



Bilingual education teachers and learners in a preschool context: Instructional and interactional translanguaging spaces

Kenan Dikilitaş^{a,*}, Vahid Bahrami^b, Nil Tugce Erbakan^c

^a University of Stavanger, Kitty Kiellands Hus Stavanger, 8600, Norway

^b University of New South Wales, School of Education, NSW 2052, Sydney, Australia

^c Bahçeşehir University Yıldız, Çırağan Cd., 34349, Beşiktaş/İstanbul, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how bilingual education teachers' flexible delivery of instructional translanguaging within a bilingual preschool in the predominately monolingual context of Turkey could provide children with a space for bilingual interaction. The research aim is to analyse the children's use of translanguaging in relation to translanguaging pedagogy of the teachers. These flexible practices involved two levels of translanguaging. One was teachers' design of the teaching materials, assigning either Turkish or English to each task as the instructional and interactional languages. The other was the facilitation of children's unenforced flexibility to alternate and shuttle between Turkish and English. Six co-teachers were interviewed online about their bilingual teaching experiences and their journals containing children's translanguaging utterances were obtained. Implications for teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers in bilingual education contexts are discussed.

1. Introduction

In officially monolingual contexts such as Turkey, language learners' vernaculars have often been kept detached from English learnt as an additional language (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2020). In these contexts, the first languages (L1) of learners are often institutionally barred as a language of instruction and interaction due partly to the belief that reliance on L1 could decelerate the English learning process (Hall & Cook, 2012), and that it is an indication of inadequate target language proficiency (Hughes et al., 2006). Furthermore, language teachers themselves may be apprehensive of using learners' L1 due to perceived potential cross-contamination with the target language (Jacobson & Faltis, 1990). This could be traced back to types of training where teachers are taught to expose students to the additional language only (Kramsch, 2014) and where the facilitating role of one's native language is ignored (Turnbull, 2018). These tendencies are common in communicative language teaching, which foregrounds the use of the target language in activities that seem to replicate real-life language use (Savignon, 2018). However, students who are deprived of using their full language repertoire can experience challenges in developing verbal participation when they cannot express the meanings they mentally construct in the imposed language (see Cenoz & Gorter, 2021).

In response, bilingual education (BE) programs have sometimes been designed and implemented in such contexts. Yet, the focus of instruction in such programs may be on teaching the two languages separately, rather than educating students by utilizing a truly bilingual pedagogy (Sánchez et al., 2018). An alternative approach which addresses this issue is translanguaging-driven BE. Translanguaging, as Lewis et al. (2012) argue, refers to the learner-driven alternation of their available language features (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017) and to the selection of various features of each language in order to make meaning creatively (García & Li, 2014). It is also distinct from code-switching as translanguaging is concerned with the process of communication where the interlocutors rely smoothly on their entire language repertoire while in code-switching there is a rather mechanical switch from one language to the other (see Oliver et al., 2021). Moreover, according to García (2011) translanguaging transcends code-switching because it involves multi-modal interactive acts in more than one language through, for instance, reading, writing, discussing, and/or signing. Translanguaging could function as a linguistic tool that can instigate flexible bilingual use in monolingual contexts because the learners are in the process of continuous linguistic development and thus in need of developmentally appropriate resources (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Yet as important as such spontaneous translanguaging is, it may have

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: kenan.dikilitas@uis.no (K. Dikilitaş), v.bahrami@unsw.edu.au (V. Bahrami), nil.erbakan32@gmail.com (N.T. Erbakan).

differential effects on the learners' linguistic and interactional development, and thus pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz, 2017) with teachers who can facilitate the alternation and shuttling between and beyond all linguistic resources possessed is additionally required (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García & Li, 2014). Consequently, English language teachers in monolingual contexts need to undertake new roles within such a pedagogical approach, including that of interactive communicator and translanguaging facilitator (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2020). The final role is one of the key skills these teachers need to enact in the classroom where two languages are used systematically. Teachers aiming to learn to conduct translanguaging pedagogy could design tasks which can activate students' full language repertoire (Sánchez et al., 2018; Vogel and García, 2017) to make meaningful interaction (Arroyo-Romano, 2016). Of course, this is not to claim that learning and implementing translanguaging pedagogy is an easy task. Recent research (e.g., Ticheloven et al., 2021) has shown that teachers could experience challenges in this regard such as steering the difficult situations where learners rely too much on L1 or fall silent due to lower ability in another language and the effort required by both teachers and learners to remain engaged in translanguaging. Thus, specialist training and ongoing support for teachers who are engaging in this type of pedagogy seems to be of great importance.

Research has, to some extent, also focused on the investigation of translanguaging (Lewis et al., 2012) as a child-centred approach and of the advantages it could provide for children (Baker, 2011; Estyn, 2002). Accordingly, the curriculum-embedded translanguaging practices might support children's meaning-making process as linguistic and social resources (García & Li, 2014). The continuous activation of two languages for meaning-making, authentic communication, and questioning (Arroyo-Romano, 2016) not only enables access to the full language repertoire, but also constitutes a resource for learning (Collins et al., 2019). Research (e.g., Durán & Palmer, 2014) has also shown the benefit of explicit teaching of translanguaging strategies to children (however see Jaspers, 2018 for a critical discussion of the possible transformative limits of translanguaging). Overall, despite its challenges and limitations, a translanguaging-driven pedagogy has been shown to offer positive learning outcomes.

