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## Possible ways of translanguaging at the school's micro-level. The aftermath of a translanguaging project of introducing non-standardised ways of speaking to school for Roma bilingual children

### Abstract

The present study encounters the long-term process of a linguistic ethnographic research. The research took place in a primary school in Hungary, with students being Hungarian-Romani speaking bilingual Roma children and Hungarian as the language of instruction. The research, initiated in 2016, developed an educational approach in the school based on a translanguaging stance through multiple sub-projects and a three-year Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Program. The applied translanguaging approach involved the Roma children's home ways of speaking into the children's learning. Translanguaging was first introduced at the macro level of the school with the cooperation of the school's management, participant researchers, teachers, parents, teacher trainees and university students. The Erasmus program terminated in 2021. This study details the process of how, following the completion of this macro-level project, translanguaging can be sustained at the micro level within the school. It also discusses the difficulties and challenges faced by teachers when implementing translanguaging at the micro level, after macro-level planning and strategy have concluded.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, macro and micro level, Roma children, bilingual education

## Introduction

In 2019, researchers, primary teachers and university students gathered to collaborate in an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Programme to make school environments more suitable and beneficial for Romani-speaking bilingual children. Among the participant institutions, one of the primary schools is Magiszter School, located in northeast Hungary. In this school, all the pupils are considered to be Roma bilingual children; however, the school is monolingual, and the language of instruction is different from the Roma children's home language, which challenges both the learning and the teaching processes in the school.

By taking part in this Erasmus+ international cooperation, the Headteacher of the Magiszter school and the co-author of the present article have taken up translanguaging as a theoretical framework in the school's language policy at the macro level. The macro level is an institution's management level and involves a school's organised language management (García, Hesson, 2015, p. 222). Scholars, students, parents, and teachers worked together throughout the project to find ways of introducing translanguaging into the teaching process at the school. The cooperation involved four universities and two primary schools, and it aimed to help teachers find ways of involving children's home languages in the teaching and learning processes.

In 2022, the project terminated, which raises a question: what happens in the school and the students' lives after such a significant project ends? How can it continue to build on that work without the institutional background the Erasmus+ cooperation provided? What can one teacher do to continue serving the idea of translanguaging in the classroom? This article will introduce our experiences on how a translanguaging stance can be maintained in a class at the micro-level after finishing a remarkable project that had a significant impact on the school's approach to bilingualism without the macro-level promotion of translanguaging and the collaboration of academic and non-academic members.

### 1. Translanguaging for Equal Opportunities

Our Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Program called *Translanguaging for Equal Opportunities: Speaking Romani at School* was a collaboration of four universities (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church of Hungary, University College London, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia) and two primary schools (Magiszter Primary School in a small town in northeast Hungary and the Jedlik Ányos Primary School in a small village called Zemné in Slovakia). Both primary schools are engaged in teaching Roma children. However, their situations are different. The lan-

guage of instruction is Hungarian in the primary school in Slovakia, but they also have to involve Slovakian as a second language in the curriculum. Most of the Jedlik Ányos Primary School pupils are Roma, mostly living in Romani-Hungarian bilingual families. However, most Roma families' home language is Romani rather than Hungarian. Some of the family members also speak Slovakian. At the same time, the Magiszter Primary School in Hungary is situated next to a segregated area where Vlach Roma people live. Therefore, the pupil composition at the Magiszter Primary School is more homogeneous regarding ethnicity and language, as all the pupils and their families consider themselves as Vlach Roma. What is common in both primary schools is the circumstance that bilingual Roma pupils study in monolingual school systems. The Roma bilingual children's speaking methods differ from that of the school's language of instruction. Generally, this difference is valued negatively at school, and the Roma pupils' home language practices confront the standard language ideology dominant in the school.

The Erasmus+ project was a collaborative project in which primary school teachers, pupils and parents worked together with researchers and university students to develop a translanguaging approach to enhance bilingual Roma pupils' learning and to build ways of communication through translanguaging linguistic practices in order to help to connect pupils with teachers at school. The project was initiated by researchers and implemented at the macro level of the primary schools: participation was optional for teachers.

In the present article, we focus on the Magiszter Primary School in Hungary to give an account of the aftermath of the project: in what ways can the translanguaging approach be maintained once the macro-level initiative is completed? We aim to emphasise the teacher's agency in creating translanguaging space for pupils, allowing them to build on their linguistic practices even if these are different from the language of instruction at the school.

