

# Translanguaging in ESL Classroom: A Case Study of Government College University Hyderabad

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## Abstract

This study explored perception and attitude of university teachers towards practicing translanguaging in English language classrooms in Pakistan. Using a mixed-method approach, ESL teachers from Government College University Hyderabad were approached to participate in the study. An adapted questionnaire was utilized to gather data on the teachers' use of Sindhi/Urdu (local languages) in their classrooms and their beliefs about translanguaging. The study revealed that the teachers recognized the benefits of translanguaging, such as aiding weaker language skills, promoting deep understanding of content and supporting students' bilingual identities. Translanguaging was seen as a tool to bridge communication gaps and foster an inclusive learning environment. The findings contribute to the understanding of translanguaging in the ESL context, highlighting its potential benefits for language learners in multilingual settings.

**Keywords:** Translanguaging, second language acquisition, bilingualism, ESL context, teachers' perception

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## INTRODUCTION

The radical expansion of multicultural and multilingual academic settings has piqued a growing interest in outlining an effective teaching strategy with regard to second language acquisition. Translanguaging, concerning second language acquisition and bilingual research, has developed as a topic of interest in multilingual settings. Pakistan, like many other countries, presents a complex and diverse socio-cultural and linguistic landscape, particularly in its cities where multilingual environments are prevalent<sup>3</sup>. In Pakistani classrooms, students often come from various linguistic backgrounds, leading to a rich array of ways in which they think and communicate about their knowledge and experiences<sup>4</sup>. Due to this diversity, many Pakistani students rely on their mother tongue (L1) for communication and meaning making at home, often lacking significant exposure to the target language (L2), which, in this context, is English<sup>5</sup>.

To bridge the dividing gap between communication, meaning-making, and learning the target language the tertiary level practitioners i.e., University Teachers are disposed to employ Translanguaging as a pedagogical technique to cater needs of multilingual students rather than opting for the prescribed monolingual pedagogical technique to teach a foreign language<sup>6</sup>. This study aims to study the attitudes and perceptions of university teachers in practising translanguaging in their English language classrooms and to understand the purpose behind using the local language in their classrooms.

### The History of Translanguaging

Khan (2021) argued that native language practices facilitate and improves the competence of individuals learning Foreign Language<sup>7</sup>. This assumption gave rise to a number of theories in the field of bilingual education, including Translanguaging. Renowned educationist Cen Williams coined the term 'translanguaging' in the 1980s<sup>8</sup>. Initially, Williams used the term 'trawsiethu' to describe a teaching practice that systematically employed both the native and target languages to teach a lesson. Subsequently, this concept was translated into English and referred to as 'translinguifying'. Later, in 2012, Lewis built on the work of Baker (2001) and defined translanguaging as the deliberate alternation between the language of input and output in the classroom, explaining the process of language switching and providing a theoretical framework for it<sup>9</sup>. Canagarajah (2011) defined translanguaging as the ability of multilingual speakers to

<sup>3</sup> Adamson, John L., Howard G. Brown, and Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson. "Revealing shifts and diversity in understandings of self access language learning." *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 9, no. 1 (2012): 5.

<sup>4</sup> Manan, Syed Abdul, and Khadija Tul-Kubra. "Beyond 'two-solitudes' assumption and monolingual idealism: generating spaces for multilingual turn in Pakistan." *International Journal of Multilingualism* 19, no. 3 (2022): 346-367.

<sup>5</sup> Khan, Arshad Ali, Naureem Nazir, and Amina Khalid. "Pakistani Higher Education Teachers' Perceptions on Translanguaging Practices in Multilingual Classroom." *Ilkogretim Online* 20, no. 5 (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Shah, Mujahid, Stefanie Pillai, and Malarvizhi Sinayah. "Translanguaging in an academic setting." *Lingua* 225 (2019): 16-31.

<sup>7</sup> Karathanos, Katya. "Exploring US mainstream teachers' perspectives on use of the native language in instruction with English language learner students." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12, no. 6 (2009): 615-633.

<sup>8</sup> Conteh, Jean. "Translanguaging." *ELT journal* 72, no. 4 (2018): 445-447.