2. Translanguaging space: Instructional and interactional dimensions

Li, 2011, 2018 puts forth the concept of translanguaging space, referring to an imaginary but socially tangible space where, through translanguaging, interlocutors bring together not only their linguistic repertoires, but also their histories, beliefs, and experiences for meaning making. "A Translanguaging Space acts as a Thirdspace which does not merely encompass a mixture or hybridity of first and second languages; instead, it invigorates languaging with new possibilities from 'a site of creativity and power'" (Li, 2018, p. 24). This is a space for engaging in translanguaging in addition to one where translanguaging occurs, revealing and engendering novel utterances and interaction patterns (Li, 2018).

Language teachers who work in bilingual programs could learn how to create and manage such a space. A translanguaging space may, therefore, be further theorized into instructional and interactional spaces. In the former, teachers could help the learners develop oral communication skills in the languages they know and/or are trying to develop, including English (Lewis et al., 2012), to gain a deeper experience of learning due to the complementary processing of knowledge in two languages (Estyn, 2002). This can be achieved by relying on pedagogical strategies such as using bilingual resources (e.g., presentation of language features bilingually; using dual language multimedia sources such as books), non-linguistic resources (e.g., gestures), and code-switching (see Schwartz & Asli, 2014). Teachers could also strengthen the opportunities to attain fuller bilingualism (Baker, 2011) by nurturing the weaker language(s) (Baker, 2006; Williams, 2002), that

may be English in a predominately monolingual context, which in turn could generate greater metalinguistic awareness (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). On the other hand, Blommaert et al. (2005) recommend interactional spaces, which build upon instructional practices, since they offer a periphery conducive to using the two languages (spontaneously), and teachers can thus monitor modelled use of both languages by learners. In this sense, translanguaging pedagogy could be potentially transformative as it could lead learners themselves to rely on both languages fluidly in a non-hierarchically designed classroom or go beyond two languages where they use them creatively to make new meanings (García et al., 2017). Worth mentioning, however, is that this is likely to be achieved in environments supportive of translanguaging pedagogy (see Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2020) and in the absence of such support students' creation of an interactional space may not flourish.

Despite the affordances of translanguaging-driven pedagogy, such an approach, as purposefully embedded in the syllabus, based on specifically-designed and delivered pre-course training, and focusing on preschool learners in predominately monolingual contexts has been sparsely investigated. To address this gap, the current study explores the experiences of six homeroom and English co-teachers who facilitated children's systematic alternation and shuttling between their full language repertoire as an instructional design cycle (García et al., 2017). To this end, the following research questions are addressed.

1. How do paired Turkish homeroom teachers and teachers of English implement translanguaging pedagogy?
2. How do the co-teaching pairs describe the influence of their instructional practice on children's bilingual interaction through translanguaging?

3. Literature review

Previous research on BE in preschool settings is not very widespread. Some of the existing studies have investigated bi/multilingual pairings of languages other than English (e.g., Kirsch, 2017, 2020; Velasco & Fialais, 2018). On the other hand, very few studies have examined BE/translanguaging pedagogy at the preschool level, where one of the taught languages was English (e.g., Gort & Pontier, 2013; Leonet et al., 2017; Pontier & Gort, 2016). Gort and colleagues as well as Leonet et al. (2017) have focused on translanguaging pedagogy in multilingual contexts where the L1 of the children was a minority language to be strengthened and preserved. For instance, Gort and colleagues relied on data obtained from Spanish-English bilingual co-teachers' practice and their students' interactions in Southeastern US where a policy of language separation was in effect (e.g., based on time of the day, teacher). These studies, overall, showed that despite initial reservations and unfamiliarity with this kind of bilingual pedagogy, teachers flexibly adapted to it over time, utilizing communicative strategies such as code-switching and tandem talk (i.e., turn-based speech in two languages when speaking about the same topic). The children also benefited from affordances provided by translanguaging pedagogy, which allowed them to become comfortable with their linguistic repertoire and begin to develop in terms of vocabulary and discourse structures as well as socio-emotionally.

However, studies that focus on predominantly monolingual contexts where English is the minority language and stakeholders often view it as the course objective are fewer in number. A case in point is Prošić-Santovac and Radović (2018) who, in their study of 18 parents, 20 children, and one pair of teachers in a Serbian kindergarten, which followed a one-teacher-one-language (OTOL; Schwartz & Asli, 2014) approach and strict language separation, elicited the respondents' attitudes toward OTOL. They found that the children had positive attitudes toward bilingual pedagogy, and the teachers came to believe in the efficacy of BE after practicing it for a while (see also Dikilitaş & Bahrami, 2022). Nevertheless, due to reasons such as perceived low proficiency in L2 and fear of speaking English in the presence of peers, more than half

of the children relied on their L1 for communication. In terms of teaching strategy use, while nonverbal strategies were the most often used, translanguaging was the least utilized. This was because the L1 teacher believed translanguaging could confuse the children, lead to an unstable learning environment, and discourage the children from using the L2. In a similar study in the context of Hungary, [Lugossy \(2018\)](#) relied on data collected from a bilingual nursery and two bilingual kindergartens. Overall, 36 children and four teachers participated in this study. Once again, it was discovered that the children communicated very little in English. Interestingly, the only times when they tried to utilize English as well was during meaningful communicative activities (e.g., during mealtimes). The teachers did not consistently use English in practice either, although they claimed otherwise. Thus, they predominantly relied on translation to communicate with the children.

