

Translanguaging in Action: A Quantitative Study of Multilingual Practices in Tertiary Classrooms

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Abstract

Translanguaging is an approach in education that allows students to use their entire linguistic resources in the classroom to understand content and support learning. Research in the field acknowledges translanguaging as an effective approach in multilingual education. This current research analyzed the impact of translanguaging pedagogy on students' comprehension, classroom participation, and academic performance. Additionally, it analyzed the relationship between translanguaging practices and instructional strategies. Drawing on Sociocultural Theory, Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, and Cognitive Load Theory, this quantitative correlational study gathered data from 241 college students through convenience sampling. The survey questionnaire, adapted from Eslit (2025), served as the data gathering tool. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and Pearson product-moment correlation were employed. Findings indicated that translanguaging strategies are a significant predictor of students' comprehension ($R^2 = .769$, $\beta = .877$, $p < .001$), classroom participation ($R^2 = .636$, $\beta = .798$, $p < .001$), and academic performance ($R^2 = .851$, $\beta = .923$, $p < .001$). The greatest effect was found on academic performance. In addition, a significant positive correlation was observed between translanguaging practices and instructional strategies ($r = .873$, $p < .001$). The results indicate that translanguaging can lead to better comprehension, active participation, and better academic performance when learners are allowed to employ their full linguistic repertoire through translanguaging. The study offers empirical evidence for the adoption of translanguaging in higher education and highlights its potential as a participatory and empowering pedagogical approach in multilingual university classrooms.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Multilingual Education, Translanguaging Practices

Introduction

Language is one of the most important tools in the classroom as it helps students share their insights, express their ideas, and participate in classroom discussions. However, even in the early development of formal education systems, classrooms have traditionally adhered to a language designated for teaching and learning, called the medium of instruction (MOI). Likewise, learners are generally expected to use the target language (TL) that is required by the curriculum. Both MOI and TL are meant for learning and developing proficiency in the language. For instance, English, Science, and Mathematics-related courses in college are supposed to use English as both the MOI and TL. In English classrooms, the English language serves as both an MOI and a TL. Dearden (2015)^[1] and Macaro (2018)^[2] noted that this can be

attributed to the belief that consistent exposure and use of the target language enhances language acquisition and communicative competence.

Over the years, English has increasingly become the language of instruction in higher education across the globe. This expansion of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is driven by internationalization, globalization, academic mobility, and the growing importance of English in various areas such as professional communication and research (McKinley, 2024) ^[3]. Colleges and universities use English to prepare learners when they enter the globalized world of work and academic community. However, the expectation that learners learn content and communicate in English can pose a challenge, especially in educational contexts where English is not their first language and multilingualism exists.

For students in higher education, learning through English does not only require understanding content but also understanding complex academic language. Because of this, learners experience difficulties in comprehending lectures, reading academic texts, participating in discussions, and expressing their ideas in English. According to Licaros et al (2024) ^[4], learners struggle with speaking, vocabulary development, and academic comprehension in English-medium classrooms. Moreover, differences between language policies and classroom realities may affect students' confidence, classroom participation, and academic performance.

These realities have raised concerns, called for recognition of the learners' linguistic diversity, and suggested more flexible approaches to language use in higher education. In various educational contexts, English remains the primary medium of instruction, disadvantaging multilingual learners. Moreover, learners who are still developing proficiency in English may face challenges in understanding lessons and course materials; they may struggle to participate in class discussions and achieve academic success. Contemporary perspectives, such as translanguaging, acknowledge that learners draw upon multiple languages, especially their first language, to understand lessons, construct knowledge, and participate in discussions.

García and Wei (2014) ^[5] posit that as a translanguaging practice, language in education can be theorized that enables learners to draw on his full linguistic repertoire in making meaning and to confront the challenges brought about by language use in education in the form of a linguistic deficit, and this re-mediate access to the target language while it makes space in the classroom for the learners to use L1 as a parallel medium of instruction with L2 in discussing subject content, which results to better understanding, more engagement, and better learning outcomes for the students.

