

Research Article

A Toddler's Journey in Language Development: Using Translanguaging to Navigate Multicultural Worlds

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This qualitative study, based on a parent-as-researcher approach, aims to understand a 2-year-old toddler's translanguaging practice. While the importance of family/home literacy for children's language and literacy development is well-recognized (Lau & Richards, 2021; Payne et al., 1994; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002), there is a noticeable gap in our understanding of how and why bilingual toddlers specifically develop their literacy skills in both languages. Drawing inspiration from the concept of translanguaging as proposed by García (2009), this empirical study shows

how a bilingual toddler negotiates between two languages to create a translanguaging space where he can actively participate in the family and fosters a sense of belonging within the family context. Expanding on this idea, we emphasize the importance of establishing bi/multilingual environments for toddlers through the incorporation of translanguaging practices. This approach emphasizes exposure to each language, underscoring the pivotal role of translanguaging in shaping children's linguistic and cultural development.

Keywords: bilingual children; family/home literacy; immigrant families; parent-as-researcher; translanguaging

1. INTRODUCTION

This passage is extracted from Müge's field notes during her observations of her 2.5-year-old bilingual toddler, Aris:

In a diverse neighborhood nestled in the United States, Aris navigated the intricacies of his multicultural world with ease. His friends were a tapestry of cultures, representing both his Turkish roots and the vibrant mosaic of American society. This setting is significant because it shapes Aris' linguistic experiences and highlights the richness of cultural diversity in his upbringing.

Aris' language choices are context-driven, a manifestation of the concept of translanguaging. Among his circle of Turkish friends, ranging in age from 2 to 9 years old, the common thread that bound them together was their shared mother tongue—Turkish. The families of these Turkish children, including Aris' own, predominantly spoke Turkish at home. This linguistic environment naturally influenced their language preferences during their spirited games of tag, hide-and-seek, and imaginative role-playing. Whenever they gathered for playdates, their laughter and

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conversations flowed seamlessly in Turkish, illustrating the pivotal role of language in molding their social interactions.

However, beyond the boundaries of their Turkish playdates and the walls of their school, a different linguistic landscape awaited Aris. Whenever he ventured into the world of his American friends, the language of choice seamlessly transitioned to English. With a captivating blend of curiosity and confidence, Aris embraced English wholeheartedly, asking questions and engaging in animated conversations. Even when in the company of his parents, Aris' language repertoire remained steadfastly rooted in English.

Drawing from the above observation and research, it is evident that toddlers exhibit a keen enthusiasm to adapt their language preferences according to the context of their family/home environment (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Rowe, 2019; Weizman & Snow, 2001) and the cultural diversity of their surroundings (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moses & Kelly, 2017; Wertsch, 1998). The study of bilingual children's language acquisition has expanded beyond the classroom setting to include their family and home environments. Researchers studying bilingual children have explored how the variability in bilingual children's language acquisition was linked to their experiences with each language (Gathercole & Thomas, 2009; Place & Hoff, 2011; Scheele et al., 2010). Previous research focused on exposure, particularly from parents, and general input measures, such as weekly language exposure (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Kreiter, 2003; Marchman et al., 2017; Place & Hoff, 2011; Thordardottir, 2011). This shift emphasized the vital role of investigating home environments in early language and literacy research.

In our research, we delved into the nuanced realm of toddlerhood, a developmental stage that is often underestimated in its linguistic complexity. Aris' journey illuminated the ways in which language choices and translanguaging emerged as dynamic, context-driven phenomena, shaping and shaped by the rich tapestry of his immediate environment: a Turkish heritage interwoven with multicultural American society. Aris' interactions were colored by a seamless transition between Turkish and English depending on whether he was with Turkish or English speakers; this epitomized translanguaging.

The concept of translanguaging (García, 2009), as manifested by Aris' interactions, is the focal point of our inquiry. García (2009) characterized translanguaging as the utilization of various discursive practices by bilingual individuals to comprehend and navigate their bilingual environments. Translanguaging made language a tool for facilitating connections and fostering a sense of belonging (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Jeon, 2020) within a culturally diverse social landscape. Aris' experiences also echoed the broader global reality of multicultural societies, where individuals, even at a very young age, engage in sophisticated linguistic practices that transcend mere communication. The intentional weaving of Turkish and English threads in Aris' communicative tapestry reflected not only the adaptability of a young mind but also the intricate interconnections between language, culture, and social identity.

