

## Pedagogical Translanguaging as a Strategy of Overcoming Monolingual Foreign Language Teaching Model in Poland

Translanguaging pedagogiczny jako strategia przezwyciężenia modelu monolingwalnego nauczania języka obcego w Polsce

Dariusz Stępkowski

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University  
in Warsaw, Poland

ORCID 0000-0002-6855-1517

[d.stepkowski@uksw.edu.pl](mailto:d.stepkowski@uksw.edu.pl)

Anna Sarbiewska

University of Warmia and Mazury in  
Olsztyn, Poland

ORCID 0000-0002-9429-8228

[anna.sarbiewska@uwm.edu.pl](mailto:anna.sarbiewska@uwm.edu.pl)

Olga Kacprowska

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University  
in Warsaw, Poland

ORCID 0009-0001-2842-6279

[o.kacprowska@doktorant.uksw.edu.pl](mailto:o.kacprowska@doktorant.uksw.edu.pl)

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**Abstract:** The article explores the potential of pedagogical translanguaging as a theoretical and practical framework for overcoming the monolingual model of foreign language teaching and learning prevailing in the Polish educational system. Drawing on recent developments in translanguaging theory, the study examines how this approach redefines the concept of language competence, emphasizing its dynamic, processual, and integrated nature rather than its traditional lexical-grammatical understanding. The paper also discusses limitations of both monolingual and plurilingual classroom models, proposing instead the concept of a translingual classroom, in which learners consciously construct new linguistic codes through reflective engagement with their native language. Based on this perspective, five theses are formulated that outline the fundamental transformations required in Polish foreign language education. These theses emphasize the irreplaceable role of native language in acquiring additional languages, learner's agency in meaning-making, and the necessity of developing translingual pedagogical practices. The study concludes that pedagogical translanguaging offers a promising path toward reconceptualizing foreign language education in Poland in line with the principles of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR).

**Keywords:** pedagogical translanguaging, trans-sphere, translingual classroom model

**Abstrakt:** Artykuł bada potencjał pedagogicznego translanguingu jako ramy teoretycznej i praktycznej umożliwiającej przezwyciężenie monolingwalnego modelu nauczania języków obcych dominującego w polskim systemie edukacji. Odnosząc się do współczesnych badań nad translanguagingiem, analiza wskazuje, jak podejście to redefiniuje pojęcie kompetencji językowej, traktując ją jako dynamiczną, procesualną i zintegrowaną, w odróżnieniu od tradycyjnego rozumienia ograniczonego do wiedzy leksykalno-gramatycznej. W artykule omówiono również ograniczenia zarówno monolingwalnej, jak i plurilingwalnej klasy, proponując koncepcję klasy translingwalnej, w której uczniowie świadomie konstruują nowe kody językowe poprzez refleksyjne wykorzystanie języka ojczystego. Na tej podstawie sformułowano pięć tez wskazujących fundamentalne zmiany konieczne w polskiej edukacji językowej. Tezy te podkreślają niezastąpioną rolę języka ojczystego w przyswajaniu kolejnych języków, aktywną rolę ucznia w procesie tworzenia znaczeń oraz potrzebę rozwijania translingwalnych praktyk pedagogicznych. Artykuł konkluduje, że pedagogiczny translanguaging może stanowić efektywną drogę do rekonceptualizacji nauczania języków obcych w Polsce, zgodnie z zasadami *Europejskiego Systemu Opisu Kształcenia Językowego* (CEFR).

**Słowa kluczowe:** translanguaging pedagogiczny, sfera trans, model klasy translingwalnej



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## INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging is one of current approaches in language acquisition, broadly discussed by linguists and pedagogues (García & Li 2014; Cenoz & Gorter 2022; Canagarajah 2011; Li 2018; Prilutskaya 2021). Including its pedagogical application, it represents a shift in how language use is conceptualized in education. Unlike monolingual or even bilingual approaches that diminish the importance of the native language in favour of the foreign language, translanguaging views language learning as dynamic, fluid, and integrated. In its pedagogical form, translanguaging refers to instructional strategies that leverage the full linguistic repertoire of learners – encouraging the flexible use of native language to support understanding, communication, and learning foreign language. This approach moves beyond traditional distinctions between native language and foreign language, emphasizing meaning-making and cognitive engagement over strict language separation.

