



### 3.3 Mediation through translanguaging: the linguistic negotiation of identities and policies

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Over the last decade, translanguaging has been implemented and explored in a variety of learning contexts with cultural and linguistic diversity, including schools catering for indigenous, minority and immigrant populations as well as heritage community language schools. Studies have shown that it is an effective pedagogical practice in contexts “where the school language or the language-of-instruction is different from the languages of the learners” (Li 2018: 15). In its commitment to social justice and equality in education, on a theoretical plain, it deconstructs the socially and ideologically constructed divides between indigenous v. immigrant, majority v. minority, target v. mother-tongue languages (Li 2018: 15). Ultimately, it challenges the dichotomy between content and form maintained by institutions in the separation of school subjects or academic “knowledge” from linguistic practices through which knowledge is generated (García et al. 2021; Tarsoly and Čalić 2022). When adopted in educational contexts, translanguaging “empowers both the learner and the teacher, transforms the power relations, and focuses the process of teaching and learning on making meaning, enhancing experience, and developing identity (Garcia 2009; Creese and Blackledge 2015)” (Li 2018: 15). Chapter 3.2 explored the transformative impact of translanguaging on the various stakeholders involved in teaching and learning; Chapters 3.4 and 3.7 extend the scope of transformation beyond the classroom. This chapter focuses on the ways in which socially and institutionally constructed boundaries are overcome due to a translanguaging stance in education.

In the classroom scene in Video 1 (*Translanguaging as cultural mediation*) we witness an instance of cultural mediation in which the pupils engage in the language of their home, a local variety of Romani, in a cultural practice, poem recital, which typically occurs in Hungarian. Reciting poems in public is a ritual performance in Hungarian society. On national celebrations poems suitable for the occasion are recited in public, often by actors or other trained professionals, and audience members may join in. Learning a canonical set of poetic texts by heart is integrated into school curricula. Children also learn poems for various celebrations, and recite them in front of parents and other members of the school’s community. There are school-based and national competitions of text recital, including poetic and prose texts. Good results at national competitions may gain scores in applications for further study. The learners in the video, Roma children from the Majoros neighbourhood of Tiszavasvári, might have heard of, or experienced, similar performance rituals in their homes, such as singing and dancing together, although our research suggests that customs related to orality and text performance (such as storytelling and ritual greeting) are no longer practiced in their home communities. Even if there are similar rituals in the children’s families, they are performed differently from what we can see in the video. Singing and dancing are valued in the community: listening to music or performing traditional Gypsy dances are central to merrymaking and to displaying individual aptitudes. Parents are proud to share video recordings of their children dancing, and *dancing* always refers to practising and performing the steps of traditional Gypsy dances (Martin 1980). In contrast to Hungarian poem recitals, however, these performances are spontaneous: *practised* but not *rehearsed*, and part of community-based knowledge and culture, rather than institutionalised. Therefore, when



children prepare for poem recital competitions, in Hungarian, as part of school activities, they are brought into the world of the Hungarian-speaking majority, particularly the highly literate, educated middle-classes.

The relationship of language policy and practice in multilingual educational environments has often been described in terms of *tension* and *conflict* (cf. Li and Martin 2009), and bilinguals' fluid linguistic practices as *smuggling* (of vernaculars) or *sabotage* (of learning) when brought into the context of mainstream education (cf. Probyn 2009). These are apt formulations of the unreconcilable differences between monolingual language policy as text, what Spolsky (2004) called language management, and multilingual community's ways of speaking, which involve language (choice) acts that run in the face of monolingual policy. Following Spolsky (2004), Bonacina-Pugh (2012) establishes a three-way distinction between types of language policy. First, declared language policy in the form of oral or written texts; second, perceived language policy, rooted in discourse and ideology which underpin people's beliefs concerning prescribed linguistic behaviour; third, practised language policy, which is a set of implicit rules deduced by speakers from interaction patterns. The first one of these in our context means a monolingual declared language policy at national level, which is supported by the particularly strong association in non-scientific discourses between the compound *anyanyelv* (*anya-nyelv* 'mother-tongue') and Hungarian. There is evidence in our field notes from summer 2021 that one of our interlocutors, a young woman and mother in her twenties, felt uncertain when asked what her mother tongue (*anyanyelv*) was, and repeated several times in answer to our questions checking her answer that it was Hungarian. After discussing the question with her peers in Romani, she asked for her answer to be corrected to Romani. The discourse suggesting a near-exclusive association of Hungarian and "mother tongue" underpins the perceived language policy, generalised to the whole of Hungary and characterising also the Roma community in Tiszavasvári, that the language of education and schooling can, and should, be only Hungarian. The third component, language policy as practice, however, showed a different trend prior to the start of the translanguaging project: speaking Hungarian was often replaced by silence in classes and by speaking local Romani, the students' home language, during breaks. Silence was encouraged by the parents in order for their children's good behaviour to be rewarded at school.

For the translanguaging project to succeed, both perceived and practised language policy had to change among school staff and in the community. The starting point for this was the alteration of declared language policy at local level. Explicit statements were made by Magiszter's leadership and the teachers in classes that the use of Romani was acceptable and commendable as long as students felt it allowed them to express themselves better. There are many examples of the oral "declaration" of this new policy in our video repository. A translanguaging catechism, compiled by Heltai, served the same purpose (cf. Chapter 2.1).

The old conflict between policy and practice was replaced by new tensions: a re-writing of attitudes toward, and beliefs about, language (choice) required processes of adaptation on the part of all stakeholders. It is these processes of individual and community-based adaptations in terms of ideologies, policies, and practices that we consider under the umbrella term *mediation* in this chapter. Mediations are, thus, both internal, individual mental processes, and external, community-based, practised ones. Their aim is to level out the tensions arising from changes in intercultural, and possibly intergenerational, experience regarding school and its language practices. Our understanding of intercultural, following Auger et al. (2018), includes different literacy practices and access to schooling, of which different ways of speaking, and the cultural practices associated with them, are only a part.



