

TRANSLANGUAGING: CO-CONSTRUCTING MEANINGS IN A MULTILINGUAL SETTING

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Abstract

Being an expatriate teacher in Brunei made me consider different strategies and techniques in language teaching. This paper attempts to discuss my reflections on the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in a student-centered learning environment with multilingual learners whose native languages are beyond my linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging has gained a lot of attention since its coinage in Southeast Asia, but there appears to be a paucity of this concept in language research specifically in Brunei context. In the same vein, Barr and Tagg's learning paradigm was used to frame the discussion and expound on how translanguaging as a pedagogy could be a powerful tool in an environment where students are expected to co-construct knowledge with their teacher. In doing so, I posit that translanguaging empowers both teachers and students in constructing meanings however, if the teacher is not in any way familiar of their first language, students' communicative competence might also be at risk.

Keywords: translanguaging, student-centered learning, multilingualism, second language teaching

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1.0 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In a multilingual society, often, the aim is to promote multilingualism and multiliteracy (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Instead of looking into languages as separate entities, multilingualism promotes the holistic view of language learning. Translanguaging is one of the pedagogical tools that promote multilingualism (Gort, 2015). It optimizes students' linguistic repertoire, making it a powerful tool for creating a collaborative learning environment (Garcia & Leiva, 2014). Cen Williams coined this term to refer to a pedagogical practice where students could freely use an amalgam of their first and second languages (Garcia & Kano, 2014). It refers primarily to "the principle that bilingual and multilingual speakers select language features from a repertoire and 'soft assemble' their language practices in ways that fit their communicative situations" (Garcia & Kano, 2014, p. 260). Hence, any creative language techniques and discursive strategies that help the students relate to and learn from the concepts are part of translanguaging. I give emphasis on this idea of translanguaging as this parallels my reflection on translanguaging in a multilingual and student-centered learning environment.

Translanguaging has offered a lot of positive effects on our language learners. For instance, it gives platforms to negotiate with their teachers (Canagarajah, 2013); it provides a space to disrupt the idea of English hegemony (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016); and it creates a balanced relationship between the teacher and the students (Anwaruddin, 2018). Consequently, in a student-centered learning environment, any forms of collaboration and communication from the students are highly encouraged and seen with great importance because this would lead to an active environment where both teachers and the students are learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Certainly, language plays a critical role in classroom discussion, hence I find this a good opportunity to put translanguaging through a critical lens.

Different Linguistic Repertoires

As a teacher expatriate in Brunei, I made sure that before I enter the country, I already have a basic familiarization with their language, culture, and history. Brunei's official language is Malay and there are also other five heritage languages from the ethnic groups of this country which are Belait, Bisaya, Dusun, Murut, and Kedayan (Jones, 2008; Haji-Othman, McLellan, Jones, 2019). Brunei and the Philippines have different native languages, but according to Kachru (1985), both countries are part of the outer circle of World Englishes (WEs) which signifies that both countries widely use English in their social life or in the government sector, and they consider English as their second language (L2). Several studies (Braiglinn, 1992; Jones, 2016 & Haji-Othman, 2016) have mentioned that Bruneian learners have been exposed to the English language since their primary level and this is one of the reasons why translanguaging was never part of my pre-planned strategy.

Moreover, Brunei is a country of diverse languages and culture. Specifically, it is a small Malay Islamic Sultanate on the island of Borneo and was a British Protectorate until 1984 (Hussainmiya, 2006). Only then did the country consider adopting a bilingual language-in-

education policy or the Dwibahasa system (Haji-Othman et al., 2019). In comparison to the Philippines, my home country, bilingual education system was established in 1987 until a new language-in-education policy was established in 2012, currently known as the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy, in which children's mother tongue is used in the classroom as a bridge to learn Filipino and English (Adriano, Franco, Estrella, 2021).

All this information prepared me as I start being a teacher expatriate in Brunei. In this paper, I refer to the courses that I taught at the Jerudong Park Medical Center College of Health Sciences (JCHS). These courses are Speech Communication and Purposive Communication, both general education subjects, that focused on developing students' communication skills in English specifically, speaking and listening skills. Furthermore, most of my students use Malay as their native language and English as their second language (L2). Surprisingly, I also have a number of Filipino students who can still speak the Filipino language. On the other hand, I can only speak two languages which are Filipino, my mother tongue, and English, my second language. In the classroom, both Malay and Filipino become minority languages as they turn invisible in the teaching and learning process which makes English the language of our multilingual space.

