



## Translanguaging as an Inclusive Pedagogical Practice in Early Education Classes

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### Abstract

*Using students' full linguistic resources in classes has always been controversial. Some researchers still adopt the monolingual ideology, while others see that incorporating students' L1s can help in many aspects of teaching practices. This has led to several multilingual pedagogical practices, one of which is translanguaging. The latter has been theorized as a pedagogical resource for building and promoting students' knowledge and inclusion. This study examines translanguaging as an inclusive strategy in early education. The participants are teachers and students from three preschool classes. This study aims to explore to what extent translanguaging helps engage students more in their classroom activities and boosts their well-being in their classes. Then, teachers' perceptions of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice were investigated. Both classroom observations and interviews were used as research instruments in this study. The results indicated that translanguaging helps significantly in engaging young learners in their classroom activities and increases participation and fun during learning activities. Concerning the teachers' perceptions, although they see that translanguaging creates more fun and engagement, they are still reluctant to embrace and employ it in their daily teaching practice for various pedagogical and personal reasons.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational policies nowadays have to catch up with our instructional institutions' culturally heterogeneous and multi-culturally instructional institutions. Despite this reality, instructional practices still carry on the traditional, monolingual policy. A considerable number of students join these institutions carrying varied linguistic repertoires. However, our education policies and teaching practices are not always pedagogically invested in such repertoires. Therefore, there is a need for specific approaches that consider multilingualism as their core and embrace learners' cultural and linguistic diversity. Such approaches should also perceive learners' linguistic repertoires as resources to benefit from to promote the act of teaching and learning in general.

As I explored the area of multilingual education approaches that open up to the linguistic diversity of students, I came across 'translanguaging pedagogies' (García et al. 2012, 2017). Translanguaging is a theoretical and pedagogical concept that has recently gained more ground.

Theoretically, “translanguaging is based on the concept of linguistic repertoire, where the totality of language features to which a person has access are understood as part of an integrated, disaggregated system. This is in contrast to the traditional understanding of languages such as English, Spanish, etc., as bounded, separate entities.” (Snell, 2017. p. 34). It considers that multilingual have one unitary linguistic repertoire that they use to understand the world around them, so it calls for a shift from monolingual ideologies in education to a more inclusive, multilingual policy in our educational practices.

Pedagogically, translanguaging is an instructional approach to using learners’ whole linguistic repertoires as resources to improve the act of teaching-learning. It reflects the purposeful use of students’ full linguistic repertoire to foster and develop their linguistic abilities and language awareness. Translanguaging offers students with varied linguistic backgrounds the opportunity to benefit from their linguistic resources and, as teachers, to promote the act of teaching-learning and make the latter a more enjoyable experience.

Research shows that students are best served when they are allowed and encouraged to use all of their linguistic repertoire (Cummins, 2006; D’warte, 2014). This gives them control over their learning, learn more easily, and increases their access to linguistic and cultural capital (Hélot, 2012). Such view approaches the learning process from the learners’ perspective rather than the traditional view of language as a remote, abstract code that somehow exists independently of the people who use it (García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009). In this case, the act of language teaching-learning is seen as something we do with students rather than to them, empowering them to be fully engaged participants in both the school and community (García & Flores, 2012).

This study investigates the applicability of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice to engage learners more in their classroom activities and create a welcoming, tolerant learning atmosphere, especially in early education years. In Morocco, multilingualism is a sheer reality. Apart from the two official languages – Amazigh and Standard Arabic, other foreign languages, , mainly French, Spanish and English, are commonly used in different domains and parts of Morocco. Recently, sub-Saharan immigrants’ diverse language varieties have also sounded familiar in Moroccan society. Thus, students with different linguistic backgrounds characterize Moroccan classrooms. In this study, I explored how pedagogical translanguaging can help embrace learners’ various linguistic repertoires and create a conducive and inclusive learning environment, especially in early education classes.

Early childhood education in Morocco is traditionally divided into kindergartens and Quranic institutions. The former usually takes place in private schools that provide basic education, typically in urban areas. The latter also equips children with basic literacy and numeracy skills, along with the recitation of the Quran; they are mainly in rural areas. However, Morocco has recently implemented preschool ing in state schools in urban and rural areas. Morocco’s Ministry of Education and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) signed an agreement in 2020 to make preschool education mandatory.

Moreover, the Moroccan Foundation for the Promotion of Preschool Education (FMPS) was created to promote the quality of preschool education in the country. This foundation supervises preschool courses, trains teachers, and provides equipment for properly running

preschool facilities. The public school system formally regulates preschool education. It comprises a two-year mandatory preschool for around four- to six-year-olds and an optional preschool year for three-year-olds in private institutions. Other non-formal institutions also provide preschool education, such as daycare centres.

