: lack of teaching materials in the home language, lack of teachers who could speak it, lack of directive from the Central office, the presence of too many home languages, and preference to wait for results of further experiments (cited in Fonacier Bernabe, 1987). Sixty years later, similar problems surfaced among teachers who used Bikol as MOI: the multilingual composition of student population, untranslatability of academic terms to a home language, and lack of materials (Burton, 2013).

Bautista, Bernardo, & Ocampo, 2008/2009 reviewed seven educational reforms from 1990 until 2006 to find out why reforms fail. First, a bureaucratic culture discourages change initiatives coming from members within the organisation. Reforms fail to take off because they are externally induced. Second, reforms are treated like school projects: to do by it and do away with it. Bautista, Bernardo, and Ocampo use the expression “education reform in a petri dish” to colourfully capture how initiatives do not develop beyond their initial stage. With Jane Austen’s eye for comedy, Miguel Luz describes how this bureaucratic medium paralyses innovation:

The DepEd bureaucracy lives by the DepEd Memo. This is so ingrained in the system that administrators and school heads will wait for [it] rather than act on their own. A common joke made: A principal will wait for a DepEd memo on “principal empowerment” before he will act on an issue (cited in Bautista et al., 2008/2009, p. 33).

These cause DepEd’s weak language-in-education policy: the policy’s inadequate theoretical support, the agency’s inability to influence policymakers to view language policy beyond employment growth paradigms, and the need to shift from structural learning paradigm to a more socio-constructivist pedagogy and assessment (Bautista et al., 2008/2009, p. 21–22). Young’s (2011) recommendations corroborate the need for increased awareness of multilingual education among stakeholders (students, teachers, local and national officials) and the challenge to keep education responsive to the locality. Nolasco (2013) correctly observes that MTB-MLE is officially recognised on paper, but the practice is still predominantly bilingual. If language policy is defined as “an explicit statement, usually but not necessarily contained in a formal document, about language use” (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2000, p. 2), then the Philippine language
policy can be described as either bilingual in Constitution—with English occupying prestige position according to employment growth paradigm—or multilingual on the strength of DO 74. To say the least, the policy is confused.

In a survey done among 476 Filipino teachers of English, majority bore negative perception about MTB-MLE (Wa-Mbaleko, 2014). A survey of non-teaching professionals yielded similar results (Mahboob & Cruz, 2013). Respondents connected English proficiency with economic success. They also believed that home language robbed children time to learn English. While community mobilisation (Dekker & Young, 2005) can contribute to MTB-MLE’s success, multilingual education faces an uphill battle against an ingrained hierarchisation of language.

3. The problem with language in language policy
Reflecting on Jacques Derrida’s confession about himself as francophone Jew, Tim McNamara (2010) blurs the boundaries between first language and additional language. Language is a resource regardless of origin. Indeed, language admits no origin. Like air, it is felt but escapes the hand’s grasp. It sustains life for everyone, but is owned by no one. Its course can only be surmised. It is a gift, a surprise. During the Vichy government, francophone Jews in Algeria were prohibited from exercising the privileges previously accorded to Jews of French nationality. When he was ten, Derrida was expelled from school because of his Jewish roots. Yet he considered himself French throughout his life. He wrote in a language that disowned him. McNamara muses on

the embrace of another language as a form of resistance, although it too will necessarily involve the experience of a secondary colonization. Thus, even bilingualism or multilingualism offers no escape from the monolingualism of the Other—they involve simply proliferation of monolingualism (McNamara, 2010, p. 36).

In this passage, McNamara explores how Derrida complicates the relationship between identity and language. If the marker of identity is the mother tongue, how can we put our hope on a marker that moves? Language is imagined as a stable reflection of the external world. Language is a source of the origin. Because language continually attempts to transcend the physical objects it describes, it purports to preserve the essence of the world in the purest, image-free container. The world as ideas soars lofty where they exist unchanged and stable. This lightness guarantees the possibility of retrieving origin and identity.

