

Translanguaging in Language Learning: Embracing Multilingualism for Enhanced Proficiency

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ABSTRACT:

This study discusses the way in which translanguaging assists the Persian speakers who study English as a foreign language in vocabulary, grammar, cultural and emotional balance enhancement. The sample was a group of Iranian students who were attending English courses. The study used qualitative methods to merge systematic observations and behavioral analysis. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the way of enriching the participants in lexical knowledge, grammatical competence, emotional expression and intercultural communication using Persian. The results indicated that translanguaging assisted learners in internalizing the English words, in that they associated the English words with their Persian counterparts. It was also helpful in the learning of grammar since learners were in a position to compare grammar of the two languages. In general, the research offers empirical data that translanguaging is a useful teaching method. The significance of considering the linguistic and cultural background of the learners is also a crucial point of the study that can enhance academic accomplishments, cultural self-worth, and emotional steadiness. Thus, these results provide teachers and administrators with a ground in creating more inclusive and comprehensive language programs, in

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particular in the bilingual environment like Iran.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Iranian EFL learners; language proficiency; cultural integration.

1. Introduction

Multilingualism is very essential in multilingual classrooms whereby, effective communication and cultural knowledge depends on the skill of using more than one language. Students are exposed to diverse versions of their first language (L1) and other languages as they study a new language and go through linguistic differences. Translanguaging has come into the limelight as a major strategy where all the languages that a person knows are used to improve understanding and communication.

Translanguaging involves the dynamic and purposeful application of two or more languages by multilingual speakers. Instead of perceiving languages as distinct ones, it sees them as interdependent instruments. Students are proposed to exploit all linguistic resources such as their L1 to cross the barrier in comprehension, communicate without any issues, and feel confident in the learning process.

The significance of translanguaging is that it can use the already existing languages among students. Using the target language with L1 allows learners to use prior knowledge to facilitate faster skills acquisition (Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021). Additionally, to the development of language, translanguaging expands cultural, identity, and historical consciousness in relation to languages (Ali, 2024). Since language is a mirror of culture, the EFL students will learn to understand their linguistic roots in the process of acquiring new linguistic forms, and in doing so, they will be able to capture such complexities as humor and irony (Pierson & Grapin, 2021).

Translanguaging boosts understanding among different backgrounds (Sangeetha & Sridhivya, 2025). It prepares students to communicate with people who belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds,

promotes the development of language competencies and the appreciation of diversity (Olgun-Baytas et al., 2023). Translanguaging is an inclusive and flexible instructional approach in the education profession (Yilmaz, 2021). It authenticates the multidimensional nature of students and promotes self-expression and allows teachers to customize the learning experience to personal linguistic strengths (Pierson & Grapin, 2021). In this way, translanguaging also changes the conventional approach to teaching language to make it learner-focused, adaptive, and enhancing skills in proficiency, understanding of other cultures, and cross-community communication (Olgun-Baytas et al., 2023; Wei, 2024).

Persian is spoken in Iran, and it is spoken alongside many other local languages, and in this case, translanguaging may offer valuable information on language teaching, use in classrooms, and identity formation. However, the nation's extensive linguistic diversity does not directly entail that the existence of translanguaging, its use, and its influence on Iranian education have been properly investigated. Consequently, this paper investigates the practices of translanguaging, its intentions and the results it produces. It also explores the concepts of translanguaging in relation to language policies, education systems, linguistic diversity and identity construction. Its aim is to shed light on the complexity of Iranian translanguaging phenomenon, its impact on language use, pedagogy, identity and sociolinguistic relationships, which in turn will give teachers and policy-makers practical knowledge to act on.

2. Literature review

Translanguaging is highly applicable in the second language learning. Research indicates that translanguaging in the classroom enhances performance of students. It also demonstrates

respect to the students whose culture and language is part of them and inclusive and equitable education. As educators make learners use all languages they know, students become more intelligent and articulate their ideas. They are also more aware of the content and learn language more easily. Translanguaging is especially notable in the case of multilingual learners and ethnic or linguistic minority groups who see translanguaging as advantageous.

