

**Reconstructive Discourse Analysis as a Method for Reclaiming Non-Western Epistemologies in Language Studies: The Case of Translanguaging**

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**ABSTRACT**

*While pluralized concepts such as multiliteracies, multilingualism, and translanguaging are often portrayed as cutting-edge research discourses in the West, non-Western communities have a rich history of engaging with these multidimensional forms of literacy and language use. This article recommends Reconstructive Discourse Analysis (RDA) as a decolonial research methodology to recognize and incorporate non-Western communities' perceptions of semiotically complex language and literacy practices into mainstream research discourses. The authors describe the steps involved in RDA and illustrate its application through a comparative study of recent Western discourses on translanguaging and ancient Chinese notions of interlinguality: "通九蕃语" and "解六蕃译". This experiment highlights the contextual nature of Western theorizations about translanguaging, revealing how it is influenced by responses to modern European nation-states and their associated discriminatory social, racial, and linguistic categorizations. In contrast, the Chinese concepts prioritize multilingualism in everyday professional, social, and political interactions for mutual comprehension and the prevention of discriminatory hierarchies. The authors conclude that each concept is a response to local and time-bound discourses, and claims to universality and uniqueness of a theory can be challenged by centering similar concepts in other contexts.*

**KEYWORDS:** Translanguaging, multilingualism, discourse analysis, deconstruction, decolonization, 通九蕃语, 解六蕃译

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This article reports the findings of a research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to explore methods that can help de-westernize mainstream language and literacy research. As an outcome of this project, here we introduce Reconstructive Discourse Analysis (RDA) as a decolonial research methodology that combines discourse analysis with reconstructive analysis to critically examine dominant Western theories by reconstructing them through a non-Western lens. By tracing the discursive genealogy of trending concepts in language and literacy research, RDA exposes the local nature of the cultural, political, and discursive contexts that have created these concepts. It then introduces alternative discourses

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from non-Western traditions and reconstructs the concepts in new ways that disrupt the theoretical hegemony of trending Western theories as universal conceptualizations. Hence, for readers of *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, RDA offers a model of decolonial theoretical intervention: it not only analyzes discourse but also intervenes by deliberately reconfiguring it. This approach provides scholars with tools to question the universality of Western frameworks to recognize epistemologies from diverse communities, and to create more inclusive and equitable forms of knowledge production.

Over the past few decades, language and literacy researchers in the English-speaking world have theorized several pluralized concepts that aim to broaden our understanding of literacy engagement and language use. Examples of these theories include multiliteracies, multimodality, multilingualism, plurilingualism, and translanguaging. The research trends that represent these concepts often frame them as “cutting-edge” research. Nevertheless, non-Western communities have long engaged with these multi, pluri, and transforms of literacy. In fact, the dominant monolingual print-based model of literacy, which these research movements often critique, is the result of Western positivist, colonial, and neoliberal educational structures, which overlooked, or even devalued, multilingual, multisemiotic, and oral literacy practices already existing in the other parts of the world (Aydin & Ozfidan, 2014; Gee, 1986; Imouri, 2021; Kalan, 2016, 2021; Liu, 2023; Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2023; Mohanty, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009).

Through this decolonial lens, one can see that multi, pluri, and trans literacy theories should not be regarded as Western inventions in a linear progress of academic ideas. The research trends that promote these practices are in fact attempts to remedy the ills of modern Western conceptualizations, policies, and practices such as language standardization, centralized curriculum, nation-state-based official monolingualism, and overemphasis on print-based literacy. With a trajectory of forced homogenization of knowledge in educational settings, Western contexts may not be the best geographical regions for examples of multilingual and multimodal language and literacy practices. While Western thinkers were busy conceptualizing modern European nation-states based on one-nation-one-language ideologies and the superiority of print-based cultures (Avineri, 1972; Fichte, 1806/2008; Hegel, 1837/2011), they criticized the multi-dimensionality of non-Western communities’ treatment of language and literacy as “savage” and “illiterate” (Gee, 1986) behavior. With the tide recently turning toward an appreciation of multiplicity of linguistic, communicative, and literacy practices in English scholarship, it is important to recognize non-Western discourses about multi, pluri, and trans concepts and draw on non-Western communities’ rich experiences with complex language and literacy practices.

There is a growing recognition in applied linguistics that (re)centering Southern perspectives is necessary to resist the colonial trends that have historically attempted to privilege Western, or Northern, ideologies while undermining the value of Southern thinking (Canagarajah, 2018, 2022, 2024; Kubota, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Ndhlovu, 2021; Wei, 2023; Windle et al., 2023). For example, Canagarajah (2012) has observed that most contemporary research treats translingual orientation as a new development, ignoring the longstanding presence of such practices in the Global South. Wei (2023) has also drawn connections between translanguaging and Southern theory, formulating translanguaging as a theory to address the sociopolitical particularities of the communities being studied.

This trend of decolonial translanguaging also includes calls for a methodological shift. For instance, Wei (2018, 2022) has acknowledged the need for new analytical approaches that move away from treating languages as isolated and fixed systems toward a broader understanding of how language users dynamically combine their diverse communicative resources in daily social interactions. Agama et al. (2023) argued that translanguaging should not only be seen as a pragmatic educational practice but also a site of resistance against monolingual normativity; this

stance indicates the development of research methods that better explain the construction of this “normativity” and disrupt it. Lee (2022) has also argued for translanguaging methodologies that transcend rigid language conceptualizations to better understand language use in various social contexts, suggesting that communication is often more complex and unpredictable than typically assumed. Phyak (2022) proposed “*tangsing*” (coming together/collective act) as a decolonized research methodology, offering “a transformative space” (p. 5) for researchers to critically engage with power dynamics related to their positionality to make their perceptions of literacy in unequal linguistic environments visible. Vogel (2022), in the same manner, argues that researchers must reflect on their own positions within social and geographical locations. Positions and positionalities significantly impact discourse generation in the process of research.

Contributing to this trend, we recommend Reconstructive Discourse Analysis (RDA) as a research methodology that can help us recognize non-Western communities’ conceptualizations and perceptions of multidimensional (plural) language and literacy practices and incorporate them into mainstream language and literacy research discourses. We hope that RDA can help establish more accountability in terms of historical epistemological imbalances.

In what follows, we describe the different steps involved in Reconstructive Discourse Analysis as a decolonial inquiry approach. Next, we will illustrate the use and potential of this methodology for discursive intervention through a study of recent Western discourses about translanguaging in comparison with older Chinese notions of interlinguality developed in a different socio-historical context. In this process, we focus on two old Chinese concepts that, similar to the theory of “translanguaging,” were developed to address interlingual connections in times of increasing linguistic diversity: “通九蕃语” (tōng jiǔ fān yǔ), which translates to “understanding multiple foreign languages,” and “解六蕃译” (jiě liù fān yì), which signifies the ability to “comprehend and interpret a variety of foreign languages.”

