

9 Researching Translanguaging in Literacy Activities in Early Childhood Education Centers in Luxembourg: Insights into Qualitative Methods and Ethical Considerations

Claudine Kirsch and Džoen Bebić-Crestany

Introduction

Over the last two decades, educationalists have been promoting the use of translanguaging pedagogies that give learners opportunities to deploy their full semiotic repertoire flexibly and strategically to create meaning and enhance learning ([García *et al.*, 2021](#)). Translanguaging, as a pedagogy, has been researched in various educational settings: mainstream, minority and heritage education; higher education; foreign language classes; bilingual education and community schools. Scholars tend to agree that translanguaging can facilitate communication and understanding, develop metalinguistic awareness and language skills, open safe spaces for interaction and participation, promote well-being and inclusion, and contribute to knowledge construction and identity-building (e.g. [Creese & Blackledge, 2015](#); [Duarte, 2019](#); [Garrity *et al.*, 2015](#); [Kirsch, 2020](#); [Leonet *et al.*, 2017](#); [Lewis *et al.*, 2012](#); [Prada, 2019](#); [Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2019](#)). The exact meaning of translanguaging, however, has continued to change, with the result that not all studies are underpinned by the same understanding of the concept. Reviewing empirical studies, [Poza \(2017\)](#) distinguished among those that regarded translanguaging as a mere alternation between two languages, those

where researchers espoused heteroglossic views and studied practices based on sociocultural learning theories and, finally, those in which researchers with heteroglossic views followed a social justice agenda. Most studies fitted into the second category and presented the ways in which teachers used translanguaging either as a scaffolding strategy or as a resource-based pedagogy. More rarely, the practices under investigation were underpinned by critical pedagogies that challenged dominant linguistic ideologies and aimed to place all learners on an equal footing (García *et al.*, 2021). In a more recent literature review, Bonacina-Pugh *et al.* (2021: 1) distinguished between studies with a ‘fixed language approach’ where languages were perceived as bounded systems, such as in Poza’s (2017) first example, and a ‘fluid language approach’, based on the understanding that translanguaging means selecting semiotic signs from one’s unitary repertoire to communicate and make meaning.

While the benefits, challenges and limitations of translanguaging have been widely researched in monolingual and bilingual contexts (Bonacina-Pugh *et al.*, 2021; Duarte, 2019; García *et al.*, 2021), less is known about language practices in early childhood education (ECE) (Pawliszko, 2022) and in multilingual contexts such as Luxembourg. Furthermore, the process of researching translanguaging has had less focus in the literature. The present chapter, therefore, examines the methodological approaches and ethical quandaries of a research team in multilingual Luxembourg investigating literacy practices in daycare centers. Our understanding of translanguaging falls into the ‘fluid language approach’ (Bonacina-Pugh *et al.*, 2021) and is influenced by critical pedagogy.

The present chapter will firstly contextualize research on translanguaging in Luxembourg and provide insights into the ways in which we operationalized translanguaging in the research project ‘Collaboration with Parents and Multiliteracies in ECE’ (COMPARE). Secondly, it will outline the ways in which we applied procedural ethics and ‘ethics in practice’ and worked in responsible ways with the educators and the 3-year-old emergent multilinguals (Johansen & Frederiksen, 2021) while collecting and analyzing data. The focus will be on the video-recorded interactions between the educators and the young children, given the fact that research with young children raises specific ethical considerations. The chapter will show the extent to which our understanding of translanguaging and our research processes are context-dependent.

Multilingualism and Research in ECE in Luxembourg

Multilingualism is an everyday reality in Luxembourg, a small country in Western Europe bordering on France, Germany and Belgium. Apart from the three official languages of Luxembourgish, French and German, many other languages, including Portuguese and English, are used on

account of the high proportion of immigrants in Luxembourg. In the academic year 2020/21, the Ministry of national Education, Childhood and Youth (MENJE) indicated that 67% of the children in preschools and primary schools spoke languages other than Luxembourgish as their first language at home, mainly French, Portuguese, German, English and Italian (MENJE, 2023). While translanguaging is a widespread and widely accepted societal practice, it was frowned upon in educational settings until a few years ago (Kirsch, 2020).