Translanguaging contributes to creating a “third space” (Bhabha 1994: 55): a discursive condition which challenges the meaning of culture as “primordial unity or fixity” by revealing that existing signs can be appropriated, translated, and reinterpreted, thus made anew. Such processes of remaking allow speakers to overcome boundaries between socially constructed named languages and spaces associated with different practices such as home and school. Hierarchies are reshuffled between knowledge practices and individuals associated with various positionalities within them, such as the superior position of an omniscient teacher versus the subordination of the learner. There is tension arising from the gap between these symbolic and real spaces and power positions; gaps which are manifest in beliefs sustaining existing practices. Overcoming these gaps triggers new conflicts between ideologies and practices, but these mediated tensions generate potential by equalizing former hierarchies and by forging synergies across policy, ideology, and practice (García et al. 2012).

In Video 1, the first instance of mediation between the children’s home world and the school is an internal and individual process: the teacher’s realisation that poem recital competitions remain entirely outside the children’s lived experience, and her decision to make the institutional exercise relevant to that experience. The second mediation is external, and occurred during her preparation: she adapted the exercise designed for Hungarian-monolingual majority learners to local children’s home culture by including a Romani poem among those learnt for the contest. The third mediation is linguistic, or what we might call interlingual, in the sense that all paraphrasing across ways of speaking associated with different communities and social voices is: the original Romani text, written by the Latvian Roma poet, Leksa Manush, was paraphrased by a local teaching assistant into the children’s home variety. The fourth instance of mediation is metalinguistic levelling: children learnt the text in both Hungarian and local Romani, but some months later it seemed difficult for them to recall the Hungarian version. So, the teacher proposed a translation exercise: based on the Romani text, of which they had better recollection, they re-created the Hungarian text. Translation is mediation between semiotic systems: a segment of discourse is recontextualised, reformulated, and comes to be understood in terms of another semiotic system (Gal 2015: 227). Transfer between the two is a metaphoric process in which equivalence is never a pre-existing match between discourse components but a negotiated one. Translation, as Ezra Pound said, is “making it new” (cited in Clifford 2013: 49). Hence, translation, similar to translanguaging, allows access to a “third place”, although the histories of the practices involved in the two processes are different. In the fifth, final, act of mediation, the children have an agentive role: as cultural mediators, they participate in a performance (reciting the poem collectively in front of an audience), a cultural practice associated with the majority’s language and society, in the language of their home. Through acts of negotiated difference (in named language and language variety, in cultural practices, etc.) a new possibility for empowerment opened up: the pupils were not merely subjected to, or passive undergoers in, the learning process; instead, they took ownership of it. It is on their initiation that the poem recital becomes a group performance instead of a solitary act. It was their involvement and enthusiasm which made it possible for the teacher to set up this task: the children’s investment in the proposed activities is obvious from the moment when a translanguaging space is offered.

From the above reasoning it follows that our understanding of the children’s and teachers’ mediating role is not based on the definition of mediator as a channel through which communication is established between conflicting parties (for an overview see Corbett 2021). Mediators in a translanguaging educational space are conscious agents who undertake some

form of action to enable communication to occur in spaces where otherwise there would be either silence or a lack of ability to engage in shared meaning making (cf. Liddicoat 2016). Mediation is, thus, a complex and purposeful interpersonal engagement with meanings across different social worlds and historically constructed named languages. Among the many understandings of the role of mediator in various disciplines, our emphasis is not on that of the go-between who builds bridges between two separate worlds, “seeking to overcome incompatibilities which stand in the way of *transfer* of meaning” (Hatim and Mason 1990: 223; emphasis by ET). Mediators, in our understanding, *synthesize* the meaning-making processes of the social and communicative spaces they inhabit, thus becoming active co-creators of new meanings belonging to a *tertium quid*: a third, synthetic space in which segments and patterns of discourse originating from different social settings are recontextualized and re-enacted. It is in this sense that translanguaging can be understood as a form of mediation, inasmuch as “[translanguaging is] the enaction of language practices that use different features that had previously moved independently, constrained by different histories, but that now are experienced against each other in speakers’ interactions as one new whole” (García and Li 2014: 21). Therefore, mediation occurs each time when difference in linguistic and social practices is levelled out in translanguaging speakers’ minds and actions (cf. Deumert 2017: 10).

In this chapter we explore instances when mediation, understood as creative, ad-hoc responses to tension and difference, occurs in our data, field notes, extra-curricular projects, and video materials recorded in the Magiszter School. We look at four specific areas: transactions through dynamic assessment (García et al. 2012); creating a transcultural third space through linguistic innovation in the learning of subject-specific technical terms (García et al. 2021; Guerra 2016); mimetic practices in performing difference in order to overcome it (Deumert 2018); translation as translanguaging mediation (García, Aponte, and Le 2019; Gal 2015; Baynham and Lee 2019).

### 3.3.1 Transactions through dynamic assessment

According to a study by García et al. (2012), schools which are successful in enabling children from socially marginalised communities are characterised by *transcaring* practices, covering translanguaging, transculturación, transcollaboration with the broader community, and transactions through dynamic assessments Chapter 3.7 discusses transculturación and transcollaboration in the schools we have collaborated with. This section focuses on transactions in dynamic assessment.

