Do They Appreciate Diversity? University Students' Approach to Linguistic and Cultural Pluralism

Eva Seidl

*University of Graz, Department of Translation Studies, Austria
e.seidl@uni-graz.at*

This chapter reports on research designed to investigate university students' perceptions of linguistic and cultural pluralism. An open exploratory research approach was taken in order to gain more insight into the mindsets on cultural reflexivity and plurilingualism of young adults. To accomplish this, a small-scale, questionnaire-based study was conducted at the Department of Translation Studies at an Austrian University, more precisely, with students of the Bachelor's degree programme Transcultural Communication. The analysis reveals German-as-L2 students' perceptions of the role of languages as well as their deliberate decisions regarding the use of linguistic resources in different areas of life, such as study activities or recreational activities. The purpose of this chapter is to emphasise the fact that multilingual higher education in the field of Transcultural Communication and Translation Studies is in need of inclusive learning environments where the linguistic and cultural resources of all learners are appreciated. Accordingly, a possible teaching practice is presented, adopting the concept of Translanguaging.

Keywords: translation studies, transcultural communication, translanguaging

Introduction

Being a student and being a teacher at the university should mean that both parties share the same pedagogical space, that is to say, a space in which there is freedom, there are choices to be made and chances to be taken, and in which risk-taking and responsibility-taking occur (Barnett 2007, 141). Without this space, students in higher education 'cannot come authentically to their judgements, findings, observations, actions and exchanges' (Barnett 2007, 150). Of course, some students may be reticent to deliberately take on self-responsibility, particularly in their first years in a higher education context. Nevertheless, this shared pedagogical space requires university teachers to encourage their students to stretch their boundaries, or, as McGuire (2015) states, by focusing on the students' part, '[h]igher education is an environment where students are expected to push themselves past their limits' (McGuire 2015, 106).

In this respect, Mentz (2017) advocates compulsory stays abroad for students¹ at the tertiary level, to promote the formation of critically thinking young adults who value democratic practices and global fairness. He maintains that '[i]f we want to prevent populist and post-factual slogans, we must equip citizens with knowledge-based skills they need to analyse political and social developments on a rational and argumentative level. This requires critical, free-thinking and informed citizens, who are able to look beyond their own national horizon' (Mentz 2017, 196).

Teaching, Learning and Living in the 21st Century

In the same vein, the American Modern Language Association Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007) calls for the promotion of multilingual individuals 'who have deep translingual and transcultural competence [and] are also trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture' (MLA 2007, 3–4). As for the European context, from 2015–2018, the European University Continuing Education Network (eu-cen) coordinated the project 'HE4u2 – Integrating cultural diversity in Higher Education,' which was co-funded by the European Union Erasmus+ programme. The consortium of seven project partners recently published policy recommendations concerning the integration of cultural diversity in higher education (Bernal Gonzalez, de Viron, and Souto Lopez 2018). There, the authors call for higher education institutions to 'more actively embrace their social responsibility and work towards influencing positively the development of an intercultural society' (p. 10).

Similarly, the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, reported to the European Commission the pressing needs of university graduates as future leaders, who will live to see the perhaps futuristic-sounding year of 2080. These needs consist of 'a new kind of intercultural understanding, respect for common rules and fair play, an understanding of different interests, views and ways of thinking, and the ability to reconcile and to compromise' (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education 2013, 50). For the members of this High Level Group, the accelerated changes and the disappearance of clearly-defined boundaries, which derive from globalisation, have led to obvious consequences in and requirements for education. This means that university teachers must prepare graduates for global competitiveness as well as for global cooperativeness in order to live peaceful and healthy lives in the 21st century.

¹ In this case, in particular for teacher training students.

Educational Context

So far, the focus has been on the general framework of learning and teaching in higher education in an age of increasing diversity, complexity and shifting boundaries. What follows is a description of the plurilingual teaching context where the author of this chapter conducted a questionnaire-based study and deployed the Translanguaging concept as a pedagogical approach to German-as-L2 teaching at the Austrian tertiary level. The author, a native German-speaking teacher and teacher educator, teaches first- and second-year students at the levels B2 and C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The German language classes are offered within the three-year bachelor's degree programme (BA) in Transcultural Communication at the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz. This BA prepares students for a two-year master's degree in Translation and/or Interpreting.