Despite these findings, this literature has a number of limitations. They include lack of BE training for teachers which resulted in their differing attitudes toward bilingual pedagogy in addition to challenges and inconsistencies in its implementation. The teachers did not have the opportunity to design syllabi and teaching tasks either, whether on their own or in collaboration with their co-teachers, which prevented them from or slowed down their personalization of classroom practice or becoming familiar with their co-teacher's beliefs, input, and teaching. Translanguaging was also defined rather loosely in some of these studies, sometimes being equated with code-switching. In our study, however, the teachers' prior training, practice, and our broader definition of translanguaging seek to address these limitations.

4. Methodology

4.1. The context of the study

The bilingual/dual immersion kindergarten where we conducted this study pursues a program that specifically encourages translanguaging and facilitates collaboration between homeroom and English co-teachers to offer translanguaging instruction. Since 2017 the kindergarten worked with an externally hired consultant (i.e., the first author) who provided a special training program, classroom observation, and feedback for the teachers. This program involved providing the teachers with knowledge about bilingual/translanguaging co-teaching and bilingual syllabus as well as task design, which was later also delivered by coordinators. More specifically, issues such as the what of translanguaging (i.e., what it means, how it is delivered, and the philosophy behind it), how to create co-teaching by using different languages, and how to create different tasks delivered by two teachers were covered (see [Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2020](#) for more details). The school attracts mainly the children of families with a relatively higher socioeconomic status. Some of the parents and children have spent time in an English-speaking country for business or research purposes. The parents have high levels of education and work in well-paid professions such as being a doctor, lawyer, or engineer or run their own business with high levels of income. The school encourages the support of parents in exposing the children at home to both languages to sustain extramural exposure to language through the media and educational resources (see [Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016](#)).

Children are accepted into the school by the age of five and graduate before they are six when they continue to the primary school. The children remain in the same group throughout the year and with the same paired teachers and the caring assistant nurses. They are accompanied by English and Turkish speaking teachers on a shift system for breakfast and lunch breaks and for restroom visits to maximize the opportunities for creating an interactional space. The classroom is often an environment where the two languages are constantly used for authentic meaningful interaction, and exposure by the other children helps them normalize such practices. The main physical environments children use include the classroom, where they engage in games and instructional practices in two languages, the theatre area, where they act and play, the

garden, where they improve their motor skills, and the art hall, where they engage in artistic skills development. The goal is to develop children's self-confidence for engaging in translanguaging interaction in multiple spaces. The paired teachers spend the whole day interacting with the children as this is an opportunity to engage in authentic dialogues as a natural part of the life at school.

A common practice in bilingual programs is to separate the two languages by teacher, in order to allow for equality of language development in all aspects ([Freeman, 2004](#)). Thus, while the homeroom teachers instruct in Turkish consistently and speak to children in Turkish only, the language teachers speak English only but understand both languages so that the children can respond in either language. This is to ensure that the children would not assume that only one language is reserved for each teacher ([Prošić-Santovac, 2017](#)) so that they can rely on their entire language repertoire better. The children cannot read or write at this level, thus all instructions are given either by signs or by verbal prompts. Therefore, written language is minimized, and children are exposed to verbal interaction and verbal input sources through multimodal digital media resources, including audio (mainly stories), pictures (based on the major concepts introduced), and videos (e.g., cartoons, short clips, songs, teacher-created videos). They are also reminded that they should not correct students' overall potential linguistic errors, including phonetic, lexical, structural, and pragmatic ones as long as the conversation is intelligible. In the case of lack of genuine comprehension, clarification is preferred to explicit error correction.

4.2. The participants

The participants for this study were three pairs of co-teachers who had entered BE in the mentioned preschool after receiving initial training. They were divided into homeroom teachers and language teachers, with the former having educational backgrounds in areas other than language and language teaching. Five classes were taught by these teachers who followed equally distributed instructional and interactional language use (i.e., 50-50). The range of their teaching experience within BE was between one to three years while they had seven to 20 years of experience outside BE. [Table 1](#) summarizes these teachers' demographic information.

4.3. The translanguaging practices in the lesson syllabus

Bilingual instruction involves offering content and language integrated courses that inform each other. While the former is the input (content subject matter), the latter functions as the language through which this input is acquired. On the other hand, a more nested integration is provided when teaching materials are proximally presented in the same course by two teachers. The same syllabus is co-constructed and co-implemented in sequentially (i.e., sharing the lesson time) and/or simultaneously conducted activities (i.e., following stationed tasks as groups in the same class).

The teachers who participated in the current research integrated

Table 1
BE teachers' demographic characteristics.

Co-teaching pairs	Age group	Background education	Teaching experience/ in BE
Cisem (Homeroom)	6	Preschool education	20/3
Çagil (Language)		American literature	7/1
Gamze (Homeroom)	6	Preschool education	7/2
Raziye (Language)		English language teaching	11/2
Hale (Homeroom)	5	Preschool education	15/1
Didem (Language)		Translation and interpretation	7/3

translanguaging into their lesson delivery and interaction not only by systematically offering learning content and materials in two languages, but also through verbal encouragement. The teachers organized the concept teaching in Turkish as new knowledge with which children might not be familiar whereas children were instructed in the practical aspects, involving the relatively less challenging self or collective engagement, in English. For instance, students listened to stories in one language and then narrated it in the other. This initiated a conceptual shift in the understanding of BE from separatist to integrationist view engendered by translanguaging (García & Li, 2014) as a transient process of bilingual acquisition, where native language functions as a scaffold in the meaning-making process (Swain & Lapkin, 2013). Both teachers were in the classroom to use and model the two languages in the 40-min lessons. Each lesson syllabus included common goals and objectives, but the teachers were guided by OTOL (see Appendix B for a description of teachers' co-constructed lesson plans, and sample corresponding activities).