Please note that these Chinese concepts are not translations or equivalents of “translanguaging,” but rather contextual theoretical responses to questions about the use of multiple languages in communication processes. These concepts were used in historical texts such as *The History of A Lushan* written in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) by Runeng Yao and *New History of the Tang Dynasty*, compiled by a team of scholars of the Song Dynasty in 1058. These texts describe how the Sogdians, a Central Asian Iranian people, mastered various languages and worked as interpreters for the Tang government in diplomatic activities and foreign trade along the Silk Roads. The Silk Roads were a complex network of trade routes that, from the 2nd century BCE to the 18th century, connected Europe to Asia and covered all the territories in between including Anatolia, Persia, Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and North and East Africa (Elisseeff, 2000; Frankopan, 2015). In the following sections, we use Reconstructive Discourse Analysis to reveal the Sogdian-Chinese perspectives on interlingual connections. We also discuss how these perspectives can enrich current conversations about translanguaging in English academia.

Throughout this article, we use the term “non-Western literacies” to refer to multilingual and multisemiotic practices that are and have been performed beyond the dominant modernist paradigms of monolingual print-based literacy promoted by centralized industrial, colonial, and neoliberal educational structures. We also use “non-Western” or “Southern” when discussing the knowledge about the multidimensionality of literacy which has been geographically produced in diverse regions and cultures of the Global South, where multilingual literacy practices are deeply intertwined with local traditions and social contexts. As multilingual scholars with access to Persian and Chinese sources, we decided to focus on the said Chinese conceptualizations about the Sogdians’ language practices as an example of how to conduct Reconstructive Discourse Analysis.

## What is Reconstructive Discourse Analysis (RDA)?

RDA is a research approach that brings together (a) discourse analysis and (b) reconstructive analysis. Discourse analysis helps us identify cultural, sociopolitical, and historical discourses that load language with meaning (Gee, 2014; Paltridge, 2012). In reconstructive analysis (Carspecken, 2008; Habermas, 1979), discourses are reconstructed in new combinations to make the sociocultural and power relational contexts of the discursive hegemony visible, an approach that, in turn, acts as a form of discourse analysis. This kind of discourse reconstruction functions on the knowledge that “semantic structures are instantiated through culturally distinctive uses of words and phrases whose meanings depend on relations to other categories through relations of opposition, contrast, similarity, analogy, metaphor, and homology” (Carspecken, 2008, p. 743). Reconstructive analysis provides an opportunity to compare two different discursive contexts, highlighting their similarities and differences to evaluate the theories developed within these contexts by putting them next to possible alternatives.

Thus, RDA is a form of deliberate discursive intervention to (a) unsettle, disrupt, and dismantle dominant theoretical concepts, and (b) incorporate marginalized discourses into reconstructions of mainstream discourses for creating a more inclusive epistemological ecosystem. One can imagine RDA as a form of “theoretical action research” to better understand the functionality of this approach. Educational action research is mobilized as a form of pedagogical intervention that allows transformation of dominant teaching methods. In a typical action research cycle, we observe a problem in the process of teaching and learning, we devise a plan to address the problem in the form of pedagogical action, we put the plan into practice, and, at the end of the cycle, we study the outcome. RDA is basically a theoretical form of action research in which we deconstruct the concepts created by privileged epistemologies and reconstruct them as an intentional discursive interference. At the end of this process, similar to the stages involved in action research, we reflect on the resultant discourse and evaluate its similarities and differences with the dominant concepts and its implications for more inclusive and equitable education. In accordance with this model, to conduct RDA, researchers need to take the following steps:

### *1- Mapping the Genealogy of Discourses (Discursive Genealogy):*

RDA starts with a genealogy approach (Foucault, 1972, 1986; Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005) to identify the core discourses in a field of inquiry, and the historical, academic, social, and political contexts that those discourses have emerged from. A genealogy approach will help us (a) identify and categorize dominant discourses and their academic/intellectual genealogies, and (b) map out how cultural, racial, economic, political, power-relational, and similar non-academic factors have impacted the formation and dissemination of trending discourses. In this phase, the researcher can ask how the new areas of knowledge in question (for instance, translanguaging) developed. What are the field’s agendas and interests? What is the field’s publication history and dissemination map? Who authored the field’s publications, and in what languages were they written? What are the trending authors’ academic and cultural affiliations? Which journals and publishers facilitated the field’s scholarly exchanges? Who is the trending scholars’ audience? What social movements and political events have given rise to the popularity of the concept(s) in question? In summary: What is the discursive map of what constitutes a field of inquiry such as translanguaging theory?

Once this genealogical data is extracted, it is coded for analysis through instances of recurrence, conceptual emphasis, anaphora, ellipsis, conjunctions, thematic patterns, semantic

coherence, and intertextual thematics (Titscher et al., 2000). This form of analysis will often reveal the contextual foundation of the theories, which can undermine claims of theoretical universality and universal application. Revealing the provincial nature of trending Western theories will challenge the colonial perception of the academic leadership of the West (Chakrabarty, 2008; Connell, 2010, 2020; Meghji, 2021; Santos, 2015, 2018) and thus will democratize epistemological relations by enabling discourses from other communities to participate in the scholarly conversation.

### ***2- Disrupting the Dominant Discursive Hegemony (Discursive Intervention):***

When trending discourses are mapped out, they can be contrasted with non-Western perceptions of the same phenomena or concepts. This comparison is what we call “discursive intervention.” Discursive intervention is “an effort to change our social reality by altering the discourses that help constitute that reality” (Karlberg, 2005, p. 1). To conduct discursive intervention, “an alternative discourse ... needs to be more clearly articulated” (Karlberg, 2005, p. 1). For instance, in what follows, we present two Chinese concepts as alternative discourses that were used long ago to discuss certain multi- and translanguing practices. We describe the historical circumstances that gave rise and popularity to the Chinese concepts. Then, we try to reveal the discursive dimensions of these concepts as a new point of discursive reference to disrupt the discursive hegemony of current English conversations about translanguaging.

### ***3- Reconfiguring the Discursive Landscape (Reconstructive Analysis):***

At this stage, currently trending concepts will be reconstructed with the notions borrowed from a different context. This process of reconstruction, in practice, helps us continue discourse analysis of trending concepts because “reconstructive theories analyze ... processes of symbolic production and reproduction and their underlying structures” (Peters, 1994, p. 106). Reconstructive analysis acts as a form of discourse analysis by revealing underlying layers of discourses in the process of reconstruction. At the same time, however, reconstruction of discourses with the voices and perceptions of non-Western communities contributes to decolonizing knowledge by showcasing hidden academic theorizations that long before the current trends were used to discuss pluralized concepts such as multiliteracies, multilingualism, and translanguaging. Reconstructing concepts with the incorporation of the marginalized discourses will undermine centralized academic authority and, in a spirit of collaborative theorization, will allow more well-rounded understandings of phenomena.

