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## **Translanguaging and Multilingual Picturebooks: Gloria Anzaldúa's *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado***

**Saskia Kersten and Christian Ludwig**

### **Abstract**

English language teaching (ELT) is overcoming its monolingual character with students increasingly bringing additional languages to the classroom. Closely related to this, there is a growing awareness of the fact that students' experiences with multilingualism are a valuable resource which should also be harnessed in language classrooms. Even if English is the language of instruction, the learners' home languages, other languages and language varieties spoken in the school and personal environments, all influence their learning process and the formation of cultural identities. This paper looks critically at the traditional concept of the monolingual language classroom and explores the potential of multilingual literature which supports the learners' second language development while, at the same time, raising their awareness of multilingualism and developing their plurilingual literacies. The English-Spanish children's book *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado* (1995) by American writer and Chicana cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa serves as an example of how working with multilingual literature can enrich the English learning experience of children from different age groups.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, Chicano/a, multilingualism, multilingual picturebooks

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## Introduction

This article explores the notions of translanguaging and multilingual literature and relates them to contemporary ELT. It makes the argument that multilingual literature, in particular picturebooks, can be used as a resource to foster translanguaging by creating a translanguaging space and teaching multilingual literacy. The implementation of multilingual or, as it is sometimes also referred to, plurilingual, practices, has gained traction in recent years, which manifests itself, among other things, in the fact that the new Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) 2018 Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2018) explicitly includes new, additional scales on plurilingual and pluricultural competence. The difference in terminology is commonly that *multilingual* is used at societal level, describing the many languages used by societal groups, whereas *plurilingual* describes an individual's knowledge of two or more languages at varying degrees of competence (Council of Europe 2001, 2018; see also García & Li, 2014). For a more detailed discussion, see e.g. García & Li (2014, Part I, chapter 1).

Although translanguaging is something that many, if not all, plurilingual speakers regularly engage in at a local level, it will become even more important to be able to engage in these 'fluid practices' in a globalized world and the resulting virtual spaces learners are likely to inhabit. This will enable speakers to participate in communication in an even wider, more diverse context (García & Li, 2014, pp. 25-26).

The first part of this paper outlines the academic debate on translanguaging in relation to plurilingualism and argues that languages should not be regarded as separate entities but rather as a continuum of linguistic skills of meaning-making at a learner's disposal. Fostering these skills should consequently be at the heart of language teaching, allowing learners to experiment with and use all 'meaning-making resources' (García & Li, 2014, p. 80) they possess and also further the development of new strategies inherently useful in our globalized, multilingual and multicultural world. Following the 'multilingual turn' (May, 2013), 'multilingual challenge' (Kramsch, 2012) or even 'post-Multilingualism challenges' (Li, 2017) in language pedagogy, any language teaching should be understood not only to impart knowledge of one standard linguistic system, but also to encompass the teaching and learning of multilingual and multicultural competencies and translanguaging (García & Li, 2014; García & Kleyn, 2016). Moreover, Otheguy, García & Reid (2015)

argue that a standard linguistic system, which they refer to as a 'named national language', is itself a societal construct, not a linguistic reality. Therefore, the explicit inclusion of multilingual practices, such as texts and media, enables learners to operate and learn in a 'translanguaging space' (Li, 2011; 2017), that is, a space that gives learners the room to utilize all the linguistic resources they possess but hitherto may have only practised separately in other contexts (García & Li, 2014) and to 'go between and beyond socially constructed language and education systems, structures and practices' (Li, 2017, p. 16). Using multilingual literature in ELT is one such way to create translanguaging opportunities for learners.

The second part provides a brief overview of the conflictual history of the United States and Mexico and the life of both Mexican Americans as well as the so-called wetbacks (*mojados*) who cross the border illegally to find a better life. The ensuing section discusses Gloria Anzaldúa's widely acclaimed children's book *Friends from the Other Side – Amigos Del OtroLado* which broaches the issue of living in the US-Mexican borderlands by describing the experiences of the Mexican American girl Prietita when being confronted with the harshness of life of illegal Mexican immigrants. In order to help the boy Joaquín and his mother, Prietita has to stand out against the male systems of power and discrimination in her community and make decisions about her own life. The article concludes by suggesting some implications for classroom practice.