Focusing on the Magister School, the authors of this article first present the situation of Roma students in Hungary, followed by a summary of the theoretical foundations of translanguaging. Highlighting the macro-level projects introduced for years that have shaped the work of the Magister School, we also discuss how the school managed to maintain a translanguaging approach at the micro level following the conclusion of international collaborations. We briefly address the challenges in planning and executing translanguaging activities at the micro level. To illustrate the process of translanguaging work in the classroom, we provide a specific classroom example.

### **1.1. Romani speakers in Hungary**

In Hungary, most Roman-Hungarian-speaking people identify themselves as Vlach Roma and speak local varieties of Romani. However, this definition as-

sumes the 'named language' and the 'standard language' ideologies (Li, 2023, p. 1). Romani is often considered a language like other European (state or official) languages. The self-identification of Roma people is often based on the same ideologies. Based on the 'standard language' ideology, the idea is that for a Roma social organisation, a named language is needed, so Romani ways of speaking must be standardised (Heltai, 2020c, p. 466). However, standardisation cannot be achieved without a nation-state or power centre (Busch, 2012, p. 71). Since it is not an official language anywhere, its standard version cannot become widespread due to the lack of institutional support. It poses challenges in education because students do not adapt to a central standard, even if there is a codification basis in some specific countries. There have been attempts at standardising Romani in recent decades in Hungary in which a variety of the Romani called *Lovari* has been put as the standard Romani. However, many speakers of Romani do not understand this variety (Heltai, 2020c, p. 467). *Lovari* remains a term that is not commonly used. Its existence may be known, but nobody aligns their practices with it. Vlach Roma communities prefer to use the local ways of speaking. In Hungary, Romani does not appear as the language of instruction at schools; it is only taught additionally as a foreign or heritage language (Lakatos, 2012).

The standard of a language is linked to access to education and public community systems, creating a unity of language, ethnicity, and space (Gal, 2008), and these provide the basis of the one language nation-one state. In Hungary, the standard definition of Roma defines political, social, and economic actions. For example, Roma people are defined as a unified ethnic group in the Law on the Rights of Nationalities, regardless of the self-identification of Roma people and the different languages they speak (for example, Romani, Boyash, Kárpáti cigány). Due to the diversity of definitions, it can be contradictory to determine who is considered Roma. In Hungary, the term "Gypsy" or "Roma" as a social category is mainly linked to low social and economic status (Bartha, Hámori, 2011), unemployment, unfavourable living conditions, poor health conditions, and lack of education (Nagy, 2007). It signifies a marginalised social position (Nagy, 2020, p. 169) and often designates stigmatised, excluded, and segregated groups (Kemény, Janky, Lengyel, 2004; Heltai, 2020a).

Our Erasmus+ project was based on prior linguistic ethnographic research that provided data about the local ideologies, attitudes and social discourses. Interviews with teachers from the Magiszter Primary School indicate the values attached to the Roma bilingual pupils' speaking methods and the locally relevant power relations. The teachers generally regard the Romani speaking methods as a "mixed language", and by comparing them to the standard Hungarian used at school, they are not considered good enough. From the Roma pupils' perspective, the values attached to their ways of speaking are similar to those of the

teachers. Since Hungarian is considered the language needed for academic achievement, parents encourage their children not to use Romani in school, with which they express a desire to assimilate and not to belong to a stigmatised ethnic group. However, Roma pupils and their parents do not only compare their home linguistic practices to the standard Hungarian but to the standard Romani as well. For them, the “real language” is the standard form of Romani, the Lovari, and their local variety of Romani is not considered valuable in comparison.

The monolingual and standard linguistic ideologies and categorisations greatly influence how teachers, pupils, and their parents at the Magiszter School think about languages. According to these ways of thinking, the standard variety is considered authentic, pure language. For example, the standard Hungarian as the language of instruction in the school is prestigious because this is considered to be the key to academic success. In contrast, the children’s home language practices are not regarded as “real” or “pure”. The socialisation of the children in the bilingual Roma families is characterised by a different perception of languages and ways of speaking as these families have a different understanding of language boundaries than that of the monolingual perception which is typical of the school (Tarsoly, Heltai, 2023a, p. 1). For example, there are linguistic resources in the local ways of speaking that, based on groups, are described as Hungarian loanwords; however, these linguistic resources are perceived as Romani words for the Romani speakers (Heltai, 2020a, p. 94). Therefore, instead of another standardising attempt, the members of the Erasmus+ project made the children’s home linguistic practices part of the schoolwork, using the theory of translanguaging as the basis for the project, because translanguaging pedagogy challenges monolingual ideologies in education (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; García, 2014).