This study focuses on translanguaging practices in early education in Morocco, specifically in three preschool classes. The objectives of this study are twofold. The first is to investigate whether translanguaging as a pedagogical practice helps promote young learners' engagement and participation in their FL classes. The second objective is to elicit teachers' perception of translanguaging use in their classes. The research questions addressed in this study are:

- To what extent does the use of translanguaging practices contribute to the inclusion and engagement of young learners in classroom activities?
- What are the teachers' perceptions of using translanguaging as an inclusive pedagogical practice in their classes?

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Translanguaging:**

The term translanguaging was first introduced by Williams (1994) in the Welsh language 'trawsieithu', to refer to a pedagogical practice which deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms' (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012, p. 643). Williams' works are based on a bilingual education context. He observed that the systematic use of different languages in the classroom helps learners to strengthen their linguistic abilities and develop balanced bilinguals. Over the last two decades, translanguaging has been further extended to be employed in the classroom and other multilingual spaces. In this respect, García (2009, p. 44) states:

[Translanguaging] is an approach to bilingualism centred not on languages as has often been the case but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable. These worldwide translanguaging practices are seen here not as marked or unusual but taken for what they are, namely the normal mode of communication that, with some exceptions in some monolingual enclaves, characterizes communities worldwide.

García's definition suggests that translanguaging is a normal linguistic behaviour in multilingual spaces, and it goes beyond a mere classroom practice as originally proposed by Williams (1994). In this regard, Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012) claim that "the term has been generalised from school to the street", and its extension reaches all contexts of a bilingual person's life (p. 647). Translanguaging has been more developed in the work of Ofelia García (Beres 2015) and many others (e.g., García 2009; García and Li Wei 2014; García et al. 2015; Li Wei 2018). These works argue that translanguaging is both a theoretical and pedagogical concept that is observed not only in the classroom context but also in natural multilingual contexts.

Translanguaging as a theoretical concept challenges the traditional view of languages as what Cummins (2008) called the ‘two solitudes’ approach to bilingualism, where languages are considered strictly separate. It posits that multilingual have a unitary, integrated system to be negotiated for various communicative purposes. In other words, unlike the traditional view that conceives languages as discrete systems located in separate boxes in mind, translanguaging views the language practices of bilinguals not as belonging to two separate, autonomous language systems as they have been traditionally viewed but as part of one’s unique linguistic repertoire (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 2).

However, such a view of languages has been criticized by MacSwan (2017), who advocates that bilinguals have internally differentiated linguistic systems. Others hold the middle ground, such as Cummins (2017), who accepts that languages are social constructions and their boundaries are arbitrary; still, he sees that speakers should treat them as separate and be able to identify each. People can identify most conversations as being in one or another language, even if the boundaries are harder or softer depending on the social context (Cenoz and Gorter, 2021). Li (2018) also argues that speakers know the boundaries between languages, even if these are arbitrary. In the same line, Canagarajah (2013, pp. 15-16) states, “While resources are mobile, they acquire labels and identities through situated uses in particular contexts and get reified through language ideologies. Therefore, labelled languages and language varieties have a reality for social groups. More significantly, they are an important form of identity for these groups.”

Translanguaging is often associated with and even equated to codeswitching (CS). Although both concepts involve the alternation of two or more languages, they are epistemologically different. García and Li (2014, p. 22) accentuate this difference:

Translanguaging differs from the notion of code-switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages but to the speakers’ construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language, but that make up the speakers’ complete language repertoire.

In other words, CS refers to the alternation between languages in a specific speech event. Functional as well as grammatical constraints govern such an alternation. CS recognizes the use of different codes/languages. On the other hand, translanguaging uses a multilinguals’ whole linguistic repertoire as a resource for sense-making. It assumes that multilingual have ONE linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to make meaning and communicate effectively. In other words, CS implies the existence of two or more language systems, while translanguaging implies one integrated language system.

Translanguaging can be understood from different perspectives, but generally, there are two types of translanguaging: spontaneous and pedagogical translanguaging. The former occurs in natural contexts where bilinguals use different communication systems; the boundaries between languages are fluid and constantly shifting (García and Li Wei, 2014). On the other hand, pedagogical translanguaging -which will be further explained in the next section- refers to a planned, strategic usage of all linguistic resources available to build knowledge in classes. It is viewed as the implementation of instructional strategies that integrate two or more languages intending to develop the act of teaching-learning in classes. These translanguaging types are perceived as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, as there are some intervening situations.

