MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

Intercultural and Pedagogical Perspectives from Commonwealth Countries

Edited by Androula Yiakoumetti
CONTENTS

Notes on contributors .......................... v
Series Editors’ Preface .......................... xi

PART ONE .......................... xiii

Language policy and practice with a focus on Commonwealth contexts
Androula Yiakoumelli (Oxford Brookes University, UK) .......................... xiii

PART TWO .......................... xix

Africa
The sociolinguistic and language education landscapes of African Commonwealth countries
Nkonko M. Kamwangamala (Howard University, USA) .......................... 1

Multilingualism and language in education in Tanzania
Birgit Brock-Utne (University of Oslo, Norway) and Martha A. S. Qorro (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) .......................... 19

Language-in-education policy and practice in Ghanaian classrooms:
Lessons from School for Life’s complementary education programme
Kingsley Arkorful (Education Development Center) and
Carolyn Temple Adger (Center for Applied Linguistics, USA) .......................... 31

South Asia
Language-in-education policy and practice in India:
Experiments on multilingual education for tribal children
Ajit Mohanty (National Multilingual Education Resource Consortium) and
Minati Panda (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India) .......................... 49

Multilingual education in Singapore: Beyond language communities?
Ritu Jain and Lionel Wee (National University of Singapore) .......................... 67

Translanguaging in Singapore: Discourse in monolingual versus bilingual classrooms
Viniti Vaish (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) .......................... 87


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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, language-in-education policies in schools have insisted on the use of the standardised variety of the language or languages of instruction. As a result, many language-minoritised students, speakers of different varieties of the language(s) used in schools, have high rates of academic failure. Educators are simply not doing enough to leverage the complex and dynamic languaging that students bring into classrooms.

In this chapter we take up the theoretical framework of *translanguaging* – ways of thinking about, and acting upon, the dynamic and complex language practices of speakers themselves, and especially of language-minoritised students (García 2009; García and Li Wei 2014). A translanguaging framework ensures that the students’ different home language practices are not only validated, but also used and leveraged for academic purposes – to think critically and creatively; to produce authentic work, to analyse language use, to better understand what are traditionally known as students’ own bidialectal and bilingual practices. The translanguaging framework has been applied mostly to study the language practices, and the teaching and learning, of bilingual and multilingual students. Although in this chapter we continue with this tradition given our work with bilingual students in the US, this framework has deep and widespread implications for the education of speakers of different dominant-language varieties, and certainly for speakers of different varieties of English in Commonwealth contexts.
This chapter also takes up the distinction in the field of language policy between macro- and micro-level language use, specifically with regard to language management. We discuss below the theoretical framework of language management, focusing on the difference and interrelationships between the organised language management of an institution such as school (macro-level), and the discourse-based management of teachers in classrooms (micro-level).

Taking up the theoretical frameworks of language management and translanguaging, and acknowledging the failure of most schools to meaningfully educate bilingual students, this chapter develops an alternative view of what schools, teachers and students can do by focusing on the following questions:

- How can schools manage language practices in ways that recognise and leverage all the language practices of bilingual children as resources in teaching and learning?
  - What are some ways of transforming the schools' organised language management at the macro-level?
  - What are some ways of transforming the teachers' discourse-based management at the micro-level?

We start by briefly discussing the theory of language management, especially as applied to schools, and reviewing the language management policies of US education. We then discuss alternatives to managing language practices for both schools and teachers through the use of translanguaging.

**LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT**

The scholarly field of language policy and language planning emerged in the 1960s and coincided with the collapse of colonial systems. Its explicit objective was to change the structure and use of language(s). Those changes were said to be in the hands of governmental experts in institutions established for such purposes; that is, they were said to be top-down processes and ‘macro’ in nature. But as the field developed, scholars also began to understand the very important work of individuals in changing language use and started referring to this as bottom-up ‘micro’ processes (Hornberger 1996). To bring these two perspectives together, Language Management Theory (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987) developed ways of studying the interaction between these two dimensions— the macro and the micro. Language Management is thus not just about institutional policies, but also about the ‘everyday linguistic behavior accompanying the ordinary use of language in concrete interactions’ (Nepavil and Sherman, forthcoming). As such, two types of language management can be identified:

- Organised management, performed by institutions with specific ideologies and aimed at changing language as a system
- Discourse-based management, performed by speakers through ordinary use of language.

