

Book Review

Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism, and Education

Ofelia García and Li Wei

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Reviewed by

Connie Lam James

Simon Fraser University

In *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, García and Wei challenge more traditional views of bilingual education by inviting readers to consider language through a translanguaging lens. Pushing for an epistemological shift in how multilingual students' language practices are viewed, the authors present translanguaging as more than an alternative category to notions such as bilingualism, multilingualism, and plurilingualism. With translanguaging, language practices are not seen as separate autonomous systems but as one linguistic repertoire, better addressing the complex linguistic practices of diverse and multilingual students and therefore potentially enacting change in societal and educational structures. Throughout its seven chapters, this book delves into the concept of translanguaging in relation to other corresponding concepts, with the authors ultimately arguing towards a translanguaging pedagogy in bilingual education.

The book is divided into two parts, with Part One consisting of two chapters that situate translanguaging in the context of related theories of bilingualism. In Chapter 1, García and Wei introduce readers to different conceptualizations of language. The authors examine definitions of bilingualism, multilingualism, and plurilingualism and critique more traditional notions of bilingualism and multilingualism that take an additive approach to language education, framing languages as discrete and autonomous systems that must be kept separated, especially in learning contexts. However, whereas some scholars such as Makoni and Pennycook (2007) would go as far as contesting the existence of languages as a whole and positing languages as invented and constructed, García and Wei acknowledge that bilingual speakers must navigate languages as part of their lived realities. They therefore stress the need for concepts such as translanguaging in order to encompass individuals' complex language practices in today's constantly changing and shifting world.

Chapter 2 provides a more in-depth examination of translanguaging, beginning with its Welsh origins, and then tracing how translanguaging has since been expanded upon by different scholars. In solidifying their own definition of the term, García and Wei particularly accentuate the criticality and creative aspects of translanguaging. By positioning "*the language practices of bilingual people as the norm*" (García, 2012, as cited in García & Wei, 2014, p. 22), translanguaging addresses different sociocultural issues such as hybridity in culture and identity, and the oftentimes liminal and marginalized spaces people can live within. Individuals play with

language and negotiate different identities within and against conflicting dominant ideologies; by conforming to certain ideologies but resisting others, transformation can occur.

Part Two consists of five chapters which take the discussion of translanguaging specifically into the realm of education. It begins with Chapter 3 in which the authors deem current models of bilingual, second language, and foreign language education insufficient because of how they separate languages and/or homogenize language groups. They proceed to review several studies that showcase different ways of integrating students' home languages into students' learning. However, the authors insist that these strategies are only paving the way for reform; to truly harness students' linguistic resources, there needs to be a change in epistemology that advances beyond just scaffolding students' understanding of a lesson. In order for readers to imagine this potential, García and Wei refer in Chapter 4 to education in the United States where there is an ever-emergent population of diverse and multilingual students. In addition to cognitive engagement, translanguaging in education should involve giving students a voice that challenges monolingual ideologies, traditions, and educational practices, giving consideration to different and often delegitimized language practices and cultures, and thus developing students' critical awareness of these practices and cultures.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on translanguaging in the classroom. Chapter 5 summarizes studies that demonstrate students translanguaging, processing information through interaction using their home languages, and thereby leveraging their linguistic resources to mediate and expand learning possibilities. Chapter 6 explores different classrooms in different subject areas where teachers have adopted a translanguaging pedagogy. García and Wei present teachers who have made room for students to share and challenge ideas but who are also co-learning and establishing bonds with their students as they learn bits and parts of students' languages and cultures.

To conclude, Chapter 7 articulates the main strategies, principles and goals of translanguaging pedagogy that can be elicited from previous chapters and studies discussed in the book. The authors provide concrete examples of what to do in the classroom by breaking down which translanguaging strategies can potentially be used for what purposes, while providing suggestions for further readings to expand on these strategies. The authors close by posing the main challenge: translanguaging is not an accepted legitimate pedagogy and practice, especially in teachers' assessment and evaluation practices. They argue for the restructuring of the education system and deeply-rooted epistemologies in order for change to occur.

Altogether, García and Wei offer a comprehensive and informative introduction to not only translanguaging but also related concepts. In order for the authors to make the argument for translanguaging in education, they provide a useful and detailed description of relevant theories, and thus their introduction can serve almost as a small survey course in language and bilingualism. Regarding translanguaging in particular, the book can be useful for those who have continuously seen the term in recent literature but in a more abstract discussion without concrete examples. For a more nuanced awareness of the topic of bilingualism and multilingualism, however, it might be useful to read this book alongside other works and studies (on language maintenance or minoritized languages, for example) that might better situate the concept of translanguaging amidst debates surrounding language in an ongoing dialogue.

Finally, as a key element in this book is a change in epistemology, the book's inclusion in some shape or form in teacher education courses would be very beneficial. García and Wei state that we are living in a world with “new patterns of global activity characterized by intensive flows of people” (p. 9) highlighting the possibility for teachers to find multilingual students in their classrooms. In the British Columbia (BC) context specifically, there is an existing diverse population—with a continuous influx of new immigrants, transnationals, and refugees—who are learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) or are in varying EAL scenarios for a myriad of reasons and purposes, but who also have their own complex language repertoires, backgrounds, and mixed social and cultural practices. Translanguaging potentially offers the field of EAL in BC new possibilities for learning, while simultaneously celebrating the language and cultural practices that are representative of contemporary learners in BC, Canada. Overall, this book can be for all educators, starting a discussion that questions structures and traditions in order to reimagine new approaches and possibilities for bilingual education.

References

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