During their first two years at university, students spend a significant portion of their time as BA students developing their language skills and cultural knowledge in their respective primary language and two additional foreign languages. In the third year of the programme, they attend introductory translation courses. Throughout the BA programme, they are offered courses in translation theory and an introduction to translation technology. The compulsory German classes, which are the focus of this chapter, serve two purposes: they aim (1) to prepare BA graduates to work in the rather broad field of Transcultural Communication or (2) to continue their studies in a master's programme.

Institutional Challenges

Exactly this requirement of pursuing two pedagogical objectives in the BA Transcultural Communication represents a considerable challenge. On the one hand, this programme forms the basis of a master's degree in Translation Studies. However, on the other hand, it must equally provide the BA graduates with language skills and cultural competence that will allow them to gain footholds 'in an increasingly complex professional environment, in which it is possible to work in various contexts and geographical areas' (Orlando 2016, 94). Teachers must equip those students who choose to work in the field of Transcultural Communication with general capabilities and transferable skills to succeed in a wide range of possible job prospects. Some of the career profiles open to them are in the field of institutions managing migration and integration, in the tourism industry or the language teaching profession (Sinclair 2019). It is also likely that some undergraduate students

will choose to continue their university career with other study avenues, such as the MA programme Global Studies.

Language teachers at the Department of Translation Studies have to keep in mind that they serve the needs of different student cohorts. Not every BA student will continue with an MA in Translation Studies, but, as Li (2002) stated, nonetheless 'efforts must be made to ensure that the language courses are tailor-made for translation students' (Li 2002, 525). Whether or not students leave the university after completing their bachelor's programme, there is one decisive qualification for translators as well as for cultural communicators, namely empathic accuracy, i.e. being able to imagine what is taking place in another person's mind. Thus, language instruction as well as translation training needs 'to help students develop this empathic capacity,' because only then will students 'have the opportunity to become the cultural mediators they need to become' (Hague 2015, 28).

It should be clear, however, that the early years of language learning in higher education should not be undervalued. On the contrary, the Modern Language Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages advises us to appreciate the contribution of teachers who provide basic training, as they are often experts in the fields of second language acquisition and higher education language didactics (MLA 2007).²

Educational Challenges

In addition to the aforementioned institutional challenges, more general educational challenges must be addressed as well. In her analysis of pathways to multilingually teaching culture in foreign language education, Kramsch (2018) comes to the following conclusion (Kramsch 2018, 30):

In our post-modern era of diversity, social and historical contingency, and symbolic power struggles, we can no longer teach stable monolingual cultures. If FL education is about opening students' minds to other ways of viewing the world by speaking the language of people who might see it differently, then it is about making them not doubly monolingual, but 'multilingual.'

While Kramsch (2018) speaks of opening language learners' minds, Cook (2002) uses the notion of alteration. For him, the acquisition of a foreign language 'alters the L2 user's mind in ways that go beyond the actual knowledge

² For a more detailed analysis of the specific characteristics of language teaching for translators, see Seidl and Janisch (2019).

of language itself' (Cook 2002, 7).³ When it comes to teaching and learning foreign languages and getting to know different, unfamiliar cultures, Kramersch (2018) reminds us that culture is no longer the 'taken-for-granted unitary cultural narrative that holds nation-states together [...], but something that individuals carry in their heads' (Kramersch 2018, 18). Furthermore, Boeckmann (2006) offers another interesting observation with his comparison of pluricentric languages with intra-cultural variation within a given culture. By rejecting the idea of two opposites, namely native or source culture versus target culture, he argues that cultures are not only dynamic but also differentiated within themselves, allowing for subcultural and intracultural variation. By analogy with intra-linguistic variation within a given language, which is the case with pluricentric languages such as English, German, French or Spanish, the author suggests considering rich intra-cultural variability as a similar phenomenon (Boeckmann 2006, 12).