The assertion for translanguaging was largely supported by evidence, but research in the tertiary and higher education is still limited, particularly in the Philippines, which is a multilingual country. The majority of research on translanguaging is centered on basic education and young learners, and thus offers little insight into how translanguaging is utilized at the tertiary level. It may be because universities and colleges have their own rules in terms of MOI and TL, as part of responding to the mandate of the curriculum. In addition, few studies provide a quantitative examination of the correlation between translanguaging practices and measurable student outcomes, including understanding, engagement, and academic performance.

Also, institutional and pedagogical barriers, including insufficient teacher training, ambiguous policies, and worries about academic rigor and skills development of learners, hinder the use of translanguaging practices in the classroom. These gaps suggest the importance of a quantitative study that investigates the relationship between relevant constructs and provides empirical evidence for translanguaging in higher education.

To fill these gaps, this study aims to determine the impact of translanguaging practices on students' comprehension, classroom participation, and academic performance. Additionally, it aims to analyze the relationship between translanguaging practices and instructional strategies.

Theoretical Foundations

Translanguaging has become an increasingly popular method of instruction in multilingual education that challenges the traditional separation of languages in the classroom. Drawing on studies on cognitive, sociocultural, and bilingual education, translanguaging is based on the understanding that multilingual learners utilize a unified linguistic repertoire rather than separate language systems (García & Wei, 2014)^[5].

Translanguaging has foundations in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which argues that learning is human-dependent and language-dependent; also, social interactions and the human use of language are fundamental to cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978)^[6]. The theory states that learners gain knowledge through dialogue, interaction, and the use of language as a cultural tool. In bilingual and multilingual classrooms, the opportunity to use more than one language for communication leads to clearer comprehension and greater cognitive development.

Furthermore, Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis posits that the level of proficiency a child attains in L1, to some degree, dictates the level of proficiency they can attain in L2 (Cummins, 2000)^[7]. The principle encourages translanguaging because it enables linguistic and cognitive skills to transfer between languages. If students are encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire, their learning can be facilitated.

A further important model is provided by the Cognitive Load Theory of Sweller (1988)^[8], which maintains that if the cognitive load on working memory can be decreased, learning is facilitated. Translanguaging, as it decreases cognitive overload by allowing students to think and learn in the language they know more, improves understanding and memory.

Research consistently shows that translanguaging supports understanding by allowing learners to activate background and prior knowledge. García and Kleyn (2016)^[9] argue that translanguaging promotes deeper conceptual understanding, as it fills in linguistic and cognitive gaps. Increasingly, students today practice translanguaging, consciously or unconsciously, and can better make sense of difficult concepts by negotiating between languages to interpret meaning (Creese & Blackledge, 2010)^[10]. Translanguaging promotes metalinguistic awareness; learners can analyze and compare language systems, and this process supports empowerment to develop academic literacy.

Translanguaging positively affects engagement by creating a welcoming and supportive classroom environment. Learners often do not participate in discussions at all in monolingual classrooms because language barriers and limitations prevent them from doing so, but now they can speak out more openly with translanguaging.

There is evidence that collaboration and engagement among students in the class are enhanced by translanguaging (Creese & Blackledge, 2010)^[10]. The greater involvement will also encourage more thoughtful discussions and greater interaction in the classroom among the students. In addition, translanguaging facilitates the affirmation of learners' identities, which leads to greater motivation and willingness to participate (García & Wei, 2014)^[5].

Translanguaging contributes to students' academic success by facilitating academic performance, which can be observed in the form of a more effective understanding of subject matter and greater engagement

in the class. Multilingual learners are better academically, as they utilize more than one language while learning (García and Kleyne 2016)^[9].

Also, the transfer of knowledge across languages allows students to make use of their existing knowledge, which enhances learning outputs (Cummins, 2000)^[7]. Nevertheless, the success of the translanguaging approach depends on the well-planned and intentional execution in the teaching-learning process.

Teachers are the key agents in translanguaging practices. Useful strategies are bilingual scaffolding (such as building on students' knowledge of concepts or content in one language before moving to the next), code-switching, and drawing on multilingual resources. Leaning on García and Wei (2014)^[5], translanguaging pedagogies call for a certain degree of fluidity and openness; hence, teachers are increasingly important in this regard.