The education system in elementary schools is largely underpinned by monoglossic ideologies and requires children to learn Luxembourgish, German and French sequentially. Owing to the high standards expected in each language and the fact that children learn content through several languages, the curriculum proves challenging, particularly for children of low socioeconomic status and from migration backgrounds, who underachieve more frequently than children from more advantaged backgrounds (MENJE, 2022). To address educational inequalities, the Education Ministry has taken several steps over the last few years, one being the implementation of a national program of multilingual education for 1- to 4-year-old children in the formal and non-formal ECE sectors (Kirsch & Seele, 2020). It applies to teachers who work in the formal sector and to qualified educators in the non-formal one. The new program requires educators to develop children's skills in Luxembourgish and French – the weighting depends on the setting – and to value their home languages. Collaboration with parents, which is one pillar of the program, is intended to show respect for the children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Prior to this Education Act in 2016, Luxembourgish was the official language of instruction in early education (non-compulsory school for children aged 3 years) and preschool (compulsory for children aged 4–5 years). In the non-formal sector, however, there was no language-in-education policy and, as a result, this sector had diversified, with some centers becoming dominant in Luxembourgish or French, and others being officially bilingual. Empirical findings showed that educators communicated daily in the center's dominant languages, as well as in some of the children's home languages, while nevertheless remaining faithful to monolingual norms and separating languages (Neumann, 2015; Seele, 2016).

The concept of translanguaging, understood by García (2011) at the time as the flexible use of one's linguistic repertoire, made its first appearance in articles published in Luxembourg in 2015. Working with educators in the non-formal sector, Kirsch (2015) showed how children and educators used multiple languages to communicate. Working with children and teachers in preschools, she found that children used features of several languages dynamically when telling stories with their friends on the app iTEO (Kirsch, 2017). Following the Education Ministry's implementation of the program of multilingual education, language

practices have slowly changed in ECE settings and translanguaging has become a legitimate practice (e.g. Kirsch *et al.*, 2020; Kirsch, 2024).

The findings from questionnaires and interviews indicated that teachers and educators reported using multiple languages both throughout the day and in planned activities. This is an indication of change: practitioners began to intentionally use multiple languages to promote language development. Furthermore, the participants showed positive attitudes to multilingual education and indicated that they reflected on their beliefs regarding language learning (Kirsch *et al.*, 2020). Observations in schools and daycare centers showed a variety of transglossic interactions and called for the need to investigate translanguaging more closely. Some teachers and educators switched automatically to the children's home languages for communication whether there was a need for this or not (Kirsch, 2020, 2024). For instance, during lunch, Ms Anna was observed using Luxembourgish to encourage the 3-year-olds to eat. When Lia and Tadeo refused to eat, she switched to their home languages and repeated her request in English and Portuguese, respectively. She then explained to two other children how to use their cutlery appropriately, addressing them in their home languages, French and German (Kirsch, 2020). In this situation, the educator opened several monolingual spaces with the home languages. While this strategy, called 'home languaging' by Kirsch, was helpful in that children ate and learned to use cutlery, using multiple languages in parallel was unnecessary in other situations. Following our professional development course on translanguaging pedagogies, the participating teachers and educators became familiar with the concepts of translanguaging stance, design and shift (García *et al.*, 2017) and began to reflect on their multimodal and transglossic practices. As a result, they tried to monitor their language use and to translanguage more strategically (Kirsch *et al.*, 2020).

The mixed-method research project COMPARE (2020–2024) builds on these previous research findings and investigates educators', children's and parents' deployment of their semiotic repertoire in literacy activities and collaborative events in daycare centers. We understand translanguaging both as individuals' use of their entire semiotic repertoire to create meaning and to communicate, and as pedagogical practices that leverage these processes to support learning and participation (García *et al.*, 2021). Such practices are always influenced by language ideologies that help to explain why not all 'named languages' enjoy equal status. After the implementation of the multilingual program in 2017, we found that the educators communicated in multiple languages in their daily practice, drawing on Luxembourgish, French and Portuguese, and offered literacy activities in several languages, including German and English. Some parents visited the centers to offer literacy activities in their home languages. However, not all the children's home languages were given space, despite the program's focus on the inclusion of all home languages

(Kirsch & Aleksić, 2021; Kirsch & Bergeron-Morin, 2023). While the educators perceived multilingual pedagogies as important and frequently translanguaged, they did not seem to follow a social justice agenda, namely creating an inclusive learning environment where all home languages were equally acknowledged and valued, and where all children benefited from opportunities to hear and see their home language.

Details of the way in which we operationalize translanguaging in the COMPARE project, as well as some methodological implications are presented next.

