

Review

Title of the dissertation: The forms and functions of pedagogical translanguaging in Hungarian heritage education

Name of the PhD candidate: Éva Csillik

The dissertation addresses the topic of translanguaging practices of emergent bi- and multilingual children (Hungarian heritage speakers) in early childhood educational settings which has been hardly investigated by any previous research. This alone already justifies the necessity and the novelty of this research. Translanguaging as a term and a research framework was introduced in the last decade and has been attracting an increasing number of scholars. However, as a new field of applied linguistics, it is still developing its own terminology, theories and methodology which makes research challenging in this framework. The author of this dissertation took this challenge successfully by choosing translanguaging as the best explanatory approach to her research and developed appropriate methodologies to find the answers to her research questions.

The dissertation is divided into 6 main chapters and further broken down into subchapters. Unfortunately, the subchapters are not numbered throughout the thesis which makes referring to them difficult, both for the reviewer and the author too. In general, the literature review, the chosen methodology, the analyses of the results and the conclusions are well-written and reflect the fact that Csillik Éva is capable of conducting scientific research and writing a comprehensive report on it. At this point, most critical remarks are connected to the structure of the thesis and are meant to be supportive in case of future publication(s).

Chapter 1 is titled as *Research Problem* but content-wise covers more than the problem itself, including the necessity, significance, limitations and delimitations of the study, a glossary of important terms and the overview of the structure of the dissertation. It would be more logical to include the problem statement and the structure only in Chapter 1 while incorporate the rest to the literature review. It is generally accepted that the literature review proceeds from the more general to the more specific, so the literature review presented in the *Background and Need* part would nicely fit, as the justification of the research, just before the research questions. It would highlight and pinpoint importance of this significant research at the right place.

It was surprising to see the *Definition of terms* subchapter which is a glossary of some terms which are directly related to the present research but many of them are only loosely

connected. A better solution would be the incorporation of the relevant terms to the body of the text.

The literature review (chapter 2) is a nicely orchestrated part of the dissertation building upon most of the relevant literature of translanguaging and connecting it to concepts like multicompetence, wholistic view, dynamic systems, etc. Translanguaging is described as a linguistic and as a pedagogical phenomenon and tool. The chapter is rich in references which proves that the author has read all the related literature and used them logically to argue for her points. Two important names were missing from the list: Maria Polinsky's and Silvia Montrul's work on heritage speakers are both great pieces in terms of theory and methodology and they could provide further data analyses with an extended framework. As a critical remark, it should be noted that the literature review heavily relies on author-prominent citation which hinders the logical flow of argumentation. A more information-prominent structure would aid understanding better (e.g. *Researchers like Géza Kende (1927), Joshua A. Fishman (1966b), Csilla Bartha (1995b, 2005), and Anna Fenyvesi (2005) touched upon the waves of emigration of Hungarian descendent people to the United States* (p. 42-). Suggested use: Many scholars (*Kende (1927), Fishman (1966b), Bartha (1995b, 2005), and Fenyvesi (2005) touched upon the waves of emigration of Hungarian descendent people to the United States.*)

Referencing is also unusual and unsystematic: first and second name of the authors are displayed (Li Wei, David Singleton, Ofelia Garcia, Colin Baker, Gwyn Lewis, Adrian Blackledge Sureh Canagarajah etc.), while other times only the surname is used: Canagarajah, and sometimes the first names: Ofelia and Li. The conventional reference is using the surnames of the authors in the text.

The subchapter titled *Hungarian Ethnolinguistic Community - The origins* is a very valuable part of the research as it puts the whole community in the right context and perspective and even non-Hungarian readers will be able to understand the relevance and importance of the present research. The author also describes the proposed language maintenance outcomes of first, second and third generation heritage speakers in the dominant society. She draws our attention to the change in the drive to maintain Hungarian in the US which leads her to the conclusion and the realization of the research problem: "*it is difficult for such a low-incidence heritage language, like Hungarian is, to survive in the "jungle" of languages found in today's diverse classrooms across the United States.*" (p. 46).

The subchapter of the *Sociolinguistic Goals and Socio-Educational Collaboration in the Hungarian Ethnolinguistic Community* contains only 1 reference, so it is not clear where the

information comes from. One of the subchapters describes the target school in the literature review which could better serve the understanding if it was placed to the next chapter. Furthermore, the chapter on *Translanguaging Pedagogy in the Hungarian School Culture* appears just before the research questions and hypotheses, though it has little to do with the theoretical background but more with the recommendations for future practice.

