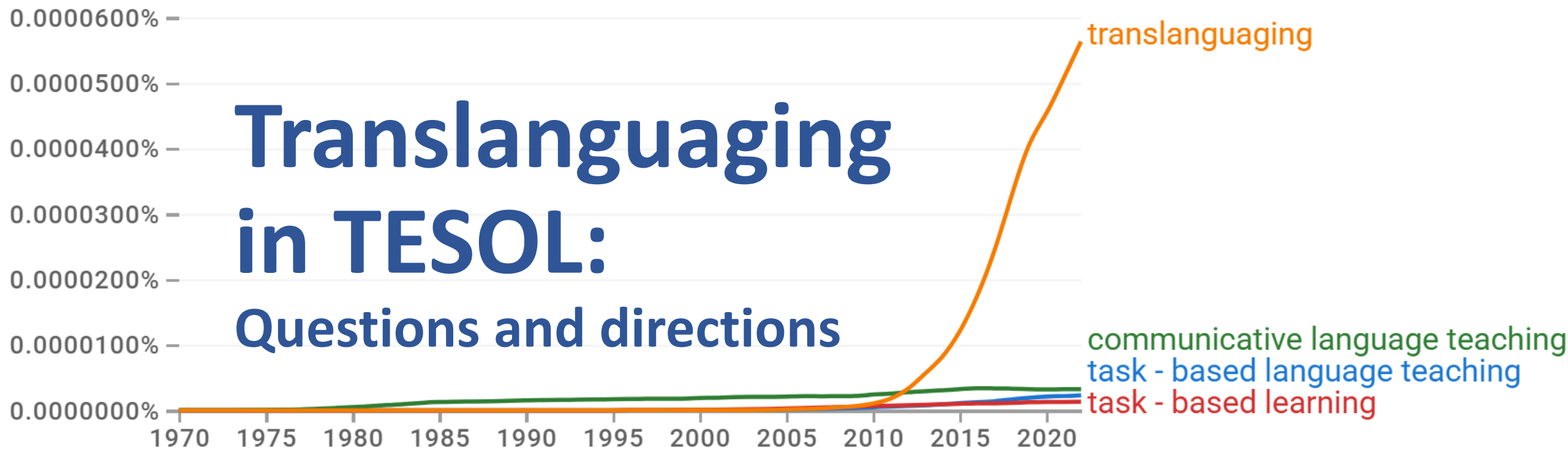


Translanguaging in TESOL: Questions and directions



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Questions and directions

1. How do we navigate between the need to embrace and incorporate our learners' multilingual repertoires in our classes, and the need to focus primarily on developing a limited part of these repertoires (the English part)? Is there a trade-off here?
2. Are we back in the old discussion of how much 'L1' to use in the 'L2' classroom?
3. Are translanguaging pedagogy and communicative language teaching oppositional as theories underpinning language learning?
4. Are we moving away from current understandings of 'English' communicative competence as the primary outcome of ELT? If so, what are we moving towards? (i.e., the 'directions' bit!)

Contexts and communities for this talk

- **Global awareness:** Remaining aware of all teachers who teach English as an additional language in some way (esp. EFL, ESL, ESOL, CLIL), esp. the most numerous (primary and secondary EFL and postcolonial ESL around the world)
- **Low resource norms:** Recognising that most of these practitioners work in challenging situations
- **‘TESOL’ discourse bias:** While this talk does address academic discourse and theory, it prioritises the challenges and concerns of the above teachers, not those working in the Anglosphere



Brief background to translanguaging theory

- Rapid emergence of translanguaging as a key construct, initially in bilingual education (e.g., García, 2009)
- It has become both a means and an end in the struggle to achieve more appropriate, equitable, socially just and decolonised multilingual education: a **meta-theory** (of, e.g., language, cognition, practice, identity, pedagogy - combined?) – hence a **paradigm shift** (Anderson, 2024c).
- Example definition (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 2):
 - “...translanguaging is an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages.”
- Stronger and weaker forms have emerged (García & Lin, 2017)

But what does it mean for us in 'named' language teaching?

What probably hasn't changed?

