
Translanguaging Practices in Multilingual Classroom Contexts: Implications for Pedagogy and Communication

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**Paper Received on 10-09-2023, Accepted on 01-11-2023,
Published on 02-11-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.4.89**

Abstract:

This research paper explores translanguaging in multilingual classroom contexts and its implications for pedagogy and communication. Translanguaging refers to the fluid and dynamic use of multiple languages within a single communication event. The paper provides an overview of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach, discusses its theoretical underpinnings, and presents empirical evidence on its benefits for language learners. Furthermore, it addresses the challenges and concerns associated with translanguaging in education and offers recommendations for practical implementation in diverse classrooms. The paper concludes by highlighting the potential of translanguaging to foster inclusive and effective pedagogical practices in multilingual settings.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Multilingualism, Pedagogy, Communication, Language diversity, Inclusive education.

Introduction:

The contemporary educational landscape is marked by increasing linguistic diversity in classrooms worldwide. As globalization, migration, and the interconnectedness of societies continue to rise, classrooms are becoming microcosms of the rich tapestry of languages and cultures that make up our globalized world. In these dynamic learning environments, educators are faced with the challenges of catering to the diverse linguistic needs and backgrounds of their students. Within this context, "translanguaging" has emerged as a pedagogical and communication approach that can transform how we think about and engage with multilingualism in educational settings.

Translanguaging represents a paradigm shift in our understanding of language and learning. It challenges traditional views of languages as isolated, discrete systems, advocating instead for recognizing the dynamic and fluid nature of language use. At its core, translanguaging acknowledges that individuals do not neatly compartmentalize languages but rather draw from their entire linguistic

repertoire to convey meaning and engage in communication. This approach celebrates multilingualism as a valuable resource and embraces the idea that learners should be encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire to enhance their learning experiences.

The purpose of this research paper is to delve into the concept of translanguaging in multilingual classroom contexts and explore its profound implications for pedagogy and communication. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding and harnessing translanguaging practices is critical for educators seeking to create inclusive and effective learning environments. This paper will provide a comprehensive overview of translanguaging, from its theoretical foundations to empirical evidence supporting its benefits in educational settings. Additionally, it will address the challenges and concerns associated with translanguaging and offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers interested in implementing this approach effectively.

In an era when multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception in many educational settings, translanguaging offers a promising path forward. By acknowledging the linguistic diversity present in classrooms and valuing each student's unique linguistic identity, educators can tap into the full potential of their learners. As we embark on this

exploration of translanguaging practices, we will uncover how this approach can help foster more inclusive and equitable educational experiences, ultimately enriching the tapestry of our global society.

Literature Review

Omidire, Margaret Funke, and Ayob, Sameera's (2020) main findings of the study highlight the enablers and constraints of employing translanguaging as a support strategy in multilingual South African classrooms. Enablers include the creation of a welcoming and non-threatening learning environment, teachers' positive attitude towards translanguaging, the availability of translated audio recordings of learners' home languages, and the incorporation of these languages into lessons. These factors facilitated successful implementation.

Constraints encompassed the complexities of language use, differing views on home languages, limited school resources, time constraints, insufficient teacher training for multilingual classrooms, and socio-economic factors. The study recommends substantial investment in pre-service teacher education, emphasizing the integration of learners' home languages, creating positive attitudes, and providing effective pedagogical techniques. In-service teacher development programs tailored to multilingual contexts are also suggested, along with policy changes to support a dynamic and technology-driven approach to incorporating

various home languages into the curriculum. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the impact of translanguaging on learners' achievement across subjects over time.

Canagarajah Suresh (2011) suggests that translanguaging can serve as an effective support strategy for learning and teaching within multilingual classrooms, particularly in the context of South African primary schools. Enablers of translanguaging include creating a non-threatening and accepting environment, teachers' positive attitudes towards translanguaging, the availability of translated audio recordings of learners' home languages, and including home languages in lessons. These factors contribute to successful implementation. However, constraints include language complexities, differing views on the use of home languages, resource limitations in schools, time constraints, insufficient teacher training for multilingual contexts, and socio-economic factors. The study recommends significant investment in pre-service teacher education to raise awareness of integrating learners' home languages, creating positive environments, and fostering the right attitudes. Additionally, directed professional development programs for in-service teachers and policy changes to support multilingualism are advised. Future research should focus on the longitudinal impact of translanguaging

on learners' academic achievement across the curriculum.