Epistemological and Methodological Considerations

We conceptualize translanguaging as a process of selecting various semiotic signs, including linguistic signs, visuals, gestures and posture, and orchestrating these in meaningful ways to communicate. In this sense, young children provide perfect examples of translanguaging as they draw on their entire semiotic repertoire to communicate, uttering sounds and words, using pitch or making use of gestures, mime and actions. Similarly, educators working with young children are also likely to draw on their entire semiotic repertoire to make themselves understood and facilitate communication (Garrity *et al.*, 2015). This is illustrated in the following example of a class in early education in Luxembourg where none of the 3-year-olds spoke Luxembourgish at the beginning of the 2017 academic year. During the morning ritual, Abdul became confused while first counting all his peers and then only the boys. He counted the girls rather than the boys. Ms Clara repeated the Luxembourgish word for ‘boys’ and when Abdul began to count the girls a second time, she shook her head and signed ‘no’ with her finger. When he began to count the girls a third time, she translated ‘boy’ into French. When Abdul still did not know what to do, she pointed to the picture of a boy on the wall. Abdul finally understood (Kirsch & Seele, 2020). A study on translanguaging practices in ECE for our research team means, therefore, firstly, taking the multiple languages and multimodality of communication in naturally occurring interactions into account; secondly, analyzing them in detail; thirdly, identifying some implications for ECE professionals. Next, we indicate several implications for the collection and analysis of data in our project.

The first implication is the need to regularly video record interactions and make detailed transcriptions that include all relevant paralinguistic features (e.g. tone of voice) and extralinguistic features (e.g. mime, gaze, gestures), as well as material resources. Video recordings are necessary because of the multilingual and multimodal features of communication that are simultaneously observable. The recordings allow us to watch the interactions at a later date as often as required to make sense of them in a holistic way. Taking field notes during open observations (Copland & Creese, 2015) is not enough to understand the complexity of the practices.

While the researchers in the team speak Luxembourgish, German, French and English, and two of the team also speak Italian and Croatian, respectively, we can understand most but not all the languages used in the daycare centers. During the data analysis stage, we drew on the help of experts to understand Portuguese and Russian, as well as referring to resources to understand specific words in Romanian, for example. Recordings are therefore necessary to trace and later analyze all linguistic features present in the interactions, as well as all the nuances in the communication. Furthermore, field notes are ‘authored accounts’ (Copland & Creese, 2015: 39), meaning that they are based on the researcher’s interpretations and perspectives. As we have different qualifications and come from different research fields (e.g. education, social science, philosophy), it was likely that we would ‘see’ different things. This does not mean, however, that video recordings (like field notes) are not selective, a fact that we needed to think about. The video recordings were important, as they enabled us to discuss and analyze the same interactions, taking our different perspectives into account.

A second implication relates to the coding of all ‘named languages’. We espouse heteroglossic language ideologies (García, 2011) and situate ourselves within what Bonacina-Pugh *et al.* (2021) call a ‘fluid language approach’. Even though it may sound at odds with our understanding of translanguaging, we code all languages, as this procedure enables us to illustrate the language diversity in ECE settings and point out language hierarchies (Kirsch & Aleksić, 2021). Coding individual languages is not always straightforward on account of the fluid boundaries between some languages. For instance, one of the daycare centers in the COMPARE project is close to the Luxembourgish–German border, and, at times, it is not clear if the educators and children are speaking a Luxembourgish dialect or are switching between Luxembourgish and German. Were our aim to give an account of the fluid ways children deploy their repertoire, counting languages would not make sense. We are, however, working in the field of education and, in particular, teacher education and professional development, and one of our aims is to make practitioners aware of the language hierarchies they are reproducing and the language ideologies they are drawing on. As such, coding languages is necessary. To help researchers and practitioners comprehend the transglossic practices we observe in the field, it is also important to be specific during the coding process and to indicate what communicative strategies translanguaging entails. Like García and Sylvan (2011), Nikula and Moore (2019) and Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019), we differentiate between language alternation and translation while also adding ‘home language’ (Kirsch, 2020) (see below).

Finally, to comprehend the educators’ translanguaging stances and their purposes in translanguaging, we needed to add semi-structured interviews to the observations we carried out over one academic year.

Having outlined these methodological considerations, we now provide details of the data collection and analysis in the COMPARE project.