Brunei's First Private Nursing School

Jerudong Park Medical Center (JPMC) of Brunei Darussalam established the very first private health science college in partnership with Far Eastern University (FEU) of the Philippines; JPMC College of Health Sciences (JCHS) aims to produce healthcare professionals who possess the core values of excellence, compassion, research orientation, and perseverance. The college adopted FEU's nursing curriculum which essentially operates under the learning paradigm or student-centered learning (SCL). From teaching at FEU, I was chosen to be a secondee at JCHS. I was assigned to teach general education subjects: Speech Communication and Purposive Communication.

Concurrently, SCL is not new to me as a paradigm as I have been a subscriber since I started teaching at FEU in 2018. An SCL classroom means that the teaching and learning process is interdisciplinary, integrative, and interactive (Doyle & Tagg, 2008). It values and encourages critical thinking by engaging the students in an active discussion where they are welcome to ask essential questions and synthesize different viewpoints (Biggs & Tang, 2011). As part of FEU's vision and mission to uphold its quality education, teachers are annually invited to a course refresher in assessing and facilitating teaching-learning under the learning paradigm to which I actively take part as a facilitator. In Brunei, student-centered learning is also a feature of their education system where independence is encouraged and 21st-century skills are acquired (Yahya & Sa'ari, 2015).

In the Philippines, the majority of the students are English language learners, but not everyone shares the same mother tongue. Hence, translanguaging casually happens in our classroom. Indeed, this notion has been posited by Canagarajah (2011) that translanguaging happens naturally in a multilingual classroom. Meanwhile, Bruneian students, according to Haji-Othman (2016), are all second-language learners of English as this has been the focus of their education system, *Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21* (SPN-21). Upon the discovery of these differences, thinking and creating several techniques and strategies in language teaching became another challenge for me. As I have noted, my students in JCHS and I are coming from a context where we have been raised in different countries with different first languages. Now that I am acclimated to a country with a different culture, language, identity, and history, I believe that this critical review will be an essential part of developing my language teaching practices and beliefs.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Bilingual education in Brunei has been introduced since its independence in 1985 (Barry, 2011). Its national language, Malay, and its second language, English are seen to be of great importance. As part of their commitment to bilingual education, an organization called the Center for British Teachers (CfBT) was established and assigned to recruit English teachers in Brunei (Haji-Othman et al., 2019). Barry (2011) pointed out that researches on the teaching of English in Brunei appear to be scant. In addition, Barry (2011) found out that there appears to be a limited number of studies about Brunei English, especially about the expatriate English language teachers' experiences, roles, and perspectives in the implementation and development of bilingual education.

Translanguaging is not only about code-switching, it also involves a lot of creative ways of making the students understand a term by varying tones, voices, and gestures (Wei, 2018). Moreover, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, I aim to discuss and expound on the concept of translanguaging in a student-centered learning environment by framing it using Barr and Tagg's learning paradigm. I will also expound on translanguaging as a pedagogical tool and its implication on my students' communicative competence in an attempt to provide more data on Brunei English language teaching, specifically in a context where both the teacher and the students do not share the same first languages.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is not a new concept in language teaching. It has been in the field since the 1980s and it originally came from the Welsh word "trawsieithu" which refers to a practice that uses Welsh and English alternatively to communicate in the classroom hence, it originated from a bilingual education context (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Translanguaging has been defined and used in many fields of study and in several contexts, but in this paper, the focus will be about pedagogical translanguaging. Cenoz and Gorter (2021) define translanguaging as a "theoretical and instructional approach that aims at improving language and content competencies in school contexts by using resources from the learner's whole linguistic repertoire" (p. 1). Similarly, Sembiante (2015) defined translanguaging as a "dynamic and discursive exchanges in which teachers and students engage as they draw on and choose from multiple languages and language varieties" (p. 9).

Moreover, translanguaging can subvert the ideology from a monolingual to a multilingual view of languages (Garcia, 2017), in the sense that, each language skill and experience from a learner is recognized in the classroom and thus, could actually be a pedagogy of social justice (Paulsrud & Zilliacus, 2018). Translanguaging then empowers both teachers and students, balances the power in the classroom, and focuses on co-constructing meanings, providing rich experiences, and enriching identities (Garcia, 2009; Creese & Blackledge, 2015). In translanguaging, both students and teachers are allowed to go beyond the norm as they could utilize any discursive practices that are beyond their linguistic systems (Wei, 2018). Wei (2018) also argues that translanguaging is a natural phenomenon in every human interaction as it sees language as multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource to communicate.