<sup>9</sup> Baker, Colin. *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Multilingual matters, 2011.

fluidly switch between languages, treating their diverse linguistic repertoire as an integrated system<sup>10</sup>. This definition not only encompasses the act of simultaneous language switching but also includes the systematic use of multiple languages (depending on the linguistic diversity in the classroom) during specific language teaching activities. In 2014, Garcia described translanguaging as the act performed by bilinguals, where they access different linguistic features or various modes of what is considered autonomous languages to maximize communicative potential<sup>11</sup>. In his book, MacSwan (2017) introduced translanguaging as a new term in bilingual education, supporting a heteroglossic language ideology that values bilingualism for its own merits<sup>12</sup>. MacSwan proposes that languages should not be viewed as separable or associated with nation-states but instead as a language system, that occurs in continuous overlapping.

Acquisition of English (L2) with due support and facilitation of students' native language has been the researcher's primary research interest. In countries like Pakistan, the position and power-driven attitude towards English cannot be overlooked as the official communication is primarily conducted in English. In a study conducted to record the attitudes of native English-speaking teachers towards the use of their students' first language (Japanese) in the classroom were examined by McMillan and Rivers (2011) examined the reasons behind the choice of using or avoiding Japanese in their classroom and their purpose of choosing the appropriate action, by EFL teachers<sup>13</sup>. The majority of the researches regarding attitudes of English-speaking teachers are carried out in the domain of EFL teaching; however, there are not many studies examining attitudes of English-speaking teachers in the ESL context are lacking. This research gap motivated the researcher to conduct a study in ESL context for understanding the attitudes towards and practices of translanguaging.

### Research Question

Recent studies in the field have accounted the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers on the use of Turkish and Spanish (respectively) in their classrooms<sup>1415</sup>. However, the said studies were limited in terms of the number of participants and entail a foreign language teaching context. Hence, it is anticipated that the current study will contribute to the literature of translanguaging in the ESL context and tertiary level classroom. The following constitute the research question of the study.

- What are the perceptions of English Language Teachers towards translanguaging in an ESL context?

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<sup>10</sup> Canagarajah, Suresh. "Translanguaging in the classroom: Emerging issues for research and pedagogy." *Applied linguistics review* 2, no. 2011 (2011).

<sup>11</sup> Aab, Alexander, P. Abreu, M. A. R. C. O. Aglietta, E. J. Ahn, I. Al Samarai, Ivone Freire da Mota Albuquerque, I. Allekotte et al. "Depth of maximum of air-shower profiles at the Pierre Auger Observatory. I. Measurements at energies above 1 0 17.8 eV." *Physical Review D* 90, no. 12 (2014): 122005.

<sup>12</sup> MacSwan, Jeff. "A multilingual perspective on translanguaging." *American educational research journal* 54, no. 1 (2017): 167-201.

<sup>13</sup> McMillan, Brian A., and Damian J. Rivers. "The practice of policy: Teacher attitudes toward "English only"." *System* 39, no. 2 (2011): 251-263.

<sup>14</sup> Sali, Pinar. "An analysis of the teachers' use of L1 in Turkish EFL classrooms." *System* 42 (2014): 308-318.

<sup>15</sup> Yavuz, Fatih. "The attitudes of English teachers about the use of L1 in the teaching of L2." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (2012): 4339-4344.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Originating in the Welsh context, the research of Cen William (1996) gave a new narrative ‘Translanguaging’ to bilingual as well as multilingual education<sup>16</sup>. Subsequent studies carried out in this domain further developed ‘translanguaging’ as a theory. The present concept of translanguaging differs from the earlier context that was limited to code switching – that positions bilinguals to employ the use of separate linguistic systems within a particular context<sup>17</sup>. Instead, translanguaging offers the use of multilingual practices of bilingual speakers to ensure flexible bilingualism as a point of origination as well as to operate without defined boundaries to facilitate multilingual education<sup>18</sup>. The present concept identifies translanguaging not only as a strategy but also a framework conceptualizing the educational practices of bilinguals<sup>19</sup>.

### Code Switching versus Translanguaging

In the previous work of Garcia (2009)<sup>20</sup> code switching was viewed and taken as translanguaging while later it was discovered these two ideas to be at odds with one another<sup>21</sup>. Per their understanding, code switching is the alternate use of two languages in a clause or sentence and utilizations separate linguistic codes while translanguaging could go beyond the clause level. They contended that code switching is a cycle of changing two dialects where a variation happens between independent monolingual codes of the two dialects. Through translanguaging however, speakers utilize their linguistic collection to convey meaning more effectively and make deliberate communication. One of the conspicuous highlights of translanguaging is that it surmises a dynamic and practically coordinated utilization of various dialects and language assortments. Translanguaging underpins a heteroglossic perspective that sees language frameworks in ease and does not have unbending limits between language frameworks. Then again, code switching underpins monoglossic perspective in which bilinguals are considered to work among independent and disconnected linguistic frameworks. Translanguaging is regularly observed as a cycle of information development that goes beyond the linguistic outcome in contact situation<sup>22</sup>.

