

# Preface

If you have chosen to read *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning*, you are probably an educator—a teacher, a curriculum developer, a professional development provider, a school administrator, or other school personnel. And like most educators, you probably have students in your classrooms and schools who speak languages other than English (LOTE) and you are interested in how to further their education, including their English language and literacy development. This book is for you.

This book shows teachers, administrators, consultants, and researchers how **translanguaging**, a way of thinking about and acting on the language practices of bilingual people, may hold the key to successfully educating bilingual students. The translanguaging pedagogy that we put forward in this book is purposeful and strategic, and we demonstrate how teachers can use translanguaging to

1. Support students as they engage with and comprehend complex content and texts
2. Provide opportunities for students to develop linguistic practices for academic contexts
3. Make space for students' bilingualism and ways of knowing
4. Support students' socioemotional development and bilingual identities

These four purposes frame the translanguaging pedagogy, and they work together to advance the primary purpose of translanguaging—social justice—ensuring that bilingual students, especially those who come from language minority groups, are instructed and assessed in ways that provide them with equal educational opportunities.

**Translanguaging classrooms** are aligned with the global and local realities of the 21st century. These dynamic classrooms advance the kinds of practices that college and career-readiness standards demand, as they enhance bilingual students' critical thinking and creativity. Teachers learn to expand and localize their teaching in ways that address all content and language standards, and integrate home, school, community, and societal practices and understanding. Translanguaging classrooms also allow teachers to carry out the mandates of the growing number of states that are adopting seals of biliteracy to reward students' bilingual abilities. At the time of this writing, 14 states have adopted seals of biliteracy.

## WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

This book has been written specifically with bilingual students in 4th–12th grades in mind. Teachers and other educational leaders can use this book to guide teaching, instructional programming, and action-oriented research in any context.

Our primary audience is teachers. Any teacher, whether monolingual or bilingual, and whether involved in a program officially designated as English-

medium<sup>1</sup> or bilingual education, can create a translanguaging classroom. You could be a specialized language teacher or professional—a teacher of English as an additional language, bilingual education, home language literacy, or world language<sup>2</sup>—a general education teacher of either children or adolescents, or of a specific content-area at the secondary level, or even the principal of a school. Teachers and administrators are capable of building instructional spaces that go beyond our traditional understanding about programs for bilingual students.

Many, if not most, classrooms are multilingual, with students who speak languages in addition to English. Some of these students are highly bilingual and biliterate (**experienced bilinguals**), whereas others' bilingualism and biliteracy is emerging (**emergent bilinguals**). Some of these bilingual learners have developed strong academic foundations through quality school systems, while others may have experienced limited formal schooling. Regardless of where your students fall within bilingual or educational progressions, this book demonstrates innovative ways of educating them.

Because of the important place of bilingual Latino students in U.S. education, this book emphasizes the context of Latino students—in English-medium and bilingual instructional settings—to help you understand translanguaging classrooms.<sup>3</sup> Because we know that translanguaging is not limited to Spanish–English bilingualism, we also draw on examples from English-medium classrooms that include bilingual students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Whether your students are speakers of Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Karen, Pular, or any other language, the principles for translanguaging in the classroom are the same.

Research and practice on bilingualism at U.S. schools has focused narrowly on English language learners' content and language learning, generally in English-medium classrooms, and reflecting a language-as-problem or deficit orientation. In contrast, *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning* takes a much broader approach. We focus on all bilingual students, including those who are emergent bilinguals, as well as those who are seen by the academic mainstream as English speakers but speak languages other than English at home. We show teachers how to identify and build on the varied bilingual performances of all bilingual students, regardless of whether or not they perform well academically in English or another language, and regardless of whether they are learning in English-medium, bilingual, or LOTE classrooms.

We bring the translanguaging pedagogy to life through vignettes from three very different classrooms:

- A 4th-grade dual-language bilingual education classroom of students who speak English, Spanish, or both at home, taught by a bilingual (Spanish–English) teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico
- An 11th-grade English-medium social studies classroom of students who speak English, Spanish, or both at home, taught by a monolingual teacher in New York City

---

<sup>1</sup>English-medium classes and programs officially use English for instructional purposes, and they aim for academic achievement and language development in English. Bilingual education classes and programs use two or more languages for instructional purposes, and they aim for biliteracy and academic performance in two languages.

<sup>2</sup>In the United States, world language refers to a class focused on the teaching of a LOTE as a subject to language majority students, whereas home language literacy classes teach that language to bilingual students as a subject. English as an additional language teachers could teach only the subject (English literacy) or be classroom teachers of all subjects. Bilingual teachers are classroom teachers teaching subjects through two languages.

<sup>3</sup>We use Latino not as a “Spanish” word with an “o” inflection, but simply as a word that is inclusive of all gender identities and all persons of Latin American heritage who are Spanish speakers.

