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**Author(s):** Palojärvi, Anu; Koivula, Merja; Mård-Miettinen, Karita; Rutanen, Niina

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# Manifestations of an expert teacher's practical theory of language pedagogy in translanguaging situations in early childhood education and care

Anu Palojärvi, University of Jyväskylä  
Merja Koivula, University of Jyväskylä  
Karita Mård-Miettinen, University of Jyväskylä  
Niina Rutanen, University of Jyväskylä

*This case study explores how an expert teacher's practical theory of language pedagogy is manifested in translanguaging situations involving the use of multilingual children's home languages in early childhood education and care. Practical theory encompasses teachers' views of good teaching in relation to values, aims and principles. We applied nexus analysis to observation data, analysed interactions in translanguaging situations involving multilingual children's home languages and related them to the teacher's practical theory of language pedagogy. The main result was that some principles and aims, such as pedagogical tact, were variously manifested in different situations, while others, such as utilising children's language expertise, stayed the same across situations. Furthermore, multiple principles and aims from a practical theory can affect even activities of short duration. The results also show that translanguaging occurred both in teacher- and child-initiated situations, implying a dual locus of power when using the children's home languages. The expert teacher's practices were mostly in line with how she had previously verbalised her practical theory. The findings point to the importance of enhancing reflection on the dynamic relationship between practical theory and situational practices in both pre- and in-service teacher training.*

**Keywords:** practical theory, bilingual education, early childhood education and care, expert teacher, translanguaging situations

## 1 Introduction

Due to the rapidly growing multilingualism in Finnish society (SVT, 2022), especially because of increased immigration, children's groups have become more linguistically heterogeneous. Such groups are characterised by diverse linguistic backgrounds and home languages<sup>1</sup>. Working efficaciously with a linguistically

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Corresponding author's email: [anu.k.palojarvi@jyu.fi](mailto:anu.k.palojarvi@jyu.fi)

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heterogeneous group means that all languages in the group should be recognised, valued and respected in order to implement socially just education (Adam, 2021). Therefore, it is important that educators develop pedagogical practices that makes the use of several languages possible in ECEC (Díaz, 2016, pp. ix-x).

This article focuses on how an expert teacher's practical theory of language pedagogy is manifested in interactional situations involving multilingual children's home languages (translanguaging situations) in a bilingual (Finnish-Swedish) early childhood education and care (ECEC) programme. By practical theory, we mean the teacher's vision of good teaching (Maaranen et al., 2016). The way in which teachers' practical theory of language pedagogy is implemented in ECEC has been sparsely studied. Previous studies of the relations between practical theories and practices have been conducted in school contexts. In Finland, the ECEC structure and working culture differ from those in the school context due to the greater focus on holistic learning (EDUFI, 2022 instead of discrete subject areas; thus, getting information from ECEC can broaden knowledge of the implementation of practical theories. It is also important to study the manifestation of the practical theory of language pedagogy in order to understand how a practical theory about language use affects actual practices in ECEC.

The implementation of multilingual practices can promote social justice (Kirsch & Seele, 2020) and give multilingual children the possibility to use their entire linguistic repertoires (Quehl, 2022). The first step for a teacher to develop multilingual practices is by building a practical theory that acknowledges several languages. The teacher participating in this study had taken this first step and developed a practical theory of language pedagogy that acknowledged the linguistic diversity in her group (see section 2.1.; Palojärvi et al., 2021). However, a practical theory bears little meaning if the actual practices are not aligned with it. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore how the ECEC teacher's practical theory of language pedagogy is manifested in situations involving the use of the children's home languages. To do this, nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004), which is a form of discourse analysis, was used to uncover the ways in which interaction occurs and how it relates to the teacher's practical theory of language pedagogy. Nexus analysis was chosen because it is a good way of capturing the interaction by analysing the interaction order, thus helping to understand the manifestation of the practical theory.

### *1.1 Translanguaging and translanguaging pedagogy*

Translanguaging is a common concept used in discussions on multilingual practices in educational settings. Translanguaging can be regarded as a theory, as multilinguals ways of speaking and as a pedagogy. When talking about translanguaging as a theory, there are two competing theories which García and Lin (2017) call the weak and the strong version of translanguaging. The weak version of translanguaging, also known as the multilingual perspective of translanguaging (MacSwan, 2017), recognises national languages but "yet calls for softening these boundaries" (García & Lin 2017, p. 126). However, according to the strong version of translanguaging multilinguals have a single linguistic repertoire (García & Lin, 2017) and therefore the existence of languages and multilingualism has been questioned (MacSwan, 2017). In this article we do not go into detail about translanguaging as a theory (for more information, see García

& Lin 2017; Wei 2018). Instead, we focus on translanguaging as multilinguals ways of speaking and as a pedagogy. As multilinguals way of speaking, translanguaging refers to the use of a speaker's whole linguistic repertoire (García & Kleyn, 2016). In translanguaging different language resources are used flexibly (García & Kano, 2014). From a multilingual perspective of translanguaging, it can also refer to "participants' choice and use across multiple languages" (Semiante et al., 2023, p. 2). In educational contexts, translanguaging can be understood as "the dynamic discursive exchanges in which teachers and students engage as they draw on and choose from multiple languages and language varieties" (Gort & Semiante, 2015, p. 9). Thus, translanguaging permits multilinguals to use languages in ways that are natural to them (MacSwan, 2017).

As a pedagogy, translanguaging refers to multilingualism as an asset in instruction and the possibility for students to use their whole linguistic repertoires (Tian & Shepard-Carey, 2020). Translanguaging pedagogy also focuses on "the dynamic use of multiple languages to enhance learning" (MacSwan, 2017, p. 191). According to Kirsch and Seele (2020), the intention of translanguaging pedagogies is to enhance learning and participation. In translanguaging pedagogies, teachers design activities that utilise the learner's whole linguistic repertoire and model language in various ways (Semiante et al., 2023). In other words, teachers model multilingual behaviours and treat multiple languages as resources for learning, which promote multilingualism and viewing a multilingual language repertoire as "normal, natural and valuable" (Gort & Semiante, 2015, p. 9). Translanguaging pedagogy requires that teachers make multilingual students' translanguaging legitimate, natural and visible (García & Otheguy, 2020). In utilising students' full language repertoires through translanguaging, teachers enable socially just education for multilingual students (García & Kleyn, 2016; Kirsch & Mortini, 2023). According to Parra and Proctor (2022), translanguaging pedagogy promotes educational equity since incorporating students' full range of communicative resources into the instruction ensures participation and learning (see also Kirsch & Mortini, 2023).