Yet Saussure (1974) has convincingly argued that the nature of language is representational, not mimetic; arbitrary, not logical. Furthermore, meaning is a magical result of morpho-phonemic differences we find in minimal pairs. Derrida (1976) pushes this further by positing the perpetual deferral of origin. No origin can be found because there is nothing but pure difference. There is none: Even that sentence cancels the affirmation of “is” (existence).

If identity is a constant reinvention, the search for identity in a mother tongue is always already a failed project. Nothing hinders us from appropriating the language of dominance as a form of resistance, as an expression of will to re-imagine the self. As a kid make-believes a bed to be a boat (without denying it is still a bed), so does the construction of identity reaches a ludic (playful) level of creative possibilities. Perhaps, that is what McNamara might have meant when he wrote that to adopt a second language is to embrace resistance and colonisation as well. For Derrida, the origin is the lynchpin around which a system is built. Once it is deconstructed, system-building (and the oppressiveness associated with it) collapses. William Butler Yeats (2003) captures the atmosphere in a line from The Second Coming: “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold”. 

Geography, language, and nativism may encourage policymakers to believe that a return to origin is possible. Dupre (2014) gives an account of the Taiwanese government’s contentious introduction of
Hakka, Min Nan and other local languages as a weekly mandatory class among Mandarin-speaking population. Taiwan’s case may illustrate how a mother tongue as binding marker can be as colonising as an imposed foreign language.

Aside from naturalising the politics of origin, language policy formalises uneven power relations through prescriptivism (Morgan, 2007). Thus, any language policy—be it monolingual, bi- or multilingual—is fraught with ethical issues when it sets a standard against which other languages or variations of language would be excluded (Canagarajah & Stanley, 2015; Cobarrubias, 1982; Oakes, 2017; Shahamy, 2006).

Finally, AL has shifted from an exclusive focus on LT to language as social (rather than linguistic) practice (Pennycook, 2010b). To accommodate sociality and multimodal communication, meaning broadens beyond word-to-world correspondence. Language is now viewed as fluid, tactical enactment of meaning negotiation (Song, 2016). The shift opens opportunities to research the intersections across language repertoire, heteroglossia, and the postmodern condition (Busch, 2012).

One problem with language-as-system comes from its language-centred orientation. Linguicentrism invests effort to preserve the status quo of a language through maintenance, standardisation, and planning. However, linguicentrism may downplay the affordances which motivate language users (Spolsky, 2004). For example, the history of bilingual education and its relationship to the civil rights movement are fraught with misunderstanding. The rationale for bilingualism as legal recognition differs from the rationale for bilingualism as pedagogy. The US courts saw bilingual education as a concession with the growing population of non-English speaking students. In the hands of linguicentric lobbyists, bilingual education became a means for language preservation (Spolsky, 2004). It appears that language preservation needs language-as-system model to justify its activities.

This artificial bifurcation of languaging (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) is also observed in the Philippines, a country with a formal bilingual policy stipulated in its Constitution. English and Filipino are considered as separate domains of language performance. In tertiary education, English retains its prestige as MOI for science, technology, engineering, and math (Washington, 2016). While bilingualism is observed, it inadvertently dichotomises languages as either intellectually reputable or quotidian.

Language performance is also split according to named language rather than the social context that motivates a preference for one linguistic repertoire over another. It is a bilingualism satisfied with preserving the systemic distinction among languages. In other words, a monolingual bilingualism dominates mainstream bilingual policy at the expense of other considerations. Why is that language spoken on such particular context? Is the subject trying to obliterate the heaviness of serial monolingualism by mixing several languages? (By serial monolingualism, we mean the prescription upon bi-/multilinguals to speak one language at a time so as to avoid one language system from contaminating another.) Isn’t the subject conjuring an idiolect distinguishable from past and future language performances based on socio-temporal factors? These questions are overlooked in monolingual bilingualism.