### ***The Tradition of Discourse-Based Inquiry***

We regard RDA as a methodology rooted in better-known and more frequently used forms of discourse analysis, which we will briefly discuss in this section. Depending on the discipline, the term “discourse,” as a target of analysis, carries various interpretations among scholars within their respective academic domains. Nevertheless, these definitions generally align with an understanding of discourse analysis as a form of inquiry for studying the impact and connotations of language “beyond the sentence” and embedded within “a broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language” (Tannen et al., 2015, p. 1). In this sense, “discourse” involves the utilization of various semiotic, cultural, social, and ideological resources in addition to language (Waring, 2017; Widdowson, 2007). These metalinguistic resources are the substance of discourse analysis.

The space between language and the social context that frames language in communicative acts allows the emergence of the politics of communication and the appearance of extralingual connotations. Discourse is the underlying ideology that motivates the production of the text in the first place. Waring (2017) referred to discourse as “the actual use of language along with other multimodal resources...to accomplish actions, negotiate identities, and construct ideologies” (p. 8). Thus, discursive practices not only encompass linguistic utterances that signify theoretical concepts such as “translanguaging,” but they also involve “the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories” (Foucault, 1980, p. 199). That is why discourse generally contains three dimensions: “language use,” “the communication of beliefs (cognition),” and “interaction in social situations” (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 2).

Scholars who study discourse are interested not only in language itself but also in how language is employed to accomplish various social actions and interactions. Discourse analysis, thus, can involve “studying language in the context of society, culture, history, institutions, identity formation, politics, power, and all the other things that language helps us to create and which, in turn, render language meaningful in certain ways and able to accomplish certain purposes” (Handford & Gee, 2013, p. 5). Given the wide range of approaches within the field, discourse analysis is continuously expanding and evolving. Here we briefly review several major discourse analysis approaches to show how RDA can contribute to discourse studies by shifting the focus from “deconstruction” to “reconstruction.”

### *A Brief Review of Discourse Analysis Approaches*

Under the umbrella term of “discourse analysis,” different approaches have been developed that make use of deconstruction as a key method to identify metalinguistic meanings. In this section, we provide a brief review of major discourse analysis approaches to highlight how they mobilize deconstruction (see Table 1 for a summary of approaches).

**Table 1**  
*Discourse Analysis Approaches and Their Targets of Deconstruction*

Approach	Focus of Deconstruction
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	Written language
Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis	Large collections of written texts
Mediated Discourse Analysis	Multimodal language use in complex social situations
Multimodal Discourse Analysis	Language used in conjunction with other forms of semiotic communication
Conversation Analysis & Ethnomethodological Discourse Analysis	Conversational language in social contexts
Narrative Analysis	Narrative structures mobilized in cultural and social interactions

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines language and discourse, with a particular focus on the societal and power relations that shape and are shaped by language use (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 2013; Kress, 1990; Van Dijk, 2015). CDA is mobilized to explain and critique structures or mechanisms underneath language use, focusing on “the elites and their

discursive strategies for the maintenance of inequality” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). Therefore, it explores how dominant groups maintain their dominance through language use and how marginalized groups may resist inequality through language.

Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis relies on analysis of large collections of written texts (Cheng, 2013; Flowerdew, 2012; Upton & Cohen, 2009). It aims to demonstrate distinctive perspectives into how discourse is constructed in a large set of texts by “document[ing] variation in the use of lexical and grammatical features in particular registers, describing the functions and frequency distributions of those linguistic features” (Gray & Biber, 2011, pp. 139-140). Hence, Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis makes it possible to “go beyond the analysis of sentences and short texts to the analysis of huge amounts of text” and construct “covariant lexico-grammatical patterns across registers” (Bhatia et al., 2007, pp. 7-8). This approach offers a data-driven and evidence-based method to study language and understand discourse creation and variation.

With a greater focus on how language use can lead to action meant for social impact, Mediated Discourse Analysis “focuses on linkages between discourse and action and how this plays out in complex social situations” (S. W. Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2013, p. 66). Mediated Discourse Analysis “seeks to develop a theoretical remedy for discourse analysis that operates without reference to social actions on the one hand, or social analysis that operates without reference to discourse on the other” (R. Scollon, 2002, p. 1). It recognizes the multiplicity of modes of communication in mediated contexts—including written texts, audiovisual materials, digital platforms, and social media—and offers insights into the impact of mediated discourse on language use, communication practices, and social dynamics. Similarly, Multimodal Discourse Analysis is interested in analyzing how language and multiple semiotic resources, such as gestures, sounds, and images, interact and contribute to meaning making in discourse (Kress & Bezemer, 2023; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; O’Halloran, 2004). Multimodal Discourse Analysis allows researchers to explore the intricate relationships between various modes of communication and understand how multimodal resources are employed in different contexts. It considers how multimodal texts are positioned within broader cultural, social, and historical discourses.

Among different modalities and semiotic structures, Conversation Analysis focuses on the properties of naturally occurring conversations to discover the underlying principles that govern conversation and to understand conversational patterns in social life (Bhatia et al., 2007; Heritage, 2001). With a similar emphasis on naturally occurring conversation and interaction as a source of data, Ethnomethodological Discourse Analysis invites researchers to observe the meaning that people make when speaking with each other and interacting with different kinds of media, as opposed to the meaning that we project to those interactions based on our preconceptions and presuppositions (Rodrigues & Braga, 2014). It views conversation as context-dependent and shaped by the specific circumstances of the interaction.

With the same interest in naturally occurring genres of communication, Narrative Analysis uses discourse analysis to ask how stories are structured, “what makes stories tellable,” and what constitutes their “cultural resonance and meaningfulness” (Thornborrow, 2013, p. 263). It examines how meanings are conveyed by narratives, and the social and cultural implications those narratives hold. “Narrative is embedded in social activity both on the level of interaction and on the level of discursive and social practice” (De Fina & Johnstone, 2015, p. 158). Narrative analysis offers a way of understanding how individuals and communities use storytelling to construct identities and the interplay between personal narratives and broader social discourse.