Although we will address these two types of language management separately, it is important to remember that there are tight links between the language management of institutions such as schools and the language management of teachers and even students. This chapter discusses how to break the vicious cycle in which-language policies in schools and those enacted by teachers and performed by students have led to the continued failure of language-minoritised students. Even schools that have been traditionally organised to serve these students, such as the English as a Second Language and bilingual education programmes in the US, have not always served language-minoritised students well. Using examples from the education of language-minoritised bilingual students in the US, we present here alternatives to the present language-management policies of schools, teachers and students. But before we do that, we discuss how US schools have traditionally managed ways of using language.

**TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT IN US SCHOOLS**

Throughout the world, educational institutions manage and ‘police’ the use of a standardised form of the dominant language of the nation-state. Despite the very different language practices of students throughout the world—what Vertovec (2007) has called a superdiversity—schools exist precisely to impose one artificial way of using language.

The US has a long tradition of implicit, and not explicit, language policy. For example, unlike many other countries, the US does not have a de jure official language policy of English. This is perhaps the legacy of Pounding Fathers who believed that attracting others to settle and work in the US was beneficial and that the economic power of English would be enough to work the magic of complete linguistic assimilation (Heath 1977). But this less explicit language policy was accompanied with other elements of force. Early on, enslaved African Americans were separated from others who spoke their
languages, as masters insisted on their language shift to English while forbidding their literacy development. From the nineteenth century, Native Americans were sent to boarding schools where they were immersed in English and deprived of contact with families and thus of their languages and cultures. For enslaved and conquered groups, the language policy was implicit, but forceful, robbing them of the humanity that enables people to succeed. For immigrants who have been the core of US national formation since its inception, ‘Americanisation’ was carried out through schooling in ways that achieved the language shift in three generations (Fishman 1966) – the hallmark of the US ‘melting pot’.

The twentieth century

The US did not have explicit policies to educate the children of immigrants and those considered ‘others’ until the mid-twentieth century. Until then, immigrants, Native Americans, African Americans and ‘others’ were simply immersed in using specific forms of English. The explicit purpose of this practice was to belittle their language and cultural practices, and to restrict entry only to the lower echelons of American society. But in the twentieth century and in the wake of the civil rights era, US society started to think about how to educate the children of those who spoke languages other than English, in some cases immigrants, but in most cases people absorbed into the US through policies of ‘Manifest Destiny’ and American imperialism. Among the latter group were not only Native Americans, but also children of Mexican descent, some of whom had crossed the border, but others of whom had been born in territory that had been Mexico before the end of the Mexican American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 ceded to the US the 500,000 square miles of territory that today encompasses California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, most of Arizona and Colorado, and parts of Oklahoma, Kansas and Wyoming. Yet other children were Puerto Ricans, US citizens since 1917 as a result of the colonial relationship maintained with the island since the end of the Spanish American War in 1898.

In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was passed, with the US Congress authorising federal funds for schools to establish bilingual education programmes where children were taught in English and their home languages. In the beginning many Developmental Maintenance Bilingual Education programmes were established by educators who shared the language identity of the children. In those programmes, the language other than English, as well as English, were used to educate the group for self-realisation. But by 1974, bilingual education policy restricted the use of languages other than English only as a temporary measure and as a way to further accelerate the shift to English, in what became known as transitional bilingual education.

The political opposition to the inclusion of languages other than English in schools started almost immediately. Alongside these bilingual education programmes, English as a Second Language programmes were developed, in which only English was used.

As the twentieth century came to a close, yet another type of bilingual education came into being – developmental bilingual education. However, with increased opposition to ‘bilingual’ programmes and the word ‘bilingual’ itself being associated with political contention, these new bilingual programmes were labeled ‘dual-language’ and included two groups of children – those who spoke English and wanted to learn the other language and those who spoke another language but were said to be ‘Limited English Proficient’. Developmental bilingual education then became restricted to programmes in which half of the children spoke English and half not. Based on the traditional scholarship of immersion programmes in Canada, and of foreign language programmes around the world, these ‘dual-language’ programmes separated the two languages strictly through language allocation policies that relied on various arrangements – different spaces, times, subjects or teachers for each language. Today in ‘dual-language’ programmes, sometimes there are two teachers who teach in different classrooms and in different languages, in what are called ‘side-by-side’ models. In other cases one language is used one day or one week or during certain times of the day, whereas the other language is used the other day or the other week or during other times of the day. That is, the two languages are used in complementary fashion in ways that Cummins (2007) has described as ‘bilingual solitudes’.

