

Translanguaging with Multilingual Students: Learning from Classroom Moments

Ofelia García and Tatyana Kleyn (Eds.)
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Kahdeidra Monét Martin*
Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)

Translanguaging with Multilingual Students: Learning from Classroom Moments (García & Kleyn, 2016) propels the scholarship on translanguaging theory forward by exploring its application as an instructional strategy. The text aims to reconcile the tensions that arise between the modernist, structuralist orientation of language policies in the United States with the critical poststructuralist position of translanguaging theory. According to García and Kleyn, the editors, translanguaging asserts that bilingual speakers draw from one integrated linguistic repertoire to make meaning with their environments. In contrast to code-switching, which assumes separate linguistic systems corresponding to each language, “translanguaging refers to the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire, which does not in any way correspond to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages” (p. 14). The editors have given in-depth explorations of translanguaging theory in prior texts. What is noteworthy about this work is that it moves the discourse from theory to pedagogy. Here, the *applied* aspect of applied linguistics is realized, and the authors the book presents introduce translanguaging as a pedagogical framework.

This collection of ethnographic case studies features the work of educators and students who participated in a multi-year research study, the City University of New York-New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals (CUNY-NYSIEB). The book is organized into three parts: theory, case studies, and policy considerations. Part I provides a history of translanguaging theory in education and explains the origins and objectives of the CUNY-NYSIEB project. Three components guide translanguaging pedagogy in CUNY-NYSIEB. In the first component, educators have an affirming *stance*, or belief, that diverse linguistic practices are valuable in an educational context. A second component is an instructional *design* that is informed by students’ linguistic practices. The final component is *shift*, described as the ability to flexibly adapt instruction to meet the needs of students. This pedagogical framework guides the professional learning trainings and curriculum materials that are made freely available by CUNY-NYSIEB.

Part II contains six case studies of classrooms throughout New York State where teachers have implemented translanguaging pedagogy. Using these case histories as a base that features a range of student ages, language backgrounds, and instructional settings, the chapters in this section focus on specific lessons and moments in which teachers implement translanguaging; they include learning activities, examples of student work and responses to the activities, and teacher reflections on the lessons. Each chapter concludes with reflection questions and extension activities to encourage educators to synthesize concepts and apply them to their own settings.

Part III concludes the book with an integrated analysis of the six case studies, an articulation of a translanguaging educational policy, and implications for teacher education. García and Kleyn argue that in

order to implement translanguaging pedagogy, it is necessary for teachers to first acquire a stance that values the flexible use of students' full linguistic repertoire. This stance is controversial in that it challenges the modernist TESOL approach, which reinforces the idea of idealized, bounded, and named languages. They assert that these language policies contradict the internal realities of emergent bilingual students, who communicate using linguistic features that span multiple languages. By consigning home language practices solely to scaffolds used to attain proficiency in English language arts, schools deprive emergent bilingual and bidialectal students of using their full array of resources. A translanguaging stance disrupts the narrative of a bounded, named language and monolingual ideal while promoting a multilingual ecology and biliteracy.

New possibilities for language policy and important implications for teachers and teacher educators emerge from ten ways identified in this book that a translanguaging stance "disrupts" traditional language policies and creates space for more equitable practices (p. 183). Despite the transformative potential evidenced in the case studies, the editors concede that translanguaging alone is incapable of producing systemic change for language-minoritized students. The lever needed to produce lasting impact is changing the way that society *views* multilingual speakers, who are often members of racially minoritized groups. Key implications for teachers to consider are that because translanguaging benefits all students, it is necessary to learn about students holistically and prepare to provide socioemotional supports; that it is important to have multilingual signage and differentiated materials that reflect the cultures in the classroom; and that a combination of machine translation and human resources—students, families, teachers, support staff—can be used to encourage teaching and learning.

As a keen example of action research, *Translanguaging with Multilingual Students* marks a critical development in translanguaging scholarship. The book is thoughtfully organized in chapters made accessible by enumerated lists, concrete snapshots, discussion questions, and consistent references to specific case studies. One recommendation might be to extend Part III to include useful, lesser known resources that are often buried on municipal and New York state websites. To illustrate, as a member of the Citywide Council on English Language Learners of the NYC Department of Education, I learned that each NYC public school has a trained staff member who serves as the language access coordinator. Teachers and families are often unaware of this position and that there is a direct-access number to request oral translations in over forty languages. If teachers had information on these lesser known city and state-sponsored programs, they can be empowered to advocate when required services are lacking or nonexistent.

It is often true that educators are hesitant about instituting new instructional techniques, particularly if they depart from traditional practices. This book addresses the apprehension of those educators who are inspired by the promise of applying a translanguaging stance but remain unclear about its viability in praxis. In addition, when used in conjunction with the video and instructional guides available on the project's website (www.cuny-nysieb.org), it serves as a palpable introduction to translanguaging for a new audience that is interested in exploring the opportunities and challenges of adapting the theory from the perspective of teachers themselves.



*Corresponding author: kmartin1@gradcenter.cuny.edu