However, teachers struggle with such demands, facing limited training and institutional barriers. Bernado (2008)^[11], as cited by Dawson and Early Albano (2018), noted that the implementation of English-dominant policies in Philippine education may suppress local language use, in turn restricting the propagation of translanguaging in the tertiary level.

The Philippines promotes multilingual education through the policy of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). Yet it is scarcely implemented in tertiary education where English is hegemonic (Martín 2015)^[12]. It is important to note that education at higher levels of learning prepares learners for the world of profession, as such, MTB-MLE is not prioritized as much as it is at the level of basic education. While students routinely practice translanguaging, the activity is not systematized in instruction, which calls for a more systematic and clear policy with regard to implementation.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

A quantitative correlational research design was used in this study to investigate the relationships among variables. Translanguaging practices served as the independent variable, while comprehension, participation, and academic performance were the dependent variables. Instructional strategies were also included as an associated variable.

2. Participants

The participants in this study are college students. Data were collected using a convenience sampling technique. The study was participated in by a total of 241 students, who provided the data essential to meet the purpose of the study.

3. Procedure

A systematic procedure was adopted in the process of data collection. The survey questionnaire was adapted from Eslit (2025), which was modified and tailored for the respondents. It underwent pilot testing to ensure validity and reliability. The questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.964, which indicates a very high internal consistency.

Thereafter, the survey questionnaires were sent to target college student participants. The instrument assessed the extent of translanguaging practices, students' comprehension, participation, and perceived learning outcomes. Once all the information was collected, the data were cleaned and organized for analysis.

4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate quantitative statistical techniques to address the rese-

arch objectives. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviations, were obtained in order to describe the respondents' opinions on translanguaging practices and the instructional strategies. These statistics provide insights into the level of variability of the responses. In addition, Simple Linear Regression was employed to analyze whether translanguaging practices significantly predict students' comprehension, class participation, and academic performance. Finally, Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to examine the relationship between translanguaging practices and instructional strategies.

5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed. Approval was sought from participants through informed consent, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were aware of their right to withdraw at any time during the process. All data were used solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. The impact of translanguaging practices on students' comprehension

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.176	0.123	-	1.44	.152
Translanguaging Practices	0.958	0.034	.877	28.20	< .001
Model Summary	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F(1, 239)	p
	.877	.769	.768	795.00	< .001

The simple linear regression employed to determine whether translanguaging practices significantly predict students' comprehension shows that translanguaging practices significantly predict comprehension among learners, as evidenced by $F(1,239) = 795.00$, $p < .001$. It accounted for 76.9% of the variance in students' comprehension ($R^2 = .769$). Furthermore, translanguaging practices emerged as a strong positive predictor of students' comprehension ($\beta = .877$, $p = .001$), indicating that greater engagement in translanguaging practices is associated with higher levels of comprehension and understanding.

These results suggest that allowing students to utilize their full linguistic repertoire helps in knowledge construction and meaning-making. Translanguaging empowers students to make connections between lessons learned in class and prior knowledge learned and developed in another language; thus improving comprehension and reducing cognitive barriers. According to Garcia and Wei (2014)^[5], translanguaging promotes deeper understanding by allowing multilingual learners to draw upon all their linguistic resources in understanding academic content. Similarly, Bonacina-Pugh et al. (2021)^[13] noted that translanguaging practices support content learning and comprehension across multilingual settings.

The findings suggest that translanguaging is a strong and valuable pedagogical tool, especially in contexts where learners come from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Table 2. The impact of translanguaging on students' classroom participation

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.536	0.154	-	3.49	<.001
Translanguaging Practices	0.870	0.043	.798	20.44	<.001
Model Summary	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F(1, 239)	p

	0.798	0.636	0.635	418.00	< .001
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The simple linear regression conducted to determine whether translanguaging practices significantly predict students' classroom participation demonstrates that translanguaging practices significantly predict students' classroom participation, as evidenced by $F(1,239) = 418.00, p < .001$, explaining 63.6% of the variance in classroom participation ($R^2 = .636$, Adjusted $R^2 = .635$). Furthermore, the positive regression coefficient ($\beta = .798$) suggests that translanguaging practices are a significant predictor of students' academic performance.

