

### 3.7 Community-based knowledge in culturally transformative pedagogies

**Eszter Tarsoly, Gabriella Csele, Eva Hoyt-Nikolič, Gizella R. Makula-Lakatos, Erika Puskás, Tamás Wesselényi**

Schools, nurseries, and other educational settings are both embedded in the communities they serve and also give rise to a community of their own, whose members include learners, educators, other school staff, and the parents and other caregivers who are part of the children's immediate social networks. The communities which are served by the two schools participating in our project were reviewed in Chapter 1.3. This chapter focuses on the communities which arise around the schools as a result of both parental engagement and the educators' commitment to community organisation, both of which serve the children's best interest (e.g. García et al. 2012; Rogers et al. 2009a). The Magiszter School in Tiszavasvári provides best-practice examples of involving all adult members of the school and its broader community in the education process. We have observed similar practices in the school in Szímő (Zemné), too. Although community organisations and NGOs are not as readily available in Tiszavasvári as in a large city setting (cf. García et al. 2012: 817; Bautista-Thomas 2015), Magiszter has been successful in mobilising their own and the community's resources to create a community of learning. In this chapter, we explore the interconnected notions of translanguaging, cultural relevance, local knowledge, and community participation. The first part explores learning communities and how they help going beyond deficit-oriented educational models. The second part discusses the ways in which the inclusion of community-based local knowledge in the classroom paves the way to culturally transformative pedagogies. Finally, we provide snapshots from classes to illustrate best practices in the implementation of such transformative programmes.

#### 3.7.1 Learning communities, parental involvement, and rethinking “gaps” in education

The value of learning communities has been studied primarily in the context of higher education (Wolfensberger-Le Fevre, Fritz and Van der Westhuizen 2011; Huerta and Bray 2013) and professional training (Luyten and Bazo 2019; Ruth-Sahd 2011; Heemskerk et al. 2020). Most studies pinpoint learners' active participation and the sharing of responsibility for learning between educators and students (Huerta 2004: 296) as the greatest benefits of learning communities (Smith et al. 2004). These qualities render the term *community of learning* suitable to characterise the primary-school contexts in our study, characterised by educators', learners', and community members' shared learning experience. Our use of *community participation*, rather than *engagement*, is deliberate. It shows our intention to move away from conceptualising care for children, either in schools or in the community, as a 'formal undertaking' to 'deliver one's duty': meanings associated with various uses of *engagement* (cf. OED, s.v. “engagement”). We would particularly like to avoid the idea that parents' *engagement* is controlled by an entity external to the community (e.g. the teachers, the school, the broader institutional setting). While it is clear that much depends on the educator's commitment to enhancing community participation, evidence from research and practice shows that it works only if the duty of care for the children' intellectual growth and mental and emotional wellbeing is shared in equal measures between the various stakeholders belonging to the school's community (Makalela 2018; García et al. 2012). Ideally, teachers, parents, and other care-givers 'share in actions' while caring for the children, even if the



‘outcome affects them differently’ (OED, *s.v.*, “participation”) because they experience different types of learning while working together.

The significance of schools’ and communities’ mutual influence is manifold. This complex relationship is centred primarily on the learners, and, secondarily, on the learning and development opportunities created for all those involved in a school’s community. Two corresponding strands concerning learning outcomes are discernible in education research. The first one focuses on the measurable influence of parental engagement on learners’ academic achievement (Gaitan 2012). The second one centres on the less readily quantifiable attitudes towards collaboration, care, and flexibility on the part of the school, which provide assurance to families that the teachers have their children’s best interest in mind (Noguera 2006: 315, Bautista-Thomas 2015). With regards to the first strand, the relevance of family features to academic outcomes has been systematised in the family-school relationship model, including family-related predictors for sociability, institutional citizenship, and rule compliance (Adams et al. 2000) and associations between parenting, self-esteem, and academic achievement (Rogers et al. 2009b; for an overview, see Rogers et al. 2009c: 90). Familial-contextual variables determine the ways in which parents interact with their children, including also controlling v. supportive type of involvement with their schooling. Supportive parental engagement, such as monitoring, helping with homework, and celebrating success provide reinforce children’s attributes for achievement, such as confidence and self-regulation (Rogers et al. 2009a: 169). Controlling parental engagement, however, has been associated with parents’ psychological stress reactions to life events, whose impact shows in their punitive involvement with the children’s learning, compounded by limited time and energy devoted to the children, less intellectual stimulation, and predominantly negative affect (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005; Adamakos et al., 1986). Negative parenting strategies and the life conditions underpinning them spill over to parents’ relationship with their children’s schools, too, by which they feel often unsupported (Roger et al. 2009b: 91). The experience of disempowerment with regards to their children’s academic progress is common in marginalised communities. The power dynamic which unfolds between the school and family life often marks out the school as an alien, unsettling territory, which impacts the children’s academic achievement (Gaitan 2012). Learning communities arising around schools can have a vital role in such situations. If the school leadership and teachers, in their role as community organisers, manage to create a safe learning space for the sharing of emotional, intellectual, social, and practical resources, parents can feel understood and supported in such communities, and be free, at least temporarily, of the worries characterising their everyday life (Wolfensberger-Le Fevre, Fritz and Van der Westhuizen 2011: 571).