Collecting Data in an Ethically Responsible Way

The mixed-method project COMPARE (2020–2024) aims, firstly, to support the development of literacies in multiple languages and cooperation between parents and educators of daycare centers and, secondly, to investigate related practices. In 2020, we organized a 15-hour professional development course on literacies and collaboration for 12 centers. In total, 22 managers and educators with a specialization in multilingual education participated. After the course, the managers were invited to volunteer to take part in a qualitative study that examined the development of literacies and collaboration with the parents at their centers. Following the principle of diversification, we selected three centers, on the basis of their main languages, size and geographical location. In each center, we focused on 2- to 3-year-old children, as it was more likely that the educators of this age group engaged the children in regular literacy activities. In each center, with the help of the educators, we selected three children from different social and cultural backgrounds who were able to communicate in one or more languages and whose parents agreed to participate during the academic year 2020–2021.

Next, we present the participants from one of the centers, which we name *Water*, and turn to the collection of data related to literacy practices. We thereby examine the procedural ethics and ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The findings are presented in a later section.

The participants and methods

The center *Water* is a small, Luxembourgish-dominant for-profit organization close to the Luxembourgish–German border. Some of the staff spoke Luxembourgish, while others communicated in German. One educator also used Portuguese when addressing Portuguese-speaking Luisa, the youngest child in the group. The 2- to 3-year-old children spoke Luxembourgish, German, French, Arabic, Greek, Portuguese or English at home. The focus children were Joyce, Luisa and Tobias, who spoke Luxembourgish, Portuguese and German, respectively, at home. Their parents had a low or middle socioeconomic status and spoke Luxembourgish, Portuguese and German, respectively, at home with their children. Table 9.1 indicates the languages the children and the educators used at the center.

Like many studies on translanguaging, we chose qualitative methods and focused on interactional data collected through observations in naturally occurring literacy activities. Apart from taking field notes, we video recorded educator–child interactions in situations of reading and

Table 9.1 Observed language use during the literacy events

		Main language used	Other languages used
Educator	Mr Paul	Luxembourgish	German, French, Spanish
	Ms Isabela	Luxembourgish	Portuguese, German, French
	Ms Ariane	Luxembourgish	German, French
	Ms Melanie	German	–
	Ms Sophie	Luxembourgish	German, French
Focus child	Joyce	German	Luxembourgish, German
	Tobias	German	German, Luxembourgish
	Luisa	Portuguese	Portuguese, Luxembourgish

telling stories, singing and engaging with writing. Below, we refer to data related to storytelling, collected over 15 days and amounting to 4 hours. We also conducted two semi-structured interviews with the educators and two with parents.

Procedural ethics and ethics in practice

Having presented and legitimized the research methods, we now outline some of the ethical procedures which should be followed throughout the research process (Copland & Creese, 2015). They include procedural ethics and ‘ethics in practice’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Procedural ethics are based on the predefined and context-independent guidelines that constitute ethical requirements, which the researcher must be mindful of during the research process. They relate to confidentiality, anonymity, respect, beneficence, honesty, accountability and non-maleficence (Johansen & Frederiksen, 2021). For instance, researchers have to explain the study; its purpose, risks and outcomes; and the participants’ rights in a consent form. All participants of legal age must give informed consent prior to the data collection (Israel, 2014). Once our project COMPARE was approved by the Ethics Review Panel of the University of Luxembourg in 2019, we informed the manager, educators and parents (orally and in writing) of the aims of the study and distributed information sheets and consent forms. In line with procedural ethics and the guidelines of the University of Luxembourg, and taking the European general data protection regulations into account, our consent forms included implications for the participants and their rights during the research process (Israel, 2014).

Ethics in practice or ‘particularistic ethics’ concern concrete ethical dilemmas and issues that arise during the research process and go beyond the scope of ethical guidelines. Johansen and Frederiksen (2021) advocate the use of both research ethics procedures to guarantee good research practice. In the COMPARE project, this means that we continuously

reflect on our positionality as researchers, particularly in relation to our epistemologies and language ideologies, and pay attention to power differentials between ourselves and the participants. Furthermore, during the data collection process, we developed mutual trust and respect and encouraged the participation of all actors at different stages in the research process (e.g. inclusion of all children, respondent validation) (Adams & Siry, 2020).