The twenty-first century

As the twenty-first century rolled in, other ways of using and viewing language emerged, the product of an increasingly globalised world with its accompanying technologies that created dynamic movements of people, information, goods and services. Traditional conceptions of language, bilingualism and bilingual education were challenged by a multilingual world where plurilingualism, in the sense given by the Council of Europe as the potential to use various languages to different degrees and for many purposes (Beacco and Byram 2003), was increasingly seen as a resource.

The US has responded to the emerging global multilingual arrangement by instituting language management policies that preserve the hegemony of English without disturbing its ability to attract the world’s best professional
talent and the world’s most hard-working capacities. Educational authorities and their schools, through implicit language education policies, have played a major role in the continued hegemonic status of US English. High-stakes assessments in ‘academic’ English only, as well as the recently developed Common Core State Standards, adopted fully by 45 states at the time of this writing, are two ways in which English hegemony has imposed itself. This has resulted in the increased pressure to use only ‘academic’ English in schools, the loss of many bilingual education programmes and the insistence that the ‘academic’ way of using ‘English’ and the other ways of using language(s) always remain separate even in bilingual education programmes.

Clearly the language policy adopted in US schools which sets the English language apart and demands performance in what is called ‘academic English’ has little to do with the ways in which US students, especially bilingual and bidialectal students, use English. English is defined in the US context as an autonomous linguistic structure that can be learned and ‘had’. Those who have different ways of speaking are then labeled as ‘limited,’ ‘deficient,’ and their way of using language is said to be ‘corrupted’. This has the effect of stigmatising these language practices while equating the practices of elite monolingual English speakers with ‘academic’ English, thus ensuring those in power the privilege of a better education more closely aligned to their linguistic practices, as well as improved opportunities for the future.

If we were to truly manage language practices in ways that are inclusive of all speakers and that work against definitions that privilege certain ways of using language, we would have to adopt a different framework of language, bidialectalism and bilingualism. This alternative framework is the topic of the next section.

ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Language is not simply an abstract system of language forms that learners can ‘have,’ but emerges from the concrete verbal communication of speakers (Voloshinov 1929/1973). Language, as Mikhail Bakhtin posits, is incapable of neutrality because it emerges from the actions of speakers with certain ideological positionings (1981). *Languaging* is thus a better term to capture this ongoing process, which is always being created as we interact with the world lingually (Becker 1988).

Because bilinguals have more modalities of signification (Kramsch 2009) than monolinguals, we use the term translanguage to refer to the dynamic ways in which bilinguals interact with the world translingually, beyond the two language systems that are assumed in traditional definitions of bilingualism (for more on translanguage, see especially Canagarajah 2011; Creese and Blackwell 2010; García 2009; García and Li Wei 2014; Lewis, Jones and Baker 2012a, 2012b). Bilinguals have one linguistic system with features that have been societally defined as belonging to one language or the other, but which for them form one linguistic repertoire that is used in complex ways.

The question then is whether schools are capable of taking up this translanguage framework to leverage as a resource all the language practices of bilingual students and language-minoritised students in particular. Further, the most important question is whether bilingual schools, specifically developed to educate emergent bilingual students, can transform themselves into institutions that manage the language practices of students in ways that educate ALL students meaningfully and equitably. In the sections that follow we describe ways of adopting both a translanguage macro (top-down) framework, as well as a translanguage micro (bottom-up) framework. The translanguage *macro-framework* works as organised language management to include, rather than exclude, different language practices. The translanguage *micro-framework* works as simple management (or discourse-based management) as teachers use the entire language repertoire of students to teach meaningfully and students use their entire language repertoire to make sense of learning.

Many skilled teachers of bilingual students take up a translanguaging stance and develop translanguage pedagogical strategies (what we call here discourse-based management) to enable their students to learn. However, we know of very few institutional efforts to organise instruction so as to allocate time and space to translanguage itself. Creating translanguaging macro-frameworks in schools is very important so that teachers who take up translanguage feel supported in their practice. We turn first to describing what it would mean for schools, and especially for bilingual schools, to take up a translanguage macro-framework.