### **Translanguaging — Concepts and Definitions**

The term *translanguaging* itself was first coined by Cen Williams in the 1990s, who had learners in Wales recast 'their understandings received in one language in the other language', in this case English and Welsh, with the intention of deepening their understanding and allowing them to change the language of the input and the output (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 11), thus leading to a deeper understanding of content as well as the development of the languages involved (Li & García, 2017). Translanguaging takes the internal perspective on bilinguals' language practices, which are part of the same interconnected system (Vogel & García, 2017). This view has evolved over time; where García (2009) used *translanguaging* as an umbrella term that includes code-switching, later sources argue that the two concepts are 'epistemologically at odds' (Vogel & García, 2017,

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see also Otheguy et al., 2015), as the term *code-switching* can be seen as preserving dichotomous language categories by taking ‘as its starting point separate grammars for each of the languages’ (Cenoz 2017a, p. 193; for a more detailed discussion, see e.g. García & Li, 2014). The term also denotes the perceived mixing of two named languages and therefore does not adequately reflect the dynamic and creative practices plurilingual speakers engage in and the underlying ‘complex linguistic realities’ (Li, 2017, p. 6) and may lead to fluid practices being viewed as a ‘contaminated’ or ‘corrupted’ version of a named language and therefore derided by society (terms such as *Spanglish* or *Chinglish*).

Canagarajah (2011, p. 401) defined *translanguaging* as ‘the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system’. García & Li (2014) and Li (2017), however, argue that translanguaging goes beyond the mere ‘shuttling’ between languages and allows other voices to come to the front, thus challenging and transforming classroom practices, in particular the assumption that only the target language should be used.

Vogel & García (2017) acknowledge that a bilingual’s language repertoire ‘includes features from what society would view as more than one named language’. This is not a contradiction, because successful communication also means being able to gauge which linguistic resources are the most useful in facilitating successful communication, including appropriate register, style etc. Translanguaging, taking the perspective of the individual, focuses on their idiolect and the way they make use of it in a given communicative context; it is therefore ‘the view from inside the speaker’ (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 297). The other perspective, that of the speaker as a member of a set group, uses external categories to determine to what extent the idiolect of a given speaker overlaps with that of other speakers, thus enabling ‘the establishment of externally named boundaries’ (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 297), for example by assigning the label *English* as opposed to *Spanish*, etc.

The notion of an integrated linguistic repertoire, rather than two (or more) separate linguistic systems corresponding to different languages, is at the heart of translanguaging, as translanguaging as a concept emerged in the context of research into plurilingualism and the ‘multilingual turn’ (May, 2013). It rejects the idea that plurilingual speakers possess two or more separate language systems. Rather, ‘bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire’ (Vogel

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& García, 2017, unpaginated). García & Li (2014) argue that bilinguals are necessarily different from monolinguals, because their lives and experiences are deeply rooted in diverse linguistic practices, which leads to a multi-competence in plurilingual speakers that both needs to be acknowledged and should also be actively encouraged in all language learning contexts.

In order to utilize all the competencies and strategies they have at their disposal, learners need a 'translanguaging space' (Li, 2011; 2017) in which they can integrate all the practices they may have hitherto compartmentalized. A translanguaging space is also a social space, a space in which 'learners bring together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment; their attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies; their cognitive and physical capacity, into one coordinated and meaningful performance' (Li, 2017, p. 15). It is also a space that unleashes creativity and criticality and has thus transformative power, as new identities may be shaped (see the discussion of using a language portrayal below).

These notions directly link to what the author of the picturebook expresses with regard to her own language practices: 'neither español ni inglés, but both' (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77) and her own identity: 'neither eagle nor serpent, but both. And like the ocean, neither animal respects borders' (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 84). García and Li (2014, p. 43) explicitly refer to Anzaldúa's work when discussing the political dimension of translanguaging:

Translanguaging provides this space *sin fronteras* – linguistic ones, nationalist ones, cultural ones. Translanguaging for us refers to languaging actions that enact a political process of social and subjectivity transformation which resists the asymmetries of power that language and other meaning-making codes, associated with one or another nationalist ideology, produce.

This political dimension not only 'privileges bilingual performances and not just monolingual ones', which is a departure from traditional instructional settings where the latter have been traditionally privileged, but also 'challenges prevailing theories [...] in order to disrupt the hierarchies that have delegitimized the language practices of those who are minoritized' (Vogel & García, 2017, unpaginated).

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### **Translanguaging and Language Pedagogy**

One of the main reasons put forward in why translanguaging is a useful concept in the context of fostering multilingualism is that

[w]hen looking deeply at the students in almost any given classroom, one cannot accurately describe any such learning environment as monolingual or monodialectal. Instead, teachers can uncover the multilingualism of their classrooms to make visible the range of language practices that students have. When these multilingual practices are being made to be a natural part of their learning environment, they enrich the children's education (Kleyn, 2016, p. 203).

