Translanguaging in child second language acquisition: a case study of an intercultural family in Viet Nam

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This paper argues that translanguaging (García and Baetens Beardsmore 2009) can be conceived of as a way for bilingual children to employ in their bilingual practice, especially where their parents are from different cultures. Translanguaging functions as bilinguals’ selection of linguistic and cultural resources available to them to realise their communicative intentions.

My data are taken from a longitudinal investigation of the request realization of a bilingual child in her spontaneous interactions with her Vietnamese mother and her European-American father over a period of approximately 11 months. In spite of language-specific differences between Vietnamese and American English, the two languages provide a similar range of linguistic and cultural resources for the child to draw on to realise her communicative intentions. My findings suggest that translanguaging can be perceived as an inclusive means of bilinguals.