## 1.2. About Translanguaging

An Irish scholar, Con Williams (1994), used the term *trawsieithu* to describe a teaching practice for Welsh-English bilingual classes. This practice involved both English and Welsh in the language learning process for the students to improve their skills in both languages and develop academic knowledge. The term then became widely spread in critical sociolinguistic studies (García, Li, 2018, p. 1), and it is used in three interpretations: first to describe bilinguals’ ways of speaking, second as a theoretical perspective, third as a name of a pedagogical approach to learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms.

Bilingual speaking is not segmented into languages but is based on a unitary linguistic repertoire (Li, 2011; Otheguy et al., 2019; Heltai, 2021). Focusing on language as action, translanguaging as ways of speaking refers to speakers’ linguistic practices that go beyond the named languages: “Translanguaging refers

to the use of language as a dynamic repertoire and not as a system with socially and politically defined boundaries” (García, Li, 2018, p. 1). Speakers’ repertoire is a broader view of language as a semiotic system includes linguistic and multi-modal signs that together make up the speaker’s communicative repertoire (García, Li, 2018, p. 1). Semiotic resources include features such as the tone of our voice, gestures, mimics, body language, appearance, etc. (Blommaert, Rampton, 2011, p. 6). Translanguaging as the action of linguistic practices shifts focus from the languages to the speaker’s agency to select and deploy the semiotic features to communicate with others (García, Li, 2018, p. 2).

As Li (2018) explains how translanguaging can be considered a theoretical perspective on language, he argues that translanguaging speaking is dynamic and involves creative linguistic practices. Approaches to multilingualism based on the ideology of “named languages” are inadequate for describing this dynamic and complex linguistic reality because they focus on named languages. With a translanguaging theoretical approach, Li (2018) questions linguistic notions and dichotomies based on the ideology of “named languages”, such as majority versus minority or target versus mother tongue languages. By this, translanguaging has the means to transform power relations. It also offers an alternative view of language learning, emphasising the role of social interactions as a way to gain experiences of languaging activities (Li, 2018, p. 17).

As a pedagogical approach to learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms (García, Kleyn, 2016), translanguaging builds on the assumption of the unitary repertoire of speakers (Vogel, García, 2017) and designs the learning process based on the whole linguistic repertoire (García, Kleyn, 2016). It means that bilingual children’s home linguistic practices also become part of the learning and teaching process. Thus, implementing translanguaging as a pedagogical approach to teaching allows pupils to access academic content with the semiotic resources they bring from home and learn new ones through the translanguaging classroom experience (García, Li, 2015). By making minority languages appear in the school, translanguaging leads to social justice and academic achievement (García, Kleyn, 2016; García, Otheguy, 2021).

### **1.3. The Translanguaging for Equal Opportunities Erasmus+ project**

The beginning of our project dates back to 2016 when a multi-sited linguistic ethnography research began in the Magiszter Primary School and the Vlach Roma community from where the pupils go to school. Linguistic ethnography has been an increasingly significant approach in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics in the last 20 years that blends linguistic and ethnographic elements (Tusting, 2020). It considers “foreign” and “familiar” categories in local realities by questioning existing but oversimplified ethnocentric definitions, aiming to

understand categories operated by speakers rather than imposing categories (Rampton, Maybin, Roberts, 2015). In this introductory course of the research, a research group of university students aimed to discover the linguistic background of the Vlach Roma bilingual children and the local categories describing their ways of speaking.

The research group found that the children's ways of speaking in the local mindset about ethnicity and language are not determined according to named languages. The description of the bilingual home environment shows significant diversity, and Romani and non-Romani individuals have differing opinions about it. Linguistic socialisation is usually associated with Romani, but it is added that it also takes place in Hungarian. The reason behind the varied views on bilingual linguistic practices is that while the non-Roma teachers perceive the Romani and Hungarian bilingual ways of speaking as the coexistence of languages, the Roma bilingual speakers do not always describe their ways of speaking along named languages but as complex and constantly changing practices (Heltai, 2020a, p. 96).