These findings may be attributed to reduced linguistic anxiety experienced by the learners in multilingual classrooms when they are allowed to use not just the target language, but their first languages when expressing their ideas in class. Translanguaging creates a more inclusive learning environment and provides learners with an avenue to communicate more confidently, ask questions, make clarifications, share their insights, and contribute to the discussion without experiencing linguistic constraints. Moreover, translanguaging encourages active participation and engagement by acknowledging the learners' linguistic identities and allowing them to engage meaningfully in classroom activities (Garcia & Wei, 2015)^[14]. Likewise, Garcia, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017)^[15] claimed that classrooms that welcome translanguaging foster collaboration, discussions, and learner engagement because they are not strictly constrained by rigid boundaries in language use.

The findings, therefore, suggest that translanguaging practices play a significant role in enhancing classroom participation; thus, leading to a more interactive learning experience.

Table 3. The impact of translanguaging on students' academic performance

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.326	0.089	-	3.67	<.001
Translanguaging Practices	0.912	0.025	.923	36.98	<.001
Model Summary	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	$F(1, 239)$	p
	0.923	0.851	0.851	1368.00	< .001

The simple linear regression employed to determine whether translanguaging practices significantly predict students' academic performance reveals that translanguaging practices significantly predicted students' academic performance, as evidenced by $F(1,239) = 1368.00, p < .001$, explaining 85.1% of the variance in students' academic performance ($R^2 = .851$, Adjusted $R^2 = .851$). Furthermore, translanguaging practices emerged as a significant positive predictor of students' academic performance ($\beta = .923$). These findings suggest that higher levels of translanguaging practices are associated with higher levels of students' academic performance.

The results prove that translanguaging is a substantial contributor to the academic success of the learners. By allowing the use of languages other than the medium of instruction or target language, translanguaging helps improve learners' comprehension, facilitates knowledge transfer, and strengthens critical thinking skills. Garcia and Wei (2014)^[5] argued that it expands opportunities for learning by allowing the learners to process and express complex ideas using their linguistic repertoire. Additionally, they documented the positive influence of translanguaging on academic engagement, content mastery, and learning outcomes of learners in multilingual settings.

To this end, the findings show that translanguaging has a significant impact on the academic performance of students. This is consistent with findings from previous studies indicating that multilingual practices positively contribute to learning.

Table 4. Relationship between translanguaging practices and instructional strategies

	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Interpretation
Instructional practices	3.62	0.426	0.873***	<.001	Reject	Significant
Translanguaging Practices	3.59	0.388				

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

To assess the relationship between translanguaging practices and teaching strategies within instruction, the analysis employed Pearson product-moment correlation. Results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between the two variables $r(239) = .873$, $p < .001$. This indicates that higher levels of translanguaging practices are associated with greater use of instructional strategies. This also means that strong instructional strategies are predictive of frequent use of translanguaging practices in classrooms. The results acknowledge that translanguaging significantly contributes to the learners' academic success. Additionally, these results recognize the importance of the teacher in facilitating successful translanguaging in the classroom. Successful translanguaging is enabled through purposeful pedagogical choices and teaching methods that draw on students' linguistic repertoire. Garcia & Wei (2015)^[14] also stress that in order to apply translanguaging pedagogy, teachers must establish learning environments that validate and strategically weave multilingual practices in classroom action. In addition, Bonacina-Pugh (2021)^[15] and other scholars illustrated that good practices of translanguaging in pedagogy should be understood in relation to classroom practices that encourage linguistic flexibility and inclusivity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, translanguaging practices have a positive and significant impact on the reading comprehension, classroom participation, and academic achievement of the students. These findings indicate that translanguaging is a significant predictor of the three learning outcomes, with the strongest effect found on learners' academic performance ($R^2 = .851$). Similarly, a significant positive correlation was found between translanguaging and teaching approaches, suggesting that effective pedagogy is needed for the effective pedagogical use of translanguaging in the multilingual classroom.

Translanguaging is currently an emerging trend in second language education, where students' profound understanding, active involvement in learning, enhancement of academic performance, and alignment with good teaching effectiveness and practices are evident in the findings of this study. Therefore, it is essential that teachers identify translanguaging as an effective pedagogy to facilitate inclusive education and positive student outcomes in tertiary education.

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