

## Title

Translanguaging stance of preschool teachers in Luxembourg

## Abstract

In 2017, the new law declared multilingual education mandatory in Luxembourg where there are 65% of 4-year-old language minority children. To support 40 teachers with the new law requirement that asked teachers to use children's home languages in the classroom, we offered a 6-month professional development course in translanguaging pedagogy that builds on children's full linguistic repertoire. Mixed methods were used such as focus groups, questionnaires, and video observations. Through pre- and post-course focus groups we identified three groups of teachers: (1) those with *mild monolingual stance* who believed that the most important is to develop children's school language, Luxembourgish, (2) those with *mild translanguaging stance* who expressed that children's home languages are important but can hinder children's Luxembourgish, and (3) those with *true translanguaging stance* who believed that children's home languages are necessary for their well-being and development of Luxembourgish. The questionnaires showed that there was a significant increase in teachers' positive attitudes towards children's home languages and translanguaging. However, in the video observations we identified both positive and negative examples in teacher-designed activities that, when compared to the focus groups and questionnaires results, seemed paradoxical but portrayed a fuller picture of preschool teachers' translanguaging stance in Luxembourg.

## The main paper

### Objectives

The student population in Luxembourg is highly socially and culturally heterogenous. Almost 67% of 4-year-old children do not speak Luxembourgish as a home language of which 28% speak Portuguese (MENJE, 2022). In Luxembourg there are three official languages in use: Luxembourgish, French and German. Children start preschool in Luxembourgish, they learn to write in German and continue learning in French. In 2017, the new law declared

multilingual education mandatory where the attention is on developing Luxembourgish, familiarizing children with French and valuing their home languages in preschool. Thus, it is necessary to support teachers to engage children in learning in their multilingual classrooms. The present study aimed to: (1) provide a professional development (PD) course in translanguaging for preschool teachers, (2) actively include children's families to foster home-school collaboration, and (3) reinforce children's cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional engagement in the classroom. The project advocated partnership-based research and close collaboration with organizational stakeholders, teachers, parents and children. In this presentation, we will focus only on teachers and their attitudes (translanguaging stance).

## **Perspectives**

The main goal of the study was to give a professional development course in translanguaging pedagogy. The topic of our PD is *translanguaging* which is the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire to make meaning (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). It is a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense-making (Wei, 2017, p. 22). It is also a natural language practice of multilingual people and it enacts *dynamic bilingualism* (Celic & Selzer, 2011). More specifically, our course contained 7 sessions (22 hours) on translanguaging pedagogy (García, Johnston, & Seltzer, 2017): (a) translanguaging stance (e.g., teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism), (b) design (e.g., how to make classroom multilingual), and (c) shifts (e.g., moment-to-moment teachers' flexibility). The sessions contained practical activities on the following topics: (1) multilingual ecology, (2) translanguaging space, and (3) translanguaging strategies.

## **Methods**

There were 40 preschool teachers divided into four groups, coming from different corners of the country (south, north, east, west). To evaluate the effectiveness of the course as well as teacher's attitudes that are crucial for using translanguaging pedagogy we used teacher questionnaires and focus groups with teachers before the course (June 2019) and after (December 2019). We also video-taped teacher-children translanguaging classroom practices once the course finished.

## Results and arguments

The results from the focus groups showed that there were three groups of teachers: (1) those with *mild monolingual stance* who believed that the most important is to develop children's school language, Luxembourgish (3 teachers), (2) those with *mild translanguaging stance* who expressed that children's home languages are important but can hinder children's Luxembourgish (33 teachers), and (3) those with *true translanguaging stance* who believed that children's home languages are necessary for their well-being and development of Luxembourgish (4 teachers).

The translanguaging stance of the preschool teachers in the first group consisted of mainly negative attitudes concerning multilingual children and their parents with the exception of some positive attitudes concerning children, namely building of communication skills, tolerance, metalinguistic awareness, and language learning. Furthermore, there was a conviction that children are confused by multilingualism and cannot differentiate between languages. Children's home language proficiency was categorized as bad, which made their Luxembourgish deteriorate and Luxembourgish children bored during language activities. The teachers in the second group who expressed mild translanguaging stance, believed that home languages are important for children's well-being and learning but most of the teachers were afraid that if they use it, this will hinder children's development of Luxembourgish. Finally, a very small group of teachers who had true translanguaging stance, believed that using children's home languages in the classroom will benefit children's well-being and learning and facilitate children's development of Luxembourgish.

The questionnaire data showed that there was a significant increase in teachers' positive attitudes towards children's home languages and their multilingualism and a significant decrease of the sole focus on Luxembourgish. The data were however statistically summarized and did not match with the results from the questionnaires and the video observations where we observed teachers' ambivalent behaviors by the same teachers, discriminative in some language activities and positive in another. We will discuss the ambivalent results and the methodologies used, to obtain a fuller picture of preschool teachers' attitudes. We've recently published this study in *International Journal of Multilingualism*.

## References

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