A bilingual may simultaneously employ multiple languages to convey an idea (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Just as the complexity of a metropolis involves traffic of ideas (and, inevitably, road traffic), speakers experience language traffic as they navigate complex social situations. Transactions of this type require multitasking, or a simultaneous reactivation of communication repertoires appropriated from diverse language systems. Language-as-system may be tidy as a map. But language is also like a city filled with serendipitous alleyways and alternate routes a commuter discovers. Hence, the promise of translanguaging as pedagogy is halted, misdirected or marginalised in a bilingual policy that still denies the ludic nature of language.
One can only be playful and innovative to an extent. It is possible to comprehend originality because it cannot be that original. Linguistic originality is a partial departure from collocation. A critique of language-as-system is not an utter disregard for order, beauty, and logic. AL has paid more attention to order than to flux because order is the markedness of language. As the eye is drawn to that coffee stain on a white crisp table cloth, so the mind is led to the seriality of language out of desire to impose order. As jouissance brings disruption, the mind guards itself from the dangerous pleasure of hybridity. Milton (2000) presciently portrays Sin as hybrid: “a woman to the waist, and fair/But ended foul in many a scaly fold/Voluminous and vast—a serpent armed with mortal sting.”

4. Translanguaging as pedagogy of amorphous language

As a way to accomplish things with words, languages betray the stability of pureness. When the focus of classroom research shifts to the daily negotiations among actors, language becomes a site for hybridity. Like performers on stage, multilinguals cleverly appropriate usable blocks from languages. Languages transform into stage props—contributory to performance, but also improvisatory. A chair can be a table or a dais or a catharsis of painful memories. What an actor does with a chair interests the audience more than the presence of the chair itself.

Translanguaging comes with different names. Creese and Blackledge (2014) speak of heteroglossia, apparently influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984) work on Dostoyevsky and Rabelais. Bailey (2007) draws out postcolonial implication from heteroglossia through its connection with the crafting of identity. Associated with postmodernism, translanguaging is characterised as a critique of binarism (Canagarajah, 2011; Stegu, 2011). As phenomenon in urban areas, translanguaging is related to metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010).

Garcia and Lin describe translanguaging as “both the complex and fluid language practices of bilinguals, as well as the pedagogical approaches that leverage those practices” (2017, p. 117). The practice of translanguaging encourages diverse linguistic practices in a classroom ecology. Blurring the boundaries across named languages, translanguaging is “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015, p. 281). An example of translanguaging includes reading in one language and responding through another language (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). Another example is borrowing words from one language and investing them with different meanings. New Chinglish (Li, 2018) and Filipinisms (McFarland, 2009) illustrate this creative transformation of named language into a fluid practice.

Translanguaging reflects postmodernity wherein people constantly rummage heirlooms at the attic of history, gender discourse, and nationalism. A self constantly refashions from these fragments. Language is amorphous insofar as its pristine form is inaccessible. It defies systematisation when its motley form refuses conventional differentiation across languages.

Language deconstructs its own form, remains provisional. A seeming coherence is adapted for convenience. Although translanguaging could have happened in any epoch characterised by the commerce of ideas and commodities, it can only be theoretically articulated in our age that celebrates the emancipatory advantages of fragmentation. Hence, translanguaging is an uncomfortable idea requiring pedagogical rethinking about correctness, error, and standard (Canagarajah, 2011).

However, translanguaging is seen to be a threat to minority languages as long as language is still perceived to be a bound system which must remain pure if it were to survive (Garcia & Lin, 2017; Li, 2018). A sustainable way to translanguaging can strike a balance between conservationist discourse and acceptance of linguistic purism’s indefensibility (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017).
Translanguaging differs from codeswitching, previously considered as a negative interference of L1 on the target language (Otheguy, Garcia & Reid, 2015). In translanguaging, switch from one language to another within one discursive event creatively negotiates meaning through multi-modal forms. Multimodality constitutes a bilingual’s linguistic repertoire. Shifting does not imply the inability to express oneself. Instead, the shift is improvisation and a trait of deftness in playing within a social event. Hence, language as a social practice is emphasised over language as a system.