4.4. Study design and data collection

For the present research, we drew upon an exploratory qualitative design (Patton, 2014), which involved collecting data through a number of qualitative data collection tools. As Patton (2014) maintains, this design is suitable for pragmatically exploring less researched topics without explicitly relying on any specific epistemological assumptions. Thus, we made this choice to explore the teachers' instructional practices and children's translanguaging as well as the connections between them. More specifically, the data were collected through semi-structured online interviews with the co-teachers, who have worked in the same school for up to 3 years, although with different partners each year. The interview questions were designed to evaluate the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy taught to teachers during their training. The co-teachers were asked to comment on two aspects: first, their joint experiences, including syllabus planning and material preparation; second, the in-class simultaneous instruction and interaction with children (see appendix A). The interviews were conducted in Turkish, which is the teachers' L1, for ease of communication and to facilitate sharing of complicated and nuanced experiences and beliefs (Bahrami et al., 2022; Dörnyei, 2007). They were each interviewed once with each interview taking 60–90 min. In addition, their journals from periods of their teaching (i.e., homeroom teachers kept 17–20 while English teachers kept around 30 journals in a year) were collected to add depth and produce further evidence of their observations and reflections alongside the interview data. The teachers were provided with clear verbal instructions on how to keep spontaneous journals by the first author, which were freely written, and outline occurrences of key translanguaging instances and dialogues with students as well as reflective thoughts on their practices. The difference in the number of the produced journals by teachers was not purposeful but idiosyncratic. Thus, the data analysis was not a one-shot process as the teacher journals were written naturalistically and over time.

It needs to be acknowledged that the first author acted as the teacher trainer to the participants and the third author was a teacher in the program who collected part of the data and cross-checked our interpretations. The second author, therefore, played an etic role in all aspects of this research in order to balance the emic perspective contributed by the other two. Additionally, after obtaining each interviewee's consent, the interviews were conducted in a calm environment, and we established rapport for data collection (King & Horrocks, 2010) as the interviewees were reassured that this was not an evaluative session and simply a friendly conversation to collect data. They were also informed that their data will be used for research purposes only. The journals, on the other hand, had been authentically produced by the teachers for the purpose of keeping records of children's language production as previously suggested to them by their trainer.

4.5. Data analysis

The first and the second author read and re-read the transcripts of the interviews, translated by the first author, and the journals which had been written bilingually (with the Turkish parts also translated) to gain a broad familiarity with the patterns in the data. In terms of coding strategies, we adopted open coding (Dörnyei, 2007) in order to delineate the broader salient patterns in the two data sets, followed by process coding (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017) because we also aimed to reveal more about the process of how teachers collaborated on instruction in the bilingual classroom, and how they created an environment suitable for translanguaging to occur. We coded the journals for analysis purposes. Process coding was also applied for analysing the teacher journals in order to extract the developmental trajectories of the children's translanguaging. Process coding involves the analytic strategy of identifying key terms, which are then converted into gerund phrases (-ing phrases). The overall codes were then collated as the descriptive and procedural lists of what happens in the translanguaging space based on being referred to by all or the majority of the teachers. For instance, the process codes "co-designing the lessons", "deciding on the language sequence", and "re-evaluating tasks/materials jointly" were mentioned by all the teachers and were collated under the broader theme of "bilingual lesson planning". Disagreements between the authors were addressed through discussion and reaching consensual agreement (King & Horrocks, 2010), and we relied on the third author's experiences to cross-check our interpretations.

5. Findings

5.1. Translanguaging in the instructional space

We discovered that bilingual co-teaching was a positive experience characterized by shared responsibilities and sometimes an increased workload but accompanied by a reciprocal work mentality (e.g., equally shared distribution of teaching practices, enacting the same syllabus with different languages with full consideration of the co-teacher). This instructional space created by the co-teachers apparently also turned into a cherishing environment for the translanguaging of the children.

5.2. Planning and implementing co-teaching

Planning the bilingual lessons, developing tasks, and their implementation was a collaborative process for the teachers. Didem, for instance, described in detail how she and her co-teacher developed lessons together and assigned responsibilities to each other:

We made lesson plans in accordance with the instructions and the feedback by trainers while delivering the activities. Firstly, language transitions had to be very soft and clear, so we started writing down the flow. That is, we made a certain plan determining what teachers should say and when. (Interview)

Thus, the process of synchronisation of the activities with the choice of the instructional language as the course progressed was also an important aspect of planning their teaching. All the teachers referred to three criteria in the interviews for this process, which were best elaborated by Raziye:

We often found ourselves discussing which activity in the syllabus should be in which language. Our criteria for instructing in English is concreteness, familiarity, and the degree of ease. This means that if the topic is about something concrete such as tools or food; familiar to the children based on what we have already taught; and easy to understand as a concept or in terms of language required to convey it, it will be taught in English. But if it is beyond the children's existing knowledge, we set it for delivery in Turkish. (Interview)