A translanguage macro-framework for schools

Schools most often only accept the language practices that they have defined as ‘standardised’ and academic, whether the school is monolingual or bilingual. In the case of monolingual programmes, the richness of different ways of speaking that students bring to school is completely ignored. This is also the case of second language programmes such as those in the US known as
English as a Second Language, where English is the only language of instruction. The objective of traditional bilingual programmes is often to 'protect' one 'language' from the other, ignoring the bilingual practices, that is, the translanguaging, that characterises all bilingual communities in the world. Thus, in an effort to protect the standard form of one 'language' or another, schools fail to even recognise, much less nurture and sustain the real multilingual practices of communities.

In monolingual programmes, ways of using languages in communities that speak differently from that of the school norm are completely ignored. In bilingual programmes, languages are completely compartmentalised and only 'official' ways of using language, as in monolingual schooling contexts, are permitted. Never are the languages used in ways that reflect the bilingual practices of communities. Never are the children asked to reflect on their entire range of language practices by examining the different ways in which their language deploys meaning. Never are the children encouraged to use their language repertoire creatively or even authentically. By only recognising bilingual children as either 'language learners' of the dominant language or simply two monolinguals in one (Grosjean 1982), schools are missing opportunities to truly develop the creativity and criticality of bilingual children (Li Wei 2011), or to develop the ability to perform language meaningfully.

We recognise that because schools are instruments of the nation-state (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), one of the functions of schools (certainly not the only one since the most important one should be to educate every child) is precisely to develop ways of using standardised languages. In order to participate equitably and structurally in the larger society, language-minoritised students need to be able to pass exams in the standardised dominant language and perform language in ways that schools evaluate narrowly. The question then is whether there are macro institutional and pedagogical arrangements for language use that could develop ways of engaging language-minoritised students in both using the dominant language for academic functions as prescribed in schools AND at the same time develop the child's security to act lingually in the world with confidence, creativity and criticality (Li Wei 2011). The answer, we think, lies in developing a translanguaging macro framework.

A translanguaging macro framework for schools aims to build a translanguaging space alongside spaces that are assigned to practices particular to each of the two languages. Figure 1 displays what a translanguaging macro-framework might look like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space for language practices associated with Language X</th>
<th>A translanguaging space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used flexibly</td>
<td>Space for language practices associated with Language Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used flexibly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, for example, in an English as a Second Language programme, one space would be associated with English, though all languages would be used flexibly, and there would be an explicit space for translanguaging, in which students are encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoires meaningfully. For example, students might be explicitly asked to write a story that includes a dialogue with members of the family who speak languages other than English and then read the story out loud to the class. This would mean that students would not only have to use their entire language repertoire but learn how to communicate with a multilingual audience that might not share the same language practices. In a bilingual education programme in English and Chinese, for example, the translanguaging space would allow students to bring together their so-called 'English' and 'Chinese' practices into one meaningful and coordinated performance.

As we said before, in monolingual classrooms only the dominant language is used in the narrow ways constrained by schools. In bilingual classrooms two languages are used. But a translanguaging space ensures that there is space in the curriculum for children to use their entire language repertoire. In some cases that translanguaging space is opened every day, alongside the other space(s) which, of course, also contain translanguaging practices. In other cases, time is built for an explicit translanguaging space every few days or even once a week. Regardless of the time allotted, a translanguaging space is a critical component of the language allocation policy and must be clearly defined by the school.

Bilingual schools have to work harder than monolingual schools to decide when to use one language versus the other. A translanguaging space is not an 'extra' space in the sense that it does not add to the curricular time. Instead, decisions are made as to what content is taught through different language practices, some monolingual, others bilingual.

In the translanguaging space, students are encouraged to use their entire language repertoire to learn. Teachers use this translanguaging space to bring together language practices that students usually perform separately. For example, sometimes students are engaged in doing a science project using the
Internet to search for information and would be encouraged to use whatever modalities of signification are available to them, including written texts and videos, as well as different language practices. Other times, students are asked to go into their communities and research a social studies topic. To do this, students are asked to interview community members with appropriate language practices. Students are then encouraged to write a bilingual report where the different people interviewed speak in their own languages. They then prepare a multilingual PowerPoint presentation that they present orally through translanguaging to members of the school community. Yet other times, teachers put alongside each other different language practices and ask students to reflect on differences and similarities with respect to the lexicon, syntax, morphology and discourse. Sometimes this exercise, which develops students’ metalinguistic awareness, is conducted with video and oral language, as teachers ask students to reflect on differences in pragmatics and even phonology.

