

# **Multimodal Conversation Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

A Methodological Framework for  
Researching Translanguaging in  
Multilingual Classrooms

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# Contents

	<i>List of Illustration</i>	vi
	<i>List of Classroom Extracts</i>	vii
	<i>About the Author</i>	viii
1	Introduction	1
2	Methodological Approaches in Researching Translanguaging in Multilingual Classroom Settings	7
3	Multimodal Conversation Analysis for Investigating the Process of Classroom Translanguaging	33
4	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for Investigating the Causes of Classroom Translanguaging	52
5	Triangulating Multimodal Conversation Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for Researching Classroom Translanguaging: Examples from Secondary English Medium Instruction Classrooms in Hong Kong	65
6	Conclusion	106
	Appendix: Multimodal Conversation Analysis Transcription Conventions	112
	<i>Index</i>	114

# Illustration

## Figures

1.1	Continuum of different multilingual education programmes (adapted from Thompson and McKinley, 2018)	4
3.1	Lin and Wu, 2015: 304–305	43
3.2	Jakonen et al., 2018: 38	45
5.1	Combining Multimodal Conversation Analysis (MCA) with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	70
5.2	Pedagogical Model for Creating Translanguaging Sub-Spaces	101

## Tables

4.1	A set of relationships which can be employed to interpret the data (adapted from Smith et al., 2013: 28)	56
4.2	Stages that are involved in the IPA analysis	58
5.1	Video-stimulated-recall interview	82
5.2	Video-stimulated-recall interview	95

# Classroom Extracts

## Extracts 1

Part 1	76
Part 2	77
Part 3	78
Part 4	78
Part 5	79

## Extracts 2

Part 1	87
Part 2	88
Part 3	89
Part 4	90
Part 5	91
Part 6	92

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Translanguaging refers to the process which speakers draw on their full linguistic and semiotic resources to make meaning (Li, 2018; Ho and Li, 2019; Lin, 2019). It differs from code-switching by decentering the focus from the code to the speakers who are constructing complex destructive practices. Translanguaging aims to transcend the boundaries between different named languages and also between different modalities (e.g., speech, sign, gesture). Since translanguaging practices are complex in nature, it is necessary to have a flexible methodological framework that can integrate multiple theoretical orientations, methodologies, and data sources to understand the complexities of translanguaging practices (Li, 2018).

This book is the first book in the field of applied linguistics which presents in detail the methodological framework, namely combining Multimodal Conversation Analysis (MCA) with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), to interpretively analyse the translanguaging practices in educational contexts (Tai and Li, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2023; Tai, 2022, 2023a, 2023b; Tai and Wong, 2022). MCA offers a detailed analysis of classroom interaction which allows researchers to get at the question of ‘how’ from the participants’ perspectives, that is, how teachers draw on multiple linguistic, multimodal, and spatial resources to shape their pedagogical practices and how the students themselves treat these practices. Additionally, using IPA allows researchers to take an emic approach in order to explore how the teachers understand and make sense of their translanguaging practices in the classrooms. Hence, triangulating MCA and IPA affords researchers the ability to study how translanguaging practices are constructed in multilingual classrooms and how the teachers make sense of their own translanguaging practices at particular moments of



*Figure 1.1* Continuum of different multilingual education programmes.  
(adapted from Thompson and McKinley, 2018)

will be assessed on their English proficiency. Alternatively, EMI programmes are placed towards the content-oriented domain since EMI has content learning as the main goal, and English acquisition is secondary. Students are assessed on their content knowledge in English (i.e., L2), rather than their English proficiency.

### 1.3 The Structure of the Book

The book begins with discussing the concept of translanguageing from the perspectives of bi/multilingual pedagogy, languageing, multimodality and multilingualism. Chapter 2 also reviews relevant literature on translanguageing as a pedagogical resource in multilingual classrooms. It then discusses the nature and guiding principles of classroom translanguageing research and invite readers to critically examine the different methodological approaches for analysing translanguageing practices in classroom interactions.

The third and fourth chapters explain why MCA and IPA are considered as useful methodologies for understanding how and why translanguageing practices are constructed by participants in the classroom. The chapters further explain the data collection procedures and the types of data that will be collected, analysing the data. These types of data include classroom video recordings and video-stimulated-recall interviews.

The fifth chapter refers to a doctoral research project that was conducted by me in order to illustrate how MCA and IPA can be triangulated for demonstrating the complexity of classroom participants' translanguageing practices. It also focuses on the methodological issues that researchers will encounter when using MCA and IPA for analysing their research findings. The final chapter explains the methodological implications to research in applied linguistics and future directions for research.

By exploring these issues, this book aims to offer methodological implications to the field of applied linguistics. This book is indispensable for researchers, education policymakers, higher education educators,

as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in the fields of applied linguistics, language education, and teaching English to speakers of other languages.

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## 2 Methodological Approaches in Researching Translanguaging in Multilingual Classroom Settings

### 2.1 Translanguaging: Transforming Boundaries

#### 2.1.1 *Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Practice*

The term ‘translanguaging’ was first coined by Williams (1994) in the context of Welsh bilingual classrooms in reference to the deliberate alternation between languages for receptive or productive purposes, which is reflected in the practice of reading and discussing a topic in one language and then writing about it in another in Welsh revitalisation programmes. Here, the alternation between languages is not spontaneous but rather strategic and deliberate, involving ‘using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and in order to augment the pupil’s ability in both languages’ (Williams, 2002: 40). In other words, it aims to employ the stronger language to help learners to develop the weaker language in order to contribute to the balanced development of the student’s two languages. Whilst translanguaging promotes the flexible use of multiple languages and other meaning-making resources, it seems to go against the basic premise of monolingual education policy, such as English Medium Instruction (EMI). The reality though is that in many if not all EMI classes, the use of languages other than English is actually very common. This is similar in many ways to the situation that Williams (1994) observes in the Welsh-medium classes where the teacher, following the school policy, tries to teach in Welsh only, but most pupils respond in English. Rather than seeing it as a barrier to revitalising Welsh, Williams views translanguaging as a way to realise and maximise the pupils’ learning potential. Williams (1994) in the original conception wants to advocate a translanguaging pedagogy in order to assist learners in scaffolding one language with another. The term ‘scaffolding’ means that the ‘expert’ offers assistance to the novice through supportive dialogue to allow them to undertake tasks that they cannot manage