Cagil further described such planning and the reasoning behind it:

If there is a physical activity, for example, in our sequential lesson plan, the homeroom teacher guides it in Turkish and the English teacher is responsible for using pre-planned materials [e.g., visual aids] to facilitate. Or, if a book has been read in English, the reading comprehension questions may continue in English in the library activity [i.e., going to the library to read to children the books they brought], but the questions that will support higher cognitive skills are prepared by the homeroom teacher ... [this way] the concept is expressed in two languages and the meaning of the concept is understood. (Interview)

Another key practice was participating in weekly discussions in cross-paired group meetings to discuss and exchange ideas on task development and employment. The teachers mentioned the emerging opportunity this provided to improve the appropriateness of the materials and re-evaluating their classroom practices. Gamze, for instance, highlighted using already developed materials in the programs by redesigning them through discussion with colleagues:

We listened to the reflections of the teachers who had produced and implemented materials for the two languages, which increased our effectiveness of materials use. We reviewed the materials, decided which did not work well, and engaged in an adaptation process, which were all constructive experiences. (Interview)

However, a very interesting potential of BE that they were gradually actualizing was its capability to create a space for translanguaging among the children. Based on their accounts, this was due to a number of teaching practices that these teachers had designed and were delivering. One such activity was the free-flowing shuttling between English and Turkish by the co-teachers. As Cisem described:

We tried to normalize the use of two different teachers and two different languages for the students by making transitions without any pause in the course because in the classroom teachers do not use any language other than the language they are responsible for and we have to understand each other in that language. (Interview)

Hale had a similar story:

After getting to know each other, we started to speak in each other's language, and we switched very easily with body language. I think it reflected on these children very positively. Thanks to this, the children started to rely on English and it was not like we switched to Turkish. We gradually made the transitions in more and more natural ways. (Interview)

This collaboration in terms of contiguous use of two languages to set up and teach the lessons seemingly presented the children with the possibility of using the two languages simultaneously, connecting the implemented pedagogical translanguaging to children's discovery of the possibility for spontaneous translanguaging. As Hale described, "we were setting an example for the children by supporting each other and helping each other by cooperating" (Interview). Similarly, Didem talked about the fact that

the bilingual program creates a sense of democracy in children when two teachers attend the class together. This is my most important observation. A more pluralistic environment is created in the classroom. The children become interested in speaking in English and speaking in Turkish. The children express themselves in the language they feel comfortable with and mix them both. (Interview)

Gamze and Raziye as well as others also mentioned their proximal language shift within the same activity to refer to the creation of an instructional space: "We sometimes share the same activity and start it with English and end it with Turkish" (Gamze, interview). Such nested teacher-planned translanguaging pedagogy, as she justifies, "helps children work more naturally with the changing instructional languages".

When children actually began to engage in translanguaging, another feature of the teachers' practice was their supportive encouragement of this practice. The teachers, for instance, highlighted the key role of ongoing interaction not curbed by constant error correction and explicit evaluation of learning with display questions but by advancing "embodied elicitation" through gestures (Sert, 2015, p.102). For example, Cagil said:

I now sustain the flow of conversation with the children not only without correcting and recasting and without any hint of error, but also through gestures and mimics, and I show that I enjoy communicating with them when they use both languages in their utterances. (Interview)

Cisem also added:

[The children] don't feel like they are being assessed during the English activities or conversations we make. So, they are more self-confident and this makes them feel better. I think they know that they will be approved of what they do or say. (Interview)

Raziye similarly stated that "not hiding the ability of the homeroom teachers to speak Turkish and therefore not forcing the children to speak English by saying things like 'I don't understand. Speak English.' makes the children feel free to use both languages" (Interview). Thus, such an instructional approach seemingly created a space for children conducive to using English when Turkish is also involved in interaction. This is because having access to their L1 can keep children interactive, active, and socially dynamic. When they are forced to only rely on English, they may be inclined to become less engaged and more silent (García & Li, 2014).

5.3. Translanguaging in the interactional space

The teachers' positive experiences in the instructional space, where they planned and implemented bilingual teaching, also related to the interactional space they created for children. Their congruence with each other seemingly generated a favourable environment for children's translanguaging.

5.4. Pedagogy-linked translanguaging episodes

Opening an interactional space for children is of great importance in early education which creates opportunities for learning through strengthening social structures needed for communication (Sert, 2015). Initially, this was achieved by the co-teachers through creating familiarity with concrete concepts for children. For example, Gamze and Raziye were teaching the concept of healthy/unhealthy foods. One of the children told Gamze that "sen bir gün bize gel, seninle kek yapalım; ben çikolata yiyemiyorum ama healthy kek yapalım seninle elma kulanalım" (If you come to our house one day, I will make a cake for you; I can't eat chocolate, but let's make a healthy cake and use apples with you; Journal). In this rather long utterance, the child is showing that he has picked up the concept of healthy food and its associated vocabulary item in English. In this regard, Raziye maintained that "they surely began to use at least one English word in every sentence. I see this as an improvement." (Journal). Similarly, "When communicating with her friend, one child used a [lexical] instance of translanguaging" (Didem, Journal). "Ben bunu green yapacaktım" (I would make this green; Didem, Journal) was a general instance of translanguaging at early stages of this child's bilingual development. The child used 'green' instead of 'yeşil', the Turkish equivalent word" (Didem, Journal) due partly to the liberty of using newly acquired English words. Such examples show how children were in the process of acquiring concepts through using them bilingually in English-Turkish utterances. Translanguaging in these instances is a spontaneous act of language use which is not consciously analysed by the child but can be viewed as a self-initiated and maintained acquisition process. This shows how

translanguaging can support the active learning of key concepts in preschool education in both languages.