The notion of *pedagogical translanguaging* (Cenoz & Gorter 2022) has emerged against the background of the previous considerations. At its core, this concept seeks to apply the theoretical framework of translanguaging to the domain of foreign language education. In particular, it addresses both evolving approaches to language instruction in formal educational settings and shifting understandings of foreign language acquisition which increasingly emphasize learners' dynamic use of their full linguistic repertoires rather than the isolated mastery of a single target language system. These two aspects are closely interrelated and will be central to the considerations developed in this paper.

While terms *translanguaging* and *pedagogical translanguaging* have begun to appear in the Polish academic and educational discourse, their presence remains limited. Theoretical foundations of translanguaging are discussed in selected publications by authors such as Piotr Romanowski (2018), Teresa Maria Włosowicz (2020), and Hadrian Lankiewicz (2020). The concept has also been adopted in educational research conducted in multilingual or linguistically diverse school environments (Blackledge & Creese 2010; García & Li 2014; Lewis, Jones & Baker 2012). In these studies, the existence of a multilingual setting is often treated as a necessary precondition for the implementation of translanguaging-based pedagogy.

In Poland, however, despite the increasing number of individuals who speak languages other than Polish in public spaces and schools, it remains difficult – if not impossible – to ensure

the presence of genuinely multilingual environments across the educational system. This challenge has also been acknowledged by international scholars exploring pedagogical translanguaging in various countries and regions around the world (Baker 2011; Blackledge & Creese 2010; Canagarajah 2011; García 2009; García & Li 2014; Li 2011).

In this context, the presented study explores the possible application of pedagogical translanguaging theory to foreign language acquisition in the Polish educational system to overcome the monolingual classroom model. The following research questions guide our inquiry: (1) How is foreign language acquisition conceptualized within pedagogical translanguaging frameworks? (2) How does translanguaging overcome the model of monolingual classroom in the foreign language acquisition? and (3) What changes does pedagogical translanguaging prompt in the current way of acquiring a foreign language in the Polish educational system?

This article is structured into four main sections. The first section provides a general overview of the concept of translanguaging and its pedagogical variant, discussing its origins, etymology, and a brief review of related theoretical and empirical studies. The second section addresses the process of language competence acquisition through the lens of pedagogical translanguaging. The third section explores how to overcome the monolingual classroom model with the help of pedagogical translanguaging in two variants: the plurilingual classroom and the translingual classroom. Finally, in the third section, we formulated in five theses the changes that are necessary to be introduced in foreign language acquisition in the Polish educational system from the perspective of pedagogical translanguaging.

## 1. An Overview of the Concept of TRANSLANGUAGING

The concept of *translanguaging* originates from the Welsh term *trawsieithu* and was first introduced by Cen Williams at Bangor University in Wales in 1994. Initially, the term was used to describe pedagogical practices in which learners alternated between languages based on the communicative mode – receptive or productive. A typical example of this would be reading in English and writing in Welsh, or *vice versa* (Baker 2011).

Over time, translanguaging practices extended beyond these initial educational applications. They have been observed in classroom contexts where instruction was delivered

in Welsh while students responded in English, or where learning materials were available in Welsh, but classroom interactions occurred in English. These observations have led researchers to extend the spectrum of the use of translanguaging to multifaceted linguistic behaviors of multilingual individuals and communities. In addition, translanguaging has become a framework for developing pedagogical approaches that reflect the linguistic complexity of classroom interactions (Blackledge & Creese 2010; García 2009; Li 2011). While these scholars offer distinct interpretations of the term, their discussions converge around the themes of bilingualism and multilingualism, particularly within the context of globalization.

