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## **Circulation of concepts, compartmentalisation and erasures in Western academic circles: sumak kawsay/buen vivir and translanguaging**

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## **Circulation of concepts, compartmentalisation and erasures in Western academic circles: *sumak kawsay/buen vivir* and translanguaging<sup>1</sup>**

Building on previous studies, this paper addresses the geopolitics of knowledge circulation in an academic field known as sociolinguistics in France, showing firstly the common erasure of research produced in the Global South and in languages other than English, and secondly the need to decolonise entire fields of research, in which analytic frameworks are mostly produced in hegemonic Global centres. As part of this special issue, we ask how far concepts rooted in Southern or non-hegemonic experiences are marginalized, co-opted or reused in academic circles in the West in general and in France in particular. As a modest epistemological contribution, this paper then focuses on two concepts – *sumak kawsay/buen vivir* and *translanguaging* – looking at their archaeology and development and at how they circulate in these fields, both in Northern and Southern academic circles. Both examples illustrate their circulation but also erasures and compartmentalisation through language.

Keywords: geopolitics of knowledge circulation; circulation of concepts; multilingualism

### **Introduction**

It is a well-known fact that in the West, scientific disciplines such as linguistics and anthropology developed concomitantly with the description of languages and cultures

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this article were given as a paper at the conference on ‘Globalisations et circulations des idées, des savoirs et des normes’ which I co-organised within the Fédération Sciences Sociales aux Suds (2019) and as a plenary at the Sociolinguistic Symposium in Ghent (2022).

viewed as exotic (Gal and Irvine 1995), in parts of the world which served as a reservoir for Western theorising (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012) captured through a violent episteme (Deumert and Storch 2019) and an extractivist process of elicitation and data mining. Simultaneously with the development of nation-states, colonial linguistic descriptions produced ‘powerful icons of ethnolinguistic sharedness’ (Errington 2001) which played a part in the invention of Africa and African languages (Mudimbe 1988; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Colonised territories were forced to adopt the norms and nomenclature of the West. Educational systems, designed during the colonial period and based on European models, perpetuated colonial ideologies and hierarchies of languages and language varieties (Bambgose 2000), and continued to disseminate Western forms of knowledge (Makoni and Pennycook 2021). Thus European, and more generally Western, scientific discourse, with its own norms and worldviews, has de facto imposed itself as a ‘global science’ in social sciences and disciplines such as sociology (Dufoix and Macé 2019). The tendency to assume that research focused on the WEIRD countries (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic) is universally valid (Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan 2010) has been remarked on repeatedly, as has the tendency to present Western theories, notions and research as ethically sound, pan-cultural and universally applicable (Shi-xu 2009), while at the same time Southern researchers have been assigned to local and empirical domains (Mudimbe 1988, Hountondji 2002).

To quote Dufoix and Macé, the global economy of knowledge in the social sciences is ‘still dominated by the West linguistically, academically, financially, editorially, and conceptually – and, within this overall domination, by the English language, which unfailingly produces effects of “peripherisation” and

“provincialisation” within the North itself” (2019, 121). This assessment, which relies heavily on the critiques from subaltern, post- and decolonial studies, matches many academic experiences, including my own in multilingual scientific environments, reading and working with colleagues from various institutions around the globe in the field of multilingualism for the last twenty years. As a French scholar engaged in long-term scientific projects both in Amazonia and Southeast Asia, becoming decentred is a necessary experience, as is taking on board alternative theorising and emic perspectives (Léglise 2017)<sup>2</sup> even though – or because – these *Southern theories* (Connell 2007) or *Epistemologies of the South*<sup>3</sup> (Santos 2007) are peripheral to the system of knowledge production (Medina 2013, Demeter 2020) and have been the object of erasure on a massive scale. Becoming aware of the silences in Western epistemologies (Mignolo 2009) is one response; identifying interconnections (Kerfoot and Hyltenstam 2017) and reappropriations is another; addressing core-periphery problems in academic publishing and its exclusionary effects (Obeng-Odoom 2019) is yet another. None of these

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<sup>2</sup> More than twenty years of companionship experiencing coloniality in French overseas territories and discussions with French Guianese friends, including local activists and political leaders, has made me very sensitive to Indigenous claims and also receptive to Southern epistemologies. Among many other occasions, the conferences of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics were crucial opportunities for me as a young researcher to first encounter powerful discourses by Caribbean scholars. Years later, regular meetings with colleagues from the Southern Multilingualisms and Diversities Consortium gave me the opportunity to learn from experiences in South Africa, Australia and many other countries.