Supporting positive parental involvement strategies, however, is just one aspect of learning communities. As the second strand of outcomes mentioned above suggests, collaboration, flexibility, care, and the reciprocity of relationships on all levels (between parents and teachers, teachers and pupils, etc.) are also important by-products of the social practices characterising primary-school learning communities. The parents’ and educators’ engagement in this collective effort serves as a model of social participation for the children: it allows all participants to de- and reconstruct their selfhood in relation to others’ (Wenger 1998a: 34). The learning communities organised around the two schools in our study provide a sense of belonging to members of the communities they serve. Alongside formal learning centred on academic achievements, the schools, conceptualised as learning communities, become platforms for informal learning. It is due to the informal learning outcomes created at



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the interface between home and institution that learning has the potential to be not merely formative but also transformative (cf. Wenger 1998b).

A challenge to community participation in primary-school environments is that teachers are often untrained and inexperienced in working with families in a way that is strengths-based and enhances exchange of information (Bautista-Thomas 2015). As a result of the education-planning process, based on developmental goals and achievement targets, educators easily slip into thinking along deficit models, which typically take the practices of monolingual middle-class families as the *norm*, and set these practices as *normative* for multilingual learners. Deficit models (Makalela 2018: 829) assume gaps in knowledge that are to be filled, by effective education and schooling, with information and skills which are external to the world that surrounds the learners. “Gaps of knowledge” are potentially identified in cognitive processing, social and emotional development, skills and ability, and, importantly, linguistic conduct in the official language of instruction (cf. García et al. 2021). Paradoxically, even well-intentioned educational models, failing to overcome the bias of construing *difference* as *deficiency*, contribute to deepening the divide which Makalela (2018: 825) aptly called “[the] gap between school and [the learners’] lived community experience”. Perceived gaps in knowledge and skills, conceptualised along handed-down ideas within educational officialdom, construct social and emotional gaps between children’s worlds at home and at school. A member of the Magiszter School’s community, co-authoring this chapter, elucidates her experience of these gaps both as a child and later as a parent.

It was a surprising feeling for me to go to school, as I was quite withdrawn. I did not know anybody there because I was sent to school with Hungarians, and I could not speak with anybody. I sat alone in a bench at the back of the classroom. Everyone was able to speak when the teacher asked something. She was writing on the blackboard and said: raise your hand if you know the answer. Everyone raised their hand except me. So, the teacher came to me and asked me why I wasn’t raising my hand. I said, well, first I could not say a word, I was just listening. It was difficult for me to utter Hungarian words. Later, the truth is, my classmates also turned away from me because I could not communicate with them, I could not speak with them easily because they did not understand what I wanted to tell them, what I wanted to say, and I did not understand what they were saying because their way of uttering words was unusual to me. I knew Hungarian, but my way of speaking was different from theirs.

I was placed in a Hungarian class because I was better at studying than other children. I was fast. In the first grade I learnt to write down my name nicely, I knew how to count. I went to school here [to the predecessor of Magiszter, a school near the Roma neighbourhood]. We had a teacher who was not from Vasvári. He was from Leninváros [lit. ‘Lenin-town’, today Tiszaújváros]. It is far from here. He used to come by bus. He was slightly older but he was a good teacher, he really cared. He sat down with me to have a chat and told me that I should not feel ashamed of myself, I should not withdraw, I should feel like the other children. He was very caring. He used to ask me questions about the way I spoke at home, and I told him I spoke only in Gypsy, that we didn’t know Hungarian properly. So, he taught me. He told me I could tell him anything in Gypsy, just not when my classmates are there. He taught me up to the second grade, then I was transferred to a different class again. I felt very uneasy there, too. The teachers were new. There were children who were friendly with me but others were not. In the breaks I used to run to my Gypsy peers from other classes and I chatted to them. But then my classmates asked me why I went with them, why I chatted with them, what did I say. Someone asked me: did you curse us? I told them that I was just



talking about my classmates, telling them who is who. They did not believe me. They thought I belittled them.

When I was little, there were no community events in the school. But when my daughter went to school, her class staged a performance in the community education centre, and the parents could go to see it. I felt very uneasy there because I was the only Gypsy. I did not dare talking to anyone. There was an elderly lady, I will never forget, who invited me to sit next to her. She noticed how uncomfortable I felt. She invited me to sit with her. She told me: “come, my dear, sit next to me, and don’t be so frightened, just stay calm, and sit with me here” and she chatted with me.

Noguera (2006: 317) observed in his study on teachers’ evaluation of Latinx learners’ behaviour at school that a passive, compliant, or, as in our assessment above, “withdrawn” behaviour is likely to win praise. We have observed similar trends in Tiszavasvári, where in the past parents encouraged their children to remain silent at school and smile when asked questions to avoid getting into trouble. Such behaviour might provoke positive statements about the students in general but it hinders their academic success: Roma students are usually overrepresented in remedial classes and Special Educational Needs groups (Németh 2007: 187–189). The social and emotional gap between herself and the school environment was experienced by our local contributor as a barrier to social interaction and communication with peers: a lack of possibility to speak and be understood. The reason for this is the difference between their own and their peers’ or teachers’ ways of speaking and not necessarily their knowledge (or lack thereof) of the same named language(s). The reverse, however, is also true: a learner can feel admitted in the school’s and a teacher in the learners’ home community due to a sense of understanding the other and of being understood by them. The Magiszter School’s community in Tiszavasvári has been successful in developing practices through which the parents’ and the broader community’s impact on shaping children’s development can be brought into the school in a way that makes sense for both parents and teachers (cf. Bautista-Thomas 2015). Below, we elucidate from a teacher’s perspective the gaps between the children’s home and school environment, offering also an outlook on possibilities to overcome it.

