

Multilingual Practices and Trans-Language Methods in Teaching English

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Abstract

The study investigates trans-language methods in teaching English. The research examines multilingual practices in the Ukrainian context from sociocultural and multimodal perspectives. Also, it is a desire to know how trans-language techniques can effectively enhance language acquisition. The data came from the Program of English Language Profile conducted in two Ukrainian Universities, aimed at giving students in the bachelor's programs the opportunity to reinforce their multilingual and intercultural competencies in a second foreign language (English) within the first semester of 2021. The study analyzes the audio recording of students' and teachers' multilingual practices, questionnaires on students' attitudes toward trans-language, and qualitative interviews with teachers. Results show how multilingual resources may facilitate intercultural communication and language development. The findings emphasize the importance of building natural multilingualism and making it a resource, strategy, and goal of teaching English. This study provides practical suggestions and techniques on how universities can adapt to formal teaching environments. Implementations show that trans-language processes become a set of multilingual practices whereby language teachers build on and use their students' linguistic resources and background knowledge to convey meaningful content. This research develops 'trans-language' as an educational and linguistic concept and gives educators the ground to think critically about the advantages and limitations of adopting a multilingual approach.

Keywords: multilingualism, multilingual practices, teaching English, translanguaging, trans-language methods

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Introduction

Multilingual practices have become very popular. Multilingualism, translanguaging, and interlingual are theoretical terms defining language competencies as integrated and contextualized conceptualizations.

Students' linguistic needs in a multilingual context are imperative for success in teaching English. Universities around the world create programs to reinforce multilingual practices and strategies of trans-language to achieve intercultural competencies.

Trans-language as a concept shifts focus from the structural analysis of the language to what people do with it in their everyday lives. Oliva, Donato, and Ricciardelli (2020) describe it as "the unmitigated desire for language and the desire to ensure that future generations experience as many languages as possible" (p.178). This idea also helps to rethink bilingualism as the norm and adopts beliefs about the language that multilingual practices are at the center of investigation and teaching.

Translanguaging refers to a communicative function of receiving input in one language and giving output in another. It allows bilingual learners to use their home language and develop positive experiences. The approach presents an opportunity to understand the speaker's worldview in their plurality and advance pedagogy based on language practices. There is a need for systematic inquiry into multilingual practices to establish how language varieties have permeated into higher education classroom interaction.

The study aims to investigate the effectiveness of multilingual practices in teaching English.

The research gives educators the ground on how to use the trans-lingual approach and trans-lingual methods in the classroom.

The research attempts to answer the main research question:

How can using multilingual practices and trans-language techniques effectively enhance acquisition of English as a second language?

It also has the following sub-questions:

1. What multilingual practices and trans-language techniques do the teachers use?
2. Do the teachers use trans-language techniques to facilitate the students' language learning?
3. Can trans-language procedures facilitate intercultural communication?

The research objectives of the study:

1. To determine how multilingual practices are present in teaching English.
2. To investigate how teachers create a learning environment using trans-language techniques in multilingual classes.
3. To explore possible recommendations for strategically using multilingual resources and multimodalities in the intercultural context.

Literature Review

The definition of translanguaging

The history of translanguaging relates to the field of multilingual practices. Williams (1996) used this term first. Baker (2006) stated that translanguaging in the classroom is the input (reading or listening) which tends to be in one language, and the output (speaking or writing) in another one, and this is systematically varied. Williams (1996), Lewis, Jones, Baker (2012), and

Beres (2015) found that translanguaging works well as a teaching strategy in high school to develop both languages successfully. Trans-language strategy results in effective content learning.

Translanguaging has established a new paradigm for the study of language acquisition, which has engendered a highly nuanced terrain for innovative research (Oliva, Donato, & Ricciardelli, 2020).

Garcia and Wei (2014) explained the concept of trans-language as the multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage to make sense of their bilingual worlds. Their definition is rather broad and emphasizes existing bilingual practices. Researchers argue that a language is a continuous process that only exists as *linguaging* or *translinguaging*. The process shapes people as they interact in specific social, cultural, and political contexts. The emphasis *-ing* purposefully shifts the focus away from discrete languages and does the act of meaning-making central. Garcia (2009; 2011) refers to translanguaging the active invention of new realities through social action.

