

Understanding the Multilingualism of the Mauritian Multilingual Primary School Learner and Translanguaging: A Linguistic Ethnographic Study

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Abstract : The Mauritian landscape is well-known for its multilingualism with the daily interaction of the number of languages that are used in the island; namely Kreol Morisien, the European languages (English and French) and the Oriental/Asian languages (Hindi, Arabic/Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Mandarin, etc.). However, within Mauritius' multilingual educational system, English is the official medium of instruction while French is taught as compulsory subject till upper secondary and oriental languages are offered as optional languages at primary level. Usually, Mauritians choose one oriental language based on their ethnic/religious identity, when they start their primary schooling as an additional language to learn. In January 2012, Kreol Morisien, which is the considered the language of daily interaction of the majority of Mauritians, was introduced as an optional subject at primary level, taught at the same time as the oriental languages. The introduction of Kreol Morisien has spurred linguistic debates about the issue of multilingualism within the curriculum. Taking this into account, researchers have started pondering on the multilingual educational system of the country and questioning whether the current language curriculum caters for the complex everyday linguistic reality of the multilingual Mauritian learner, given most learners are embedded within an environment where the different languages interact with each other daily. This paper, therefore, proposes translanguaging as being a more befitting theoretical lens through which the multilingualism and the linguistic repertoire of Mauritian learners' can best be understood.

Keywords : multilingualism, translanguaging, multilingual learner, linguistic ethnography

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