

Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom by Anna Mendoza

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Abstract

Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom by Anna Mendoza, published by Multilingual Matters in 2023, offers a nuanced exploration of multilingual practices within the specific sociolinguistic context of Honolulu, Hawaii. Positioned within the broader discourse of multilingual education, this book examines how high school students, drawing from diverse linguistic backgrounds, utilise translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in their daily interactions and learning processes. Mendoza's work significantly contributes to the field, bridging theoretical perspectives on translanguaging and ELF with empirical insights derived from linguistic ethnography. Through a detailed examination of classroom dynamics, this book challenges conventional notions of language use in education, proposing a more inclusive approach that recognises and values the full linguistic repertoires of students. This review will critically evaluate Mendoza's work, focusing on the context, content, critical analysis, comparisons, and conclusion.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Multilingual Education, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Linguistic Ethnography, Plurilingualism

Anna Mendoza tarafından kaleme alınan "Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom" adlı Eserin İncelemesi

Özet (Türkçe)

"Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom" adlı kitap, Anna Mendoza tarafından 2023 yılında Multilingual Matters yayınevi tarafından yayımlanmış olup, Honolulu, Hawaii'nin özgül sosyo-dilbilimsel bağlamında çok dilli uygulamaları ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Çokdilli eğitim söyleminin daha geniş bir bağlamında konumlandırılan bu kitap, farklı dilsel geçmişlere sahip lise öğrencilerinin günlük etkileşimlerinde ve öğrenme süreçlerinde translanguaging (dillerarası geçiş) ve İngilizceyi bir Lingua Franca (ortak dil) olarak nasıl kullandıklarını ele almaktadır. Mendoza'nın eseri, translanguaging (dillerarası geçiş) ve Lingua Franca (ortak dil) üzerine teorik perspektiflerle dil etnografisinden elde edilen ampirik içgörüler arasında köprü kurarak bu alana önemli katkılar sunmaktadır. Sınıf dinamiklerini ayrıntılı bir şekilde inceleyen kitap, eğitimde dil kullanımına ilişkin geleneksel kavramlara meydan okumakta ve öğrencilerin tam dilsel repertuarlarını tanıyan ve değer veren daha kapsayıcı bir yaklaşımı önermektedir. Bu inceleme, Mendoza'nın eserini bağlam, içerik, eleştirel analiz, karşılaştırmalar ve sonuç unsurlarına odaklanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dillerarası geçiş, çok dilli eğitim, Lingua Franca (Ortak Dil) olarak İngilizce, Dilsel Etnografi, Çok dillilik



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Introduction

Anna Mendoza's *Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom* (2023), published by *Multilingual Matters*, offers an insightful and empirically grounded exploration of multilingual practices within the unique sociolinguistic environment of Honolulu, Hawaii. Against increasing global awareness of linguistic diversity in education, Mendoza's work examines how high school students from diverse linguistic backgrounds engage in translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in their daily learning and communication. This study is particularly impactful because it integrates theoretical frameworks surrounding translanguaging, developed by scholars such as García and Li Wei (2014), with real-world classroom ethnographic data. By merging theory with empirical research, Mendoza challenges established monolingual ideologies, presenting a more inclusive view of language use that values the full linguistic repertoires of students. The study's context, Hawaii's culturally and linguistically rich environment, provides a compelling backdrop to understand how global and local languages intersect in an English-dominant educational system. Anna Mendoza composed this book to address a critical gap in the literature on multilingual education—precisely, the limited empirical research on how translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) function in real classroom settings. While theoretical discussions on translanguaging and ELF have been well-established, there remains a need for ethnographic studies that explore how students from diverse linguistic backgrounds navigate these practices in their daily interactions. Mendoza's work bridges this gap by providing an in-depth linguistic ethnography of multilingual high school students, offering insights into how translanguaging and ELF intersect in plurilingual classrooms to challenge monolingual ideologies and promote more inclusive pedagogical approaches. This review critically engages with Mendoza's work by analysing her approach through a broader lens. It will address the underlying theoretical frameworks she employs, evaluate her linguistic ethnography's methodological strengths and limitations, and consider the broader educational implications of her findings. Moreover, the review will explore how Mendoza's work fits within the broader scholarly discourse on multilingualism and translanguaging, offering comparisons with other significant studies in the field. This article aims to critically examine Mendoza's work by analysing its theoretical underpinnings, methodological framework, and empirical contributions while evaluating its broader implications for multilingual education and language policy.

