

# UC Santa Barbara

## UC Santa Barbara Previously Published Works

### Title

János Imre Heltai & Eszter Tarsoly (eds.), Translanguaging for equal opportunities: Speaking Romani at school. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2023. Pp. 321. eBook Open Access, Hb. €115.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/24b512t3>

### Journal

Language in Society, 53(3)

### ISSN

0047-4045

### Author

Bucholtz, Mary

### Publication Date

2024-06-01

### DOI

10.1017/s0047404524000137

### Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

## BOOK REVIEWS

## REFERENCE

Borlongan, Ariane (2023). Migration linguistics: A synopsis. *AILA Review* 36(1):38–63. Online: [doi.org/10.1075/aila.22014.bor](https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.22014.bor).

(Received 21 December 2023)

*Language in Society* **53** (2024)  
doi:10.1017/S0047404524000137

JÁNOS IMRE HELTAI & ESZTER TARSOLY (eds.), *Translanguaging for equal opportunities: Speaking Romani at school*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2023. Pp. 321. eBook Open Access, Hb. €115.

Reviewed by MARY BUCHOLTZ 

Department of Linguistics  
University of California, 3432 South Hall  
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-3100, USA  
[bucholtz@linguistics.ucsb.edu](mailto:bucholtz@linguistics.ucsb.edu)

With sociolinguists' renewed attention to our disciplinary responsibility to advance social justice, and the tremendous interest in translanguaging as an equity-centered perspective on multilingualism, there has been a profusion of publications on the liberatory potential of translanguaging in the education of linguistically and otherwise minoritized groups. What distinguishes *Translanguaging for equal opportunities* from most such publications is that it is not simply a book about social justice: in addition, this important and highly original volume powerfully exemplifies social justice in the research and writing process through which it was created. The coeditors rather modestly frame the project as a multi-authored monograph about how a translanguaging curriculum can support the learning experiences of bilingual Roma students in monolingual Hungarian schools in Hungary and Slovakia. But this remarkable, bountiful book is much more than this characterization suggests, transcending the limits of academic business as usual in many ways.

First, as the coeditors make clear in their introduction, the volume represents a genuinely inclusive community-centered collaboration. This is attested by the extensive list of authors (thirty-nine in all) involving two communities and seven institutions across four countries. The distribution of this huge team of collaborators across roles and domains of expertise is strikingly balanced, with roughly similar numbers of Roma community members, teachers and head teachers at Roma-serving elementary schools, teacher trainees, graduate students, and university faculty members.

Second, the project is unusual in its scale and scope as well as the rigor of the research and its broad and deep impact. These qualities can be credited to the seven years of ethnographic participatory action research on which the volume is based. The research focuses squarely on social and especially linguistic justice for one of the most oppressed, marginalized, and misunderstood groups in

Europe, the Roma people. Importantly, it does so through long-term partnerships in which Roma people themselves directly shape the research agenda and collaborate throughout the (still-ongoing) research and writing process.

A third innovation is that the volume is accompanied by a large online repository of English-subtitled videos of classroom interaction that support and illustrate the analysis while centering Roma students' voices and learning experiences. (These can be viewed at <http://www.kre.hu/romanitranslanguaging/index.php/video-repository/> or by searching 'Romani translanguaging videos'). Such scholarly transparency is still rare in ethnographic research, where ethical concerns about participant privacy often preclude the public circulation of data, but thanks to the collaborative nature of the project, ethical data sharing is possible.

Moreover, as an open-access volume and as one of the first publications in English on this project, *Translanguaging for equal opportunities* overcomes economic and linguistic barriers to reach a wide international audience of researchers and university graduate and undergraduate students as well as bilingual communities and educators who seek to create schools and classrooms that value students' entire linguistic repertoires.

One of the most noteworthy ways in which the book stands out is in its authors' commitment to a nonhierarchical, holistic approach to scholarly knowledge. The volume is deliberately multivocal, and collaborators' diverse epistemological standpoints are included throughout, with personal reflections woven in alongside theory and analysis. Rather than forcing the text into a monolithic scholarly voice, this approach enables readers to engage with the varied perspectives and ways of knowing represented within the research team. Moreover, the chapters may be read in almost any order. This approach closely aligns with the introduction's theorizing of translanguaging as a rhizomatic practice in which diverse linguistic resources make up a unified repertoire (chapter 1). The result is a rich, nuanced linguistic ethnography, informed by the team members' complementary areas of expertise.