Although translation has been mostly banned from the language classroom, a translanguaging space also builds on students’ translation skills, an important talent of bilingual students (Orellana 2009). The teacher gives students the opportunity to render the material that they have been taught in one language, using other language practices. This process amplifies the students’ voice, enabling them to render the academic language into their own words and thus appropriating the content.

The translanguaging space has the potential to exploit students’ language creativity. Many times teachers use this space to get students to write stories and plays in which different characters speak differently using translanguaging. This not only legitimises bilingual practices in the community, but also gives students an academic space to develop these important practices. It has been said that the greatest resource in the twenty-first century will be precisely the ability to translanguish and thus develop the linguistic flexibility needed in plurilingualism (García 2009). The space to try out translanguaging in schools gives students this needed practice.

Finally, this translanguaging space has the potential to enable students to develop a critical consciousness of how to use different semiotic resources to communicate across different groups. Working through translanguaging to ensure that communication happens across communities with different language practices is hard work, yet it is an important communicative resource for the twenty-first century. But building this translanguaging space is not enough. Some flexibility with language practices is also needed within spaces that are reserved for what are often seen in schools as ‘monolingual’ language practices. How this happens is precisely what we call the translanguaging micro-framework, that is, the simple management or discourse-based management that teachers exert, which we discuss in the next section.

A translanguaging micro-framework for classrooms

Many times, teachers’ discourse-based language management simply reinforces those of organised language management. For example, we often hear teachers of English as a Second Language say: ‘Speak English!’ ‘No Spanish!’ And in bilingual education classrooms, teachers often tell students: ‘Today we’re speaking X, not Y.’ But as Menken and García (2010) make clear, teachers are also capable of negotiating the organised language management imposed by institutions, thus becoming policy-makers themselves. That is, teachers are capable of adopting a translanguaging micro-framework that builds the flexibility of language practices that can correspond to a more inclusive framework for language differences and a more meaningful way of educating bilingual students.

For teachers to take up the discourse-based language management that promotes translanguaging, teachers need to pay attention to three aspects:

1. Meaning-making
2. Use and production of classroom resources for translanguaging
3. Design of curriculum and classroom structures for translanguaging, which include peer-grouping and project and task-based learning (for more on this, see García and Li Wei 2014).

Table 1 on the following page, developed by Sarah Hesson in her work with the CUNY-NYSIEB project and adapted here, summarises the different ways in which a translanguaging micro-framework can be adopted by teachers in schools to ensure that bilingual students learn both content and language.
Table 1: A translanguaging micro-framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When students are . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assign bilingual reading partners for mutual assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide multilingual books/translations of books whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide/encourage multilingual reading material for research projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Encourage students to take notes in any language while reading and researching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Before writing, allow students to audio-record ideas first using all their language resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assign students bilingual writing partners for mutual assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage students to brainstorm, outline and draft using all their language resources, then select one language/voice in which to publish the piece.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage students to experiment with translanguaging in writing for both bilingual and monolingual audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assign language partners in class (Beginner with intermediate, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assign newcomers a buddy to show them around, answer questions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Group students so they may draw on all their language resources in small group work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask students to translate certain aspects of the lesson (such as the objective, a summary of the text, or an explanation of the task) to build comprehension and fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Create a multilingual listening centre comprised of fiction and non-fiction texts in the classroom, summaries of longer texts, narratives of community members and books recorded by students or their families (a favourite book or their own writing). Try to represent all the language varieties of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allow students to explain complex concepts to each other using all their language resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When the teacher is . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- During content area reading, give partners time to discuss difficult passages or words using all their language resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Create multilingual interactive word walls (especially in content areas – Math, Science, Social Studies) and encourage students to add words, definitions, visuals and translations to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Write tasks and assignments in as many languages as possible, using translanguaging where applicable. Write on the board using multiple languages and translanguaging, as student(s) give ideas in any language (students may assist with writing if necessary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give written comments on an assignment in student’s home language or using translanguaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make connections between words to build vocabulary and improve spelling, especially through cognates (eg. revolución – revolution; tríángulo – triangle).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explain the objective of a lesson using student’s home language(s), implement the lesson in the target language, then use translanguaging to review at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conduct individual conferences with students using translanguaging to ensure understanding, to make language connections (in grammar, vocabulary, etc.) and to model translanguaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allow students to explain/share ideas using all their languages (another student can translate if you or some classmates don’t speak the language).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So that the reader sees the relationship of a translanguaging macro-framework and micro-framework in schools and classrooms, we describe below the translanguaging teaching practices of a Grade 4 bilingual teacher and of an ESL secondary teacher.