### *From “Deconstruction” to “Reconstruction”*

These major discourse analysis approaches have their own unique characteristics and are grounded in diverse theoretical foundations. Nevertheless, all these approaches share the common goal of uncovering hidden meanings by *deconstructing* texts. They are mobilized to reveal the ideological layers of linguistic constructs and the hidden semantic space between the lines. Deconstruction is an outcome of the cognizance of the fact that texts are “always in a state of change, furnishing only provisional meanings” and that they are “open-ended constructs [because] sign and signification are only arbitrary relationships” (Guerin, 1999, p. 176). The meaning of a text always remains open to the reader, as language has the power to stimulate interpretative potentials and attribute multiple meanings to the same text (Khafaga, 2017). The writer, also, uses this interpretive space to load their own ideologies onto the text/language as an additional communicative component that remains hidden but impacts readers’ interpretations of the text and their understanding of the “truth” indicated within the text. Deconstruction is important because it makes this interpretive space visible.

In other words, deconstruction involves exposing the underlying contradictions and hierarchical oppositions present in language, texts, messages, policies, and/or ideas to reveal the inherent complexity and the multiple interpretations that can arise (Wolfreys, 1998). Deconstruction aims to show that “texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices ... do not have definable meanings and determinable missions” (Derrida, 2020, p. 31). Thus, deconstruction can be understood as a radical questioning process that relies on the agency of the interpreter to engage in the undetermined interpretive space of the text to extract meanings that inform us about the ideological contexts beneath the text. By employing deconstructive discourse analysis, we could undermine “the revelation of essence, de-stabilising meaning as presence, and disrupting dominant, taken-for granted notions of a subject” (Macleod, 2002, p. 18) so that it would be possible for us to analyze the internal tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions that challenge conventional interpretations.

The scholarly texts where pluralized concepts such as translanguaging are discussed have the same discursive nature. Despite claims to universality, reinforced by the Eurocentrism that has for centuries now positioned Western scholars as an epistemological reference, these concepts have emerged out of certain provincial contexts and address local ideological concerns. The deconstructive tendency of discourse analysis methods can reveal the ideological and historical embeddedness of multi, pluri, and trans concepts. Nevertheless, deconstruction on its own cannot allow us to showcase non-Western traditions of complex linguistic and textual practices. Thus, we felt we needed to move from “deconstruction” to “reconstruction.”

### *Towards Analytic Reconstruction*

To reclaim non-Western knowledge of multi, pluri, and trans concepts such as translanguaging, we need to disrupt dominant academic discourses by constructing concepts that center non-Western experiences. This requires a move toward revisiting, refiguring, and reconstructing dominant concepts. To develop a method of reconstructive discourse analysis, we drew on two, rather underutilized, conceptualizations in qualitative research: De-westernization and Reconstructive Analysis.

From the field of communication studies, Glück (2015) has written about the idea of de-westernization of research. De-westernization addresses the imbalance in academic knowledge reception by moving beyond conceptualizations in the West. “It suggests an epistemic shift away from ideas of parochialism or Eurocentrism” by integrating “historical and current intellectual

debates within countries of the Global South” (Glück, 2015, p. 1). The minute difference between decolonization and de-westernization is important. Decolonial projects that we are exposed to in English deconstruct Eurocentrism within the Western intellectual ecosystem, but de-westernization aims to center the margins by providing Western conceptualizations with a second place in comparison with conversations occurring outside the geographical realm of the West. A theory of de-westernization, thus, displays consciousness about geographical and sociomaterial contexts of knowledge generation. As important as critiquing colonial ideas is, we also need to attempt to center non-Western communities’ ideas in those critiques to replace, or, in a reconstructive approach, to balance epistemological weight based on geographies of knowledge production.

One method for making devalued epistemes visible is to reconstruct our knowledge based on them. Among less orthodox discourse analysis approaches, there is a method that Carspecken (2008) has framed as “Reconstructive Analysis.” Drawing on Habermas’ (1979) concept of “reconstructive sciences,” Carspecken (2008) describes reconstructive analysis as basically a form of discourse analysis: a “theoretically guided process of explicating the initially implicit components, structures, and/or generative rules of meaning” (p. 740). Nevertheless, Carspecken, echoing Habermas, explains that this act of “explicating” happens because of hermeneutic reconstruction. In other words, in discourse analysis, hidden meanings are not entirely discovered; instead, as proposed by Reconstructive Analysis, a reader-interpreter (re)constructs a text’s metalingual meanings.

For Carspecken, the occurrence of reconstruction is the result of the fact that meaning is always exposed in multiple nuanced forms: “All meaningful expressions are usually experienced as a range of possible meanings, not as a singular unambiguous meaning” (Carspecken, 2008, p. 741). Thus, the analysis of meaning is a constant act of comparison between different possible meanings. At the same time, the multiplicity of possible meanings, rather than creating confusion, helps us establish a horizon of validity while rival interpretations correct one another’s perspectives. That is why “the first step [of Reconstructive Analysis] is to become cognizant of the array of validity claims that constitute meaningful acts. Every expression of meaning is constituted by” (Carspecken, 2008, p. 741) validity claims. Hence, in our case—pluralized concepts such as translanguaging—the best conceptualizations are those which endure discursive comparisons.

We have developed our method of Reconstructive Discourse Analysis (RDA) based on the above theoretical affordances so that, as an act of research de-westernization, we can borrow discourses from non-Western communities and then use them as a horizon of validity to reconstruct dominant Western discourses. RDA provides an opportunity to compare two different discursive contexts for highlighting “similarities” and “contrasts,” and, as a result, creates a “validity horizon” (Call-Cummings & Ross, 2019, p. 6) for discourse-centered theories by putting them next to possible alternatives.

Although we are taking the initiative to extend available reconstructive theories to formulate Reconstructive Discourse Analysis (RDA), we are aware that the need for such a move has long been felt in the field of discourse analysis. As highlighted by Luke (2004) in his article “Notes on the Future of Critical Discourse Studies,” discourse analysis can shift its focus toward a reconstructive agenda, one that is designed to reconcile and rebuild social structures, institutional lives and identities. Discourse studies should “document and analytically explicate affirmative, emancipating and redressive texts and discourse practices – turning our attention to instances where discourse appears to lead systematically to the redistribution of wealth and power” (Luke, 2004, p. 151), and, in the same vein, the redistribution of intellectual privilege.

## Discursive Reconstruction of “Translanguaging” Based on the Historical Chinese Perceptions

As a brief illustration of how researchers can mobilize Reconstructive Discourse Analysis, in this section, we draw on Chinese perceptions of interlingual comprehension to discursively intervene in current debates about “translanguaging.” Following the model presented previously, we first provide brief narratives of the discursive genealogies of English and Chinese conceptualizations of interlinguality. Next, performing discursive intervention, we attempt to disrupt dominant discursive connotations of “translanguaging” through a comparison with Chinese terms that connote interlinguality. This, we hope, will allow us to reconstruct the concept of “translanguaging” while we embrace older non-Western views of interlingual connections.