It also allows for deeper engagement and encourages learners to make full use of their linguistic repertoire when comprehending complex content (Vogel & García, 2017).

However, this enrichment of education that appears to be intuitively desirable is not yet the norm. Cummins (2005, p. 588) states that, in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) or immersion/bilingual classes in the US and Canada, the 'monolingual instructional assumptions predominate', even though these have 'minimal research basis'. These practices include using the target language only, discouraging students from translating between L1 and L2 and from using bilingual dictionaries, which are all based on the view that the two languages 'constitute two solitudes' (Cummins, 2005, p. 588) that potentially hinder the learning of the other or are even seen as in danger of contaminating or competing with each other. In a similar vein, García (2009, p. 141) calls this a 'hegemony' in which language hierarchies are established and 'monolingualism is routinely accepted as the norm, and bilingualism is accepted only as double monolingualism', instead of 'capitalizing on the children's bilingual practices'.

### **Translanguaging in German ELT**

In the German EFL context, for example, which is also the context for the implications for the classroom discussed below, this view appears to be still prevalent and there seems to be an underlying fear that if German or another home language of the students is used in the

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EFL classroom, this would not only detract from the limited time the learners are exposed to English, but also may let those teachers, who are in most cases ‘non-native speakers’ of English themselves, ‘off the hook’ so that they can all too gladly revert to teaching English ‘in German’, as it were, even if the inclusion of the mother tongue (or any other language) may make learning the second language more effective (Butzkamm, 2003).

This ‘common assumption that only the ‘target’ language was to be used in language education programs, and of strict language separation, has become increasingly questioned as globalization has encouraged movement of people and information, shifting our conceptions of language use’ (García & Li, 2014, p. 59). In the present article, we argue that the translanguaging practices, as outlined here, do not open the door to reverting to, for example, ‘teaching English in German’ at all. The main reason being that instead of simply resorting to the named language generally used in school (for instance German), teachers make use of the multilingual resources available in the classroom and beyond, including the whole of the learners’ linguistic repertoire, which may or may not include the named national language. This will, however, demand more flexibility from the teacher as well as the ability to open up the language classroom to new ideas and practices. These may, at least in the beginning, be more challenging for the teachers and require a willingness to question long-standing ideologies, such as ‘target language only’, that prevail not only in teacher education, but also in the minds of language learners and, depending on the context, their parents or guardians.

Adopting and incorporating translanguaging in the classroom does not mean that the teacher has to know all the languages present in their multilingual classroom nor does it require a bilingual programme (García & Seltzer, 2016). What it does require is ‘trust that bilingual students’ existing linguistic repertoire is not a threat to learning the new language but must be leveraged to appropriate and integrate new features into an expanded repertoire’ (García & Seltzer, 2016, p. 24). This integration of new language practices, that is, adding to existing meaning-making resources (García & Li, 2014), enables the users to transcend boundaries and labels, thus going beyond languaging: they *translanguage*:

[L]anguage practices cannot be developed except through the students’ existing knowledge. Thus, translanguaging enables emergent bilinguals to enter into a

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text that is encoded through language practices with which they are not quite familiar' and also 'enables students' to truly show what they know (García & Li, 2014, p. 80).

But, as Cenoz (2017b, p. 9) states,

multilingual speakers are not always aware of the resources they have and may not use them to their full extent if they are not activated. Multilingual speakers use their resources when they translanguage spontaneously but pedagogical translanguaging has great potential because it can provide deeper understanding of the content and can also be useful as scaffolding across languages.

### **Multilingual Education and Multilingual Literature**

Current discussions involving the use of more than one language give the impression that '[...] multilingualism and multiculturalism [...] were recent discoveries instead of what they really are: a condition of life as old as the human species.' (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 190). Moreover, the term *language* itself constitutes a difficulty as many definitions of multilingualism look at the term from a broader perspective, including not only officially recognized languages but also dialects or codes, as the following definition of multilingualism by the European Commission (2007, p. 6) elucidates: 'In this context, a language is defined neutrally as a variant which a group ascribes to itself for use as its habitual code of communication. This includes regional languages, dialects, and sign languages.' This definition is in line with the view of the plurilingual speaker's repertoire as consisting of one unified system and the view that the boundaries between (named) languages are socially and politically defined (Otheguy et al., 2015), as discussed above.