The current education system in Brunei, SPN-21, is designed to further enhance the student's language competencies in both Malay and English (Haji-Othman et al., 2019). In the same vein, Haji-Othman et al (2019) argued that SPN-21 appears to be a cosmetic change in relation to language acquisition as it is not that different from the Dwibahasa policy. Both SPN-21 and Dwibahasa policy sees both Malay and English languages of great importance. With this, Brunei's education system still firmly believes that successful English language acquisition will happen by making it as the medium of instruction. Furthermore, Sammons et al. (2014) elaborated on the language-in-education policies in Brunei when the Ministry of Education started to engage with the Centre for British Teachers (CBT) in 1985. The report concludes that the bilingual education policy in Brunei has moved from a teacher-centric view of learning to a student-centric view of learning where they focus more on the learning outcomes of each course.

In the Philippines, the current curriculum program is known as the Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Program of 2013. The country's language-in-education policy transitioned from bilingual education to Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education which puts the learners' mother tongue in a role where it supports or bridges the second or third language acquisition (Adriano et al., 2019). In comparison with Brunei's current language-in-education policy, there is no provision yet for including indigenous languages as part of their lessons (Haji-Othman et al., 2019). The different language-in-education policies in both countries also translate how teachers see translanguaging as pedagogy in the classroom. In Brunei, Kirkpatrick (2012) regarded that the Dwibahasa policy is successful in its goal, but MOE sees translanguaging as a negative practice (Haji-Othman et al., 2019). Moreover, language research in Brunei has shown that teachers surreptitiously use translanguaging as the practice helps them elaborate concepts and makes teaching of Science and Mathematics easier (Lin and Martin 2005; Heller and Martin-Jones 2001). In the Philippines, because of MTB-MLE policy, translanguaging has become a common practice in the classrooms (Gatil, 2021).

Furthermore, several studies were conducted in view of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool. Canagarajah (2013) in her study showed that translanguaging gives opportunities for students to freely raise their concerns, open discussions in the classroom, and negotiate with their teachers and classmates. Although translanguaging is a common phenomenon in a multilingual classroom, teachers most likely are using it unconsciously (Canagarajah, 2011). It was also discussed by Tai and Li (2020) that translanguaging involves other semiotic practices and not just using two different languages simultaneously. This involves gestures, visuals, audio, and videos. This came from the conclusion that the use of semiotic practices by the students helped them adapt to the particular conversation and situation they are in (Creese and Blackledge, 2015). Along with these results, Portoles and Marti (2017), as well as Caroll and Morales (2017) supported that translanguaging indeed increased students' participation and engagement, optimized meaningful learning experiences, and helped both teachers and students work together to create meanings.

To date, a number of authors have studied the possible effects of translanguaging in a multilingual classroom. Garcia and Wei (2014) found out that translanguaging enriches our students' sociocultural orientation; it enables them to create meanings based on their identity and values while they pay attention to their society's current events and conditions. With this, a follow-up study by Garcia and Kleyn (2016) reported that translanguaging actually disrupts the hegemony of the English language and was further supported by Anwaruddin (2018) in that translanguaging contributed to students' "intellectual emancipation" (p. 306). Moreover, even though these effects were seen by the teachers, there were still some studies refusing translanguaging as a pedagogical tool. Garcia (2012) found out that bilingual teachers are more open to the possibility of integrating translanguaging in their classrooms. However, others have questioned translanguaging in terms of its efficiency and found out that translanguaging could be an additional task for teachers if they do not speak their students' mother tongue (Pacheco & Miller, 2015); it could also alter natural teaching strategies and techniques in the classroom (Garcia and Wei, 2014); and teachers were found to be confused on how translanguaging affects their students' English language learning (Canagarajah, 2015; Fang and Liu, 2020).