TRANSLANGUAGING MACRO/MICRO FRAMEWORKS IN ACTION: TWO TEACHERS

Lucas’ Grade 4 bilingual class

In Lucas’ Grade 4 dual-language bilingual class in upper Manhattan, New York, about three-quarters of his 25 students are Latino, with family roots in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Ecuador, Cuba, Colombia and Spain. Of the remaining students, four are white US Americans, one is Pakistani and one is French. For the six non-Latino students, Spanish is a language they began learning when they joined the bilingual programme in kindergarten. The home language practices of the non-Latino students include different varieties of English, Urdu (for the Pakistani student) and French (for the French student). The home language practices of the Latino students include both English and Spanish to different degrees.

The students’ school language performances vary. Though the school has a macro-level language policy that follows in principle three-week cycles in English and then Spanish, Lucas plans strategically to ensure that his students are well supported in their bilingual (or trilingual) development regardless of the language of instruction. Besides the translanguaging micro-framework that we first describe, Lucas also pays attention to how to set up a translanguaging space as a macro-framework, even within the strict language allocation policy of the school.

Lucas encourages students to use their entire language repertoire on a daily basis, regardless of whether they are supposed to be in the English or Spanish cycle. For example, the following list is posted in his classroom:

As multilingual students, you have the right to:

- Take notes during independent reading time in any language
- Brainstorm and outline your ideas in any language
- Annotate Science and Social Studies texts in any language
- Ask for help with an unfamiliar vocabulary word or difficult concept in any language
• ‘Try your idea aloud in any language before speaking or writing it in the
target language.
• Create a summary or version of your final work in an additional language
to share with speakers of that language
• Keep multilingual vocabulary lists
• Read, write, speak and share in the language of your choice during ‘biling-
gual time’
• Research a new topic using all your languages
• Compare and contrast the grammar and vocabulary of all your languages
• Create bilingual projects, presentations and writing.

Lucas’ choices reflect his knowledge of how bilingual students learn, using all
their language practices for sense-making and learning. The flexibility with
which Lucas meets the students’ language practices ensures that students’
natural thinking and languaging processes are not disrupted. This results in
more complex ideas being shared. In addition, Lucas gives his students the
opportunity not only to use language more flexibly and fluidly, but also to
make critical connections between the languages as students learn increas-
ingly complex academic vocabulary and grammatical structures. These prac-
tices result in richer conversations and writing, deeper content knowledge
and greater literacy skills in all languages.

In addition to creating space for students to use language flexibly
throughout the day, Lucas and all other bilingual teachers at the school also
have a two-period block every Friday afternoon that is deemed ‘flexible bi-
linguual time’ by the school. Teachers design their own units of study for this
block, the only requirement being that students may develop their multi-
lingual repertoires within this translanguaging space. Lucas uses this time
to develop projects with his students on issues that matter to them and that
relate to their daily lives. In order to do this, Lucas starts the year off with
a neighborhood project that asks his students to reflect on different aspects
of their communities, including language use, popular activities, special
places, aspects they love about where they live and aspects they would like
to change.

Students begin the unit by observing and taking notes about their neigh-
borhood. First they notice the physical landscape. They take walking trips
around the community and take note of the languages used in signs, bill-
boards, directions and other written texts. They note the different areas of
the neighborhood, the shops, buildings and organizations present; the public
spaces such as parks and plazas; and how popular different spaces are. After
observing the physical landscape, students observe the people in the spaces
more closely. They note what they are doing, as well as the languages used in
different places.

After gathering information, students discuss and reflect on the spaces
and activities in their neighborhood, as well as the language used in various
spaces and activities by different people. Groups of students then work to cre-
ate a multilingual script based on their community with different characters
speaking in ways that mirror the language use observed in their neighbor-
hood. To develop the story of the play, students either use shared writing to
create a fictional but realistic storyline, or they base the plot of the play on
actual events. For example, a group in the class chose the theme of building
a community garden. The play included the public campaign to make the
garden a reality, with both public officials and community participants. The
students finally perform their plays at the end of the semester, in front of a
large multilingual audience. In this way, students participate in a translan-
guaging space that not only recognizes, but also develops their translanguag-
ing abilities.

