

Translanguaging education in class 1/A

It was a great challenge accustoming class 1/A that is made up by 27 elementary school students. However, in this year in September using translanguaging pedagogy stance and practices gave greater chance and more opportunities. The "admission" of the Romani language to the lessons speeded up the forming of the direct relationship between students and me. The students were free to communicate courageously even in September. I'm sure that all of this is in connection with the fact that the school year was not started in a usual school environment. We got the chance to spend a few days at Gólyahír Children's and Youth Camp at the beginning of the school year. This direct, child-friendly environment allowed children to escape from possible anxiety induced by school. So the students could have said their requests and opinions not only in Hungarian, but also in Romani which they use at home. Then we went to school and started to learn. The preparatory period was excellent. It also turned out to me which child preferred to use Romani, in which family the children are allowed to speak only in Hungarian – yet they understand and speak Romany too – and who are those who use both languages very well. I admit that I had to prepare for these lessons even though I have been teaching HHH [multiply underprivileged] children for 25 years. I visited Sára Lakatos [a mother from the community working at the school] several times, who wrote down many words, phrases and sentences to me. So I made a small booklet for myself, since instructions told in class are in both languages. Not all lessons are taught in this way, but my little students already know that. If I say, "In this lesson we will be speaking in both languages", their eyes are sparkling in advance; in fact, some seem to put themselves in comfort. I have two little helpers who only translate for me what I do not understand. I can say, that the translanguaging lessons make children feel good, and it makes me too. They are very proud that at this time not only do they learn from me, but also I can learn from them. Of course, they reward me with red points if I'm smart. There was already an example of a black point that I got. Everyone here wants to be a little teacher to teach me everything that I don't know yet. They are having fun and they do not realize that they are also learning, not just me. Even if it is not a subject curriculum, their social, empathic, communicative competence is evolving by all means.

Actually, I did not know how I could use this knowledge and motivation in Math and in Hungarian lessons to facilitate the processing of the curriculum. Maybe I still only wonder in the dark, I do not know how to do it differently. However, I can solve such doubts at the very moment as they happen, because it always depends on the situation. This cannot be – or just I do not know – how to plan ahead, as I cannot predict the kids' expressions, opinions, especially in their own language. Maybe I can say that my pupils are the ones that provide help to achieve new game-like learning methods. First in Math classes we counted from 0 to 10 in Hungarian, then we did it in Romani. It turned out that they did not have a word for 0 and that only 3 to 4 children could count to 3 or 4. But since I have been prepared for class (Sára helped), we learned how to count until 10 in Romani. We are talking about thematic images in Romani, and not just words, phrases, but they can also say sentences. They do addition and withdrawal verbally easier in Hungarian than in Romani. The method for this is that they translate Romani into Hungarian, then the Hungarian solution into Romani, and that is how they give their answers. However, I used to ask them this, because their thinking, memory is also developing in this way.

I was afraid to introduce translanguaging into Hungarian classes. Here they have to deal with voice recognition, voicing, tone separation, calling pictures, etc. It was a pity to be afraid because this challenge has been solved very well. Just like in Math classes, there are also thematic pictures here from which we collect words, phrases, sentences. I always ask them to tell it first in Hungarian and then in Romani. But in some cases they argue with each other that they are not telling the same word. The reason for it is that a word can be expressed in several ways in Romani. In that case, we agree that everyone is right because all solutions are correct. Then we reverse the order. First, they tell Romani phrases. But this is only interesting for them if I have to translate it into Hungarian. This game is extremely motivating and awareness raising for them. On such occasions I observed in November that they can divide into words the sentences that they say in Romani. Only students with good abilities can do this in Hungarian even in January. Among the callers used for letters, there are some that start with the same sound even in Romani. In other cases during letter learning I do not use translanguaging.

In group work, it is extremely useful to use the two languages. They're happy that when they work in small groups they can also mull over in Romani like they were at home, and in addition they can also reply in Romani.

At the beginning of translanguaging lessons, several students spoke only in Hungarian, saying that they can not speak Romani. After a few minutes, however, they joined the course of the lesson by using Romani.

A little girl student said sadly that she could not speak in this way. I reassured her that there was nothing wrong about it, and that not everyone has to know how to speak like this, and anyway we were just talking. The next day, with a smiling face, she told me that she can speak in Romani, as well as her peers. She knows and learns the true lovari language [a standard-like Romani variety in Hungary]. So now in translanguaging lessons 3 languages are used.

Of course, as I mentioned above, I'm just experimenting this method. I feel so motivated that we have a lot to do with the kids. I look forward to see how much it will ease the children's work in school. I'm already sure that it makes it easier for them.

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