Duarte, Joana (2019) findings of this study challenge conventional beliefs about the adverse effects of linguistic diversity in classrooms, particularly in the context of translanguaging. The research demonstrates that translanguaging, where students use multiple languages during collaborative discussions, fosters on-task, high-quality exploratory dialogue. Significantly, this approach helps collaboration compared to monolingual groups. Even students with relatively modest proficiency in their family languages can engage in intellectually demanding discussions effectively. Translanguaging alleviates language separation challenges and sociolinguistic issues that often hinder minority language speakers in monolingual classrooms, promoting shared experiences and trust among students. This study underscores the significance of creating systematic and explicit contexts for translanguaging, adding to the sociocultural understanding of how multilingual repertoires function in mainstream education. Ultimately, allowing translanguaging during collaborative talk phases can be a transformative pedagogy feature, particularly in multilingual settings.

Ferreira-Meyers, Karen Aline Françoise., and Horne, Fiona., (2017) The article highlights a gap between the recognition and understanding of

multilingualism as a valuable concept in South African language education and its actual implementation in language classrooms. While stakeholders, including the government, teacher trainers, teachers, learners, and parents, acknowledge the importance of multilingualism, its integration into language teaching remains limited. This discrepancy is attributed, in part, to a lack of emphasis on multilingual contextualization in teacher training programs. To address this issue, the article suggests introducing appropriate methodologies for multilingual contextualization in teacher training and advocating for greater inclusion of multilingual contexts in language policies and education policy development. The article underscores the significance of multilingualism in promoting democratic citizenship, linguistic and cultural diversity, and lifelong language learning, emphasizing the need to move beyond instrumental language learning approaches.

Ismaili, Merita (2015) The main findings of the study indicate that both teachers and students have a generally positive attitude towards using the students' native language (L1) in English classes. However, this attitude largely depends on the teacher's proficiency in the students' L1, as using it without proficiency can be seen as disrespectful. In such cases, teachers often adopt an English-only policy but allow students to use their

L1 for clarity and comfort when necessary. The study suggests that a balanced and careful use of L1 in English classes does not significantly affect students' exposure to the target language and can even be beneficial for learning, primarily when teaching low proficiency level students from diverse language backgrounds. However, it emphasizes that teachers should judiciously control L1 usage to avoid hindering the acquisition of the target language.

Theoretical Framework:

Translanguaging as a theoretical framework and pedagogical approach represents a significant departure from traditional conceptions of language and language learning. Rooted in sociolinguistics, this framework challenges the boundaries that have long been placed around languages, highlighting the dynamic, fluid, and interconnected nature of language use. In this section, we will delve into the theoretical underpinnings of translanguaging, discussing its evolution, key concepts, and the scholars who have contributed to its development.

The Emergence of Translanguaging Theory:

Translanguaging emerged as a concept in the late 20th century, largely through the pioneering work of Professor Ofelia García. García's research sought to understand how multilingual individuals navigate language boundaries in their daily lives, challenging the traditional view

of languages as distinct, separate systems. Her work introduced the idea that individuals draw from their entire linguistic repertoire, using multiple languages fluidly and simultaneously to communicate effectively.

One of the foundational principles of translanguaging is the rejection of linguistic hierarchies. It recognises that all languages a person know are of equal value and can be used interchangeably depending on the context and communicative goals. This departure from the idea of a "dominant" language in multilingual settings has profound implications for education and pedagogy.

Key Concepts in Translanguaging:

Dynamic Language Use: At the heart of translanguaging is the belief that language is not a static entity but a dynamic tool that speakers use flexibly to express themselves. Translanguaging acknowledges that multilingual individuals may not neatly separate languages but instead weave them together to create meaning. This dynamic language use is evident in everyday conversations, where speakers effortlessly switch between languages to convey their thoughts and emotions.

Linguistic Repertoire: Translanguaging recognises that individuals have a linguistic repertoire—a set of language resources that includes their proficiency in multiple languages. This repertoire is not limited to the languages taught in school but encompasses all languages a

person knows, including their home or community languages.

Bilingualism vs. Multilingualism: Translanguaging challenges the traditional binary view of bilingualism, which often implies a strict separation between two languages. Instead, it acknowledges and celebrates the multilingual reality of many individuals who may navigate three or more languages daily.

Translanguaging in Pedagogy:

Translanguaging has profound implications for pedagogy and language education. It calls for a shift from monolingual or bilingual approaches to a more inclusive and dynamic model. In a translanguaging pedagogical context, educators encourage students to draw on their linguistic repertoire to enhance their learning experiences. Here are critical aspects of translanguaging in pedagogy:

Inclusive Learning: Translanguaging creates inclusive learning environments where all students, regardless of their language background, feel valued and can participate actively. It validates students' linguistic identities and recognises the importance of their home languages.