Table 1. Barr and Tagg's (1995) Description of Learning Paradigm

| Dimension | Learning Paradigm |
|--|--|
| Mission and Purpose | Produce learning with students |
| Criteria for Success | Quality of the learning and student success outcomes |
| Teaching and Learning Structure | Teachers and students negotiate structures with each other, and students practice agency and they make decisions in their own learning |
| Learning Theory | Knowledge exists in each person's mind and is shaped by individual experience which are continuously constructed and negotiated |
| Productivity/Funding | Focused on the process and outcome (i.e. student learning and skills) |
| Nature of roles | Teachers and students are co-constructing meanings and knowledge; where teachers are facilitators |

Student-centered Learning

One of the paradigms in education is the learning paradigm, also known as student-centered learning (SCL), which sees the students as the chief agents of the meaning-making process (Barr & Tagg, 1995). With this, students are exposed to a learning environment that is cooperative, collaborative, and supportive. Barr and Tagg (1995) provided a description of the learning paradigm in six dimensions found in Table 1, which was modified from a study by Culala and De Leon (2019). These six dimensions are mission and purpose, criteria for success, teaching and learning structure, learning theory, productivity and finding, and nature of roles.

SCL's mission and purpose are to produce learning with students. Students are treated as co-producers of knowledge and should take responsibility for their learning. Its criteria for success are mainly rooted in the quality of learning and student success. It looks upon the knowledge and skills that they have learned to achieve independent learning. The teaching and learning structure in SCL are negotiated and students are encouraged to practice their agency as they take responsibility for learning. SCL also believes that knowledge exists in each person's mind and is shaped by their individual experience. SCL focuses on producing outcomes for the students: learning and skills and lastly, in SCL, teachers are facilitators, and meanings are co-constructed with the students.

■ 4.0 METHODOLOGY

For Dewey (1933), teachers need to take reflective practices which involve “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or any supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads” (p. 9). I intend to take these reflective practices as a form of methodology and translate it into my teaching practices. In a constructivist learning theory, the learner constructs knowledge through participating and collaborating in the teaching and learning process in which reflection is a crucial aspect (Vygotsky, 1982). It is not enough that a teacher participates and collaborates in the classroom, reflection is also part of a teacher-researcher's professional development.

More importantly, the reflection process should be conducted in a systematic approach: carefully elaborating on their past experiences, review of these experiences, and changing their teaching behaviors (Valli, 1997; Farrell, 2007). Therefore, a reflective practitioner should have no biases and will listen to both sides of an issue, should look carefully into the consequences to which action leads, and should not be afraid to face uncertainties to produce change (Dewey, 1933). Moreover, in the field of language research, Richards (1990) has shown that reflection and critical thinking are the two most important skills a language teacher should possess to guide their actions based on empirical evidence. In this paper, my experiences of translanguaging will be elaborated on and framed through the learning paradigm and reflected on its implications on communicative competence.

■ 5.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Translanguaging and SCL in the Philippines

As I enter the classroom, I see and hear students gradually stopping from chit-chatting with their classmates. These murmurs are, no doubt, always understandable as most of my students are native Filipino speakers. I normally start by asking them if they are alright or what has happened to them so far. In these initial ‘how are you’ portions of my classes, most of them use both English and Filipino languages as there are portions of their stories that are better understood and expressed if you use the Filipino language. After that short ‘how are you’ session, the discussion starts. During the discussion and presentation in the classroom, all of us speak English. Moreover, there are times that my students use Filipino to express themselves better when they are explaining or giving examples about the concept. In this setting, translanguaging flows naturally and I do not stop my students from using it because I already have an initial understanding that translanguaging is a normal pedagogical tool. These students enrolled in my course can actually communicate well in English. However, I sometimes hear grammatically incorrect sentences which lead me to subtly correct them by repeating it and emphasizing the correct usage.

There are also instances where the students are finding it hard to understand the topics presented to them, and since all of us speak Filipino, we resort to using our native language to exchange ideas and examples related to the topics that are a little difficult to comprehend. Moreover, these are the reasons why I find translanguaging a strong pedagogical tool. I have observed that my students were more comfortable in sharing their opinions which makes the discussion more productive instead of restricting them to speaking in only one language. One of the effects of this pedagogical tool is that you can really see and observe who are fluent and not speaking in English in the classroom because of the tendency to code-mix the languages. I see it as a downside because I sense these students' shame feeling whenever they cannot share or speak in English fluently. I believe that this kind of mindset came from our previous English teachers' policies in our primary and secondary school experiences. When I was in my high school years, I remember that our school initiated an English-only policy and although there is no accumulated punishment, teachers will constantly tell a student to speak in English once they hear them speaking in Filipino. This has resorted some of my classmates to not speak during the discussions and to regard highly of those who can speak in English fluently. This could have also affected the Filipino students to see Filipino as a language that should not be given importance to.