Numerous studies support the benefits of translanguaging in language teaching, including its ability to enhance learning experiences, reinforce cultural and linguistic identities, and promote inclusive classroom experiences. An example of such studies is the work of Abourehab and Azaz (2023) that examined translanguaging in the context of Arabic heritage and the study by Liu and Fang (2022) focusing on how it influences teaching the English language.

Abourehab and Azaz (2023) studied the concept of translanguaging as applied to community and heritage through an Arabic lens. They monitored the teacher-students and realized that learners spoke active Arabic dialects and English to learn vocabulary and grammar. The authors believe that community and heritage language environments are the best places to apply the concept of translanguaging, which enables learners to pursue identity and develop language proficiency.

Liu and Fang (2022) analyzed the recent tendencies in the area of translanguaging in multilingual ELT settings. Their study also identified the shift in terms of multilingual approaches and that majority of stakeholders favour translanguaging in ELT situations. The article highlights the importance of having a reconsideration of ELT, questioning monolingual policies, and acknowledging the students as assets in their first languages.

Wei (2022) and Cenoz and Gorter (2020) discussed pedagogical and political sides of translanguaging. Wei contends that translanguaging facilitates versatile application of 2 or more languages and resources and provides

evidence of how previous language competencies facilitate new language learning. Such perception breaks the conventional classification of languages and challenges such concepts as academic English. Cenoz and Gorter study the topic of pedagogical translanguaging, which is the rejection of monolingual teaching and the significance of multi-lingualism in classes. Their research indicates that translanguaging allows the students to apply complete linguistic skills, builds multilingual skills, enhances understanding of language, and raises awareness. It demands considering the learners as multilingual individuals, not lacking in the English proficiency.

Conteh (2018) argues about issues of translanguaging in ELT that are based on monolingual assumptions of education policy and practice. Although there has been increasing migration and multilingualism, there are still numerous classrooms segregating languages and disregarding the home languages of students. The existing policies, curriculum and testing support national and standardized languages. Nevertheless, there is reason to be optimistic because educators and scholars are beginning to recognize the importance of translanguaging in connecting and empowering students, and this can further expand translanguaging practices in future.

Creese and Blackledge (2019) examined the research of language learning opportunities in the information desk of a municipal library. In their analysis of the interactions of library users and assistants, they found out that these desks have two primary functions: the access to resources as well as creating spaces where language teaching/learning occurs. The interactions were not merely about exchanging information, but they provided inclusive and active learning process. The authors emphasized the role of translation strategies and trained employees and the physical design of the location in enhancing communication and explained the effect of normative demands and language homogeneity on translanguaging.

Translanguaging is a term coined by Walker (2018) to theorize fluid language practices and hybrid language practices in an educational context. Through the case study, bilingual learners were involved in an international online exchange and thus their translanguaging patterns became prominent. The findings showed that meaning is built with the help of various semiotic resources and learning communities become collaborative.

Lewis et al. (2012) examined the concept of translanguaging compared to code-switching and translation giving an account of the linguistic and ideological perspectives at work. They analyzed the ways in which translanguaging may be instructional, based on the implications of teaching this language on children, development of emergent bilinguals, and influence on language acquisition and production, congruity with curriculum, and skills in encouraging the learning process and cognitive growth. The article further examines how the children, including the deaf children, engage in the learning processes via the process of translanguaging. In general, it emphasizes the ideological aspects of the process of translanguaging.

Wei (2018) discussed the development of translanguaging as a theoretical framework of language. The paper demonstrates that translation influences the debates on the Language and thought theories as well as the Modularity of Mind theory. It focuses on the multimodal and multisensory dimensions of social interactions by multilingual speakers. In an attempt to close the sociocultural and cognitive phenomenon, Wei presents the notions of Translanguaging Space and Translanguaging Instinct. Another issue addressed in the article is criticism and misconception of translanguaging.

