Translanguaging in the multilingual classroom

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This paper draws on the ongoing research project "Signs of language" which focuses on literacy teaching in multilingual classrooms in Denmark. The aim is to explore children’s complex use of linguistic and semiotic resources available to them and viewed with a focus on children as users and interpreter of literacy (Blackledge & Creese 2010). In the project literacy learning is approached from a social semiotic perspective, where the acquisition of sign systems is regarded as a process in which children make meaning from a range of semiotic resources available to them in their social environment (Kenner et al, 2004; Kress, 2001; Laursen, 2011).

Methodologically, an ethnographic approach is employed (Blommaert, 2003). The data material involves classroom observations and interventions, informal interactions with the children, semi-structured interviews and collection of artefacts produced by the children as part of the teaching and as part of quasi-experimental activities.

In this paper, selected parts of the data material are examined in order to highlight the possibilities for meaning making strategies which multilingual artifact gives students. This will be executed through a discussion of the concept ‘translanguaging space’ (eg. Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Canagarajah, 2011; Wei 2011). The paper presents an analysis of data material from different perspectives on the concept.

The concept translanguaging is understood differently by various researchers. While some adopt an individual, psycholinguistic perspective (eg. Wei 2011), others bring a more social and political perspective on the concept (eg. Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Which potential for new insights are provided by this concept when children make meaning from multilingual resources made available for them? How can we understand this multilingual space, from both an individual and social perspective on translanguaging?

300 words

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