Pedagogical translanguaging is designed by the teacher but can occur next to the spontaneous use of multilingual resources. Even if spontaneous translanguaging has not been planned, the teacher can turn it into a learning situation and have a clear pedagogical value (see also Lin & Lo, 2016; Lin, 2020).

### **2.2. Translanguaging as a pedagogy:**

Pedagogical translanguaging is an instructional approach in the context of multilingual education. It involves the intentional and planned use of students' multilingual resources in language and content subjects (Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021). Multilingual approaches might not be new, but there has recently been a multilingual turn in language education scholarship (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May 2014, 2019; Ortega, 2019). This turn is accentuated by the changing multilingual ecologies worldwide owing to technology-assisted globalization and the mobility of people (Blommaert, 2010). In this context, the emergence of pedagogical translanguaging has recently shined and is widely celebrated. It is considered a “movement in language education” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 10).

Pedagogical translanguaging takes multilingualism as its cornerstone. It applies to educational contexts and aims to mediate learning through multilingual resources. It is a planned use of students' linguistic resources to ease the act of teaching-learning in classes. Cenoz (2017, p.194) states that it is “planned by the teacher inside the classroom and can refer to the use of different languages for input and output or to other planned strategies based on the use of students' resources from the whole linguistic repertoire”. Pedagogical translanguaging is used in classes with students whose linguistic repertoires are varied for developing their linguistic and academic performance. It uses students' whole linguistic repertoire as prior knowledge to build and support further learning.

Translanguaging as a pedagogical practice perceives students' pre-existing knowledge as resources that should be invested in to lead meaningful learning and build new knowledge. It works for mobilizing students' familiar resources to scaffold their mastery of the target resources (Lin, 2012). Thus, translanguaging calls for planning and designing instructional materials and activities that capitalize on learners' linguistic and cultural resources to support their learning. Baker and Wright (2017, pp. 280–281) assert that translanguaging in classes

efficiently builds understanding because “pre-existing knowledge is a foundation for further learning, and there is the ease of crosslinguistic transfer as two languages are interdependent”.

Translanguaging pedagogy places students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds at the heart of the teaching-learning process. These backgrounds are recognized as resources in classes. To help educators conceptualize and implement this pedagogy, García et al. (2017) identified three interrelated components: *stance*, *design* and *shifts*. Stance refers to the teachers’ beliefs and commitment to embrace multilingualism, draw on students’ repertoires, and view their languages as part of a unitary system rather than separate and bounded entities. Teachers should have a *stance* towards linguistic diversity and practices in their classes and take advantage of their instructional benefits. The design points to the development of instructional materials and activities that consider students’ diverse linguistic and multimodal resources and allow them to connect home and school languages to build new knowledge. The shifts denote the teachers’ readiness and flexibility for shifts or deviations from the design that could occur as they adapt to the students’ needs and responses during translanguaging activities.

A plethora of studies examined the effectiveness of translanguaging in various contexts. (e.g., García, 2009; García, 2009; García and Li Wei, 2014; García et al. 2015; Childs, 2016; Jaspers and Madsen 2016, 2019; Li, 2018; Duarte, 2019; Kirsch and Seele, 2020; Fürstenau et al, 2020). These studies advocate that translanguaging serves several pedagogical purposes and benefits. However, there are some criticisms of translanguaging pedagogy. Kamwangamalu (2010) argues that teachers often perceive it as ‘illegitimate’ in mainstream education. Conteh (2018) also reviews translanguaging, claiming that the research has been on understanding interaction processes rather than exploring its pedagogic potential. Ticheloven et al. (2019) also argue that this approach is not clearly defined in terms of pedagogical tools.

In the context of preschooling, translanguaging is not well explored. One of the first studies in this context was conducted by García et al. (2011). In this study, they analyze the language practices of 37 preschoolers aged 5 and 6 at a school in New York. The authors reveal that translanguaging was used to serve six functions: (1) to mediate understandings among each other; (2) to co-construct meaning of what the other is saying; (3) to construct meaning within themselves; (4) to include others; (5) to exclude others, and; (6) to demonstrate knowledge. Other studies (e.g., Inbar-Lourie, 2010; Schwartz & Alsi, 2014) examining the use of translanguaging by preschool teachers in the EFL classroom highlight that using students’ whole linguistic repertoire serves certain instructional, managerial and/or affective purposes. Encouraging young learners to translanguage in their preschool classes with their peers and teachers helps these children build a positive attitude and tolerance towards multilingualism and cultural diversity (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019, 2020). Meanwhile, teachers’ embrace of the multilingual reality in their classrooms, especially in early childhood classes, makes students more comfortable and welcomed; this increases their social and emotional well-being (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019). Creating such an anxiety-free environment among young learners does not only contribute to their socio-emotional and cognitive development, but also to their linguistic and cultural development (Berk, 2013).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1.Context of the study**