### Benefits of Translanguaging

Translanguaging offers manifold advantages to learners that range from aiding students to maintain and bridge their native language identities as learners and speakers of English to developing strategies to help them in navigating conversations. Other than learners, it offers benefits to instructors, such as making use of existing knowledge of learners to help them understand the context based in their native language. Encouraging students to have a say in

<sup>16</sup> Conteh, Jean. "Translanguaging." *ELT journal* 72, no. 4 (2018): 445-447.

<sup>17</sup> Kiramba, Lydiah Kananu. "Translanguaging in the writing of emergent multilinguals." *International Multilingual Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (2017): 115-130.

<sup>18</sup> Vaish, Viniti. "Challenges and directions in implementing translanguaging pedagogy for low achieving students." *Classroom Discourse* 10, no. 3-4 (2019): 274-289.

<sup>19</sup> Jiménez, Robert T., Georgia Earnest García, and P. David Pearson. "Three children, two languages, and strategic reading: Case studies in bilingual/monolingual reading." *American educational research journal* 32, no. 1 (1995): 67-97.

<sup>20</sup> García, Ofelia. "Emergent Bilinguals and TESOL: What's in a Name?." *Tesol Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2009): 322-326.

<sup>21</sup> García, Ofelia, Li Wei, Ofelia García, and Li Wei. *Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

choosing the language used in the classroom fosters the concept of shared autonomy, enabling them to combine their knowledge of the native language to help learn the target language. This approach promotes learner empowerment and autonomy<sup>23</sup>. According to Lewis et al., (2011)<sup>24</sup>, translanguaging offers several benefits:

- a) It can assist students in enhancing their proficiency in their weaker language
- b) It facilitates a deeper understanding of the subject matter
- c) It enables the simultaneous development of learners' second language skills alongside content learning

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study follows a mixed-method approach, encompassing a perception study that involves multiple dimensions necessitating the combination, contrast, and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively record and interpret findings. The aim of this research is to explore and understand the attitudes and perceptions of Pakistani ESL university teachers towards the use of Sindhi/Urdu in their classrooms. For this purpose, fifteen (15) ESL teachers from the department of English at Government College University Hyderabad, in the province of Sindh, were selected as participants. The study utilized a questionnaire adapted from Nambisan's (2014) research conducted in the EFL context in Iowa<sup>25</sup>. The questionnaire comprised two parts: the first part collected demographic information, including years of teaching, age, and gender of the participants, while the latter part contained Likert-scale items examining the use of Sindhi/Urdu by teachers and students, along with their application of Sindhi/Urdu in the classroom. Additionally, two open-ended questions were included to determine the circumstances in which the use of Sindhi/Urdu is beneficial or detrimental, providing further insights into the practice of translanguaging.

A questionnaire was provided to participants through a link with fourteen items. The questionnaire was adapted from the study conducted by Nambisan (2014) and was later divided into three parts<sup>26</sup>. The first part consisted of seven items to record the demographic information of the participants. The intention behind doing so was to understand the participants involved in the study and to obtain any additional information, which might suggest a possible trend through the responses. The second part of the questionnaire comprised of 15 variables having items with 5 points likert-scale. The variables were aimed to record the practices and perception of the teachers. Lastly, two open-ended items were provided at the end of the questionnaire to account for the negative and positive feelings of the teachers.

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<sup>23</sup> Lin, Angel MY, Yanming Wu, and Jay L. Lemke. "It takes a village to research a village": Conversations between Angel Lin and Jay Lemke on contemporary issues in translanguaging." *Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative endeavors for equitable language in education* (2020): 47-74.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, Gwyn, Bryn Jones, and Colin Baker. "Translanguaging: Developing its conceptualisation and contextualisation." *Educational Research and Evaluation* 18, no. 7 (2012): 655-670.