Video 7 (*Technical terms for school subjects*) provides an example of dynamic assessment in the context of oral exams, which are routinely used at all levels of education in Hungary. The Hungarian term for this assessment type is *felelés* ‘(the act of) answering, reporting’, suggesting a questions-and-answers type of interaction between the teacher and learners. In practice, it often means the recitation of the materials learnt by the pupils, followed by the teacher’s questions concerning details and gaps in the learners’ summary. In Video 7, *felelés* is practiced as a truly dialogic form of assessment: the teacher invited a group of learners to the director’s office, where they sit in a round-table arrangement, to give them a chance to improve their marks through a less-formal conversation about the material they learnt concerning knights’ and noblemen’s historic role and way of life. In this relaxed and personable oral exam, learners were allowed to use Romani in their answers. The technical nature of the vocabulary associated with the topic meant, however, that learners could not always rely on their home-language resources. When one of them got stuck on the Hungarian word *adózás* ‘taxation’ while speaking Romani, the teacher encouraged him to



speak in Hungarian in situations when the Romani words escape him ([video 7: 0:55–1.10](#)). The purpose of tax was then explained jointly by the learners using the entirety of their linguistic repertoire. This is a reminder that the key to success in translanguaging education is never in encouraging students to use one named language or the other but to help learners realise that the socially constructed boundaries between named languages can be simultaneously disrupted and reorganised in favour of the message being conveyed (cf. Makalela 2019). The following classroom scene is an illustration of this ([video 7: 0.52–2.31](#)).

- (1) Learner 1 *Nemesi cím- címo hász, együtt földbirtoko khudingyá [...]*  
'NOBLEMEN'S TITLES, THEY WERE GIVEN LAND WITH IT'  
[hesitates]
- Teacher *Most azt akarod mondani, hogy nem kellett adózni nekik? Azt mondhatod nyugodtan magyarul is, ha nem jut eszedbe cigány nyelven. [...] Mert a király mellett, mit csináltak?*  
'Are you trying to say that they did not have to pay tax? You can say that in Hungarian if you cannot recall it in Romani. [...] Because what did they do for the king?'
- Learner 1 *Harcoltak.*  
'They fought.'
- Learner 2 *Harcolingya.*  
'THEY FOUGHT.'
- Learner 3 *Ná kapijá lenge adó- adózni.*  
'THEY DID NOT HAVE TO PAY TAX.'
- Teacher *És akkor [name] már cigányul is lefordította, nagyon jó! Azért mert harcoltak a király mellett.*  
'And [name] has even translated it into Romani, excellent! Because they fought battles for the king.'
- Learner 3 *O kiráji- o kiráji gyia len birtoko*  
'THE KING GAVE THEM LAND'
- Teacher *Nagyon jó, értem amit mondasz, tehát birtokot kaptak a királytól. Mert mit csináltak a királynak?*  
'Very good, I understand what you are saying. They were given land because? What did they do for the king?'
- Learner 2 *Harcoltak a királynak.*  
'They fought for the king.'
- Teacher *Harcoltak és még mit csináltak?*  
'They fought and what else did they do?'
- Learner 1 *Bementek a torna<terembe>.*  
'They went to the sports'<hall...>'
- Learners *<lovagi> terembe*  
'<knight's> hall'
- Teacher *Nem tornaterem, a lovagi terembe. Olyan volt, mint a tornaterem, igaza van [name]-nak. De miért kellett harcolniuk a lovagoknak?*  
'Not quite the sport's hall but the knight's hall... it is a bit like a sports hall, [name] is quite right. [...] But why did they have to fight?'
- Learner 2 *Hogy megvédjék a birtokot.*  
'To protect their land.'
- Learner 1 *Mert ha nem gyakorolnak, akkor levágják a fejüket.*



- Learner 3 'If they do not practice, their head will be cut off.'  
*Száko gyész tanúlinász le.*  
'THEY PRACTICED EVERY DAY'
- Teacher *Ezt mondjad, ezt nem értem.*  
'Say it again, please, I don't understand.'
- Learner 2 *Minden nap gyakoroltak.*  
'They practised every day.'

The students and the teacher take turns in the discussion, but students often interrupt each other and the teacher in their eagerness to say what they want. They move equally freely between their resources based on Romani and Hungarian in a concentrated engagement in meaning making. Sometimes the teacher's Hungarian-language prompt (as in the case of *adó* 'tax') or question (e.g. "why did they have to fight?") is followed by an utterance in Romani or the translation of a Hungarian utterance into Romani, or vice-versa. One student in particular uses translanguaging strategically: after his first Romani-language answer about taxation earned praise from the teacher, he is keen to translate or paraphrase in Romani parts of the material they learned. Translation and paraphrasing, using his home-language resources, is the learner's individual way of displaying his knowledge and understanding of the subject.

The teacher is also an active participant in fluid language practices. She applies the following strategies: inviting the learners to use the entirety of their bilingual repertoire; encouraging Hungarian-language utterances when technical terms might be lacking in the learners' home-language repertoire; rewarding translations from and into, or paraphrasing, in Romani; reflecting simultaneously on her own understanding of Romani-language utterances and students' understanding of subject-specific language; asking for help from students when she cannot understand the Romani; applying subtle and constructive corrections in the use of technical terms when needed. Importantly, she accepts answers in Romani without reservations, even when she does not understand them. She trusts learners to the point of relying on their translation, and rewards both the answer and its translation into Hungarian. Her evaluation of the students' performance runs parallel with her evaluation of her own understanding of Romani utterances. The strategies applied by the teacher through the adoption of a translanguaging stance are instrumental in overcoming what Goffman described as "disruption to spontaneous involvement in smooth interactions" (1967: 135). Neither the use of Romani, a non-mainstream language in education, nor learners' lack of ability to unthinkingly recite Hungarian-bound, and for them potentially meaningless, technical terms is seen as an "involvement offence" in the conversation. Assessment is adapted to the learners' needs, which allows the teacher to enquire about their existing competences.