This study focuses on translanguaging as an inclusive pedagogical practice in early education classes in Morocco. As aforementioned, the state formally manages early education in Morocco and comprises two-year mandatory schooling for around four to six-year-olds and an optional preschool year for three-year-olds in private institutions. This study is based on three early education classes in different preschool institutions. One of them is public, and the other two are private. Still, all of them belong to Agadir directorate in Souss region. The first institution is a public school with preschool and primary education classes. This study focuses mainly on preschool classes. In one of these classes, which I observed, there are 13 students. These students have different linguistic backgrounds; there are Amazigh, Moroccan Arabic, French and some local sub-Saharan varieties. The second class is the second year of preschooling in a private institution. There are 15 students with different L1s in this class, namely Amazigh, Moroccan Arabic, French, and English. The other class is also in a private institution consisting of 11 first-year preschoolers with different L1s: Moroccan Arabic, Mauritanian Arabic, French, and Korean. These classes present an interesting, diverse linguistic profile for studying multilingual practices such as translanguaging in educational settings.

#### **3.2.Participants:**

The participants in this study are 39 students and their 5 teachers. The students' age ranges from 3 to 6 years old. 23 of them are females while 16 are males. They are from different social and geographical backgrounds; hence, their linguistic background is diverse. The majority of students are Moroccan, but there are also students from Cameroon, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, France, England, and South Korea. For the teachers, they are all females. Their teaching experience varies from 2 to 9 years. In each class, there is a principal teacher and an assistant one, except for the public school; there is only one teacher. In terms of participants' selection, purposive sampling method was applied as the study targeted only multilingual classes.

#### **3.3.Data collection**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Its data was collected using classroom observation and interviews. Classroom recordings could also have helped, but they were not used because some participants (teachers) and their institutions did not prefer that. The regional directorate of education signed a consent form to allow the researcher to observe the classes for this study. These classes were observed four times. Two times before translanguaging pedagogy and the other two during the implementation of the pedagogy to notice its impact on students' engagement, participation, and well-being in the classroom. The non-participant observation was applied to observe not only what the participants were doing (e.g., by voice tone and body language) but also what they were not doing (e.g., ignoring instructions or refraining from asking for help). Then, the teachers were interviewed to elicit their perceptions of the use of translanguaging in their multilingual classes. The interviews were semi-structured.

#### **3.4.Data analysis**

The data was analyzed qualitatively following the research questions. The first one was concerned with the extent to which translanguaging practices contribute to the inclusion and participation of early education learners during classroom activities. To address this concern,

classroom observations were conducted. I observed if and how translanguaging as a pedagogical practice changes the learners' behavior in terms of integration, engagement, well-being, and participation in the classroom activities. I also tried to observe the teachers' roles and processing of translanguaging in their classes. The second research question deals with the teachers' perceptions. They were interviewed to get insights into the nature of their perceptions of such a new instructional approach. The elicited answers were thematically analyzed, hence qualitatively approached.

#### **4. RESULTS**

As pointed out earlier, the data analysis follows the research questions. The first one revolves around the extent to which translanguaging as a pedagogical practice contributes more to the engagement and participation of early education learners during classroom activities. To answer this question, classroom observations were conducted. Meanwhile, teachers' perceptions were also elicited to reinforce the observational remarks. The general finding of this work indicated that the children were noticeably more engaged during translanguaging activities. In comparison with the traditional approach, translanguaging triggered more participation. Besides, students showed high interest in each other's languaging practices and seemed eagerly integrated into the classroom activities.

During the classroom observation sessions, the learners seemed surprised at first by this new approach, which encourages them to use their L1s and translanguage to achieve learning objectives. However, the fun translanguaging evoked made them smoothly more engaged as the activities continued. It was also noticed that all learners, even the shy and reluctant ones, were physically and cognitively engaged, especially during the group work activities. All the teachers asserted this. One of them stated:

“I was surprised to see how engaged students were. To be honest, I did not expect that, given the novelty of the approach to us, both teachers and students.”

It is noteworthy that all the cited statements of the participants during the interviews were translated from Arabic to English.

Students also demonstrated more willingness and openness to learning from and about each other's languaging practices. This makes both teachers and students aware of the language resources available in their classes. It was observed that several students were asking each other about their languaging, and those whose L1s are similar also raised interesting arguments such; for instance, some discussions were related to the differences in the Amazigh varieties in Morocco or the differences between Moroccan Arabic and Mauritanian Arabic. Such language negotiation makes students better understand their languages and those of their classmates, which leads them to view the world differently and more tolerantly. Such linguistic and cultural



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tolerance is important for students' inclusion both inside and outside the classroom; they embrace differences in languages and cultures from an early age.