Building on the linguistic ethnographic research findings, the research group had begun a project of translanguaging language pedagogy. This project aimed to find a place for children's home ways of speaking in the school, thereby improving the children's school well-being and contributing to better academic achievement and improved meaning-making. The experimentation and implementation of translanguaging in the school were supported by the Magiszter Primary School's head teacher and some teaching staff members. In the field of pedagogy in Hungary, translanguaging was almost revolutionary, as theory and practice combined, complementing each other. The head teacher believed Roma families should consider their bilingualism as a strength. However, why did they think this was necessary? From a practical standpoint, it was of utmost importance for the teachers that Roma students be as successful as possible in their academic performance. That is why teachers allowed the use of the home language among students in the school. It was a new approach because most of the teaching staff previously believed pupils should speak Hungarian in the institution.

Not every teacher believed that allowing the children to use their home language could make children more successful in their studies. A small group of teachers tried this new pedagogical approach simply for the sake of innovation, which served as a tool in the hands of the child and could potentially become a method for the teacher as well. The teachers and the research team organised monthly workshops to share the initial experiences among the Magiszter teachers and encourage each other to try out new translanguaging practices in teaching. Until November 2019, 20 workshops were held to explore possible ways to introduce a translanguaging pedagogical stance in the school (Heltai et al., 2023, p. 66). Perhaps this is why the teachers accepted this request, which was sur-

prising to them as well, to allow the children to use the Romani language. Several teachers initially feared that the students would mock them and lose control over the class because they did not know this language. However, their fears were groundless.

On the one hand, the students were pleased with how much easier it was for them to understand new concepts and express themselves in their home language for specific lessons. On the other hand, the teachers who embraced translanguaging consciously prepared the students for the ethical use of the Romani language in the school with the help of the research group. They created a Charta of Translanguaging (Heltai, 2022), describing the rules for school language practices. Today, the students and their parents who attend the school embrace and use their home-speaking methods.

The translanguaging approach to learning allowed additional participatory activities to the collaboration. Members of the research group, Magiszter teachers and children, and their parents worked together during the summer holidays in various activities involving translanguaging. In 2018, local children and university students wrote a theatre play based on a Roma tale in which local ways of Romani speaking were also included in the script. The play was performed twice, once in the local community centre and once in the capital city, Budapest. In 2019, research participants with local children and adults created a series of translanguaging videos<sup>1</sup> which deal with local Roma culture and customs. The summer of 2020 was about a storybook project: Four volumes of translanguaging storybooks (Tiszavasvári Transzlingváló Műhely [Translanguaging Working Group of Tiszavasvári] ed. 2020) were produced and contain Roma tales written by local Roma adults, and the editors are university students from the translanguaging research group. The authors of the storybooks wrote the tales using the letters of the Hungarian alphabet but followed the Romani pronunciation. It resulted in a diversity of individual solutions. Children drew the illustrations in the books from the Magiszter School. All four volumes are available online on the research group's web page (<http://translangedu.hu/elseo-kotet/>).

Translanguaging was introduced to the school at the macro level with participatory characteristics and continued the same way in the Erasmus+ project entitled *Translanguaging for Equal Opportunities: Speaking Romani at School*.

The Erasmus+ project was accomplished with two intellectual outputs: a video repository<sup>2</sup> of translanguaging classroom moments and an accompanying volume (Heltai, Tarsoly, 2023a) based on the videos. The research team created 35 videos and compiled them as a video repository. Each video is approximately 5 to 10 minutes long and structured the same way: in the introduction,

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<sup>1</sup> The videos are available here: <http://translangedu.hu/en/transzfilm-projekt/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kre.hu/romanitranslanguaging/index.php/video-repository/>



the teacher provides context for the following translanguaging classroom moment. Then, teachers, researchers, students, teacher trainees and parents reflect on the translanguaging moment from various perspectives. In the videos, among others, we introduced translanguaging teaching practices such as relying on the pupils' unitary repertoire during lessons and in their assessments, using children's home ways of speaking as a scaffold to help them learn the language of instruction, connecting with parents through translanguaging drama plays; building trust by making Romani visible in the classroom; building confidence in the child by encouraging the self-identification of being a bilingual Roma pupil; changing classroom dynamics between teachers and pupils; innovating creative ways in writing; transforming the linguistic landscape of the school.