Conceptual Understanding: Research has shown that students often better understand complex concepts when using their home language(s) to clarify or explain. Translanguaging thus supports deeper comprehension and conceptual development.

Language Development: Translanguaging promotes language development in home and target languages. It provides opportunities for students to reinforce their language skills and transfer knowledge across languages.

Fostering Critical Thinking: Translanguaging encourages critical thinking by allowing students to explore and express complex ideas in the language(s) they are the most comfortable with, reducing the cognitive load associated with language acquisition.

Student Agency: It empowers students by giving them agency over their language choices, allowing them to use the language(s) they are the most proficient in to express themselves effectively.

Empirical Evidence:

Numerous studies have provided empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of translanguaging in educational contexts:

Improved Comprehension: Research indicates that when students can use their home languages alongside the target language, their comprehension of complex concepts often improves. Translanguaging enables students to access background knowledge and express their thoughts more effectively.

Enhanced Language Proficiency: Translanguaging has been linked to improved proficiency in both the home and target languages.

Students who engage in translanguaging practices tend to develop more vital language skills.

Inclusive Learning Environments: Translanguaging fosters inclusive classroom environments by validating students' linguistic identities and experiences. It helps to reduce linguistic and cultural hierarchies and promotes a sense of belonging.

Empirical Evidence:

The theoretical underpinnings of translanguaging have been supported by a growing body of empirical research conducted in diverse, multilingual classroom contexts. This section explores some of the key empirical findings that highlight the benefits of translanguaging in education:

Enhanced Comprehension and Conceptual Understanding:

Studies have consistently shown that students often have a deeper understanding of complex concepts when they can use their home languages alongside the target language (García & Wei, 2014). For example, in a science class, students may clarify scientific concepts in their home language before fully engaging with them in the target language. Translanguaging allows students to access prior knowledge and cultural contexts associated with their home languages, which can facilitate the comprehension of new information.

Language Development and Proficiency:

Research has indicated that translanguaging can lead to improved language development in both the home and target languages (Cummins, 2014). When students use their full linguistic repertoire, they practice and reinforce their language skills. In multilingual settings, translanguaging provides opportunities for students to expand their vocabulary and grammatical structures in all languages they speak (Canagarajah, 2013).

Inclusive Learning Environments:

Translanguaging practices have been linked to the creation of more inclusive learning environments (Li, 2018). When students are encouraged to use their home languages, it validates their linguistic identities and cultural backgrounds. Inclusive classrooms promote a sense of belonging, reducing the risk of alienation or exclusion for students who speak languages other than the dominant language of instruction.

Development of Metalinguistic Awareness:

Translanguaging can foster metalinguistic awareness, where students become more conscious of how languages work and how they can effectively switch between them (García, 2017). This heightened awareness can lead to more strategic language use. Students may become better equipped to navigate different linguistic contexts and develop metacognitive skills that support language learning.

Support for Emergent Bilinguals:

Translanguaging is particularly beneficial for emergent bilingual students who are in the process of acquiring proficiency in a new language (García, 2009). It allows them to express complex ideas and demonstrate their knowledge while they continue to develop their language skills. Research has shown that translanguaging can reduce the stress and anxiety often associated with language learning for emergent bilinguals (Suresh, 2018).

Positive Student Attitudes:

Studies have reported positive student attitudes towards translanguaging practices (Li Wei, 2011). Students often appreciate the freedom to use their home languages, which can boost their confidence and motivation to participate in classroom activities. When students see their languages and cultures respected and valued in the classroom, it can lead to a more positive and engaging learning experience.

Improved Assessment Outcomes:

While traditional standardised tests may pose challenges to translanguaging, alternative assessment methods that incorporate students' home languages have shown promise (García & Menken, 2010). Such assessments can more accurately measure students' content knowledge and language proficiency. Authentic assessment practices, such as portfolio assessment or performance-based assessments that allow for

translanguaging, provide a more comprehensive view of students' abilities. It is important to note that the empirical evidence supporting translanguaging is not without its complexities. The effectiveness of translanguaging can depend on various factors, including teacher expertise, classroom context, and the languages spoken by students. Additionally, concerns related to standardise testing and teacher preparation remain, as mentioned earlier in the paper. Nonetheless, the growing body of empirical research underscores the potential of translanguaging to enhance learning outcomes, promote linguistic diversity, and create more inclusive educational environments in multilingual settings. Further research and continued exploration of translanguaging practices are essential to fully harnessing their benefits in education.