Identity and Cyberspace

Finally, the concept of identity has to be addressed when speaking of current educational challenges. By stressing the critical role that the development of criticality plays in higher education, Brumfit et al. (2005), with regard to the experience of language learning, maintain that '[it] becomes not just a means of encountering the other cultures but a process of redefinition of self, a means of refining criticality by destabilising and restabilising the mechanisms through which we both understand and communicate' (Brumfit et al. 2005, 166). In this respect, language educators should embrace the idea that in the post-modern era, the concept of identity is seen as 'multiple, dynamic, and conflictual, based not on a permanent sense of self but rather the choices that individuals make in different circumstances over time' (Warschauer and De Florio-Hansen 2003, 158). Through deliberate choices of language and intra-linguistic variation, individuals 'constantly make and remake who they are' and by doing so, they attribute to language the role of an 'important identity marker in the age of information' (Warschauer and De Florio-Hansen 2003, 158). Therefore, Warschauer and De Florio-Hansen (2003) raise the question of the role that language plays in cyberspace, where one can immediately notice what language or dialect is being used.

³ See also, in this context, Dewaele's (2018) rejection of the term 'L2 user' and his proposal to substitute it with the value-neutral term 'LX user'. This term does not imply any level of proficiency and has no connotation of inferiority, suggesting that 'all individuals can be multi-competent users of multiple languages' (Dewaele 2018, 239).

By looking at the concept of cyberspace, which cannot be conceived as just an empty space, from a Translation Studies perspective, Kaiser-Cooke (2004, 207) argues as follows:⁴

In the context of globalisation, and particularly in the realm of what is commonly called cyberspace – that allegedly ‘culture-free’ and ‘supra-national’ space – translational practice, and the decisions a translator is faced with, are closely connected with the compatibility of different human theories of the world.

The author elaborates on the decision-making process of translators when they have to ‘transfer something of source cultural conceptualisation into the target cultural perception of reality’ (Kaiser-Cooke 2004, 244). In the context of language teaching for students of Transcultural Communication and/or Translation Studies, it is of central importance to clearly communicate what is asked of them if they want to become translators and cultural mediators.

Kramsch (2003) offers an appropriate description of young adult language learners, which perfectly describes the majority of the students who attend German-as-L2 classes at the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz. She claims they are ‘multilingual young adults at the threshold of defining an adult identity for themselves [...], [who] live and study in other languages and cultures than the ones they were born into, and thus might have quite a different relationship to these languages than monolingual speakers’ (Kramsch 2003, 108). As university teachers we should ‘bear in mind that although undergraduate students at this stage of their tertiary education do not necessarily plan their future as professional translators, they should be provided with the foundations to build their general language competence’ (Kodura 2019, 91).

Returning to Kaiser-Cooke’s (2004) elaboration of what is demanded of translators demonstrates that, in fact, the task of cultural transformation is by no means an easy one. The author explains that a policy of inclusion or integration can be used, such as in the following situation (Kaiser-Cooke 2004, 207–208):

⁴ She posits that cyberspace does not contain any formal or officially recognised instance to which power is explicitly attributed (Kaiser-Cooke 2004, 247). This resonates with Warschauer and De Florio-Hansen (2003) who highlight the basic contradiction of cyberspace when they describe the Internet as ‘potentially the most democratic media yet developed’ which, contrastingly, can also be a very restrictive medium that magnifies existing inequalities (p. 160).

If [...] the aim is to really transfer something of source cultural conceptualisation into the target cultural perception of reality, a policy of inclusion can be used. In order to give target text recipients access to the source cultural interpretation of reality through the medium of the target language, i.e. to show them how 'the others see it,' the two concept systems need to be integrated into one another.

The above-mentioned inclusion or integration of the so called 'other' into the target system of language and culture 'brings two interpretations of reality together and thus, at least for the duration of communication, has the ability to change their respective power relations' (Kaiser-Cooke 2004, 209). In her words, translation takes place 'in the space between the differences' (Kaiser-Cooke 2004, 212). These requirements or educational objectives should be kept in mind when discussing the teaching and learning of future translators and cultural mediators. At the same time, the question of whether or how learners' own multilingualism affects their sense of self (Kramsch 2003, 108) must not be disregarded. Unfortunately, though, still too often 'the non-native language learner [...] is expected to produce linguistic forms that are identical to those produced by native speakers' and his or her own 'linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and resources tend to be regarded as irrelevant, even counterproductive' (Wei 2016, 536).⁵ One way of validating and taking into account language learners' manifold competencies and resources is to adopt the concept of Translanguaging as a teaching practice.