We acknowledge that methodological and epistemological challenges of cross-linguistic research are not neutral. As Rabiah-Mohammed et al. (2024) emphasized, bilingual and cross-cultural studies often lack systematic frameworks for translation and conceptual framing, requiring careful justification of how equivalence is negotiated across languages. Accordingly, we would like to clarify that we do not claim that the Chinese concepts are linguistic models like contemporary conceptualizations of translanguaging. Nor are we interested in comparing the definitions of these concepts with translanguaging at a conceptual level. Our focus, as highlighted in the name of our proposed methodology, Reconstructive Discourse Analysis, is the discourses that surround the Chinese terms and those associated with the contemporary translanguaging theory. We would like to explore the discursive contexts which fostered these concepts, and, to some degree, the social, political, and historical circumstances that necessitated intellectual investment in the conceptualization of theories that try to understand, and advocate for, use of multiple languages and interlingual fusions.

In translating culturally and historically embedded Chinese terms “通九蕃语” and “解六蕃译,” we consulted a range of authoritative bilingual dictionaries (including *Oxford Chinese Dictionary* and *Collins Chinese Dictionary*) and cross-referenced terminology across relevant literature to ensure semantic precision as much as possible. Given that these terms have no direct modern equivalents, we employed interpretive strategies grounded in historical usage, institutional function, and discursive context. In this sense, the translations are not merely lexical entities but conceptual re-articulations, reflecting a synthesis of lexicographic sources, scholarly interpretation, and our methodological stance.

### *Discursive Genealogy of Contemporary Translanguaging Theory*

The term “translanguaging” was first introduced in the 1980s in the Welsh context, originating from the Welsh term “Trawsieithu” coined by Cen Williams. It was subsequently translated into English as “translanguaging.” This concept was initially developed to “name a pedagogical practice which deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms” (G. Lewis et al., 2012, p. 643). This notion has evolved to refer to “both the complex and fluid language practices of bilinguals, as well as the pedagogical approaches that leverage those practices” (García et al., 2017, p. 118). With different scholars contributing to the concept, it has gained multiple discursive connotations including those which emphasize linguistic, pedagogical, multimodal, semiotic, and critical dimensions.

### ***Theoretical Linguistic Foundations***

Different from “bilingualism” conceptualizations, which hold that bilingual speakers have two separate language systems corresponding to the socially recognized boundaries of named languages, translanguaging theory critiques the division of named languages and argues that there is “one semiotic system integrating various lexical, morphological, and grammatical linguistic features in addition to social practices” (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 5). The theory of translanguaging recognizes that every individual—regardless of being called monolingual, bilingual, multilingual, or plurilingual—possesses a single linguistic repertoire. This repertoire is acquired through interactive social engagements and allows individuals to choose and utilize linguistic elements to create meaning within specific contexts (Vogel & García, 2017).

From this linguistic perspective, translanguaging theory treats language use as a dynamic and flexible process. To refer to this process, Otheguy et al. (2019) used the term “linguistic system,” which covers linguistic structure and linguistic competence, and argued that the linguistic system is “acquired in the first place through social interaction and communication” and “is the collection of lexical and structural resources seeded by linguistic practices and grown and harvested in such practices” (p. 629). In other words, translanguaging theory has a heteroglossic perspective of multilingualism which “considers multiple language practices in interrelationship” (García, 2011, p. 7) within a unified linguistic system.

### ***Pedagogy***

Translanguaging also has a pedagogical dimension designed to empower language-minoritized students by providing them with space to address linguistic inequalities by using their own languages in the process of learning (Flores & García, 2017; García & Leiva, 2014). Translanguaging acknowledges the linguistic and cultural wealth of multilingual students, enabling them to display their distinct identities (Canagarajah, 2011; Sayer, 2013). In this pedagogy, instructors are invited to regard translanguaging as a means of learning, thinking, and developing proficiency in various languages (García & Kleyn, 2016). The general principles for translanguaging pedagogy “include the placing of students’ languages at the centre of the curriculum, learning based on ‘dialogical action’ between students and students as well as between students and teachers, and content-integrated language learning” (Conteh, 2018, p. 482). From this perspective, students’ diverse linguistic backgrounds are assets rather than obstacles, and teachers need to create inclusive and supportive environments that allow the use of students’ linguistic repertoires.

### ***Semiotics and Multimodality***

Translanguaging theory has also been described as a process of knowledge construction that includes more than language. Translanguaging is “a practice and a process—a practice that involves dynamic and functionally integrated use of different languages and language varieties, but more importantly, a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond language(s)” (Wei, 2018, p. 15). Translanguaging theory, thus, transcends the conventional boundaries between linguistic and non-linguistic cognitive and semiotic systems. According to this perspective, language transforms into “a multisensory and multimodal semiotic system that is interconnected with other identifiable but inseparable cognitive systems” (Wei, 2018, p. 20). The theory of translanguaging emphasizes that linguistic resources are a component of a broader repertoire that encompasses additional non-discursive elements like emotions, experiences, and other multimodal resources.

Hence, translanguaging theorists deem it insufficient to analyze languages as separate bounded systems: “repertoires are better considered as an emergent property deriving from the interactions between people, artefacts, and space” and “they are the product of social spaces as semiotic resources, objects and space interact” (Pennycook, 2017, p. 277). In different environments, individuals have the freedom to utilize all available linguistic and communicative resources, blending them together to create complex linguistic and semiotic expressions (Blommaert, 2014). Kalan (2022) has also described translanguaging as a trigger to intensify semiotic interactions and thus allowing multilingual speakers to foster interactions across different communities and cultures as well as languages.

### *Critical Perspectives*

Contemporary translanguaging theory is also interested in the sociopolitical and power relational dimensions of language ideologies and hierarchies. Flores and García (2017), for instance, contextualized educational inequalities within a racialized framework and argued for granting bilingual students a voice in schools that are primarily governed by monolingual language policies and monoglossic ideologies. Translanguaging practices are argued to enable students to “appreciate the importance of dynamic bi- and multilingualism and their mobilization of all linguistic and multimodal resources for meaning-making that advanced their understanding of social justice issues” (Lau et al., 2017, p. 121). Thus, translanguaging theory offers students opportunities to explore various layers of social diversity and develop a nuanced understanding of social prejudice. This discursive dimension of translanguaging theory addresses language inequality and promotes social justice by recognizing and valuing diverse linguistic practices, particularly those of marginalized, minoritized, and racialized communities.