5.5. Emergence of child-directed translanguaging in communication

In the early months of the program, as the children were discovering the possibility for translanguaging and feeling encouraged to engage in it, they also started to show some initiative in drawing upon their Turkish alongside their developing English repertoires. Initially, they utilized their knowledge of Turkish to enhance their chances and facility of communicating in English. In a sense, translanguaging in these stages served a compensatory role, allowing them to move beyond their still limited command of English. This draws upon Swain and Lapkin's (2013) discussions about using the L1 as a tool for scaffolding learning when students are supposed to process or produce complex ideas. For instance, one student relied on phonological patterns prevalent in Turkish to express intensity of distance. Hale noted:

The children had access to online books that were assigned weekly. The kids listen to the audios of the books, and then they record their own voices. They say whatever they remember about the story and would like to share with others. (Interview) ... [One day] one of the children opened an online book that she had read before and started to tell her friends what she remembered about the story. The name of the book was 'near and far away'. While talking about the book, she said 'The flower was near, but the horse was faaaaar away.' She wanted to express the greatness of distance using items she could see on the pages. (Journal)

The child here uses the intonation form in Turkish by raising the intonation on the middle vowel in the word 'far'. Interestingly, she did not use the adverb 'too' before far, which might signify the compensatory function of early translanguaging as previously mentioned. This was followed by applying Turkish morphology to English words which helped the children go beyond their current level of linguistic knowledge to maintain the flow of conversation. In another instance, the teacher asked a child about the pictures they were told to draw about space:

Didem: Did you talk about it?

Child 1: Yes.

Child 2: Ben parmak kaldırmıyorum çünkü ben *did*'im (I don't raise my hand because I already did it).

The reliance of the children on such forms of translanguaging could indicate their developing openness toward their linguistic repertoire and seeing Turkish and English as complementary for meaning making.

As the children progressed more, their translanguaging went beyond using single lexical items and/or grammatical features in the span of an utterance. They began to use different phrase types and chunks in English. In the words of Cagil:

One of the children was talking about the names of jewelry. Another suddenly asked the teacher whether she can put on jewelry that is made of gold at school as she was not sure about having permission:

"Miss, in the school altınlı bilezik takılır mı?" (Are we allowed to wear gold jewelry in the school; Journal).

The child here embeds a prepositional phrase within a Turkish sentence, but more varied uses of translanguaging were also observed by the teachers. As Cisem described, "a child expressed how she liked the olive she was eating in the breakfast by saying "Hmmm ... very nice; sevdim bu olive'i" (Hmmm very nice I like that olive; Journal)". In this excerpt, the child initiates the utterance with an adjective phrase preceded by an amplifier adverb, then makes the verb phrase in Turkish and again the direct object in English, to which Turkish definite/accusative marker is attached. Such an utterance includes multiple features from each language. Not only content words, but also bound morphemes

are mixed, which shows the liberty of continued alternation and shuttling between two languages has been relatively well internalized by the children. Thus, engaging in translanguaging influenced children's learning, as mentioned, but it also helped them with further involvement in communication because it assisted them in going beyond their linguistic limitations in their early learning trajectories. Then, translanguaging through phonological, morphological, and phrasal means later emerged as adding to children's linguistic versatility. Although not possible to corroborate within our data set, this may indicate a progressive process of communication and learning, where facility of communication through translanguaging leads to better learning gains.

5.6. Development of conversational agency

An important milestone which the children seemed to have reached in the later stages of the school year was their development of a sense of conversational agency and greater group responsibility. One form of this type of agency occurred in the following way:

While the children were dealing with painting, cutting, and pasting in groups, a child did not seem to understand the instructions, so she did not start working. Another in the group instructed her, saying "*cutsana, öğretmen cutın dedi*", which means "why don't you cut, the teacher told us to cut". (Raziye, Journal)

The child here intervened in the peripherally on-going dialogue between the English teacher and his peer to clarify the teacher's instruction. He did this by informing and guiding his friend dutifully and exposing her to a similar prompt to that of the teacher, though with a more comprehensible version by using Turkish-inclusive translanguaging. This clearly shows the linguistic responsiveness of children systematically exposed to two languages. Such unprompted translanguaging-driven interaction also reveals how this type of pedagogy could open a space for children to initiate the use of both languages to communicate, which keeps them interacting with others. Communicative events like this clearly indicate how translanguaging pedagogy could enable children to learn to recognize opportunities in ongoing interaction to integrate themselves in meaning-making processes. Similarly, Cagil was in the middle of a dialogue with one of the children when another suddenly inserted herself into the conversation, drawing on translanguaging to be able to communicate fluently:

Cagil to child 1: "You have eaten very well today; mommy will be happy".

Child 2 (jumping in): "Benim mommy de will be happy" (my mommy will also be happy; Journal).