In FEU, we would like to erase this kind of mentality to the newly enrolled students. I have handled several freshmen students since the year 2018 and I have seen the students' increase of enthusiasm to share their opinions and experiences every semester. Since we operate in a student-centered learning environment, encouraging students to speak has become more apparent. No one literally leaves the classroom without sharing anything either to their teacher or their classmates. During presentation and discussion, this is where their communicative competence starts to be noticed. Students become more active as they gradually lose their hesitation to speak in the classroom once they knew that they could speak in any language they want as long as its comprehensible. In every classroom, I have observed that there is always

a student who dominates the classroom discussion and most of these students are those who are confident in using both languages. This is where the challenge as a facilitator comes in and therefore translanguaging is one of the pedagogical tools I use.

Translanguaging and SCL in a Foreign Country

In this part, I will be sharing my translanguaging pedagogical experiences I had in Brunei, which could be considered as the driving force that lead me to put translanguaging through a critical lens. First, as I immerse myself in this foreign country, I know that I needed to familiarize myself with their language and culture. During the first semester, I was assigned to teach Speech Communication and Purposive Communication. Both of these subjects require students to learn and improve their speaking and listening skills. During the first few weeks of teaching, I consciously avoided the use of translanguaging in the classroom. This is because of my belief that their previous English teachers are probably native speakers of English. I then had an experience that made me change this practice. Before I started teaching in Brunei, I deliberately chose not to use translanguaging as part of my pedagogy mainly because of my presumption that my students' English teachers during their primary and secondary level could be expatriate teachers who obtained a degree in English language teaching from a university in Australia or the United Kingdom. I got this presumption from reading their history that Brunei was once a British protectorate because of CfBT's eligibility requirements as seen on their website (CfBT Education Services, 2022). Due to this, I declared that I will never attempt to involve myself in any translanguaging practices.

However, as I enter the first two weeks of the first semester, I noticed that there were a lot of similar words with the same meaning between Malay and Filipino. During the orientation week, most of the students were still reluctant to answer some questions during the presentation, but I believe it's only natural for students to do so because they are surrounded by people they only met at that moment. Surprisingly, it was during our first discussion on the first reading material that I discovered that the Malay word /SAkit/ means similar to the Filipino word /saKIT/ that if we both translate it to English could relatively mean ill, hurt, or sick. I was attempting to explain a concept about communication and to get the students' attention, I relate the concept to a story about love. The discussion was going on a topic about delivering clear and concise communication and how they would do it in different types of relationships, and that if they did not elicit this skill in any communication attempts, both people on the other end of the relationship will get hurt emotionally. During this time, I can see most of them raising their eyebrows and I tried to explain it one more time, but the result was the same. With that, I tried to act as if my heart was hurt to show them what I mean, and I heard one student say "ah! sakit Miss!", that's when I learned that /SAkit/ means the same in both Malay and Filipino. I then use the word /saKIT/ to explain further, and I heard everyone laugh as they understood the concept we are trying to learn that day. As I think of this scenario, I was already having a hard time at that moment thinking of any ways to explain the concept to the students. It is because I do not know how to translate it into their first language, and I do not know any movie or television show to which I could appropriately relate it hence, I resulted in a total physical response. I just got lucky that a student shouted the word /SAkit/ that I eventually used in the discussion. In this scenario, translanguaging has become a tool for me and my students to reach a goal. The gesture, as well as the word that is similar to Malay, was used to create a better understanding of the topic.

In one of my classes, one of the assessments that my students are required to submit is a literature review. Students were given time to consult about their works before the actual submission date. I then gave feedback to all of these papers and announced to everyone that they are required to 'revise' their papers by integrating the comments that I have written on their works. After one week of giving them time to submit, I noticed that the papers are still the same as to the first time I checked them. I asked my students if they did revise their papers, and they said yes and with conviction. I was confused at that moment. Surprisingly, I then encountered an advertisement online. It was an advertisement for students who will be taking their O-level and A-level exams in the next few months. The advertisement says: "Unlimited exam revision on-the-go! Hundreds of updated GCE O-Level Exam MCQs constantly updated to ensure you pass all subjects!" and with matching comments from one of the customers: "Convenient app - I can revise anywhere, even on the bus to school". I then realized that 'revise' is their term for 'review'! Thus, whenever I want to say that they have to revise something, I then consciously say 'edit' to avoid confusion.