The disadvantaged position of Roma youth in education is explained by three main factors: the gap between the schools’ and the families’ social and cultural norms, the children’s limited knowledge of Hungarian, and that we lack the tools required to manage this difference – or if we have the tools, we are reluctant to apply them. Achievement targets at school are entirely incomprehensible and pointless for the young people raised in our Roma community characterised by its own language practices and traditional Roma customs and culture. Most schools choose to ignore both the experiential knowledge children bring from their homes and their cultural competence shaped by Roma traditions. The pupils’ needs and interests are overlooked, the richness and challenges arising from their bilingual traditions are ignored, often educators are not even aware of these. Roma pupils are thus forced to participate in an education system which is entirely alien to them as far as language and cultural practices are concerned. This happens in a critical period of their life when the skills necessary to understand subjects requiring a greater cognitive effort are not fully formed yet in their home language either. The central curriculum does not accommodate a teaching programme which builds on the strengths of the children’s home language and culture. As a result, their competence in the official language of instruction, Hungarian, also remains limited. But soon after they start school, competence testing starts, too!

This gap can be breached if the school is open towards Roma cultural practices and families, and implements pedagogical approaches which build on children’s knowledge



brought from home, thus enabling them to develop a positive sense of self. We organise events involving the parents at school: joint classroom activities, cooking or baking sessions, quizzes, cycling tours, football, arts&crafts and singing sessions, and many more. When we started the community participation programme, we first asked the parents what sort of activities they thought could be useful. We involved them in the planning of the programme but we also wanted to provide models for spending free time in a meaningful and constructive way.

Building bridges between the institution and the families allows teachers to understand and appreciate culturally different forms of behaviour, and to use this knowledge to forge a community of co-learning. The parents in the community think that I know their language because they accept me. They understand that I have their children's best interest in mind. They know I don't look down on them. We organise events together at the school where we all have a good time. Do I speak Gypsy? No, I don't. But when we are together, I understand what they say. For example, two mothers are talking in their home language, and they use words that I know. Some of these are, for me, Hungarian words, for them local Romani words. From these, I understand what they talk about, and, if it's something funny, I catch their gaze and laugh with them as I pass by. Moments like this bring us closer: they allow me to get to know them better, and they also come to understand that I am not that different from them. Sometimes they say I am like a Gypsy. If they think I am one of them, they feel they can trust me with their children.

School became a less alienating experience for Roma families after the introduction of translanguaging, which allowed knowledge inherent to the community to be valued in the context of formal education. The co-author of this chapter from the community summarised her experience as follows. The school today is different from what it used to be when I was a child because teachers appreciate Gypsy speech. When I was a child, we were not allowed to speak Gypsy at all. Now several teachers and the director encourage it. They even know Gypsy; they are learning it from the children and from us, when we work here. I also worked for the school for three years. The director used to invite us to her room, and we talked. They were asking us questions about our language, words for various things, how we say them. I also come to school for celebrations involving the families. We sit down with the children, we draw and paint together, we do competitions. Sometimes we cook together, we bake cakes, we make fruit bowls. We do this together with the teachers. When the little girl, my grand-daughter who was born just a few days ago, grows up, we will send her to this school, too, because here they can speak both languages.

### **3.7.2 Learners' "funds of knowledge" and culturally transformative pedagogies**

#### **Community-based knowledge and local concepts of knowledge transmission**

Our experience in Magiszter is supported by research findings from other contexts. Studies have found that efforts towards educational equality for the Roma must rely more on their communities (Németh and Szira 2007: 11; Lopez 2009: 169). Extending the remit of education beyond the school's walls is key to providing for children and young people a nurturing environment which enables them to achieve their full potential. The concept of *ethical care* (Noddings 1986: 80), practised by institutions tasked with the transfer of learning, and requiring an effort not needed in natural care, has been theorised in the context of education for minorities (Valenzuela 1999; Rivera-McCutchen 2012), indigenous ontologies in academic writing (Guttorm et al. 2021: 118), and translanguaging research (García et al. 2012). In the latter, the term *transcaring* was introduced for "caring enacted to



build a common collaborative ‘in-between’ space that transcends linguistic and cultural differences between schools and homes” (García et al. 2012: 799). The four components of transcaring are translanguaging, transculturación, transcollaboration, and transactions through dynamic assessments. The previous part of this chapter looked at the benefits of transcollaboration in communities of learning attached to schools. The remaining part focuses on transculturación through the exploitation of local ways of knowing in the classroom, but with the understanding that the four components discussed by García et al. (2012) are intertwined (cf. Chapter 3.3.1 on dynamic assessment).

The concept of care in education involves a rethinking of deficit models and a constant search for existing competences in order to reduce the social and emotional gaps between homes and classrooms. This is possible through a transformative pedagogy that builds on the students’ “funds of knowledge”: the historically accumulated and culture-specific bodies of knowledge and skills essential for individual functioning and well-being (Moll et al. 2001: 133). Such culturally responsive pedagogies move away from school-centred models in favour of learner- or community-centred ones. They enquire about what constitutes knowledge in the students’ home environments and what the community’s traditions of knowledge transfer are. They exploit the community’s resources in building academic knowledge, thereby supporting learners in developing fluid subjectivities which extend beyond “first” or “second” languages and cultural identities (García et al. 2012: 807).

