



Received: 21.04.2023
Accepted: 29.10.2023

Received in revised form: 13.10.2023
Available online: 15.11.2023

Original Research

Citation: Terziyan, T. (2023). Ways to Implement Translanguaging for Turkish-Dutch Children. *Turkophone*, 10(2), 102-112.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.55246/turkophone.1286354>

WAYS TO IMPLEMENT TRANSLANGUAGING FOR TURKISH-DUTCH CHILDREN¹

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ABSTRACT

Even though research says that not providing heritage language support to bilingual minority children leads to poor educational outcomes, Dutch primary schools provide no Turkish support to Turkish-Dutch children. One of the consequences of this is “a vicious circle that connects bilinguals’ language knowledge, language use and language anxiety” (Sevinç & Backus, 2017, p. 1). These children feel anxious about their Turkish abilities which decreases their use of Turkish and since they do not use Turkish, this limits the growth of their Turkish abilities and as their Turkish skills are low, this increases their anxiety about using Turkish. Translanguaging, which “aims to normalize multilinguals’ transgressive performances as natural communicative acts” (Tian et al., 2020, p. 8), and translingual books can be a beneficial resource for heritage language speaking children. While waiting for the educational policies to catch up with decades of research, I propose that translanguaging can be used to alleviate Turkish-Dutch children’s current predicament. In this review paper, I first establish relevant concepts. Then, I present findings of relevant literature in four sections with a focus on various activities for parents and teachers to utilize such as using holidays or festivals to bring different cultures, traditions and vocabulary together or using books with multiple languages to encourage children to use both Turkish and Dutch.

Keywords: Bilingualism, translingualism, language acquisition

1. INTRODUCTION

Research into bilingual minority children’s language abilities has been telling us that best academic outcomes are seen when they receive heritage language support and receiving an education only in the majority language sets them up for failure (for a review, see Potowski, 2021). This suggests that Turkish speaking children in Europe are being set up for failure seeing that while in some countries they get very limited amount of heritage language support in schools (Extra & Yağmur, 2002) in others, namely the Netherlands, they receive no heritage language support in primary schools (Extra &

¹ This study was presented at the IV. International Congress of Bilingualism Studies and European Turks

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Yağmur, 2004; Yağmur, 2006). Just as the research would predict, Turkish students in the Netherlands are much less successful academically than their native Dutch counterparts (Herweijer, 2009). However, the consequences of the Dutch educational policies are not only academic.

Turkish speaking children in the Netherlands are found to have high levels of language anxiety (Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018). There exists “a vicious circle that connects bilinguals’ language knowledge, language use and language anxiety” (Sevinç & Backus, 2017, p. 1). These children feel anxious about low Turkish skills which leads to them not using their Turkish and that prevents their Turkish language growth which leads to low Turkish skills (Sevinç & Backus, 2017). Below quotes are provided from four different children that exemplify their feelings about their low Turkish skills (Sevinç, 2022; Sevinç & Backus, 2017). It should be noted that these children are feeling anxiety about their Turkish in addition to their depression that been linked to how discriminated against they feel (van Dijk, Agyemang, de Wit, & Hosper, 2010). All of this adds up to Turkish-Dutch children having higher levels of anxiety and depression than their native counterparts (Janssen et al., 2004).

(1) “I am used to Dutch and most of the others too I think are used to Dutch. So you think in Dutch. And also inside your head you think in a Dutch way. And when you are in Turkey you think what should I say and you get scared to make mistakes.” (Sevinç & Backus, 2017, p. 11)

(2) “Because they [Turks in Europe] are afraid that they make mistakes ... as a Turkish person, you do not know the language? ... She laughed at me and said I need to talk Turkish more, then it should get better. It was a joke I know, but it was embarrassing...” (Sevinç & Backus, 2017, p. 12)

(3) “When they correct me I feel ashamed... For I speak very bad Turkish.” (Sevinç & Backus, 2017, p. 12)

(4) “My grandfather makes me stressed about my Turkish. He says that I can’t talk Turkish very well... I get angry with him. I speak Dutch all the time, when he is around, deliberately, so he doesn’t understand me, he gets annoyed.” (Sevinç, 2022, p. 881)

It is clear that the education policies need to change and more support for Turkish need to be provided to the Turkish speaking children in the Netherlands. Researchers such as Kutlay Yağmur (for an example, see Extra & Yağmur, 2004) and organizations such as Tulip Institute have been fighting for some time in order to achieve this. The question remains how we can provide heritage language support to Turkish speaking children in the Netherlands in the meantime. Translanguaging could be a possible answer to this question. The current paper summarizes research done on the subject and provides suggestions for their implementation in order to bridge research and daily life for educators and parents.