<sup>3</sup> Following Santos (2011, 39) I understand the Global South as ‘a metaphor for human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on the global level, as well as for the resistance that seeks to overcome or minimise such suffering’, a phenomenon that exists both in Western or Northern countries and in Southern contexts.

responses excludes the other. In the present text I hope to contribute to this field by discussing the circulation of concepts in research on language and society (a subdiscipline identified as sociolinguistics in France), particularly in my own fields, multilingualism and education. I am seeking to go beyond the hegemonic productions of our research fields, and to ask how far concepts rooted in Southern or non-hegemonic experiences are marginalized, co-opted or reused in Western academic circles in general and in France in particular.

Epistemological thinking of this sort, whose subject is an active scientific discipline, is not easy to do: in the scientific discipline in which I was trained, the language sciences, epistemological analysis of the ‘history of linguistic ideas’ is generally practised over the long term (Auroux 1989). However, I still think that epistemological thinking on the contemporary is necessary, since it enables us to question our own place in the chain of production and circulation of knowledge as a whole, and that of concepts and theories in particular. Years of co-writing cross-linguistically<sup>4</sup> and cross-theoretically has made me particularly sensitive to the difficulty of finding shared concepts to communicate cross-culturally – even between Francophone and Anglophone sociolinguistics. As Guilherme and Dietz (2015) show, scientific concepts form complex webs-of-understandings with layers and regions of meanings. Thus, as traditions of thought in sociolinguistics are deeply linked to

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<sup>4</sup> Drawing on the conception of comprehension, as articulated by Bourdieu and Culioli, as a particular case of misunderstanding, communication always needs inter-individual adjustments. In my view named languages, theories and illusions of understanding might constitute obstacles to be overcome to avoid common misunderstandings.

languages (Léglise 2022), they constitute different ‘cultural discourses’ which might be analysed through both a transcultural and crosscultural analysis (Shi-xu 2022), in search of influence and borrowing of concepts in the first case and of differences and variations in the second. Discussing the circulation of concepts cross-linguistically, as I will, can thus contribute to cultural discourse studies.

Although trained in sociolinguistics, I have begun a dialogue with many social scientists over the last decade, particularly through the French Federation of Research Centres working in the Global South, seeking to ‘take into account perspectives developed from/on the South to think science’ (Dumoulin Kervran et al. 2018). As a consequence, I have been interested in the circulation of knowledge (Keim 2014) through studies spanning the sociology of elites, intellectual history and reception studies showing how theories and ideas are circulated across countries and disciplines, mostly by mobile scholars (Medina 2013, Demeter 2020) with a mobile gaze. If ideas flow ‘like rivers, from the South to the North, and are then transformed into tributaries which swell into great waves of thought’ (Cusicanqui 2012, 116), very few empirical studies focus on the reception of knowledge ‘from the South to the North’ (but see Brisson (2020) on the limited reception of Spivak in France, for example).

In terms of methodology, I draw here on epistemological analysis of linguistic thought by adopting qualitative and epistemological thinking on the contemporary in my fields of expertise, tracing the archaeology of concepts and its variation in academic texts. I also draw on studies of the circulation of knowledge, by tracing authors’ quotations and concepts as they circulate particularly in publications in sociolinguistics. All this analysis is qualitative, complemented by a systematic analysis of all PhD theses defended in France between 1985 and 2020.