Adriana’s secondary school ESL class

In Adriana’s secondary ESL class in Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens,
NY, her 25 adolescent students speak a total of nine languages. While Adriana
knows some Spanish, a language that four of her students speak, she has very
little knowledge of the rest of the languages represented in her classroom.
Adriana has found that a student-centred environment works best, and she
invites students to use and develop their home languages daily to make sense
of the complex content as well as improve their literacy skills in both their
home languages and English.

Adriana’s students are the language experts in her classroom, and she lets
them know this from the first day of school. She views everyone in her class-
room, including herself, as both a teacher and a learner and gives students
plenty of opportunities to experience both roles.

At the beginning of the year, and whenever she welcomes a new student
into her classroom thereafter, Adriana asks students to fill out a survey to give
her information about their language practices. With the help of students
and community members, Adriana has been able to translate the survey into
Standard Tibetan, Mandarin Chinese, Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Haitian
Creole, Spanish and French – the main languages of her students. The survey
gives Adriana information about the languaging and cultural practices and
abilities her students bring to class, how much schooling they have received
and in what languages, and how students view their own language practices. Adriana also familiarises herself with the students’ literacy and literary traditions, their writing systems, as well as their histories of immigration. She also has made it a point to have students teach her how they say ‘Good Morning,’ ‘Thank you,’ and ‘Please,’ and uses those words freely in greeting them and calling on particular students.

Adriana’s daily routines are the foundation for setting up a translanguaging space. Adriana has both a general academic and a content-specific vocabulary list on the wall to which students add in both English and their home languages as they learn new words. Students have the freedom to use bilingual dictionaries and iPads whenever it is necessary. New students in the class are assigned a ‘buddy’ who speaks their home language, familiarises them with school and class routines and answers questions throughout the lessons. Students know they are permitted to use their home languages as they navigate difficult passages of English text, to clarify conversations, to explain new vocabulary, to take notes and to make outlines and drafts of their writing. Adriana regularly asks students to explain ideas or share in their home languages and has students present on their language and cultural practices whenever relevant. Students are also encouraged to seek out relevant information in their home languages, and often present their findings to classmates through a summary in English or with the help of a classmate.

During a non-fiction unit on government policy, for example, as soon as students enter the room, they know to take out their notebooks and get into groups that share a home language. The groups range from two to five students, with the larger groups sometimes breaking into smaller pairs or triads depending on the exercise. Two students – one a beginner and the other intermediate in English – are the only speakers of their primary language in the class – one Haitian student who speaks Haitian Creole and a Senegalese student whose first language is Mandinka. However, since both students know some French, the teacher pairs them strategically to offer some support as they acquire their third language, English.

Where possible, intermediate English speakers are paired with beginner speakers, while advanced English speakers are paired together. Adriana has found that the intermediate speakers are the most eager teachers to beginner students, and that the role also pushes their literacy skills forward. Advanced speakers are not always paired together, but pairing them for the opening activity of the class gives them a daily opportunity to practice newly acquired English skills in conversation and reading material.

The opening activity of this unit on government policy every day is to discuss a piece of news from a home language newspaper on a policy issue of the group’s choosing. Students read the article at home, take notes in both their home languages and English and then bring their article and notes to class to discuss with their groups. Some groups coordinate with each other to read the same article, while others bring in different articles (all addressing the theme) and share their findings. If advanced students are ready for the challenge, they are encouraged to seek out a second article from an English-language newspaper that addresses the same topic as their home language article.

After discussing the articles and taking notes using any language, students work together to construct a two-to-three sentence summary of their findings in English. Each student must write this summary in their notebooks in English below the notes they took the night before and any additional notes from their discussion which could be written through different language practices. If students are in the beginning stages of acquiring writing in English, they may copy the English summary from a more advanced student. After all students have the English summary in their notebook, they also write it on a large chart paper, to which they add a new summary daily. Each group’s chart paper thus records how the issue is progressing and demonstrates students’ linguistic growth as the unit progresses. Each group shares this summary aloud with the class and classmates then have the opportunity to discuss and ask each other clarifying questions. Any unfamiliar English vocabulary is added to a running list posted in the classroom, where students may write alongside the English word, the word in their home language.