Colin Baker (2011, 288), who played a central role in introducing the term into English-language academic discourse, defined translanguaging as a cognitive and experiential process through which individuals create meaning, build understanding, and acquire knowledge using two or more languages. Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) further emphasized that translanguaging entails a dynamic, integrated use of languages to facilitate various cognitive and communicative processes, including thinking, speaking, writing, and learning. Rather than emphasizing grammatical correctness, this approach prioritizes the functional role of language in meaning-making and communication.

Importantly, pedagogical translanguaging goes beyond the simple use of multiple languages in one classroom. The prefix *trans-* denotes a movement across linguistic boundaries that results in the formation of a novel and complex semiotic reality – one that constitutes a distinct phenomenon in its own right. It also implies a transdisciplinary orientation, challenging conventional definitions of language and language learning (Li 2011). The second part of the term – *linguaging* – as described by Mignolo (2000, 226), refers to the act of “thinking and writing between languages”. This shift from the noun *language* to the verb-like *linguaging* underscores the inherently dynamic and emergent nature of human linguistic activity. Rather than viewing language as a static system or finite resource, this perspective sees it as a form of social action – something we *do* rather than something we *possess*, underscoring that language is a practice, not a possession. In this view, language is not isolated from its context but is constantly shaped by and embedded in specific social, cultural, historical, and political realities (Blommaert 2010; Pennycook 2010).

As previous explanations have indicated, the concept of translanguaging developed in countries where foreign language acquisition corresponded to the requirements of the bilingual classroom model. This assumption could be regarded as a limitation. It seems evident that the potential of pedagogical translanguaging also extends to contexts in which the foreign language learner operates within a monolingual environment, with formal schooling providing the sole source of contact with the foreign language.

It is therefore unsurprising that discussions of pedagogical translanguaging have increasingly addressed three issues typical of foreign language acquisition in monolingual settings: (1) the relationship between the native language and the foreign language, (2) the interplay between teaching and learning within institutional education, and (3) the content of instruction. These issues are explicitly discussed by Piotr Romanowski (2018), who also presents findings from his own empirical research showing that learners' flexible use of both languages in classroom interaction supports comprehension and communicative competence, underscoring the pedagogical potential of translanguaging beyond bilingual education.

Pedagogical translanguaging transforms teacher-learner relations: the teacher supports learner-led linguistic development rather than transmitting knowledge. Based on Romanowski's analysis (2018), pedagogical translanguaging introduces modes of pedagogical practice that differ significantly from those found in traditional models of language acquisition. In this approach, the teacher does not occupy a dominant role but instead fosters the development of learner-led linguistic practices and competencies. As a pedagogical strategy, translanguaging aims to promote deeper and more comprehensive understanding of subject matter, support critical thinking, and enhance linguistic flexibility.

As for the content of instruction, Romanowski (2018) does not refer to conventional English language lessons, but rather to the teaching of non-language subjects – such as geography or physics – through a foreign language. This scenario aligns with educational settings characterized by bilingualism, which are distinct from the monolingual conditions that constitute the focus of this article. Here, we are concerned specifically with language learning in monolingual contexts, where the learners' exposure to the foreign language is largely limited to formal classroom instruction, and where the dominant societal language – usually the learners' native tongue – remains the sole medium of communication in most educational and

everyday settings. This creates a unique set of pedagogical challenges and requires alternative approaches, such as pedagogical translanguaging, to support the development of communicative competence in the absence of immersive linguistic environments (Canagarajah 2011; Cook 2008).