The first section of the paper, building on previous studies, addresses the geopolitics of knowledge production in my fields of inquiry – broadly defined as the sociolinguistics of multilingualism – showing firstly the common erasure of research produced by scholars in institutions located in what is described as the Global South and in languages other than English, and secondly the adoption of the Global North as the sole provider of analytic frameworks. In the second and third sections I look at the archaeology and development of two concepts – *sumak kawsay/buen vivir* and *translanguaging* – and at how they circulate in these fields in various academic circles. Both examples, I argue, illustrate the circulation of concepts and also erasures and compartmentalisation through language.

### **The geopolitics of knowledge production and circulation around the sociolinguistics of multilingualism**

In the last decades, critical works have opened up a fruitful space of contestation on the global economy of knowledge, although relatively few empirical studies concern the field of the sociolinguistics of multilingualism and education (but see Canagarajah 1996, Bamgbose 2000 and more recent studies cited below) and its exclusionary effect on researchers located in Southern institutions. Recent publications urge us to decolonise these fields (see among others Pennycook and Makoni 2020, Ndhlovu 2021). At the same time, by including the voices of traditionally excluded, marginalised or silenced populations in both the South and the North (Kerfoot and Hyltenstam 2017), scholars situated in Southern institutions are still struggling to make their voices heard in rethinking the sociolinguistics of multilingualism (Heugh et al. 2021). In their



introduction to a thematic issue entitled *Seeing from the South*<sup>5</sup> a few years ago, Tommaso Milani and Michelle Lazar (2017) note that in reference books introducing sociolinguistics published in English, and disseminated globally through major publishers, postcolonial theorists are never cited, hardly any contributions are associated with Southern institutions, and none deal with theories or data from outside Europe or North America, except for occasional references. These geopolitics of knowledge, already well described in many publications, still privilege Northern perspectives and deter researchers from the South from providing differently positioned interpretations of events and practices that matter to them (Mignolo 2002). I have similarly shown (Léglise 2022) that postcolonial theorists are almost never cited in sociolinguistic research in France. It is as if the numerous works published in postcolonial, subaltern or de-colonial studies during the last decades were non-existent and irrelevant to the study of language in society. I have also shown that contemporary works by scholars situated in Southern institutions simply have no place: in a recent reference book introducing sociolinguistic concepts 90% of the contributions are from France and none from outside Europe and North America.

Effects of peripheralisation have also been documented in the subfield of multilingualism through the study of citation practices in four academic journals. The

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<sup>5</sup> At the time, the first author was affiliated with a university in South Africa and the second in Singapore, both locations they consider as belonging to the Global South, an expression which ‘encapsulates the conflation between geographical positionality and political marginality, as well as captures the complexity of contemporary postcolonial conditions’ (ibid.).

study by Liddicoat (2016) shows how the impression that no academic knowledge or tradition exists outside the English-speaking world comes about: 90 to 100% of citations are taken from English-language sources. Languages other than English, along with their associated epistemologies, are almost invisible, as if they have made only a peripheral contribution to the field of multilingualism and the definition of its theoretical foundations.

Research on multilingualism in education shows also that at present, while caught between locally specific demands on the one hand and globalisation on the other, the subject is still strongly influenced by its colonial history, due to the persistence of language policies (Bamgbose 2000) as well as asymmetrical language status inherited from colonialism and resulting language-based social inequalities (Migge and Léglise 2007). Pennycook and Makoni (2020) show that research done on a country in the Global South generally first discusses the theoretical and methodological frameworks developed in the North and then their extension or application to the South. They argue for decolonising university curricula by sensitising students to the historical and political issues of postcolonial conditions, and also by exposing them to the diversity of kinds of knowledge on the subject of language in order to situate existing Western research on language teaching more clearly, and to encourage the development of alternative paradigms which offer a different understanding of multilingualism.