Through an in-depth examination of Aris' journey, this scholarly exploration contributes valuable insights to the fields of early childhood language development, multiculturalism, and sociolinguistics. By unraveling the complexities of Aris' language choices and exploring the phenomenon of translanguaging, we shed light on the ways in which children, even in their formative years, actively participate in the construction of their bi/multilingual identities. This research enriches our understanding of the intricacy of language's operations in diverse cultural landscapes, emphasizing the pivotal role of translanguaging in shaping the bi/multilingual experiences of young children.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Early Childhood Language Development

The early years of a child's life, spanning from birth to approximately 2.5 to 3 years old, represent a crucial period of linguistic development (Levine et al., 2020; Scarborough, 2001). Research (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2007; Hartshorne et al., 2018; Petitto et al., 2001) has underscored the remarkable progress observed during this phase of acquiring a second language. Infants undergo rapid linguistic transformations, transitioning from simple cooing sounds to actively engaging in conversations with family members, peers, and educators across one or more languages within 18 months (Levine et al., 2020; Tomasello, 1992). Notably, infants exhibit an innate ability to discern speech sounds from any language, but this ability gradually becomes refined, aligning with the phonetic nuances of their specific language(s). While the emergence of caregiving and educational programs tailored for infants and toddlers holds promise in facilitating language development, it is imperative to recognize the pivotal role played by the home environment. The home environment serves as the crucible for language development, offering essential language input, fostering social interactions, nurturing literacy skills, and molding cultural and linguistic identities (Curdtt-Christiansen, 2009; De Houwer, 2007; King & Fogle, 2013; Li, 2006; Sorenson Duncan & Paradis, 2020). It is within this familial cocoon that the foundations of language are laid, intertwining the richness of a child's linguistic exposure and cultural background.

2.2 Influence of Caregiver Roles on the Language Development of Infants/Toddlers

The acquisition of vocabulary and pragmatic understanding is a pivotal aspect of learning for both monolingual and bi/multilingual learners, influenced by a diverse array of factors. Social conditions (Mukan et al., 2017; Pearson, 2007) as well as cultural and linguistic environments (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Bialystok & Werker, 2017; Correia & Flores, 2017; Duursma et al., 2007; Pearson, 2002) significantly shaped this process.

Within this intricate web, the home environment assumed a pivotal role (Anderson et al., 2017) in examining the reasons why some children in language minority contexts attain and sustain proficiency in two languages. This perspective drew from the foundations of social constructivism, pioneered by Vygotsky (1978), which argued familial contexts served as fertile grounds for language acquisition. Within these family dynamics, adults emerged as indispensable pillars, providing essential support and scaffolding that guided children's learning experiences within their zone of proximal development (Bruner, 1975).

Moreover, caregivers played an important role, especially concerning heritage languages and their significance in ethnic identity development (Jung, 2016; Lee, 2013; Schwartz, 2008). When caregivers recognized the importance of heritage languages in shaping their children's identities while they learned additional languages, they could create environments tailored to this understanding, filled with books, museums, and diverse multimodal materials to promote multilingual development. Caregivers who were confident and unafraid to teach their heritage languages tended to offer more robust support (Marchman et al., 2017; Park & Sarkar, 2007).

Research also indicated that caregivers with all levels of education played a significant role in the language acquisition process (Farver et al., 2013; Kalia & Reese, 2009). Furthermore, social interaction awareness (Lantolf et al., 2015) among caregivers emerged as a catalyst in language development. Those attuned to the importance of social interactions in linguistic growth created environments where children could practice language skills in daily interactions. Engaging in meaningful conversations, encouraging dialogues, and exposing children to various linguistic contexts honed their communicative abilities. Caregivers, in this context, emerged as facilitators, empowering children to navigate the intricate landscape of multilingualism with confidence and clarity.

2.3 Bilingualism and Language Development

Bilingualism, ranging from alternating language use to native-like control over two languages, is a multifaceted concept (Cook 1995). Contrary to conventional beliefs stemming from deficit perspective, research challenged the notion of delays in language acquisition and grammar development among bilingual children (Blom, 2010; Espinosa, 2015; Junker & Stockman, 2002; Thompson & Newport, 2007; Tomasello, 2003). Bilingual infants possess an innate ability to distinguish speech sounds and exhibited equal proficiency in both languages from birth (Byers-Heinlein et al., 2010; Hoff et al., 2012; Kovács & Mehler, 2009; Petitto et al., 2001; Singh et al., 2018; Werker & Byers-Heinlein, 2008). Pragmatic development in bilingual children emphasized language awareness and context-based language choice, shaping language choice rules (Bialystok, 2001; Hoff et al., 2012; Qi, 2010).

Recognizing the dynamic ways in which children naturally use language as a bridge between diverse linguistic worlds reveals profound insights. Within this process, family can play a crucial role in establishing varied linguistic roles. Family Language Policy (FLP) is a burgeoning field that scrutinizes language policy dynamics within the household, focusing on language use and choice among family members. FLP delves into child language learning and usage influenced by parental ideologies, decision-making processes, and strategies concerning languages and literacies. Young children display a remarkable ability to adapt to various languages in social and educational environments, transitioning seamlessly based on Family Language Policy (FLP) and institutional language policies. For instance, according to Comeau et al. (2007), by the age of 2 to 3 years, bilingual children became aware that the flexibility in language use played a crucial role in avoiding communication breakdowns, and they reacted differently depending on the reasons for the misunderstanding, such as an inappropriate choice of language or unclear speech. The flexibility of language, shaped by cultural and familial influences (Duursma et al., 2007; Pearson, 2002), notably highlighted that bilingual toddlers demonstrated heightened flexibility in applying linguistic repertoires in diverse communicative situations. This exploration extends beyond the immediate family sphere to consider the broader social and cultural context of family life.