The Notion of Translanguaging

According to Wei (2016) the notion of Translanguaging (TL) is 'not some fancy post-modernist term to replace traditional terms such as code-switching or language crossing in referring to specific language mixing behaviour' (Wei 2016, 541). To answer the question of the very nature of TL, Mazak (2017) reviewed the history of the concept as an evolving term and concluded that 'it means different things for different researchers in different contexts' (Mazak 2017, 3). For the remainder of this chapter, TL will be understood as 'a *pedagogical stance* that teachers and students take on that allows them to draw on all their linguistic and semiotic resources as they teach and learn both

⁵ Even if she does not refer to Translanguaging, Kaiser-Cooke (2004) offers a powerful description of such resources. 'As one learns a language – and especially if one has grown up in that language – one learns how the particular community talks, i.e. relates to different things, what associations, ideas, feelings and emotions are linked with certain words, places, personalities, historical events etc.' (p. 254).

language and content material in classrooms’ (Mazak 2017, 5; original emphasis). That means that teachers’ and students’ dynamic multilingual and multimodal communicative repertoires are conceived of as valuable resources for learning and teaching. Both parties are called upon to reflect on how they think, know, and learn in and about their first and additional languages and cultures.

Translanguaging in Higher Education

In comparison with research on TL in primary and secondary classrooms (see, e.g. García and Kleyn 2016), hardly any literature exists on TL in higher education contexts (Mazak 2017, 6). Yet, early on, Canagarajah (2002) established himself as an important TL scholar, focusing specifically on multilingual academic writing or on the question of assessing TL competence in academic settings. A seminal publication is the anthology on TL in higher education by Mazak and Carroll (2017), who aimed to fill the existing gap between research in school and university settings ‘by showcasing the complexity and illustrating the various ways in which translanguaging practices exist within higher educational contexts around the world’ (p. 6). The editors of this volume acknowledge the fact that TL itself is an ideology and a political act, which must be examined through a critical lens. The description of examples in which TL was applied in various higher education teaching contexts on different continents across the globe demonstrates not only the successful deployment of the concept but also possible limitations.⁶

Translanguaging Space and Instinct

One of the most prominent TL scholars, Wei, coined the terms Translanguaging Space as well as Translanguaging Instinct. In his view, the act of translanguaging is transformative in nature, as it is ‘both going *between* different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going *beyond* them’ (Wei 2011, 1223; italics added). Thus, translanguaging forms and transforms (Wei 2011, 1223):

[I]t 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

⁶ For a perspective on Translanguaging in the Austrian higher education context, see, e.g. Seidl (2020).

physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience.

The author calls this social space ‘translanguaging space,’ a space ‘*for* the act of translanguaging as well as a space created *through* translanguaging’ (Wei 2011, 1223; italics added), to emphasise the ongoing, lifelong process of its construction and the ever-shifting nature of its boundaries, which exist primarily ‘in the mind of the individual who creates and occupies it’ (Wei 2011, 1223).

As for the notion of Translanguaging Instinct, Wei (2016) argues that all human beings have this ‘innate capacity to draw on as many different cognitive and semiotic resources as available to them to interpret meaning intentions and to design actions accordingly’ (541). In order to achieve effective communication, this innate capacity or Translanguaging Instinct ‘drives humans to go beyond narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend the culturally defined language boundaries’ (Wei 2016, 541).

In the following sections, we will take a closer look at multilingual university students’ perceptions of language boundaries and such concepts as Translanguaging. In addition, we will explore their approach to learning and teaching settings, where pedagogical space is highly valued, i.e. where there is room for freedom and their own choices but also the need for risk-taking, and responsibility-taking. The concept of Cyberspace will also be considered within the pedagogical examples.

Questionnaire-Based Study

The following sections refer to the class ‘German: Language, text and culture’ which the author of this chapter has been teaching for more than ten years at the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz. The class is taught in the second year of the BA programme Transcultural Communication at the CEFR level of C1 (with some students’ German language proficiency being B2). Classes take place 6 hours per week during a semester (4 months) and students can earn 9 ECTS credits. The author’s interest in the topic of Translanguaging was generated when she first encountered the concept while attending a presentation at an international conference on L2 writing at the tertiary education level.⁷ Translanguaging as a pedagogical approach to language learning and teaching resonated with the author’s

⁷ This was the international writing symposium ‘Supporting L2 Writing in Higher Education,’ held at the University of Gießen, Germany, April 6–7, 2017.

hypothesis that: (1) neither teachers nor students automatically employ all their cultural and linguistic resources in the university classroom and, more importantly, that (2) both parties are not fully aware of the potential of linguistic and cultural pluralism for translation and language didactics.