To move away from the monolithic vision of languages prevailing in English-language sociolinguistics on multilingualism and education published in Global centres, many concepts have been forged in the last twenty years and widely disseminated, including ‘superdiversity’, ‘crossing’, ‘(poly)linguaging’ – and in many ways ‘translanguaging’. Bagga-Gupta and Dahlberg (2018) observe that these neologisms

appear and are disseminated by academics in the Global North, to be adopted in a significant number of works by ‘junior scholars from the Global South’ whose research they direct, while ‘senior scholars from the Global South’ find that they resonate only marginally. Heugh and Stroud (2019) point out that researchers who claim to have (re)discovered that multilingualism is more than the sum of several languages, each understood as monolingual, present their research – intentionally or not – in a way that is ahistorical and disconnected from the experience of minority and marginalised populations in the Global South. They also note that the work of colleagues from the South is rarely or only summarily cited, giving the impression that two parallel conversations are taking place. The problem, they argue, is that this new academic fashion not only appropriates and disseminates ideas that have been circulating for a long time in the Global South – presenting them as new discoveries – but also treats multilingualism as if it were a peculiar phenomenon.

In English publications that treat multilingualism and education, few circulating terms are clearly identified as rooted in Southern experiences. Among them we can cite ‘disinventing languages’ (Makoni and Pennycook 2007) following the ‘invention of Africa’ (Mudimbe 1988) and African languages and the notion of ‘linguistic citizenship’ (Stroud 2001) which has been disseminated widely (Williams et al 2022). I focus in the next two sections on two other concepts, the first clearly identified as rooted in Southern experiences and the second mostly identified with Northern experiences and look at their circulation and reappropriation.

### **Example of the travelling concept of *buen vivir***

The first example I would like to take has travelled as a notion as *buen vivir*, but comes originally from Quechua *sumak kawsay* and Aymara *suma qamaña*. It was forged – or revealed to a broader audience – in the 1990s through the work of the Kichwa-Amazonian anthropologist Carlos Viteri Gualingua<sup>6</sup> and began to be used as an alternative to development discourses in the 2000s. *Buen vivir* entered the Constitution of Ecuador in 2008 and that of Bolivia in 2009. Outside of anthropology (Viteri Gualinga 2002), it was used in activist and political spheres before entering the fields of philosophy, the social sciences and communication, and more recently education (see for example Rodríguez Cruz (2015) regarding its potential for intercultural bilingual education, Brown and McCowan (2018) for its potential for education for development rooted in a comprehensive and contextualised philosophy of living, and Angel Alvarado (2021) for decolonial pedagogies). According to Yáñez Cossío (2012) in Quechua *kawsay* means a living entity, including humans and nature, with energy going through space and time, and *sumak* refers to a concrete realisation of *sumay*, including aesthetics and spiritual and physical harmony. Conjoined, the terms refer to holistic thinking. *Sumak kawsay* combines four principles: (1) social justice for humanity, more egalitarian social relations, equal access to the means and redistribution of production, (2) symbiosis with nature, respect for nature, control of the effects of production, (3)

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<sup>6</sup> Viteri Gualingua was working with the Sarayaku people in the 1990s; in relation with the Pastaza Indigenous Peoples' Organisation, he 'systematized this concept until it became a theoretical model of welfare and a proposal for social transformation' (Hidalgo-Capitán, Cubillo-Guevara, and Masabalín-Caisaguano 2020).

economy at the service of society, and (4) the search for balance between material and symbolic aspects of life (economic, political, cultural, ecological).

Although *sumak kawsay* is said to be untranslatable in languages such as Spanish and English (see quotation 1), it seems that most publications refer to it by its translation in Spanish or English (see quotations 2, 3 and 4).

- (1) los significados de la expresión quechua (*sumak kawsay*) y aimara (*suma qamaña*) son tan extensos y complejos que resultan prácticamente intraducibles a idiomas como el español o el inglés<sup>7</sup> [Barranquero Carretero and Sáez Baeza (2015)]
- (2) The contemporary notion of *buen vivir* emerged in the late 1990s from the meeting of ancient indigenous belief systems, the work of critical intellectuals and adoption in the political sphere. *Buen vivir* is the Spanish translation of the concepts of *sumak kawsay* in Quechua and *suma qamaña* in Aymara, as well as similar terms from indigenous languages across the continent<sup>8</sup> (Gudynas and Acosta 2011). The translation is inadequate but serves as a starting point. Literally translated into English as ‘good living’, this is considered a pale reflection of the original meanings of *sumak kawsay*. *Sumak* means full of plenitude, sublime, excellent, magnificent, beautiful, while *kawsay* is life; to

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<sup>7</sup> The meanings of the expression in Quechua (*sumak kawsay*) and Aymara (*suma qamaña*) are so extensive and complex that they are practically untranslatable in languages such as Spanish or English (my translation).