In translanguaging switch occurs in features selection instead of grammar switch. Language broadly covers both the structuring mechanism of language (syntax, phonology, and morphology) and—more especially—the sociality and arbitrariness of language. While both languages may possess available tactics, a speaker/writer may prefer to construct a language ensemble because it more effectively fits a social practice. For instance, English and Filipino possess repertoire to impart witticism. Yet, a university professor may decide to deliver it to an audience whose cultural capital involves English. In a different situation, the same humour may be conveyed in Filipino or through a mix of both languages.

Because an event may be more complex than its description here, the example may be faulted for reductionism. It may appear that the professor has full agency to choose repertoire. The example serves just to point out the availability of languages as a resource of lexical and para-linguistic features. Of course, a social event is incalculable, unpredictable and overdetermined. This indeterminacy ruptures the language system and opens the possibilities of play, which is the “translanguaging space” (Li, 2018) in a linguistic event. We do not imply that linguistic decisions are ahistorical realisation. Habitus regulates choice insofar as the accrued competencies are a product of socialisation. Habitus opens the possibility of witticism, but also closes down other possibilities outside the actor’s historicity. For example, he may not crack a joke in French when his audience does not share his knowledge of French. Or he may not joke in French because he has no language competence. In the first example, habitus defers to contextuality. In the second, habitus lacks a history to refashion the event.

Translanguaging avoids transfixing language into linguistic objects. Sometimes, linguistic objects can unfortunately serve panopticism. If the nation is origin of language, language-as-object systematically quarantines fuzzy linguistic realisations. Hence, language-as-object is a productive power that constructs identity (albeit, a repressive one). In rethinking language, translanguaging eases the commerce across languages and admits hybrid competencies. This means the nation-state is just one among the many points of departure in languaging. Nationality may occupy the backstage to lend prominence to class, gender, or a confluence of identifications. Language ceases to be an end goal of communication. On the contrary, language becomes an “erogenous zone” (de Certeau, 2000, p. 178), a site to reconstitute communication. Reconstitution acknowledges that the subject’s language performance today could morph tomorrow.

The association of translanguaging with multilingualism lends it an overt political agenda. Multilingualism can interrogate “the discrimination, coercion, exclusion, impositions and violation of rights, in the name of unity and cohesion” (Shohamy, 2006, p. xix). In our postcolonial age, racism is subtly coming back. Old racism justified the hierarchy of races through biological difference. It is shamelessly straightforward. The new racism reestablishes the old order on the basis of unbridgeable cultural differences (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991). In our age that lionises difference for difference’s sake, we may fall into a predicament similar to the racism we critique. A monolingual multilingualism segregates; this time, nativism cleanses the tongue of impurities.

Arguably, supporters of multilingualism have romanticised it as a return to a pristine language that never was (Canagarajah, 2011). Through a critique of purism, translanguaging shows much promise in combatting a racism that doesn’t look like one. AL should be more wary (hence, more theoretical) lest it becomes a seedbed for neoracism.
On the other hand, the mother tongue could be mishandled too. Multilingualism might be introduced as a simplistic solution to complex economic struggles of which language is a symptom (Hamid, Nguyen & Baldauf, 2013). Multilingualism might be used by a government for window dressing perennial socio-political problems better addressed outside language policy.

5. Towards creative destruction in language curriculum

In the first volume of The Practice of Everyday Life, the French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau (1984) pays homage to the ordinary people. The social sciences treated them as a nameless effect of the actions undertaken by celebrated personalities who dominate history and hagiography. De Certeau considers his work as a “science of singularity” because the quotidian bears the unique intervention of nameless individuals on the representation of their lives. The ordinary—crossing the street, eating a burger for lunch, scrolling a playlist on one’s smartphone during a heavy traffic—is an exercise of seizing the moment to transform it to a realisation through difference. By affirming the inventiveness in the everyday, de Certeau critiques the idea of dailiness as the realm of boredom. More than an eyesore in urban spaces, graffiti penetrate the soul as they anonymously express the shared— but unspoken—resistance to drab urban existence. Graffiti are a manifesto against gentrification.

