Chapter 9
Conclusions and Implications

Viniti Vaish

This book has explored the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy in an attempt to further the practice and theory of this extremely important concept. A collaborative effort on the part of researchers, teachers, the schools, and the students, this book is not about a formal intervention but a Proof of Concept. In other words, it is about a soft launch of translanguaging pedagogy in an educational landscape which is entirely based on the concept of two monolingualisms.

The book has situated translanguaging in the metrolingual landscape of a global city: Singapore. Like Singapore, other global cities like London, New York, and Hong Kong also face super diversity in the student body and have to deal with a plethora of languages in the school system. The difference is that Singaporean school-going students are part of one nation serviced by a central school system. Many of them do not have a clearly defined L1 and L2 in their early years as most of them grow up as simultaneous bilinguals. Also, in all the classes in Singapore, there are myriad home languages like Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and other languages from India and South East Asia. The situation is confounded by the fact that though students become English dominant due to the English medium school system, many are not necessarily more proficient in their dominant language. "Mother Tongue," the language of the ethnic group of the child, as it is defined by the government, is dynamic and not static. Diversity in Singaporean classes is a result of the fact that there are children who are Mother Tongue dominant, those who are English/Singlish dominant, and those who are fairly balanced bilinguals, all in the same class. In addition, due to Singapore's relatively open immigration policy, and the fact that one in three marriages in Singapore is between a Singaporean and a foreigner, there is what I would call hyperdiversity of language backgrounds in the Singaporean classroom. In a small class like the LSP which has five to ten students, it is possible

V. Vaish (✉)
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, Singapore
e-mail: viniti.vaish@nie.edu.sg

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that each student has a different language background, making it a challenge for the teacher to implement translanguaging pedagogy.

In the introduction to this book, Professor Angel Lin problematized the definition of translanguaging by comparing it with code-switching and linking the former with Thibault's (2011) distributed view of language which comprises first-order languaging and second-order language. According to Lin, translanguaging is first-order languaging, whereas the boundaries between named languages and grammatical rules prescribed by grammarians are more representative of second-order language. Thibault's is an " approach which recognizes that language is a cultural organization of process that is naturally grounded in human biology" (pg. 2). The measurement of interaction, according to Thibault, should not only include all bodily gestures but could also be measured in as small a unit as a Pico scale.

Though this book has not measured interaction on a Pico scale, the idea that translanguaging is first-order languaging and distinct from second-order language does, indeed, resonate with the findings of this book. For instance, my method of coding translanguaged utterances defies the rules of grammar. As mentioned in the chapter on methodology, many scholars discard translanguaged utterances in calculating MLU. However, I have included such utterances in my data coding because I take meaning rather than grammar to be of paramount importance. Thus coding translanguaged utterances as meaningful units is a way of looking at translanguaging as first-order languaging.

An Asian aspect of this book is the introduction of a new language in the literature on translanguaging: Malay. Of the three languages discussed in this book, Malay, English, and Chinese, Malay is highly underrepresented in the literature on translanguaging. As a language widely spoken in Southeast Asia in the countries of Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, and Singapore, it is important for translanguaging to diversify language data on which the theory is based. The more examples we have from diverse languages across the world, the more we will have the opportunity to test the boundaries of translanguaging. Though Chinese has been written about extensively, the context is still Chinese students learning English as EFL. The situation in Singapore, at least for some students in the LSP, is the opposite: English-dominant children learn Chinese as a second language in school. Thus the use of data from Malay-English bilinguals, and the context of Chinese students who are English dominant, is relatively new in translanguaging literature.

More importantly, culture in an Asian context has revealed some unique challenges of implementing translanguaging pedagogy. Li Wei's take on translanguaging in education is that it is not only "a space for the act of translanguaging" but also "a space created through translanguaging" (Li Wei 2011, pg. 1222). He develops the notion of translanguaging space "to focus on multilingual speakers' creative and critical use of the full range of their socio-cultural resources" (pg. 1222). At the same time, Li Wei also emphasizes creativity and criticality in these decisions which give agency to the interlocutors despite the improvisational nature of their speech. These keywords, creativity, criticality, and agency, impart a transformative role to the practice of translanguaging, which, indeed, is the most important aspect in a Proof of Concept. The new pedagogy that we implemented was, we thought, the

practice which would result in enhanced student talk, language learning, and a fundamental transformation of classroom interaction.