Similar to multilingualism, multilingual literature is not a new phenomenon, it already existed in the late nineteenth century and has come to gain increasing scholarly attention. When it comes to using multilingual texts in ELT, they prove to be particularly useful as most multilingual writers also have a multilingual/multicultural background, turning them into 'living voices' (Wood, 2006; cf. Elsner, 2012, p. 411) of the multilingual world with its 'hyphenated identities' (Elsner, 2012, p. 412) we live in. These multilingual and multicultural texts constitute 'literary multilingualism' and entail 'a cross-cultural or

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experimental effect' (Knauth, 2009, p. 41) and are 'by and about diverse populations and includes diverse perspectives' (Gopalakrishnan, 2011, p. 29). In short, they are a manifestation of multilingual practices and thus serve as vehicles to bring translanguaging into the classroom. These texts not only represent the multilingual world outside the classroom, but also (intentionally) disrupt the oft-monolingual learning environment, creating opportunities for new perspectives and discussions on language and languaging.

These multilingual texts can also be used to aid learners' comprehension of 'complex words, sentences, and concepts' (Kleyn, 2016, p. 206). Using parallel texts in particular, as in the example discussed below, allows learners to directly compare and contrast two or more (named) languages. In doing this, learners not only expand their competence in either language if they speak both languages, but also gain background knowledge that in turn helps them to 'make meaning of the content being taught' (García & Li, 2014, p. 121). Furthermore, activities involving multilingual literature allow for the possibility of cross-linguistic transfer and raise metalinguistic awareness (García & Li, 2014).

In the following section, we discuss one such multilingual text in more detail and suggest classroom activities that open up ELT to translanguaging opportunities. These in turn help create translanguaging space for learners to reflect on language ideologies and societal perceptions of speakers of certain named languages and provide opportunities to discuss the link between language and identity within the text and beyond. For a discussion of other English-Spanish picturebooks, see Daly (2018) and Rossato de Almeida (2018).

### **Gloria Anzaldúa and the Chicano/a Experience**

The United States and Mexico share a long history of tensions and still today their relationship is often characterized by antagonism and unilateralism. Since its independence from Spanish rule after the Mexican War of Independence from 1810 to 1821, Mexico's autonomy was threatened principally by the United States. For example, since the 1830s, Mexico had to fight a growing number of insurrectionist American settlers in Tejas, leading to Mexico's second armed conflict in a short time: the Mexican War (1846-1848), a brief but intense conflict between the United States and the Mexican Republic. The conflict resulted in the peace treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, still today a crucial event in Mexico's collective memory, as it gave the triumphant United States approximately 50 per cent of

Mexican territory, including today's states of Texas, Colorado, Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico. Since then, Mexico's national identity as well as the identity of the many 'illegal' immigrants living in the United States have been defined by the idea of, as Cisneros (2014) posits, borders having crossed the Latino community rather than the other way around. This commonly held belief is, for example, expressed through the slogan of the immigrant rights movement: 'We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us!' (Jackson, 2009, p. 6). In other words, many Mexicans did not come to the United States by choice, but simply found themselves in alien territory as a result of America's expansionist policy. Among other things, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed the property and civil rights of Mexicans who chose to remain in the United States as US citizens. Above all, the US government's disregard of these provisions has remained central to the understanding of the Mexican experience. Since then, both the geographic and civic borders have played an important role in the way Mexican Americans and Chicanos are viewed and how they view their relationship with the United States.

In stark contrast to what had been promised to Mexicans who overnight took American citizenship, former Mexicans were confronted with inequality, de facto segregation, and the denial of their linguistic and cultural heritage in most areas of public life, including education, housing and the workplace. Especially since the Second World War, however, many Mexicans went through a process of Americanization or assimilation, which '[...] was not seen as repressive but rather as a means for gaining status in society' (Jackson, 2009, p. 10). Although the Mexican-American civil rights movement (*El Movimiento*) has raised the political and public awareness of the situation of Mexican Americans and resulted in substantial improvements in many areas of life, discrimination based on race, police brutality, and the lack of social services are only some of the problems they still face today. In other words, Mexican Americans still struggle to be accepted and recognized as fully participating American citizens in a '[...] bifurcated America, with two languages, Spanish and English, and two cultures, Anglo-Protestant and Hispanic' (Huntington, 2004, p. xvi).