## 2. LANGUAGE COMPETENCE ACQUISITION IN THE PRISM OF TRANSLANGUAGING

In this section, we address the question: How is the acquisition of foreign language competence conceptualized within pedagogical translanguaging? At the outset, we acknowledge that our analyses refer to the concept of language competence as it functions within the Polish educational system. According to the *National Core Curriculum* (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 lutego 2017 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły podstawowej, Dz. U. 2017, poz. 356, as amended; Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 30 stycznia 2018 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla liceum ogólnokształcącego, technikum oraz branżowej szkoły I stopnia, Dz. U. 2018, poz. 467, as amended) language competence is defined as the sum of three sub-competences: lexical, grammatical, and communicative, and involves the use of linguistic knowledge (lexical and grammatical) in communicative situations. In the process of acquisition, the native language is considered an inhibitor and is therefore deliberately excluded from foreign language lessons (Cummins 1992; García 2009). García (2009) compared this to “boxes” representing separate linguistic codes, where learners switch between languages as isolated systems.

In contrast to the traditional view, in which each language is associated with a separate set of linguistic competences, the concept of pedagogical translanguaging assumes a single, integrated linguistic competence that encompasses the learner’s entire linguistic repertoire. Ofelia García presents it as a transition from a native language to a foreign language (García & Li 2014). In pedagogical translanguaging, the acquisition of a foreign language does not focus on reaching the “other shore”, but rather on the process of acquiring it. Contrary to the common understanding of the process as a set of activities aimed at a specific goal, from which they derive their meaning, translanguaging views the process as “being on the move” (processing) (Cenoz & Gorter 2022). In the context of school foreign language acquisition, this means that

language competence is not limited to the final product of teaching and learning but is understood as ongoing production. This production is neither a one-time event nor unconscious (magic secret). The learner is the agent of this process, supported by the teacher (Blackledge & Creese 2010; Li 2011). The learner becomes an active agent, supported by the teacher in the *trans-space*, where meaning emerges dynamically (Canagarajah 2011).

As presented above, language competence in pedagogical translanguaging is unrelated to full mastery of the foreign language but concerns the use of already possessed linguistic knowledge in communicative situations. It should be noted that without activities aimed at raising awareness of this knowledge and eliciting it by the learners themselves, foreign language acquisition is impossible (Lewis, Jones & Baker 2012, 666). This indicates that language competence, as an entry into the space between ignorance and knowledge, presupposes lingual-educational competence on the part of both the teacher and the learner (Rittel 1993; 1994).

Thus, the language competence implied in pedagogical translanguaging differs from the language competence underlying foreign language education in Poland. This competence is a property of every human being by virtue of being a linguistic entity and possessing a native language (Mignolo 2000, 110). It constitutes a whole in which the acquisition of a foreign (second and subsequent) language takes place processually (processing). This acquisition proceeds with conscious awareness and involves producing a new linguistic code based on the already possessed natural code of the native language.

As the above considerations indicate, in pedagogical translanguaging one cannot speak of acquiring language competence in the sense that the learner initially lacks language competence but gains it after completing school-based foreign language learning. As we have shown previously, acquisition involves conscious and creative transformation of linguistic resources in contact with an unknown language (Cenoz & Gorter 2022; García & Li 2014). While not all translanguaging practices are fully conscious, pedagogical translanguaging aims to raise learners' awareness of their linguistic choices and to foster deliberate reflection on how their existing linguistic knowledge can support the acquisition of a new language.



### 3. HOW TO OVERCOME MONOLINGUAL CLASSROOM MODEL

In this section, we consider the possibility of overcoming the monolingual concept of foreign language acquisition, which (still) remains the dominant practice in the Polish educational system and the dominant idea of educational legal norms concerning teaching and learning of a foreign language in Poland. The point of reference of our considerations are the indications included in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020), which provides a comprehensive framework for language policy and assessment across Europe. Although the EU member countries have full autonomy in terms of education policy, the aforementioned document provides criteria for assessing the quality of this policy in relation to school language education. Before discussing the basic trend that emerges from comparison of the three versions of the CEFR that have been published so far (2001, 2018 and 2020), we will explain what we believe the monolingual classroom model consists of as a practical application of the previously mentioned monolingual concept of foreign language school acquisition.