We needed to be particularly careful, as we were undertaking research with young children. In this case, the main ethical considerations include the consent of people of legal age and the assent of children not yet of legal age, the possible witnessing of potentially dangerous or harmful situations, and confidentiality or privacy (García & Fine, 2018). Consent and assent were asked of the parents and the children prior to the start of the project. Assent from a toddler is important because ‘their age should not diminish their rights’ (García & Fine, 2018: 373), but obtaining and maintaining assent is problematic, as the child needs to understand the presence of the researchers and the purpose of the research. To obtain assent, the researcher has to observe the children and assess whether they are comfortable. To reduce uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations in our project, we observed children only in naturally occurring situations in the presence of their educators. To guarantee privacy, we never observed them in the bathrooms or while they slept. The next two subsections provide further details of the ethical procedures followed during the data collection.

Ethics in practice in relation to video recordings

Research using video recordings or visual methods has gained increasing popularity in social sciences in the last decades owing to the advancements in technology and the affordability of new technologies. The use of these new technologies has, however, also brought new ethical issues to the fore concerning the methodology and the video recording itself (i.e. consent, confidentiality, anonymity) (Harley & Langdon, 2018). Even though these visual methods can encourage participatory research and increase the validity of the data collection and analysis (e.g. authentic data, deeper and more nuanced analysis), they are not undisputed. For example, Harley and Landon (2018) question the legitimacy of video recordings in research studies with children from an ethics of power perspective. Children are not research objects but are nowadays understood as ‘social actors’ (García & Fine, 2018: 371) with agency. To help researchers keep in mind both the children’s agency and their own perception of children’s competencies, Hilppö and Stevens (2020) propose two theories: ethical symmetry and process assent. ‘Ethical symmetry’ contemplates the ethical relationship between the researcher and the child. Researchers need to start from the basis that this relationship is no different from that with an adult. In the project COMPARE, three of the

researchers were qualified teachers or educators, had experience of working with small children and could communicate in several languages. We believe that this greatly facilitated the rapport with the children. ‘Process assent’ focuses on the change in children’s wish to participate during the research process and/or the process of negotiating new consent. When video recording children in the COMPARE project, we looked for visual and emotional cues from the children such as hints of sadness or discomfort and only observed them when we felt they were comfortable. To help the children understand the process of observing and recording and to encourage their participation, one of the researchers from time to time showed them what she had filmed and allowed them to film their peers and surroundings themselves. Some children also took an interest in the field notes, asked for explanations and imitated us taking notes. In April, for instance, one child in *Water* sat on the lap of one of the researchers and scribbled in her notebook. Overall, however, obtaining continuous consent from educators and parents was challenging on account of the staff rotation and the ongoing enrolment of new children.

Ethics in practice in relation to interviews

The qualitative research method of interviews has been used in all scientific fields to gain a deeper or better understanding of people’s views and experiences. To guarantee the quality of the research process, the researcher should build a good rapport with the interviewees and make them feel comfortable (Fredericks, 2019). The interview should be perceived neither as enforced or stressful, nor as jeopardizing the interviewees’ position (anonymity). It should include a level of reciprocity and certainly not create harm (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In our study, we wanted to understand the educators’ translanguaging practices in literacy activities. For this purpose, Kirsch conducted two group interviews with the regional and local managers of *Water* and the educator at the center, who had specialized in multilingual education. Anonymity and the interviewees’ rights during the research process were guaranteed through the consent forms, but these topics were also addressed in a conversation prior to the interviews. Kirsch furthermore explained the study purpose during both interviews.

When preparing the interview, Kirsch planned questions on the basis of the observations and video recordings. To gain a deeper understanding and to validate the teams’ initial hunches, she arranged for member checking with the educators: she asked the interviewees to view selected video recordings, shared the researchers’ interpretations of these and asked the participants to comment. Often, she sent the educators some videos of literacy activities in advance, as well as some topics such as the use of multiple languages that she wished to discuss. She used several techniques to put the educators at ease and give them agency: the location and date of choice, the material sent beforehand and the choice of