The conversation here exemplifies a multilogue in which more than two participate without explicit invitation. Children engage in surrounding dialogues without being pressured or prompted even when not properly focused or prepared. They may thus become more adept at swift production in both languages. The use of translanguaging in the utterance indicates how the child comprehended the language instantaneously and recreated her own message by relying on Turkish features as well. Such translanguaging exemplifies how two languages are used by multiple interlocutors in one conversation, which is similar to a multilingual conversation in social environments where more than two languages are used to interact (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). In another instance, Gamze recounted that

One of the children brought an English book to the class. We were curious so we talked about the cover of the book and the students tried to guess what the book was about:

Child 1: She go to the supermarket?

Child 2: Fruit rain on cover, teacher.

Child 3: Neee? (Whaat?)

Child 4: Meyve yağmuru! (Fruit rain), Fruit *rainiyor!* (Fruit is raining!; Journal).

In yet another example, Hale noted that “a child said ‘K’s mom came to school’. Then another student responded ‘Kin annesi neden okula gelmiş ki?’ (Why did K’s mom come to school). They like to speak like this” (Journal). Such examples indicate that when children develop conversational agency, they begin to naturally talk to each other in both languages without the need to be prompted. Furthermore, these episodes shed light on other functions of translanguaging in higher levels of fluency which are more varied engagement in conversation making situations as well as assisting one’s peers.

6. Discussion

This study investigated bilingual co-teachers’ translanguaging practices and preschool children’s interactional development in terms of instructional spaces created by the teachers to encourage translanguaging and interactional spaces formed by the children for meaning making (see Li, 2018). Drawing on the teachers’ comments, the analysis revealed that exposing children to a continuous translanguaging-driven syllabus led by two teachers contributed to an environment which promoted their translanguaging. More specifically, the teachers used the two named languages, within a pedagogy designed to enable translanguaging, for the purpose of creating a free environment, where linguistic repertoires were systematically used, with children’s languages viewed as functioning as one system with two options for meaning making and interaction. L1 functioned as the language that helped with meaning-making (Swain & Lapkin, 2013), while the children embodied meanings using linguistic signs from the two existing linguistic systems, without hindrance or judgement (e.g., being forced to rely on English-only). Corresponding to Schwartz and Asli’s (2014) bilingual teaching strategies, the teachers also relied upon gestures to facilitate translanguaging. Relying on these pedagogical strategies seemingly allowed the children to become dependent on both of the languages, which prevented them from developing a sense of self-regression from dialogue or conversation in the classroom. In contrast to this, if the children had been encouraged or forced to solely rely on one language (e.g., English), which characterizes language education based on a monolingual ideology (Turnbull, 2018), they could have faced a loss of the perception of being bilingual (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021) and become restricted in communication.

The positive collaboration of the teachers for creating syllabi and teaching activities seemingly led the children to rely more readily on their linguistic repertoires. This was evident from their use of the two languages in harmony and in a mutually supportive and complementary ways. Such a pedagogy involved sharing of roles and the responsibility for managing the classroom, making the decisions on teaching materials, instructional decisions, assessment, development of the lesson syllabus, and interacting with students. The sharing of power and sustaining the relationships in tandem as well as the psychosocial factors involved may make it challenging for teachers to accept, recognize, and respect each other’s way of teaching, communicating, and establishing rapport with children (see Dale et al., 2018). Previous experiences must be unlearned, and new ways of working in a classroom need to be embraced. Teacher learning in this context, then, involves reflection-driven learning accompanied by welcoming new teacher experiences while facilitating the evolution of bilinguals (García & Li, 2014). Such a process of initiation into a diverse, previously unexperienced teaching model is likely to lead to increased motivation, identity shift (Dikilitaş & Bahrami, 2022), and autonomy, particularly if teachers engage in reflective, critical, and insightful discussion of teaching methods and their rationale. This was facilitated for our teachers, for instance, in their board meetings with each other, which was also a part of their continued training program and through hands-on experiences of bilingual teaching. The kindergarten curriculum which included main concepts to be acquired by children also seemed to help the teachers in terms of division of labour and readiness for classroom practice.

As regards the interactional space, although a distinction is often

made between pedagogical and spontaneous translanguaging in the literature, as Lin (2020) maintains, these two types should not be viewed as dichotomous and that the pedagogical sort can indeed lead to spontaneous translanguaging. This was observed in our study as the instructional space created by the co-teachers apparently encouraged the children to adopt translanguaging, even though each teacher was responsible for one language. Accordingly, an informed approach to bilingual course design and delivery could counteract the problem pointed out by Prošić-Santovac (2017) regarding association of one language with only one teacher and failing to engage in and benefit from translanguaging.

We also discovered that in the beginning stages translanguaging helped the children compensate for their lack of English knowledge while later it was utilized for engagement in more varied meaning making situations and assisting their peers. In these later stages, they recalled linguistic forms and constructed meaning not in pre-designed moments of the lesson but in interaction with their teachers and peers. They used translanguaging while engaged in the classroom, even without being prompted, which is a sign of natural interactive functioning with two languages in multiple moments. This can be contrasted with foreign language teaching, where interaction in English in the classroom is for learning the language system (Littlewood & Yu, 2011), rather than for integral communication with teachers and peers. The children also showed signs of metalinguistic awareness (e.g., using features not explicitly taught) which could be regarded as a significant development for this age group, although metalinguistic knowledge (i. e., the ability to reflect on language and verbalize the related knowledge) could be nurtured in them in higher grades, which could have benefits such as strengthening associations with prior knowledge (see Woll, 2018).