- While many aspects of our understanding of what language is and what types of learning constitute valued learning in additional language teaching are under debate (Anderson, 2022, 2024a; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Leung & Valdes, 2019), the following probably still hold true for those of us who teach named languages:
 1. learners need plentiful exposure to the language (or languaging practices) we expect them to learn (i.e. 'input')
 2. learners need opportunities to use/practice/'do' the language we expect them to learn (i.e. 'output' / 'interaction')
 3. learners need some kind of explicit instruction to support and guide learning relative to these input and output opportunities
- i.e., certain fundamentals of SLA theory underpinning CLT probably remain true, broadly supporting Nation's 'Four Strands' approach (2007), as a starting point.

Emerging pedagogic questions

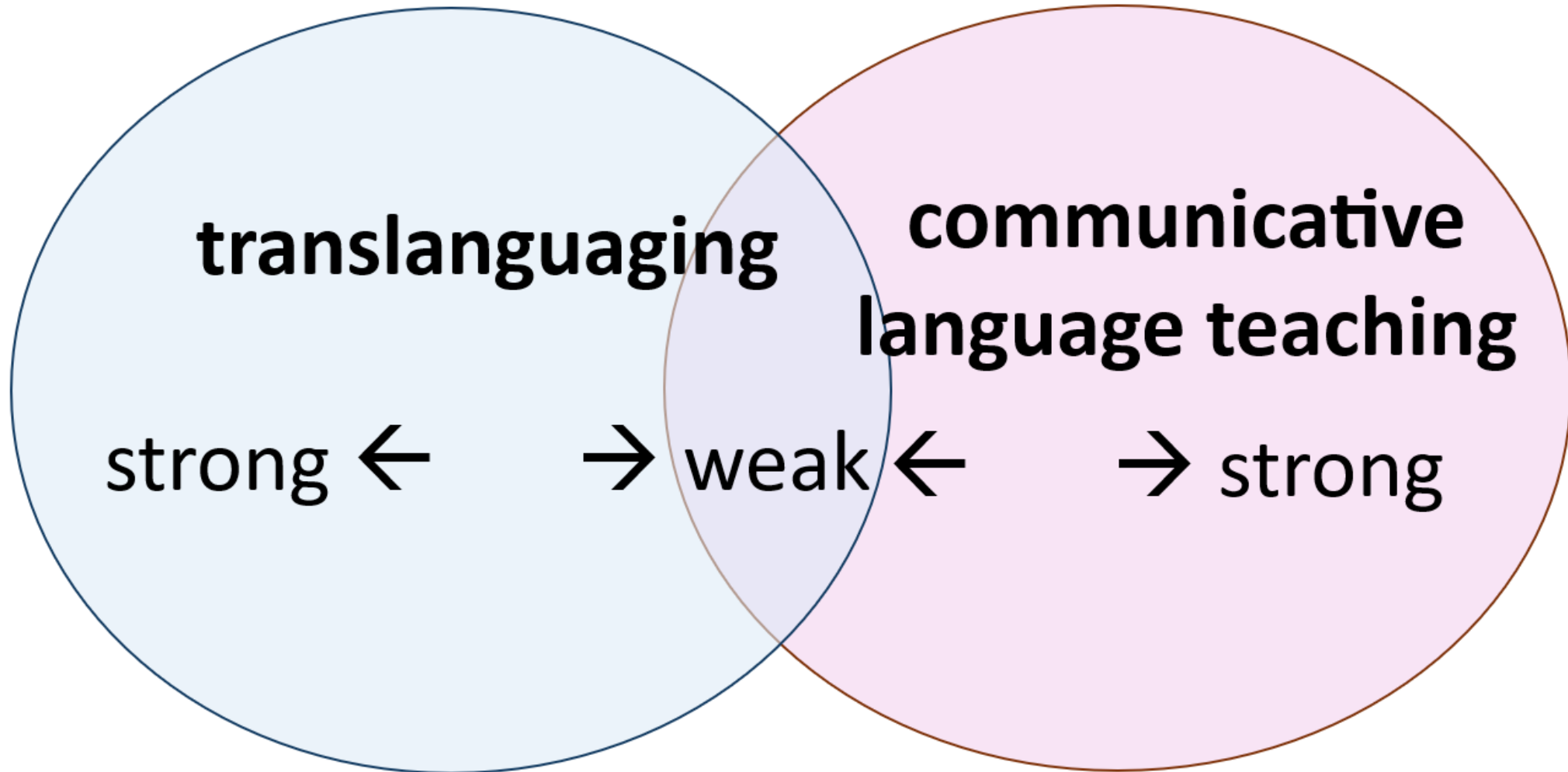
Learners still need input, output and interaction in/involving the “target language” (TL), but:

1. What happens *around* the input and output opportunities?
2. How exactly do we *do* the explicit instruction, from a languaging perspective?
3. To what extent might the input, output and interaction opportunities themselves *become* translingual?
4. What else do our learners need to *be* confident, capable, empowered language learners users?