- 7th-grade English-medium math and science classes that include emergent bilinguals who speak Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, French, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Korean, Mandingo, and Pular (Fula) at home, co-taught by a math and science teacher and an ESL teacher in Los Angeles, California

These rich and varied cases clearly demonstrate how teachers can adapt the translanguaging pedagogy that we introduce in this book for all students, whatever their bilingualism looks like, in whatever instructional context.

## WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A TRANSLANGUAGING PEDAGOGY?

The central innovative concept in this book for teachers is *translanguaging*, which García (2009) describes as “an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages, as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable” (p. 45). This book builds on that approach in three important ways. First, we describe the **translanguaging corriente**,<sup>4</sup> the natural flow of students’ bilingualism through the classroom. Second, we propose the **dynamic translanguaging progressions**, which is a flexible model that allows teachers to look holistically at bilingual students’ language performances in specific classroom tasks from different perspectives at different times. Third, we introduce a **translanguaging pedagogy** for instruction and assessment that teachers can use to purposefully and strategically **leverage** the translanguaging corriente produced by students.

Translanguaging classrooms have two important dimensions. First, teachers observe students’ languaging performances, and then describe and assess their complex language practices. Then teachers adapt and use the translanguaging pedagogy for instruction and assessment to leverage the translanguaging corriente for learning. Our work revolves around three principles:

1. Bilinguals use their linguistic repertoires as resources for learning, and as identity markers that point to their innovative ways of knowing, being, and communicating.
2. Bilinguals learn language through their interaction with others within their home, social, and cultural environments.
3. Translanguaging is fluid language use that is part of bilinguals’ sense-making processes.

### *Translanguaging Corriente*

We suggest that the translanguaging corriente, produced and driven by the positive energy of students’ bilingualism, flows throughout all classrooms. Metaphorically, we think about the translanguaging corriente as a river current that you can’t always see or feel, but that is always present, always moving, and responsible for changes in the (classroom) landscape. Sometimes the translanguaging corriente flows gently under the surface, for example, in classrooms where teachers do not generally tap into students’ home language practices for learning. At other times the translanguaging corriente is much stronger, for example, in bilingual classrooms or English-medium classrooms that do draw on students’ home language practices.

---

<sup>4</sup> We use the Spanish word *corriente*, which is a cognate with the English word *current*. Throughout the book we use other Spanish terms to reflect our own language practices. Because Spanish constitutes the language practices of over three fourths of U.S. bilingual students, this book pays special attention to the Latino population. However, educators working with other language groups might want to use terms in other languages that maintain the spirit of these terms.

To feel the translanguaging corriente, all you have to do is take a step back from your daily routine and listen and look. Listen hard to what your students say to you and their peers, inside the classroom, hallways, and cafeteria, and on the playground. If you listen hard enough you might be able to perceive their intrapersonal voices (the unvoiced dialogues they have in their heads with themselves or friends). Listen also to the conversations that take place when their families and peers are present; try to hear what is being said and how it is said, as well as what is not being said and why. Listening in this way allows you to hear your students' voices anew, and puts you in touch with the translanguaging corriente, even if it is not obviously at the surface of your classroom.

In this book the translanguaging corriente runs through the content it communicates and also through the ways that we have chosen to use words in Spanish in this predominately English-language text, without any italics. We do this to indicate that, for us, the Spanish features we use are not alien or foreign; they are simply part of our narrative, always present and part of us, even when we are writing in English. We translate some documents in the Appendix into Spanish because, as we said earlier, this is the largest population of U.S. bilingual students and in the classrooms featured in this book. However, you can translate the English text in these documents to any of the languages in your classroom as one means of strengthening the translanguaging corriente in your classroom.

### ***Dynamic Translanguaging Progressions***

The notion of the translanguaging corriente moves us from the concept of linguistic *proficiency*, which is assumed to develop along a relatively linear path in more or less the same way for all bilingual learners, to one of linguistic *performance*. The dynamic translanguaging progressions enable teachers to do the following:

- Gauge the students' different bilingual performances on different tasks from different perspectives
- Distinguish between **general linguistic performance** (bilingual students' ways of performing academic tasks—e.g., express complex thoughts effectively, explain things, persuade, argue, compare and contrast, recount events, tell jokes—without regard to the language used to express these tasks) and **language-specific performance** (bilingual students' use of features corresponding to what society considers a specific language or variety)
- Leverage the translanguaging corriente for learning in their classes

Teachers in translanguaging classrooms use the dynamic translanguaging progressions to document their students' language performances on specific classroom-based tasks—in any language.

### ***Translanguaging Stance, Design, and Shifts***

The translanguaging pedagogy in this book encompasses both instruction and assessment, and is structured into three interrelated strands: the **translanguaging stance, design, and shifts**.

A stance refers to the philosophical, ideological, or belief system that teachers draw from to develop their pedagogical framework. Teachers with a translanguaging stance believe that bilingual students' many different language practices work **juntos/together**, not separately, as if they belonged to

different realms. Thus, the teacher believes that the classroom space must promote collaboration across content; languages; people; and home, school, and community. A translanguaging stance sees the bilingual child's complex **language repertoire** as a resource, never as a deficit.