Langman (2014) explored the issues of secondary-school teacher as they work with English learners in various classrooms. Most educators are not aware of the second language acquisition fully and are unable to modify instruction materials to suit the learning of a

language. The article reviews the way in which teachers plan their lessons and compares such practices with state standards of the content and language competency. It also criticizes the existing educational policies which do not take into account the cultural background of the students and how the teacher training programs can be improved to support language learners better.

Dryden et al. (2021) have studied foreign-language anxiety (FLA) among migrant EFL learners under a new setting. Through linguistic ethnography the researchers examined four adult migrants in Australia as they had to negotiate with FLA that occurred in the form of forgetfulness, loneliness, avoidance, and emotional responses. The paper also examines how translanguaging has the potential of providing safe emotional spaces that alleviate FLA. The results highlight the importance of supportive learning and emotional contexts in which migrant students can share their experience and emotional state, which will help to alleviate the adverse outcomes of FLA.

Wei and Ho (2018) conducted research on the effect of translanguaging on language learning. In their study, they illustrate how learners with national and linguistic bridges apply a wide range of linguistic and multimodal capabilities, educational and workplace experiences, to facilitate the language acquisition process. The research is directed at self-managed Chinese language learning through online systems in mobile learning setting. The authors promote such transdisciplinary approach where bilingualism and multilingualism studies are integrated with the findings of language teaching strategies. They also stress on the dismantling of language and mode barriers as well as writing systems to enhance language education ties.

Yasar Yuzlu and Dikilitas (2022) studied how translanguaging instructional practices affect the language skills and perceptions of these instructional practices of EFL learners. They engaged in work with pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate learners in Turkey over 10 weeks splitting the participants into the

experimental group who received 40 hours of translanguaging instructions and a control group who received other strategies. The findings revealed that translanguaging had great effects of enhancing language proficiency in students. Cognitive, interactive, and emotional advantages such as the increased comfort and motivation in using English were found during interviews. The research has practical implications to teachers regarding the integration of language translanguaging in the teaching of the English language.

The advantages of translanguaging are presented in a number of studies in Iran. The current article by Nazari and Karimpour (2023) concentrated on the emotional nature of translanguaging in eight Iranian L2 teachers in a language school. Based on classroom observations, interviews, and narrative frameworks, their study showed that emotional labor and translanguaging by teachers are connected to three aspects: regarding translanguaging as emotionally related to language proficiency, as a way to sustain emotional face, and as a multifaceted policy that has emotional implications. According to the findings, teachers who are involved in translanguaging actively deal with, suppress, and communicate their emotions, which cause both challenges and opportunities in educating students. This study can enlighten teacher educators, policymakers and teachers about the appropriate application of translanguaging to address the emotional well-being of teachers in their teaching profession.

Khonamri et al. (2022) researched the extent to which the language skills of bilingual students can be used to teach grammar. Mixed-method design was used to collect information of 25 Iranian male students in the twelfth grade. The subjects were involved in an instructional experiment consisting of three stages teaching grammar in their local language and their official language (English). The results revealed that translanguaging into the linguistic resources of students significantly enhanced the comprehension of the grammatical concepts among the students. Students embraced the

method, which they reported positively influenced learning, motivation and self-confidence. This study is quite informative to language teachers and scholars in how to include multilingual skills into instruction.