language. During the first interview, the educators explained which languages they and the children used in daily communication and during planned activities. It became apparent that French (one of the languages in the multilingual program) and the children's other home languages were rarely used. Kirsch considered this to be an issue and wished to discuss it, but she soon faced an ethical dilemma. The educators perceived her not only as the interviewer but also as a national expert in ECE education, and, as a result, asked for advice and training. Being a teacher educator (as well as a researcher), Kirsch felt it pedagogically sound to answer the questions and promised a professional development course after the data collection in June. Given that researchers tend to agree on the need for some reciprocity in studies, depending on the cultural and social context (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Israel, 2014; Lagunas, 2019), the decision to give ideas, advice and limited feedback during the interviews was ethically justifiable. Kirsch also felt the need to address an ethical issue related to equal opportunities. We had noticed that the educators always took the same children to the local library, including our focus children. The COMPARE team perceived the selection process as unfair and wondered if the educators' choice was intended to facilitate the research process. Kirsch questioned this choice, but the educators made no change. At a different time, however, they adapted their practice following a conversation with Kirsch. In the interview in January, it became clear that the educators used little French despite the multilingual program they were supposed to implement. This interview influenced the educators; several included a French rhyme in the daily morning ritual, and one integrated some French words when reading stories. These changes were noticeable over several months until the focus on French weakened again. We were fully aware of the effect of this interview and any adaptations made, which we reflected in the research process. While the educators had briefly added one additional language, they had, however, not changed their practice of translanguaging.

Analyzing Data on Translanguaging

This section provides details of the processes of coding translanguaging in a multilingual ECE setting.

Transcription and translation

After the data collection, we transcribed the most significant video recordings and added relevant paralinguistic and extralinguistic resources, as well as details of the context. Given that we understood all but one of the languages used by the children and the educators, no translations were necessary. This avoided the potential loss of meaning. However, help was sought for Portuguese. Following ethical procedures, we always used

pseudonyms when we transcribed. Below are two examples of multimodal transcriptions of multilingual interactions with two English translations. We will provide details about the analysis in the following sections.

Excerpt 1

The Luxembourgish-speaking educator, here called Ms Ariane, read a story in German to Jakob (who speaks German at home), Joyce (Luxembourgish), Adrian (Luxembourgish) and Mara (Portuguese, French). She used an interactive book where readers can move or lift certain mobile elements. The conversation was in Luxembourgish (normal script), German (underlined) and French (italics). Relevant non-verbal information has been added.

Excerpt 1 Storytelling in Water, 9 March 2021

		Original utterances	Translation and non-verbal features of communication
1	Ms Ariane (reading)	<u>Und sie staunt: 'Wer klopft denn da?'</u>	{reading} And she is amazed: 'Who is knocking?'
2	Jakob	<u>Der Specht</u>	The woodpecker {pointing at the picture}
3	Ms Ariane	<u>Es ist der Specht.</u>	It's the woodpecker.
4	Jakob	<u>Ja</u>	Yes
5	Ms Ariane	<u>Wie wunderbar.</u> Clock, clock, clock, clock mëscht deen och am Bësch, mëscht dee Lächer an de Bam. (...)	{looking at Jakob} How nice. {Moving the picture of the woodpecker in the book} Clock, clock, clock, clock its makes in the forest, it makes holes in the tree,...)
6	Jakob	De <u>Eichhörnchen.</u>	{pointing} A squirrel.
7	Ms Ariane	Wië sëtzst do? Adrian? Kaweechelchen. Mat engem, wat huet hien do?	Who is sitting there? {pointing to picture} Adrian? Squirrel. With a {pointing}, what does it have here?
8	Joyce	<u>Ein</u>	A
9	Mara	<u>Nuss</u>	Nut
10	Joyce	<u>Nein</u>	No
11	Ms Ariane	Wei seet een dofir?	How do you say? {pointing, looking at Joyce}
12	Joyce	<u>Das ist eine schöne</u> Prabbeli.	This is a nice umbrella. {looking at educator}
13	Ms Ariane	Prabbeli, richtig.	Umbrella {nodding}, correct.
14	Jakob	Nee, <u>ein Regenschirm.</u>	No, an umbrella.
15	Ms Ariane	An op Franséisich? Weess de dat och?	And in French? {looking at Joyce} Do you know as well?
16	Joyce		{nodding}
17	Ms Ariane	Wéi dann? <i>Parapluie</i>	How? {looking at Joyce} Umbrella {articulating clearly, segmenting}

Excerpt 2

Ms Isabela (who has a Portuguese background) first read a book in Luxembourgish to Luisa (who speaks Portuguese at home) and Tobias (German) using Luxembourgish and Portuguese. Next, she read a book about the sandman in German to Tobias, switching from Luxembourgish to German. The conversation was in Luxembourgish (normal script), German (underlined) and Portuguese (italics).