Context

Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom by Anna Mendoza, published in 2023 as part of the *Bilingual Education & Bilingualism* series by *Multilingual Matters*, represents a significant contribution to the ongoing scholarly conversation surrounding multilingual education. This book is particularly timely, emerging amidst increasing global recognition of the complexities of educating linguistically diverse student populations. The context of the study is crucial to understanding its significance: it takes place in Honolulu, Hawaii, a region marked by a rich history of immigration and linguistic diversity. Honolulu's unique sociolinguistic environment, where English operates as a dominant language amidst numerous heritage languages, provides an ideal setting for examining the interplay of translanguaging and English-as-a-Lingua Franca (ELF) practices in a classroom context. The concept of translanguaging, initially developed by Williams (1994) in the context of Welsh-English bilingual education and later expanded by scholars like García (2009), has evolved into a critical framework for understanding how bilingual and multilingual speakers navigate their linguistic repertoires. Mendoza's work builds on this tradition, focusing on how

students in Hawaii's schools use their complete linguistic resources—including multiple languages and dialects—to communicate, learn, and negotiate identities in an English-medium educational system. This book is positioned at the intersection of several critical issues in language education: the need for pedagogical strategies that embrace linguistic diversity, the role of ELF in global communication, and the ongoing debate about the benefits and challenges of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms.

Content

Mendoza's book is organised into eight chapters, each methodically exploring different aspects of translanguaging and ELF in the classroom. The introductory chapter sets the stage by outlining the book's aims and situating the study within the broader field of multilingual education. Mendoza articulates a clear research agenda: to explore how multilingual students in Honolulu utilise translanguaging as a resource for learning and identity negotiation and how these practices intersect with English as a Lingua Franca.

The second chapter delves into the study's theoretical constructs, including plurilingualism, translanguaging, code-switching, stylisation, and ELF. Mendoza provides a thorough literature review, discussing how these concepts have been defined and employed in previous research. For instance, she critically engages with García and Li Wei's (2014) conceptualisation of translanguaging as using an individual's entire linguistic repertoire without regard to the boundaries of named languages. Mendoza also addresses the debates surrounding the psycholinguistic reality of distinct languages (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015), positioning her study within these ongoing scholarly discussions.

Chapters three through five present the empirical core of the book. Mendoza employs linguistic ethnography to investigate classroom interactions in two English classes in a Honolulu high school, focusing on how students from diverse linguistic backgrounds engage in translanguaging practices. Chapter three provides a detailed account of the research context, including the historical and sociolinguistic landscape of Hawaii, the demographics of the student population, and the specific school and classroom settings. Mendoza's methodological rigour is evident in her careful consideration of researcher positionality and the ethical implications of her work.

Chapter four examines the dynamics of translanguaging among linguistic majorities, minorities, and singletons in one of the English classes. Mendoza's analysis reveals that while translanguaging is a common practice among students, it is mediated by their linguistic backgrounds, social identities, and classroom hierarchies. For example, Filipino students, who constitute a linguistic majority in the class, frequently translanguage between English and their heritage languages, creating a sense of linguistic solidarity and identity affirmation. However, this practice also raises challenges for students from minority linguistic backgrounds, who may feel marginalised or excluded.

In Chapter Five, Mendoza explores the relationship between translanguaging and critical language awareness (CLA) in the second English class, where students are encouraged to reflect on their language practices and the social power dynamics embedded in them. Mendoza argues that fostering CLA is essential for creating an inclusive and equitable classroom environment, mainly when students come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. She demonstrates how translanguaging can be a pedagogical tool to raise students' awareness of linguistic diversity and challenge monolingual ideologies.

Chapter six shifts the focus to individual students' identity trajectories, using case studies to illustrate how translanguaging and ELF practices shape their academic and social identities. Mendoza's nuanced analysis highlights the complexities of identity negotiation in multilingual classrooms, where students must navigate their linguistic repertoires and the expectations and norms imposed by teachers, peers, and the broader society.

The book's final chapters discuss the pedagogical implications of Mendoza's findings and the broader theoretical contributions of her work. In Chapter Seven, she offers practical recommendations for educators seeking to implement translanguaging and ELF strategies in their classrooms. Mendoza emphasises the importance of creating a classroom environment that values and legitimises all students' linguistic resources, regardless of their proficiency in the dominant language. She also highlights the need for teacher training programs that equip educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage linguistic diversity in the classroom.

The book concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and directions for future research. Mendoza acknowledges that her study is context-specific and that the findings may not directly apply to other settings. However, she argues that the insights gained from this research can inform broader discussions about multilingual education and the role of translanguaging in promoting linguistic equity.

