

IMPLEMENTING TRANSLANGUAGING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES, AND PEDAGOGICAL GAINS

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The growing linguistic diversity of today's classrooms raises fundamental questions about how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) should be taught. Monolingual, "English-only" approaches are increasingly at odds with the lived realities of multilingual learners, who draw on their full linguistic repertoires to make sense of school content and interact with peers. Against this backdrop, translanguaging has emerged as a powerful pedagogical orientation and practical theory of language that reimagines language use in education as fluid, dynamic and integrated rather than compartmentalised into separate codes [1], [2].

In the EFL context, translanguaging offers a way to harness learners' existing linguistic resources to support comprehension, participation, identity construction and deeper learning [3]. At the same time, it confronts entrenched monolingual ideologies in curricula, assessment and teacher education. This thesis examines how translanguaging can be implemented in the EFL classroom, focusing on its theoretical foundations, practical strategies, typical challenges and observed pedagogical gains. It draws on research in translanguaging pedagogy, bilingual education, second language acquisition (SLA) theory and classroom storytelling to argue that translanguaging is not simply a "tolerated" use of L1, but a principled approach to teaching that can significantly enhance the quality and equity of EFL instruction.

Translanguaging originated in Welsh bilingual education as a planned alternation of languages for input and output in the same lesson, but has since evolved into a broader theoretical lens for understanding multilingual practices across educational contexts [4]. In its contemporary sense, translanguaging refers to the flexible, holistic use of a multilingual speaker's full semiotic repertoire to make meaning, rather than the switching between discrete, pre-existing "languages". This reconceptualisation challenges the assumption that learners must keep languages strictly separate to learn efficiently, and instead frames multilingualism as a resource for learning, identity and social justice [5], [6].

From a cognitive perspective, translanguaging aligns with SLA principles that highlight the role of prior knowledge, meaningful input and scaffolding. The work on Practical Application of Second Language Acquisition Theory emphasizes that learners draw on existing cognitive schemas built in their first language(s) to process new information in L2, and that judicious reference to the L1 can reduce cognitive

overload, support noticing of form–meaning relationships and strengthen retention [7]. Translanguaging pedagogy operationalises these ideas by allowing students to read, plan, discuss or reflect in their stronger languages, while gradually building up their ability to express these understandings in English.

Translanguaging is also closely linked to culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogies. Approaches that treat students’ home languages as legitimate classroom resources contribute to a more equitable distribution of participation and recognition, especially for learners from minoritised communities [8]. In this sense, translanguaging is not only a method for supporting comprehension, but also an ethical stance that contests deficit views of multilingual learners and seeks to rebuild classroom power relations around mutual respect and shared meaning-making.

In practice, translanguaging in EFL classrooms can be implemented through a range of instructional, interactional and assessment strategies. Research on translanguaging in bilingual and EFL settings shows that planned yet flexible integration of learners’ languages can scaffold both language development and content understanding [9].

One group of strategies targets input and comprehension. Teachers may encourage students to preview reading materials in their home language, use bilingual glossaries, or discuss key concepts in L1 before engaging with English texts. Such practices draw on the idea that conceptual understanding is not language-specific and can be transferred across languages once it is consolidated. Translanguaging-focused reviews of multilingual classrooms indicate that these approaches improve access to curriculum content and reduce superficial, rote-based learning.

A second group of strategies focuses on productive and interactive tasks. *Translanguaging in Action* (2017) and *Translanguaging in Every Classroom* (2023) document classroom activities in which students plan group work using mixed-language notes, negotiate meaning using all their linguistic resources, and then present findings primarily in English [5], [6]. In such tasks, students move between languages to clarify ideas, check comprehension and fine-tune formulations, while the teacher maintains a clear communicative goal in English. This strategic alternation supports both fluency and accuracy by distributing cognitive load across languages, and reflects how multilingual speakers operate in real-world settings.

Storytelling is an especially rich domain for translanguaging. The work *Integrating Storytelling in English Language Teaching* shows that allowing learners to draw on home languages when generating narratives, developing characters or structuring plots increases creativity, personal investment and willingness to speak [10]. Translanguaging storytelling sequences may involve brainstorming storylines in L1, writing drafts that mix languages, and then collaboratively shaping an English version for presentation. This process leverages the emotional and cultural depth of L1 while still driving development of English narrative skills.

