Chapter 7
Translanguaging as a Pedagogy for Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice in a Multilingual Classroom

Leonardo Veliz

Excelsia College, Australia

ABSTRACT

The present study reports on an investigation into the benefits of a translanguaging pedagogy in an ELICOS class as a pedagogical approach to integrate students' complex socio-cultural, multilingual practices and experiences into a classroom learning community. This was explored through semi-structured interviews with five ELICOS students and their teacher over the course of four weeks. Interview questions addressed three specific areas of teaching and learning: (1) teacher perceptions of the pedagogical effectiveness of the translanguaging pedagogy, (2) students' views of the implementation of the translanguaging pedagogy and its benefits for their language development, and (3) students' perceived changes to their self-image as language learners throughout the pedagogical implementation. Findings revealed that the integration of a translanguaging pedagogy created more inclusive and equitable opportunities for students to draw on their hybrid and fluid multilingual experiences and resources to participate more actively in communicative interactions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The massification and internationalization of education along with complex processes of global migration have accelerated student mobility around the world. Bateer and Saeed (2019) point out that "the intercontinental mobility of students has been viewed as one of the indicators of campus diversity and a prime source to boost the revenue of higher education institutions" (p. 933). The agenda of internationalization in education has, according to de Wit (2020), reinforced a paradigm shift from 'cooperation' to 'competition' which has perpetuated the idea of international education as an 'industry', a source of

revenue and a means for enhanced institutional reputation rather than as a place of cultural cohesion where equitable opportunities are available to both domestic and international students.

Equitable access to socio-cultural and linguistic practices is, however, not only unthinkable but also unobtainable for international students. It is commonplace that overseas students are not generally eligible for healthcare benefits, social welfare support, unemployment benefits, government-funded language support, or permanent employment due to visa, and often language, barriers. In this hostile, and yet rather attractive, environment for a 'new life', international students find themselves trapped in a 'work-hard-to-study-more' cycle that often leads to exhaustion and great levels of dissatisfaction with their poor language proficiency which interferes with their capacity to integrate into their host country.

A large number of international students who arrive in Australia on short-term visas, or even tourist visas, enrol in what is called 'English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students' (ELICOS), which, upon successful completion and demonstration of satisfactory competencies, they utilize as channels to progress into Vocational courses, and, in some cases, university degrees. The majority of these students, who predominantly come from Asian and South American countries, possess extremely low levels of language proficiency, who, upon commencing their studies, lack knowledge of not only linguistic forms but also cultural norms to be able to engage in communication. Being an ELICOS teacher, Dhin (2019) shares her experiences as a learning skills advisor who attends to the needs to students who are seeking learning support. She points out that "students sometimes come for consultations without knowing what to ask, how to phrase their questions or how to practise politeness strategies" (Dhin, 2019, p. 59). These instances of failure to engage in a real-life communicative event, which cause a great sense of 'linguistic and cultural disconnect', prevail in the English language classroom.

It is well documented that decades of earnest attempts to implement a 'communicative approach' all around the world have triggered not only some bitter criticism but strong reactions to finding alternative, more effective and inclusive approaches to the teaching and learning English. Didenko and Pichugova (2016) argue that "apart from the weaknesses that destroyed CLT [communicative language teaching] from the inside, there is quite an astounding amount of criticism which is based on the evidence that CLT failed to fulfill its many promises to innovate educational environments in the world" (p. 2). The consequences of this unwanted and rather disillusioning scenario is that however persistently and eagerly language instructors pursue to implement a communicative approach in the classroom, their efforts are most likely to be not only fruitless but also abandoned, and generally taken over by an unintended inclination towards a more traditional approach which favors the teaching of grammar patters over meaningful communication.

This rather disheartening reality is exacerbated by what I wish to call in the present chapter a 'monolingual mindset', which not only legitimizes monolingualism as a social-cultural norm but also perpetuates a long-standing tradition of linguistic and cultural dominance of neoliberal ideologies. In ELICOS classrooms, monolingualism is fostered and sustained through the enforcement of 'English Only' policies, which impose a ban on the use of languages other than English within the premises of the training organization. In my view, not only does this preserve the underlying principles of the ontology of monolingualism, but also, and most importantly, precludes students from participating in an inclusive, equitable and just environment. A monolithic approach to English teaching stands in stark contrast to the purpose of multicultural education, which, according to Dilg (2003), aims to "increase educational equity for all students" (p. viii).

The present chapter discusses the implementation of a translanguaging pedagogy in an ELICOS context offered as an alternative to a traditionally dominant monolingual approach with the specific aim of

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