Theories of care emphasise the relationship of reciprocity between all stakeholders in education, highlighting that learners’ engagement in a caring relationship with an adult at school is an important first step towards learners caring about school (Valenzuela 1999: 79). Authentic caring has been associated with values inherent in the home cultures of minority groups in the US (cf. García et al. 2012: 801) and indigenous populations in South Africa (Makalela 2018, 2019; Mwaniki 2019). Such values for Latinx students include *personalismo* and *compadrazgo*: the development of interpersonal relationships in educational contexts, similar to co-parenting or godparental responsibilities. This implies the forging of supportive familial networks among school personnel, parents and families. In the South-African case, Makalela (2018) argued that translanguaging in its complex multilingual African contexts is part of the culture of *ubuntu*, which presupposes the complementarity of language practices in socially separated named languages, on the one hand, and, on the other, the reciprocity, complementarity, and equality of relationships within communities, particularly in communities of learning. Makalela (2018: 832–838) identified in community elders’ narratives discourse patterns employed in community-based teaching, such as praise, riddles, animal and name symbolism, and circumlocution (multimodal and linguistic proximations of problem). Indigenous knowledge-transfer traditions are not characterised by the hierarchies conventionalised in the global north in student-teacher relationships, in the linear (or paragraph-like) arrangement of information, and in the socially constructed boundaries between languages. In indigenous communities of co-teaching, in one of Makalela’s informants’ words “you don’t fail [students]; [it] would mean the community is failing” (Makalela 2018: 837–838).

Stewart (1998: 57) observed a similar non-hierarchical arrangement in adult-child relationships among the Roma. Adults interfere remarkably little with children’s behaviour, and they may even reprimand each other for doing so. Core values which bear on the way knowledge is constructed in Roma communities include (cf. Stewart 1998: 55–57) the reciprocity and symmetry of relationships, a culture of swapping and sharing belongings, the autonomy of the child from a relatively young age, hierarchical gender-relations, fluid language practices, and patterns of discourse which are deployed to assert or negotiate the



individual's position vis-à-vis their interlocutors in verbal interactions. Among such discourse patterns, Heltai (2016) identified banter, mockery, threats and cursing, seeking to impress (Hu. *lenyűgözés*), and playing haughty (Hu. *flegmázás*). The “funds of knowledge” which Roma learners bring to the school are seen from within the community in Tiszavasvári as follows. The language and customs of the Gypsies are inseparable from each other. Both must be learned [at school]. There is much difference between Gypsy and Hungarian customs and habits. For instance, Hungarians do not go over to each other's place, but we, Gypsies, do. When I cook, I take some food to my neighbour, we sit down and talk. We share what we have been doing on that day, how the children are doing. If there is a celebration, like a birthday or a school-leaving party, we invite the neighbours as well, not only our relatives. We give them a little bit of everything we cooked for the occasion to take home with them. I don't think Hungarians do this. But even that son of mine, the one who left the settlement, maintains this habit nonetheless.

### **Culturally transformative, participatory creative projects**

Our case study for the successful exploitation of the learners' funds of knowledge in a translanguaging educational space is a theatre project, which members of our research team co-created with teachers, pupils, and community members attached to the Magiszter School. A film-making project of a similar scope is discussed briefly. The aim of the theatre project was to stage a theatre production with the participation of learners in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Other participants included university students, researchers, school teachers, and, in the final stages of the project, a few adults living in the Roma neighbourhood and three former students of Magiszter. The project ran from April to November in 2018. Teachers in Magiszter held weekly theatre workshops, assisted once a month by Budapest-based researchers and teacher trainees. These took place in the *Tanoda*, a learning centre and community hub in the Roma neighbourhood. Preparatory work during the spring term was followed by a four-day summer school where the text of the performance was memorised. The props and stage design elements were also hand-made by the children in the *Tanoda* with assistance from research team members. Finally, three performances took place in the autumn (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Scene from the theatre performance in Budapest



The text of the play was created during the theatre workshops. Teachers read stories with the children from a collection of Roma folk tales (Csenki 1974), and the children picked the tale entitled *A szegény fiúból őz lett* ('The poor boy who became a fawn'; Csenki 1974: 140–147) as a starting point for their story. Based on the tale, children wrote short dialogues and narrative texts for the story teller in groups. Children were invited to use their full linguistic repertoire in all activities. This translanguaging space allowed the learners to integrate their experience from different social spaces which had been formerly “separated through different practices in different places” such as the school and their home (Li 2018: 23). The resulting texts included resources linked to both Hungarian and Romani, thus representing local ways of speaking for the first time on stage. Children produced texts not only by alternating the named languages familiar to them but also by using their repertoire components side by side, reflecting the fluidity of their everyday language practices, as shown in Example (1).

- (1) *Mondja az ember: Na ker tut aba séj.* ‘The man said: DON’T PRETEND, WOMAN!’  
 (HU) ‘Mondja az ember: Ne tedd magad, asszony.’
- (2) *Gyá ko szomszédó taj mang szita taj lapátá.* ‘GO TO THE NEIGHBOUR AND ASK FOR A SIEVE AND SHOVEL.’  
 (HU) ‘Menj a szomszédhoz és kérj szitát és lapátot.’