Cenoz and Gorter (2022) categorised translanguaging practises into strong and weak forms according to the degree of pedagogical intervention and the use of two or more languages during class activities. According to Cenoz and Gorter enhancing metalinguistic awareness (using and reflecting on several languages cross-linguistically in the same classroom) and the use of whole linguistic repertoires (using several languages to carry out the activity) are stronger forms of translanguaging practices, whereas integrated language curriculum (using only one language as a classroom language where syllabuses in different languages are coordinated so that the languages support one another) and translanguaging shifts (translating words or giving explanations in a language that is not the language of instruction) are weaker forms of translanguaging practices. In this study, translanguaging practices are mainly related to the use of whole linguistic repertoires, which means that students are encouraged to use several languages to carry out activities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Duarte (2020) used three categories for the functions of translanguaging based on the use of minority and migrant languages in teaching: symbolic, scaffolding and epistemological functions. The symbolic function involves acknowledging and valuing children's home language proficiency. Scaffolding function denotes that "temporary but systematic bridges towards other languages are incorporated in everyday teaching, thus attributing equal value to all languages" (Duarte, 2020,

p. 244). The epistemological function involves using the different languages to enhance content and language knowledge. In order to use the symbolic and scaffolding functions, teachers are not required to be able to speak or understand the children's home languages, but to implement the epistemological function, this kind of knowledge is needed (Duarte, 2020). In this article, we categorise translanguaging according to Duarte's functions, in order to capture how translanguaging is used in the different situations.

## *1.2 Bilingual and multilingual education in ECEC and multilingual children*

Bilingual education refers to education where two languages are used for instruction (García, 2009). Different models of bilingual education differ in the way the languages are used. In bilingual education, languages can either be kept strictly separate, e.g. by separating languages by person, time or place, or they can be used flexibly together (García, 2009).

Previous research in bilingual education has mainly examined practices where all or most of the children are L1 or L2 speakers of one or both of the instructional languages (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Mård-Miettinen et al., 2015; Schwartz & Asli, 2013). This is so partly because, previously, multilingual children were not frequently accepted to bilingual education programmes or were ignored or pushed out (Taylor, 2009, 2015). However, bilingual education programmes have been mainstreamed in many contexts. Furthermore, the number of multilingual children entering ECEC units has increased, and all groups have become more linguistically heterogenous, even those offering bilingual education. This means that teachers working in bilingual education programmes also need to consider the linguistic heterogeneity of their groups. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989, art. 29, 30) states that multilingual children have the right to use their home languages and that education should foster respect towards these languages. Thus, teachers in bilingual ECEC programmes also need to consider how children's home languages can be used and respected.

In some countries (e.g., Luxemburg) instead of bilingual education multilingual education is provided, where more than two languages are used in the instruction. Kirsch (2020a, 2020b) studied the use of children's home languages in multilingual education through the lens of translanguaging pedagogies and found that including and using children's home languages fostered relations between children and adults, enhanced children's well-being and participation and supported meaning-making and language learning (2020a; see also Kirsch & Seele, 2020). Multiple languages were used in planned activities and daily interactions (Kirsch, 2020a, 2021), while the children's home languages were used for translation, to get and sustain attention, ensure participation, comfort them, enhance their well-being and value their home languages (Kirsch, 2020a; Kirsch & Seele, 2020; Mary & Young, 2017). The practitioners also acknowledged home languages by translating utterances from these languages into institutional languages, for example, the main instruction languages used in kindergarten (Kirsch, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Kirsch & Mortini, 2023; Kirsch & Seele, 2020; Mary & Young, 2017), collaborating with parents to utilise home languages (Kirsch, 2020b; Mary & Young, 2017), expecting answers in home languages and elaborating on them (Kirsch, 2020b, 2021; Kirsch & Mortini, 2023) and encouraging children to use home languages, for example, to retell stories (Kirsch, 2020b). However, there was a lack of knowledge of how the children's home languages were used in

Finnish ECEC and how teachers' practical theory affected them. This study addresses these issues.

### *1.3 The significance of practical theory*

Practical theory encompasses teachers' vision of good teaching (Maaranen et al., 2016) and guides teachers' actions (Aaltonen & Pitkäniemi, 2002; Maaranen & Stenberg, 2017) and is based on teachers' beliefs, experiences, conceptions, values (Maaranen et al., 2016), goals and ideals (Aaltonen & Pitkäniemi, 2002; Maaranen et al., 2016; Tiilikainen et al., 2019). It is only partially conscious (Aaltonen & Pitkäniemi, 2002) and can thus be divided into articulated practical theory, which is the conscious and verbally descriptive part of practical theory, and the unconscious part. The teacher's practical theory is built mainly on actions in practice and experiences, and thus, the teacher often believes in such guiding principles that also work in practice (Aaltonen & Pitkäniemi, 2002). Therefore, ideally, practical theory affects practice, and experiences from practice affect practical theory.