As we delved into the intricate world of multilingual language practices within social and educational contexts, it became evident that code-switching was just one facet of these young bilingual children's linguistic adaptability (Belazi et al., 1994; Haugen, 1950; Poplack & Meechan, 1998). Recently, translanguaging has been developed (García, 2009) to further illustrate how children fluidly navigated the complex linguistic terrain within their social interactions. Current studies (Charamba, 2020; Esquinca et al., 2014; Infante & Licona, 2018; Toker & Olğun Baytaş, 2022) of bi/multilingual children using translanguaging have underlined the need to understand their linguistic repertoires at home as a valuable asset to foster inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that enhance language development and overall educational outcomes.

The integration of translanguaging practices at home introduced a different aspect to bilingual children within the framework of Family Language Policy (FLP). Studies in multilingual immigrant home settings (Li, 2006; Kwon, 2017) have identified the importance of family language policy in maintaining and developing children's heritage languages. Numerous research, particularly studies focusing on young children's translanguaging practices in a home setting, has highlighted that bilingual children and their families employed their heritage language and English with flexibility and strategic intent to collaboratively construct and navigate meaning. For instance, Song (2015) illustrated that three Korean-American children use both English and Korean as resources to develop negotiation strategies during their translating process between the two languages. This flexibility is essential for efficiently constructing subtle meanings. Additionally, Kwon's (2022) study of interactions within transnational immigrant

families and their children in informal learning settings, such as museums, emphasized how translanguaging interactions between parents and children offered agency to children, enabling transformative learning experiences and connections across generations. These empirical studies have highlighted that immigrant families using languages other than English within the framework of FLP played a critical role in children's translanguaging practices, consequently supporting their biliteracy development.

While previous studies on bi/multilingual toddlers' language development have highlighted the significance of family/home surroundings, we aimed to revisit bilingual toddlers' linguistic environment through the lens of translanguaging, seeking to highlight the flexible linguistic practice of bilingual toddlers in home settings. The utilization of translanguaging at home stands as a critical strategy to encourage exploration of a toddler's heritage language and other languages. Therefore, not incorporating translanguaging in educational settings overlooks a valuable tool that can profoundly affect toddler's language acquisition, hindering their potential for comprehensive multilingual proficiency. In this context, we used translanguaging as the guiding framework for our research to focus on the language development of toddlers who are exposed to two languages (Turkish and English) in their home environment.

2.4 Translanguaging as a Way to Make Sense of Bi/Multilingual Worlds

The prevailing monolingual pedagogical mindset is a deficit one; it characterizes young bilingual children as lacking language or having limited linguistic abilities. Early childhood education has predominantly leaned on the psycho-developmental viewpoint, and this perspective has faced persistent criticism for perpetuating White monolingual ideologies that tend to employ “deficit paradigms to interpret the developmental paths of multiply minoritized children” (Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018, p. 204). However, there is a growing demand for acknowledging the diverse literacy practices involved in the meaning-making processes of young children (Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). García (2009) introduced the concept of translanguaging to highlight how young children naturally used their linguistic resources without regard for the confines of conventional language categorization. García (2009) defined translanguaging as “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p. 45, emphasis original). Translanguaging is a framework showing young children's flexible ways of doing language and interpreting and producing texts as “spontaneous, impromptu, and momentary actions and performances” (Li, 2011, p. 1124). García viewed this practice as resistance against monolingualism.

Translanguaging differs significantly from code-switching. Translanguaging encompasses a seamless communication process where speakers effortlessly draw upon

their entire linguistic repertoire. In contrast, code-switching involves a mechanical shift from one language to another (Oliver et al., 2021). What sets translanguaging apart, according to García, is its incorporation of multimodal interactive acts in multiple languages, such as reading, writing, discussing, and signing. Unlike code-switching, translanguaging engages various modes of expression beyond mere verbal shifts. García emphasized that translanguaging goes beyond the mechanical aspects of language switching, encompassing diverse interactive methods and modes of communication, making it a more holistic and adaptable approach to multilingual discourse.

Nevertheless, despite the growing awareness of the immigrant family's influence on young children's translanguaging practices, questions arose concerning how toddlers in bilingual immigrant families utilized both languages and the nature of their interactions with their families. Given that literacy development is a continuous process that begins at birth, it is imperative to explore the literacy development of young children within the family and home environment. In this study, this translanguaging was a critical framework for acknowledging the strategies and practices immigrant families deployed when they interacted with their bilingual child. In light of this, the following questions emerged: In what ways does translanguaging serve as a bridge for toddlers? How do toddlers employ translanguaging as a tool for developing language, especially in bilingual home settings?