In examples (2) and (3), we provide samples from the text created by the children to illustrate the ways in which they adapted the text of the Roma tale, which they read in Hungarian, to reflect local practices and ways of speaking. The text of the tale is provided only in English version. The English translations of the children’s texts are not idiomatic; they reflect the composition of the original as closely as possible.

- |     |                    |  |
|-----|--------------------|--|
| (2) | Original text      | The girl went to the neighbour’s house and called the old lady:        |
|     | Children’s version | <i>Lácsó gyesz, Juliska néni! Ále aba auri phenav tuke vareszu!</i>    |
|     | HU                 | Jó napot Juliska néni! Gyere ki, mondok valamit!                       |
|     | ENG                | ‘GOOD MORNING, AUNTIE JULISKA. COME OUT, I’LL TELL YOU SOMETHING.’     |
|     | Original text      | My father says you should lend us your sieve and coal rake and shovel. |
|     | Children’s version | <i>Apukám küldött szitáért, lapátért, szénvonóért.</i>                 |
|     | HU                 | Apukám küldött szitáért, lapátért, szénvonóért.                        |
|     | ENG                | ‘My dad sent me for the sieve, shovel, and coal rake.’                 |
|     | Original text      | And what do you need it for? / To bake bread.                          |
|     | Children’s version | <i>Minek az nektek? / Kenyeret sütni.</i>                              |
|     | HU                 | Minek az nektek? / Kenyeret sütni.                                     |



	ENG	‘What for?’	/ To bake bread.
(3)	Original text	Husband, if you don’t destroy your two children, I shall not live with you any longer.	
	Children’s version	<i>Hát gyere már ide, te ember, súlyos beszédem van veled!</i>	
	HU	Hát gyere már ide, te ember, súlyos beszédem van veled!	
	ENG	‘Com’on here, you, husband, let me have a serious talk with you.’	
	Children’s version	<i>Azok a gyerekek nem engedelmeskednek, csak a kárt csinálják.</i>	
	HU	Azok a gyerekek nem engedelmeskednek, csak a kárt csinálják. ‘Those children of yours are disobedient, all they do is harm.’	
	Children’s version	<i>Hát khal tut o gyászó lencal együtt.</i>	<i>Pusztítin len athar ando gyászó.</i>
	HU	Egyen meg a gyász velük együtt!	Pusztítsd el őket a gyászba! ‘MAY GRIEF CONSUME YOU ALONG WITH THEM! DESTROY THEM INTO GRIEF!’
	Children’s version	<i>Ha még holnap is itt látom őket, akkor elmegyek innen...</i>	
	HU	Ha még holnap is itt látom őket, akkor elmegyek innen... ‘If I still find them here tomorrow, I will leave you...’	
	Children’s version	<i>...viszem a pénzemet és mindenem, de a tiedet is ám...</i>	
	HU	...viszem a pénzemet és mindenem, de a tiedet is ám... ‘...I’ll take my money and all my belongings, and also yours, too...’	
	Children’s version	<i>...itt fogsz velük együtt éhen halni.</i>	
	HU	...itt fogsz velük együtt éhen halni. ‘...you will die of hunger right here with them.’	

The learners’ texts, particularly in (3), are longer, more elaborate and life-like than the original text. Children brought to bear their everyday experience on these texts, using their linguistic resources in a way familiar to them from their interactions at home. When they received the typed and edited written texts, they could recognise themselves in them. The final version included passages from the original tale, dialogues and narration written by the learners, and excerpts from Hungarian poetry. The poetry excerpts were included as a form of intertextuality to signal to both the learners and the audience that the children’s lived experience is reflected not only in their own texts but also in a Roma folk tale collected some fifty years earlier and in poetic texts familiar to monolingual Hungarian audiences. The final editing was done by Budapest-based trainee teachers, who consulted an adult from the Tiszavasvári Roma neighbourhood to have the Romani texts double-checked.

The Gypsy folk tale which served as a starting point, and the habit of storytelling in general, were unknown to the Roma living in the settlement in Tiszavasvári at the start of the



project. The children encounter stories about the Roma only in school. Yet these stories provide references to the community's past, connecting the Roma of the Tiszavasvári settlement to universal Roma culture. Certain features of the plot and characters reflected practices familiar to the children from their home environments. These include, for instance, the custom of exchanging household items and small gifts as a token of reciprocal and symmetrical relationships (cf. Stewart 1998: 55). This is captured in the starting scene in (1), when a man sends his daughter to ask the neighbour for household items, and the lady asks for her favour to be reciprocated by the man marrying her. The custom of negotiating deals appears when the Gypsy-girl-turned-Queen buys fish at the market: after the seller justifies the high price by praising the fish, they make a deal. Explaining why a buyer makes a good deal by praising the item for sale, and the buyer's subsequent acceptance of the deal, are displays of the mutual respect (or *patjiv*; cf. Stewart 1998: 176; Heltai 2016: 10) characterising the relationships between members of Roma communities. Further examples of tale elements familiar to the learners include references to poverty; treating children as autonomous moral agents, who are in this sense beyond education, from a young age (Stewart 1998: 56); the father's difficulty to part with his children, and the strength of the bond between siblings which defies even the younger brother's transformation into a fawn (Jenei 2009: 109–116).