Assessment, the testing of prescribed learning targets, represents a serious challenge for the transformation of a monolingual educational space into a translanguaging one. The teachers' limited understanding of Romani utterances remains potentially disruptive for interactions, while the learners' endeavour to adapt to the normative, Hungarian-based ways of speaking (Deumert 2018, 14) might inhibit their dynamic meaning-making processes which could enable them to reach their full potential in assessment situations. Dynamic assessment (García et al. 2012) is a form of mediation which helps overcoming these challenges, as illustrated in the recorded assessment scene above. The main principles are the following: (1) flexible use of language in assessment: this is illustrated in both the learners' and teacher's talk in the scene; (2) assessment as an ongoing process: oral exams are used as a form of continuous assessment in Hungarian schools and their potential to make assessment

part of learning is further exploited in this scene; the teacher invited students to have a conversation about a part of the subject where she identified difficulties in their processing of the material learned; (3) differentiated assessment to meet the needs of individual students: all contributions are rewarded, whether they concern subject-specific knowledge or operations with language such as translating and paraphrasing. Dynamic assessment provides a forum for learners' cultural and knowledge practices: it renders differences across the cultural worlds of school, home, and the subject-specific material studied (the life of medieval knights) visible, and enables students to find their multilingual voice as they put Romani *and* Hungarian alongside each other. In the teacher's reflection, learners "speak more fluidly and without inhibitions [...]. Romani is, thus, not a hindrance; depending on individual ability, it helps learners' individual talents to unfold" ([video 7: 2.32–3.50](#)).

### 3.3.2 Creating a transcultural third space through linguistic innovation in the learning of subject-specific technical terms

The oral exam scene cited in the previous section illustrates that another challenge alongside assessment, and partially overlapping with it, is the incorporation of subject-specific technical terms, always bound to the official language of instruction, in learners' repertoires. This challenge needs to be mediated, too, when translanguaging practices are brought into monolingual educational environments. Enlarging students' vocabulary with such terms is an explicit aim of instruction, especially in the upper years of primary school.

The National Core Curriculum of Hungary and its subject-specific reference framework (NAT 2020) formulates the expectation which connects subject-knowledge to the accurate use of certain lexical items. It stipulates that "[learners] apply key terms of interpretation and content in the discussion of various periods and questions of history" (NAT 2020: 20; translated by Eszter Tarsoly). For learners aged 11-12, the list of key words to be used in interpretation includes *történelmi idő* 'the historicity of time', *változás és folyamatosság* 'change and continuity', *történelmi jelentőség* 'historic significance'; the list of key "content" words includes *birodalom* 'empire', *adó* 'tax', *társadalmi csoport* 'social group', *életmód* 'way of life', to name but a few. These abstractions are challenging to absorb for Hungarian monolingual learners, too, because they lack experiential basis and are morphologically complex derived forms or compounds which children seldom encounter outside classroom contexts. Children, thus, have to mediate between the monolingual and socially remote discourse contexts in which these technical terms are licensed and the fluid multilingual ways of speaking characterising their community. What is at stake here is the appropriation, on the part of children, of what García et al. (2021 :209) called "a construct known in schools as 'academic language'", which is claimed to have "an inductively established set of features [...] which distinguish it from non-academic language", but which is, instead, an a priori category, "assumed, not discovered", and deductively supported by defining shibboleths, similar to the one cited above.

Given the typically low literacy rates and high rates of failure at school in low-income, marginalised communities, such as those in our project, a great measure of adaptability and confidence is required of bilingual Roma children to come to terms with the lexical areas associated with "academic" language by the curriculum. The teacher in Video 7 commented on this as follows: "The world of knights and noblemen is far removed from pupils in the fifth grade, and many do not even know the actual word *knight*" ([video 7: 2.32–3.50](#)). According to another teacher of history (cf. video 15, *School language policy*), "during classes [the children] work with technical terms specific to the discipline of history, which simply do not exist in their Romani language practices bound to orality" ([video 15: 3.15–](#)



[3.25](#)). The learners in examples (1) and (2) embrace this challenge by applying creative, translanguaging solutions rooted in their fluid language practices. They convert to the normative, curricular expectation by *using* the technical terms as “their own words” while simultaneously subverting the norm by *re-inventing* the terms through the domesticating morphological processes familiar from the language practices of their home, thus making these technical terms truly “their own”. Example 2 (*There is no beaten track*, [video 17: 1.45–2.33](#)) illustrates the ways in which translanguaging classes enable students to creatively reinvent technical terms within their own language practices.

- (2) Learner *Róma egy cino városó hász, egyre báro hász, el volt- foglalingyá o országa, utca építinyá, hajóvo, ### provinciának, provinciákat hívták az <elfoglalt területek>*  
'ROME WAS A SMALL TOWN, IT GREW INCREASINGLY RICH, IT OCCUPIED SEVERAL COUNTRIES BUILT ROADS AND BOATS, PROVINCES, <THE OCCUPIED AREAS> WERE CALLED PROVINCES'
- Teacher *<elfoglalt területet>, nagyon jó!*  
'<the occupied areas>, very good!'
- Learner *...és elküldte más, a helytartókat más, i<zébe>*  
'...and he sent the governors to another <mmm>'
- Teacher *<a ter>ületekre, kik voltak ott ezek a helytartók? Mit mondtam? Fő...*  
'<to other areas>, who were the governors? What did I say? Bo...'
- Learner 2 *<Főnö>kök voltak.*  
'<Boss>es they were [bosses].'
- Learner *<Főnöka>*  
'BOSESSE'
- Teacher *<Főnök>ök voltak, igaz? Ott voltak a főnökök. Hogy mondjuk cigányul? Úgy, hogy <főnök>...*  
'They were the <boss>es, weren't they? They were the bosses there. How do we say in Gypsy? We say <BOSS>'
- Learner *<Főnöká>*  
'<BOSESSE>'
- Tanár *Főnöká vagy főnöka. Jó, ügyes vagy.*  
[says the noun *főnöka* twice with phonetic variation] 'Well done!'