Moreover, all the teachers were careful not to prejudge or mock at any one's languaging practice. They made it clear from the beginning. Hence, it was noticed that students felt more at ease and encouraged to expose their identity through translanguaging in their classes. This boosts both their confidence and well-being there.

It is obviously noticed that translanguaging created much fun as the students repeated what their partners said in different languages. This ignites their curiosity and interest to hear how each one expressed themselves, hence more engagement. It should be noted that the teachers also were having fun while translanguaging. They also shared their linguistic repertoires. In one of the classes, the teacher speaks Amazigh, and none of the students does; she shared her language variety with them as a co-learner. During the interviews, this teacher stated that she really enjoyed a lot sharing her L1 and also learnt more about her students' languages and languaging practices. Therefore, teachers and students not only bring their world to the classroom but also equips them with other cultural and linguistic outlets that ease their inclusion both in and outside their classes.

The second research question revolves around teachers' perceptions after using translanguaging in their classes. Before experimenting with this new pedagogical approach, it was found that teachers had no idea about it, nor had they had any training in teaching multilingual classes. Thus, the researcher did a short training for them and helped during the lesson planning phases. In the beginning, most teachers expressed their worry and doubt about the success of translanguaging and the reaction of their young learners. However, once it was employed in their classes, all of them admitted the engaging potential of translanguaging. They reported that they were surprised by how students responded and got along with translanguaging activities. Their comments demonstrate that they noticed a positive change in how their students interacted, participated and had fun during translanguaging activities. One of them stated:

“I didn't expect my students' response to be as 'welcoming' to translanguaging as it was. It felt a kind of awkward in the beginning when I started asking them how to say such and such in their different mother tongues, but the fun and engagement created due to translanguaging took away all the fear and doubt I had about its success”.

Another teacher, who is in the public institution professed that:

“ I felt a positive change in the atmosphere of the classroom. Normally, most students from sub-Saharan countries are reticent and timid to take part in my standard Arabic

classroom activities, but providing them the chance to share their thoughts in their L1s made them more at ease and participate more...”

The use of students’ L1s made them all more engaged and put them in an equal position. This was very noticeable during classroom observation sessions through their interaction and participation. All students were partaking in the activities implemented. One of the teachers added that she felt “freed” from paying attention to every word or utterance her students made and checking if it was correct. Generally, the teachers reported that translanguaging was very helpful in engaging their students and making them more interactive. It also created much fun. However, not all the teachers’ perceptions about the use of translanguaging in their classes were positive. A number of challenges were evoked. These challenges were classified into *personal challenges* and *pedagogical ones*.

#### **4.1. Personal challenges:**

##### **4.1.1. Time and effort consuming**

During the interviews, all the teacher raised the issue of more time and effort exhaustion when preparing, implementing, and managing translanguaging activities. This was evident during classroom observation; the majority of the teachers did not finish their planned activities as some of the latter take much more time than expected. Students were taking much time explaining in their L1s and discovering each other’s’ languaging practices, which is highly recommended on one hand, but the teachers perceive it as a challenge. One of them stated:

“Although translanguaging is good in terms of engaging learners and creating fun, but it takes a lot of time that could have been invested in learning more things. I only do half of what I prepared at home, bearing in mind how much time and effort it took us to come up with good translanguaging activities that meet the objectives of the lessons”

Another teacher asserted that:

“Translanguaging sounds new and alluring as a concept, but it is hard to implement practically because it takes a lot of time. For example, asking each student to translate from one language to others is daunting. Sometimes, you just don’t know if it is the right equivalent due to the lack of competency in all their languages”

##### **4.1.2. Teachers’ unfamiliarity with all students’ mother tongues**

Four out of five teachers expressed their discomfort and risk of allowing students to use languages that they do not know; they reported that they could not keep track of what students were doing or whether it was correct. Therefore, lack of knowledge of students’ L1s might result into lack of control of the classroom practices. For example, during the interviews, one of the teachers complained that:

“I feel less in control when students use a language I don’t know, and even if I try to use guiding questions, still I am not always sure if what they said is correct or not”.

During the interviews, a teacher said he tried to strategically deal with such an issue by grouping students according to their L1s. Then, he monitored each group to give feedback and negotiated its students’ answers. He added that he sometimes used his phone to check some languages of his students. Generally, most teachers felt uncomfortable and insecure to use languages they do not know as it risks the control of their classrooms.