7. Limitations

At this juncture, a limitation of the present study that needs to be pointed out is that the obtained findings are to a certain extent a product of the two-teacher instructional approach in a privileged, high-income preschool. Thus, our findings may not be directly transferable to less socio-economically stable or rich contexts without adaptation.

8. Implications

The present study offers implications for language and homeroom teachers in terms of how they can develop the skills of teaching together and contribute to bilingual development of monolingual preschool children. Co-teaching could give teachers a less demanding role during the instructional time, often involving more detailed planning. They identified this as an opportunity to boost dialogue on pedagogical issues and address the potentially negative and challenging sense of solitude in the decision-making process. Therefore, the following suggestions could be presented:

- Sharing space, e.g., sharing the classroom as a physical place for diverse work and functions, especially when they organize and lead separate complementary tasks in parallel with smaller groups;
- Sharing time, e.g., sharing the class time allotted for teaching, which reduces the active working time, because they are also responsible playing a supportive task-management role in addition to content delivery.

More specifically, the current study also offers the following pedagogical implications to teachers who work in a bilingual context to promote an interactional space where single language fixation is an inherent feature of the classroom setting:

- Encouraging children to express their thoughts freely through their languages.

This is essential to overcome fixation on one language, but as teachers implicitly encourage them by not constantly correcting their utterances or retranslating them in monolingual utterances, systematic encouragement helps students to use two languages to communicate.

- Facilitating dynamic continuity in interaction.

This is needed in mental linguistic processing, which involves the use of all the linguistic repertoires pertaining to two languages, without suppressing each one. This ensures access to all mental and linguistic resources to support constructing meaning in real life. Functioning freely in two linguistic systems allows systems to influence one another.

Regarding teacher education and curriculum planning, the findings of the present study seem to suggest that translanguaging-driven pedagogy could be provided in preschool teacher education, which firstly removes teachers' resistance toward using the entire learners' repertoire (see also Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2020) and secondly enables them to create a better environment and encourage translanguaging among the

students. This can be delivered in terms of co-teaching too as demonstrated in our research. The curriculum structure could also change to accommodate L1 as an instructional and interactional tool. Materials are usually monolingual and not very different across contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020), but if content is additionally provided in L1, it could mediate translanguaging especially when students start to develop bilingual literacy.

Author statement

All authors certify that they have participated sufficiently in the work to take responsibility for the content, including participation in the concept, design, analysis, writing, or revision of the manuscript, Kenan Dikilitaş: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Investigation; Project administration; original draft; review & editing; Vahid Bahrami: Conceptualization; Data curation, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Methodology; review & editing, Tugce Nil Erbakan: Formal Analysis, Methodology; review & editing.

Appendix A. The Interview

Self-introduction.

1. Can you please introduce yourself and talk about your preschool teaching experience and teaching as a pair?

How you perceive bilingual teaching.

2. What does bilingual teaching mean to you?

What you experienced initially.

3. Can you talk about your initial experiences of bilingual teaching?

How you perceive yourself as bilingual teachers.

4. How would you describe your development as a bilingual teacher since then?

How you teach jointly.

5. How do you plan your teaching together?
6. What are your in-class experiences when you teach together?

How you interact.

7. How do you interact with students and each other?

Appendix B

Table 2

Co-developed lesson plans to include Turkish and English instruction in light of translanguaging theory.

How translanguaging has been planned and enacted	Sample interaction pattern	Topics and procedures
The daily warm-up led by a student in order to help children to develop skills to address audience and give daily information	The teacher stands next to the child and initiates the activity by asking 'How do you feel today?' 'What day is it?'. The child is encouraged to talk about daily issues s/he likes	Dates, weather (5 min) A task conducted only in the first morning lesson
Task 1 – introducing the concepts in syllabus	The relevant concept is often embedded in a task which makes children physically active and offers collaborative work as pairs or groups	Stationed group work in English (including mimics and gestures) and Turkish - shift in 5th minute (10 min)
Task 2 – developing the meaning of concepts	The second task is designed to help students continue to understand the concept in the other language with a different task that aims to improve different skills such as painting	Stationed group work in English and Turkish - shift in the 5th minute (10 min)
Task 3 – practicing the concepts	Task 3 involves using the concept in other realistic activities involving contextualising, application, and production	Whole class led in Turkish and in English shared by the teachers sequentially (code-switching 10 min)
Extra-curricular bilingual activities		Storytelling (up to 30 min)

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Kenan Dikilitaş is a professor of university pedagogy at university of Stavanger, Norway. His research areas include teacher professional identity development, (bilingual) teacher education in monolingual settings, and teacher action research mentoring. He has published research articles in international journals, co-edited books, and co-authored monographs on his research areas.

Vahid Bahrami is a PhD candidate in education at the University of New South Wales, Australia. His areas of research interest include bilingual education and language teacher identity development. His recent publications appeared in the journal of English for Specific Purposes, The Journal of Experimental Education, and Journal of Teacher Education.

Nil Tuğce Erbakan is a bilingual program coordinator and teacher in Izmir. She holds an MA degree with a dissertation on child bilingual language development. She is currently working on research into bilingual education and supporting emergent bilingual teachers in pre-school level.