The dialogue in (2) is part of a revision slot at the beginning of class, so, the material discussed was covered in an earlier session, then, it was set as reading material from the textbook, and finally presented by a pupil in Hungarian. The summary cited in (2) in the student's home language was presented at the teacher's initiation, immediately after the first, Hungarian-language summary by another pupil. The text paraphrased by the students is organised around the key terms belonging to the topic covered: *city state, provinces, growth, governor*, etc. Students formulate their knowledge about the history of Rome while moving from one technical term to the other. These lexical items, thus, function as sign-posts in the discourse. The purpose of the teacher's interventions in the dialogue is, at least in part, the elicitation of the contextually appropriate term. A segment of textbook-discourse is paraphrased first in Hungarian ([video 17: 0.54–1.30](#)), and then in the students' home language, provided in (2). In the former, the learners adapt their language practices to the normative discourses of monolingual middle-class speakers, codified also in textbook



discourse; in the latter, the learner appropriates that discourse by accommodating it within the forms of expression they regard as their own.

In the recontextualised textbook discourse, linguistic mediation occurs through the creative domesticating practices generally employed by the students. Hungarian has no grammatical gender while in Romani gender is an inherent property of the noun (Matras 2002: 72). Loans and nonce borrowings, such as those used by pupils in (1) and (2) in their creative domestication of technical terms, are assigned to one of two gender classes: masculine (e.g. *birtoko* [Hu. *birtok*] ‘estate’; *hajóvo* [Hu. *Hajó*] ‘boat’) or feminine (e.g. *szorzási* [Hu. *szorzás*] ‘multiplication’; *bennfoglalási* (Hu. *bennfoglalás*) ‘division’ (in video 5, *Translanguaging in maths class*); domesticated verb forms include *harcolindja* ‘he fought’ (Hu. *harcol* ‘fight’) and *építinye* ‘they built’ (Hu. *épít* ‘build’).

Documented processes of grammatical accommodation, when used productively on new lexical material, such as technical terms learned at school, are usually spontaneous and not reflected; nor are the language elements selected from different named languages pre-planned (cf. Matras 2009: 26). In the case of technical terms, there are no pre-existing patterns: children encounter for the first time the forms of expression specific to the language of a school subject. Learners’ confidence to produce an utterance which attempts to recontextualise the textbook discourse in their home language indicates their willingness to engage in playful linguistic activity. This entails learners’ critical awareness of speakers’ choices made in the context of specific circumstances informed by various competing ideological approaches to language difference (Guerra 2016: 228-233).

In multilingual speakers’ linguistic behaviour, there is scope for creativity due to the nuanced ways in which they activate and combine various components of their complex repertoire. This “dynamic and functionally integrated use of different languages and language varieties” is nowhere as obvious as in the momentariness and instantaneity of classroom interactions (Li and Lin 2019: 5). Children “demonstrate creativity in assigning new functions and meanings to existing structures in order to reconstruct patterns drawing on linguistic matter from the [situationally] ‘appropriate’ language” (Matras 2009: 26). This creativity, arising at least in part from the complexity of multilingual repertoires, is instrumental in linguistic mediation across literacy types and discourse genres.

### 3.3.3 Mimetic practices in performing and overcoming difference

In the above analysis, learners create something new (innovative word forms in local Romani for technical terms studied at school), using something old and familiar (Romani suffixes and patterns of domestication). Assigning new meanings and functions to existing structures results from the interplay between conventionality and creativity, which are “emergent properties of situated performances, not pre-given facts about language” (Deumert 2018: 10; citing Hymes 2016 [1981]: 81). Translanguaging spaces encourage such performances as speakers find their voices in new contexts, in which their ways of speaking have not been licensed so far. Li and Lin’s (2019) emphasis on *translanguaging* as a non-finite verb form in the present progressive underlines its meaning as a practice, rather than objectified language, but it also pinpoints the creative potential of translingual utterances as situated performances.

In Example (2) above, the teacher’s closing remark contributes a noteworthy coda to the scene. She experiments with pronouncing the local Romani word *fönöka* ‘bosses’ (cf. Hu. *fönök* ‘boss’) in two different ways: [fø:nøka] v. [fø:nøkø], the latter reflecting local practices better. She first asks the students “how do we say it in Gypsy?”, inviting them to act as evaluators. After that, she attempts the pronunciation, and finally she lets herself to be



corrected by the learners (substituting [a] with [p]). The teacher here re-enacted the previous exchanges between herself and the learners but with the roles reversed: so far, she was the one eliciting and evaluating the technical terms; now it was her answer that was corrected based on learners' feedback. The teacher's performance mediates between curricular requirements, which she is responsible for delivering, and her personally assigned duty to embrace learners' ways of speaking. Her mediation is a mimetic act (cf. Deumert 2018). She first held the role of a figure of authority checking learners' understanding, but enabling the learners to reinvent the technical terms taught in order to shift the discourse context in which they are licenced. In order to level out this role and reshuffle the power dynamics within the group, she singles out a word which could be understood as a technical term in the subject-specific local Romani discourse (*fönöka*), mentioned shortly before by her students, and she has her knowledge of it checked by the learners to whom she transfers authority. Thus, by imitating the learners' *way of speaking* she stages for them their *ways of doing* things in class, too. As mimetic performance, this act of mediation aims to create resemblances by recontextualising ways of saying and ways of doing (multimodal semiotic forms) as signs of sameness.