These are perhaps the emerging areas of discussion about translanguaging in TESOL/ELT (see Hall, 2020; Jeon et al., 2025; Kim & Weng, 2022).

- How does CLT, as ELT ‘orthodoxy’, deal with them?

Translanguaging and CLT: What's the relationship?



The strong CLT perspective (i.e. TBLT)

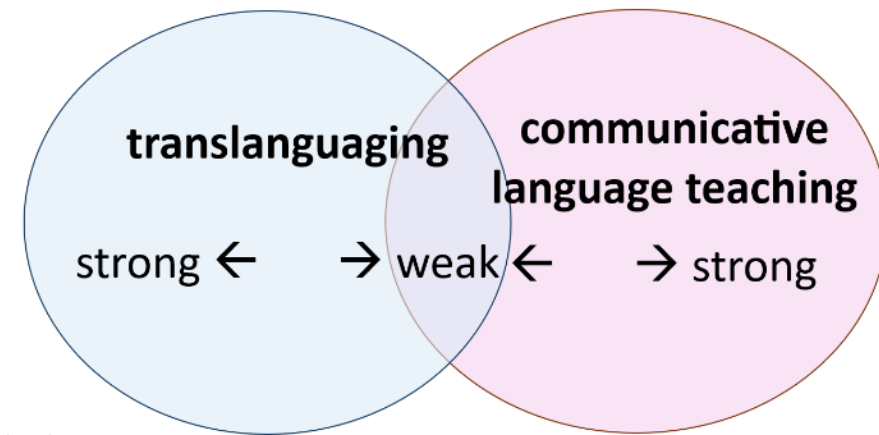
- Task-based language teaching (TBLT) emerged as a process-oriented monolingual pedagogy
- For acquisition of the ‘target language’ (TL), it assumes learners have to use it interactively and meaningfully to achieve outcomes through communication focused tasks conducted in the TL.
- So far, academics have struggled to reconcile TBLT with translanguaging:
 - East and Wang (2024) are not too optimistic: “...the monolingual principle makes sense” (p. 7) during tasks. They acknowledge that translanguaging during tasks is more authentic and can facilitate achievement of task outcomes, but they don’t address the ‘how much’ question
 - Seals et al. (2020): ‘L1’ may be used for task planning rehearsal (arguably also in post-task activities – my thought)
- Corrective feedback could also be conducted as a translingual practice to reduce cognitive load and increase rapid comprehension (research needed?)
- **BUT - the paradox:** The so-called “task” stops being a task when learners are empowered to use their full repertoire – simultaneously circumventing the process and its purpose (to facilitate TL “acquisition”), and therefore undermining the premise of TBLT

Is that
all?

The weak CLT perspective (i.e. PPP/TSLT/CAP(E), etc.)

- More opportunities for ‘teaching’, which can be translingual
- Argument for use of L1 in explicit grammar instruction well established; also possible for phonology, discourse, genre (etc.) instruction
- Opportunities for translation also evident (e.g., when teaching lexis, comparing languages, etc.)
- Weak CLT still tends to assume that classroom communication should remain in English/TL as a primary opportunity for exposure and use, but this can also be more translingual depending on context, competencies and needs (Rabbidge, 2019)
- Opportunities for learner informal translanguaging (e.g., brief spaces during (controlled) practice activities and pair checks; Anderson, 2021)
- See Jeon et al.’s (2025) review-based framework: Useful summary of the above.

Recap: CLT and translanguaging



- Limited affordances
- Stronger CLT – fewer translanguaging opportunities
- Weaker CLT – more translanguaging opportunities
- Time spent translanguaging is inevitably seen as time taken away from (maximising) ‘TL use’
- Translanguaging happens largely “around” the most important lesson activities, but not necessarily in them
- Can it ever really get beyond the ‘judicious use’ arguments of past L1-use debates? (see Hall & Cook, 2012; Macaro, 2005; Shin et al., 2020; Swain & Lapkin, 2000)
- How to move beyond this impasse (if desired)?