To investigate how students of the BA programme Transcultural Communication perceive their own plurilingualism, in the summer term 2017, a questionnaire-based, small-scale study was conducted in the above-mentioned German language class. A literature research on Multilingualism and Translanguaging (e.g. Sembiante 2016) as well as on Multicompetence (e.g. Hall, Cheng, and Carlson 2006; Cook and Wei 2016) in the context of higher education encouraged the author to investigate multilingual university students' linguistic and cultural resources and competencies. Both the usage-based approach to multicompetence (Hall, Cheng, and Carlson 2006) and the functional language perspective suggested by Sembiante (2016) informed the creation of a 5-page questionnaire. With this approach, the author aimed to encourage the students 'to develop a critical language awareness, or the understanding of how language varies across social contexts, [and] how they use language in different ways and for different purposes' (p. 56).

The questionnaire was distributed in one of the last course sessions and filled out by hand, on a voluntary basis, by 13 students (10 female, 3 male). It consisted of three main parts: the student's (1) language biography, (2) linguistic repertoire (oral and written), and (3) linguistic activities (reception, production, interaction). The most important insights after analysing the responses were that the teacher as a researcher had had no idea of the manifold languages and (sub)cultures that represented the participants' backgrounds and characterised their circumstances. It was revealing to see in which situations they opted for which language to use, which role they attributed to different languages and whether they preferred language teaching approaches such as Translanguaging. This first attempt to gain insight into multilingual students' mind-sets on plurilingualism in the higher education language teaching context was enlightening. It prompted the author to offer in an upcoming semester writing assignments for which students could employ all their linguistic resources.

Replication Study

Since the participants in the above-mentioned study were only 13, a replication study was conducted in winter term 2018–9 at the same institution and within the same German language course. This time, the group of students (and study participants) consisted of 26 (24 female, 2 male). Again, the

Table 1 The Role of Languages

Now important in my life (1.)	Important in society (1.)
German 42%	English 77%
Hungarian 15%	German 12%
Croatian 15%	Spanish 4%

student cohort's cultural and linguistic potential was overwhelming: 26 students represented 22 languages in the same classroom. When asked which languages play an important role in their current lives and which ones are of great importance in society in general, the results demonstrated a clear discrepancy.

Table 1 only shows students' top priority answers and not the languages they ranked in second or third place. It must be noted that multiple answers were possible. Nevertheless, one can easily grasp the dominant role of English as a lingua franca or a global language. What is more, the findings show that even if 42% of the participants assign the German language the most important role in their current life circumstances, only 12% consider the very same language as being of importance in society. One can only speculate as to what effect this attribution of the German language has on students' motivation and job perspectives.

Another question focused on the classroom usage of languages, i.e. which ones students are familiar with and which approach they personally prefer. When looking at table 2, again, it should be considered that multiple answers were possible. The results show that the majority of participants prefer the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom, without any reference to their source language or any other languages. However, the results also reveal considerable familiarity with exactly the approach that none of the participants would prefer, namely the combined use of source and target language. One student describes his preference for the exclusive target language use as follows: 'If you only use the target language, you start to think in the target language.' Nevertheless, the results seem to confirm Wei's (2018) conclusion, that '[d]espite the theoretical appraisal in recent years of the importance of L1 in learning additional languages, the target-language-only or one-language-at-a-time monolingual ideologies still dominate much of practice and policy' (p. 16).

Behind the description 'more languages at the same time' the teacher-researcher conceptualised the Translanguaging concept without mentioning the very word. Of the 15% who opted for this language learning and teach-

Table 2 Classroom Usage of Languages

Typical language classes	Personal preference
Source and target language 88%	Target language only 62%
Target language only 65%	More languages at the same time 15%
More languages at the same time 35%	Source and target language 0%

Table 3 Students' Usage of Languages

Language I use in this classroom	Language I use in my leisure time
German 42%	For emails: German
Arabic, Hungarian (resp.) 19%	For WhatsApp/Facebook/Instagram etc.: 3 different answer types: L1 only; L1 and English; L1, English, and German
English 15%	For diary writing: 3 different answer types: English; L1 and English; L1 and German
Italian 12%	
Serbian 4%	

ing approach, one student stated insightfully: 'I would love to use all the languages I speak in the classroom, so I could make connections all the time.' In order to provide an additional insight into the students' approach to plurilingualism, table 3 reports on the languages they prefer to use in the German language classroom in which this study was conducted as well as the preferred languages for their leisure time. Note that multiple answers could be given here, too.