1.1 Translanguaging

Translanguaging is communicating with all bildiğin diller (languages you know) (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). Belki biri sana Türkçe bir şey diyor (maybe someone says something in Turkish to you) and you respond in English. Or while speaking English you forget a sözcük (word) so you use a Turkish word instead. Ya da cümlenin ortasında birdenbire (or in the middle of a sentence, suddenly) you change the language you are speaking in. “[A]s a descriptive lens, translanguaging aims to normalize multilinguals’ transgressive performances as natural communicative act; as a theoretical lens, translanguaging aims to legitimize all linguistic varieties (e.g., “Spanglish” and “Chinglish” with negative connotations in a traditional sense); and as a pedagogical lens, translanguaging aims to

validate language-minoritized students' home and community languages and cultures in classroom settings.” (Tian, Aghai, Sayer, & Schissel, 2020, p. 8).

Translanguaging can naturally occur in multilingual educational environments. Seals and colleagues (2019) observed translanguaging being used as a tool in an indigenous language revitalization program which included bilingual children with “varying degrees of multilingual competences” (p. 57). They argue that these children are able to “develop a deeper and fuller understanding” of the indigenous language since they are “building upon their full linguistic repertoire” (p. 58).

Translanguaging underlines that bilingual's minds are not made of two distinct linguistic systems per their language but one whole linguistic system which includes both of their languages (Otheguy et al., 2015). This suggests that while they are speaking to monolinguals, they are actively trying to suppress a part of their linguistic systems, which has been demonstrated by neurolinguistic research (e.g. van Heuven, Schriefers, Dijkstra, & Hagoort, 2008). A possible metaphor that can be used to explain how it feels like to suppress a part of their linguistic system might be to ask a monolingual to speak only using words that start with “a”.

Interviews with Turkish-Dutch adults demonstrate the different atmospheres embracing translanguaging or not can foster (Bezcioglu-Göktolga & Yağmur, 2018; Sevinç, 2022). Quote 5 below illustrates the welcoming environment monolingual teachers can create for multilinguals only by learning a few words in another language and using these in conversations. When the teacher not only recognizes the parents as bilinguals but also makes an effort to accommodate them, the bilingual parent feels respected. On the other hand, Quotes 6 and 7 below exemplify how treating bilinguals as (or as less than) monolinguals can have negative effects. In both of these situations, the bilinguals are not recognized as bilinguals and they are made to feel less because their linguistic abilities are seen as less than of a monolingual individual's.

(5) “We are mostly Turks at school. Our teachers, Mr. Johan and Mrs. Carola, learnt a bit of Turkish to communicate with us. They say ‘merhaba, inşallah’ [hello, hopefully] and we really like it. This is respect for us, and we respect them more in return” (Bezcioglu-Göktolga & Yağmur, 2018, p. 52)

(6) “[My mother] corrects me immediately, sometimes gets angry. For instance, when I say something incorrect, let's say, when she gets angry and corrects me, I am thinking then, if I make the same error again I get scared. As a human being, I mean one gets naturally uncomfortable, stressed.” (Sevinç, 2022, p. 883)

(7) “At work, I experience that some Dutch people correct every little mistake of yours consciously just to show that they are Dutch, so they can do this to you. Some of them laugh at you if you use a wrong word and say ‘WE don't use this, WE use that!’, so you feel discriminated [against] and despised.” (Sevinç, 2022, p. 883)

The current states of things are, as exemplified above, demoralizing for heritage language speakers in the Netherlands. This paper proposes translanguaging as a possible balm until more systematic changes can be made. This paper aims to introduce translanguaging to teachers and parents and provide a variety ways to implement it.

2. Ideas on How to Apply Research Findings

In this section, the review of the literature on translanguaging and multilingual/multicultural classrooms is provided. The findings of the research have been divided into four subsections, each

highlighting a different concept for teachers to be used in schools or for family members to be implemented at home. Moreover, various example materials are also presented here for teachers and family members.