Translanguaging means different things for different researchers in other contexts. Creese and Blackledge (2010) used this term for flexible bilingual pedagogy. A pedagogical approach adopted this term to enhance teaching indexes of the speakers' shifting multilingual and multicultural identities.

Daryai-Hansen, Barfod, and Schward (2017) distinguished between linguaging and translanguaging: linguaging is the everyday communication practice where individuals transcend norms and use them to achieve interactional and social aims.

Canagarajah (2011; 2014) noted that current classroom studies show that translanguaging is a naturally occurring phenomenon for multilingual students.

Wei (2011; 2022) described trans-language practices as creative, critical, and flexible strategies in a multilingual context. The trans-language practices combine various linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, listening, and reading). Translanguaging includes the full range of linguistic performance of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information, and the representation of values, identities, and relationships.

Mazak (2016) explained trans-language practices as transformative, which create a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of learners' personal history, experience, and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience. Wei (2011) calls this space 'translanguaging space.'

Wei (2011) looked further at the creativity and criticality of multilingual speakers, using a psychological, linguistic notion of 'linguaging,' which refers to the process of using the language to gain knowledge, make sense, articulate one's thoughts, and communicate using it. For Wei (2011), trans-language practices involve the learners making strategic situation-specific choices about the language systems they use to achieve a communicative goal. The techniques can limit the transformative and critical occupation of language spaces inherent in multilingual classrooms.

Sayer (2013) referred to trans-language as a method, a descriptive label for language practices, and an analytical tool.

Makalela (2014) and Poudei (2019) related trans-language practices to code-switching. Code-mixing is the use of code from one language in another in the course of using it in communication. Unlike code-switching, translanguaging (code-mixing) does not refer to the use of two separate languages or the shift of a language code to the other one (Hornberger & Link, 2012). In translanguaging, speakers select language features and soft assemble their language

practices to fit their communicative needs (Garcia & Wei, 2014). That code-switching, on the one hand, often carries language-centered connotations of language interference and language transfer, which has a monolingual orientation where languages have different codes. Translanguaging, on the other hand, shifts the lens from a cross-linguistic influence to how multilingual speakers intermingle linguistic features assigned to a particular language or variety (Hornberger & Link, 2012). In other words, code-switching is language-centered and treats language systems as discrete units. Translanguaging is speaker-centred, assumes unitary language systems, and shows the interdependence of language systems (Makalela, 2017).

Zirbes (2014) stated that using of any language, that the learners know is not only unavoidable as a cognitive function but is a valuable tool in promoting language awareness. Students can transform restrictive monolingual landscapes. Creese and Blackledge (2010) reported that the universities which have accepted multilingual practices are successful in their language teaching programs.

Wei (2022) argued that translanguaging is a methodology offering a new conceptual framework that promotes some significant analytical shifts: shift away from the language as abstract code to meaning- and sense-making.

Cenoz, Leonet, and Gorter (2022) referred to pedagogical translanguaging as instructional strategies integrating two or more languages. 'The boundaries between languages are soft and fluent, and students should benefit from being multilingual by using resources from their whole linguistic repertoire' (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022, p. 343).

Mazak and Carroll (2016) saw translanguaging as follows:

1. Translanguaging is a language ideology that takes bilingualism as the norm.
2. Translanguaging is a theory of bilingualism based on lived bilingual experience. Bilingual students possess an integrated repertoire of languaging practices from which they draw as they navigate their everyday bilingual worlds.
3. Translanguaging is a pedagogical stance that teachers and students take that allows them to draw on all their linguistic and semiotic resources as they teach and learn both language and content material in classrooms.
4. Translanguaging is a set of practices that is not only code-switching but includes language practices that draw on an individual linguistic and semiotic repertoire.
5. Translanguaging is transformational and changes the world as it continually invents and reinvents language practices in a perpetual meaning-making process. Implementing of these practices transforms not only our traditional notions of languages but also the lives of bilinguals.