#### **4.1.2. Teachers’ beliefs in its applicability and utility**

When I first met teachers, before observing their classes, to explain the objective of this paper, three of them were reluctant about using translanguaging in their classes. One of them stated:

“I don’t know if I can do it as I know nothing about it. Also, I think allowing the use of different languages might not be a good idea in our classrooms. This is something we are not used to in our classes. Actually, I doubt its utility, especially that the textbooks are monolingual, so I need to use only the language of instruction in the textbook.”

Such concerns are legitimate because the traditional, monolingual ideology shapes teachers’ beliefs, and their training is mainly based on it. However, the interviews conducted after using translanguaging in their classes indicated a slight change in their beliefs that translanguaging cannot be applied and is risky. One of the teachers, whose comment is reported above, stated:

“Translanguaging proves to be a good tool for engaging learners; still, it is difficult to manage it in our classes given a number of factors such as the nature of the training, parents’ and administrations’ expectations, and so on.”

In the same line, another teacher asserted that:

“Most parents expect teachers to teach using the languages of instructions (Standard Arabic or French) because students will need to master them for their future studies.

Translanguaging seems to be an engaging tool, but it does not guarantee good inclusion in the next levels where lessons would be taught in Standard Arabic or French.”

## **4.2. Pedagogical challenges:**

### **4.2.1. The monolingual language policy in the curriculum**

According to all the teachers, the biggest challenge is that the curriculum recommends using the language of instruction only. In other words, the languaging practices in classes are shaped by the monolingual ideology. All the teachers reported that such an ideology is deeply rooted in our school system. One of them said:

“Before starting teaching, we were trained and recommended to use only the language of instruction with our students. Sometimes, we have visits from supervisors who always insist on avoiding using students’ L1s and exposing them to the language of instruction as much as possible. Therefore, even if we want to use translanguaging and believe in it, we cannot due to the language use policy in our schools.”

This was also confirmed by another teacher advocating that:

“I do see now that translanguaging really can help in engaging learners to interact and participate more, and it adds liveliness to the classroom atmosphere, but it is not enough. I prefer to avoid using it because if the headmaster or supervisor comes in, they will not be satisfied with that. Even parents expect and insist on using the language of instruction for their kids.”

Generally, the teachers see that even if translanguaging can bring about positive effects such as engagement, participation, and fun, it is not up to them to decide whether to use it or not. There are external factors that guide the use of the language of instruction such as the language policy based on monolingualism and lack of training on using multilingual approaches in language classes.

### **4.2.2. Lack of trainings in translanguaging pedagogy**

As pointed out earlier, the teachers are not trained on effective ways of using students’ full linguistic repertoire in their classes. The monolingual ideology of language teaching policy still prevails in the pedagogical trainings in Morocco. Three teachers raised this issue. They stated:

Teacher 1 “I guess translanguaging is good, but I think I still need more training in it so that I can prepare easily and quickly instructional activities based on it.”

Teacher 2 “This new approach (translanguaging) is interesting. Still, it is necessary to know more about it, especially in terms of designing practical activities so that our translanguaging classroom practices become meaningful.”

Teacher 3 “I loved the way translanguaging made my class more energetic. However, we need to have more trainings about it and attend demo lessons based on it so that we can see concretely different ways of implementing it.”

#### **4.2.3. Lack of translanguaging-based instructional materials**

Lack of instructional materials based on activating and using students’ full linguistic resources is reported by all the teachers. The materials available to them are all monolingual. This deters teachers from adopting multilingual approaches like translanguaging because they need to design all the activities by themselves, which is, according to them, much effort and time consuming; adding to that lack of training in designing such activities. One of the teachers stated that:

“It is very tiring and hard to design activities based on translanguaging pedagogy. It would be better if we had available materials designed by experts in it, especially that our training is limited.”

Another teacher asserted:

“I loved the way students reacted to translanguaging. I just wish there were books which are based on this approach so that our job is more eased.”

#### **4.2.4. The monolingual assessment policy**

One last challenge raised by two teachers was their concern of the appropriate way of assessing learners from a translanguaging perspective. Normally, assessment methods prescribed by the curriculum are monolingual-based; hence, these teachers expressed their worry about the way to assess young learners. One of them commented:

“The problem I am thinking of is if students get used to translanguaging in the classroom, then the assessment methods should also be based on it. The issue is our schools’ assessment policy is based on the language of instruction only, especially in the coming levels.”

The other teacher also expressed his worry in this regard and stated:

“The assessment strategies should go hand in hand with the teaching ones to be fair to students. If we teach our students using translanguaging practices, the latter should be reflected in how we assess their performances. I have no idea how to do it.”