<sup>8</sup> Referring probably to South America.

exist in a dynamic, changing, active manner. [Brown and McCowan (2018: 318)]

- (3) The purpose of this chapter is to identify the different meanings of Latin American Good Living (*buen vivir*) and its diverse intellectual wellsprings [Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara (2017)]
- (4) *Good living* is a relatively new concept in the social sciences [Hidalgo-Capitán, Cubillo-Guevara, and Masabalín-Caisaguano (2020)]

Analysing these quotations, it seems that not only has the concept travelled through Spanish and then English – languages in which the term always appears first, and is sometimes translated after – but that it has been coined as a concept via the translation. We may also note that it has been popularised largely through two books by Alberto Acosta (Acosta and Martínez 2009; Acosta 2013) and particularly through the translation of the latter. *El Buen vivir: Sumak Kawsay, una oportunidad para imaginar otros mundos* has been translated into many languages. If the Spanish concept *Buen vivir* generally remains cross-linguistically in the various translations of the title of the book as a loan-word (although sometimes explained in the subtitle, as in Dutch: *Latijns Amerikaanse Filosofie over Goed Leven*), the original term *Sumak Kawsay* disappears in the translations of the book title, as in French *Le buen vivir: pour imaginer d'autres mondes*.

Although it is possible to trace its development quite clearly (see Hidalgo-Capitán, Cubillo-Guevara, and Masabalín-Caisaguano (2020)), some publications stress its obscure origins and various influences (see for example Altmann (2014) on the role of German development agencies in the dissemination in Bolivia of what he calls the

‘*Good life*’, originating with the Aymara elite first described in anthropology). The general impression we get is that it is obscure and complicated. It is as if it had no stable meaning but many variations continuously requiring translation. Moreover, it is clear that the notion travelled through Spanish (either as *buen vivir* or *vivir bien*) before being stabilised both in Spanish (as *buen vivir*) and English (as *good living*) in various academic and non-academic fields.

Looking at its reception in France in academia and particularly in the sociolinguistics of multilingualism, I note that it has not been translated into French or established in France. The following table shows how often *Sumak kawsay* and *buen vivir* are mentioned in PhDs in France defended between 1985 and 2020.<sup>9</sup>

	All academic disciplines	Sociolinguistics
<i>sumak kawsay</i>	40	0
<i>buen vivir</i>	103	1

Table 1: Number of PhD theses mentioning both terms

Their absence in PhDs in sociolinguistics is particularly meaningful regarding both erasure and language compartmentalisation in science. They may be used in the field of education in France, but it seems essentially limited to activist circles and blogs and not to have gained a real footing in academia.

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<sup>9</sup> Data accessed at theses.fr (10/12/2020).

### **Example of the travelling concept of translanguaging**

The second example I would like to focus on is a much more well-known concept in Western academic circles. The term *translanguaging* became famous via the publications of Ofelia García, a professor at the City University of New York, more than ten years ago (García 2009a; 2009b) when referring to ‘the practice of bilingualism with no functional separation’ of languages in the classroom, unlike a monolingual vision of multilingualism. The term quickly became highly popular in the field of English language teaching. Numerous publications immediately adopted the term, especially in their titles, in reference to García’s work (Creese and Blackledge 2010; Wei 2011; Canagarajah 2011). The notion has been applied to all kinds of languages and teaching situations, and has rapidly been exported to English-speaking sociolinguistics in general, influencing the field of translation (Baynham, Lee and Lee 2019) as well as the study of everyday behaviour in advertising, urban signage and communication within the family, at work, in health centres and elsewhere (Mazzaferro 2018). At the same time the concept was quickly adopted by actors in the world of education, for instance by government agencies, municipalities and inspectors in Sweden (Bagga-Gupta and Dahlberg 2018).