The students stated that for private conversations during the German language class or for clarification of tasks they might well use other languages besides the target language. Some answers seem to reveal that students feel that they can be more authentically themselves in their first language or can express humour more easily if it does not necessarily have to occur in the target language. One student described his linguistic usage as follows: 'When I switch to my mother tongue, I don't even realise it. It comes so naturally to me.' As far as students' private language use is concerned, it is interesting that for writing emails they prefer German. This might be connected with the status of emails for the young generation of students who consider emails as formal texts and use them mainly for interactions with teachers or administrative matters. The three different response categories the study participants chose for domains such as WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram, i.e. the so-called Cyberspace, reveal a surprisingly hybrid use of languages. There, as well as for diary writing, the participants make use of a variety of linguistic

resources, a behaviour that could be described as a translanguaging space according to Wei's (2011) definition of the term.

Writing and Translanguaging

As stated earlier, already the results of the first questionnaire-study in 2017 prompted the author to consider writing assignments in which students could resort to their full linguistic potential. By doing so, the teacher-researcher wanted to stretch the linguistic boundaries of typical writing tasks by deliberately abandoning the target-language-only ideology. Therefore, in the academic year 2018–2019, two different writing tasks were introduced in the class 'German: Language, text and culture.'

Each winter term, the topics to be addressed in this class are: (1) media & digitalisation, (2) law & administration, (3) research & medicine, and (4) science & technology. For every topic, students are given a writing task. In the winter term 2018–9, within the topic science & technology, students had to listen to online videos, which were produced by a German start-up company⁸ specialising in the production of multilingual videos online and focusing on solutions for saving data storage space. Students were requested to listen to as many language options for individual videos as possible and to analyse grammar, lexicon, pronunciation and intonation of the different speakers who were not always L1 speakers. The time available for the assignment was two weeks and 300–400 words were requested. When students, after submission, were asked to critically evaluate this kind of writing task (which took place only orally) they reported the following observations: (1) They could really use all their linguistic knowledge (in several cases they analysed languages which the teacher was not familiar with). (2) When they wanted to analyse videos in non-familiar languages, they asked friends for help, thus showing considerable motivation for the assignment. (3) Not being critically evaluated themselves this time, but being asked to evaluate others' online language use, was reported to be very gratifying. (4) They found it rewarding to be able to gain professional awareness, as they realized how important competent translation and interpreting services are in the real world, beyond the classroom.

Writing and Translanguaging Revisited

Some students in the winter term 2018–9 complained about the fact that their first language or other languages which make up their linguistic reper-

⁸ See <https://alugha.com/>

toire, were not part of the existing multilingual online videos, provided by the German start-up company. Hence, in summer term 2019 a writing assignment was designed which was much more open for linguistic variety. Generally, during each summer term, the following topics are addressed: (1) arts & culture, (2) rules & taboos, (3) nature & environment, and (4) economy & sustainability. Within the topic rules & taboos, after a classroom discussion of the sub-topic ‘psychiatry, mental health and art therapy,’ with video examples in German, students had to carry out research on this topic in any language available to them. The assignment was due within two weeks, the requested words were 300–400, students could use sources in print or online, and they had to be cited in their texts. This time, after submission, students were asked to informally and anonymously write down their thoughts on this kind of writing task.

In comparison to the more restrictive task in winter term, students appreciated the greater freedom of choice regarding the language in which they wanted to do their research (even if the language of the text *production* was the target language German). Some stated that they could use many more sources, as it was easier for them to do research on the topic in languages they felt much more secure with than with German. It was reported as very rewarding being allowed to employ all one’s own linguistic resources and simultaneously improve receptive and productive competencies in a variety of languages. One student wrote that he or she learnt to understand how other cultures deal with a certain concept, in this case art therapy. This resonates with Kramsch (2018) who reminds us ‘by learning other people’s vocabularies, [we] are also learning other ways of thinking, talking and writing about people, objects and events’ (p. 17). However, with respect to Translanguaging, translingual practices, and Cyberspace, she raises a note of caution (p. 27):

The ever increasing importance of words and their indexicalities in professional interactions on the internet, in political pronouncements and diplomatic exchanges speaks to the need for ever greater caution in the choice of syntax and vocabulary. Translanguaging might be appropriate for functional transactions in informal contexts of language use; it is much less appropriate in highly complex contexts where communication stakes are high and potential misunderstandings abound.