The research gap is one area in which the application of translanguaging to language learning processes is applied by Iranian learners. The use of translanguaging is common within the context of bilingual and multilingual learners, however, not much is known about the strategies, patterns, and motivations that Iranian learners employ. The investigation of the practices can contribute to the general discussion on language education and provide insights into the linguistic and cognitive processes of Iranian learners. The results will be used to inform the teaching practices and curriculum development that can better support the needs of the Iranian learners of new languages.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were a purposely chosen sample of 45 Iranian university students studying English as a foreign language. They ranged between 18-24 years of age with an average age of 21 years. There were 24 women and 21 men in the sample to have equal representation of both genders. All the respondents were native speakers of Persian and had studied English at least 3 years. Test scores and teacher ratings indicated that their level of English proficiency was between upper-intermediate and advanced. All respondents said that they used the translanguaging strategies frequently, both in the classroom and out of the classroom. They had the will to learn more about the English language and were excited to present their translanguaging experiences. Prior to the study, informed consent was obtained by everybody and their privacy was thoroughly maintained during the research.

3.2. Data Collection

The data collection involved a qualitative content analysis in order to achieve a broader

picture of the practices of translanguaging. We observed over three months fifteen classes. The sessions took approximately 90 minutes and the teachers and students agreed to be recorded. In the course of observations, we made translanguaging observations, their context, purpose, and linguistic characteristics. The field notes were used to note non-verbal behavior and the general classroom environment as regards to translanguaging.

Written assignments were also done by the participants, including reflective essays and language diaries within four weeks. This was done through the analysis of these texts in terms of language switching, code-mixing, and the motivation of translanguaging in some situations. The participants were encouraged to be open and share some important information about their natural practice of translanguaging. All data-collection processes were ethical and were passed by the review board of the institution. Participants were thoroughly aware of the purpose of the study and were fully aware that they were involved in the study on a voluntary basis.

3.3. Procedure to analyze and code data

The data gathered were analyzed in details. The transcription of audio and video recordings was word-to-word so as to retain the linguistic specifics and the contextual indicators. Transcription of written assignments and transcripts of interview was also done with accuracy. To determine the purposes of recurring patterns in translanguaging, thematic analysis was used to detect these patterns.

Taking the initial step, a coding scheme was created with the help of the existing theories of translanguaging, including vocabulary support, grammar explanation, emotional communication, and cultural references and prepared it with the support of the initial data reviews. All transcripts and written work were reviewed by two coders- the primary researcher and a third party language-education expert. They found translanguaging instances and put them under the predefined themes. In case of

disagreements the coders revisited the context and made a decision resulting in reliable coding.

Member checks entailed having the participants review the initial findings just to ensure that they were valid. The process of coding was also supported by peer discussions. It was a comprehensive method that enabled a detailed analysis of the techniques, intentions and causes of the use of translanguaging by Iranian learners.

4. Results

Conventionally, educators instruct scholars to think of the target language and forget about their language background. Recent researches indicate that translanguaging (the ability to use all the languages of the learner) might be a way to enhance learning and communication. In our research, the question we answered is how the EFL students in Iran could use their native language to assist them in times when they were less aware of English.

We have found that translanguaging is useful in building vocabulary in learners. Through their mother tongue, students are able to identify some links and detect similar words or phrases in the new language. The practice increases their vocabulary as well as enhances communication in a wide range of subjects. Another area that is found to be difficult is grammar. Translanguaging allows students to make comparisons of the first language grammar with English. The observation of similarities and differences aids them in the understanding of rules and their use in an accurate manner when speaking and writing.

Besides vocabulary and grammar, translanguaging encourages the absorption and comprehension of culture. Students will be able to incorporate their cultural experiences, traditions, and values into the learning process, which will allow them to build a more real connection to the target language and culture. It also assists them to express emotions and nuanced meanings that may otherwise be difficult to express utilising English by itself. As a result, communication is more authentic and

closer. Later in the paper, we give examples and plans on how translanguaging can be implemented in actual learning environments.

Translanguaging allows students to utilize all their linguistic assets, enhances their cultural identity and increases their overall language proficiency. Teachers and students,

struggling with the challenge of acquiring a foreign language, should welcome this approach as a promising and interesting way to achieve successful learning. Recognition and exploitation of multilingual ability of students can create inclusive and supportive classrooms that would enable the learners to achieve greater levels of language and cultural awareness.