Existing and emerging frameworks for translanguaging

General frameworks

- García et al. (2016): stance, design, shifts;
- Cenoz & Gorter (2021): pedagogical and spontaneous TL continuum;
- Duarte & Günther-van Der Meij (2018)

TESOL

- Jeon et al. (2025), based on systematic literature review (meta-ethnography, see Figures)
- Kim & Weng (2022) EFL/ESL distinction.

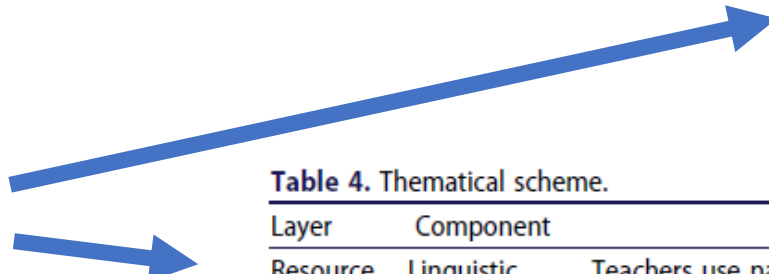
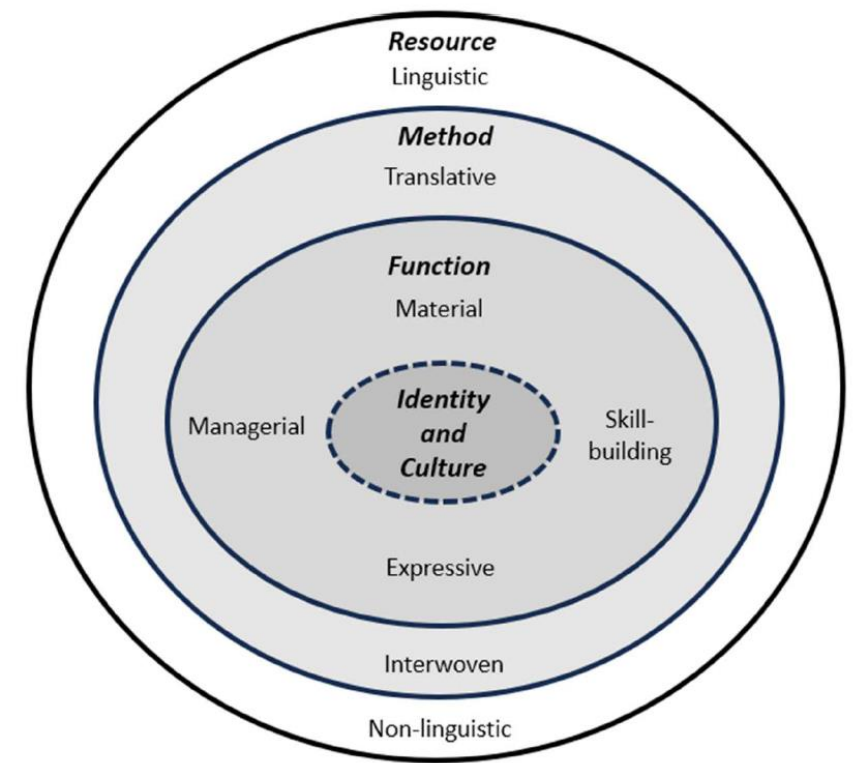


Table 4. Thematical scheme.

| Layer | Component | Definition |
|----------------------|----------------|--|
| Resource | Linguistic | Teachers use named languages for translanguaging. |
| | Nonlinguistic | Teachers use gestures, signs, or other semiotic resources than named languages for translanguaging. |
| Method | Translative | The same meaning is produced through different resources. |
| | Interwoven | New meaning is added through different resources. |
| Function | Material | Teachers use translanguaging with materials to guide interaction topics, manage conversational turns, or provide language practice. |
| | Managerial | Teachers use translanguaging to organize the learning environment. |
| | Skill-building | Teachers use translanguaging to enable students to produce correct forms and acquire language sub-skills (e.g. listening, speaking, phonology, grammar, etc.). |
| | Expressive | Teachers use translanguaging to enable students to express themselves freely and clearly and to promote their language fluency. |
| Identity and Culture | | When translanguaging, teachers share the same cultural awareness with students or promote students' own identities. |

Two possibilities...

