Chapter 11
Dealing With Language Gap in a Hungarian–English Early Childhood Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The term 'translanguaging' has been widespread in the field of Applied Linguistics in a short period of time, and just as quickly, it infiltrated in the field of Multilingual Education. Translanguaging is mostly seen as an opportunity to build on multilingual speakers' full language repertoire in the classroom in order to make sense of the world around them. At the same time, translanguaging might be seen as a threat for heritage language survival because heritage languages are forced to immerse in the main-stream language(s). The authors observed pedagogical translanguaging practices in the AraNY János Hungarian Kindergarten and School (USA) to understand how English was used in teaching the heritage language and to discover how bridging existing language gaps between speakers worked in the practices of bilingual pedagogues. The overarching aim of this study was to reveal some of the pedagogical translanguaging strategies used to deal with occurring language gaps.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, in the past, schools have followed a monolingual language policy of strict language separation in the school curriculum, by establishing clear boundaries between two or more languages to avoid cross-linguistic influence and code-switching, to protect and develop proficiency in minority languages. These ideologies of language separation have been highly criticised in recent years (Grosjean, 1985;

Cook, 1999; Cummins, 2007; García, 2009; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Li, 2011; Canagarajah, 2011; Gort, 2018) and are outdated in terms of multilingual education. A new paradigm has been taking shape due to today's fast-changing world as a result of globalization, ubiquitous technology use, and world-wide immigration. Instead of separating language systems from one another, there is a trend towards two or more languages to co-exist in the multilingual classroom (García, 2009; Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz and Gorter, 2011, 2015). Although it is a natural linguistic phenomenon for emergent bilingual speakers to use all their language systems or language repertoires to communicate and make-meaning of the academic content (García & Wei, 2014; Paulsrud et al., 2015; García & Kleyn, 2016; Golubeva & Csillik, 2018), it is still a challenging task for pedagogues working in multilingual classrooms (Csillik, 2019b). The integration of different elements from different languages is not easily accepted neither by the field of Applied Linguistics, nor by the wider society. It is still associated with the incompetency of the language speaker who lacks a linguistic code in one language and borrows this code from another language. Some might see it as a "divergent linguistic phenomenon" that deviates from the "standard academic language" or from the socially accepted norm in language education. In spite of all these, translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2015, Paulsrud et al., 2015; García & Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2017; Gort, 2018; Rabbidge, 2019) is one of the widely used concepts associated with this new trend in multilingual education. The authors previously introduced translanguaging (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019b, p. 170) as "the act of using different languages interchangeably, in order to overcome language constraints, to deliver verbal utterances or written statements effectively, and, to ultimately achieve successful communication".

Encouraging students to translanguage with their language learning peers and teachers helps multi-lingual students to claim some ownership in the educational process, show complete understanding of the subject area, and express individuality in shaping their identity to belong to a social minority group (Golubeva & Csillik, 2018; Csillik & Golubeva, 2019a; Csillik, 2019a in press).

Not only language learners can use translanguaging in the classroom, but also the teachers of the multilingual/multicultural setting (García et al., 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016; Paulsrud et al., 2017). By using translanguaging practices in the multilingual/multicultural classroom, teachers make students feel comfortable and welcomed while increasing the students' social-emotional well-being at the same time. Furthermore, it promotes diversity and ensures inclusion in school settings. This is especially beneficial in the case of first-generation immigrant students who are transitioning from one culture to another in a very short period of time, and by providing translanguaging practices they can easily find a close link to "home", which is extremely comforting at first in an environment where they might experience a 'cultural shock' at first (Golubeva & Csillik, 2018; Csillik & Golubeva, 2019a; Csillik, 2019a in press), or sometimes even a sense of identity loss.

The analysis of the recent scholarly papers on this new translanguaging phenomena (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019b) showed that the research in this area has mostly been dedicated to study the social and psycholinguistic aspects of 'languaging' or 'code-switching', and less is done in the fields of Foreign /Minority Language Pedagogy or Heritage Language Transmission and Maintenance. The linguistic terms, language "transmission" and "maintenance", were first used by Fishman (1991) separating passing on the heritage language to young children (language transmission) and maintaining the heritage language among adolescents and young adults after transmitting the heritage language. It is unequivocal that more should be done in investigating the multilingual classroom settings from this aspect as well.

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