Table 1. Functions of translanguaging among Iranian EFL learners

Function	Application	Example
<i>Vocabulary assistance</i>	If a student is unsure of an English word, they may use a Persian word or phrase to explain its meaning.	“This word means پروژه”
<i>Grammar support</i>	When grappling with complex grammar structures, students may use Persian grammar rules to help them understand.	“I am در حال studying”
<i>Expressing emotions</i>	Translanguaging can be used to express emotions more accurately.	“This is why I am حسود”
<i>Cultural references</i>	Cultural items can be incorporated through translanguaging.	“This food is like کباب تابه‌ای”

These specific instances demonstrate how Iranian students employ translanguaging strategies to improve their comprehension and communication in English classes.

4.1. Vocabulary assistance

The following sections provide examples of how Iranian students of English use translanguaging for vocabulary support.

4.1.1. Offering synonyms

When faced with an unfamiliar English word, some students used Persian synonyms to clarify the meaning of the word.

Example 1: “The synonym of this word is سخاوتمند.”

4.1.2. Offering a definition in Persian

If a student is struggling to find the right English word, they may provide a definition or explanation in Persian. For instance, one of the participants who did not know about the word ‘frustrated’ said:

Example 2: “This word means ناراحت or ناامید.”

4.2. Grammar Support

The following examples demonstrate how Iranian students employed translanguaging strategies to aid their understanding of English grammar during their language classes. By leveraging their knowledge of Persian grammar, they are able to improve their grasp and application of English grammar rules.

4.2.1. Explaining Verb Tenses

When faced with complex verb tenses in English, students often utilize Persian grammar structures to assist them in comprehending the concepts. For instance, one of the participants said: “I خوانده‌ام this lesson.”

4.2.2. Using Persian connectors

Students also used Persian connectors or conjunctions to help them connect ideas in English sentences. For instance,

Example 3: “اگرچه I am tired, I want to stay.”

4.2.3. Applying Persian sentence patterns

Students used Persian sentence patterns to make sense of English grammar rules. For example,

Example 4: “This book خوانده می‌شود by me.”

4.3. Expressing emotions

The following examples illustrate how Iranian students employed translanguaging strategies to better express their emotions in English classes. By incorporating their understanding of the Persian language and cultural context, they were able to communicate their feelings with increased accuracy and richness.

4.3.1. Expressing emotions through Persian

Students often used Persian words or phrases to describe their emotions in a more precise and meaningful way.

Example 5: “I am the happy ترینم.”

4.3.2. Persian Idioms or Expressions

Persian idioms or phrases were employed by students to express their feelings in a better way. As an example, instead of saying “I am angry,” one of the students used the Persian expression “دیوونه شدم.”

4.4. Cultural References

The rest of the examples below describe how Iranian students used translanguaging strategies to include cultural references in their English classes. By being knowledgeable about Iranian culture, history, and traditions, they not only contributed to their discussions but also gained a deeper understanding of their heritage.

4.4.1. Comparing traditions or customs

Students made comparisons between Iranian traditions and practices and practices of English speaking countries by using translanguaging. For example, one student said that when referring to Persian food:

Example 6: “In Iranian weddings, they cook various foods, like زرشک پلو and قزقمسبزی.”

4.4.2. Describing cultural artifacts or landmarks

Translanguaging can be used to describe famous Iranian cultural artifacts or landmarks in English. For instance, when talking about Persepolis, one student said:

Example 7: “Persepolis is a باستانی Persian city that dates back to the سلطنت هخامنشیان.”

4.4.3. Explaining traditional clothing

Students used translanguaging to explain the significance of traditional Iranian clothing. For example, when discussing the Iranian traditional outfit, one of the students said,

Example 8: “Traditional Iranian clothing, such as the چادر و روسری.”