In the same vein, some students cautioned that for this assignment they might have misunderstood some concepts or might have translated incorrectly from other languages into German. Since still being undergraduate

students of Transcultural Communication and not yet proper students of translation, some felt overburdened with translation tasks. However, students were free to choose their languages of research on the topic and some even opted for the target language German. Those who deliberately did not choose German as the source language regretted the fact that, by doing so, they missed the opportunity to learn to understand complex texts about a difficult subject in the language of the classroom. Another issue that the students addressed, was the teacher's inability to diagnose potential errors due to her lack of proficiency in several languages that the students used for this assignment.

Conclusions and Implications

This chapter focused on the question of whether undergraduate students of Transcultural Communication appreciate cultural and linguistic diversity. The findings support the idea that the majority of the students who took part in a questionnaire-based study and gave the author of this chapter oral and written feedback on writing assignments using a Translanguaging approach appear *not* to be very aware of their linguistic resources. However, the results of this study also suggest that it can be awareness-raising for language and translation students if these resources are consciously incorporated in the learning and teaching context, both by the teacher and the students. Throughout the chapter, the notion of space was found to be central for addressing students' cultural and linguistic potential. By starting with the concept of pedagogical space and its inherent freedom of choice, the role of language and culture in the so-called Cyberspace was subsequently discussed. The third kind of space which was introduced was Translanguaging Space as a social space.⁹ The findings of the literature study, the empirical study and the teaching approaches can be summarized in that it seems that the majority of the survey participants are not yet very familiar with alternative language teaching approaches such as Translanguaging. As for the pedagogical space with its inherent need for responsibility-taking, it is possible that especially undergraduates are in need of further guidance from their teachers. For Barnett (2007), '[t]he teacher who is sensitive to these matters of space and risk, wanting to encourage her students to have a go – intellectually, practically, personally – may use just these words: "Have a go!" She

⁹ For an overview of the academic debate on learning space and learning place in educational contexts, see, e.g. Assinger (2019) and for the distinction between space and place from an experiential perspective, see, e.g. Tuan (2018).

may also add: “Nothing will happen to you; you are in a safe place” (pp. 146–7). In this digital age, we may extend this kind of ‘safety blanket’ by guiding students safely through the Cyberspace, encouraging them to become critical, free-thinking, digitally literate world citizens. As for criticality in the digital age, Darvin (2019) asserts that ‘[t]o create something new, whether a new idea or text, learners need a critical disposition that empowers them to challenge and transgress linguistic and ideological boundaries’ (p. 2). Consequently, to develop such a critical understanding, learners need teachers who ‘construct a space where learning processes are negotiated rather than imposed’ (p. 23).

With regards to the Translanguaging Instinct and Translanguaging Space, the findings suggest that some of the students whose opinions and circumstances were at the heart of this chapter are not yet very much accustomed to be allowed to claim their own Translanguaging Space. In this regard, Haukås (2016) calls for teachers who encourage learners ‘to become aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and language learning knowledge [...] rather than attempting to maintain [their] languages in isolation’ (p. 1). According to Otheguy, García and Reid (2015), Translanguaging ‘evens the playing field, giving bilingual students the same opportunity that monolinguals have always had, the opportunity to learn and grow while enjoying the intellectual and emotional benefits of all of one’s linguistic resources’ (p. 305).

Still, too often, language students compare themselves with native speakers and should, therefore, be reminded of Cook’s (2016) message of hope. He encourages students not to see themselves ‘as failures always trying to be like native speakers’ but rather ‘as successes, achieving things as L2 users that are out of the reach of monolinguals’ (Cook 2016, 187–8). This means that students should trust their own abilities and teachers should challenge students to meet their high expectations while, at the same time, communicating their confidence that they can succeed. With regards to the concept of Translanguaging, the engagement with it in the university classroom led the author of this chapter to the conclusion that university language educators should demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity towards the specific social, linguistic and cultural contexts of their students, thus showing evidence of trust-building teacher-student relationships.

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