Critical Analysis

One of the primary strengths of Mendoza's work lies in its methodological rigour and the depth of its empirical analysis. By employing linguistic ethnography, Mendoza can capture the complexities of classroom interactions and provide rich, contextually grounded insights into how students navigate their linguistic repertoires. This approach allows her to move beyond monolingual versus multilingual education's simplistic binaries and explore language use's fluid, dynamic nature in multilingual settings. Mendoza's focus on ELF is another notable contribution, as it adds a layer of complexity to the study of translanguaging in classrooms. At the same time, much of the existing literature on translanguaging has focused on bilingual education in contexts where two or more languages are equally valued (e.g., García & Wei, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010), Mendoza's work highlights the challenges and opportunities that arise when English, as a global lingua franca, interacts with local languages in a multilingual classroom. Her analysis demonstrates that ELF can serve as both a bridge and a barrier to communication, depending on how students use and perceive it. However, the book is not without its limitations. One potential weakness is the narrow focus on a single geographical and cultural context. While Mendoza provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of translanguaging practices in Honolulu, the specificities of this context may limit the generalizability of her findings to other multilingual settings. For instance, the linguistic dynamics in a classroom in Europe or Latin America, where different historical, social, and political factors shape language use, might lead to different outcomes. Another limitation is the book's emphasis on the positive aspects of translanguaging and ELF, which sometimes overshadows the challenges and tensions that can arise in multilingual classrooms. While Mendoza acknowledges that linguistic hierarchies and power dynamics can impact students' language practices, these issues could have been explored more deeply. For example, a more critical engagement with the potential for translanguaging to reinforce existing inequalities or create new forms of exclusion would have added to the book's analytical depth. Despite these limitations, Mendoza's work offers valuable insights into the role of translanguaging and ELF in multilingual education. Her careful and thorough analysis provides a strong foundation for future research and contributes to ongoing debates about the best ways to support linguistic diversity in educational settings.

Comparisons

Mendoza's book can be situated within the broader literature on translanguaging, bilingual education, and ELF. Compared to seminal works like García and Li Wei's *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism, and Education* (2014) and García's *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century* (2009), Mendoza's study offers a more localised and ethnographically grounded

analysis. While García and Li Wei focus on the theoretical and pedagogical aspects of translanguaging on a global scale, Mendoza's work provides a detailed case study that highlights the specific challenges and opportunities of translanguaging in a particular sociocultural context. Mendoza's emphasis on ELF also distinguishes her work from other studies in the field. While ELF has been explored in other contexts (e.g., Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011), Mendoza's integration of ELF into her analysis of translanguaging practices in a multilingual classroom is a novel contribution. This approach allows her to examine how global and local linguistic practices intersect in educational settings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic dynamics at play. In addition, Mendoza's work can be compared to research on code-switching and multilingualism in education, such as Creese and Blackledge (2010) and Cook and Wei's *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Multi-Competence* (2016). While these studies also explore the fluid and dynamic nature of language use in multilingual settings, Mendoza's focus on the specific context of Hawaii and her use of linguistic ethnography provides a unique perspective that enriches the existing literature.

Conclusion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how translanguaging can be effectively implemented across diverse educational contexts, particularly in classrooms where linguistic diversity is a defining characteristic. While the study focuses on a specific sociolinguistic environment, its implications extend to multilingual settings globally, including those where English is not the dominant language. Educators and policymakers can utilise these findings to develop translanguaging-informed pedagogies that embrace students' full linguistic repertoires while ensuring structured support for language learning (Prilutskaya, 2021). However, it is also crucial to acknowledge the potential risks of translanguaging in reinforcing existing inequalities or creating new forms of exclusion (Liberali & Swanwick, 2020). As the study reveals, power dynamics within classrooms may privilege specific linguistic backgrounds over others, leading to the unintended marginalisation of students who do not share the dominant translanguaging practices. Future research should explore strategies to mitigate these disparities by fostering equitable classroom interactions that validate all linguistic identities (Landsman & Lewis, 2023). While this study is contextually specific, its findings contribute to broader discussions on translanguaging, and future research could expand on its scope by examining similar dynamics in different educational systems. The minor limitations identified, such as the specificity of the study's context, do not undermine its significance. Instead, they highlight the need for further research to assess how translanguaging practices can be adapted and refined to support equitable learning environments in diverse, multilingual classrooms.

In conclusion, Anna Mendoza's *Translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca in the Plurilingual Classroom* is a significant and timely contribution to multilingual education. The book provides a rich, contextually grounded analysis of translanguaging practices in a diverse educational setting, offering theoretical insights and practical implications for educators and policymakers. Mendoza's work is particularly valuable for its methodological rigour, focus on ELF, and critical engagement with linguistic diversity and equity issues in the classroom. While the book's focus on a specific geographical context may limit its generalizability, the insights from this research are nonetheless relevant to broader discussions about multilingual education. Mendoza's work challenges us to think more critically about the role of translanguaging and ELF in promoting linguistic equity and social justice in educational settings. As such, this book is recommended for scholars, educators, and policymakers interested in exploring the complexities of multilingual practices in education and their implications for pedagogy and social equity.

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