

Translanguaging pedagogy and creative activism for early education in multilingual Luxembourg

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Luxembourg is a highly linguistically and culturally diverse country. In particular, there are 64 % of four-year old children who not speak Luxembourgish at home, of which about 20% are Portuguese (MENJE, 2018). In 2017, multilingual early education was proclaimed by law. Until that time, the focus in early education was on developing children's competences in Luxembourgish, however, from 2017, teachers are obliged to not only help develop children's Luxembourgish, but to familiarizing them with French, and valuing their home languages. This recent change has opened the possibilities for new pedagogies that teachers can use to facilitate teaching and learning in their highly linguistically and culturally classrooms. One such pedagogy is translanguaging pedagogy.

Translanguaging is bilinguals' natural use of their full linguistic resources fluidly and strategically to communicate and express their bilingual and bicultural identities (Flores & García, 2013). As pedagogy, translanguaging has a purpose (1) to promote dynamic bi/multilingualism, in which teachers see students' multilingualism and cultural diversities as resources rather than problems, (2) to affirm student identities, whereby teachers create spaces for students' diversities so that they express themselves and learn, and (3) to combat structural inequalities, where teachers promote social justice for language minority students by challenging the power of the dominant languages (Yilmaz, 2021). Therefore, the present project aimed to (1) offer an 18-hours professional development (PD) course in translanguaging pedagogy to preschool teachers, (2) actively involve children's' families in order to strengthen home-school collaboration, and (3) support children's linguistic, socio-emotional, and cognitive development and engagement in the classroom. The 6-month PD course contained seven sessions on multilingual ecology, home-school collaboration, multilingual brain, and multilingual oracy and literacy, and translanguaging pedagogy. To assess the course, we used language portraits, teacher questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews with 40 teachers, parent questionnaires and interviews with 65 parents, and early literacy and numeracy tests in the school and home languages and video observations of teacher-children classroom interactions, with 23 4-year old children.

The results from the teacher questionnaire before and after the course showed significant positive increase in attitudes towards children's multilingualism and their home languages, and decrease in focus on Luxembourgish only. However, the results from the focus groups and the interviews indicated that most of the teachers used children's home languages for the purpose of developing the school language, Luxembourgish. Moreover, during the video-observations, we noticed that when teachers used children's home languages in the classroom, children's well-being visibly increased as they smiled and

interacted more frequently. On the other hand, in some of the classrooms, we also observed power relations and language hierarchies, when some teachers insisted that children identify themselves as language minority children while children did not want to.

Furthermore, 65 parents whose children were involved in the schools we worked with, filled in parent questionnaires on home literacy environment and participated in the interviews. According to the questionnaire results, the most important factor for children's linguistic development and well-being was parental involvement. We interviewed 17 parents who expressed the need for home-school collaboration. To strengthen the home-school collaboration, during the PD course, we presented these results to teachers and offered many practical activities.

Over one year, we tested 23 children in early literacy and numeracy in their home languages (Portuguese, English, French, German) and Luxembourgish, three times over one year. We identified a clear progress in both home and school language, however, children performed better in their home languages than in Luxembourgish. The video observations showed that when teachers used children's home languages in the classroom activities, this facilitated their learning and increased their well-being.

Following these I created three outcomes for teachers, parents, and preschool children. Following the course, we identified that teachers needed a database of practical activities for involving children's cultures and languages. Thus, I created a website www.transla-program.org, in English, French, and German, with over 100 activities regarding on multilingual classroom, home-school collaboration, and multilingual oracy and literacy. For children and parents, I wrote two illustrated books in English, French, Serbian, Portuguese, and German, [Mara's Song](#) and [Sumak](#). In the book for children, Mara is a girl who left her country with the parents, and is faced with a new language and culture she does not understand. She tries to find answers in the nature and the bird is helping Mara to sing and express herself. The book contains the audio CD in which Mara is singing in her own (invented) language. In the book for parents, Sumak is a woman who had to flee from her country and is faced with the painful integration in a new country. She is trying to stay connected to her roots and is also trying to find her way in the society she does not understand. To integrate these art works in teachers' multilingual classrooms, I distributed over 300 books to teachers we worked with. The new project will provide the storytelling workshops with the puppet theatre in which teachers, parents, and children can actively participate.

Following the principles of creative activism, which are "transformative interventions in order to change society for the better by communicating conflicts and/or solutions where no one else can or will in order to provoke reflection (and consequent behavioral changes)" (Harrebye, 2016, p. 25), I created the website, and the two books. The participation at the Conference will allow me to present these

creative outcomes, introduce them to other researchers in the field of early education, describe their impact so far, and present the ideas of the future project.

References

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