2.1 Translanguaging in classrooms with monolingual teachers

Sylvie, a French pre-school teacher who had Turkish speaking children in her class, used translanguaging for four purposes (Mary & Young, 2017). Firstly, she met their basic needs by having posters around the classroom with important phrases such as “Mummy’s coming back soon” and “Do you need to use the toilette?” in multiple languages in order to take care of a heritage language speaking child’s basic needs and by comforting distressed children using a few words she knew in their heritage language. Secondly, she brought up elements from the children’s heritage cultures (e.g. “lahmacun”) in activities to build a bridge between their heritage culture and the classroom. Thirdly, she used translanguaging a way to scaffold children’s vocabulary. For example, when the child did not know a word in French, she let the child say the word in Turkish. She, then, repeated the Turkish word and translated it into French. Lastly, she encouraged an environment where the children can engage with literacy activities in any language they preferred. When a group of Turkish speaking children talking about a book in Turkish, she did not stop them or attempted to make the activity about learning French. Mary and Young argue that (2017) “This aspect is of considerable importance given the aforementioned impact on academic achievement early engagement with literacy has been shown to have” (p. 121). Going a step further, Moody and colleagues (2020) recommend to include books in a variety of heritage languages in a classroom library. They argue that doing so not only supports literacy development of heritage language speaking students but it also helps reduce ethnocentrism in monolingual students. They specifically suggest that having multiple versions of the same book in different languages since they point out that “[m]ost teachers agree that books should not be shared without the teacher reading them themselves first” (p. 562). Below some examples of books that published separately in Turkish and Dutch languages are listed in order to support multilingual classroom libraries.

Books published by Nederlands Jeugdinstituut:

- Pas op voor Wilde Wesley!
- Vahşi Wesley’e dikkat!
- De rat van weinig woorden
- Az Sözlü Sıçan
- De opruimspin
- Çekidüzen-örümcek
- Banaan
- Muz
- De poezen van de buurvrouw
- Komşu teyzenin kedileri

Books published by De Leescoalitie:

Books published by Clavis Books:

- Ridder Rikki
- Şövalye Rikki
- Plastic Soep
- Plastik Çorba
- Samen Naar School
- Okula Gidiyoruz
- Kleine Kangoeroe
- Küçük Kanguru
- Heksje Mimi Tovert Iedereen In Slaap
- Cadı Mimi Herkesi Uyutuyor
- Klein Wit Visje
- Küçük Beyaz Balık

- Coco kan het!
- Anna Trafikte
- Coco bunu yapabilir
- Anna in het Verkeer

In an another type of translanguaging classroom, where monolingual English speaking teachers teach English to Chinese students, Shi and Rolstad (2022) observed that translanguaging can still be used to bolster the students' learning experience. The teachers being observed by Shi and Rolstad (2022) use some techniques that have been described above by Mary and Young (2017) as well as some different ones. For example, when a student had difficulty in understanding something or expressing themselves, the teachers asked the other students to help out in their stronger language. Another example was that one of these teachers asked the students to become the teachers. Shi and Rolstad (2022) argued that "Through reversing the roles of teacher and student, Daniel built rapport with Chinese-English bilingual children, appreciating their translanguaging, while also maximizing their English exposure." (p. 19).

2.2 Multicultural-multilingual activities

An example of such an activity is "Culture Day Project" (Tian, 2022). First, children were asked to conduct interviews with their families in their heritage language to find out more about their family (e.g. where they come from) as well as their heritage culture (e.g. holidays, festival, foods and clothes) and language (e.g. interesting words, expressions and idioms). Then, they put together an oral presentation for their classmates. Tian (2022) concluded that "this project was beneficial to building and strengthening family-school connections: family members could still participate in their children's learning even though they did not speak [classroom language]" (pp. 339-340).

Some other fun ways to incorporate heritage language and culture in lessons are singing and dancing (Tarman & Tarman, 2011). A teacher reported that she uses "Hello To All the Children of the World" song, for example (Tarman & Tarman, 2011). The partial lyrics to for "Hello To All the Children of the World" are given below. This stanza of the song can be modified based on the different heritage languages a teacher has in their classroom. For example, the modified stanza below was rewritten to feature Dutch, Turkish, Arabic and Swedish.

Original Lyrics:

Hello, Bon Jour, Buenos Dias,

G'day, Guten tag, Konichiwa,

Ciao, Shalom, Dobrey Dyen

Hello to all the children of the world!

Modified Lyrics:

Hallo, Witam, Merhaba,

Privet, Bună ziua, Dobar dan

Ahlaan, Hallå, Geiá sou

Hallo aan alle kinderen van de wereld!