Finally, translanguaging has important implications for assessment and classroom culture. *Building Classroom Culture Through Translanguaging* demonstrates how daily routines, classroom norms and assessment practices can be designed to recognise multilingual repertoires as assets rather than obstacles [11]. Teachers may, for example,

allow students to annotate texts bilingually, include reflections in their home language in portfolios, or use multilingual rubrics that value content, reasoning and collaboration alongside English accuracy. Such practices not only provide a more accurate representation of learners' competencies, but also communicate that all of their languages "belong" in the classroom.

Despite its potential, translanguaging implementation in EFL contexts is not without challenges. One of the most significant is the persistence of monolingual ideologies in curricula, textbooks and high-stakes assessments, which often equate "good teaching" with target-language exclusivity [12]. Teachers may feel constrained by exam requirements or institutional policies that implicitly discourage the use of learners' home languages, even when research suggests clear benefits.

Teacher beliefs and professional preparation also play a key role. Many EFL teachers were themselves trained in traditional, grammar-focused or immersion-like paradigms and may worry that translanguaging will reduce exposure to English or create classroom confusion. Without sustained professional development, it can be difficult for teachers to distinguish between strategic, goal-oriented translanguaging and unstructured language mixing. The literature repeatedly highlights the need for explicit guidance on how to design tasks, set expectations and gradually increase the proportion of English in ways that respect learners' repertoires without sacrificing language learning goals [3].

There are also practical classroom management concerns. In linguistically diverse classes, no single L1 dominates, which can make it harder to integrate learners' languages in whole-class activities. Teachers must then rely more on peer support structures, small groups and multimodal resources to ensure that translanguaging does not unintentionally exclude some students. Additionally, translanguaging practices can become politically charged in contexts where certain languages are minoritised or stigmatised, raising questions about which languages are legitimised and on what terms.

Finally, there is a risk of overreliance on L1 if translanguaging is not carefully structured. SLA research reminds us that sustained, meaningful exposure to the target language is essential for developing automaticity and complex grammatical competence. Translanguaging pedagogy must therefore balance the use of learners' full repertoires with deliberate opportunities for rich input and output in English, ensuring that L1 functions as a scaffold rather than a permanent crutch.

When implemented thoughtfully, translanguaging yields substantial pedagogical gains in EFL classrooms, which can be grouped into cognitive, affective and sociocultural dimensions.

Cognitively, translanguaging enhances comprehension and higher-order thinking. Studies of translanguaging in bilingual and mainstream classrooms show that allowing learners to mobilise all their linguistic resources facilitates deeper engagement with complex texts and concepts, rather than limiting them to surface-level decoding in a language they are still mastering. Learners can draw comparisons across languages, notice structural patterns and consolidate conceptual understanding, all of which align with SLA findings on transfer and metalinguistic awareness [3].

Affectively, translanguaging can reduce anxiety and increase participation. When students are permitted to use their home languages for planning, problem-solving or peer explanation, they are less likely to remain silent due to fear of making mistakes in English. Storytelling projects that invite students to weave personal experiences and cultural references into English tasks are particularly effective in fostering confidence and voice. This “emotional safety net” encourages risk-taking in English precisely because learners know they can fall back on familiar resources when needed.

On the sociocultural level, translanguaging contributes to more inclusive and democratic classroom cultures. Recognising and incorporating students’ languages challenges deficit narratives about bilingualism and reframes multilingual learners as competent, agentive individuals. Research on building classroom culture through translanguaging shows that such an environment strengthens relationships between teachers and students, promotes mutual respect and supports the development of critical language awareness regarding power, identity and inequality [11].

Taken together, these gains suggest that translanguaging is not a marginal or optional add-on, but a central component of pedagogically and ethically sound EFL practice in multilingual contexts.

Implementing translanguaging in EFL classrooms requires teachers to rethink long-standing assumptions about language boundaries, exposure and assessment, as well as to navigate institutional and ideological constraints. However, the literature on translanguaging in bilingual education, EFL contexts, SLA-informed practice and storytelling-based instruction converges on the conclusion that the potential benefits are substantial.

For EFL educators and policymakers, the key task is therefore not whether to translanguag, but how to support teachers in doing so strategically and responsibly. This entails revising guidelines, developing professional learning opportunities and designing assessment systems that recognise multilingual competencies. In the long term, implementing translanguaging in EFL classrooms can contribute to more equitable, engaging and intellectually robust language education, better suited to the multilingual realities of the contemporary world.

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