However, there are differences between how well teachers' practical theories correspond to their actions in practice (Pitkäniemi, 2010). Student and novice teachers' thoughts and conceptions of teaching do not usually correspond to their actions in teaching (e.g., Fung & Chow, 2002; Mellado, 1998; Wilson et al., 1994), although there are some exceptions where thoughts of teaching have affected practice (Ryan, 2003; Sweeney, 2003). Levin and colleagues (2013) article discusses three teachers that have been teaching a few years. According to their findings both current and previous practical theories affected the teaching actions, although some inconsistencies were also found. Similar observations were made in a case study of a more experienced teacher: The practices were mostly in line with the teacher's practical theory, although some cognitions diverged from these practices (Feryok, 2008). Many case studies have found that experienced teachers' thoughts about teaching correspond well with their actions in the classroom (Marland & Osbourne, 1990; Michell & Marland, 1989; Ritchie, 1999). However, the relation between practical theories and teaching practices in ECEC has been sparsely studied. This study seeks to narrow this research gap through the following research question: How is an expert teacher's articulated practical theory of language pedagogy manifested in interactions in translanguaging situations involving children's home languages?

## **2 Materials and methods**

### *2.1 The context and the participants*

In Finland the ECEC is for children under six years old and it is not compulsory, however it is followed by a one year of compulsory pre-primary education. In ECEC the children are often grouped by age. Often the groups are divided into under-threes and over-threes according to the different child-adult ratios. ECEC may be provided by public or private service providers, both of which must follow the National Core Curriculum (EDUFI, 2022). This study was conducted in the context of bilingual education. In the case of this study, the two instruction languages were Finnish and Swedish: Swedish was new to all the children,

whereas Finnish was the first language (L1) of some children and the second language (L2) of the multilingual children. The programme under study was labelled “small-scale bilingual education,” which means that Swedish was used in the instruction less than 25% of the time (EDUFI, 2022), with the remainder being in Finnish.

This qualitative case study was conducted in a kindergarten located in a town where Finnish was the official and dominant language and Swedish an official language in numerical minority. The study participants were an ECEC teacher and children whose parents had given research permission (five children in the first year and 12 in the second). The anonymity of the children was protected by using codes for the children and the identity of the teacher was protected by using a pseudonym for the teacher. The ECEC teacher (pseudonym Johanna) implemented small-scale bilingual education in Finnish and Swedish, which was called bilingual pedagogy, in a group of children from diverse language backgrounds. Johanna was a bilingual speaker of Finnish and Swedish who had over 20 years’ working experience from contexts in Finland and Sweden (see Palviainen et al., 2016). In her current position, she was also in charge of multicultural issues and teaching L2 Finnish. She was chosen because she was an expert teacher who worked with bilingual education in a linguistically heterogeneous group and had been the subject of earlier research (e.g. Palojärvi et al., 2021; Palviainen et al., 2016). We also wanted to examine how multilingual children’s languages were acknowledged in practice, and the earlier research gave insights into Johanna’s practical theory and bilingual practices.

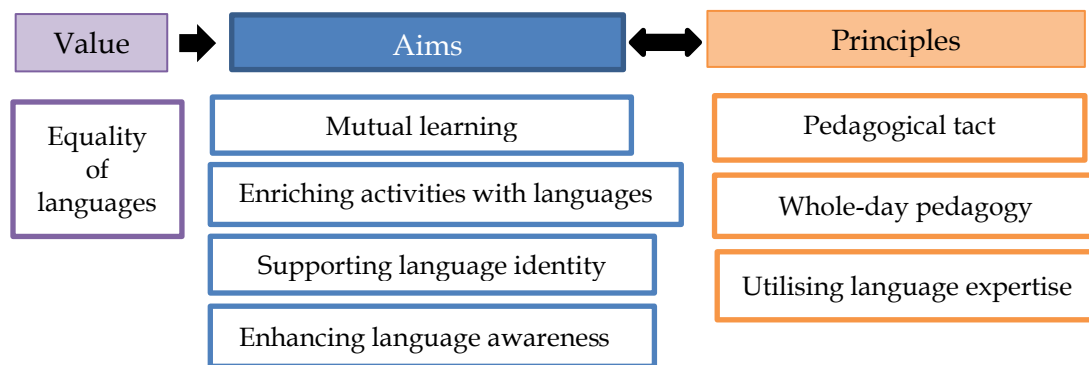
In the ECEC group, there were two other early childhood educators besides Johanna. The group comprised slightly more than 20 children between three and five years old. Depending on the point of time, there were between three and six home languages besides Finnish in the group. However, Swedish was new to all the children, which they learned through the teacher’s bilingual pedagogy.

Johanna’s bilingual pedagogy began with language showering activities in Swedish in a linguistically homogenous group in 2012, which she developed further through reflection and discussion with researchers (Palviainen & Mård-Miettinen 2015). In her bilingual pedagogy, Johanna used Finnish and Swedish according to specific linguistic principles, for example, using Swedish in simple and concrete utterances and Finnish in complex and abstract utterances and avoiding translations (Mård-Miettinen et al., 2015). She also had certain objectives for the bilingual pedagogy, such as getting the children acquainted with Swedish and creating positive attitudes towards Swedish (Palviainen & Mård-Miettinen, 2015). The objectives were in line with those of small-scale bilingual education, as stated in the National Core Curriculum for ECEC (EDUFI, 2022).

Johanna now works in a linguistically heterogeneous group with multilingual children. To examine how practical theory is manifested in practice, we now present our characterisation of aspects of Johanna’s articulated practical theory based on our previous study (Palojärvi et al., 2021). In Johanna’s work with multilingual children, her practical theory of language pedagogy was constructed from interview data via thematic analysis (Palojärvi et al., 2021). In the article of Palojärvi and colleagues (2021), the analysis revealed that the practical theory was constructed from a core value and several aims and principles (see Figure 1). The core value emphasised the equality of languages which meant that all languages were seen as equally valuable and shown interest to. The aims of Johanna’s practical theory were mutual learning, enriching activities with languages,

supporting language identities and enhancing awareness of languages. The mutual learning signified that as Johanna taught the children Finnish and Swedish, she also strived to learn their home languages of the multilingual children. Enriching activities with languages meant incorporation of various languages into activities in order to enrich them. Supporting language identity was also a central aim, with Johanna seeking to encourage the use of home languages. Finally, the aim of enhancing language awareness was to promote the children's awareness of different languages. (Palojärvi et al., 2021.)