Did Raise the BAR, a design based on translanguaging pedagogy, work for the children in the LSP? Some variables, e.g., amount of talk and MLU, did not show discernable improvement due to translanguaging. Raise the BAR did, however, increase MLU for both the English-only and translanguaging classes in School F when we compare the same type of class from day 1 of the experiment to the last day. In other words, both in the English-only classes and in the translanguaging classes, the children were talking more on the last day as compared to the first day. In School C the MLU increased from day 1 to the last day only in the translanguaging classes but not in the English-only classes. These results lead me to speculate that if a design like Raise the BAR is part of the regular school curriculum, then we could see an increase in MLU for children though there is no guarantee that their MLU for translanguaging will overtake their MLU for English.

Similarly questioning patterns did not improve for either teachers or students. Where there was an increase in number of questions, it was for factual and procedural questions, which elicit lower-order thinking. However, it was in the analysis of transcripts that we saw the greatest potential for translanguaging as an approach to language learning. These Exchanges demonstrated how Malay or Chinese can be used as scaffold for English and how using two languages together can trigger metalinguistic awareness.

My use of Mean Length of Utterance as a measure of the outcomes of translanguaging is, no doubt, controversial. Typically qualitative methodologies for data collection and data analysis are privileged in translanguaging theory. Though my own training in graduate school has been in qualitative methods, while researching multiple pairs of languages in Singapore, I have grappled with how to come up with cross-linguistic measures. For instance, one problem was empirically establishing if students talk more when they are allowed to translanguage. Even if the school had data on language use in the home, this information does not necessarily predict the language dominance of the child which is dynamic and changeable. Using an empirical measure like MLU showed that the students in the LSP, on an average, did not talk more when they were allowed to translanguage in all the classes.

I have surmised that this could be both because they were unused to the practice of translanguaging in the class and because many of them were English dominant though weak in their dominant language. Another reason that needs to be emphasized here is the culture of pedagogy in an Asian context. Alexander (2001) in his intensive analysis of pedagogy in India, Russia, France, the UK, and the USA found fundamental differences in pedagogy between these countries on the basis of national policy, culture, and history. The teacher-fronted classroom of Singapore where most of the talk time is taken by the teacher and students rarely participate in class is diametrically opposed to a new culture that translanguaging pedagogy celebrates. This new culture is one that reinforces criticality and creativity and transforms interaction in the classroom by allowing the children to talk more by using all the linguistic resources in their repertoire of languages. The challenge for us was to

change the culture of the classroom through translanguaging pedagogy, which, our Proof of Concept, disrupted but could not transform.

Was it appropriate to teach them English reading skills through their nondominant language when, according to some studies reviewed in this book, the direction of transfer is from the L1 to the L2 and from the stronger language to the weaker language? However, what if the students are simultaneous bilinguals and don't have an L1 or L2? This sociolinguistic situation is another uniquely Singaporean and also Asian perspective where many children grow up simultaneous bilinguals. This situation is very different from an educational context in which the child has a well-defined L1 and learns an L2 as a second language, e.g., Chinese children learning English in China. Indeed, translanguaging for simultaneous bilinguals would be different from translanguaging for those with a clearly defined L1 and L2. As Martin-Beltran points out, "In a setting where two of the languages are available all of the time … the processes of the acquisition of two languages can occur simultaneously" (Martin-Beltran 2010, pg. 272). As the theory and practice of translanguaging develops, there should be more studies of simultaneous bilinguals acquiring multiple languages together as they are in the linguistic landscape of Singapore.