Excerpt 2 Storytelling in Water, 9 March 2021

		Original utterances	Translation and non-verbal features of communication
1	Ms Isabela	D'Mamma Schnubeldubidu gëtt him Zopp. Mësch d'Mamma och Zopp? <i>A mamã faz sopa para Luisa?</i>	Mother Schnubeldubidu gives him soup. {showing the picture, looking at both children} Does mummy make soup too? <i>Does mummy make soup for Luisa?</i>
2	Luisa		{nodding}
3	Ms Isabela	Jo. Tobias, mësch d'Mamma och Zopp fir dech? (...)	Yes. {nodding, then looking at the boy} Tobias, does mummy also make soup for you? (...)
4	Ms Isabela	<u>Und dann macht er so mit dem Sand</u>	<u>And then he does this with the sand</u> {illustrating picture, simulating sprinkling sand with fingers}
5	Tobias		{laughing}
6	Ms Isabela	<u>Und dann machst du mal so und schläfst ein.</u>	<u>And then you do this</u> {rubbing eyes} <u>and fall asleep.</u>
7	Tobias	<u>Dann kucke ich</u>	<u>Then I will watch.</u>
8	Ms Isabela	<u>Kuckst du heute ob das Sandmännchen kommt?</u>	{smiling} <u>Will you check if the sandman comes today?</u>

Translanguaging as the use of one's semiotic repertoire

To analyze translanguaging, we identified multilingual interactions such as the examples above. In Excerpts 1 and 2, we can focus on the individuals and examine the ways in which children and educators combine and orchestrate features of their non-verbal repertoires (e.g. tone of voice, pace, gestures) and verbal repertoires in flexible ways, either at the intersentence level (see Excerpt 1, Lines 5 and 17; Excerpt 2, Line 1) or the intrasentence level (see Excerpt 1, Lines 6 and 12) in relation to the interlocutors. For example, Ms Ariane switches to German when talking to Jakob and to Luxembourgish when talking to Adrian and Joyce (see Excerpt 1, Lines 3, 7 and 11). Luxembourgish-speaking Joyce speaks in German (Excerpt 1, Lines 8 and 10) before changing to Luxembourgish (Line 12). Similarly, Ms Isabela changes from Portuguese to Luxembourgish and German when she speaks to Luisa and Tobias (Excerpt 2, Lines 1, 3 and 4). A comparison of both excerpts with other transcripts shows that they are representative of the translanguaging practice in this setting.

Coding translingual interactions: Language alternation, translation and home languaging

Rather than analyzing the individuals' deployment of their semiotic repertoire, we can examine the communicative acts entailed in translanguaging. Language alternation and translation are typical strategies in ECE contexts in Luxembourg (Kirsch *et al.*, 2020; Neumann, 2015) and elsewhere. Before showing how we coded some of the utterances in Excerpts 1 and 2, we explain the meaning of these terms. Language alternation and translation have been identified in empirical studies involving children (Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Kirsch, 2024; Mary & Young, 2017) and adolescent and adult learners in secondary schools and in higher education (García & Sylvan, 2011; Nikula & Moore, 2019; Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2019). The teachers in the abovementioned studies used two (or more) languages in either monoglossic or heteroglossic spaces. In the first scenario, they used two languages, one after the other, thus drawing on features of one linguistic repertoire at a time (e.g. 'cross-language recapping' in Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2019). In the other scenario, teachers opened spaces for transglossic interactions. This could mean either that teachers and learners produced mixed utterances (e.g. 'simultaneous code-mixing' in Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2019) or that different people drew on features of different languages. For example, a teacher addressed the students in English, the language of instruction, while the students shifted to Spanish (Nikula & Moore, 2019). In Luxembourg, Kirsch identified a particular type of language alternation. She coined the term 'home languaging' (2020) to denote situations of language separation where professionals used the dominant language of the center as well as several home languages, while remaining in a monolingual mode with each child (Kirsch & Seele, 2020). Language alternation, translation and home languaging can also be identified in Excerpts 1 and 2.