In addition to their referential meaning, the learners' linguistic innovations communicate through their form. In the Peircean sense, they work both indexically and iconically. On the one hand, they exploit the association of Hungarian, from which the technical terms are adopted, with learned discourse and the resulting sophistication (indexicality); on the other hand, they imitate this sophisticated discourse in Romani, including through the morphological domestication of the technical terms (iconicity). Thus, on a broader level, the learners' and the teacher's mimetic acts address and deconstruct social ideologies and stereotypes; they question, playfully and creatively, what Austerlitz (1988: 35) called "myth". In his (Austerlitz 1988, 34–38) model of cultural reproduction and resistance, myth holds nature, society, and economy together by a framework of interpretation, which is meaningful for a particular group at a particular period. Play, and a particular form of play: art, allow for experimentation with myth, and challenge the values, norms, and rules sustained by it. The learners' and teacher's translingual recontextualization of elements of discourse bound to Hungarian plays with the values associated with different ways of speaking, which smuggles criticality into the primary-school classroom. The final component in Austerlitz's model is humour, which challenges the legitimacy of myth outright. The relationship of play (creativity) to humour, in the Austerlitzian sense, is similar to the continuum of mimesis and mimicry proposed by Deumert (2018; Swann and Deumert 2018). The former is a creative form of recontextualisation which highlights sameness; the latter is disruptive imitation, which emphasizes difference through recontextualisation. While our examples so far illustrated mimetic practices as forms of mediation, Example (3) includes features of mimicry.

Video 16 illustrates the ways in which even conventionalised speech performances can be turned into an expressive resource in a translanguaging classroom. The scene shows a classroom ritual called *jelentés* 'reporting', whose text has been fixed and handed down over generations in exactly the same form (cf. Heltai 16: 0.45–0.55) – always in Hungarian. The purpose of the activity is, on the one hand, to update the teacher on the number of students present, and, on the other, to separate symbolically the time for learning from the break. The time of reporting is when everyone arrives, emotionally and mentally, to the symbolic learning space. In the reporting in Video 16, two pupils walk to the front of the classroom and start presenting their report ([video 16: 1.04–1.19](#)).



- (3) Learners *Tanár néninek tisztelettel jelentinav, hogy az osztályi létszáma huszonkettő.*  
HU Tanár néninek tisztelettel jelentem, hogy az osztályi létszáma huszonkettő.  
ENG ‘To the teacher I respectfully REPORT that the number of LEARNERS IN CLASS is 22.’

- Learners *Ebből hiányzinel hét tanulóvo, az osztályi rajzórára készen áll.*  
HU Ebből hiányzik hét tanuló, az osztály rajzórára készen áll.  
ENG ‘Of this, seven learners are ABSENT, the CLASS is ready for art lesson.’

The immediate effect of the pupil’s reporting is to highlight the utterance as distinct from ordinary reporting through a deliberate signalling of the message key and the performativity of the speech act. As opposed to Examples (1) and (2), the students’ speech performance in (3) is an entirely deliberate and self-aware social display, which is not to be mistaken for communicative ineptness. The forms which, from a monolingual Hungarian point of view, appear to be Hungarian word stems with Romani suffixes (*jelentinav* ‘I report’, *hiányzinel* ‘is absent’, *tanulóvo* ‘pupils’, *osztályi* ‘class’) are placed in the conventionalised text of reporting. This repetition of sameness is exploited by the pupils to highlight difference: first, through the Romani person, number, and noun-class markers added to key words, as if domesticating them in a Romani utterance; second, in the situated linguistic performance of the learners’ identity. The domesticated forms evoke speech patterns typical of the learners’ home community within the conventionalised Hungarian text. Students’ recontextualization of these linguistic forms singles them out as indexical signs which point to the learners’ belonging to the Majoros settlement’s community. Disrupting the textual conventions of a Hungarian-only classroom ritual becomes a display of the learners’ identity (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 378—380).

As children’s overall communicative maturity grows, they are able not only to control and combine the selection of features from their linguistic repertoire, but also to manipulate it for the sake of producing stylistically marked discursive patterns such as humour or imitation of roles, styles, and voices of others (Matras 2009: 36–38). This is achieved through recontextualised repertoire components, which either creatively subvert and challenge conventionalised and normative ways of speaking (as in a named language v. another or in a type of discourse pattern v. another) or simply signal (“perform”) the difference of the speech act from the expected pattern.

### 3.3.4 Translation as translingual mediation: a storybook of Roma tales

The last part of this chapter is a case study which allows us to look at the processes of mediation discussed so far in the way they are present in a single translanguaging project involving the school and the community. The case study is based on a project undertaken jointly by pupils, parents, and teachers in Magiszter, and facilitated by teacher trainees and researchers. Local parents and children co-authored, translated, and illustrated a storybook of Roma folk tales in summer 2020, which later served as learning material in classes. In this case study we also expand on translation as a form of mediation.

The idea of the storybook project built on our earlier experience with extra-curricular activities in the Majoros settlement and its school, but this project required greater involvement from parents than our previous activities (cf. Chapter 3.7.2). Six local women translated and wrote tales for the book, while children were in charge of illustrations. Our primary aim was to create a project which involves the entire community and produces an outcome which can be included in formal learning. A secondary aim was to exploit local



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literacy practices, thus bringing community and school-based knowledge systems closer to each other.

The two main platforms for local literacy are writing on social media outlets and printed or hand-written materials containing passages of, or explanatory text to, the Bible and other texts of religious content (cf. chapter 3.8.4). Another local practice on which we wanted to build was storytelling. During our fieldwork, however, we were told that the great storytellers of the past died, and children prefer watching cartoons on television. Others said they could not make up stories when prompted because all their stories were instantaneous inventions, forgotten soon after told, about their childhood and youth. Therefore, university students selected tales from published collections, which were either compiled by Roma authors (e.g. Bari 1990) or catalogued in the library under the label *Roma folktales* (e.g. Burus 2015; Frankovics 2015). These stories were published in Hungarian-only editions. The translation of these texts into Romani was a starting point to our work with local women in Tiszavasvári.