This activity not only gives students a meaningful opportunity to interact with their peers in their home languages, the lesson is also culturally relevant as newspapers from different countries emphasise different news, giving the class the opportunity to learn about particular policy issues affecting their peers. For students who share a home language but are from different countries, the assignment allows for a cross-cultural analysis of the same policy issue. It also serves as a jumping off point for Adriana to introduce English-language newspaper articles, charts, statistics, photographs and videos each day. While students report on government policies they find in home language newspapers, Adriana focuses on immigration policy in the US and introduces new material on the issue daily.

By the end of the unit, Adriana has introduced the affordances in terms of vocabulary, discourse and skills necessary to write a report and create a presentation on a policy issue of students’ choosing. For the final project, all students are assigned partner(s) that ensure the language support they
will need. However, each pair may choose to join another pair with a different home language to research the same topic, or may opt to stay in a homogenous language group. Across the class, about half of the students opt for a homogenous language group while the other half move to work with different pairs based on their topics. Students also have the option of working on immigration policy in the US, a topic that has been well-scaffolded throughout the unit by the teacher. Two pairs of students who struggle with literacy in both their home languages and English opt to focus on this topic, and work with the material the teacher has already collected to craft their own report and presentation on the issue. Students are encouraged to create presentations in both their home languages and English with the purpose of reaching a larger audience and of informing their home communities of relevant government policies.

We have seen how Lucas and Adriana take up a translanguaging framework. In the bilingual education classroom, Lucas not only opens up spaces for translanguaging within the spaces that have been assigned to English and Spanish, but also creates an innovative translanguaging space that transforms the schools’ and students’ conception of language and bilingualism. In the English as a Second Language classroom, Adriana uses translanguaging as a scaffold to English, but also as a transformative space that makes students conscious of multilingual discourse and its sociopolitical realities. For schools and teachers the question remains – why bother with managing the language practices of their students to open them up to translanguaging? We address this now.

**WHY TAKE UP A TRANSLANGUAGING MACRO AND MICRO FRAMEWORK?**

It is clear that schools and classrooms will be increasingly multilingual as a result of ongoing globalisation around the world. Monolingual arrangements and traditional bilingual arrangements go against the current of the fluid language practices that exist in all classrooms today. By ignoring what García, Ibarra-Johnson and Seltzer (forthcoming) call the translanguaging corriente present in all multilingual classrooms today, language-minoritised children will continue to fail, while all children will be robbed of the possibilities of developing plurilingual abilities.

García and Li Wei (2014) have identified different reasons why schools and teachers take up a translanguaging framework and relate these reasons to three important goals of education. Table 2 identifies the reasons and goals for incorporating a translanguaging framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>To differentiate among students’ levels and adapt instruction to different types of students in multilingual classrooms.</td>
<td>To communicate understandings and appropriate knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To build students’ background knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To deepen students’ understandings and develop and extend new knowledge.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>For cross-linguistic metalinguistic awareness.</td>
<td>To develop new language practices and sustain old ones.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For cross-linguistic flexibility.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For identity investment and secured positionality.</td>
<td>To give voice to and shape new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To develop critical consciousness.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To interrogate linguistic inequality and disrupt linguistic hierarchies.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Schools in the twenty-first century must take up the three goals identified here:

1. Communicate understandings to students and have them appropriate knowledge
2. Develop new language practices while sustaining old ones
3. Give voice to all students and thus shape new sociopolitical realities

To achieve these three important goals of schooling in the twenty-first century, a translanguaging framework has much to offer. But the work cannot just happen from the bottom up; that is, from a micro-perspective. Organised language management policies must also take up translanguaging from the top down. Although we find examples such as that of Lucas of teachers taking up a translanguaging macro-framework, schools continue to be silent on this issue. Only by blending organised top-down translanguaging macro-frameworks of institutions with bottom-up translanguaging micro-frameworks of teachers will there be the potential to transform schooling for all students in our increasingly multilingual world which includes the English colonial context. Schools and teachers of speakers of different varieties of English in Commonwealth contexts must also reflect on the transformative possibilities of taking up a translanguaging stance and framework to educate students meaningfully and equitably.