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Generally, the young learners demonstrated a notable level of engagement during the translanguaging activities vis-à-vis the traditional, monolingual ones. They showed more interest and willingness to participate in classroom activities; hence, their participation increased. Similar findings were documented in previous studies (e.g., Garcia & Li, 2014; Woodley, 2016; Mary and Young, 2017; Garcia et al., 2017; and Tai, 2021). These studies identified the transformative potential of translanguaging as an inclusive pedagogical practice. For example, Woodley (2016) displayed how translanguaging in diverse elementary classrooms promotes participation and offers both teachers and students opportunities to include better and construct students’ knowledge. Similarly, Tai (2021) argues that deploying students’ full linguistic resources in the classroom helps inculcate inclusive practices, and teachers need to invest strategically in these resources to promote such practices in their classrooms.

Therefore, teachers must adopt open attitudes to multilingualism in their classes and embrace the various linguistic resources available to them to engage their students and celebrate their multilingual backgrounds. Besides, the results of the study showed that translanguaging boosts not only students’ participation and engagement but also their motivation and well-being. Teachers’ acceptance of the multilingual reality of their classrooms, especially in early childhood classes, make students more comfortable and welcomed; this increases their social and emotional well-being (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019). It was noteworthy that students were having fun as well. This was found out in other studies (e.g., Garcia, 2011; Garrity, 2015; Kirsch, 2017; Mary and Young, 2017). In a multilingual preschool in France, Mary and Young (2017) found that the teacher’s strategic use of students’ L1s made his young learners enjoy this new inclusive teaching practice. Recognizing students’ linguistic backgrounds and opening up to their linguistic identities make the act of inclusion smoother and feasible.

### **Translanguaging as an Inclusive Pedagogical Practice in Early Education Classes**

Concerning the teachers' perceptions after using translanguaging in their classes, all of them expressed their satisfaction with translanguaging as an engaging pedagogical practice. They admitted that translanguaging enjoys various benefits. The first of which is that translanguaging boosts students' inclusion and participation in classroom activities; this was supported by other studies quoted above. For instance, Tai (2021) concludes that teachers' translanguaging practices encourage students to collaborate more and promote inclusion as well as participation in the classrooms. In another context, Fürstenau, et al. (2020) studied translanguaging as an inclusive strategy in a German primary school. The study reported that the teacher noticed a livelier participation among her students.

Translanguaging, as reported by the teachers in this study, promotes learners' socioemotional aspects such as recognizing their linguistic identity and enhancing their well-being in the classroom. Other studies demonstrated how multilingual process emotions differently in diverse languages. (Dewaele, 2008; Inbar-Lourie, 2010; Schwartz & Alsi, 2014; Ticheloven et al., 2019). In this regard, Ticheloven et al. (2019) concluded that there was an agreement on the positive relationship between translanguaging and students' well-being. The teachers also stressed the importance of translanguaging for dealing with negative emotions such as feeling mad or excluded. Encouraging young learners to translanguage in their preschool classes with their peers and teachers helps them build more tolerance towards linguistic and cultural differences. Such a positive attitude and tolerance towards multilingualism and cultural diversity are very important, especially at an early age (Csillik & Golubeva, 2019, 2020).

Despite these benefits, the teachers raised several challenges that translanguaging evoked. These were classified into personal and pedagogical challenges. The first raised personal challenge relates to the effort and time consumed when preparing and implementing translanguaging activities. Teachers found difficulty in managing well the time spent because, according to one of them, he did not want to interrupt "students' engagement, participation, and joy that translanguaging resulted in". Most of the teachers did not know about the proper amount of time that should be allocated for the use of other languages in their classes. Actually, there is a need for studies that could clarify when it can work best. The teachers' views agree with Arocena et al. (2015), who argued that the teacher in their study viewed learners' participation in their local languages as time-consuming. In the same vein, Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) noticed that the teacher did not manage time very effectively, and the lessons were not concluded early enough.

The next personal challenge raised was the teachers' unfamiliarity with their students' full linguistic repertoire. This, according to teachers, risks their control of the classroom and made them feel less secure. The same was found in Ticheloven et al (2021), who reported that teachers felt inclined not to use other languages during their classes because they experience "organisational stress and risk of losing control as more significant than the principle of linguistic inclusion" (p. 500). Other studies have also addressed this issue (e.g., García & Kleyn, 2016).