1. Re-evaluating how we understand “competence”
2. Moving beyond competence(-only) models of additional language education (ALE)

1. Reevaluating and redefining (communicative) competence

- Communicative competence is typically seen as a monolingual construct with four elements (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980)
- Possibility of adding additional competences (e.g., Anderson's translingual competence; 2018)
- Possibility of viewing competence differently (e.g., Canagarajah's performative competence; 2013)
- This creates opportunities for more authentic translingual practices as both the norms and the goals of language teaching (e.g., mediation activities, translation activities, comparative analysis activities, etc.)
- How does this impact learning? Still not clear, but see Yuzlu and Dikilitas (2022).

2. Moving beyond competence (only)

- SLA research (and CLT as its methodology of choice) has tended to assume that the only meaningful goal of language education is to develop learner (communicative) competence (Anderson, 2024a)
- While competence models can be amended (e.g., as discussed previously), these still only recognise a comparatively small proportion of much of what is frequently identified and assessed as valuable in much additional language education (ALE) today (Anderson, 2024a)
- As Kramsch (2002) documents, modern foreign language curricula typically have a much wider range of goals than TL proficiency development. These have continued to expand (e.g., social and emotional intelligence, higher-order thinking skills, intercultural awareness, etc.). See, e.g., China's shift to a core competencies curriculum (and away from TBLT) (Wang & Luo, 2019).

A post-competence perspective

- Based on the norms and realities for the vast majority of English language teachers and their learners around the world today, Anderson (2024a) argues that the still-dominant competence orientation (language as innate faculty) in ALE needs to be balanced with a literacy orientation (language as social construct):
 - **Competence orientation** (language as innate faculty): models that view language education as the enabling of the faculties of natural language learning. Language is a system to which learners need to be exposed, given opportunities to communicate in, and to learn through trial and error.
 - **Literacy orientation** (language as social construct): models that view language education as the development of the means of cultural interaction. Language is a system which learners need to be introduced to, and taught the rules, discourses and evaluation criteria of, both in formal education and wider society. (p. 274)

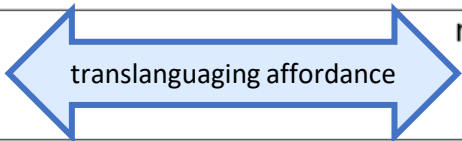
Anderson's (2024a) competence-literacy continuum (p. 275)

- Different systems, programs, classes will necessarily locate at different points on this continuum depending on educational goals/outcomes, which themselves result from value systems and priorities in a given context.
- Importantly, different locations will reflect different ideologies, opportunities and expectations with regard to mono- and multilingual practices (including translanguaging).

| | competence orientation | ← pluralist orientation → | literacy orientation |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| | strong | weak | weak strong |
| view of learning | as implicit acquisition | including both implicit and explicit learning | as explicit understanding |
| view of syllabus | individual, internally-defined | external syllabus adapted to individual needs | communal, externally-defined |
| teacher role | to create conditions for acquisition | to support both acquisition and development | to guide and scaffold development |
| learner role | to progress towards autonomy | to gain independence through mastery | to master texts, registers, genres, etc. |
| prioritised learning practices | learner-independent activities | both teacher-led and learner-independent | teacher-led instruction, modelling |
| prioritised learning processes | exposure, meaningful interaction | multiple | study of texts, practice, replication |
| emphasised modalities | speaking and listening | balanced | reading and writing |
| repertoire focus | target language prioritised | adaptive | more-enabled language(s) prioritised |
| primary assessment focus | process (acts) | both product and process | product (texts) |
| primary assessment goal | proficiency | both literacy and proficiency | literacy |

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TESOL as both literacy and competence development (the pluralist perspective)