As far as I know, the first written occurrence of the term as used by García is in her preface to Makoni and Pennycook’s *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages* (2007). There she compares what they call *translingual language practices* to the concept of *translanguaging* used in English-Welsh bilingual education (Baker 2003).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012) discuss the origins of the notion, which was introduced by Cen Williams and his colleague Dafydd Whittall during a training session for school head



The term, taken from the Welsh word *trawsieithu*, was apparently first used in Cen Williams' doctoral thesis to refer to a pedagogical exercise in which students listen to a lesson in one language and respond in another (Williams 1994). In subsequent publications García acknowledges her indebtedness to Latin American writers (see quotations 5 and 6) for her understanding of the term *linguaging* and of the prefix *trans*<sup>11</sup>. García and Wei (2013) also made a connection with the decolonial struggles that the term is said to support, in the same way that Mignolo's (2000) notion of bilanguaging is said to help correct the asymmetry of languages by denouncing the colonial nature of power and knowledge.

(5) I try to theorize translanguaging by reflecting on how the concept emerged for me as a US Latina, born in Cuba and raised in New York City. I, thus, draw mostly on Latin American scholarship, and specifically the work of Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, and the Argentinean cultural theorist Walter Mignolo. [García and Leiva 2014, 201]

(6) It is Maturana and Varela's concept of linguaging that shapes my understanding as a Latin American of translanguaging. Linguaging is directly linked to

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teachers. It was first translated into English as *translinguifying*, but in the end *translanguaging* was adopted following a discussion between Williams and Baker. They claim that it was the third edition of Baker's work *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, in 2001, which 'made the term internationally known' (2012: 645).

<sup>11</sup> In one sense via the notion of *cultural transculturation* introduced by Ortiz in 1940, and in another sense with respect to the 'trans-formative' and transcendent power of *translanguaging*.

Maturana and Varela's theory of autopoiesis that argues that we cannot separate our biological and social history of actions from the ways in which we perceive the world [ibid.]

In contrast to my attempt here to reconstruct its trajectory and the intellectual debts involved, the vast majority of publications on *translanguaging* refer purely to authors publishing in the United States or the United Kingdom, sometimes mentioning the Welsh-language origin of the term, but especially citing the two main works that have become most prominent (García 2009a; García and Wei 2013). At the same time many voices have criticised this concept for adopting a hegemonic Global centre perspective (see Bagga-Gupta and Dahlberg (2018) and Heugh and Stroud (2019)).

However, the notion of *translanguaging* has travelled widely and resonates with the South African experience, described by Leketi Makalela for example. He associates it with the concept of *ubuntu*, stating that when plurilingual students speak different languages in the classroom, this is in fact an advantage, both socially and cognitively, and that this use of *translanguaging* seems to index the values of *ubuntu* (Makalela 2015). Borrowing the notion of *Sankofa* from Ghana, he argues that we should draw on pre-colonial societies for models and solutions based on African experience. He offers the example of the Limpopo Valley and the Luanga and Mapungubwe regions (in present-day Zambia) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, to show that movement among different communities created a language continuum which made it possible to communicate and enable civilisation to develop in the region. On the basis of this philosophy he proposes to construct plurilingual pedagogical practices drawing on *translanguaging ubuntu*, in order to escape from the monolingual bias which continues

to dominate official language practice in South Africa and which he believes creates tensions between actual practice (where the use of one language is incomplete without the practice of others) and expected monolingual practice.