### *Discursive Genealogy of Chinese Conceptualizations of Interlinguality*

We now switch to ancient China as an example of a non-Western context to exemplify alternative notions of pluri, multi, and trans theories in language and literacy research. China possesses a diverse multicultural history. This multiculturalism played a central role in the ancient Silk Roads trade network linking the East and the West (Brotton, 2003; Wood, 2002). The Silk Roads facilitated academic, religious, and linguistic interactions as well as commerce and exchange of goods (Yang et al., 2019). Through this network, Chinese culture influenced neighboring regions, while absorbing elements of other cultures (Herbert, 1997). For instance, the Chinese had interactions with the Sogdians—Central Asian Iranians located at the Silk Roads crossroads in present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—who were known for their unique mercantile skills (Rong, 2001). Due to war, trade interests, and other factors, large numbers of Sogdians settled in China during the rule of Han to Tang dynasties (Rong, 2001). The Sogdians’ mobility, commercial expertise, and knowledge of multiple languages connected distant regions, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas (Yoshida, 2021). Historical Chinese records show that the Sogdians influenced China in different areas of social life including culture, religion, commerce, agriculture, art, fashion, and entertainment (De la Vaissière, 2003). Thanks to their ability to communicate with different linguistic populations in the region, the Sogdians gained respect for their expertise in long-distance trade. They developed a reputation for their entrepreneurial spirit, establishing commercial relationships and forming networks with various societies along the Silk Roads (Rong, 2001).

The concepts of “通九蕃语” (understanding multiple foreign languages) and “解六蕃译” (comprehending and interpreting a variety of foreign languages) originated in China’s Tang

Dynasty within the Court of State Ceremonial (鸿胪寺), where they denoted the essential linguistic qualifications for interpreters, as detailed in the administrative code *The Six Statutes of the Tang* (大唐六典, 739). This system facilitated diplomacy, managed tributary missions, and gathered intelligence (M. E. Lewis, 2009). These terms not only reflected institutional needs but also mirrored the lived linguistic realities of key historical actors, particularly the Sogdians, whose multilingualism played a central role in the cultural and commercial exchanges along the Silk Roads. As highlighted by Hanks (2010), linguistic connection and diffusion were core mechanisms of the cultural exchange in this region, and the Sogdians, by virtue of their linguistic skill, emerged as indispensable intermediaries in both trade and diplomacy (Drompp, 2005; Rachel, 2010).

Chinese historical texts such as *The History of An Lushan* (An Lushan Shi Ji, 安禄山事迹), written by Runeng Yao in the Tang Dynasty, around 618-907) and *New History of the Tang Dynasty* (新唐书, 1058) noted the Sogdians' strategies to negotiate across multiple languages and cultures, using the terms “通九蕃语” and “解六蕃译” to highlight their linguistic competence. These concepts date back over a millennium, which indicates that curiosity about multilingualism is hardly a new phenomenon. Much like contemporary translanguaging theory, these early Chinese notions center on how multilingual individuals use their knowledge of multiple languages (their linguistic repertoire) to overcome language barriers and facilitate effective communication in various domains, including intellectual exchange, trade, and diplomatic activities.

The concepts of “通九蕃语” and “解六蕃译” share the discursive connotation of “understanding (通),” or “comprehending (解),” multiple foreign languages. In Table 2, we define the surrounding Chinese characters in relation to the central characters that denote “comprehension”:

**Table 2**  
*Meanings of the Characters in the Chinese Terms*

Chinese Concepts	通九蕃语 (tōng jiǔ fān yǔ)	解六蕃译 (jiě liù fān yì)
Meaning of each Chinese character	通tōng: To communicate, to understand 九jiǔ: Nine 蕃fān: This character historically referred to non-Chinese ethnic groups, particularly those living in border regions. 语yǔ: Language, speech	解jiě: To explain, to solve, to comprehend 六liù: Six 译yì: Translation or interpretation

As explained, the characters “通” (to understand) and “解” (to comprehend) are semantically central in these concepts. Their meanings are in line with conceptualizations that define “translanguaging” as an approach that facilitates communication and deeper comprehension in multilingual settings (Vogel & García, 2017).

With the knowledge of these meanings in mind, we asked what some other connotations of the characters were that could potentially help us better understand the historical and cultural discourses that motivated the use of these characters. We consulted several Chinese dictionaries—including *古汉语字典* (Gu Han Yu Zi Dian), *古汉语大字典* (Gu Han Yu Da Zi Dian), *古代汉语*

字典 (Gu Dai Han Yu Zi Dian), and 新华字典 (Xin Hua Zi Dian)—to see how the central characters 通tōng and 解jiě were historically used. In Table 3, we summarize the various connotations of these characters:

**Table 3**  
*The Historical Connotations of Two Key Chinese Characters in Their Contexts of Use*

Key Chinese Characters	通tōng	解jiě
Connotations in various contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get through without obstacles</li> <li>• Lead to</li> <li>• Reconcile</li>   <li>• Connect, communicate</li> <li>• Notify, tell</li> <li>• Exchange</li> <li>• Interact</li> <li>• Understand, know</li> <li>• Being proficient, erudite</li> <li>• Link up</li> <li>• Remove obstacles from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissect</li> <li>• Untie</li> <li>• Begin</li> <li>• Split, divide</li> <li>• Dissolve</li> <li>• Mediate</li>   <li>• Explain, interpret</li> <li>• Understand, comprehend</li>   <li>• Solve</li> <li>• Resolve</li> </ul>

Next, based on the connotations of the two key terms suggested in the dictionaries, we gathered examples from Chinese historical records where these terms were employed. Drawing from the collected material, we tried to categorize the discourses that facilitated the use of the terms. Our aim was to comprehensively explore a range of possible perspectives, including ideologies, power dynamics, historical perceptions, and social constructions as they manifested in the texts employing these terms. As Table 4 and the subsequent explanations show, we identified the major underlying discourses of the Chinese terms which would allow us to make comparisons with current discourses surrounding “translanguaging.” These concepts are: (1) comprehension, (2) negotiation, and (3) collective growth.