In Excerpt 1, Ms Ariane translated the words 'squirrel' and 'umbrella' into Luxembourgish and French, respectively (Lines 7 and 17), whereas Jacob offered the German words for 'squirrel' and 'umbrella' in Lines 6 and 14. There are also translations in Excerpt 2, where Ms Isabela repeated the same question in Luxembourgish and Portuguese, offering a translation (Lines 1 and 3). However, overall, Excerpt 2 is more monolingual in its orientation, as Ms Isabela engaged frequently in 'home languaging'. She opened monolingual spaces where she and the children communicated in the children's home language over several turns. She shifted to Portuguese with Luisa and to German with Tristan. Excerpt 2 is representative, as Ms Isabela frequently communicated with Luisa in Portuguese while communicating in a different language with other children. The situation is reminiscent of the lunch situation with Ms Anna, described in Section 2 (Kirsch, 2020). It is interesting to note, however, that Ms Isabela frequently used Portuguese when interacting

with Luisa while using Luxembourgish with the other children. She did not use German with Tobias (as in Excerpt 2) or French with Mara. Portuguese, her own home language, seemed to have a special status.

To understand literacy practices in multilingual contexts, we need to go beyond the identification of the multilingual interactions and engage in a micro-analysis of teacher–child talk. While Duarte (2019) uses Mercer’s (2004) discourse analysis for this purpose, we also used an approach to conversation analysis underpinned by sociocultural theories (Seedhouse, 2005). This analysis shows that Ms Ariane gives feedback (Excerpt 1, Lines 3 and 13), explains (Line 5) and asks questions (Lines 7, 11 and 15). As in other excerpts, she frequently operates at the word-level and asks for labels in German and in French. While the labeling practice was typical, the inclusion of French was not. Ms Ariane only began to do so following an interview with Kirsch and the manager, as described previously. Looking at books became akin to a vocabulary exercise in multiple languages. In contrast, Ms Isabela typically tried to draw children into short conversations related to various aspects of the book (Excerpt 2, Lines 1, 3 and 6). Her use of the children’s home languages, particularly Portuguese, and her connections to their experiences at home suggest that she values the children’s well-being.

The purpose of translanguaging

To examine the educators’ purpose of translanguaging in greater depth, it is necessary to triangulate the video recordings with the interviews that were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this case, we noticed that the manager of the center and the specialist educator for multilingual education appreciated their colleagues’ frequent switching to children’s home languages, particularly Portuguese, which they regarded as facilitating communication and valuing the children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as reported in studies elsewhere (Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Mary & Young, 2017; Lewis *et al.*, 2012). They appeared to perceive translanguaging as a useful strategy (Poza, 2017) to develop a positive relationship with children, while sharing books, for instance, rather than a multilingual pedagogy that values all home languages and leverages the learners’ complex repertoire for learning. If learning was a focus of an activity, as perhaps unintentionally in Ms Ariane’s multilingual label-quest, learning became very formal and was underpinned by an additive approach to bilingualism (García *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, while the educators intentionally translanguaged to include some children, they did not seem to be aware that not all majority and minority languages had a similar status in their center or that the ways languages were used could leave some children feeling different. They seemed unaware that language practices are tied to language ideologies and hegemonic forces. These findings invite further analysis of

the interviews in relation to the educators' pedagogy and understanding of inclusion, as well as their language ideologies. They also call for further analysis of the children's reactions when the educators engaged in home languaging with them. We can investigate if and when children felt privileged or that they were being 'othered' (Tomauske, 2017) and how beneficial translanguaging was for whom and under what conditions.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to define and operationalize translanguaging and explain how we collected and analyzed data on translanguaging in literacy practices, in multilingual ECE settings in Luxembourg. A particular focus was put on procedural ethics and ethics in practice as we carried out research with young children and examined languaging practices. This chapter shows the extent to which our understanding of the concept of translanguaging is shaped by international discourses, the national multilingual context, the local context and the recent language-in-education policies. Thus, it also illustrates how context-dependent the researchers' understanding of translanguaging is. In addition, it explains the situatedness of the research questions and methodology, including the need for translations, the coding of languages and the relevance of our code 'home languaging'. Our coding may seem problematic, as we name the languages while, at the same time, trying to be consistent with the theory of translanguaging, which holds that all languages are part of one single repertoire. By separating majority languages and home languages, we risk reinforcing the very language hierarchies we are trying to highlight and dismantle. Researching language practices is never a neutral exercise; therefore, it is important to contextualize the findings, reflect on the research process and position ourselves as researchers. As shown, investigating multilingual practices (and doing so as multilingual researchers) influences the very context we research. We have explained the way interviews can influence educators. Finally, our goal to produce educational research that is meaningful and useful, and our understanding of the need to give something back to the participants, also shaped the research process. As indicated, we identified an appropriate window where we could offer a training session to the participating educators. We hope that our reflections have provided valuable insights into the process of researching translanguaging with multilingual learners and that it will guide other researchers.

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