A fairly widespread belief is that a monolingual classroom gathers foreign language learners who come from the same culture and speak the same native language. From the perspective of pedagogical translanguaging, this belief must be considered oversimplified and completely wrong. In our opinion, teaching and learning a foreign language in a monolingual classroom model is characterised by a situation in which – figuratively speaking – crossing the threshold of the classroom means automatically entering the sphere of foreign language influence. We distinguished three consequences of such an “entry” as quite senseless. The first involves possible complete abandonment of the use of native language during lessons which supposedly facilitates learners’ acquisition of the foreign language. The second consequence relates to the way the teacher works. The teacher’s job is to provide learners with as much philological knowledge of the foreign language as possible. It is tacitly assumed that this knowledge is indispensable in linguistic competence (lexical and grammatical) formation, which will later develop into communicative competence. As we pointed out in the previous section, communicative competence is understood as the use of linguistic competence in more or less fictional communicative classroom situations. Finally, the third consequence concerns



the learners' role in foreign language acquisition. The teacher tries to involve them in the course of the lesson and in the acquisition of language content with the use of a variety of teaching methods, including activity-based methods. It is believed that the attractiveness and novelty of these methods determine the effectiveness of a teacher's educational work.

We consider learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds largely marginal in the monolingual classroom. They may come from the same or different cultures and speak the same or different languages. What truly characterises the monolingual classroom is the central role of the native language in teaching and learning. In pedagogical translanguaging, the native language serves as the irreducible foundation for producing a code specific to the foreign language.

In our view, the CEFR (2001; 2018 and 2020) indications can be seen as a proposal to overcome the monolingual classroom model. The latest version states that "plurilingual competence refers to the ability to call flexibly upon an inter-related, uneven, plurilingual repertoire to make sense of and shape a complex and dynamic world" (Council of Europe 2020, 28). The aim is to broaden perspectives on foreign language acquisition and consider learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Hadrian Lankiewicz (2020) further explains what plurilingual competence entails and how to foster it in the classroom.

Lankiewicz (2020) sees plurilingual competence as the outcome of plurilingualism and a way to overcome the monolingual classroom model. In a plurilingual classroom, learners from different cultures and languages interact, creating a space that fosters communication and plurilingual competence. Lankiewicz argues that such interaction constitutes foreign language learning, even though it involves simultaneous communication in multiple languages, which he considers the greatest benefit of this model.

The unspoken premise of the plurilingual classroom, where students communicate freely and seemingly acquire plurilingual competence, is immersive language acquisition (Genesee 1987; Swain & Lapkin 2005; Lyster 2019; Lightbown & Spada 2013; Baker 2011). Immersion assumes that direct contact with a foreign language leads to learning, but from a translanguaging perspective, where learners actively produce the new language code, this assumption is rejected. The plurilingual classroom thus resembles a monolingual model, differing only in learners'

cultural and linguistic diversity. What both models lack is the *trans-space*, where learners produce a foreign language code grounded in their native language.

Higher accessibility of a foreign language can support learning but is insufficient. Entering the trans-space initiates the process but does not ensure mastery. Pedagogical work is necessary, with the native language serving as an irreplaceable foundation. Learners transform meanings from their native language and relate them to the new code, so pedagogical translanguaging neither promises effortless learning nor renders the native language redundant.

It is worth noting what Lankiewicz pointed out in the second version of the CEFR: the term *language* (present in the first version) was replaced by term *linguaging*. This maneuver, in his opinion, indicates the indirect presence of the idea of pedagogical translanguaging in the document. Such assumption seems to be unjustified, since in our opinion the concept of a plurilingual classroom, constructed by the author in question, does not meet the basic condition of pedagogical translanguaging, which is the conscious acquisition of a foreign language through the reflexive processing of the native language. To express that, we propose the phrase *translingual classroom*, in which translingual practices will be developed for such processing.