The term *Chicano/a*, which changed its meaning in the course of the 20th century, plays an important role in this struggle for identity and equality (see also Keating, 2000, for an interview with Anzaldúa on this topic). The term is difficult to define, especially as the

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native national group is subdivided into many regional groups, such as Tejanos or Arizonenses, each with their distinct cultural, linguistic, and artistic traditions. While it was mainly used as a derogatory term to insult poor Mexican immigrants living in the United States in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the 1960s and 70s it gave expression to the new cultural and political identity of the Mexican-American community. It was also used by Mexican-American civil rights activists to give expression to a feeling of social change.

Today, there is a strong public art movement, as a way of expressing Chicano identity ('depicting the life in the barrio'), focusing on a broad range of themes and issues such as immigration and the border, feminism, sexuality, religion, and family. These issues, and many others, also play a central role in the rich Chicano literary tradition. Until today, Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1941-2004) has remained one of the most acclaimed lesbian and feminist scholars of Chicana cultural and queer theory. Coming from a traditional Chicano family, Anzaldúa was the first one in her family to have access to higher education. Through her work, she contributed to a wider and mainstream recognition and understanding of women of colour in the United States and the limited notions of gender and sexuality they are trapped in. Although, for reasons of space, it is not possible to discuss all of Anzaldúa's contributions to feminist and Chicana feminist theory, attention might be paid by teachers to Anzaldúa's idea of labelling, equally present within as well as outside the Chicano community:

While I advocate putting Chicana, tejana, working-class, dyke-feminist poet, writer theorist in front of my name, I do so for reasons different than those of the dominant culture [...] so that the Chicana and lesbian and all the other persons in me don't get erased, omitted, or killed (Anzaldúa, 1998, p. 264 as qtd. in Anzaldúa & Keating 2009, p. 164).

Anzaldúa's most influential works include *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) as well as three bilingual English-Spanish children's books. Partly based on Anzaldúa's life, all three stories, *Prietita Has a Friend/Prietitatiene un amigo* (1991), *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del OtroLado*(1995), and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y La Llorona* (1996) revolve around the young Chicana girl Prietita, who lives in the US-Mexican borderlands and her life near the US-Mexican border.

**Anzaldúa's Picturebook: *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado*,  
Illustrated by Consuelo Méndez**

In *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado*, Prietita meets the young Mexican boy Joaquín who, together with his mother, illegally crossed the border to find work. In the course of the story, Prietita and Joaquín become friends and Prietita protects him not only from the daily racism he experiences but also from the Border Patrol.

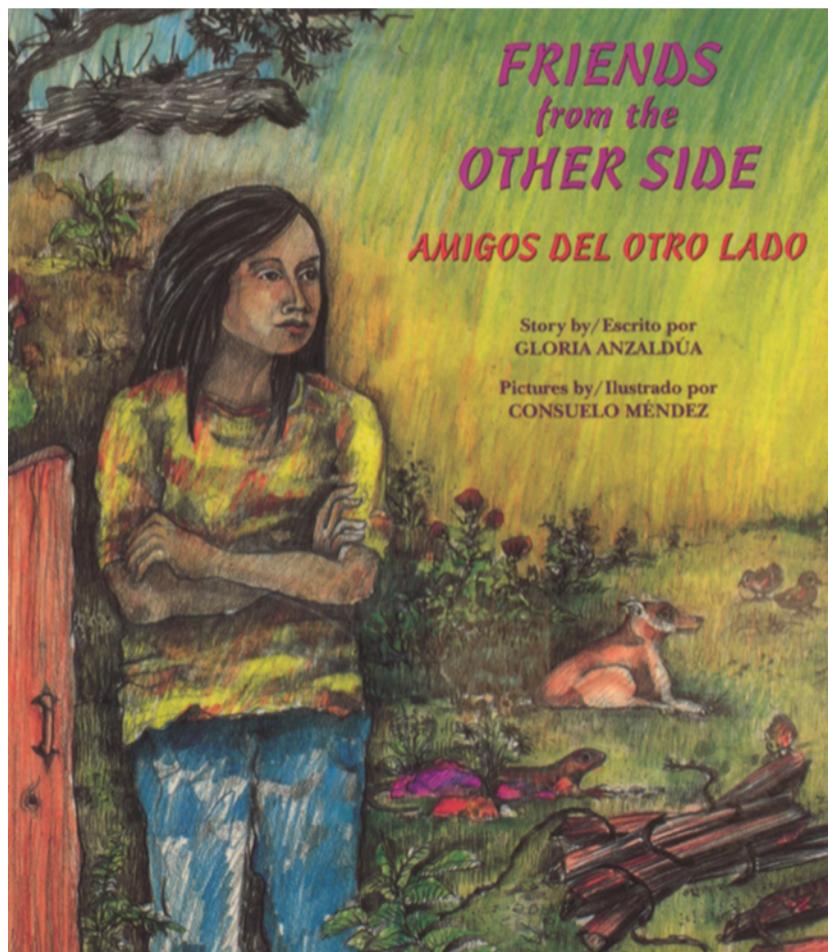


Figure 1: Cover of Anzaldúa's *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado*