<sup>25</sup> Nambisan, Kavitha. "Teachers' attitudes towards and uses of translanguaging in English language classrooms in Iowa." PhD diss., Iowa State University, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

**RESULTS & FINDINGS**

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics (Demographic Information of the Participants)**

<b>Teaching Experience</b>		
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0 to 5 years	4	30.8
6 to 10 years	7	53.8
11 to 15 years	2	15.4
<b>Native Language</b>		
Urdu	3	23.1
Sindhi	10	76.9
<b>Proficiency (Urdu/Sindhi/Other)</b>		
Able to discuss a variety of topics without too much trouble	1	7.7
Have no problem communicating with native-speakers on wide range of topics	12	92.3
<b>Students Number</b>		
20 to 40	7	53.8
41 to 60	5	38.5
61 or more	1	7.7
<b>Students' native language (Urdu/Sindhi)</b>		
40%	1	7.7
60%	2	15.4
80%	7	53.8
100%	3	23.1
<b>Primary Instruction of Language in Class</b>		
English	1	7.7
Both English and Urdu	11	84.6
Both English and Sindhi	1	7.7
<b>Using Students' Native Language is Beneficial in English Language Classroom</b>		
Yes	13	100.0

Table 1 revealed valuable insights into the demographics and teaching experience of the participants. The majority of teachers had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. Sindhi was the predominant native language (76.9%), followed by Urdu (23.1%). Participants showed high self-assessed proficiency in their native language, with 92.3% feeling comfortable communicating with native speakers. Class sizes (students' number) were generally moderate, with 53.8% teaching 20

to 40 students. The majority of students (53.8%) were native speakers of Urdu or Sindhi. Translanguaging practices were common in the classroom, with 84.6% using both English and Urdu as the primary instruction language. Interestingly, 100% of participants believed that using students' native language in the English classroom was beneficial, indicating a positive attitude towards translanguaging in language teaching.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics (Perception of Teachers)**

Variables	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range
CSG	1.98	1.25	1.25	0.49	0.24	-0.79	-0.44	1.5
PAPA	3.25	3.25	3.25	0.37	0.14	1.48	4.59	1.5
BCA	1.27	1.25	1	0.69	0.47	-1.03	3.62	3
EPRC	3	3	3	0.49	0.24	-0.39	-0.01	1.75
EPLPS	3.97	3	3.25	0.55	0.3	0.71	0.75	2
RTQ	3.02	3	2.75	0.64	0.41	0.46	-0.01	2.25
APQT	3.21	3.25	3	0.49	0.24	-0.22	-0.23	1.75
ECV	3.5	3.5	3.5	0.58	0.33	-1.15	3.83	2.5
GDCA	3.77	3.5	3.5	0.48	0.23	1.18	2.85	2
CM	3.27	3.25	3	0.69	0.47	-1.03	3.62	3
GFS	3.12	3	3.25	0.55	0.3	0.71	0.75	2
PS	3.5	3.5	3.5	0.58	0.33	-1.15	3.83	2.5
BBS	2.25	3.25	3.25	0.37	0.14	1.48	4.59	1.5
QCA	2.98	3.25	3.25	0.49	0.24	-0.79	-0.44	1.5
HLPS	3.5	3.5	3.5	0.58	0.33	-1.15	3.83	2.5

The second part of the questionnaire (Table 2) presents how often the participants observed or encouraged the use of students' native language in the classroom for specific purposes.

### **Discussing Activities or Content in Small Groups (CSG)**

The mean value (1.98) shows that the teachers rarely or sometimes encouraged the use of the first language in small group discussions while learning target language. This indicates that while translanguaging in small group discussions is not entirely uncommon, it is not a prevalent practice in the classroom.

### **Providing Assistance to Peers during Activities (PAPA)**

The mean value (3.25) indicates that most of the participants sometimes encouraged or observed the use of the first language for assisting peers during activities, suggesting that translanguaging is employed to facilitate peer support in the classroom.

### **Brainstorming during Class Activities (BCA)**

The mean value (1.25) indicates that most of the participants rarely or sometimes encouraged or observed the use of the first language for brainstorming during class activities. This indicates that the use of translanguaging for this purpose is not common in the classroom.

### **Explaining Problems not related to Content (EPRC)**

The mean value (3) indicates that most of the teachers sometimes observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue for explaining problems not related to content. This suggests that the native language is occasionally used for clarification purposes.

### **Enabling Participation by Lower Proficiency Students (EPLPS)**

The mean value (3.97) indicates that most of the teachers is relatively more common for enabling participation by lower proficiency students.

### **Responding to Teachers' Questions (RTQ)**

The mean value (3.02) indicates that most of the teachers sometimes observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue when responding to teachers' questions. This finding suggests that the native language is occasionally used for students' responses to teacher queries.

### **Asking Permission or Questions to the Teacher (APQT)**

The mean value (3.21) indicates that most of the teachers observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue when asking for permission or questions to the teacher.