The main principles in the practical theory were pedagogical tact, whole-day pedagogy and utilising the language expertise of families. We borrowed the concept of pedagogical tact from van Manen (2015), which means that Johanna sought to be sensitive to the children, the group and the situation when choosing which language(s) to use and how to use it/them (Palojärvi et al., 2021). Whole-day pedagogy means that the entire ECEC day is deemed important for learning, not only the formal learning situations. Utilising the language expertise of families highlights how to use children's and parent's language abilities. In Johanna's practical theory, the aims, principles and core value were closely intertwined.



**Figure 1.** Johanna's practical theory of language pedagogy.

## 2.2 The data and analysis

The data were gathered during three mornings over two years (days 1 and 2 in year one and day 3 in year two). The data consist of observation notes (24 pages), video recordings (93 min) and audio recordings (133 min). Due to ethical reasons, not all situations could be recorded; thus, the actions were documented mostly through written observation notes. Also, two thematic interviews (84 min in total) were used as background knowledge relating to the activities and the arguments for them.

We applied nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) to our data. In nexus analysis, the focus is on the social action – *the nexus* – located at the intersection of *the historical body* of the participants (e.g., life experiences), *the interaction order* (e.g., social arrangements) and *the discourses in place* (e.g., discourses relating to the issue in focus; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). In nexus analysis, it is possible to examine all these dimensions; however, one can also focus on only one or two of them (Hult, 2015, p. 225; cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2004). In this study, we focus only on the interaction order, because we wanted to examine how Johanna's practical theory was manifested in the interactions in translanguaging situations involving the multilingual children's home languages.



The term interaction order was coined by Goffman (1983) and describes how the interaction proceeds and what social and situational norms are connected to it (Hult, 2015; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). There are several factors affecting the interaction order, including the situation, social structures and conventions (Goffman, 1983). The practical theory affects how the interaction proceeds and therefore it is connected to the interaction order. Through the practice the practical theory turns into the interaction order.

The analysis began by transcribing the data and reading and rereading the transcripts several times. Thereafter, key moments on which to focus the analysis were identified (Hult, 2015). These key moments were translanguaging situations that included the multilingual children's home languages ( $n = 10$ ). From these key incidents, the interaction order was analysed. To determine how the practical theory was manifested, we identified and marked passages relating to the aims and principles of practical theory in Palojärvi's and colleagues (2021) research (see Figure 1). The passages remaining outside of the identified aims and principles were critically examined to understand their function. To determine how the interaction order was realised, we focused on examining how the interaction proceeded and its typical aspects (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) as well as who were the central and peripheral participants and their roles (Hult, 2015). In this article, with central participants we refer to participants engaged in the action, whereas with peripheral participants we refer to persons that somehow affected the social action but were not present in it. After this, illustrative examples representing the different combinations of aims and principles were chosen and translated into English. The examples were also analysed by interpreting how the translanguaging functions occurred (Duarte, 2020). Thereafter, the examples were divided into teacher- and child-initiated situations in order to structure the results section.

### **3 Results**

In this section, we first discuss how practical theory was manifested in teacher-initiated situations involving home language use, followed by an analysis of child-initiated situations involving home language use. The children's home languages were changed to protect their anonymity. In the reporting, the home languages were changed to other languages from the same continent, except English, which was not changed due to its widespread use.

#### *3.1 Teacher-initiated translanguaging situations involving home language use*

Just over half (6/10) of the translanguaging situations involving the children's home languages were initiated by Johanna, the teacher. Thus, Johanna played an active role in including the home languages in the activities and exercised power in deciding when, how and which home languages were used. Below, we present three examples of teacher-initiated translanguaging situations involving the children's home languages and explore how the aims and principles from Johanna's practical theory were implemented in them. In the first example, the child's home language was introduced during an ordinary lunch situation.

**Example 1.** Translanguaging during lunch (observation notes; Finnish and metatext in normal style, Korean in *italics*, Swedish in **bold**).

- 1 Johanna and the children sit in the canteen eating lunch. The teacher talks with the children sitting at the same table while they are eating.
- 2 Johanna: Mikä se on koreaksi? [What is it in Korean?]
- 3 The child answers in Korean.
- 4 Johanna: Jos mä sanon nyt *sagao* niin se on siis tää [So if I now say *apple* so it is this] ((points at the apple slice))
- 5 Johanna: Haluutko sä opettaa jotain muutakin? [Do you also want to teach something else?]
- 6 The child utters another word in Korean
- 7 Johanna uses the Korean words and also tells other children about the words she has learned, for example, Johanna: Jos mä haluan lisää omenaa ja oisin Koreassa niin mä voisin sanoa *tsugaiugen sagao* [If I want to have more apple and I were in Korea, I could say *more apple*] ((tells to another child))
- 8 Johanna: Hei, *sagao* [Hey, *apple*] ((points at the apple))
- 9 The child also tells what banana is in Korean
- 10 Johanna: *Banana, sagao*. Mikäs on appelsiini koreaksi? [*Banana, apple*. What is an orange in Korean?]
- 11 The child tells in Korean
- 12 Johanna: *Banana, sagao, orenji* [*Banana, apple, orange*]((points at the fruits on the tray one after another and uses the words she has learned))
- 13 Johanna talks for a while in Finnish about drinking sour milk and eating bread with a child.
- 14 Johanna: *banana, sagao ja orenji* [*banana, apple and orange*] ((points and names the fruit on another child's plate))
- 15 Johanna: Kiva kuulla uusia sanoja, kiva kun kerrot niitä. [It is nice to hear new words, nice that you tell them] ((to the Korean-speaking child))
- 16 Johanna speaks about something in Finnish
- 17 Johanna: **Nä, väntä** [**No, wait**] ((to a child))
- 18 Johanna: Mä syön nyt tän *sagao* [I will now eat this *apple*] ((says to the children and shows the apple))
- 19 Johanna: Missä sun *sagao* on? [Where is your *apple*?] ((asks one child at the table))
- 20 Johanna: Mä syön mun *bananan* [I will eat my *banana*] ((takes the banana and eats it))
- 21 Johanna: Nyt mä oon syönyt mun *sagao, bananan*, ja mulla on jäljellä [Now I have eaten my *apple, banana* and I have left] ((points at the orange))