In the introduction to the research questions the author uses two terms: “translanguaging-as-right” and “translanguaging-as-problem”. It is not clear whether the terms are the author’s own creations or are taken from the literature (p. 55).

The last part of chapter 2 presents the hypotheses and the research questions of the study. There are some methodological problems with the hypotheses. Hypotheses are, by definition, possible answers to the research questions, they state the relationship between (at least) two variables and they must be falsifiable. In the present dissertation, the author presents her beliefs (2 of them) about the topic, then the hypothesis and lastly, the research questions (wrong order!). The hypothesis is the following:

“the more translanguaging practices and pedagogy are allowed and welcomed in the Hungarian heritage language school in New York City, the more cross-linguistic influence occurs in the process of Hungarian language acquisition. This will promote acceptance and tolerance towards diversity in young emergent bilinguals, who further will gain intercultural competence that will contribute to forming their bi-, and multilingual, and bi-, and multicultural self in today’s globalized world (see Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001).” (p. 56).

Problems:

1. it includes 3-4 hypotheses merged to 1;
2. they can’t be supported or refuted based on the collected data (e.g. a control group would be necessary to see what happens if no translanguaging is allowed and welcomed).

My suggestion: in this research hypotheses are not relevant and not necessary because (1) there is not enough previous research for the strong grounding of the assumptions; (2) it is a highly exploratory study which requires no hypothesis; and (3) as the researcher herself states on page 59: *Both the participants and I (the researcher) might shape the questions being asked, the data being collected and analysed, and the theory being generated at the end.* This latter statement makes hypotheses creation an impossible endeavour.

The design (qualitative, naturalistic, exploratory) of the study also requires the questions to be modified to something more exploratory. As stated on page 58: *I design to explore the relationships between translanguaging participants and contexts in the early childhood classrooms.* Consequently, the questions should be relational rather than causal

Research question: *To what extent do teachers' attitudes and perceptions of translanguaging influence the language practices of emergent bilinguals in early childhood heritage language educational settings?*

Suggestion: replace *influence* with *are related to*.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) describes the research methodology of the study in 25 pages. The candidate chose the most appropriate instruments which helped her answer her questions. Observations, recordings, interviews and questionnaires provided enough data for this qualitative longitudinal research to see the full picture of the forms and functions of translanguaging used in the classroom and the attitudes and perceptions of the teachers and the parents. The choice of the qualitative design is strongly justified on pages 58-60. In this chapter, useful tables are presented about the participants' background, the relationship between the instruments and the research questions.

Chapter 3 is disproportionately long. Some structural changes could be useful:

- *Research context* and *research site* can be merged into a shorter more cohesive description of the school and program of the school while the description of the participants should be entirely left out from this part as the author dedicates a different subchapter to the description of them. The structure is not reader-friendly as the information about the participants requires an active search from the reader's side.
- In the research methodology part the author includes lengthy justifications of the choice of her participants, the importance of games, etc. This takes the focus of the methods section from the usual description of participants and instruments to the literature. A separate subchapter in Chapter II on *Translanguaging at an early age* could solve the problem where all these parts could be transferred.
- Although the literature is extensively cited, there is a personal tone in some parts (I believe), e.g. p. 63

An extremely valuable part of the research is the description of the well-structured step-by-step data analyses procedure which is important in order to approach these highly qualitative results. One of the biggest strengths of the thesis is that the author developed a framework for her data analyses as the young field of translanguaging still suffers from some methodological shortcomings and could not offer her the means to approach the data. In order to find patterns in the linguistic data she sets up well-defined categories.

Chapter 4 presents the Results of the dissertation. As for the data analyses, I can only praise the candidate! It is meticulous work highlighting the main outcomes with some examples and summarizing the main results with figures and tables. This section is a perfect example of

how the triangulation of the methods can help explore patterns in qualitative data. The discussion part places the results in the right context, connects it with previous results and links it with theories. The *Researchers reflections* should also be part of the Discussion. The author is also aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the research, although the sampling in this case shouldn't be considered a shortcoming: the few number of cases in this research is a strength as it allows the investigator to zoom in on individual cases. The highly practical nature of this research leads the author to word some recommendations for future research and future practice.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate on this significant, important and necessary research. These results can motivate other scholars to explore language practices in Hungarian diaspora communities and inform the speakers and teachers about useful strategies of maintaining the heritage language.

Question: in the *Site Rationale* subchapter the age factor is detailed and described as an important factor. Did you see any relevance of students' age to the forms and functions of translanguaging?

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