Similar to the second experience of translanguaging is the encounter of the word 'attachment'. Another assessment that I have in my course is a mock job interview. In this assessment, I asked my students to create and submit a resume. Upon interviewing the third student, I came across the word 'attachment' as she stated: "My experiences include attachment in Hospital RIPAS". I then asked a follow-up question: "What is attachment?" and she answered: "It's like a training.". I asked her again a question: "Is that the same with an internship?" and she answered "Yes". At that moment, I realized that this is another word that is used differently in this country. After the interview with the third student, I immediately used the term "attachment" to ask about the internship program for the next students I interviewed. In these encounters, I then realized that I need to assimilate myself in order to be comprehensible to my students. I became more careful to choose words that are comprehensible and relative to their culture. I pay attention to this as a teacher because it is important to end discussions with all of us on the same page. As a teacher, I put premium on the choice of words because the nature of learning is collaborative and participative. I have to ensure that all students understand what the discussion is all about and that no student is left behind.

I always ask my students to form a circle together with their group mates. As per my observation, this type of seating arrangement helps my students understand some concepts just by asking one of their group members. In each group, students can easily communicate by using their native language, thus, making them more comfortable and enabling them to express themselves and understand the concepts according to their experiences. I noticed that when I allow them to talk to their groupmates using their native language, it gives them the opportunity to understand the concepts according to their culture's lens without them being pressured or stressed to speak in English. In relation to this scenario, my students are also fond of sharing jokes related to the discussion. The dominant student is usually the one who creates and shares humor in the classroom. Typically, this student tells the joke in their native language and everyone will laugh and smile, while I wait for the student to translate it for me so I could understand. This gives me a signal that they understood the concept and I allow them to do this without hesitation because I trust and respect my students' viewpoints.

Translanguaging and Communicative Competence

It is also apparent that while I allow translanguaging in our classroom, as a language teacher, I can't help but notice some ungrammatical sentences from my students. One of the most prominent of these sentences is "Is it... can?". The first time I heard this, I have to admit that I found it a little bit funny because the word "can" is really used in this country to ask a question of whether something is allowed or not instead of saying it in a complete sentence "Can I do it?" or "Is it allowed?". This is when I started to question the effect of translanguaging on my students. As they improve on their ability to exchange information, I tend to reflect on their capability to improve their competence in English grammar. Since I am not a native speaker of their first language, it is hard for me as a teacher to give a better explanation and further correct this ungrammatical sentence right away, as compared to when you have the affordances to speak in their native language.

Another instance of this scenario is the term 'already'. Bruneians tend to use this as an expression, and sometimes to ask a question; when my students want to say yes, they tend to say "already, miss!", and they also use "already, miss?" to ask whether a certain task has been completed. As a language teacher, I rarely use these words as it makes me feel uncomfortable. I want my students to emulate the complete way to utter these expressions, although I understand that this is widely used and accepted in this country.

■ 6.0 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Practice

Translanguaging as a pedagogical practice offers several positive effects in a multilingual classroom setting. First, it offers better rapport in the classroom. Even though I do not speak my students' mother tongue, a word or even an action could actually help us reach an understanding of a concept. As I acted or performed a gesture, it became a tool for us to transact meanings. This practice directly parallels the learning paradigm. As Barr and Tagg (1995) mentioned, SCL's mission and purpose is to produce learning with students. As a facilitator, I would be glad to accept any type of participation as long as it is connected to our discussion as it aids the students to connect it to their prior knowledge and experiences. Whatever learning experience that works not only for the facilitator, but most importantly for the students, should be taken note of. Translanguaging, on the other hand, is not only about code-mixing or using two languages simultaneously, any creative form of communication from an individual related to the construction and understanding of concepts are considered translanguaging (Sembiante, 2015). Hence, any gestures, visuals, videos, and even audio could support and eventually create a powerful learning environment (Tai & Li, 2020). This is consistent with a study by Creese and Blackledge (2015) that translanguaging indeed helped the students reach an understanding of a specific situation through diverse communicative practices. Further, letting our students share information in the classroom without restricting them to speak in one language creates an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and validated (Allard, 2017; Portoles and Marti, 2017). It can therefore be assumed that translanguaging could increase student participation, rapport, and helps create an environment where both teachers and students experience meaningful learning.