The second double page of the picturebook shows the two main protagonists of the story: the American-Mexican girl who lives close to the Rio Grande River, on the US side of the US-Mexican border, and the young, illegal immigrant Joaquín. The social status of the two teenagers is intrinsic to the page. The well-dressed Prietita sits leisurely on a tree in her yard

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while Joaquín carries the firewood he needs to sell to support his mother's small and irregular income. His shabby and ill-fitting clothes, in contrast to Prietita's outfit, immediately catch the viewer's eye: his ripped jeans and shirt have obviously been mended many times and the pink trainers appear to be more suitable for a girl than a boy. The teenagers' social status is also expressed through their position in the image. Prietita, who has her own yard to play in, is positioned high up in the tree, while Joaquín, who stands outside the yard, is below her. The two teenagers' worlds are far apart, which is also visually indicated by the fact that Prietita is positioned on the privileged recto page while Joaquín is literally forced into the lower left corner of the verso, as most of the double page is taken up by Prietita's personal realm. Although the barren tree hints at the sparse vegetation of the border area, the grass on her side is green and interspersed with flowers, the chicken functioning as an additional indicator of a certain amount of wealth. It becomes apparent that the double page functions as a micro-image of the US-Mexican border, the open gate which Joaquín does not dare to transcend, representing the open, yet difficult to cross border between the two nations. The text is written in English and Spanish.

On the next page, Prietita notices the large boils on Joaquín's forearms, setting the rest of the story in motion as she tries to heal his sores. As Joaquín and Prietita's friendship develops, Joaquín even takes Prietita home to his mother, where the young Latina girl learns more about the living conditions of the illegal Mexican immigrants, who have fallen into living conditions just as precarious as the ones they tried to escape from. A whole double page is devoted to Joaquín and his mother's shed, which they have obviously attempted to turn into a home. The poor living conditions of mother and son are almost tangible. The coat hooks on the wall function as wardrobe and a small light bulb brings little light into the dark cabin. The shack abounds with paraphernalia associated with Mexican culture such as iconostases, a corn cob and the image of a traditionally dressed Mexican woman. Moreover, the image of Don Pedrito, a famous healer (*curandero*) from the South Texas Valley Region, highlights one of the main topics of the picturebook: the lack of health care among the illegal immigrants and Prietita's decision to become a healer. Joaquín and his mother are directly juxtaposed with Prietita, the latter once again well-dressed and fed.

Anzaldúa's children's book goes far beyond telling the story of two teenagers who become friends despite their different cultural and social backgrounds, as Anzaldúa touches

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upon many of the issues prevalent in the Chicano community. Prietita does not represent the traditional Chicana, but is portrayed as a strong-minded and independent girl who constantly challenges the stereotypes of her community. She supports Joaquín and defends him against the bullying of the other Mexican-American children in the village and even hides him and his mother when the widely feared border police, *la migra*, ransacks the village. As Millán (2015, p. 208) points out: ‘In this manner Anzaldúa inserts her alter ego, manifested in the form of Prietita, as a witness to injustices by framing the protagonist’s benevolence towards Joaquín within the context of contemporary immigration debates and in response to xenophobia’.

Both the physical and the civic borders, discussed earlier in this article, are frequently alluded to in *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado*. The Mexican-American community is divided by their attitude towards the illegal immigrants. While the children bully Joaquín, it is the village’s herb-woman who hides him and his mother from the border police. When the police arrive, one of the women in the village misdirects the policemen: ‘They heard a woman say, “Yes, I saw some over there,” pointing to the gringo side of town – the white side. Everybody laughed, even the Chicano *migra*’. The quote alludes to the composition of the border police forces, consisting of a ‘gringo’ US-American and a Chicano *migra*, who despite the fact that he collaborates with the state, identifies with ‘his’ people.

### **Implications for the Classroom**

Considering the fact that Spanish is one of most spoken and favourite foreign languages in Germany as well as the relevance of politics in a globalizing world, *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado* offers many opportunities for classroom work and creating a translanguaging space which can be read with students from different age groups at primary as well as secondary level (see also Delaney 2012, pp. 425-440). In the following, we discuss some ideas for reading the picturebook in the classroom with teenage learners in the German EFL context as an example and describe some sample activities.