**Table 4***Examples of Different Discourses Surrounding the Terms*

<b>Themes of the Discourses</b>	<b>通tōng</b>	<b>解jiě</b>
Comprehension	<p><b>通</b>: to <i>comprehend</i></p> <p>Example: 鸣之而不能通其意 (From the essay “马说”)</p> <p>Translation: “When one hears the neighing of a winged steed but fails to grasp its meaning, it serves as a metaphor for foolish and arbitrary rulers who are unable to <i>comprehend</i> the thoughts of those individuals who possess talent but lack the opportunity to utilize it.”</p>	<p><b>解</b>: to <i>understand</i></p> <p>Example: 大惑者，终身不解 (From the essay “庄子·天地”)</p> <p>Translation: “Those who are confused will never <i>understand</i>.”</p>
Negotiation	<p><b>通</b>: <i>interactions</i></p> <p>Example: 数通使相窥观 (From the essay “苏武传”)</p> <p>Translation: “Between approximately 25-220 AD, during the Han Dynasty, there was a consistent exchange of envoys between the Han court and foreign countries, fostering frequent <i>interactions</i> between them.”</p>	<p><b>解</b>: to <i>mediate</i></p> <p>Example: 请有怨仇讎不相解者，召其人，明白为之解之 (From the book 墨子·号令)</p> <p>Translation: “The government ought to convene individuals who harbor grievances toward each other in order to <i>mediate</i> their conflicts, thereby fostering unity among the people.”</p>
Collective Growth	<p><b>通</b>: to <i>start to develop</i></p> <p>Example: 政通人和，百废俱兴 (From the essay “岳阳楼记”)</p> <p>Translation: “Many government affairs that had faced obstacles <i>started to develop</i>, and the people became happy.”</p>	<p><b>解</b>: to <i>begin to grow</i></p> <p>Example: 雨之润也万物解 (From the book 文子)</p> <p>Translation: “When the rain nourishes, all things <i>begin to grow</i>.”</p>

***Comprehension***

“Comprehension,” as encapsulated by the characters “通” and “解” in the terms “通九蕃语” and “解六蕃译,” accentuates an individual’s capacity for grasping and interpreting languages, texts, knowledge, and diverse situations. The use of these characters highlights the multifaceted nature of “comprehension,” extending beyond mere linguistic proficiency to encompass a broader spectrum of intellectual and social interactions as well as empathy and appreciation.

### *Negotiation*

The notion of “negotiation,” as exemplified in Table 4, connotes a variety of relational forms in Chinese texts, ranging from interpersonal interactions to intricate diplomatic relations among communities and peoples. Moreover, the nature of these relationships encompasses the resolution and mediation of conflicts and differences. Within the scope of our analysis, language can be understood as emerging not just as a medium of communication, but an instrument for shaping new relationships.

### *Collective Growth*

The notion of “collective growth” inherent in “通” and “解,” expresses how various elements come together to encounter challenges and obstacles, as they grow and converge into new forms of unity. This notion of collective growth, in the context of our analysis, depicts how language serves as a tool for bridging gaps, synthesizing different viewpoints, and creating a shared understanding that is crucial in overcoming difficulties. Moreover, it enables collaboration and innovation, allowing individuals to combine their diverse experiences and insights to form a unified response to challenges.

### **Toward a Reconstruction of “Translanguaging” through Discursive Intervention**

Providing a thorough reconstruction of the concept of “translanguaging” through the prism of the listed Chinese discourses, historically used to describe the phenomenon of moving between and communicating through different languages, would take more space than the present article. In this section, however, we can share some of our initial findings as possible directions for recasting the (Western) notion of “translanguaging” inspired by Chinese experiences. Referring to our model, the following is a preliminary analytic outcome of our “discursive intervention” and “reconstructive analysis,” mainly to exemplify these steps in the RDA research design.

### *Comprehension as a Mutual Responsibility*

Western theorists have utilized the concept of “translanguaging” to demonstrate how bilingual individuals fluidly employ their linguistic resources to create meaning and enhance communication (García & Kleyn, 2016; Otheguy et al., 2019; Vogel & García, 2017; Wei, 2018). This approach highlights language users’ translingual practices in transcending prescribed monolingual language systems to facilitate effective communication. From this perspective, the focus of translanguaging is the individual speaker and the language varieties in their linguistic repertoire as valid communicative mediums.

The Chinese concepts have a different discursive foundation and, by emphasizing mutual comprehension, make a special space for the listener as an active component of linguistic communication. A focus on “comprehension” in these concepts is significant. In English conceptualizations, bilingual individuals fluidly employ their linguistic resources to create meaning and facilitate communication. In the Chinese theories, communication is a mutual process in multilingual settings, equally contributed to by all parties present and involved in the setting, including the listener. The listener in this tradition is an active encoder and not only a decoder of language. The Chinese theories of translanguaging can also be interpreted as conceptualizations about communication between two linguistic communities, with “comprehension” viewed as a collective act of two groups of people as well as by individual members. The Chinese concepts not

only illustrate how individuals employ their linguistic repertoire for communication, as the translanguaging concept does (Wei & García, 2022), but they also emphasize connection, exchange, and interaction among different communities through the mutual act of comprehension.

Highlighting this difference is not to claim that Western conceptualizations of translanguaging are totally uninterested in the role of the listener as part of mutual comprehension. Rather, it is to report that the focus of translanguaging theory, within its local English trajectory, has been the individual's languages and for good reason. The languages of multilinguals in the Western context have remained hidden, invisible, and in some cases even their use has been punished, mainly because of different patterns of discrimination. Interestingly, in raciolinguistics, which associates itself with translanguaging, there has been a conversation about "the white listening subject" as an important part of the communication process (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). However, this area of interest is also somehow different from the Chinese understanding. In current applied linguistics scholarship about the listening subject, the emphasis is on how racial difference creates distance between the listener and the speaker. The Chinese theories, however, are more interested in theorizing mutual understanding between two equal communities. The following two themes can further explain this essential difference in terms of perceptions of racial difference and cultural dominance.

### *Negotiation as Prevention of Creating Linguistic Hierarchies*

The currently trending theories of translanguaging and raciolinguistics are largely rooted in American experiences with language education and language policy (G. Lewis et al., 2012; Rosa, 2016; Rosa & Flores, 2017). Because of this local context, the critical side of English conceptualization of translanguaging, understandably, has targeted racial issues in North America, with more of a focus on the interconnections and interactions between English and Spanish. This foundation has been so crucial in developing a critical edge for the theory of translanguaging that the circles involved in this conceptualization felt the need to develop raciolinguistics as a critical addition to their linguistic theoretical model. As a result of the American historical trajectory of race relations, translanguaging and raciolinguistics are a response to already established societal/racial hierarchies in the hopes of challenging them.

The Chinese concepts, however, as described previously, originated from different circumstances, and thus, formed a different character toward social hierarchies. Translanguaging in the Chinese context was the result of a conscious attempt to bring ethnically different intellectual, professional, and commercial communities together. Thus, whereas the Western conceptualization is often mobilized to challenge hierarchies, the translanguaging discussed in Chinese documents was a form of grassroots negotiation and mediation between two equal communities to prevent the establishment of hierarchies. This can explain why "negotiation" is one of the key discourses we discovered in our analysis.