Designing translanguaging instruction and assessment involves integrating home, school, and community language and cultural practices. The movement is created by the interaction between the translanguaging corriente and the teacher and students' joint actions, which enable bilingual students to integrate their home and school practices. Designing translanguaging instruction also means planning carefully (e.g., the grouping of students; elements of planning—essential ideas, questions, and texts; content, language, and translanguaging objectives; culminating projects; design cycle; pedagogical strategies). The translanguaging design is a flexible framework that teachers in English-medium and bilingual classrooms can use to develop curricular units of instruction, lesson plans, and classroom activities. The flexible design is the pedagogical core of the translanguaging classroom, and it allows teachers and students to address all content and language standards and objectives in equitable ways for all students, particularly bilingual students who are often marginalized in mainstream classrooms and schools. Designing assessment to set the course of the translanguaging corriente means including the voices of others, taking into account the difference between content and language, and between general linguistic and language-specific performances, and giving students opportunities to perform tasks with assistance from other people and resources, when needed.

Because the translanguaging corriente is always present in classrooms, it is not enough to simply have a stance that recognizes it and a design that leverages it. At times it is also important to follow the dynamic movement of the translanguaging corriente. The translanguaging shifts are the many moment-by-moment decisions that teachers make all the time. They reflect the teacher's flexibility and willingness to change the course of the lesson and assessment, as well as the language use planned for it, to release and support students' voices. The shifts are related to the stance, for it takes a teacher willing to keep meaning-making and learning at the center of all instruction and assessment to go with the flow of the translanguaging corriente.

## USING THIS BOOK

We have three purposes for this book. First, we want educators and researchers to see a clearly articulated translanguaging pedagogy in practice. The examples from three very different classrooms stimulate concrete thinking about students, classrooms, programs, schools, practices, and research in different bi/multilingual communities. Second, we want to guide teachers' efforts to adapt the translanguaging pedagogy put forth in this book to any translanguaging context. Third, we provide the foundation for teachers and researchers to gather empirical evidence in translanguaging classrooms, which will help refine theory and strengthen practice.

We provide templates and examples from our focal bilingual and English-medium classrooms to assist you in designing instructional units, lessons, and assessments that identify and build on the translanguaging corriente in your classroom, school, and community context. When teachers enact a translanguaging stance, implement a translanguaging design for instruction and assessment, and intentionally shift their practices in response to student learning, they help fight the English-only current of much U.S. educational policy and practice and advance social justice.

We have divided the book into three parts:

Part I: Dynamic Bilingualism at School

This part of the book focuses on the “what” and “why” of translanguaging

Part II: Translanguaging Pedagogy

This part of the book focuses on how to create a translanguaging pedagogy

Part III: Reimagining Teaching and Learning through Translanguaging

This part of the book focuses on how a translanguaging pedagogy works to enhance students’ performances in different standards and literacy, develop their socioemotional identity, and advance social justice.

We divide each chapter into three parts. Learning objectives lay out what readers will learn and be able to do with chapter material. This is then followed by the core of the chapter—vignettes from classroom practices, tools, templates, or frameworks. Each chapter ends with questions and activities that pre-service and practicing teachers can use to reflect on aspects of translanguaging classrooms, as well as “take action” in their contexts. As a whole, the taking action questions guide educators to develop a translanguaging pedagogy in specific contexts. They also assist practitioners in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating their translanguaging pedagogy in practice. We encourage you to work through these questions and activities with a close community of educators so that you can support one another as you explore and take up the translanguaging corriente in your classroom.

We invite you now to become a reflective practitioner and let yourself be swept up by the translanguaging corriente, as we explore its meaning in instruction and how to teach by capitalizing on its ebbs and flows. We hope that together we will

- See and hear the translanguaging corriente that already exists in classrooms and schools
- Learn how to intentionally, purposefully, and strategically navigate the translanguaging corriente in both instruction and assessment by applying the translanguaging stance, design, and shifts
- Demonstrate ways that bilingual students and teachers leverage the translanguaging corriente to learn content, develop language, make space for bilingual ways of knowing, and foster more secure socio-emotional identities
- Become more critical as we take up the stance of reflective practitioner and/or critical researcher and work toward social justice
- Show the kinds of challenges educators may face in translanguaging classrooms and reflect on how to overcome them
- Launch an action-oriented, social justice agenda to strengthen translanguaging pedagogy, practice, and research in diverse multilingual contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was the result of much negotiation among ourselves and with our editor, Rebecca Field. Although the process was difficult at times, Rebecca pushed our thinking, our words, and the manuscript itself. What we never told you when things were difficult—gracias, Rebecca.

We also want to acknowledge the insights gained from Kathy Escamilla, Jamie Schissel, Guadalupe Valdés, and other reviewers. García also acknowledges a summer 2015 Visiting Appointment at the University of Cologne, and her colleague, Julie Panagiotopoulou, for the space given to her to revise this manuscript.