Another way of integrating heritage language into classrooms is creating read-along programs (an hour per week) in heritage languages using family members (Pattnaik, 2003). Afterwards, children can be asked to explain the class what the story of that week was about, which would be a way to integrate the activity into the class. When additional language programs are considered, an issue that is brought

up is affordability for schools (e.g. Komorowska, 2000; Weise, 2007), families of the children supporting schools in such a way would be an attainable solution (Pattnaik, 2003).

A simple way to include more multicultural literature, even in kindergarten, is to incorporate poetry from other cultures (Gayle-Evans, 2004). Poetry is a useful tool for education (for a review see Simecek & Rumbold, 2016); furthermore, their length would enable a teacher to include many poems from many different cultures in the lessons. This way, all the different heritage cultures and languages can be acknowledged via poetry in lessons. Below the poem “Kuş ve Bulut” by Orhan Veli and Oktay Rıfat along with its English and Turkish translations (by this author) is provided as examples Turkish poem that can be used in classrooms.

Kuş ve Bulut	Bird and Cloud	Vogel en Wolk
Kuşçu	amca!	Mr. Birdseller, sir!
Bizim kuşumuz da var,	We have birds	Meneer Vogelverkoper!
Ağacımız da.	And trees too.	We hebben al vogels
Sen bize bulut ver sade	Just hand over some clouds	En bomen ook.
Yüz paralık.	100 bucks worth	Geef ons maar wat wolken
Orhan Veli ve Oktay Rıfat	Orhan Veli and Oktay Rıfat	Honderd munten waard.
		Orhan Veli en Oktay Rıfat

2.3 Bilingual books in which the same story is given twice in two different languages

Bilingual books can be used to promote translanguaging both in educational (Sneddon, 2008) and home settings (Moody, Matthews, & Eslami, 2022). At home, bilingual parents can read bilingual books to their children and discuss the book while translanguaging (Moody et al., 2022). At schools, bilingual teachers for every single heritage language spoken by children might not be available. However, this does not constitute an obstacle for implementing bilingual books in schools. Sneddon (2008) read bilingual books with small groups of 6 to 9-year-old heritage language speakers in languages he did not know. He noticed that this was actually an advantage because it gave a chance for the children to compare and contrast the two languages and raise their meta-linguistic awareness. Children were observed to enjoy reading bilingual books (Sneddon, 2008). Bilingual books have been shown to contribute to a positive learning experiences for young children (Hu, Chen, & Li, 2012) and teens (Zhang, 2017).

As previously mentioned, students' family members are beneficial bilingual resources for schools (Pattnaik, 2003) and they can be also utilized for bilingual book readings (Rodriguez-Valls, 2009). This also would have another advantage, seeing that involving parents in their children's education has been found to be highly beneficial (for a review see Pattnaik, 2003). After-school biliteracy programs for heritage language speaking children created by teachers, which also involved parents, demonstrated to foster a more positive environment for learning literacy (Brown, 2016) and to boost academic success (Rodriguez-Valls, 2009).

Below is a list of bilingual books in Turkish and Dutch that are available in the Netherlands. The books listed are mostly for young children but there are a few examples of bilingual books for older children.

Books published by nik nak

- Aap rijdt naar de bakker - Maymun fırına gidiyor
- Bang! - Korku!
- De mooiste stad - En güzel şehir
- Groot nieuws - Büyük Müjde
- Ik wil een zebra zijn - Ben bir zebra olmak istiyorum
- Konijn is jarig - Tavşanın doğum günü
- Lina's draak - Lina'nın ejderhası
- Plassen op de weg - Yoldaki su birikintileri
- Superhelden - Süper kahramanlar
- Supermarkt in het bos - Ormandaki süpermarket
- Waar kom ik vandaan? - Ben nereden geliyorum?
- Zo stoer als mijn broer - Kardeşim kadar cesur

Books published by LAPPa Books

- Lappa is jarig - Lappa'nın doğum günü
- Lappa in de diertuin - Lappa hayvanat bahçesinde
- Lappa en de maan - Lappa ve ay
- Lappa bij de dokter - Lappa doktorda
- Lappa is verdrietig - Lappa çok üzgün
- Lappa krijgt een tuintje - Lappa'nın bir bahçesi var
- Lappa en zijn vriendjes - Lappa ve arkadaşları
- Lappa is Lappa - Lappa, Lappa'dır