The volume is multi-authored: it provided a platform for the researchers, students from the Erasmus+ team, teachers, and parents from the two participating primary schools to share their perspectives and experiences on translanguaging. The volume is divided into four parts. Part I introduces the theoretical considerations of Romani and translanguaging, such as the relationship between non-standardised ways of speaking and language-policy regimes (Laihonen, Heltai, 2023), how the perception of Romani is and what are its consequences (Heltai, Tarsoly, 2023b), and how translanguaging is an alternative perspective (Heltai et al., 2023a). In Part II, the methodological approaches applied in the project are described: translanguaging and participatory ethnography are introduced while describing the data collection process (Heltai et al., 2023b) and analysis (Tarsoly et al., 2023a). This part of the volume accounts for how the authors' multiple perspectives and voices were retained through abduction, analysis, and translation. Part III provides the various perspectives on translanguaging educational practices at the Magiszter School with particular regard to the linguistic repertoire of the children (Heltai et al., 2023c), the involvement of teacher and student roles (Majzik-Lichtenberger et al., 2023a), how mediation is present in translanguaging (Tarsoly et al., 2023b), how a translanguaging shift is taking place in institutional settings (Heltai et al., 2023d), how a translanguaging space is created within the school through schoolscape design and reflective practices (Szabó et al., 2023), and how translanguaging appears in writing activities when a non-standardised language is involved (Heltai et al., 2023e). Adaptive schooling is also discussed in this section (Majzik-Lichtenberger et al., 2023b), and why translanguaging classroom activities involve various voices in stylisation and crossing (Jani-Demetriou et al., 2023). The conclusion (Part IV) summarises the course of the Erasmus+ project, bringing participatory ethnography and translanguaging education together (Heltai, Tarsoly, 2023c).

## 2. The afterlife of the project

After the completion of the project, the macro-level support was discontinued. One explanation is that several teachers, including the school's head teacher, retired, and new staff members who had not been part of this innovation arrived. However, a program that lasted for several years must have a lasting impact. For example, as a result, students and parents often use the Romani language with each other within the school. The teachers working in the school have become accustomed to the fact that the institution has effectively become bilingual because the shift in mindset was executed in a way that did not lead to significant conflicts with the introduction of Romani-related language practices. With the discontinuity of the macro-level support, the responsibility for the continuation of translanguaging falls on the teachers. The present article examines a micro-level case of a teacher who persevered with translanguaging.

The strategic use of translanguaging in classroom lessons has diminished in the school. However, in addition to her retirement, the former head teacher took on the task of teaching a first-grade class. She contemplated whether she should continue the project on her own. She believed that if it helps her pupils, she should pursue translanguaging. Taking on this new role as a class teacher gave opportunity to explore further possibilities of translanguaging practice and observe whether it is possible to implement pedagogical innovation at a micro level within a school.

She experienced the process of the introduction of translanguaging from the school management's perspective: how to deal with opportunities and challenges at the school's macro level. After the programme finished, she determined to continue the work in the classroom. She collaborated with the other author of this paper, a member of the Translanguaging Research group and the Erasmus+ programme. They meet regularly through online meetings and discuss possible ways of collaboration. At the beginning of the academic year of 2022–2023, Erika aimed to start the work systematically. In order to support translanguaging and give a framework to our collaboration, they turned to the theory of collaborative Action Research (AR) based on Burns (1999).

It is not always easy to reconcile theory with the practice in teaching. However, action research deals with real classroom situations. In AR, teachers take on the role of the researcher: they gather systematic knowledge about their teaching practice (Bodó et al., 2022, p. 9). They elaborate new teaching strategies for the student's learning needs and classroom management and intend to share their findings with other teachers. With AR, teachers become reflective practitioners, and by going public, they grow the influence of their findings (Norton, 2009).

The class composition is such that more than half of the students are not eager to speak the Romani language. They come from more affluent families

who aim to integrate into the Hungarian-speaking community. However, the others are much more open to accepting and embracing speaking Romani among themselves at home. At the age of 7, when pupils begin their studies at the Primary level, children and their families do not clearly understand bilingualism and language use at school. The pupils and their parents in Erika's class were unsure whether translanguaging benefited them, so prolonged and planned methods had to be employed to introduce translanguaging into the classroom activities.

Assessing how parents would react if the Romani language appeared in everyday school practices was necessary. As a first step, alongside the Hungarian language flashcards, Erika displayed Romani language flashcards in the classroom when teaching letters. This is how she welcomed the pupils on the first day of school. When parents entered the classroom, they were surprised but interested. They immediately became engaged with the display as they read the Romani language flashcards. The parents found it amusing because it was the first time for many of them to see their local ways of speaking written in the school. Also, one parent had not even seen the words they use daily written down.