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study is grounded in the parent-as-researcher approach (Hackett, 2017; Kabuto, 2008). In studies of childhood and child development, research conducted by parents on their own children has long contributed to more in-depth understanding of children (e.g., Piaget, 1971), particularly those from historically underrepresented groups (An, 2020). Unlike the outsider researcher, the parent researcher already has a complete membership stance, thereby equipping them to “observe their children’s learning in natural, authentic, ongoing contexts” (An, 2020, p.175). This enables a more comprehensive understanding of children's day-to-day learning.

3.2 Researcher Positionality and Participants

Utilizing the parent-as-researcher methodology, Müge investigated how her child comprehended and reacted to the linguistic disparities between the child's school environment and their family interactions. Müge’s son, Aris, is a Turkish-American boy born and raised in the United States. He was 2.5 years old during this study. Müge documented her observation of Aris’ translanguaging practice emerging from their informal conversations and broader, natural interactions with his family as fieldnotes.

As a critical race scholar, mother, former first-grade teacher, and someone deeply passionate about children's language development, Müge has actively immersed her child in a bilingual environment. Recognizing the extensive use and historical and political impact of the English language, she understood its elevated status in the language hierarchy. Additionally, Aris was born in the United States. Since Aris is an American citizen, Aris' parents thought that speaking English was crucial for his overall development, as any shortcomings in language proficiency might impact his social and educational experiences. Understanding the pivotal role of dialogue in shaping language proficiency and ethnic identity, Müge also focused on nurturing his heritage language, Turkish. Based on their Family Language Policy (FLP), Aris spoke Turkish at home only if he preferred; in other cases, the family responded in Turkish, while Aris continued to speak in English. Outside the house, they communicated in English unless they were with their Turkish friends. Aris exclusively spoke English at daycare without learning any other languages. Given the predominantly English-speaking environment at his daycare, Müge introduced Turkish books, engaged him in conversations in Turkish, and exposed him to Turkish music, delving into the meanings of song lyrics. To further enhance his cultural connection, Müge made sure he had access to Turkish literature and experiences, such as reading the Turkish version of a play at home before attending a children's theater performance in English. During visits to Turkey, when Aris was with his parents, they conversed in English only among themselves. However, when interacting with Aris' grandparents and other relatives who did not speak English, they communicated in Turkish.

As their household is screen-free (only FaceTime), Müge and Aris promote creativity and active engagement among their family members. Here, Müge's child indulges in various activities like playing with toys, listening to music, dancing, doing puzzles, and, most importantly, reading. Reading in both languages has become one of his favorite pastimes. To nurture his bilingualism, Müge has supported Aris' reading habits by providing a diverse range of books in both Turkish and English.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Müge documented these instances by taking field notes during conversations with Aris about his day with her. Additionally, she observed and documented (video and audio records) Aris' language interactions between 1 and 2.5 years old when he was reading or playing with his friends. To ensure the research's reliability, she collaborated with her co-author, Sung, an expert in early childhood education, in analyzing the data. After collecting data from multiple modalities, Müge and Sung analyzed the data using a grounded analysis approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Through the examination of field notes, which include audio and video records, our objective was to illustrate how and when Aris utilizes both English and Turkish through translanguaging. Furthermore, we aimed to share these experiences and instances by

providing a detailed description of a typical day when he interacts with American or Turkish individuals. Additionally, by analyzing the field notes, we sought to gain insights into the ways translanguaging functions as a bridge for toddlers. Our focus was on understanding how toddlers employ translanguaging as a tool for language development, particularly in bilingual home settings.

During our research, we identified a total of two unique themes through the analysis of collected data, which included field notes as well as transcriptions of audio and video records. The process of narrowing down these themes comprised various important steps. Initially, we undertook open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to categorize and label the data without imposing predetermined categories. This initial coding process generated numerous codes, reflecting the intricacy of the data.

Following this, we applied axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to investigate relationships among the codes, grouping them into preliminary categories. Although this stage provided a more structured understanding, the categories remained somewhat broad. To refine our analysis and determine the final themes, we executed selective coding (Saldaña, 2011). In this phase, we thoroughly reviewed each category, assessing its relevance to the research questions and its representation of significant patterns or trends within the data.

Through constant comparison and theoretical sampling, we revisited the data iteratively to ensure the robustness of our selected themes and their alignment with the nuances of the participants' experiences. The finalized themes were systematically organized in the results section, each supported by specific examples, quotes, and contextual information gathered during the data collection process. This method not only offered a coherent structure for presenting the findings but also guaranteed that the themes accurately captured the essence of the data while addressing the research objectives.

In the following finding section, we present two notable themes that emerged from the analysis: 1) Navigating language hierarchy: Aris' exploration in the social dynamics of languages, and 2) Co-constructing a translanguaging space: Aris' dance around linguistic boundaries.