Before reading the picturebook, the learners’ awareness of their own and others’ plurilingual reality can be raised by investigating with them their own language repertoire and biography (see Busch, 2013, pp. 14-26 and Krumm, 2005, pp. 43-54 for a more detailed discussion of the history and current state of language biography research). In order to raise

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the learners' awareness of their own language repertoire – the languages they have come in contact with, have access to or which play a role in their lives – Busch (2013) suggests asking learners to draw a language portrayal (see Figure 2 for an example). In contrast to activities where learners report orally on their language repertoires, language portrayals have several advantages. The act of drawing gives learners additional time to reflect on their languages and offers them the opportunity to look at themselves and their language experiences from the outside. Furthermore, the visual mode offers different forms of representation, including forms, colours, and written captions, which ideally lead to a more nuanced representation and provide insights into the learners' emotional attachment to certain languages and varieties, sometimes '[...] not standardised or officially recognised as languages in education' (Busch, 2006, p. 10). Last not least, the images so generated can serve as a presentation aid (Busch, 2013, pp. 36-37). The language portrayal depicted in Figure 2 may serve as an example: the student teacher who drew this portrayal was born in Germany but has Turkish roots. The portrayal shows the languages he speaks, allocating them to different parts of the body. He refers to himself as a plurilingual person, who not only speaks different languages but also dialects, sociolects, and ethnolects. For example, he refers to 'Mannheimerisch', a dialect spoken in his hometown Mannheim. The languages the student refers to are supported by colours as well as images of different flags. The shape of the heart, with the symbols from the Turkish flag inside, stands out in the drawing, described with the words *yearning*, *emotions*, and *warmth*. This most likely expresses his Turkish cultural identity.