Second, translanguaging provides students with easier comprehension of concepts within the discussion. With different usage of words due to different cultural contexts, I became more careful in choosing words accordingly. This is because I want all my students to be on the same page with everybody. Similarly, this idea parallels one of the learning paradigm's goals: to achieve success for diverse students (Biggs & Tang, 2011). As Canagarajah (2013) mentioned, translanguaging should give opportunities for our students to negotiate to learn in their own multilingual space. By paying attention to my words, I then open the discussion to a more collaborative and participative environment. To make sure that this practice is successful, I attempt to integrate words and examples that are comprehensible and relatable. In translanguaging, facilitators need to operate based on the learners' linguistic resources (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). This is not limited to the choice of words, but also other semiotic practices like gestures and visuals related to their culture. This is integral when utilizing translanguaging in an SCL classroom because knowledge should be seen as a product of an individual's experiences (Barr and Tagg, 1995). If the facilitators successfully utilize translanguaging by operating within the students' linguistic repertoire, students' diverse cultural backgrounds might also be enriched. In accordance with Garcia and Wei's (2014) study, they also are in agreement that translanguaging allows the students to attend to their cultural conditions. This might further indicate that translanguaging helps the students understand and comprehend a concept if there is a successful integration of cultural differences within the exchange of ideas.

Furthermore, as a bilingual teacher myself, I understand and view this practice as a crucial part of exchanging meanings. I have also been part of a bilingual classroom context, and I have experienced losing track of the discussion just because I can't relate to it. Due to this, I have realized how translanguaging affects the students' construction of meanings, and motivation to interact and collaborate with their classmates. This supports Garcia's (2012) notion of translanguaging that teachers who are also coming from a bilingual context view translanguaging as an extensive tool to gauge students' learning. It is vital that when we teach in a multilingual context, the words that we utter, the gestures that we elicit, and the visuals that we present to our students are all within their linguistic repertoire to ensure that everyone participates and collaborates in the discussion.

Third, translanguaging thrives in a constructivist paradigm of learning. Group activities have always been part of a student-centered learning environment that activates the collaboration and participation skills of the students (Doyle & Tagg, 2008). It's interesting to find out that group activities can also help the students create a fruitful discussion through the use of translanguaging (Anwaruddin, 2018). Students freely use their mother tongue during the small group discussions and use English during the class presentation. This appears to be operating under the constructivist theory; where students use their pre-existing knowledge and integrate it with the newly learned knowledge; whereas in translanguaging, the students use their pre-existing language and then use it in order to integrate and transact knowledge and skills which could either be the second language or the content. Furthermore, even though the majority of the discussions were uttered using their mother tongue, I know that they were able to understand the concepts because of the produced outcome, and in this case, their presentation. In an SCL classroom, the challenge of creating an environment where everybody speaks is one of the challenges that a facilitator could encounter, especially in a multilingual setting; hence, it is also the facilitator's job to use any pedagogical resource and make it happen. In this setting, it was observed that translanguaging became the pedagogical resource. Consistent with the literature, Anwaruddin (2018) similarly posited that as teachers use translanguaging to be the pedagogical resource, the dynamic between the teacher and students also changes. Surprisingly, Wang and Li (2022), found out that a translanguaging space is a classroom that allows the students to participate in

small group discussions, and choose their own reading material, while the facilitator either translates or responds to the queries. It is then interesting to note that translanguaging is successful under the learning paradigm as it positively changes the dynamic between the facilitator and the students; creating a supportive, cooperative, and collaborative learning environment (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

Lastly, translanguaging challenges the predominance of the English language. During discussions, students usually create jokes out of the topic and these jokes were typically stated in their mother tongue as this would be faster and easier to share than telling them in English. As Barr and Tagg (1995) elaborated, learning is a nesting and interacting of frameworks. Acknowledging the students' ability to tell jokes related to the discussion is also acknowledging the student's whole linguistic repertoire (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). I see these jokes created by my students as their attempt to use their prior knowledge, interact with it, and connect it with the learned knowledge. If we use translanguaging as a pedagogy, not only does it provide a supportive environment, but it also gives affordances to the students to use their background and their identity as multilingual. Anwaruddin (2018) phrased it as the students' 'intellectual emancipation'. A student's identity as a multilingual speaker is respected in the classroom and this is one of the aspects that a multilingual education should focus on (Paras, 2020). I highlight this idea of translanguaging because bilingual or multilingual education should empower mother tongues instead of stultifying them.