4. RESULTS

Aris, the subject of our study, displayed a language utilization pattern involving both the school language, English, and his heritage language, Turkish. In the initial phase of our analysis, we selected data excerpts that predominantly emphasized either English or Turkish, aligning with the dominant language spoken by those interacting with Aris. Notably, these interactions often exhibited a distinct language preference, with one language prevailing over the other. In the subsequent part of our investigation, we explored Aris' ability to seamlessly integrate and harmonize both languages, particularly in situations where he encountered the simultaneous use of both.

4.1 Navigating Language Hierarchy: Aris' Exploration in the Social Dynamics of Languages

Sue, a 60-year-old American neighbor, is retired and enjoyed spending quality time with Aris. She had a special bond with Aris since he was a baby. Sue expressed a desire to care for him and had been visiting our home twice a week for three hours each time. During these visits, they engaged in various activities, such as playing games, listening to music, and reading books together. It was a heartwarming routine, one that filled their lives with joy. But life had taken a twist, and Aris and his family had moved to a new city when Aris was 1 year old. It had been a year since they last saw each other. During this period, they used FaceTime for communication. The anticipation was building as Sue's car pulled up to the curb, and Aris' face lit up like a thousand stars. His eyes were wide, taking in Sue's presence. "How big you are!" Sue exclaimed with a warm smile, marveling at how much Aris had grown. Aris couldn't contain his excitement, and his laughter bubbled forth. "Yes, I am big," he proudly declared. Sue knew that her little friend had been eagerly waiting for this moment, and she had brought something special for him. "I have a present for you, Aris," she said, her eyes twinkling with delight. Aris' impatience was palpable. "I wanna see, I wanna see," he chanted, bouncing on his toes. Sue chuckled at his enthusiasm. "Okay, it's in the car," she replied, gesturing toward her vehicle. Aris' impatience reached its peak. "I wanna see it," he insisted, his voice a mix of excitement and impatience. His eagerness drew the attention of his mother. "Aris, can you be patient? She'll bring your present soon," she gently reminded him. "Mine, mine, mine," Aris chanted, his eyes never leaving the car. His mother tried to soothe his restlessness. "Anncim, biraz sabırlı olur musun? (Could you please be patient, sweetheart?)" Aris' response was an emphatic refusal. "No home language. No!" he declared. His mother, always quick to adapt, tried another approach. "Would you like me to speak the school language?" Aris nodded enthusiastically. "Yes." "Why?" she asked, curious about his sudden change. "Sue ev dilini bilmiyor (Sue does not speak home language)," Aris explained, his eyes fixed on the car. His mother couldn't help but smile at her son's thoughtfulness. "Right, Aris. This is very thoughtful."

In our analysis, we explored an interaction between Aris and Sue marked by a sequence of exchanges that shed light on Aris' adept management of his home and school languages. A notable moment arose when Sue acknowledged Aris' growth by remarking, "How big you are!" In response, Aris confidently affirmed in English, declaring, "Yes, I am big." This linguistic choice highlighted his keen understanding of the communicative context, as he opted for English in his interaction with Sue, recognizing it as their shared medium of communication within their social sphere.

The significance of Aris' language negotiation became even more apparent when his impatience captured the attention of his mother, prompting her to address him in Turkish with the phrase, "Anncim, biraz sabırlı olur musun? (Could you please be patient, sweetheart?)" Aris' response was unequivocal, firmly stating, "No home language. No!" This response underscored his recognition of the distinction between Turkish and English, emphasizing his preference for English in this particular context, given their interaction with Sue. In addition, his explanation, "Sue ev dilini bilmiyor (Sue does not speak the home language)," went beyond mere pragmatism; it showcased

his keen awareness of Sue's linguistic background and cultural sensitivity. Aris' decision to switch to English went beyond mere convenience; it underscored his thoughtful consideration of the language accessible to Sue and his intent to facilitate effective communication.

He understood that language use varied depending on the person he was communicating with and the context of the interaction. This observation suggested that bilingual children might exhibit greater sensitivity than their monolingual counterparts in social situations demanding nuanced communication (Baker, 2017). Aris' flexible and purposeful language choices enabled him to effectively communicate and demonstrated an acute sensitivity to the needs of his listeners. In addition, Aris' adept language use, seamlessly transitioning between Turkish and English based on the communicative context, served as a tangible illustration of how translanguaging empowers individuals to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, nurturing more inclusive forms of communication.

This interaction encapsulated the intricate interplay of language, translanguaging, and the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the people in Aris' life. His skill in negotiating between Turkish and English and in language choice, attuned to the communicative requirements of each, serves as a testament to his linguistic competence. Furthermore, his choice to employ English in the presence of Sue underscored the broader sociolinguistic context, wherein individuals adapt their linguistic choices and engage in translanguaging to establish connections and foster mutual understanding across cultural and linguistic boundaries. This observation aligns with the need to explore how language choices impact Aris' life, relationships, and language development. His interaction with Sue demonstrates how he articulates his unique 'voice' and underscores the significance of 'language as a social practice' in ensuring his voice is heard. In essence, Aris' approach reflects a departure from rigid language boundaries, fostering an environment that encourages the shared, fluid use of multiple languages as a dynamic and empowering mode of communication.