Students and researchers facilitated several workshops involving the children and the local women participating in the project. In the children's workshop, participants read and discussed a number of tales and selected a few to include in the storybook. Then, the children were asked to visually interpret the texts, and creative work began. They employed a variety of techniques, including drawing by pencil, painting, photography, and etching. Some learners decided to write an alternative ending to one of the tales. At a later point, six women from the Majoros settlement joined us and translated the texts from the Hungarian-language collections into Romani as well as writing two original tales in Romani. We worked in groups: two to three local women collaborated with two to three university students. In writing Romani, the letters and letter combinations of the Hungarian alphabet were used, as this was the most readily accessible to local women (cf. Chapter 3.8.2). In the end, we finalised the texts with the local women's help: they helped us decide if words and longer chunks of text made sense the way they were written, and we helped them divide the texts into paragraphs and dialogues.

The translated texts were noted down by either university students or the women themselves. The typing of the texts was completed by students as local women are not computer literate. Local contributors watched the text being typed up on the screen and corrected every instance of writing they disagreed with; we also verified meanings and forms of which we were unsure. There were differences of opinion between the women regarding the spelling of certain words, particularly the length of vowels and the rendering of some consonants which do not occur in Hungarian. We accommodated individual solutions not only in spelling but also in the choice of words in the Romani version as well as the organisation and punctuation of the text. As a result, four volumes were published instead of one: they contain the texts in four different versions. Students and researches undertook the final editing of the texts, inserting the illustrations made by the children and preparing them for printing and online publication. The four volumes were published in January 2021, with five hundred sixty copies printed. Most copies were handed over to the Magiszter School for use in teaching.

Translation and translanguaging are often seen as mutually exclusive, particularly because the former's critique from the point of view of colonial experience (documented e.g. by Clifford 1988). By bridging the difference between cultural worlds and named languages, translation keeps them apart (García, Aponte, and Le 2019: 85). What is problematic, however, is not the process but the outcome of translation: if the target text is believed to be the equivalent of the original, which is what allows us to read translated texts as identical



with the original, then the outcome of translation glosses over important differences in the power dynamics between the social and cultural worlds that the original and the translated text embody. The issue, therefore, is not so much with translation *per se* but with equivalence (cf. Baynham and Lee 2019). Similar to the way in which a static, objectified view of identity came to be seen as problematic in linguistic anthropology (e.g. Bucholtz and Hall 2004), so did the notion of equivalence in translation studies. Hermans (2007) argued that our belief in the possibility of translation rests on an act of faith similar to the transubstantiation of bread and water in Christian teaching. Gal (2015: 234) compared translation to a naming act similar to baptism. What is non-equivalent remains concealed by the text produced as an outcome of translating. At the basis of the term *translation*, itself a Latin calque of the Greek *metaforá* (cf. Baynham and Lee 2019: 34; Abondolo, 2006: 149), there is an underlying crypto-concept of “carrying across”, revealing a dynamic rather than static notion (cf. Nida 1964: 159). Therefore, from a translanguaging perspective, it is helpful to view equivalence as a process: it has to be discovered and unpacked between different verbal semiotic systems. The process of finding equivalence in translation is, thus, similar to the way in which different facets of multimodal semiosis (such as drawing and text, gestures and speaking, classroom language and schoolscape) reflect and reference each other.

The colonial experience of translation becomes problematic precisely because of equivalence, which relegates the original to the world of the “untamed”, “inaccessible” culture of the colonised, while appropriating the translated version as a genuine product of the target lingua-culture. In contrast, the dynamic nature of equivalence is captured in multiple translations (e.g. Jacobs 2011), or translation into various media (cf. Jakobson’s (1959) tripartite model of translation, which includes not only translation proper but also paraphrasing and the interpretation of verbal signs by means of non-verbal systems). The storybook project addressed the issues of equivalence by providing multiple translations in the broadest sense. Children paraphrased the texts, moving freely between their multiple resources, and they also interpreted the stories by means of visual meaning-making. Interlingual translation “proper” occurred from the standardised majority language into local ways of speaking without attempting to bring them in line with existing writing conventions of Romani. Moreover, the book, published in four different versions, explicitly draws attention to the problematic nature of a single equivalent, which challenges the notion of standards both in orthographic traditions and in ways of “reformulating” through translation (cf. Gal 2015: 234). The storybook project in this sense mediates between different practices of literacy inasmuch as it brings the community’s heterogenous practices into the normative literacy context of the school, allowing them to co-exist and have both a prestige and practical value of their own.

In our repository, Videos 18 (*Community based learning: A gesture of linguistic intimacy*), 19 (*Reading Romani as a translanguaging activity*), 21 (*Imitating Romani “adult speech” in school*), and 22 (*Student’s perceptions of the new community storybook*) illustrate the various uses of the volumes in translanguaging classes in Magiszter. Video 22 shows the pupils’ first reactions after receiving the printed and published books. They are overjoyed and enthusiastic as they leaf through the volumes, looking for their own work ([video 22: 1.33–2.19](#)). They also read passages from the books, which is a challenging undertaking, given that they have practically no exposure to written texts in Romani ([video 22: 2.39–3.07](#)). After the reading, the teacher tries to gauge the learners’ views of the book. In their answers children reflected on their individual self-worth and their community’s appreciation in the outside world ([video 22: 3.16–4.15](#)).