Figure 1  
The translanguaging display in Erika's classroom

In case support is not provided at the macro level, the implementation of translanguaging can still occur at the micro level. In this case, teachers must develop strategies to introduce translanguaging to the parents and find solutions to emerging problems. Erika's strategy was to involve parents as much as possible and engage with them in conversations to find out parents' beliefs and attitudes towards languages and translanguaging. Based on such conversations, Erika saw that the parents themselves could not always entirely place in their value system that they were using a usually not accepted language alongside Hungarian in the classroom, one that society did not recognise as an authentic language. Parents expressed their everyday experiences that members of the majority society still looked down on them. If they used a foreign language in front of non-Roma, they would become even more excluded. Such beliefs of the parents had been expressed during the linguistic ethnographic field works, as well as in the Erasmus+ project (Heltai et al., 2023, p. 108). Initially, when experiencing translanguaging at school for the first time, the parents believed that their children can only escape this stigmatised situation if they conform to the expectations of the majority society as much as possible. That is why parents preferred not to use Romani anywhere except at home. However, this stance has changed throughout the Erasmus+ project. When the former head teacher began teaching a grade one class, the newcomer pupils' parents were in a similar situation regarding meeting translanguaging for the first time. An ambivalent feeling existed among the parents because, despite all their concerns, they felt that using their language signifies belonging and attachment in their closed community. If they reject the language, it pushes them away from the closed community that represents safety to them. During the initial phase of the introduction of translanguaging, more and more parents slowly formulated the idea that rejecting their home ways of speaking does not necessarily mean that non-Roma people will accept and embrace them. From this point on, more parents articulated in conversations with Erika that the appearance of the Romani language through translanguaging activities could be a crutch for better academic performance. It also became apparent that the local ways of Romani speaking were a part of their sense of community and belonging.

Implementing translanguaging at the micro level does not mean that macro-level processes existing in the community will not affect the process. The parents' articulations of the values concerning languages and translanguaging remain problematic even after a whole school year. In their everyday lives, parents refrain from using the language when shopping or working because they believe it draws attention to them. Many times, they prefer to blend in with the majority. In this initial phase of the implementation of translanguaging, most parents expressed that it was not a problem if the children spoke Romani during one or two lessons in class. However, they expected the students to speak Hungarian

and eventually English. They saw the key to success and achievement in the confident use of these two languages and not Romani. This experience shows that parents' concerns can reoccur for various reasons. For example, in grade one at the Magiszter, parents were newcomers to the school and their children; these recurring fears have to be dealt with repeatedly at the micro level.

For educators, a restraining factor in the practical application of translanguaging is that most society stigmatises non-standard ways of Romani speaking. Therefore, it is also emphasised in this article that it is essential to convince Roma parents of the advantages of translanguaging and the local society as well. A very effective communication strategy must be developed for Roma and non-Roma people. Even if they cannot fully support a translanguaging approach, they should at least not put obstacles in the way of introducing the use of children's home languages in the classroom.

Implementing translanguaging at the micro level needs carefully planned strategies based on the needs of the pupils. The former head teacher of Magiszter as a class teacher had the following issue to deal with: according to García and Li (2014), translanguaging is the standard way bilinguals speak; however, with the above-described attitudes of parents towards speaking in Romani, at Magiszter Primary School, this bilingual way of speaking was restricted strictly to the home of the children. As a first step, Erika had to find a way to encourage her pupils to feel comfortable speaking Romani in the school. Erika believed that the use of Romani itself should be a motivating factor for the children. Therefore, she integrated a translanguaging component into everyday activities. It was the quiet break after lunch when they read and watched a story. Afterwards, the children had the opportunity to retell the story. The process, which has become customary by now, had a slow start: initially, almost everyone would retell the story in Hungarian. Then, those who could also retell it in Romani received an extra reward sticker, which the children highly appreciated. As a result, more and more of them wanted to retell the post-lunch stories in both Hungarian and Romani. They almost imperceptibly started using the language in more situations and during lessons.

Translanguaging in the classroom has other challenges as well. In order to work out strategies for translanguaging activities and communication in the classroom, teachers will face the most asked questions, such as how to build on linguistic resources that the teacher does not have access to? A common fear mentioned often at the teachers' workshops is that students could use translanguaging to communicate with each other so that the teacher would not understand them. Although Erika does not speak Romani, she relied on other semiotic resources; a word or intonation signals if the children used their language skills to resolve disputes secretly among themselves. Additionally, by this point of translanguaging stories, Erika's class also became accustomed to immediately retelling the Romani sentences in Hungarian as well.