Rather than simply bringing Roma learners back to the “source” of their culture through the staging of the original tale, or moving them towards a monolingual Hungarian culture through remedial activities such as the learning of Hungarian poetic texts, the co-creation of the theatre performance allowed learners to construct a “third space” (Bhabha 1988) for the emergence of new, fluid identities. In example (3) a single Hungarian sentence from the tale of the text was paraphrased into a short monologue-like passage, displaying some of the discursive patterns described by Heltai (2016: 273), which have different meanings and associated values for those within the community and outsiders. For instance, threats usually lack reference to reality (i.e. uttering a threat does not indicate the speaker's intention to act upon it); instead they are discursive displays of strength and power, through which speakers position themselves vis-à-vis their interlocutor. The children's masterful reformulation of what is a single-sentence utterance into a long and elaborate threat and curse in (3) underlines the learners' familiarity with this discursive pattern. Paraphrasing involved reflection on their own language practices and identity positions which emerged at the intersection of Hungarian monolingual resources (the original text of the tale, poetic texts) and their home-language repertoire components.

Using learning materials which draw on learners' cultural backgrounds is a pre-condition of culturally responsive pedagogy. The theatre project was not only culturally relevant but also transformative. It invited learners to reflect on the cultural practices of both their home and institution, and to transcend both in some ways. This is the process described by García et al. (2012: 808) as *transculturación*, a term that can be juxtaposed with *acculturation* (a gradual move away from a source towards a target culture) and *intercultural education* (the ability to switch between discrete and readily separable cultural practices). Of the three performances, two took place in Tiszavasvári and one in Budapest. The first one was a dress-rehearsal for other pupils in Magiszter, the premier was attended by parents, relatives, and all teachers of Magiszter. The third performance took place in Budapest in front of a predominantly Budapest-based audience. The latter had little or no knowledge of either Romani or the fluid practices linked to both Hungarian and Romani. The performers interpreted for them the main story line using their Hungarian-only linguistic resources. In this way, audience members from outside the Roma neighbourhood came to know local ways



of speaking through the children's mediation, while learners, acting as interpreters during the performance, were the sources of this valuable knowledge, which they were able to transmit beyond the boundaries of their community.

Another project to bring community-based knowledge to the school by co-creating learning materials with the children was film-making. In summer 2019, project participants created 12 short films, each exploring a topic is relevant for the local community, e.g. the history of their neighbourhood, their built and natural environment, fashion, sports, lyrics and songs, work opportunities, eating and cooking, wealth and family-based economies, etc. Topics were decided by members of the Budapest-based research team in collaboration with the children. Local community members were interviewed for the movies. The goals of the project were threefold: first, for Roma pupils to feel that the topics covered in school are brought close to them by the films; second, for teachers to get to know the values and attitudes characterising the community better; third, to provide learning materials that can be incorporated in school curricula covering various themes.

Taking the football video as an example, children listened to an interview with a famous football player of Roma background. A version of the sport called *grundfoci*, played anywhere outside and not on a pitch, is the most popular game in the settlement and has different rules, which the children wrote down. The film then expanded to a discussion of what one should do if they want to be successful in football. The local coach was interviewed on the same subject. Images of a game of *grundfoci* were added to enhance the film visually. The film represents the fluidity of local ways of speaking: contributors use both Hungarian and Romani resources. Hungarian subtitles, written with the help of adult community members, are provided for Romani utterances. The children participated in multiple stages of film making, from content creation to subtitling. The core material was produced during guided workshops as part of a summer school. Discussion forums involving the children were held on every topic. Children did most, if not all, of the filming, too. Some helped in post-production as well, for instance, with interpreting Romani speech. The members of the research group edited the videos and subtitled them later that summer.

Authors of textbooks are rarely acquainted with the cultural practices and everyday life of the learners studying from their works in such isolated communities as the one in Tiszavasvári. The learning materials we created cover a broad range of subjects interlinked with the national curriculum's requirements. The children in Tiszavasvári can relate to these themes, and they can be incorporated in the teaching and learning of a variety of school subjects.

### 3.7.3 Local knowledge in the translanguaging classroom

While cross-sector participatory projects, such as those described above, make a significant impact, they remain ineffective without the school's and educators' support of similar activities throughout the school year. Below, we illustrate with examples taken from the video repository how local knowledge is exploited in the classroom.

Video 23 (*Historic and emotive factors in Roma self-identification*) illustrates how subject-specific academic knowledge can be used to enhance students' thinking about their own identities, particularly the complementarity of their social and ethnic identity positions. The topic covered in class, quite remote for fifth-grade learners, is the pre-history of Hungarians: the 9th-century arrival of Hungarian-speaking tribes from the East-European steppe region in the Carpathian basin, known as the Conquest (Hu. *honfoglalás*). Learners' awareness of historicity is just beginning to be formed and they are unlikely to think of the pre-history of Hungarians as the history of "their own people". Turning this conflict to



advantage, the teacher invites the students to reflect on the historic roots of the Roma ([video 23: 0.45](#)). While discussing the origins of Hungarians, she asks: “[a]nd the Roma, where are *they* from?” ([video 23: 1.18](#)). Her openness to render the subject relevant to the students is rewarded by learners’ increased involvement in the class. The teacher secured the learners’ engagement by herself engaging in a subject in which the learners can recognise themselves. The Hungarian Conquest is given far greater emphasis in the curriculum than the history of minorities in Central Europe. Therefore, the decision to extend the scope of the themes covered in order to raise Roma pupils’ historic awareness of their community lies with individual teachers. The teacher in the video successfully avoids essentialising identities into the static “we” (“Hungarians”) v. “you” (“the Roma”) categories, by talking about “Hungarians *and* the Roma” as interdependent categories.