The central participants were Johanna, the Korean-speaking child and some other children eating at the same table. The translanguaging situation included three languages (Finnish, Korean and Swedish). As the child's home language was included in an ordinary lunch situation, the example illustrates the principle of *whole-day pedagogy*. Johanna initiated the translanguaging situation by asking the Korean-speaking child a word in their home language (line 2) and gave the child the role of a language expert (see Prax-Dubois & Hélot, 2020, p. 56; Sopanen, 2022, p. 30). The child served in an expert role when they recounted words in their home language either when asked (lines 2, 5, 10) or spontaneously (line 9). Johanna assumed two roles: those of a learner (lines 4, 10, 12) and teacher (lines 7, 14, 18–21), representing the implementation of the aim of *mutual learning* in practice. As a learner, Johanna both learnt the words herself and showed the other children an example of what it looks like to act as a language learner (see also Kirsch, 2020b; Palojärvi et al., 2021; Palviainen et al., 2016). As a teacher, Johanna taught the words to the other children by using them in verbalizing her own action. Thus, Johanna created opportunities for language learning among the other children. It

seems that besides enhancing language awareness, another goal in this situation was that the children had an opportunity to learn each other's languages. This, however, deviates from the articulated practical theory that the teacher had described, where she said that the aim was only to enhance awareness of different languages (Palojärvi et al., 2021), not learn them. Therefore, the action in practice seemed to create wider learning opportunities for the children than what was described in the articulated practical theory. Johanna assuming the role of a teacher when using Korean words also deviates from her practical theory, where she positioned herself only as a learner, not a teacher, of the children's home languages (Palojärvi, et al. 2021). Thus, the practices also went beyond her practical theory in this regard.

Displaying positive attention to the use of the home language (line 15) *supports the children's language identity*, which was one of the aims in Johanna's practical theory. By connecting the child's home language to a country (line 7), Johanna sought to *enhance the children's language awareness*. However, despite enhancing language awareness, it was also problematic for language awareness since the verbalisation failed to acknowledge the use of the language in other places (see Quehl, 2022 on problems on connecting languages with nations). *Language awareness* was also promoted by using the name of the language when the child was asked for words in their home language, thereby connecting the name of the language with the language (lines 2 and 10). In the example, translanguaging served a symbolic function (Duarte, 2020) since the main function was to acknowledge and value the language through its use.

In the following example, a child's home language is brought to gymnastics when Johanna asked them to help her count in Korean (line 2).

**Example 2.** Translanguaging in the gym (transcription of the video; Finnish in normal style, Korean in *italics*, Swedish in **bold**).

Johanna asked the children to count how many friends they had in the gym today. Since the children arrived at different results, Johanna suggested that they count together (line 1).

- 1 Johanna: Okei. No katotaas yhdessä [Okay. Let's see together]
- 2 Johanna: Ja hei otetaas tää (lapsen nimi) autaks sä mua, miten meni koreaksi? [And hey, let's take this (the name of the child) will you help me, how did it go in Korean?]
- 3 Johanna: *hana* [one]
- 4 Child: *dul* [two]
- 5 Johanna: *dul* [two]
- 6 Child: *set* [three]
- 7 Johanna: *set* [three]
- 8 Child: *net* [four]
- 9 Johanna: *net* [four]
- 10 Child: xxx [incomprehensible]
- 11 Johanna: mikä? [what?]
- 12 Child: *daseot* [five]
- 13 Johanna: *daseot* [five]
- 14 Child: *yeoseot* [six]
- 15 Johanna: *yeoseot* [six]
- 16 Child: *ilgop* [seven]
- 17 Johanna: *ilgop* [seven]
- 18 Child: *yeodeol* [eight]
- 19 Johanna: *yeodeol* [eight]

- 20 Johanna: **Tack så mycket** (lapsen nimi). Nyt mä sanon, nyt sä saat itse valita minkä värisen muodon otat, mee sinne seisoon, yks per muoto [**Thank you very much** (child's name). Now I will say, now you can choose yourself which coloured shape you will take, go and stand there, one per shape.]

The central participants were Johanna, the Korean-speaking child and the other children in the group. The peripheral participants were the child's parents; Johanna had mentioned in the interview that she had asked the parents to write down the numbers in Korean for her. In the example, Johanna initiated the translanguaging situation by asking the child to help her count in the child's home language (line 2), thereby giving the child the role of a language expert (see also Prax-Dubois & Hélot, 2020, p. 56; Sapanen, 2022, p. 30). In doing this, Johanna exercised power by choosing whose language gets to be used and who plays the role of the expert. Thereafter, Johanna practiced the child's home language, thereby implementing the aim of *mutual learning* by acting as a learner herself in the situation (Kirsch, 2020b). Counting in the child's home language also served the aim of *enriching activities with languages* since it included a third language in the activity, which would have otherwise been bilingual with Finnish and Swedish. In the example, the function of the use of the home language is symbolic (Duarte, 2020), since the home language was used to acknowledge the child's language proficiency as a valuable resource. The principle of *pedagogical tact* is illustrated in the example in three ways: First, Johanna counted together with the child to support them in including the home language (lines 3–19). Second, she used a familiar Swedish expression to thank the child (line 20). In the situation, only Korean was used, although there were children with other home languages in the group. This can also be due to pedagogical tact since Johanna said in the interview that she did not want to include all languages in the same situation as she believed that the children would not be able to concentrate on them all and that it would prolong the situation. This might be reasonable with young children; however, the teacher exercised tremendous power in deciding which language gets to be used in what situation. Thus, although this was a translanguaging activity where three languages were used, it did not include all the linguistic resources of all the children. However, Johanna did not act like this in all situations, such as in the next example.

In the following example, the children's home languages are introduced in a Finnish L2 club. The activity began with Johanna using Swedish (line 1) to initiate translanguaging to the children's home languages.