### 3. A translanguaging lesson with first graders

As part of their collaboration, the authors of the present article planned a shared translanguaging session. After the Erasmus+ project ended, Bernadett took on teaching a first-grade class in an international school in Cyprus. She was introduced to Erika's pupils not as a researcher but as a first-grade teacher.

As the first activity, Erika shared *Beauty and the Beast* as the after-lunch story with the children. She asked them to retell the story in Romani or translanguaging ways ("in your own words", as she put it in her instruction). The children giving prompt answers were praised, and Romani's answers received extra compliments. Pupils translated their Romani answers into Hungarian.

For the second activity, Bernadett introduced an African traditional tale taught in first grade at that time of the academic year at the international school. The tale's title is "Handa's Surprise", a book by Eileen Browne (1994). The beautifully illustrated book brings alive an African village life and introduces children to the animals and fruits typical in that area. Bernadett chose the book because it is worded, and the story's main plot is told only by the semiotic resources of the pictures, not explained or mentioned in the written text of the book. First, she read the story to the children in Hungarian. Then, she showed the animated version of the book on YouTube,<sup>3</sup> in which the story is read out loud in English without subtitles. The story could be divided into small sections for translation along with the simple sentences and the layout of the scenes. Bernadett asked the children to translate the sentences into Romani or Hungarian. In line with her expectations, the children enjoyed the story and liked the surprise at the end of the story. It was peculiar how the details in connection with the semiotic resources linked to African heritage drew the pupils' attention: that people carry things on their heads, the water only available at the fountain in the middle of the village, and the African heritage, together with the village life interlinked with poverty; for example the flies the illustrator drew on each picture and the animation highlighted them by giving them motion or the way the characters were dressed.

The lesson relied on translanguaging in multiple ways. First, the pupils needed to activate all their linguistic resources through translation. The second task involved interpreting semiotic resources, allowing the children to rely on their previous experiences and be creative while meaning-making the unknown and, for example, giving names to unknown fruits and animals (the bird was called pigeon, and the guava became pear). Third, translanguaging appeared during this class session as a form of mediation (García and Li, 2014; Tarsoly et al., 2023) between two different cultures as translanguaging enacted semiotic

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<sup>3</sup> [https://youtu.be/XyIV\\_xYi0as?si=dij2gx\\_k7TwEpugi](https://youtu.be/XyIV_xYi0as?si=dij2gx_k7TwEpugi)

resources for meaning-making that was constrained by the different history of Handa's story and the pupils were engaged with meanings across the different social worlds of Handa and that of theirs as they searched for common or distinct features. Finally, through this translinguaging session, the students experienced that bilingualism is valuable. Besides Hungarian and Romani, English was highlighted by the pupils as a precious asset and along with this, the significance of language learning (and learning generally) became also esteemed.