Video 25 (*Community-based learning methods and cultural relevance in the translanguaging classroom*) takes the task of integrating a community-based curriculum in the central one even further. It builds on the learners’ knowledge about existing practices in their community to bring an otherwise less accessible topic close to them, which is 9<sup>th</sup>-century burial customs among the ancestral tribal groups of Hungarians. The teacher builds academic knowledge on the students’ experience of local burial customs among the Roma, which happen to overlap with the ancient practices. She explicitly asks learners to find parallels between the historic material and the customs familiar to them ([video 25: 1.19](#)). As the teacher describes archaeological findings in graves, the children manage to create points of connection with their community’s practices of burying toys, cars, balls, etc. with deceased children. They also recall hearing about clothes and jewellery buried with the dead ([video 25: 3.23–3.45](#)). The inclusion of local knowledge in the lesson brings the subject closer to the learners, on the one hand, and, on the other, it invites learners to reflect on their community. Academic knowledge relies on local knowledge, and, vice versa, subject-specific knowledge enhances the learners’ understanding of who they are, and the significance of their customs in their emotional wellbeing, in this case, the expression of grief.

In the previous two examples, knowledge and practices relevant to the Roma supported the development of subject knowledge prescribed by the curriculum. The teacher’s familiarity with the community’s historically accumulated knowledge and customs is a precondition of the success of such teaching approaches. When teaching general skills, such as reading and comprehension skills, teachers have greater freedom to choose the learning material they see appropriate for the learners. Video 10 (*Enhancing the prestige of Romani within the group*) showcases a lesson in which the teacher used a Roma folk tale entitled *The Gypsy woman and the devil* instead of a Hungarian one to teach reading and paraphrasing skills. For paraphrasing, a translanguaging space was offered to learners: they could use Hungarian, the language in which they read the text, or the fluid language practices of their home. The story has a number of nuanced connections to the children’s lived experience and to the values attributed by members of their community to particular practices. We learn from the learners’ summary of the plot that the family in the tale is poor, with thirteen children. One of the students talks about the rose-patterned clothes of the mother, which she wore when she went to try her luck. (The student might have seen the rose-patterned clothes in a cartoon adaptation of this story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7K5eA09JXY>, accessed 19 March 2022, or he could have made it up based on his experience of women’s traditional dressing). These elements of the plot reflect children’s lived experience of e.g. a mother’s being torn between her devotion to her children and the inability to provide for them. The children’s cognitive processing of, and emotional involvement with, the tale is enhanced by the fact that the plot conveys a context which reflects their reality.



The pedagogical approaches discussed so far can easily be integrated in translanguaging classrooms, regardless of the specific subject content taught. Detailed case studies of similar practices are available from other contexts as well (e.g. Heiman, Cervantes-Soon, and Hurie 2021; Poza and Stites 2021; los Ríos and Seltzer 2021; Herrera and España 2021). Depending on the availability of resources (additional preparation time for teachers, external funding, etc.), learning materials exploiting community-based knowledge are well worth developing, too. The storybook project (cf. Chapter 3.3. of this volume) was one such undertaking in our work at Magiszter. 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 (*Students’ perceptions of the new community storybook*) are snapshots of the many ways in which such community-based learning materials are put to use in translanguaging classrooms. In the school activities relying on these learning materials, local ways of knowing and speaking are not simply *reflected*; they are the *core* of what is taught in school, reshuffling the hierarchies which underpin the values associated with various types of knowledge.

In video 18 (*Community-based learning: A gesture of linguistic intimacy*), the teacher reads a passage from a story, which was translated into Romani by a group of women, mothers and grandmothers, from the community with assistance from members of the research team. As the language of writing was local Romani, the learners hear their parents’ way of speaking through the teacher’s reading. This is both surprising and exciting for them, and engages their attention fully ([video 18: 1.50–3.00](#)). Normally, the teacher’s way of speaking is associated with qualities such as learnedness, providing a normative model to follow. These value attributions are reserved exclusively for Hungarian, the official language of instruction. What we see in this scene is that the teacher, the source of the “superior” language variety, speaks in Romani in a way which is identifiable to learners as their home language. What is at stake here is a reorganisation of intersubjective power positions and language status in the classroom. In video 19 (*Reading Romani as a translanguaging activity*), the classroom scene ([video 19: 1.36–2.20](#)) transports the new order of hierarchies to the level of classroom arrangement. The teacher stands up and invites a learner to take her seat to complete the reading of the story, emphasizing that the learners’ competence is greater than her own in this task; hence, it is right that her place should be taken by one of them. The Romani reading of the story is then followed by paraphrasing in Hungarian: an activity initiated partly by the students.

The experience of having the knowledge and skills required for a full understanding of what is taught has a profound impact on learners’ motivation. Central monolingual curricula often deprive children from bilingual communities of this experience. We witness a similar disruption of existing language-based hierarchies in Video 1 (*Translanguaging as cultural mediation*), when a group of learners recite a poem on their own initiative in local Romani, standing at the front of the classroom: a space usually allocated to the teacher ([video 1: 5.26–6.02](#)). The “staging” of the learners’ home language in positions which are normally reserved for the official language of instruction is a powerful act of recognition, which symbolically conveys to the learners the values of reciprocity and complementarity between their community and the majority society.