Aris, an avid book enthusiast, was engrossed in his reading one day when his daddy, a proficient speaker of English, joined the reading session. Being aware of his father's linguistic preferences, Aris smoothly transitioned. His tiny voice, now tinged with the lilt of English, began narrating the tale showing the illustrations of the book. Minutes passed in this literary cocoon, [until] Aris' grandmother decided to take the book from his father's grasp. In the gentle exchange of hands, the dynamics of the reading session underwent a subtle transformation. Aris effortlessly transitioned back to Turkish. He occasionally employed English words to describe the images. However, the narrative took a playful turn when his grandmother, a mischievous twinkle in her eye, decided to interject a bit of English into the story. She pronounced "coat (kɔ:t)" with a delightful emphasis. In response, Aris, brimming with laughter and amusement, cheekily exclaimed, "No!" His pronunciation of "coat (kɔ:t)" was enriched with humor.

Initially, when Aris' father, who is a proficient English speaker, joined the reading session, Aris seamlessly transitioned into using English. This suggested that Aris was

adapting to his father's linguistic preferences, likely reflecting the influence of the school environment or a desire to connect with his father through language. However, when Aris' grandmother took the book from his father, the dynamics changed. Aris effortlessly shifted back to using Turkish, his home language. This shift may have indicated his comfort with both languages and his ability to navigate between them depending on the social context. Interestingly, Aris occasionally used English words to describe the images, which could have been a reflection of his bilingual or multilingual competence. This choice may also have reflected a desire to maintain the English language connection established with his father.

Aris' interactions with his family, like correcting his auntie's mispronunciation of "strawberry," guiding his mother with the correct pronunciation of his American teacher's name (Janice) and modeling the correct pronunciation of "coat" for his grandmother, serve as examples of how exposure to standard American language can subtly influence a child's linguistic awareness. They underline how repair practices extend beyond mere correction and play a significant role in shaping young minds. These anecdotes serve as indicators of the complex interplay between language, power, and cultural identity (Flores & Rosa, 2022; Razfar, 2005; Sah & Uysal, 2023; Schegloff et al., 1977). Aris' corrections and navigations between English and Turkish reflect a form of linguistic repair, where he instinctively adjusts his language to fit the social and cultural expectations surrounding him.

Aris' ability to differentiate and correct pronunciation highlights the ways in which language acquisition and cultural influences shape a young mind. Although Aris' preschool educators did not particularly correct his English pronunciation, it is important to notice that a toddler's language development is not immune from language ideology. These moments allow us to examine how his understanding of the linguistic difference is situated within the language hierarchy (Sah & Li, 2022) while Aris uses English and Turkish as resources to demonstrate his literacy. While Sah and Li discuss language hierarchy in the context of a multilingual educational setting in Nepal, and we discuss language hierarchy in the context of young children's educational setting in the US, both studies demonstrate that English-only instruction in school reinforces an English-is-best ideology. These findings demonstrate the dynamic nature of language use in bi/multilingual settings. Aris exhibited translanguaging, adapting his language choice based on the linguistic repertoire of his interaction partner. This flexibility reflects his sensitivity to language variation and his understanding of the various linguistic preferences within his environment.

4.2 Co-constructing a Translanguaging Space: Aris' Dance around Linguistic Boundaries

In a cozy corner of a sunlit living room, a curious three-year-old named Aris sat on the floor, surrounded by a colorful array of toys. Across from him, in her favorite

armchair, sat a warm-hearted 60-year-old Turkish woman named Ms. Yılmaz. Aris, with his big, expressive brown eyes and curly blonde hair, had grown up in a bilingual household. His parents had raised him to speak both English and Turkish from birth. At three years old, Aris was just beginning to navigate the intricate dance of language. A retired teacher, Ms. Yılmaz has always held a deep fascination for languages and cultures from around the world. Ms. Yılmaz, who has a profound affection for children, thoroughly enjoys conversing with them in both Turkish and English, as she is also an English teacher.

One sunny afternoon, as Aris played with his building blocks, Ms. Yılmaz watched him with a fond smile. She decided to strike up a conversation with the little linguist. "Hello, Aris," she said, her voice warm and inviting. Aris turned his head, his eyes locking onto Ms. Yılmaz's. He looked at her for a moment, as if pondering something, and then his face lit up with recognition. "Merhaba (Hello)!" he exclaimed, beaming. Ms. Yılmaz's eyes twinkled with delight as she replied, "Merhaba (Hello), Aris! How are you today? I miss you, Aris, a lot!" With a look of deep concentration, Aris responded, "I'm good, thank you." His tiny voice seamlessly transitioned between English and Turkish, like a gentle breeze shifting direction. Ms. Yılmaz, feeling inspired, continued the conversation in both languages. "What are you building there, Aris? Ne inşa ediyorsun? (What are you building?)" Without missing a beat, Aris shared, "I'm building a big castle, büyük dev bir kale (a great giant castle)!" He enthusiastically showed Ms. Yılmaz the colorful tower he was constructing. Their conversation flowed effortlessly, a dance of languages that neither Aris nor Ms. Yılmaz found confusing. As the afternoon sun cast a warm glow through the window, Aris and Ms. Yılmaz continued their enchanting conversation. For Aris, it was a playful exploration of language, a bridge between two worlds. In that sunlit living room, the little linguist and the retired teacher found a beautiful harmony in their conversation, transcending generations through the art of translanguaging.