Videos 18 and 19 show contiguous scenes from the same class and illustrate two different activities designed around the book. In both scenes the teacher and pupils sit in a circle. In video 18 ([video 18: 1.11–3.35](#)), the teacher stages a secretive introduction to increase learners' intrinsic interest. She tells them she brought them a book but does not give away that it is the book co-created by the learners. When they hear local Romani from the teacher's mouth as she starts reading, the children cannot hide their excitement. There is giggling and excited locomotion all around the circle. After the reading, she asks the pupils what the text was about, giving them the opportunity to summarise and paraphrase, for which the learners choose the contextually appropriate language resources (Hungarian). The Hungarian-language text-production exercise relies on the learners' expertise in Romani. Students collaborate to improve the summaries; for instance, a learner paraphrases the first sentence as "an old man lived with his son in Hungary" while others amend it to "in Tiszavasvári" to be more faithful to the text read in Romani. In Video 19 the pupils take the teacher's place and read from the book. They carry on translating the text into Hungarian in a free-flowing creative engagement, in which they appear to be running the class for themselves as they translate, paraphrase, re-think, and interpret the text they hear in Romani. The text they create in this way is typically Hungarian but some pupils summarise what they hear in Romani. These utterances are interpreted by others in Hungarian, with nuances of meaning discussed and debated. The learners learn to rely on their own resources and on each other as they negotiate meaning across verbal and non-verbal semiotic systems, which allows them to understand the mediating role of language in the way we experience the world around us.

Video 21 further exploits the storybook as a starting point for classroom activities. Two pupils enact a horse-trade deal, staging a dialogue between seller and buyer in front of their peers and teacher. The dramatized enaction of deal-making was inspired by the tale entitled *Kinni's hens* (whose reading and translation is shown in Videos 18 and 19). The trading of goods at local markets and the negotiations of deals are cultural practices central to Roma communities (cf. Stewart 1998: 174–176). Learners, in all likelihood, witnessed such scenes in real life on many occasions. Deal-making and the exchange of objects as tokens of friendship are part of the pupils' daily life in school, too ([video 21: 0.35–0.49](#)). Exchanging objects of equal value is a practice which reflects quasi-brotherly relationships in Roma society (Stewart 1998: 176). This practice in the classroom scene becomes a staged performance, in which Roma children emulate not the cultural practices and ways of speaking of the majority group but of adults in their own community. The learners' mimetic performance is based on iconicity: their way of re-contextualising the discourse patterns of bargaining – their ways of doing things with language – *resemble* the way their adult community members perform deals both as practice and as speech acts (*Na, jól van, legyen a tiéd!* 'all right, let it be yours'). The discourse patterns of negotiating and concluding deals are summarised by a local co-author of this chapter as follows.

Roma children make deals differently. I think they are better at dealing. For them, it is a tradition to negotiate deals. For example, they play some games related to this. There are two children, one plays the part of the shop assistant, the other of the buyer. When they act out these scenes, they say "I want two packets of crisps, a chocolate, a coke, ice cream, and chewing gum", and then they pay for it. They cut up small pieces of paper. When they play this, they always speak in Hungarian, because when they go to the shop, they ask for things in Hungarian. But they cannot make deals in shops. At the market though, they do negotiate prices. Let's say, when they are playing, they use little toys as if they were of some value. One little boy says to the other one: "come here, my friend, are you going to buy it?" The one



playing the buyer says to him: “wait, let me have a look. How much do you want for it and what is it?” Then he goes up to the seller, has a thorough look from all sides, and then asks: “how much do you want for it then?” The other one answers: “is it worth twenty for you?” Then the buyer has another look, turns it around, and says: “nay, I am not giving twenty for it”. Then the seller says: “how much will you give for it?” “I will give you ten” – says the buyer. The seller retorts: “no way, I am not giving it for ten, I have just bought it. Give me fifteen!” The seller goes again: “nay, I am giving you only ten”. Then the buyer says: “all right, dam it, it’s yours!”

Gypsies are better at making deals than the Hungarians. This is a very old tradition. It has always been like this among Gypsies. They were always trading.

Negotiating deals is a good thing because one of the parties is always better off at the end. This is good for both the buyer and the seller. The Roma trade between themselves and with Hungarians, too. Children need not be taught, they learn this by themselves, they see it all the time. I also say to my son: “whatever price they tell you, try to beat it down! Try to make a deal!” There are sentences that must always be uttered when negotiating a deal. Even in trading it is good to know both Hungarian and Gypsy because when they say a price, I can say the new price in Gypsy to my son. I am proud of it because this is a Gypsy tradition, which we shall not forget. I think they should show it in school, too, because this is a good thing, one can learn much from it.

It is noteworthy that in the discursive pattern of deal-making cited above, the object offered for sale remains unknown. The seller wants to sell and calls out to the buyer. The buyer’s first question is not only about the price but also the item offered for sale. In this exchange, the first question (“are you going to buy it”) is a speech act inviting the potential buyer into the negotiation whose real purpose is to display the mutuality of the relationship between the negotiators. The buyer’s questions that follow are indications of his willingness to engage in the negotiation, in which certain utterances are fixed and indicate turning points in the dialogue. This is a reminder that in the Roma’s dealing the actual objects or live goods that change hands are of secondary importance. Deal-making has a specific discursive pattern: the negotiation cited by our local contributor follows exactly the same steps as the dialogue between the children in Video 21 (and also those reported by Stewart some twenty years earlier in his field site). Negotiating is a performative speech act which enacts and reiterates the reciprocity and equivalence of relationships within the community: it is worth making deals because if one side benefits from it, both sides benefit. Only this can explain why even the party which is worse off in a particular deal should be satisfied with the outcome. It is this dynamism of relationships within the community, based on mutuality, reciprocity, and equality, which are central to the organisation of Roma society, and which are well worth bringing into the space of formal learning. A translanguaging stance combined with practices of community-based, culturally transformative educational approaches is uniquely positioned to discover similar social and knowledge practices for inclusion in formal learning activities (cf. Chapter 3.7).

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