### **Explaining Concepts or Vocabulary (ECV)**

The mean value (3.50) indicates that most of the teachers observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue to explain concepts or vocabulary. This suggests that translanguaging for explaining complex ideas is commonly employed in the classroom.

### **Giving Directions for Classroom Activities (GDCA)**

The mean value (3.77) indicates that most of the teachers commonly observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue for giving directions during classroom activities, indicating that translanguaging for this purpose is widely practiced.

### **Classroom Management (CM)**

The mean value (3.27) indicates that most of the teachers more common for classroom management purposes.

### **Giving Feedback to Students (GFS)**

The mean value (3.12) indicates that most of the teachers sometimes observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue when giving feedback to students, suggesting that translanguaging is occasionally employed to provide feedback.

### **Praising Students (PS)**

The mean value (3.50) indicates that the use of the students' L1 for praising students is relatively common.

### **Building Bonds with Students (BBS)**

The mean value (2.25) indicates that most of the teachers rarely observed or encouraged the use of the mother tongue for building bonds with students. This suggests that translanguaging for building rapport with students is not commonly practiced.

### **Quickly Clarifying during Activities (QCA)**

The mean value (2.98) indicates that most of the teachers rarely observed or encouraged the use of the L1 for quickly clarifying doubts during activities.

### **Helping Low Proficiency Students (HLPS)**

The results indicate that the utilisation of the L1 for helping low proficiency students is relatively common (mean = 3.50).

### **The Negative and Positive Feelings of Teachers**

The primary objective of the questionnaire was to gather open-ended responses from teachers regarding their attitudes towards translanguaging in the classroom. The qualitative analysis was employed for interpretation rather than relying on statistical methods. This approach allowed for flexibility and encouraged participants to provide honest and unrestricted feedback. The collected responses were subjected to discourse analytics within the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to recognise and enlist prevalent attitudes and patterns in the use of translanguaging. The analysis focused on evaluative language related to emotions and affect, following the framework proposed by Martin and White (2005)<sup>27</sup>. The study aimed to understand the level of dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the incorporation of students' native language in a classroom setting.

**Table 3**  
**Systemic Functional Linguistics**

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Systemic Functional Linguistics</b>
Positive Terms	Positive, Need, Good, Important, Beneficial, Aid, Should Use, Betterment, Supportive, Facilitate...
Negative Terms	Negative, Must Not, Should Not, Detrimental, Regressive, Obstacle, Hinder...

The qualitative analysis based on Martin and White (2005) framework grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (as shown in Table 3). The third part of the survey collected open-ended responses to gather teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging in the classroom. The responses

<sup>27</sup> Martin, James R., and Peter R. White. *The language of evaluation*. Vol. 2. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

were analysed qualitatively through discourse analytics to understand the teachers' perspectives on using students' native language in the classroom.

1. Attitudes towards Translanguaging: The qualitative analysis revealed that the majority of teachers held positive attitudes towards the use of students' native language in the English language classroom. Teachers expressed beliefs that allowing the use of the native language could enhance students' understanding of concepts, increase their participation and engagement in class activities, and promote a supportive and inclusive learning environment.
2. Challenges and Concerns: While the overall attitudes were positive, some teachers also expressed concerns about potential challenges associated with translanguaging. These concerns included the fear of students becoming overly reliant on their native language, difficulty in managing multilingual classrooms, and ensuring a balanced use of English and the native language.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to explore the use of students' L1 (translanguaging) in the English language classroom at Government College University (GCU) and understand teachers' attitudes towards it. A survey among 13 language teachers provided insights on the frequency and contexts of translanguaging practices. The results showed positive attitudes towards its benefits, like enhancing comprehension and fostering student engagement. However, implementation varied across scenarios. Concerns included students' overreliance on their native language and managing multilingual classrooms. The study emphasizes the importance of targeted teacher training to effectively integrate translanguaging into teaching practices. Overall, it contributes to the literature on language teaching and highlights the value of incorporating students' native language in language education.

### Implications and Limitations of the Study

The survey provides valuable insights into teachers' attitudes towards using students' native language in the English language classroom. Positive attitudes suggest recognition of its benefits in facilitating learning and student engagement. However, some scenarios showed infrequent use, indicating a need for further exploration and teacher training to promote effective implementation. Addressing challenges and concerns, such as managing multilingual classrooms, is crucial for maximizing the benefits of translanguaging. The study's limitations include a small sample size from a specific institution, affecting generalizability. Nevertheless, the findings contribute to the literature on language teaching and second language acquisition, emphasizing the potential advantages of incorporating students' native language in language classrooms.

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