**Example 3.** Translanguaging in the Finnish L2 club (transcription of the video; Finnish in normal style, Korean, English and German in *italics*, Swedish in **bold**).

- 1 Johanna: Okei. Tehääs semmonen juttu että kun minä sanon näin niin mitä kieltä minä puhun? **Ett två tre**. Mitä kieltä se on? Onko se suomea? [Okay. Let's do that kind of thing that when I say this, what language do I speak? **One, two, three**. What language is it? Is it Finnish?]
- 2 Children: Ei [No]
- 3 Child 2: Ruotsia [Swedish]
- 4 Johanna: Se on ruotsia. [It is Swedish.]
- 5 Johanna: ((kuiskaten)) Sanoppas sä (lapsen nimi) jotain, vaikka yksi kaksi kolme koreaks. ((whispers)) [(child's name) say something, for example, one, two, tree, in Korean.]
- 6 Johanna: (lapsen nimi) sanoo näin [(child's name) says like this]

- 7 Child 2: *hana, dul, set* [*one, two, tree*]  
 8 Johanna: Ja mitä kieltä se oli? Koreaa. Ja mites (lapsen nimi) sun kielellä kun sä lasket [And what language was it? Korean. And how is it (child's name) in your language when you count]  
 9 Child 1: *one, two, three*  
 10 Johanna: Ja mitä kieltä se on? [And what language is it?]  
 11 Child 1: Se on (maan nimi) kieltä [It is (name of a country) language]  
 12 Johanna: Niin sä puhut siellä (maan nimi) englantia, kyllä. [So you speak there in (name of a country) English, yes.]  
 13 Johanna: Ja sit tuli vielä (lapsen nimi) oma kieli ja se on [And then there is (child's name) own language and it is]  
 14 [...]  
 15 Johanna: *Eins, zwei, drei* [*one, two, three*]  
 16 Johanna: Tossa on niinkun ruotsi, (maa 1), (maa 2) ja (maa 3). Melkein koko maapallo. [There was Sweden, (country 1), (country 2), (country 3). Almost the whole world.]

The central participants were Johanna and the children in the Finnish L2 club. Johanna initiated the translanguaging situation by counting to three in Swedish and asking the children to identify the language. She then asked each child in succession to count in their home language. In the example, translanguaging assumes both symbolic and scaffolding functions (Duarte, 2020) since bridges between languages are built besides acknowledging the home languages. Furthermore, the use of different languages served a wider function than in the earlier examples. Here, all the home languages were brought into the same situation, which differed from Johanna's argumentation about not including all languages to the same situation due to the lack of long-term concentration among the children (see previous example). Thus, Johanna acted in dissonance with her own argument in this situation. However, even though she had included all home languages, the activity was relatively short, and the children maintained their concentration. Including all the children's home languages in the situation made the translanguaging more balanced as the different home languages were given equal standing in the activity.

In the activity, Johanna assumed the role of an activity instructor. The children acted in both the roles of language experts (lines 7 and 9), by demonstrating their language expertise through counting, and learners (lines 8 and 12), since they listened to the information Johanna provided about the languages. By naming the languages that the children spoke (lines 8 and 12), Johanna *supported language awareness*. By bringing the children's home languages into the Finnish L2 club, the children's *language identities* were supported. The goals of the Finnish L2 club focus on learning Finnish; therefore, including the home languages is not an official goal. This comes from the general goals of supporting language identity in ECEC (EDUFI, 2022) and Johanna's personal goal of supporting language identities (see more in Palojärvi et al., 2021) and valuing all languages. In this example, Finnish was the main language used, but Swedish and the children's home languages were used to a similar extent and in a similar way, thereby assuming a more equal position. *Pedagogical tact* was illustrated in the way that Johanna sensitively corrected the child (line 12) when the name of the language was brought up by continuing from the child's own answer, hence respecting the child's utterance.

**Example 4.** Translanguaging in the Finnish L2 club (transcription of the video; Finnish in normal style, Korean, English and German in *italics*, Swedish in **bold**).

- 1 Johanna: Hyvä. (lapsen nimi) Annappas sinä minulle jotakin keltaista. Keltaista. Onko siellä keltaista? [Good (name of the child) Give me something yellow. Yellow. Is there yellow]
- 2 L1: On. (näyttää sinistä perhosta ja vesilätäkköä) [There is. (points at a blue butterfly and a water puddle),]
- 3 Johanna: Ei. annappas minulle jotakin keltaista. Mikäs on keltainen? [No. Give me something yellow. What is yellow?]
- 4 Child 1: Perhonen ja sitten vesilätäkkö [Butterfly and then water puddle]
- 5 Johanna: Onko tässä kelt-, keltainen on semmonen, englanniksi se on *yellow*. [Is this yell-, yellow is that kind, in english it is *yellow*]
- 6 Child 2: *Yellow*
- 7 Johanna: Mikä väri on *yellow*? [What colour is yellow]
- 8 Child1: Tämä (osoittaa kuvaa, jossa on keltaista) [This. (points at a picture with yellow)]
- 9 Johanna: Joo, ja mikä tämä on? [Yes, and what is this]
- 10 Child 1: Aulinko [Sun]
- 11 Johanna: Aurinko on keltainen. Kiitos. [The sun is yellow. Thank you,]

The central participants were Johanna and the children in the Finnish L2 club. The interaction starts with Johanna asking the child to give her pictures with yellow in them. However, the child does not understand the Finnish word for yellow and points to pictures with blue in them. After the child makes the same mistake a few times, Johanna helps the child to understand the word by giving it in the child's home language, English (line 5). In this situation the translanguaging serves the epistemological function since it helps the child to increase their language knowledge (Duarte, 2020) by helping to connect the Finnish word for yellow with the English word for yellow that the child is already familiar with. In this situation translanguaging was due to Johanna's *pedagogical tact*, because in this situation Johanna noticed the child's difficulties in understanding the word and she was sensitive to the child by supporting the understanding by providing the word in the home language. *Language awareness* is supported by giving the same word in two languages, which helps the child to compare languages and be aware of the meaning of the words. In the example Johanna acts in the role of a teacher, providing help and guidance to the child. The child acts in the role of the learner.