Video 22 (*Students’ perceptions of the new community storybook*) shows snapshots of learners’ feedback about the story book. Several children voiced their feeling of pride while looking excitedly for the illustrations they created. As one of the learners put it, the book is an important milestone because “it shows that Gypsies also know something” ([video 22: 3.25–4.00](#)), referring to local knowledge and the skills which its display in a book requires.



We learn from the children's commentaries that they felt that the book put the knowledge which they think of as their own "out there", gaining recognition and validation for their community-based values in the wider world.

As we saw in 3.7.2 above, Makalela's (2018) *ubuntu* and García et al.'s (2012) *compadrazgo* and *personalismo* are values along which relationships are organised in the communities they study. They recommend bringing these cultural practices into translanguaging educational spaces (and theorising them in academic studies) in order to inform the planning of community-based learning designs. What precisely constitutes similar central values in Roma communities requires further study, but fluid translanguaging ways of speaking, the reciprocity of relationships, expressed in practices such as swapping of belongings, and respect achieved through adhering to the conventionalised processes of deal-making are likely to be included among such values. According to the teacher's introduction to Video 21 ([video 21: 0.25–0.50](#)), most children have experienced scenes at the market, buying-and-selling goods, deal-making; swapping goods and negotiating deals at school, too, are part of their everyday practices. The classroom scene ([video 21: 1.10–2.26](#)) shows two pupils performing a horse-deal, based on a tale they read in the story book. The personification of characters in staged performances brings to life the motivations and attitudes which would appear flat on a page. Re-enactments are, thus, interpretative processes; in this case, the learners' interpretation of adult behaviour they experience around themselves. Local knowledge is present here not in terms of facts, skills, or values attributed to them, but in reflected representations of behaviour. Furthermore, role plays have the potential to transmit important information to educators, too, about typical activities and values attributed to them in the community, which might contribute, in the long run, to establishing the knowledge practices based on which community-based learning can be developed at local levels. The knowledge teachers gain from role plays might benefit subject-specific planning of classes, too. For instance, the teacher's understanding of swapping and deal-making can serve as a starting point in the teaching of social and mathematical skills.

Our last example, Video 20 (*Parental engagement at school*), revisits the topic of community participation and its possibilities in Tiszavasvári (cf. 3.7.2). The video shows scenes from a parents' club event, including a role play staged jointly by parents and teachers, enacting the recurrent issue of talented pupils turning their back on school ([video 20: 1.18–2.25](#)), and the ill-intentioned provocations that community members belonging to an evangelical church experience ([video 20: 2.34–3.23](#)). Teachers personify parents and vice versa, enabling them to mutually reflect on each other's positions and motivations. Local knowledge is present in these activities in less-reflected social-psychological factors underpinning the fears, experience of failure, and stress reactions given to such life events within the community. Re-enactments bring these to the surface, providing important insights to educators, who become more sensitised to the circumstances which determine the learners' life at home and the strategies of parental involvement in their learning. Parents also benefit from these activities because in the re-enactments they experience the teachers' perspective while finding partners in them in addressing the factors causing them discomfort or distress.

### 3.7.4 Outlook: possibilities of community-based learning

Our concluding remarks to this chapter were written by the teacher organising the parents' club in Magiszter. She reflects on our findings in view of her decade-long experience of community organisation.

Community participation in education means that the school involves parents, guardians, other carers, and the entire school personnel in school activities, building familial



networks across these communities, which dynamically respond to the specific needs and challenges vulnerable communities face in educational contexts. A further important feature of the learning communities is that they have the potential to support the education-planning process with the inclusion of local ways of knowing alongside the central curriculum. Community participation in school life reduces the feeling of alienation children from marginalised communities face and helps parents build trust towards the educators. It enables educators to understand parenting models and the types of knowledge valued by the community. Educators form partnerships of mutual trust with the parents in the interest of children. In the parents' club in Magiszter all stakeholders can openly discuss their shared successes and failures, without hierarchies and intimidations.

Participatory activities spanning across all stakeholder groups are key to the success of community-based learning. In Magiszter, community members are represented in various professions in the school, including teaching assistants, caretakers, and, it is hoped, an increasing number of teachers. Participatory activities and their goals are planned with input from the parents: the school does not tell them what to do; it merely initiates and encourages collaboration.

García et al. (2012) provide ample examples of transcollaboration across various sectors, including local NGOs, professional bodies, youth-development agencies, mental health and wellbeing support teams, and the police, with whom the schools included in their study built partnerships. Augier et al. (2018) report on the outcome of the creative translanguaging and transcollaborative project called ROMTELS (Roma translanguaging enquiry learning spaces), which created a successful partnership with a local museum. These are the most obvious directions in which the community of learning built around the Magiszter School can expand; partnerships are currently sought with various local art centres and a vocational secondary school.

García et al. (2012) underline that most successful schools in their study have a predominantly Latinx emergent bilingual population, which “runs against the oft-repeated assertion that linguistically heterogeneous settings provide the best educational contexts for emergent bilinguals” (García et al. 2012: 805 cites Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan, 2000). Applying their findings to our context, the case studies and community-based contributions presented in this chapter provide evidence that schools such as Magiszter are instrumental in building bridges across communities by creating a programme for the recognition of local ways of knowing, speaking, and being in the context of formal education.

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