Translanguaging as a pedagogy offers these positive effects on learning, especially in a student-centered learning environment. It could be highlighted that translanguaging could increase students' rapport; it could help the student understand and comprehend a concept, especially if the culture is integrated within the exchange of ideas; it is vital that we teach according to our students' linguistic repertoire; it thrives in a student-centered learning environment as it positively changes the dynamic between the teacher and the students; and it gives affordances to the students to acknowledge their multilingualism.

Translanguaging and Perceived Issues

Translanguaging as a pedagogical practice appears to parallel the learning paradigm in many ways. Contrary to expectations, I have also observed issues that could be perceived as challenges. First, since translanguaging values students' creativity in discursive practices (Garcia & Kano, 2014), I became conscious as to whether there is an appropriate time for me to correct their sentences, especially when a mistake happens during the discussion. As a language teacher, it is important for me to correct their mistakes, especially when it is a grammatical mistake. Fang and Liu (2020) also have the same concerns as they found out that translanguaging produced students that appear to be low in English proficiency, which means that the student's level of accuracy in speaking English appears to be flawed. In this situation, I do not feel comfortable correcting their mistakes as compared to correcting the grammatical mistakes of my Filipino students. This is because I can somehow provide an extensive explanation of the grammatical mistakes in the Filipino language in comparison to the Malay language. Moreover, since the environment in an SCL classroom is collaborative, cooperative, and supportive (Barr and Tagg, 1995), this goes for the language teachers to engineer a learning task that could provide the students a platform to correct these grammatical mistakes. This challenges the notion created by Canagarajah (2013) asking if there is ever a place for error in translanguaging; I argue that if translanguaging is situated in a learning paradigm, the facilitators could structure an environment where these errors could be examined, but it will be easier if the facilitator has knowledge of the student's first language.

Meanwhile, if translanguaging provides easier comprehension, transaction and co-construction of meaning might consume a lot of time during the discussion. This is similar to Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021), as they found out that translanguaging made the process of learning longer. On the other hand, translanguaging in a learning paradigm will not be seen as such. This is because time should never be a warden for learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Translanguaging in SCL might be recognized as a tool that supports learning instead of a distraction to learning (Gatil, 2020). Finally, this paper might provide some initial evidence that translanguaging demands more effort from teachers who do not speak their students' first language. As we transact knowledge during the discussion, it was revealed that there are some instances of failed exchange of information because of our cultural differences; and as a teacher, it demands conscious effort from the teachers to remember that there are differences in some words that we use. This is broadly supported by Pacheco and Miller (2015) that translanguaging requires more work for teachers who do not speak the students' mother tongue. Additionally, there were some instances where I found myself feeling uncomfortable due to forcing myself to mimic the way they utter an expression. This was similarly revealed by Garcia and Wei (2014) that translanguaging changes the ways of teaching and learning. I then argue that these translanguaging practices actually support the learners' linguistic repertoire and are just reasonable to accommodate the learners' multilingualism.

■ 7.0 CONCLUSION

Translanguaging as a pedagogical tool empowers the students' linguistic repertoire and thus, creates a powerful learning environment. Meanwhile, if the facilitators of a multilingual classroom utilize translanguaging, they will have to expect various effects of it in the process of meaning construction, especially with students whose native language is beyond the facilitator's linguistic repertoire. Upon my critical reflection on translanguaging in a multilingual and student-centered learning environment, I found that translanguaging indeed increases students' participation because it helps to create an environment where both teachers and students construct meanings; and it helps the students comprehend ideas while exchanging information.

It is worth noting that when we teach in a multilingual setting, the words, gestures, visuals, and audio that we present to our students are all within their linguistic repertoire and this is because translanguaging appears to be operating best under the constructivist theory where students use their pre-existing knowledge of the language to transact knowledge and skills on the second language. This is mainly the reason why there is a positive change in the dynamic between the students and I during the discussion (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Although there have been various positive experiences with translanguaging, I further want to highlight my reflections on teachers' expertise in translanguaging that it will be easier for teachers to utilize translanguaging as a pedagogical tool if they also have a grasp of students' mother tongue. Consequently, this is a further recommendation to interested researchers in the field to focus on the teacher's and students' experiences of translanguaging in a context where both do not share each other's mother tongue.

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