

## Opponent Review of the Doctoral Dissertation

Author: Éva CSILLIK

University of Pannonia, Faculty of Modern Philology and Social Sciences, Multilingualism Doctoral School

Title of the dissertation: *The Forms and Functions of Pedagogical Translanguaging in Hungarian Heritage Language Education. A Case Study of Hungarian-English Emergent Bilinguals in Early Childhood Classrooms in New York City*

Opponent: Erika-Mária TÓDOR, PhD, associate professor, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Miercurea Ciuc, Romania

### 1. Choice of topic and theoretical background

The topic chosen by Éva Csillik for her doctoral dissertation is relevant and timely, at the same time bold, since the author builds her research around a key concept which requires further refinements even in the present-day literature, furthermore the aforementioned concept has several individual, specific applications. The paper deals with the problem of translanguaging, Éva Csillik's research putting it in connection with the early institutional American-Hungarian bilingualism in order to map the pedagogical forms and functions of translanguaging in this specific socio-cultural and linguistic environment. The novelty of the topic is brought about, on the one hand, by the peculiarities related to age of the researched group, on the other hand by the attempt to track spontaneous speech production (during unbound play), but also by the complex interpretation of the contextual character and specific forms of translanguaging in the environment of Hungarian institutional education in New York. The objectives pursued throughout the research focus on mapping the linguistic and educational needs of today's early bilingual children in New York, with Hungarian origins. In this context, the research sheds light on the forms and functions of various translanguaging speech situations in the spontaneous

speech of very young children attending English-Hungarian and Hungarian-English bilingual groups.

In the theoretical part of the dissertation, the author has undertaken to chart the possibilities for defining the key concept, followed by presenting the specific denotation used by her, according to which translanguaging is “ the interchangeable use of two or more languages of emergent bi-, and multilingual language learners to effectively deliver verbal utterances in order to achieve successful communication” (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019: 170, see dissertation, p. 23). The present exploratory research attempts to analyze the translanguaging speech situations from the perspective of language pedagogy, while the research data serve further objectives aiming at development and goals related to teaching arrangements, in other words the way in which a translanguaging pedagogical attitude can be put into practice. I find this type of attitude towards research very useful, as well as felicitous due to the enforcement of the knowledge accumulated through research in further development and strive for innovation.

## **2. Research methodology**

Due the exploratory nature of the research, the dissertation deals with three structural research questions: (1) What are the forms and functions of pedagogical translanguaging in early childhood heritage language educational settings? (2) To what extent do teachers' attitudes and perceptions of translanguaging influence the language practices of emergent bilinguals in early childhood heritage language educational settings? (3) To what extent do parents' attitudes and perceptions of bi-, and multilingualism influence the language practices of emergent bilinguals in the home and in the Hungarian ethnic community in New York City?

In order to answer the above mentioned research questions, the candidate, following the triangulation logic, has opted for an integrated approach towards research methodology, in which means of qualitative and quantitative research are effectively combined, leading to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In fact, the chosen research methodology has been imposed by the approach of multiple perspectives (the characteristics of linguistic socialization, its historical background, its cultural and institutional implications etc.) towards the case-study. In this context, a longitudinal qualitative research has been carried out in which data collection covered altogether 12 (6+6) months. In data collection it was equally important to observe and record children's speech production, as well as to consider teachers' opinion on the

translanguaging pedagogical approach (through interviews), but also parents' view (through collecting data via questionnaires). In interpreting the gathered data, the main categories and the relationships between them have been also analyzed.

Summing up, I can conclude that the serried strategy represents an individual scientific performance of its own. The theoretical background is supported by a rich bibliography, which includes a list of more than 250 items, as well as digital resources, containing an up to par processing of the most important and up-to-date pieces of the literature connected to the topic.

### **3. Structure of the paper**

The paper has a logically built up structure. The author introduces each chapter with a summing-up forecast which guides the reader in what the chapter is about. Following the theoretical background, the elaboration of the dissertation is built around three research questions, at the same time touching upon exposition of the research methodology used in the various sub-chapters. The dissertation consists of six parts. In the first chapter, the author presents the research topic, the justification for the choice of topic and the main research questions. The last sub-chapter sums up the most important concepts and provides their concise definitions, thus preparing the second chapter of the dissertation in which the focus is on translanguaging and its theoretical approaches. The third chapter of the dissertation displays the research methodology, while the fourth chapter presents the detailed research data, its interpretation and the formulation of the thesis. The fifth chapter contains the conclusions based on interpreting the research results, as well as suggestions and recommendations for further development. The final chapter gives place for summing-up and reflections. Related to this final chapter, I would suggest putting more emphasis on presenting the individual results.

### **4. Remarks, observations, conclusions**

Based on what has been said so far, we can affirm that the topic of the dissertation is innovative, its relevance has a scientific and social importance. The merit of the research paper is to present a phenomenon which is specific for applied linguistics, and which is exposed in the literature mainly from socio-linguistic and pragmatic points of view, from the perspective of language pedagogy. This language pedagogy perspective is brought about by the context of the research itself, since the location for interpreting the phenomenon is the frame of formal education in a

small Hungarian community in New York. Using the results of the present exploratory research in improving the efficiency of language pedagogy situations presupposes a future challenge and further conciliation.

The database compiled during the research and its interpretations are presented in connection with the main research questions. At the same time, we can read about the interpretation of the data and directions for further development in other sub-chapters of the dissertation. Since - proceeding from the profile of the “superdiverse classrooms” - I think that these guidelines can mainly ensure a useful and applicable frame in the formal training of linguistic attitude of several Hungarian communities living in minority or in dispersed communities around the world, I would suggest a rethinking of the objectives for development, according to the general recommendations and the specific visualization of further innovation. For example, it represents a further question how the pedagogical principles of translanguaging could be transferred onto the level of the classroom in such a way that they serve the necessities of the community in question, and they also represent the premise for a unitary choice and language use in the institutional culture.

## **Recommendation**

**Based on the above presented criteria, it can be stated that the dissertation proposed by Éva Csillik complies with the requirements of a PhD dissertation, hence I recommend it to be publicly defended, thus granting the doctoral degree to its author.**

Reviewer,

Dr. TÓDOR Erika-Mária

associate professor

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania  
Miercurea Ciuc

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