Western translanguaging theory seeks to challenge and dismantle the established societal hierarchies that have marginalized the language practices of minority groups based on linguistic, cultural, and racial factors (Poza, 2017). However, the Chinese concepts emphasize the process of "negotiation" to prevent the establishment of such hierarchies. They highlight the importance of mediation in solving contradictions and misunderstandings and using translanguaging to allow individuals and communities to come together and foster dynamic interactions. In the Chinese theories, "negotiation" creates a more equitable and inclusive space, as it does not stem from a position of power and dominance, but a belief in mutual benefit. In the Chinese conceptualizations, individuals seek to establish relationships based on mutual respect, reciprocity, and shared decision-making. Languages, in this context, act as bridges between both individuals and diverse

ethnic groups and cultures. For instance, along the Silk Roads, different governing bodies engaged in multilingual negotiation to secure financial support, enrich cultural resources, and participate in collaborative efforts to address potential conflicts. The same difference also figures in the larger question of official languages and modern nation-states, which we discuss next.

### *Unity and Diversity (Separation and Integration)*

We think that we can best discuss the third Chinese discourse, “collective growth,” in terms of “unity and diversity,” particularly through the lens of nation-statism. Possibilities for grassroots negotiation in the Chinese context, and hence linguistic exchange and fusion, seem to have been largely the result of the absence of the modern European nation-state model, dominant internationally now. The Western conceptualization of translanguaging is deeply connected to discourses about national languages, official linguistic hierarchies, ethnic boundaries, and racial difference. Based on English scholarship, one can argue that the theory of translanguaging in the West is a response to the problem of nation-statism and thus is still informed by the presence of a higher body of institutions that regulate language practices. This is how Vogel and García (2017) describe the foundation of translanguaging theory: “It [translanguaging] takes up a perspective on bi- and multilingualism that privileges speakers’ own dynamic linguistic and semiotic practices above the named languages of nations and states [emphasis added]” (p. 4).

In contrast with this discursive foundation, the Chinese concepts were not a response to the presence or dominance of nation-states or official languages. The Chinese concepts were reflective of experiences in organic self-regulating linguistic spaces that sought commonalities while respecting differences. Whereas Western translanguaging theories are an outcome of hierarchical relationships imposed by nation-statism, the Chinese concepts are interested in horizontal linguistic fusion and hybridity. This might explain why English conceptualizations of translanguaging often sustain a strong connection with pedagogy and schooling while the Chinese translanguaging theories focused on interlingual practices that occurred outside of the official educational structures, although the Silk Roads facilitated much intellectual exchange within academic establishments of the time. Compulsory mass education, and the linguistic control that it can impose, has been an essential part of the creation of modern European nation-states. English translanguaging thus has needed to center language education in public schools to challenge the imposition of official languages. This orientation, however, does not always encourage paying attention to non-institutional translanguaging and language practices far from the center of the state and the dominance of its official language(s).

In summary, whereas Western translanguaging has had to address the question of language as a national unifier and thus the treatment of language-minoritized students as carrying languages perceived to challenge the status of the national language, the Chinese theories seem to uphold a diversity-in-unity approach. The Chinese concepts recognize language differences and propose the possibility of communication in different languages with the aid of intermediaries. Through this lens, the interaction facilitated by employing multiple languages can be seen as a new mode of communication. The integration of diverse languages, cultures, and ethnic groups does not seek to deny differences or create separation. Instead, it seeks to foster a new form of interaction that values commonalities while respecting differences. The Chinese concepts acknowledge and accept the presence of differences, boundaries, and contradictions. They emphasize the importance of exchange, negotiation, and mediation to establish new relationships, reconcile various needs, resolve disputes, and integrate cultural, commercial, and other social resources to build connections.

## Conclusion

With language and literacy research tending toward a focus on pluri, multi, and trans concepts such as “translanguaging,” Western academics need to be aware that non-Western communities have long engaged with multi-semiotic and plurilingual practices and theories. Many of these practices—for instance, orality and non-regulated multilingualism in the absence of a national language—were considered culturally and civilizationally inferior by colonial intellectuals. This recognition is particularly important because such pluralized concepts are often mobilized for a more inclusive, culturally responsive, and anti-discriminatory education.

In this article, we have recommended Reconstructive Discourse Analysis as a decolonial research approach that helps center non-Western communities’ discourses in our conversations about pluralized concepts. Reconstructive Discourse Analysis allows us to de-westernize our understandings of multi, pluri, and trans concepts by moving our attention out of our local context and debates in the West. This method of discourse analysis can help us broaden the discursive horizon which informs our academic exchanges.

As an experimental case study for illustrating the potentials of this research approach, we explored two ancient Chinese conceptualizations, “通九蕃语” and “解六蕃译,” which were employed to describe using and comprehending multiple languages. Performing discursive intervention, we endeavored to understand how today’s translanguaging theory is different from the Chinese concepts and how it can be potentially reconstructed based on new discursive horizons offered by the Chinese theories. We tried to show that the Western conceptualization of translanguaging is a response to the linguistic behavior of Modern European nation-states and the discriminatory social, racial, and linguistic categorizations this political model creates. As a result of this preoccupation, Western translanguaging theory centers public schools as an institution that reinforces official monolingualism (in cases like Canada, official bilingualism). Created in a pre-nation-state context, the Chinese concepts focus on organic out-of-school interlingual connection and linguistic fusion with an emphasis on mutual comprehension at grassroots levels to prevent discriminatory hierarchies.

What are some of the implications of Reconstructive Discourse Analysis as a decolonial research methodology in language studies? RDA, as demonstrated in our experiment with the concept of “translanguaging,” is an attempt to democratize knowledge generation by provincializing or de-universalizing (Chakrabarty, 2008; Connell, 2010, 2014, 2017; Meghji, 2021) Northern conceptualizations. Provincialization decenters dominant Northern theories that claim universality to allow a diversity of theorizations to emerge and become visible. RDA is, thus, a measure to address intellectual colonialism (Alatas, 2000) and epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). Current attention to pluralized concepts in language and literacy research is particularly a unique opportunity for performing decolonial provincialization because of the richness of non-Western communities’ experiences with complex language and literacy practices.

The decolonial edge of RDA is not limited to its potential to unearth hidden knowledges as subjects of inquiry. It also challenges dominant positivist research methods in the field of language acquisition by suggesting an interdisciplinary approach to language studies. As illustrated in the case we focused on, conducting RDA often involves drawing on sociology, history, political science, philosophy, literature, and potentially art studies. The language acquisition and applied linguistics paradigms that have dominated the field often shun engagement with interdisciplinarity because they are rooted in positivist research philosophies. Hence, an important implication of RDA could be creating space for more interdisciplinary research in language studies.

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