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

According to the literature, the application of translanguaging as one of the pedagogical means might make a significant contribution to the language learning and cultural comprehension. According to Wei and Ho (2018), translanguaging is not merely a method, but it is a combination of many aspects of communication, language, and culture. This synchronization provides the learners with more control over learning. Yasar Yuzlu and Dikilitas (2022) agree with this idea, as translanguaging improves the language knowledge and motivation of learners and helps them feel comfortable. They are also adding that thinking and emotional expression is enhanced by the practice within different classroom environments.

Khonamri et al. (2022) show that translanguaging is not only about the vocabulary and grammar of Iranian learners. It is also useful in the expression of emotions and self-image. Iranian students are able to learn complex form of language and express more as a result of Persian language and culture. This supports the fact that translanguaging assists the learner in relating better with the language as well as the culture. Nazari and Karimpour (2023) validate that the aspect of translanguaging is emotional and identity-related to Iranian teachers. Their results indicate that the application of language

may be a social and emotional process that determines the interaction in the classroom.

Lewis et al. (2012) give a more profound theoretical background as translanguaging is embedded in a wider conceptual framework. To them, translanguaging contradicts the traditional approaches of teaching that usually focus on a single language. Rather, it encourages teachers to consider all the languages their students know as their resources. Dryden et al. (2021) also support this opinion, noting that translanguaging may be used to assist the students of other backgrounds due to the establishment of the emotionally safe classes. This will make the learning process more participatory and transparent as it will eliminate fear, as well as bring about authentic interaction.

These papers prove that translanguaging is useful to language acquisition in a wide range of ways, such as the ability to acquire vocabulary, learn grammar, communicate feelings, and spread cultural concepts. It also assists students to identify with themselves, empathize and have cross cultural awareness. Langman (2014) points out that successful translanguaging in the curriculum needs adequate preparation and encouragement. Therefore, continued research and professional learning is necessary in order to fully realise its potential.

The above data makes it a sound pedagogical approach to appreciate the linguistic and cultural diversity brought to the classroom by students. It identifies translanguaging as a resource to create an inclusive, responsive and meaningful learning environment. As the field continues to grow, more research, especially in different cultural contexts, is needed to help refine strategies and adapt translanguaging into the specific contexts of multilingual learners.

Translanguaging is a viable method which does not divide languages but rather considers them to be interrelated. It draws on the language resources that students already

have. Using many languages, learners are able to achieve their maximum potential, speed up the process of acquiring new languages and enhance cultural knowledge. Translanguaging bridges the meaning between different languages, finds patterns, and transfers the already acquired skills and thus enhances the general proficiency in languages. This method recognizes the prior knowledge of learners in their first language and builds on it to produce an inclusive and encompassed method of learning.

Translanguaging also promotes culture knowledge through integration of native languages and cultures of the learners. Analyzing cultural aspects of language enhances the value of other cultures and therefore the ability to communicate across cultures. Translanguaging provides a supportive and empowering model of teaching in the classroom. It recognizes and admires diversity of languages and backgrounds, it provides a nurturing atmosphere where students are not afraid to share openly and participate actively. By using the language resources of students, teachers can use it to adapt lessons to individual requirements, developing their sense of belonging and positive learning.

We are living in a global village where most of us possess more than one language. The concept of translanguaging needs to be implemented to encourage inclusion, effectiveness, and meaningful language learning. It enables the learners to experience culture and differences more easily facilitating easier conversation and comprehension of languages. To conclude, translanguaging transforms the process of learning a language by focusing on the idea of multilingualism and language interdependency. It is capable of empowering learners to help them explore their potentials as well as improve cultural contexts knowledge, as well as sharpening cross-cultural communication skills. As teachers, students, or any other person who cares about language, we have to be aware of linguistic diversity and know the pedagogical consequences of applying language to our teaching process.

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