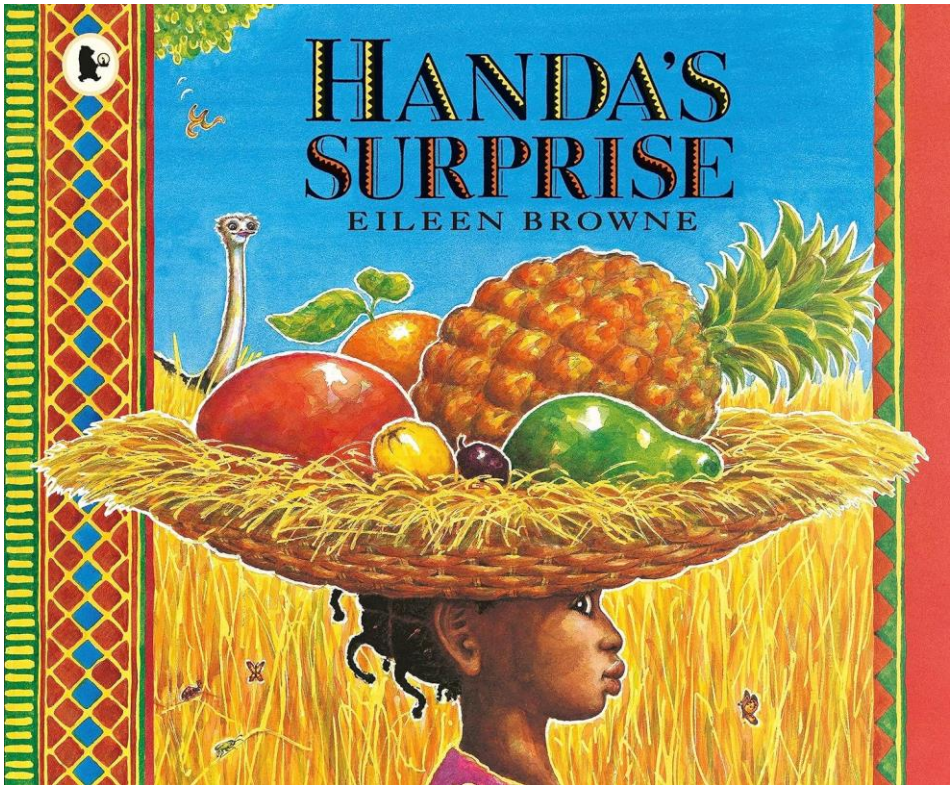


Figure 2  
Handa's Surprise

## Conclusion

In the present article, the authors aimed to share their experiences on implementing translinguaging at the micro level of a school. Translinguaging was not unknown in the Magiszter school among the teachers because, formerly, the school had been involved in several translinguaging activities and an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Programme. However, all these prior activities were intro-

duced to the school not only at the micro but also at the macro level. First, we introduced how translanguaging was present at the school in various projects before our collaboration. Sharing the former head teacher's experiences as a class teacher, we demonstrated how to maintain translanguaging at the micro level of a classroom. These experiences show that it is possible to promote translanguaging independently without macro-level support. We brought attention to how important it is to work continuously with the parents at the micro level as parental concerns reoccur because the work initiated by the larger project can be continued on a smaller scale while maintaining engagement with parents. Our translanguaging session was an example that translanguaging is not only related to language-based educational activities but also mindset-shaping as it involves languages in learning and is also about semiotic resources, cultures, customs, and creativity. At the time of writing this article, Erika's pupils are in second grade, and this raises the next step that needs carefully planned strategies: how to introduce translanguaging into writing. Heltai (2020c; Heltai et al., 2023e) has examined in Magiszter's context how speakers of Romani as non-standard speaking can develop literacy practices. The next step could be to examine how a teacher can involve non-standard and heterogeneous writing in translanguaging activities for pupils who happen to learn reading and writing.

The way translanguaging was brought into the Magiszter has been a unique experience that revealed an important lesson: the previous practice cannot be erased through translanguaging. A transformational process has started in the Magiszter that involves both micro and macro-level structures, and this cannot be taken away from the children and their parents anymore. The results of this translanguaging pedagogical approach are difficult to quantify with numbers objectively. However, the fact that the Roma students of Magiszter Primary School use their home ways of speaking in class and can learn and express themselves relying on their whole linguistic repertoire, including Romani, makes their learning more effective, especially when recounting texts and translanguaging has visible and precise outcomes.

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## **Możliwe sposoby transjęzyczności w szkole na poziomie mikro. Konsekwencje transjęzycznego projektu polegającego na wprowadzeniu do szkoły niestandardyzowanych sposobów mówienia dla dwujęzycznych dzieci romskich**

### **Streszczenie**

Niniejsze studium dotyczy długoterminowego procesu etnograficznych badań językowych. Badania miały miejsce w szkole podstawowej na Węgrzech, gdzie uczniami były dwujęzyczne dzieci romskie mówiące po węgiersku i rumuńsku, a językiem wykładowym był węgierski. W ramach badań, zainicjowanych w 2016 r., opracowano w szkole podejście edukacyjne oparte na transjęzyczności poprzez liczne podprojekty i trzyletni program partnerstwa strategicznego Erasmus+. Zastosowane podejście transjęzyczności obejmowało domowe sposoby mówienia dzieci romskich w nauce dzieci. Transjęzyczność została po raz pierwszy wprowadzona na poziomie makro szkoły we współpracy z dyrekcją szkoły, badaczami, nauczycielami, rodzicami, stażystami i studentami. Program Erasmus zakończył się w 2021 roku. Niniejsze badanie szczegółowo opisuje, w jaki sposób, po zakończeniu tego projektu na poziomie makro, można utrzymać transjęzyczność na poziomie mikro w szkole. Omówiono również trudności i wyzwania, z jakimi borykają się nauczyciele podczas wdrażania transjęzyczności na poziomie mikro, po zakończeniu planowania i strategii na poziomie makro.

**Słowa kluczowe:** transjęzyczność; poziom makro i mikro, dzieci romskie; edukacja dwujęzyczna.