### 3.2 Child-initiated translanguaging situations involving home language use

The data contained three situations in which a child self-initiated translanguaging in their home language and one situation where translanguaging stemmed from the children's play (example 5). This shows that children also have power and agency in bringing their home languages into situations. We provide two examples of this and explore how the aims and principles of practical theory are visible therein.

In example 4, the child volunteers their home language for the morning circle activity.

**Example 5.** Translanguaging in the morning circle (observation notes).

- 1 Johanna and the children are gathered for the morning circle. The children sit on cushions on the floor.

- 2 Johanna: Kuinka monta aikuista näet? [How many adults do you see?]
- 3 The children answer in Finnish.
- 4 One child counts in English.
- 5 Johanna demonstrates positive attention towards the counting in their home language, English (e.g. encourages others to listen and tells what the language was)
- 6 Johanna notes that they have also counted in Korean and German and asks whether the child whose home language is Korean wants to count in Korean.
- 7 The child does not want to count in Korean today.
- 8 Johanna asks another child in Finnish to come sit in her lap and says in Swedish “**kom hit**” [come here]

The central participants in the morning circle were Johanna and the children. The child volunteered their home language in this situation (line 4), thereby utilising their agency. However, this deviates from the interaction norm since Johanna usually initiates translanguaging in the children’s languages. Here, the child has the power to insert their home language into the situation, and this power is accepted by Johanna. By demonstrating positive attention to counting in their home language English (line 5), Johanna *supported the language identity* of a multilingual child. This positive attention given to the language also shows that Johanna valued the language. By focusing the children’s attention on the language and naming the languages in which they had counted (lines 5 and 6), Johanna supported the children’s *language awareness*. She also asked another child if they wanted to count in their home language (line 6), offering the possibility to utilise their language expertise. However, the child used their agency and declined. This also deviates from the ordinary interaction since the children are usually happy to bring in their home languages when Johanna asks. The child’s declining also illustrates that the implementation of the teacher’s practical theory did not only rely on the teacher’s actions, but also, the children affected how the practical theory could or could not be implemented. As Pitkäniemi (2010, p. 167) states the teacher needs to take “account of the cues students offer during actual teaching.”

In the following example, the home language (English) is introduced in collaboration with the children and Johanna since the use of the child’s home language stemmed from the children’s play.

**Example 6.** Translanguaging in play (transcription of the audio recording and observation notes; Finnish and metatext in normal style, English in *italics*, Swedish in **bold**).

The children are in a big swing engaging in a traveling play and ask the teacher to push the swing.

- 1 Johanna: Ja minne matka? [And where are you going?]
- 2 Child 1: Ruotsiin [to Sweden]
- 3 Child 2: Singaporeen [to Singapore]
- 4 Johanna: öö (lapsen nimi) on lähössä Ruotsiin ja ja toi [aam (child’s name) is going to Sweden and]
- 5 Child: (lapsen nimi) on lähössä ruotsiin [(child’s name) is going to Sweden]
- 6 Johanna: Sä oot menos ruotsiin. Okei. [You are going to Sweden. Okay.]
- 7 Child: (lapsen nimi) on menossa thaimaaseen [(child’s name) is going to Thailand]
- 8 Johanna: (lapsen nimi) on menossa thaimaaseen. Okei. [(child’s name) is going to Thailand. Okay.]
- 9 [...]

- 10 Johanna: Okei. **Håll i dig, Ett två tre fyra fem sex sju otta nio tio** [Okay. **Hold on tight. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten**] ((pushes the swing and counts how many times she pushes it))
- 11 Johanna: **Trevlig resa** [**Have a nice journey**]
- 12 [...]
- 13 Johanna: No niin (lapsen nimi) kävi sanomas että te meette taas johonkin [Okay (child's name) came to say to me that you are going somewhere again.]
- 14 Children: Englantiin [to England]
- 15 Johanna: Okei ja hei mites me ollaan laskettu nyt ruots-, suomeks, ruotsiks ja mites laskettiin englanniks, auttakaas mua [Okay and hey, we have now counted in Swe-, Finnish, Swedish, and how can we count in English, help me]
- 16 Child: *one*
- 17 Johanna: Okei oota, lähtee, nyt lähtee (lapseni nimi) alota [Okay, wait, now we go (child's name) start]
- 18 Children: *one, two, three, xxx, five, six, seven*
- 19 Johanna: *eight, nine, ten.* Hyvää matkaa [Have a nice journey]

The central participants were Johanna and the four children on the swing. Johanna orientated to the children's traveling play, and upon hearing that some of the children were going to Sweden (lines 2, 4–6), she translanguaged by using Swedish for counting and short utterances (lines 10 and 11), thereby illustrating *whole-day pedagogy* (bringing the new language into an ordinary play situation) and *pedagogical tact* (linking language use to the children's play). Johanna also translanguaged in a similar way with English by asking the children to count in English when she heard that they were going to England, similarly illustrating *whole-day pedagogy* and *pedagogical tact*. Furthermore, Johanna named the languages (line 15), thus promoting *language awareness*. She also enriched the children's play by incorporating different languages into it, which illustrates *enriching activities with languages*. Here, her translanguaging served both symbolic and scaffolding functions (Duarte, 2020) since she acknowledged different languages and built bridges between them by counting in a similar way using both Swedish and English. Furthermore, Johanna assumed the role of an instructor by advancing the activity with questions and guiding the counting. This shows that she exercised power in deciding how the languages were used in the situation. Therefore, even though the use of the languages stemmed from the children's play, Johanna had an important role in guiding the activity according to her practical theory.