During the course of English medium education in Singapore, many children who were either Mother Tongue dominant or simultaneous bilinguals become English dominant, but what if the dominant language is the one in which the child is weak? In fact, what if both the dominant and nondominant languages are weak due to lack of resources in the home environment of the child? As analysis of interaction in this book has demonstrated, students made links between the languages they spoke even if they were dominant in only one of those languages. Transfer does not happen unidirectionally from the "stronger" L1 to the "weaker" L2, but it is multidimensional. Even the nondominant language, in this case Chinese and Malay, can be used as a resource by a skillful teacher in translanguaging pedagogy.

Though current theories for cross-linguistic transfer assume that transfer will take place from the L1 to the L2 or from the stronger/dominant language towards the weaker/nondominant language, these processes do not explain language transfer in simultaneous bilinguals. The theory of translanguaging has the advantage of not essentializing directionality of transfer and proposing a more fluid movement between languages without boundaries. In fact Cenoz even refers to "reverse transfer" where students can bring the rules of their L3 to interpret L2 (Cenoz 2017a, pg. 7). The implication is that direction of transfer is not as important as the fact that a bilingual or multilingual will use his/her entire linguistic repertoire to make sense of the world. My own predilection is to propose multidirectional transfer irrespective of dominance; in other words, English can be scaffolded by the child's Mother Tongue even if the latter is no longer his/her dominant language, given the appropriate pedagogy.

The growth area for translanguaging is measurement, designed pedagogy, and assessment. How do we measure translanguaged utterances and discourse? As mentioned in the previous chapters, most scholars discard translanguaged utterances from their data set when they measure MLU. My attempts at calculating MLU have definitely thrown up the problems in this type of measurement. More importantly,

how do we analyze student talk for evidence of language learning through translanguaging? Transcripts can be analyzed as units of discourse to showcase how the teacher uses translanguaging, as I have done in this book, and numerous researchers have demonstrated before. However, the crucial point is student learning. How can we develop assessment tools, especially quantitative tools, to measure the outcomes of translanguaging pedagogy?

One type of assessment could be the measurement of conceptual vocabulary in various pairs of languages. For instance, the word for "sun" in Tamil is "Surya." Drawing a picture of the sun and asking the child to say or write the words for this picture in all the languages that he/she knows could be one way of measuring conceptual vocabulary in bilinguals. However, these assessments would need to be developed for specific pairs of languages keeping in mind that many concepts do not have equivalent words in certain pairs of languages. My example offers only the most basic way of measuring vocabulary within translanguaging, and the field of assessment in translanguaging is, I believe, in need of new ideas in this area.

Finally, the field of translanguaging could benefit from more designs of specific pedagogic practices. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Cenoz (2017b) emphasized that "Pedagogical translanguaging is planned by the teacher inside the classroom and can refer to the use of different languages for input and output or to other planned strategies based on the use of students' resources from the whole linguistic repertoire" (pg. 194) and distinguishes it from spontaneous translanguaging which "refers to fluid discursive practices that can take place inside and outside the classroom" (pg. 194). Raise the BAR has shown that both design and spontaneous improvisation are imperative in the classroom as part of the same design. The Proof of Concept implemented in this book is merely exploratory, and the mixed results point to how challenging it is for teachers and researchers to use translanguaging in the classroom. For teachers the challenge is to spot junctures where they need to switch languages for a specific learning outcome. This, despite the most rigorous design, must be decided on the spur of the moment, making both spontaneity and design an integral part of implementing translanguaging pedagogy in the classroom. At the same time, the researcher should keep in mind that a formal intervention with standardized testing of homogenous groups is not suitable in an environment like the LSP where nearly every child comes with a different linguistic background and home language.

As Angel Lin has written in the introduction to this book, "research on translanguaging pedagogies is still very much in its beginning stage and there are still a lot of research questions to address (e.g. how to raise teachers' awareness and capacity in judging when and how to use translanguaging pedagogies; how to change school teaching and learning cultures to capitalize on translanguaging pedagogies with effective learning outcomes)." This book has probably thrown up more questions regarding translanguaging rather than answered them. These questions are regarding how we can design translanguaging effectively in a hyperdiverse classroom, how we can measure outcomes of translanguaging, and how we can create transformation in student talk by allowing them to use all the languages in their repertoire. Future researchers in the field of translanguaging need to address many of these questions.

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