- Disrupts the locus of ALE from ‘natural’ language ‘acquisition’ (“instructed SLA”) that disadvantages many EFL contexts worldwide
- Capable of incorporating multiple, diverse goals beyond simply proficiency development (although this is not necessarily devalued)
- Wherever appropriate, identified competencies and literacies of value can be/become translingual (e.g., Mukhopadhyay et al., 2022)
- Opportunities for translanguaging increase significantly (e.g., for supporting the development of basic literacies, critical literacies, digital literacies, translation literacies, higher-order thinking skills, social-emotional learning, learner identity development, sociopolitical awareness, education-specific skills and meta-strategies, etc.)(Anderson, 2024b, 2024c)
- Translanguaging is no longer in opposition to key goals of ALE

Example activities and projects for developing competences and literacies translingually

1. Translingual news comparison (learners compare the same news story as presented in English and the community language)
2. Research and present projects (learners research something online in English [e.g., song, person, cultural phenomenon] and mediate to peers through a translingual presentation)
3. Grammar or phonology comparison posters (learners develop posters on specific areas of English language that compare and contrast it with the community language) (e.g., Anderson, 2007)
4. Exploring translation literacy through poetry, songs and drama (e.g., difference between literal and figurative translation)

Many more to come... 😊

Phonics for Eritrean Elementary School Teachers



The example words are short and simple to draw. Most of the example words are from the Eritrean grade 1 coursebook. The Tigrinya and Saho sounds given are the closest possible. They are not always the same. Often the Saho and English sounds are the same.

Lower Grades (1-2)

The Phonic Alphabet

| English | Tigrinya | Saho | Example words | |
|---------|----------|------|---------------|-------------------|
| a | ላ | a | cat | man |
| b | ብ | b | book | bed |
| c | ከ | k | cat | cup |
| d | ድ | d | dog | bird |
| e | ኦ | e | egg | bed |
| f | ፍ | f | fish | fruit |
| g | ግ | g | girl | dog |
| h | ህ | h | hat | hello |
| i | ኢ/ሀ | i | fish | in |
| j | ጅ | j | jacket | jump |
| k | ከ | k | king | book (as for 'c') |
| l | ል | l | leg | girl |
| m | ም | m | man | animal |
| n | ን | n | nose | man |
| o | ኦ | o | dog | shop |
| p | ፕ | p | pen | shop |
| q | ከወ | kw | queen | quiet |
| r | ር | r | rabbit | run |
| s | ስ | s | sun | sleep |
| t | ጥ | t | tree | cat |
| u | ህ* | a* | cup | sun |
| v | ቫ | v | vase | five |
| w | ወ | w | window | wall |
| x | ከሰ | ks | axe | fox |
| y | ይ | y | yellow | yes |
| z | ዝ | z | zip | zebra |

*Tigrinya and Saho have no exact equivalent. It is half way between ከ and ህ. Just use ከ if it's difficult.

Important Blends

| English | Tigrinya | Saho | Example words | |
|---------|----------|------|---------------|-----------|
| ch | ቸ | ç | chicken | match |
| ck | ከ | k | stick | chicken |
| sh | ሽ | sh | shop | fish |
| th | ፍ/ሽ | f/v | three | mother |
| ar | አር | aa | car | farm |
| ee | ኢ | ii | tree | teeth |
| oo | ኡ | u/uu | book | classroom |

'blend' means 'combination'

Double Consonants

Teach the students that they have the same pronunciation as the single consonant:

rabbit tall glass

Higher Grades (3-5)

Vowel + Consonant Blends

| English | Tigrinya | Saho | Example word |
|---------|----------|------|--------------|
| air | አር | ee | chair |
| al/all | ላል | ol | ball |
| ay | አይ | ey | day |
| er | ኦ | a | finger |
| ight | አይ-ጥ | ayt | night |
| ir | አር | er | girl |
| ow | አው | aw | cow |

Two Vowel Blends

| English | Tigrinya | Saho | Example word |
|---------|----------|------|--------------|
| ai | አይ | ey | wait |
| ea | ኢ | ii | eat* |
| ui | ኡ | u | fruit |

*ea has many pronunciations. Teach this pronunciation first. Then introduce others (e.g. head, break)

The Magic 'e'

When a short word (1 syllable) has the letter 'e' at the end, the vowel before it is pronounced like the name of the letter.

name



Examples:

- name The letter 'a' is pronounced አይ / ey
- five The letter 'i' is pronounced አይ / aj
- nose The letter 'o' is pronounced አው / ew



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