Translanguaging Research

Makalela (2014; 2017) presented research on translanguaging practices in South African institutions of higher learning. He concluded that adopting a translanguaging approach can increase students' linguistic repertoires and assume multilingual identities. Makalela used this approach as the methodology that is linguistically and culturally transformative. Multilingual practices transform the classroom space into a microcosm of societal multilingualism. It constantly affirms of linguistic and cultural communities where one language is incomplete without the other. Results of his research show that there is both a vertical and a horizontal input-output exchange in more than two languages in either direction. Therefore, using translanguaging discourse practices remains an innovative step toward a fully-fledged multilingual return.

Daryai-Hansen et al., (2017) delivered the research at Roskilde University in Denmark. Researchers created the explicitly designed program to reinforce students' multilingual and intercultural competencies using trans-language strategies to achieve interactional and social aims. Students in this program worked with other students in their fields on projects using English, French, German, or Spanish. The authors emphasize that this program challenges the prevailing monolingual ideology of universities in Denmark and uses multilingual practices to meet language and content learning goals. Students and teachers implement and acknowledge trans-language methods integrating other foreign languages, primarily the students' first language but also English. Daryai-Hansen et al., (2017) proved the importance of implementing multilingual tools as a resource, method, and strategy inside and outside the foreign language classroom.

Mazak, Mendoza, and Mangonez (2017) showed the multilingual practices of three professors at an officially bilingual university in Puerto Rico. They considered that translanguaging developed language practices organically, based on professors' keen understanding of students' sociolinguistic, cultural, and historical backgrounds. Teachers used an instructional strategy to link classroom participants between the social, bicultural, and linguistic domains of their lives (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). Trans-language techniques were helpful tools for professors to employ content and provide students with opportunities to expand their linguistic, academic, and meaning-making repertoires

The research of He, Lai, and Lin (2017), based on the Chinese context, examined the interplay of multilingual practices to integrate intercultural semiotic resources. It showed how strategic use of multilingual resources and multimodalities of intercultural and multilingual context facilitated intercultural communication and language-integrated learning (CLIL) context.

Groff (2017) presented interlanguage in an Indian context, based on developing natural multilingualism and positive attitudes to speech variations in multilingual repertoires.

Carroll and van den Hoven (2017) explored multilingual teaching practices in UAE. They state that translanguaging opens the door for a scenario in which bilingual teachers can use their understanding of students' L1 to make their teaching comprehensible. The authors advocate for increasing the usage of Arabic in English-medium courses.

Doiz and Lasagabaster (2017) showed the professor's beliefs about trans-language practices in English-medium classrooms at the University of Basque Country. They concluded that teachers should critically consider trans-language techniques for students in particular contexts with specific aims.

The analysis of multilingual practices reveals the importance of research in the context of the impact of translanguaging on multilingual language acquisition.

Methods

This research is explanatory, qualitative, and interpretative. It had some specific goals: to determine the extent to which multilingual practices are present in teaching English; to investigate how teachers create learning environments using multilingual practices and translanguaging techniques in multilingual classes; to explore possible recommendations for strategic use of multilingual resources and multimodalities in the intercultural context. To achieve these goals, researchers used multiple methods for data collection: 1) the audio record of students' and teachers' multilingual practices; 2) questionnaires on students' attitudes toward multilingual practices; 3) qualitative interviews with teachers.

Participants

The researchers conducted the study at V. O. Sukhomlynskyi National University of Mykolaiv (Ukraine) and Odesa National Polytechnic University (Ukraine) in 2021.

The participants comprised 62 bachelor-level students and eight teachers of English who participated in the Program of English Language Profile conducted in two Ukrainian Universities in 2021.

Research Instruments

The researchers explored the issues relevant to the language through observations and interviews. It also included discussions about language attitudes and teaching methods. The investigation considered contextual factors in the inductive analysis process based on a questionnaire addressing language use in the university classroom. A questionnaire was distributed digitally to faculty members. It included descriptive, interpretative, predictive, and attitude-based questions.

Researchers created questionnaires for teachers and students.