Challenges and Concerns:

While translanguaging holds great promise for promoting multilingualism and inclusive education, it also faces several challenges and concerns that educators and policymakers must address for its effective implementation. Here are some of the key challenges and concerns associated with translanguaging in multilingual classroom contexts:

Standardised Testing and Assessment:

One of the primary challenges is the compatibility of translanguaging with standardised testing and assessment practices. Most standardised tests are designed for monolingual or bilingual contexts and may not accurately reflect the abilities of multilingual students who engage in translanguaging practices. Concerns arise when students are penalised or assessed unfairly due to their use of multiple languages during exams or assessments. This misalignment between assessment methods and translation practices can create barriers for students seeking to demonstrate their knowledge accurately.

Teacher Preparedness and Training:

Effective implementation of translanguaging requires teachers who are knowledgeable about the concept and have the skills to facilitate it in the classroom. However, many educators may lack the necessary training in translanguaging pedagogy. Teacher preparation can lead to consistent or effective use of translanguaging practices, hindering their potential benefits. To address this concern, comprehensive professional development programmes are needed to equip teachers with the skills and understanding required for translanguaging.

Language Policy and Curriculum Design:

Educational institutions often have language policies and curricula that prioritise a monolingual or bilingual approach, which can be at

odds with translanguaging practices. Adapting these policies and curricula to accommodate translanguaging can be a complex and time-consuming. The curriculum design must be revised to incorporate opportunities for students to use their home languages as a resource for learning without undermining the acquisition of the target language.

Equity and Social Hierarchies:

Translanguaging practices can inadvertently expose and reinforce existing social hierarchies and inequalities among languages. In some cases, students may feel pressure to prioritise one language over others, leading to the marginalisation of certain linguistic backgrounds. It is essential to create an environment where all languages and cultures are valued equally to avoid reinforcing linguistic hierarchies.

Parent and Community Involvement:

Engaging parents and communities in supporting translanguaging practices can be challenging, especially if they hold traditional views of language learning and believe that using multiple languages in education may hinder language development. Building understanding and trust within communities is crucial to gaining support for translation initiatives.

Resource Allocation:

Implementing translanguaging practices may require additional resources, such as materials in multiple

languages, teacher training, and support for students with diverse language backgrounds. Schools and institutions must allocate resources effectively to ensure the success of translation programmes.

Monitoring and Assessment of Student Progress:

Traditional assessment methods may struggle to capture the progress and achievements of students engaged in translanguaging. Educators must develop alternative assessment strategies that accurately measure language proficiency and content knowledge. Monitoring and documenting the benefits of translanguaging, including its impact on academic achievement and language development, can be complex and time-intensive.

Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:

Translanguaging should be implemented with cultural sensitivity and respect for students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Misguided or insensitive practices can lead to cultural appropriation or misunderstandings. Addressing these challenges and concerns requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, researchers, and communities. By recognizing and actively working to overcome these barriers, stakeholders can create an educational environment that maximizes the potential benefits of translanguaging while mitigating its potential pitfalls. Effective support systems, resources, and a commitment

to linguistic diversity are essential components of successful translanguaging initiatives in multilingual classrooms.

Recommendations:

To harness the potential benefits of translanguaging in multilingual classroom contexts while addressing its challenges, a set of practical recommendations is essential for educators, policymakers, and researchers. These recommendations aim to guide the effective implementation of translanguaging practices:

Teachers Training and Professional Development:

Development of comprehensive professional development programmes are required for educators that focus on translanguaging pedagogy, emphasising its theoretical foundations and practical applications. To provide ongoing support and resources for teachers to build their skills and confidence in implementing translanguaging in the classroom.

Curriculum Development and Materials:

The revision of curricula is required to incorporate opportunities for students to use their home languages as a resource for learning without compromising the acquisition of the target language. To create or adapt instructional materials that reflect the linguistic diversity of the classroom, ensuring that resources are available in multiple languages.

Assessment Adaptation:

Develop alternative assessment methods that accurately measure students' language proficiency and content knowledge when translanguaging is used. Educators should be encouraged to design assessments that allow students to demonstrate their understanding in the language(s) they are most comfortable with.

Language Policy and School Culture:

Revisit and revise language policies to align with translanguaging practices, emphasising the importance of valuing all languages and cultures equally. Promote a school culture that respects and celebrates linguistic diversity, fostering an environment where all students feel valued and included.