#### 4 Discussion

This study examined how an expert teacher's articulated practical theory of language pedagogy was manifested in interactions in translanguaging situations involving multilingual children's home languages. The main finding was that the principles and aims of practical theory were variously manifested in action in some situations. For example, in various situations, the principle of pedagogical tact affected the sensitivity with which the child was corrected (example 3) or counting together with the child and using familiar Swedish expressions (example 2) or that language use was incorporated into the children's play (example 5). This illustrates how the situation affects the way in which the principles and aims of the practical theory are implemented in practice. The situationality of implementing the practical theory shows its inherent adaptability, which has not been found in previous research. However, a few aims and principles were



implemented in the same way across situations. For example, utilising language expertise was implemented either by asking the children to name words or count in their home languages. This shows that certain aims and principles were more stable in the way they were implemented.

The study also shows that even in activities of short duration, multiple practical theory principles and aims can feature. In each situation, it was possible to identify two to five aims and principles. However, there were differences in the frequencies of the principles and aims. The most frequently occurring principle was pedagogical tact, and the most frequently occurring aim was enhancing language awareness. The least common principle was whole-day pedagogy, while the least common aims were supporting language identity and enriching activities with languages. This shows that the aims and principles did not have the same space in the activities, arguably because they rival each other: Since all aims and principles cannot be incorporated into the same situation, the teacher needs to choose what to implement in each situation, which has hitherto been a gap in previous studies.

Another finding was that interactions involving translanguaging in home languages were sometimes teacher-initiated and sometimes child-initiated. In the teacher-initiated situations, incorporating the home languages stemmed from the aims and principles of the teacher's practical theory, whereas in the child-initiated situations, using the home languages stemmed from the children's own motivation, although the teacher's practical theory was focal in how she responded to the child's initiative. In the teacher-initiated situations, the results show that Johanna used a great deal of power in deciding when, how and whose home languages were included in the translanguaging situation (cf. Weng & Ataei, 2022). However, the children also exercised power in deciding when to volunteer their home language as well as agency in deciding whether or not to translanguage their home language when asked to do so (see also Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Gyogi, 2015). This reflects the dual locus of power in the group: On one hand, the teacher is in control and decides how, when and whose language is used; on the other, the children exercise power when it comes to the use of their language. Nevertheless, although the children also possessed power, the teacher had a significant role in determining language use. Thus, how the teacher exercises her power remains paramount.

Another finding was that the teacher's articulated practical theory corresponded with her actions in practice as the practices were closely related to the aims and principles identified in her practical theory (see Palojarvi et al. 2021). This substantiates previous findings on expert teachers (Marland & Osbourne, 1990; Mitchell & Marland, 1989; Ritchie, 1999). Although the practical theory corresponded with actions in practice, there were a few inconsistencies: Namely the actions in practice seemed to create wider learning opportunities for the children than in the aim of the practical theory, and the teacher assumed the role of a teacher in the children's home languages instead of only assuming the role of a learner, as stated in the articulated practical theory. However, small inconsistencies between one's practical theory and practices are not unusual, even for expert teachers (Feryok, 2008). These inconsistencies could stem from unconsciousness regarding some parts of the practical theory (Aaltonen & Pitkaniemi, 2002), and hence do not come forth when asked.

When including the children's home languages in the translanguaging situations, Johanna mainly performed symbolic and scaffolding functions (Duarte,

2020), which means that the languages were used to acknowledge and value the children's language proficiency (symbolic function) and build bridges between languages (scaffolding function). There was also one instance where Johanna's use of a child's home language (English) served an epistemological function (Duarte, 2020), that is, enhancing language and content knowledge. With only one instance of the epistemological function in the use of different languages, it can be argued that the children's languages were not used mainly for learning. This might be due to the fact that Johanna did not have knowledge in most of the children's home languages and was unable to facilitate learning through them. The other interesting feature was that the symbolic function featured most frequently. To improve the activities, the scaffolding function could have been used more often to create bridges between languages, for example, by comparing languages with each other or using different languages side by side.

This study has created new knowledge of how practical theory is implemented in language pedagogy in ECEC by showing the situationality of the implementation of a practical theory. This is important because the correspondence between practical theory and actual practice has previously been studied only among school teacher samples (e.g. Feryok, 2008; Levin et al., 2013; Ritchie, 1999). The findings have implications for ECEC teacher training. Since the principles and aims were variously implemented in different situations, it would be important to provide student teachers with various situations in which to practise implementing their practical theories. Furthermore, guided reflection on these situations could help students implement their practical theories in situation-specific ways. Giving student teachers opportunities to try out their practical theories with linguistically diverse learners may also enable them to work with such groups, about whom many students feel insecure (see Dražnik et al., 2022). The findings could be applied to in-service training to help teachers become more aware of the inconsistencies between their articulated practical theory and practice by, for example, videorecording their activities and reflecting on the videos together. This could help teachers to incorporate previously unconscious aspects into their explicit practical theory and thereby make their articulated practical theories more nuanced and richer. The study findings also illustrate how skilfully the expert teacher acknowledged both her own aims and principles and the children's initiatives, which is something that other teachers could learn from. The study illustrates the benefits of nexus analysis as a valuable tool in examining the manifestations of practical theory.

Nevertheless, as in all studies, this study has some notable limitations. First, it is a case study of only one teacher; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to other teachers. There is a need for further studies on how other teachers in ECEC implement their practical theories of language pedagogy into practice, especially since practical theories are situationally constructed. Second, the correspondence of the articulated practical theory and practice was examined only by contrasting the practical theory articulated in the interviews with observation data. In order to make the findings more reliable, stimulated recall interviews could have been applied. However, in this study it was not possible to use stimulated recall interviews because of the extensive period between the data gathering and analysis. Thus, stimulated recall interviews would not have been reliable after this lengthy period. Instead, we analysed the interaction order to uncover the relationship between practical theory and practice, which succeeded in creating a multisided picture of the phenomenon.

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## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> By home languages we mean the languages that the family members speak with each other. They can be mother tongues and/or other languages spoken in the family. Even though the term “own mother tongue(s)” is used in the national core curriculum in Finland (EDUFI 2022) we decided to use the term “home languages”, since we wanted to include also other languages that are spoken in the family, not only the mother tongues.

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