

Translanguaging Dynamics: Exploring the Language Policy of Multilingual Families in Cyprus, Estonia, and Sweden through a Global North and Global South Lens

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Translanguaging promotes and facilitates dynamic multilingualism in various contexts such as at home, in education (multiliteracy, multimodality, language diversity, and mother tongue education), and in society (as highlighted by García and Solorza 2021). It serves as a powerful tool for protesting against monolingual ideology, encompassing modes, media, registers, genres, discourses, the development of speakers' agency, the legitimization of minority/immigrant languages, plurilingualism, social justice, solidarity, and power.

We investigated the issue of translanguaging through the prism of epistemologies of decoloniality and the Global South compared with the Global North, addressing certain theoretical and practical issues, problems and challenges. We focused on the nature of language interaction on the micro, meso, and macro levels in the contexts of Cyprus, Estonia, and Sweden, exploring theoretical and practical issues, problems, and challenges, as addressed by Severo et al. (2020). We adopted the Global South perspective as outlined by Prinsloo (2020), wherein translanguaging is seen as 'a counter-hegemonic conceptual and epistemic toolkit' opposing the valorization of monolingualism and the 'autonomous and segregationist view of language' (Chaka 2020:9).

In total, 60 minority/immigrant families participated in the research, with 20 families from each country. We opted for interviews as the most efficient tool for qualitative data collection, focusing on translanguaging, family language policy, language management, and the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Our data revealed that, across all three settings, translanguaging does not adhere to a strict delineation in language choices but is context-dependent. In the post-colonial context of Cyprus, where English is widely used, translanguaging is observed at both individual and societal levels, embraced by both the local population and minority/immigrant groups. In Estonia, translanguaging is subject to varying rules among ethnically and socially diverse family members, but it is not actively encouraged by prescriptive official language policies that promote Estonian as the sole national language. In Sweden, translanguaging has gained acceptance as a communication strategy in schools. Nevertheless, it has yet to become a widely accepted practice in the family context, where parents aim for their children to speak proficient Russian and actively create opportunities for them to practice it. Despite this, many families engage in translanguaging for practical reasons, with both children and parents using the language that is most convenient in a given situation or that 'comes quickest to mind'. The differences observed may be partly attributed to the historical-political reasons for the presence of Russian-speaking communities in these countries.

References

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