Community Engagement:

Engage parents and communities in discussions about the benefits of translanguaging and its positive impact on students' language development and academic success. Foster partnerships with community organisations and language experts who can support the implementation of translanguaging practices.

Resource Allocation:

Allocate resources effectively to support translanguaging initiatives, including materials, teacher training, and support for students with diverse language backgrounds. Ensure that schools have access to technology and

resources that facilitate communication and collaboration across languages.

Research and Evaluation:

Encourage ongoing research on translanguaging practices to build a robust evidence base for their effectiveness in various educational contexts. Collaborate with researchers to conduct longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impact of translanguaging on student outcomes.

Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:

Promote cultural sensitivity and respect for students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds among educators and peers. Incorporate culturally relevant content and perspectives into the curriculum to reflect the diversity of the student population.

Inclusive Classroom Practices:

Encourage teachers to create inclusive learning environments that validate students' linguistic identities and experiences. Foster collaboration among students with diverse language backgrounds, allowing them to support each other's language development.

Advocacy and Policy Change:

The advocacy for policy changes at the district, state, or national level that recognises and support translanguaging practices in education. Collaborate with educational policymakers and stakeholders to develop guidelines and standards for the implementation of translanguaging.

Continuous Learning and Adaptation:

It is recognised that the implementation of translanguaging is

an ongoing process that may require adjustments based on student needs and evolving pedagogical practices. Encourage educators to reflect on their teaching practices and adapt them to best serve the diverse linguistic needs of their students. By following these recommendations, educational institutions can create a supportive and inclusive environment that leverages the linguistic diversity of their student population through translanguaging practices. It is through these concerted efforts that the potential benefits of translanguaging, including improved comprehension, enhanced language development, and the fostering of inclusive learning environments, can be fully realized in multilingual classroom contexts.

Conclusion:

Translanguaging, as both a theoretical framework and a pedagogical approach, offers a transformative vision for education in multilingual classroom contexts. It challenges traditional notions of language boundaries and hierarchies, recognising the dynamic, fluid, and interconnected nature of language use. In this conclusion, we reflect on the significance of translanguaging, its potential to reshape education, and the urgent need for its widespread adoption. Translanguaging celebrates the linguistic diversity that students bring to the classroom. It acknowledges that multilingualism is an asset, not a hindrance, and that students' full linguistic repertoires can

be harnessed to enrich their learning experiences. By allowing students to draw from their entire linguistic tool kit, educators can unlock the full potential of multilingualism, fostering deeper comprehension, improved language development, and the creation of inclusive learning environments. Translanguaging represents a profound paradigm shift in pedagogy, moving away from monolingual or bilingual approaches and towards a more flexible, inclusive model. It encourages educators to embrace the linguistic diversity of their classrooms, providing students with opportunities to use their home languages as a resource for learning. This shift empowers students to take ownership of their language choices, promotes critical thinking, and validates their linguistic identities. While the benefits of translanguaging are evident, it is not without its challenges. The compatibility of translanguaging with standardised testing and assessment practices remains a concern, as does the need for teacher training and support. Language policies and curricula must be adapted, and resources must be allocated effectively to support translanguaging initiatives. It is essential to address these challenges systematically to ensure that translanguaging can thrive in educational settings. Translanguaging is inherently linked to the promotion of inclusive education. It creates classrooms where students from diverse linguistic backgrounds

feel valued, respected, and included. By embracing translanguaging, educational institutions send a powerful message that all languages and cultures are equally important, helping to break down linguistic and cultural hierarchies.

As we conclude our exploration of translanguaging practices in multilingual classroom contexts, we recognise that the journey towards their effective implementation is ongoing. It requires the commitment of educators, policymakers, researchers, and communities to collaborate and advocate for the recognition and support of translanguaging in education. Continued research and evaluation will further substantiate the benefits of translanguaging and guide its evolution. Schools and institutions must adapt and refine their practices to create supportive environments where students can thrive academically and linguistically. This is particularly crucial in a globalised world where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. Translanguaging is a powerful tool that has the potential to reshape education by celebrating linguistic diversity, fostering inclusive learning environments, and empowering students to reach their full potential as multilingual individuals. It is a call to embrace the complexity of language, to value all languages equally, and to recognise the unique linguistic identities of each learner. As we move forward, let us commit to realise the promise of translanguaging

in our educational systems, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to flourish in their multilingual journeys.

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How to cite this article?

Mona A. Alshihry ,“ Translanguaging Practices in Multilingual Classroom Contexts: Implications for Pedagogy and Communication” *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)*8(4), PP:76-89,2023, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.4.89