The five chapters following the introduction provide necessary historical (chapter 2) and ethnographic (chapters 3, 4) background as well as a valuable discussion of research methods (chapters 5, 6). The heart of the book is the ten analytic chapters, which cover an impressive range of topics. These chapters can be grouped into three rough categories, although some chapters necessarily overlap, and every chapter covers much more than these brief summaries can capture. One set of chapters focuses on translanguaging pedagogy: both how such an approach aligns with the principles of adaptive-inclusive education proposed by Hungarian scholars (chapter 15), and how teachers' and students' translanguaging practices democratize the classroom and unsettle traditionally hierarchical roles, with benefits for both groups (chapters 8, 10). A second set of chapters describes the integration of translanguaging in multiple learning activities, including the collaborative creation of a book of Roma folktales in four different versions to accommodate individual language variation (chapter 9), the development of and student engagement with a school-based translanguing linguistic landscape (chapter 12), and the

introduction of Romani literacy practices and creative orthographies into the classroom (chapter 14). A third set of chapters examines the transformative impact of translanguaging throughout and beyond the educational institution, including examples of Roma students winning poetry recitals, succeeding in translanguing assessments and exams, and supporting the translanguing learning of younger children (chapter 11); the centering of community participation and knowledge in the creation of learning materials and the implementation of translanguing activities such as theatrical performance and filmmaking (chapter 13); and the project's creation of space for a wider diversity of voices, languages, and styles in partner schools, as illustrated by role-playing activities variously involving students, teachers, and parents as well as by teachers' translanguaging across ethnic boundaries (chapter 16). The volume ends (chapter 17) with an insightful discussion of how the project's extensive practices of collaboration and reflexivity built trust among all project participants. The final chapter concludes by describing follow-up research, already under way, that extends the project beyond schools to the larger local Roma and non-Roma communities. As a whole, the book provides a thorough documentation and persuasive demonstration of translanguaging as a tool for educational, linguistic, and social justice, all the while centering community collaboration and cultural insight as well as the agency and expertise of young people.

In bringing these findings to an international readership, the authors rightly emphasize that the pedagogical interventions they describe are necessarily highly contextualized and must be rooted in local language policies, ideologies, and practices. The model that the book offers is therefore not a one-size-fits-all set of recommendations but rather an example of how to carry out collaborative research that centers community self-definition and self-determination. Thus, at one level the book is an in-depth account of the pedagogical impact of teachers' translanguaging stance in the specific context of multilingual Roma students' learning in two hegemonically monolingual societies, Hungary and Slovakia. Given Romani's distinctive status as a global yet 'non-territorial' language spoken by large numbers of economically, socially, and racially marginalized people, it is a crucial focus of social and linguistic justice efforts. The Roma case also holds special significance for theories of translanguaging, as a community with an advanced, widespread, flexible, and largely nonstandardized multilingual repertoire. The authors show that, contrary to accounts skeptical of the cognitive reality of translanguaging, Roma community members perceive their diverse linguistic practices as unified rather than as easily differentiated into separate named languages. In addition to the volume's value as an ethnography and an extensive example of translanguaging in education, many of its methods and insights can be adapted to a wide variety of settings, thanks to the clarity and comprehensiveness with which the authors discuss each step in the research collaboration.

This already copious volume is further enriched by the online repository of thirty-five short videos of school-based translanguaging interactions, subtitled in English and referenced throughout the book, often multiple times, together with

educators' and university researchers' commentaries. The videos, each five to ten minutes long, focus on a multiplicity of discourse contexts; besides their utility in illustrating the analysis, they are often quite moving. Indeed, taken as a whole, the short films, which are a major scholarly contribution in their own right, constitute a veritable documentary series on translanguaging as pedagogy and practice. This resource enables a worldwide audience of researchers, teachers, and communities interested in similar issues to gain a deeper understanding of translanguaging and the authors' findings than would be possible with the text alone. The videos also make the volume ideal for inclusion in a wide range of graduate and undergraduate classes in sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, education, anthropology, sociology, and more.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *Translanguaging for equal opportunities* is its deep ethical stance. All aspects of the research project are rooted in Roma parents' and children's educational, linguistic, and social goals, and the non-Roma academic researchers demonstrate an admirable degree of reflexivity, acknowledging and working to overcome the limitations of their individual perspectives. This stance is illustrated, for example, by the thoughtful discussions in chapters 5 and 6 on data collection and processing, respectively, and by the book's overall commitment to amplifying rather than appropriating Roma voices and viewpoints.

In short, this volume deserves to be on the bookshelf and syllabi of every sociolinguist committed to socially just linguistics in educational settings. It provides a model that will inform change-oriented scholarship and community-centered collaborations both throughout our field and beyond.

(Received 23 January 2024)

*Language in Society* 53 (2024)  
doi:10.1017/S0047404524000150

PETER TRUDGILL, *The long journey of English: A geographical history of the language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp ix, 177. Pb. £19.

Reviewed by LAURA WRIGHT   
Faculty of English, University of Cambridge  
9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP  
United Kingdom  
[lcw21@cam.ac.uk](mailto:lcw21@cam.ac.uk)

This is a book for anyone who wants to know about the origins and spread of the English language regardless of training. No need for technical knowledge of any kind—most linguistics books cannot be read in one sitting like a detective novel, whereas this one can. And the detective analogy is apt in terms of tracking when and whence English spread (quick spoiler: it has been spreading slowly over 1,600 years in numerous tiny fits and starts from the edges of land-masses to the