A language curriculum cascades from a central government agency that sometimes overlooks the singularity of a classroom. The students and the teachers are reduced to nameless actors expected to mould themselves into walking signages of a directive intent on replicating itself into the bodies of its subjects. A curriculum can be implemented in three ways. The fidelity approach turns actors into curriculum transmitters who unquestioningly follow the prescribed coverage “without responding to classroom dynamics” (Shawer, Gilmore, & Banks-Joseph, 2008, p. 2). On the other hand, mutual adaptation approach produces curriculum developers who adjust the coverage and competencies according to the singularity of the classroom. Finally, in an enactment approach, students and teachers are curriculum makers who can radically resist the hegemonic pressure of a top-down curriculum (Shawer et al., 2008; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992).

Although the Philippines is the first in Southeast Asia to institute MTB-MLE, much work still needs to be done as a power struggle over MOI is ongoing (Tupas & Martin, 2017). Indeed, Ruanni Tupas (2015) perceptively cautions that a top-down implementation cannot guarantee the prospects of mother tongue education in a country with a centralised, memo-mentality education system. For this reason, he suggests a reconceptualisation of teacher education based on critical theory. When teachers limit themselves to methodological issues, they unwittingly participate in a strategic network of institutional production of docile bodies.

De Certeau speaks of strategy as “the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an ‘environment’” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). Strategy is the proper operation of an institution that produces prohibitions and permissions naturalised as common sense. In other words, external authority is rendered more powerful as it undergoes internalisation. Strategy is analogous to capital because both multiply with Taylorist precision. In fidelity approach, the curriculum is replicated on each actor.

Critical teacher education encourages reexamining our teacher ideology and problematises our preoccupation with teaching methodology (Tupas, 2015). While the call for autocritique is timely, Tupas deflects the potential of language-as-resource model in multilingual pedagogy. Students are already doing critique through translanguaging. Absence of intentionality does not preclude this accomplishment. Students may be translanguaging without a clear understanding of their subversive performance. Hence, teachers’ consciousness of received ideology is crucial to imparting praxis among students.

Strategy loses sight of the marginal in the classroom, the students who comprise the silent majority. De Certeau proposes tactic as counterpoint to strategy and defines it as “a calculus which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline
distinguishing the other as a visible totality ... A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). In other words, a tactic is a resource for resistance accessible to teachers as well as students. Being an “open-access” tool, a tactic may not be directly produced by its users. In fact, it could be a resource of an institution. Through poaching, the silent majority transform these moments of strategic practice into opportunities for tactical manipulation. Through poaching, they illegally consume a strategy and turn it into a tactic.

6. Conclusion

Innovation and creativity in language curriculum require an alternative to language-as-system. Named language favours monolingualism, an utterance system that monopolises through linguistic quarantine. Throughout the article, we argue that amorphous language model can account for language practices of a multilingual classroom. Amorphous language complements a fortiori Garcia and Li’s (2014) suggestion to move from bilingualism to translanguaging in education. However, translanguaging needs translation to practical application in the classroom (Canagarajah, 2011). For example, a language ecology framework has shown promising results of translanguaging in a bilingual classroom (Creese & Blackledge, 2014).

We do not deny that language-as-system is a valid analytical tool. But it is not an adequate concept for understanding what students do with language to get things done. Filipino linguist Bonifacio Sibayan forecasted that an intellectualised Filipino language would be a hybrid of Filipino and academic register from English (Gonzales, 1998). Burton (2013) quotes a math teacher who practices her own variety of translanguaging: “I do not translate it [math term in English] anymore. I explain it to the pupils. We cannot translate this to Bikol. And I use the English word if no words will fit that word. When I teach place value, [I say] place value” (Burton, 2013, p. 89). Like the sixteenth and seventeenth-century mystics who fascinated de Certeau, curriculum makers “articulate the experience of an elsewhere, but within the tradition they adopted” (de Certeau, 1992, p. 22). The location of resistance, creativity, and innovation in language curriculum lies at the tactical practice of the curriculum itself. Translanguaging covertly erodes the logic of language as serial monolingualism.

Perhaps, future research on translanguaging may explore how language performance may combine with multiple modes such as computer language, artificial intelligence, and robotics. When that day comes, the artifice of boundaries will be exposed in broad daylight.
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