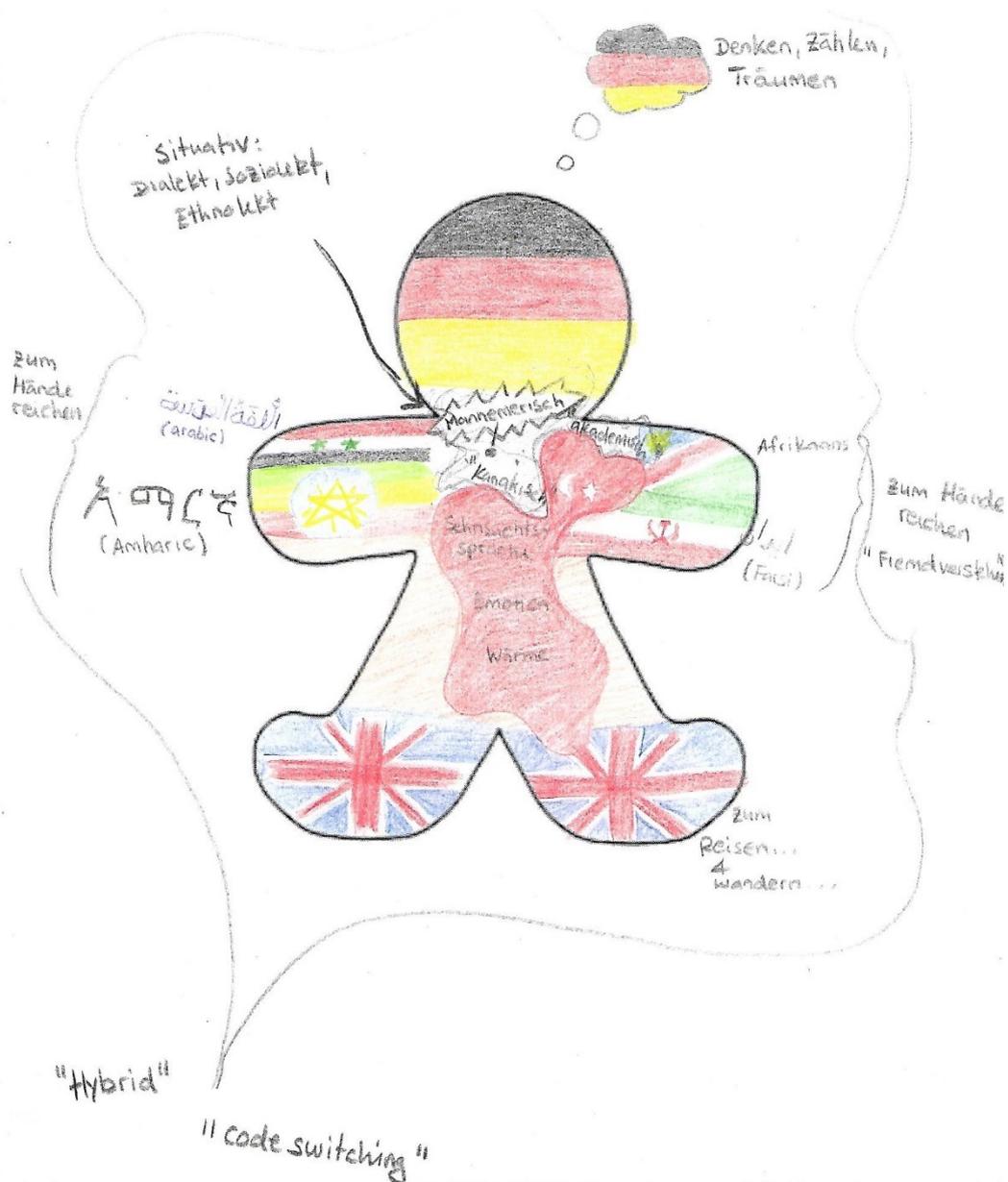


Figure 2: A language portrayal produced in a class on multilingualism at the University of Education, Karlsruhe, in 2018

In the picturebook itself, the whole story is told in English and Chicano Spanish, thus bringing the multilingual world into the classroom. The two named languages are always presented next to each other, either on the same page or on facing pages, making it possible to look at both languages simultaneously. Moreover, the English text is interspersed with Spanish words such as *mojado*, *gringo*, or *macho*, some of which may be considered offensive as the bullying scene illustrates. A scene shows how Joaquín is bullied by some of

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the other children in the village, one of them being Prietita's cousin Teté. Teté, the group leader, yells at Joaquín and calls him *mojadito/mojado*, hinting at his illegal status and establishing their superiority over the illegal immigrant. Prietita is situated on the facing recto page, looking at the scene from afar, while being positioned spatially close to the 'bullies'. Prietita's reaction to her friends' bullying is rather balanced. While she stands up for Joaquín, she refrains from distancing herself from her friends and says: 'She had known Teté [one of the tormentors] and his friends all her life. Sometimes she even liked Teté, but now she was angry at him'.

The following questions can open up classroom discussions of this double-page spread:

- *Describe the double page in as detailed a way as possible. Without looking at the text, how would you describe the relationship between Prietita, Joaquín, and the other children? What does Joaquín's body posture tell you about his feelings?*
- *Have you ever been in a similar situation? Have you ever been bullied, or bullied someone, or observed how someone was bullied? What did you do?*
- *Imagine you were in Prietita's position. How would you react to the bullying?*
- *Read the text in English and/or Spanish. Why is the word 'mojadito/mojado' (a little wet) an insult? Can you think of similar words in German or other languages you know?*

Close reading and explicit comparison of a (smallish) passage of text in the way described above can then be used to encourage learners to reflect on why there are Spanish words interspersed in the English text and what effect this creates. This could be followed up by collecting examples from the learners' own language practices outside the classroom, for example situations where they translanguage in everyday life. Moreover, learners can collect and discuss their own parallel texts, for example fare penalty notices in buses, again comparing and contrasting the different named language used and trying to guess which one might be the original that the other translations are based on, and then compare these with similar notices from a country where the languages used are the named national languages. The difference between these texts could then be followed by a discussion of cultural

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differences and whether direct translation equivalents exist (see Delanoy 2012, pp. 425-439 for a detailed description of a multilingual translation based on Anzaldúa's *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos Del Otro Lado*). Finally, learners should be encouraged to produce their own multilingual texts in groups, with one group member noting the challenges and discussions around word choice, subtle meaning differences, etc.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of multilingual picturebooks to open up translanguaging space in ELT. We argue that translanguaging and the inclusion of multilingual literature are not only relevant in English as an additional or second language learning contexts, but also in EFL classrooms because they create the space and the opportunity for learners to reflect on their own (trans)language practices inside and outside the classroom. This contributes to raising the learners' metalinguistic awareness and equipping them with communicative and meaning-making strategies that become increasingly useful in the multilingual world we now all inhabit. Multilingual picturebooks, as this article has shown, offer many opportunities for the EFL classroom to approach the issues of multilingualism and translanguaging from a practical perspective.

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