Books published by De Vries-Brouwers

- İlke gaat op schoolreis - İlke okul gezisinde

Books published by Abimo

- Maankinderen - Ay çocukları

2.4 Translanguaging books that weave two languages together to tell a story

Excerpt from “Üç Arkadaş - Drie Vrienden”:

Ali “Aslında işe de yaramış. Sincap sağ salim yere varmış. Er was ook slecht nieuws. De eekhoorn was te zwaar voor de vleugels van de fee. Bu yüzden kanatları kırılmış. Bizim peri gaf meer om de babyeekhoorn dan om zichzelf. Minik sincap kocaman sarılmış bizim periye,” diyerek devam etmiş.

Daniël “Uit het niets verscheen een kabouter. Die keek of de babyeekhoorn wel helemaal ok was,” diye heyecanla eklemiştir.

Eylül “Kabouter nedir?” diye sormuş.

Ali “Aslında tam bir Türkçe karşılığı yok. Masallarda yaşayan minik yer cüceleri. Uzun, kırmızı şapkaları olur. Bu şapka trafik dubasına benzer. Belki insanların bahçesinde minik heykellerini görmüşündür,” diye cevap vermiş.

Translanguaging books have been found to be beneficial for heritage language speaking and second language learning children. For example, even translanguaging books with limited amount of a second language incorporated (sometimes called “code-switching books”) were found to help pre-school

children learn vocabulary better than monolingual books (Read, Contreras, Rodriguez, & Jara, 2021). Moreover, using translanguaging books in a heritage language program for children with a large range of language proficiencies was found to increase heritage language use overall (Amosa Burgess & Fiti, 2019).

A translanguaging book for children in the Netherlands have been prepared and published by the author. This book is called “Üç Arkadaş - Drie Vrienden” on one side where it weaves Turkish and Dutch together and on the other side it is called “Drie Vrienden - Three Friends” where the same story is presented but Turkish parts are in English so it weaves English and Dutch together. The main purpose of this book is to normalize translanguaging, in accordance with (Tian et al., 2020), especially for Turkish-Dutch children who can suffer from language anxiety (Sevinç & Backus, 2017; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018). The Turkish side also aims to expose Turkish speaking children in the Netherlands to elements of Turkish culture because how close a Turkish speaking child feels towards Turkish culture and Turkish language abilities are linked (Demirel, 2019). Moreover, stories from the Turkish culture are told in Dutch and stories from the Dutch culture are told in Turkish. Turkish-Dutch bilinguals have been found to have unbalanced proficiencies in these languages (Sevinç, 2016) and unbalanced bilinguals have been shown to be better at understanding what they are reading and being able to apply their higher-level thinking abilities to texts in their weaker language when the texts are culturally more familiar to them (Alptekin, 2006; Cho & Christ, 2022; Davoudi & Ramezani, 2014; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998). For example, a Turkish-Dutch child who is struggling with Dutch will understand a Dutch text better if the text is about Turkish culture (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998) or vice versa.

The English-Dutch side, on the other hand, provides all benefits of translanguaging to a larger pool of Dutch children who know or are learning English. However, there is another purpose for the English-Dutch side for Turkish-Dutch children: to reduce prejudice against them in the Netherlands. It is argued that children’s books can be used to create positive impressions of a culture (Roberts, Dean, & Holland, 2005). This side book aims to familiarize non-Turkish Dutch children to the Turkish culture in order to alleviate higher levels of anxiety and depression Turkish-Dutch children feel (Janssen et al., 2004) which have been linked to perceived discriminated (van Dijk, Agyemang, de Wit, & Hosper, 2010). Furthermore, throughout the story the characters from Dutch and Turkish backgrounds compare and contrast their qualities as well as Turkish and Dutch culture since pointing out similarities and differences have been shown to be an effective tool for decreasing prejudice and increasing social harmony (Levy, West, Ramirez & Pachankis 2004; Triliva, Anagnostopoulou & Vleioras, 2014).

3. CONCLUSION

Even though language policies of schools in many countries are incongruent with research findings, there are various actions one can take at an individual level as teachers or family members of heritage language speaking children. Researchers are investigating how we can support these children and the current paper aims to be a guideline that summarizes the relevant research and makes it accessible for teachers and family members of heritage language speaking children. Moreover, the current paper also provides resources and materials for teachers and family members.

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