As an English teacher, Ms. Yılmaz, was curious how Aris understood and spoke English. She initiated the conversation with Aris in English first, waiting for Aris to respond. While the conversation between Aris and Ms. Yılmaz revealed Aris' navigation of his home and school languages, it is important to note that this conversation further revealed how Aris was fostering a sense of belonging to his Turkish family through translanguaging. In this conversation, Aris chose to practice translanguaging as a response to Ms. Yılmaz's choice of translanguaging. When Ms. Yılmaz initiated the conversation with Aris in Turkish and English, Aris also responded to her in both languages. Aris' choice to practice translanguaging underscored his efforts to foster a sense of belonging through linguistic responsiveness to others. This flexibility allowed him to engage in a harmonious linguistic dance with Ms. Yılmaz. The exchange of greetings and conversation in both languages demonstrated the role of translanguaging as a bridge that connects individuals across linguistic boundaries, enabling them to communicate effectively and authentically.

In this excerpt, the most important aspect to note is that this interaction challenges traditional language hierarchy because the adult spoke both English and Turkish interchangeably, instead of privileging English (Sah & Li, 2022; Sah & Kubota, 2022). Research has shown schools represent an environment where language ideologies are deeply ingrained, with standard English closely associated with authority and control

(Wiley & Lukes, 1996), which harms bilingual children’s potential in learning: “bi/multilinguals’ learning is maximized when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices” (Hornberger, 2005, p. 607). Thus, the interaction can be considered as the significant moment because it questions the notion of English language superiority and promotes language diversity through the embrace of otherwise marginalized languages.

While the earlier analysis underscores the impact of dominant language ideologies on young children, including toddlers, this excerpt suggests the possibility that the family setting can be a potential context in which young children use both languages as tools to convey their knowledge as it functions as a ‘translanguaging space.’ Hua and Wei (2019) argued that migrants’ transnational experiences and interactions created a translanguaging space where they could negotiate their language choices. A translanguaging space was where migrants brought “different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance” (Wei, 2011, p. 1223). The space is created by translanguaging for the act of translanguaging and enables migrants to construct their own identities (Wei, 2011). Extending the concept of translanguaging space, the conversation between Aris and Ms. Yılmaz is a way that Aris can cross the linguistic boundaries and relate to others. In other words, the translanguaging practice between Ms. Yılmaz and Aris become an even more meaningful act because they are co-creating the translanguaging space to contain Turkish and English languages and cultures simultaneously.

Aris’ use of translanguaging to establish such a space became evident when he read a book alongside his bilingual mother:

In a little corner of their home, Aris and his mother read an English book titled Joseph had a little overcoat in English. Their reading session began as Aris’ mother introduced the character of Joseph and described his little overcoat as old and worn. She then prompted Aris to show her the coat. Responding to his mother’s request, Aris pointed to the coat and labeled it as “eski” (old). Acknowledging Aris’ observation, his mother confirmed in agreement, saying, “Evet, o eski bir kaban” (Yes, it is an old coat). She then directed his attention to the pictures and asked if he could see turkeys. Instead of turkeys, Aris identified a cat, indicating that he saw a cat in the picture. “Cat, over there.” Validating Aris’ response, his mother acknowledged the presence of a cat. She then inquired about the cat’s color. Initially suggesting yellow, Aris adjusted his response and correctly identified the color as orange. Confirming his correction, his mother agreed, stating, “Evet, o turuncu” (Yes, it is orange). She continued reading, explaining how Joseph made a jacket out of the overcoat and went to the fair. During the story, Aris pointed out a doggy and mentioned hats and glasses. He used the word “şapka” (hat) and “glasses.” Acknowledging his observations, his mother confirmed the presence of a doggy and the various hats and glasses. She asked how the dogs were barking, to which Aris responded with “whoof, whoof.”

This conversation highlights Aris’ ability to navigate between Turkish and English, reflecting his language adaptability and sensitivity to language variation. We view this

experience as a translanguaging space where he used two different languages to express his understanding of the book. This conversation is one piece of the evidence demonstrating how Aris uses English and Turkish as a resource for delivering his understanding of the book's plot/contents. Similarly, Aris' translanguaging practice also works as a language bridge for him to express his knowledge.