The third personal challenge reported is the teachers' beliefs in the applicability and utility of translanguaging in the Moroccan context. Such beliefs might be shaped by the traditional

monolingual curriculum, the nature of their training, and the expectations of parents. During the interviews, the teachers reported that translanguaging could be an inclusive pedagogical approach in the classroom, but it does not guarantee effective learning in the coming years as it requires the mastery of the language of instruction. Therefore, students need to be exposed to it as much as possible. In this regard, Kamwangamalu (2010) argues that teachers often perceive the use of pupils' additional languages as 'illegitimate' in mainstream education. Ticheloven et al (2021) advocate that too much translanguaging might hinder learning the language of schooling, which is essential for 'educational achievement'. However, they also point out that translanguaging actually considers the language of schooling to be essential. Then, translanguaging is not a synonym for not learning the language of schooling (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Gogolin, 2002, 2011; Hornberger, 2003).

Generally, the teachers' views seemed to be based on monolingual language policy adopted in the Moroccan education system. If being open to and using multilingual approaches are perceived as a challenge, it will always support the existing monolingual language policy. If learning takes place effectively, it has to expose the learners to knowledge in the language they understand better, especially in early education. In this regard, Cenoz and Gorter (2021) believe that languages can reinforce each other and prior linguistic knowledge is an advantage that can be used in the classroom. Another argument is that using two or more languages in the same lesson does not imply less exposure to the target language even if this is a minority language.

Concerning the pedagogical challenges, the first of which is the monolingual language policy adopted in the Moroccan curriculum. The study found out that language policy in schools is mainly based on monolingualism. Teachers are expected to use the official language of instruction depending on the subjects they teach. Such a policy requires the teacher to use the language of instruction only. Consistent with this finding, Garcia and Lin (2017) asserted that the lack of clear multilingual policy implies that schools and teachers do not have guidelines on using or supporting multiple community languages in their classrooms. The same was found out by Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021), who argue that there is a need for a national framework which supports and guides the use of mother tongue instruction, especially in multilingual classes.

Lack of training in translanguaging pedagogy is another pedagogical challenge that the teachers mentioned. All the teachers expressed their concern and difficulty in designing and managing translanguaging activities because they are simply not trained on using it or any other bilingual approach in language teaching. It could be true that teachers sometimes code-switch for different pedagogical functions; still, it is not highly recommended by the school system. Before introducing translanguaging, all the teachers reported that they had never heard of it. When they tried it in their classes, they seemed to appreciate it, but they are still reluctant to adopt it as an everyday teaching practice due to various reasons and challenges being discussed here. Lack of training restrains teachers to freely use the best approach to prioritise their learners' needs, especially in preschool.

Another challenge raised is lack of instructional materials supporting multilingual education. This refrains teachers from adopting translanguaging, especially that they are not trained to



using multilingual approaches and preparing teaching materials by themselves. Such a finding is consistent with Sayer (2013) who pointed out the concern for lack of instructional materials in the mother tongues is obviously valid, particularly the educational policy seems to have been implemented in “a headlong rush” constitution.

The monolingual-based assessment is the last concern reported by two teachers who pointed out that the assessment method should go hand in hand with the teaching one. However, this cannot be possible since the assessment is assumed to be in the language of instruction. This was also reported by other studies (e.g., Lopez et al., 2017; cited in Nyimbili and Mwanza, 2021). They argue that assessments done in schools adopt a monoglossic perspective in that they consider all students are monolingual.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study sheds light on the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in early education classes in Morocco. It mainly examines whether translanguaging as an instructional strategy and practice contributes to the creation of an inclusive and conducive learning atmosphere, especially in early education years in Morocco. The second objective of this study is exploring the teachers’ perceptions of translanguaging use in their classes. The results indicated that translanguaging is a powerful engaging tool in classes whose students come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Using students’ full linguistic repertoires strategically brings about various instructional and affective benefits to the classes observed such as the increase of students’ engagement, participation, well-being and fun. As for teachers, they all confirmed the idea of translanguaging as an engaging pedagogical practice that makes students participate more and creates more fun among them. They all supported that translanguaging enjoys the benefits abovementioned. However, the results show that translanguaging is not an easy pedagogical practice to implement and manage in classes. The teachers raised a number of challenges. The latter are categorized into personal challenges and pedagogical ones. The personal challenges are: effort and time consuming, teachers’ unfamiliarity with all students’ mother tongues, and teachers’ beliefs in its applicability and utility. As for pedagogical challenges reported, they are: the monolingual language policy in the curriculum, absence of trainings in translanguaging pedagogy lack of translanguaging-based instructional materials, and the monolingual assessment policy. These challenges seem to be mainly resulted from the inveterate monolingual ideology in the Moroccan education system. Therefore, the latter needs to realign and adjust its policy to respond to the needs of the emerging multilingual classes in the country.

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