#### 4. TRANSLANGUAGING AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE RECONCEPTUALISATION OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN POLAND

Contemporary foreign language education in the monolingual classroom model, which dominates in most Polish schools, benefits from the immersion-like *only-in-L2* approach, originally promoted within bilingual education. This approach, explicitly recommended in the *National Core Curriculum* (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 lutego 2017 r., Dz. U. 2017, poz. 356; Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 30 stycznia 2018 r., Dz. U. 2018, poz. 467), encourages teachers to conduct classes almost exclusively in the target language, limiting the use of Polish to a minimum. Such practice reflects the persistence of the monolingual teaching paradigm (Romanowski 2018; Włosowicz 2020; Lankiewicz 2020) and stands in contrast to translanguaging-based pedagogies that view the native language as an indispensable learning resource (Butzkamm & Caldwell 2009). In order to really successfully apply the concept of pedagogical translanguaging in Polish education, and therefore to reach the plurilingual competence indicated by the CEFR, it is necessary to act

to, firstly, promote the translingual classroom model and, secondly, develop and promote good translingual practices among foreign language teachers. Both actions require changes in many of the existing philosophies towards foreign language acquisition by both teachers and glottodidactic theorists. Overcoming long-standing beliefs will certainly not be easy or immediate. However, only in this way can an educational practice grounded in the concept of pedagogical translanguaging be developed.

Below, we propose five theses inspired by the concept of pedagogical translanguaging. Their aim is to transform the prevailing understanding of foreign language learning within foreign language education in Poland. They are as follows:

(1) The native language is an irreducible foundation for the acquisition of any subsequent language as a foreign language. Classroom-based foreign language teaching and learning conducted within a monolingual classroom model and using immersion methods hinders – and in some cases even prevents – the meaningful and experiential acquisition of a foreign language.

(2) Learning a foreign language involves the learner's personal effort to construct a new linguistic code based on his or her language competence and knowledge derived from his or her native language. Teaching that transmits ready-made, primarily philological knowledge without actively engaging the learner in the process of discovery and acquisition leaves no lasting imprint in the form of expanded language skills.

(3) The acquisition of a foreign language – and any additional language – occurs through informed and conscious actions undertaken by the learner. A widely held belief in foreign language learning is that knowledge and skills are acquired automatically. This, we believe, reflects a kind of magical thinking- a persistent belief, still rooted in monolingual teaching traditions, that language learning occurs naturally through exposure alone, without metalinguistic awareness or deliberate pedagogical guidance (Lightbown & Spada 2013; Ellis 1997) .

(4) Foreign language lessons should be shaped around problematizing content in response to the questions that learners “bring with them” into the classroom. Leaving the problematization of content solely to the top-down structure of the curriculum or textbook suppresses learners' personal responsibility for their own learning and limits their participation in the classroom process.

(5) Teaching a foreign language within a translingual classroom model compels the teacher to develop new translingual practices, in which students learn the language through communicative experiences – both their own and those orchestrated within the classroom. In contrast, traditional instruction within a monolingual classroom model treats communication as a separate competence and as a linear outcome of accumulated (philological) linguistic knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

It is self-evident that teaching and learning within the Polish educational system cannot remain unaffected by the changes brought about by globalization—including the growing proportion of students who come from different cultural backgrounds and speak native languages other than Polish. This observation also applies to English foreign language lessons. For this reason alone, the prevailing monolingual classroom model requires critical reconsideration. An additional impetus for such reflection comes from pedagogical translanguaging – an innovative concept that calls for a fundamental rethinking of how foreign language learning is approached in school contexts.

In this paper, we presented the core ideas of pedagogical translanguaging and considered their potential for transforming the monolingual classroom model into a translingual one. We argue that pedagogical translanguaging challenges widely held assumptions about the teaching and learning of second languages. These assumptions, in our view, should inspire teachers to seek out educational approaches that build upon the potential of processes unfolding within the translingual domain.

We hope that the reflections offered here will contribute to further critical engagement with the innovative potential of pedagogical translanguaging – both glottodidactic theories derived from practical educational experience (Dakowska 2005) and specific pedagogical strategies for implementation in educational practice.

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**Use of AI:** rarely used for translation of specific expressions.

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