5. CONCLUSION

Our research explored how a toddler used translanguaging as a tool for language development in bilingual home settings and revealed that Aris co-constructed a translanguaging space for fostering a sense of belonging to a community speaking his heritage language. Through the lens of a parent-as-researcher approach, we examined the language practices of Aris, a 2.5-year-old bilingual toddler, shedding light on the ways in which he negotiated his home and school languages to create a translanguaging space to connect, adapt, and foster a sense of belonging. Aris continually navigated the bi/multilingual landscape, transitioning between Turkish and English, while acknowledging the difference between the languages. Aris' experiences reinforce our argument about the importance of creating multilingual environments for toddlers as they play a pivotal role in their linguistic and cultural development. His journey illuminates the profound influence of how translanguaging enables children to effortlessly weave between languages.

In the context of previous studies on Family Language Policy (Comeau et al., 2007; King et al., 2008), our study is closely connected to previous research that emphasized the importance of the caregiver's and family's role and furthermore, the crucial influence of parents' language ideologies on their children's language development and acquisition. Our research contributes to earlier findings by illustrating how Aris' family aligns with his fluid language practices between Turkish and English. Aris' interactions with family members underscored the nuanced ways in which children respond to linguistic cues. His ability to navigate around languages not because he was confused but in order to communicate most effectively with different family members or adults mirrors findings from studies of infants and toddler's language development (Byers-Heinlein et al., 2010; Hoff et al., 2012; Kovács & Mehler, 2009; Petitto et al., 2001; Singh et al., 2018; Werker & Byers-Heinlein, 2008). We observe that responses to the child's linguistic expressions can serve as social cues, potentially fostering confidence in a toddler. While Aris might experience the traditional language hierarchy in formal settings such as school (Hornberger, 2005; Sah & Kubota, 2022; Sah & Li, 2022), the family environment can serve as a protective and supportive context for him.

Our study supports the mainstream acceptance of multilingualism, aligning with the recent scholarship (Charamba, 2020; Esquinca et al., 2014; Infante & Licona, 2018; Toker & Olğun Baytaş, 2022). It posits that the embracing of multiple languages ought to be viewed as a standard practice rather than an unusual occurrence. The attitude of a

family towards their heritage language emerges as a critical factor, either fostering or discouraging their children from engaging in translanguaging practices. Drawing insights from Aris' experiences, we assert that multilingualism transcends being solely a linguistic phenomenon; it constitutes a vibrant tapestry of cultural diversity and cognitive flexibility. Aris' journey acts as a guiding beacon, encouraging educational practices that cherish and cultivate the bi/multilingual identities of toddlers.

Aris' linguistic journey prompts critical examination of prevailing language hierarchy and the impact on language development. The interplay between Aris and his various interaction partners reveals a nuanced understanding of linguistic negotiation, challenging conventional assumptions. The study delves into the power dynamics embedded in language correction practices within Aris' family. While his corrections exemplify linguistic adaptability, they also expose the subtle influence of standard American language on a young mind (Delpit, 1988; Souto-Manning, 2016). The critical lens applied here questions the potential implications of such linguistic dynamics on cultural identity and the perpetuation of language hierarchy.

While our study sheds light on the dynamic nature of bi/multilingual toddler language development, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations. The study's scope, centered around Aris' experiences, provides valuable depth but may lack breadth in capturing the myriad ways multilingualism manifests. Future research could expand the participant pool, incorporating diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to enrich our understanding of multilingual language acquisition.

The implications of our study resonate profoundly across educational landscapes, especially in the realm of early childhood education. Educators, armed with the knowledge of translanguaging's pivotal role, are better equipped to create inclusive classrooms with bi/multilingual families (see also Kim & Song, 2019; Han et al., 2021). Educators can adopt a relational approach to young children's language learning or 'acquisition' by gaining insights into how a family handles and engages with their heritage language. Dr. Zapata's (in process) advocacy for a transformative shift in classroom environments aligns with the evolving paradigm of language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of resisting monoglossic norms and authentically embracing the rich tapestry of linguistic diversity.

Additionally, educators have the opportunity to encourage a toddler's translanguaging practices by collaborating with a multilingual child's family. Toddlers, often considered linguistic sponges, benefit immensely from this inclusive approach, as it shapes their worldview in ways that explore and negotiate the heritage language and English. This discussion emphasizes the potential positive impact of such practices on the early linguistic and cultural development of children, urging educators to adopt more inclusive and dynamic approaches in their teaching methods.

Policy makers should consider our insights when formulating educational policies. First of all, by acknowledging and understanding the family as a key influencer in a child's

language development, there is an opportunity to promote more inclusive language policies and practices in educational and social contexts. Second, embracing multilingualism as a cornerstone of education ensures that curricula are culturally sensitive and linguistically diverse and paves the way for a generation of globally aware individuals. In conclusion, our study enriches the discourse on multilingual toddler language development. As we navigate the complex interplay of languages, we recognize that every child, like Aris, is a unique linguistic storyteller. By acknowledging and celebrating these diverse narratives, we embark on a transformative journey toward a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and linguistically diverse future.

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