It seems to me that the reception of the notion of *translanguaging* in France is limited and only beginning to appear. Quantitative analysis of PhD theses shows that few of them mention the term:

	All academic disciplines	Linguistics departments
<i>Plurilinguisme</i>	731	350
<i>Multilinguisme</i>	680	300
<i>Translanguaging</i>	37	28

Table 2: Number of PhD theses mentioning *translanguaging* compared to *plurilinguisme* and *multilinguisme*

In 2013 Sophie Alby (who is involved in teacher training at the University of French Guiana) and myself made use of the term at a conference in Belgium on ‘translanguaging and plurilingual resources in the classroom’, which dealt with precisely the phenomena we had been working on for years. It became clear to us that we had to adopt the dominant terminology then in circulation in order to be heard; this produced an immediate understanding of the phenomena we wished to deal with, which was not true of our endogenous terms, in particular ‘heterogeneous language practices’, a concept I work with, derived from a notion introduced more than forty years ago (Boutet, Fiala and Simonin-Grumbach 1976), which non-Francophone scholars find opaque because it does not fit into frameworks familiar to them. The adoption of this dominant terminology led to a rare discussion of Francophone versus non-Francophone

trends and the publication of our work some years later (Alby and Léglise 2018). But for us the use of the concept did not mean adopting a new idea. For the past twenty years we have been concerned with how the plurilingualism of pupils in classrooms is generally erased and only sometimes taken into account (Alby and Léglise 2005), based on how teachers deal with it and on the use of language alternation for pedagogical purposes. French-language research on the construction of knowledge through the use of multilingual resources in the classroom is not new in France and Switzerland (Moore 1996; Castellotti and Moore 1999; Gajo and Mondada 2000); it draws especially on the didactics of plurilingualism (Billiez 1998; see Moore and Gajo 2009 for an introduction) and on plural approaches to languages and cultures (Candelier 2008). This research is also based on a conception of the plural competences and repertoires of plurilingual individuals that is locally well established in the discipline (Coste, Moore and Zarate 1997), although the Anglophone sociolinguistics literature treats it as a recent innovation (for an illustration see Blommaert and Backus 2013).

The complex example of *trawsieithu/translanguaging* shows not only erasures and circulation in Western and Southern circles but also several compartmentalisations through language.

## Conclusion

We have traced the emergence, revival, interconnections and reappropriations of two concepts emerging in the 1990s and rooted in non-hegemonic circles: *sumak kawsay* through the work of a Kichwa-Amazonian anthropologist (Carlos Viteri Gualinga, working with the Sarayaku people), and *trawsieithu* through the work of

scholars in bilingual education (Cen Williams, Dafydd Whittall and Colin Baker) with Welsh, a minority language in the United Kingdom.

Both examples show firstly (more or less) circulation from one language to another, from one field to another and from one context and academic location to another. Secondly, both also exemplify erasure: the erasure of their roots (and particularly the partial erasure of the origin language *sumak kawsay* and *trawsieithu*, while *buen vivir* or *good living* and *translanguaging* are circulating), although intellectual debts may be acknowledged at some point, and the erasure of the names and inspirations (as in *trans-* and *linguaging* linked to Latin American experiences) of scholars located in Southern or peripheral institutions. Thirdly, this is particularly obvious in citation practices, where only some prominent books (such as Acosta (2013) or Garcia and Li Wei (2013)), published twenty years later and disseminated widely, are mentioned in a very prototypical and iconic way: a single quotation illustrates the concept. Finally, both examples show compartmentalisation in (access to) science through ex-colonial languages and traditions of thought or academic discourses. These constitute good examples of what cultural discourse studies call ‘transcultural borrowings’ of concepts (Shi-xu 2022). I showed particularly the way concepts rooted in non-hegemonic circles are appropriated – through translation and partial erasure of their roots – in Western academic circles and recreated through iconicity.

To assess the archaeology of current concepts and trace their circulation and erasure in academic fields associated with sociolinguistics in France is a vast project, one that I have scarcely begun; but mapping their circulation across a number of locations in the academic world – not only their spread outwards from former colonial

powers – might offer an alternative, non-binary view of the globalisation of knowledge in language and society, in which a polyphony of multiple voices, academic traditions and discourses can be heard by those who are eager to listen.

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