Table 1. *The questionnaire for teachers' interview*

Number	Questions	Coding
1.	What do you think of L1 (mother tongue) teaching and learning L2 and L3 (second and third languages)?	Q1
2.	Should teaching English be monolingual?	Q2
3.	How do you understand multilingual practices?	Q3
4.	Do you use translanguaging in teaching English?	Q4
5.	What kind of multilingual practices do you use?	Q5
6.	How to facilitate L2 learning with the help of trans-language methods?	Q6
7.	What kind of environment should the teachers create in multilingual classes?	Q7
8.	What is the extent to which multilingual practices are present in teaching English?	Q8
9.	Your recommendations to scaffold multilingual practices	Q9

Table 2. *The questionnaire for students' interview*

Number	Questions	Coding
1.	Should teaching and learning English be monolingual?	Q1
2.	Does your teacher use the mother tongue in teaching English?	Q2
3.	What languages do you use during the lesson: English, German, Ukrainian or Russian?	Q3
4.	What do you think about using all the languages you know to learn English?	Q4
5.	Is it necessary to use other languages when you study English?	Q5
6.	What languages should teachers and students use?	Q6
7.	What do you think about mixing languages?	Q7
8.	Does it make your understanding better?	Q8
9.	Does it help better communication?	Q9
10.	Does it encourage you to speak English more?	Q10
11.	What is your attitude to multilingual practices?	Q11
12.	Does it motivate you to continue the learning process?	Q12
13.	What kind of multilingual practices of teachers do you like the most?	Q13
14.	What multilingual practices would you use on all levels of learning English?	Q14
15.	What multilingual experience would you use as a future English teacher?	Q15

Research Procedures

In the autumn of 2021, the Department of German Philology and Translation of V. O. Sukhomlynskyi National University of Mykolaiv (Ukraine) initiated the Program of English language profile, which seeks to give students in the bachelor's programs the opportunity to reinforce their multilingual and intercultural competencies in a second foreign language (English). This program aims to develop students' capacity to function in a transnational and multilingual context. The content was inspired by the CLIL approach, integrating content learning and language learning, focusing on the dimensions: *the language of learning*, *the language for learning*, and *the language through learning* (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). The program required 40 hours per semester. Teachers also encouraged students to work independently with their profile language, linking the program to project work. Learners designed language profiles for and benefited from the specific academic context. Students learned to find relevant theoretical, methodological, or empirical literature for their work in their profile language. Language profiles' content was multifaceted and included the following: knowledge of significant theoretical perspectives in humanities and social sciences, knowledge about English-speaking countries, skills to talk about English and culture, analysis, and compare specific linguistic and cultural phenomena. It also included general study skills such as reading, information searching, and communication strategies. Students presented and discussed this content with teachers at evaluation seminars.

Results

Attitudes towards Multilingual Practices

Students' evaluation of multilingual practices

In the following analysis, we discuss students' attitudes toward multilingual practices in language teaching and learning by focusing on students' questionnaires filled out in the fall of 2021 by students who participated in English language profile evaluation seminars. Researchers collected 15 evaluation questions (Q1-Q15).

The approach of Daryai-Hansen et al., (2017) was the ground for the analysis and included the following levels:

1. *Nano* level - the development of individual multilingualism as the center of language profile;
2. *Meso* level – internationalization strategy;
3. *Micro* level – the implementation of the language profiles by teachers.

The data show that students' overall impression of implemented multilingual practices is positive. Learners appreciated that the language profile allowed them to study English in the Ukrainian university context at the *meso level*. Students emphasized that the English language profile provided a learning environment where they had a chance to use language practices: having the possibility to speak "freely" (Q7) and "impulsively" (Q9) and "not overthink before speaking" (Q10). They developed the "desire" (Q12) and "courage" (Q10) to talk in English and to help each other (Q9), and they became motivated to continue their learning process (Q12).

In the evaluation questionnaire in which the students elaborated on their attitudes toward multilingual practices, two questions, in particular, focused on translanguaging within the language profile. Students had to reflect on their multilingual practice (Q2) and to self-evaluate their multilingual practices (Q3 – Q5). They discussed the development of language profiles using the Q6 and the Q13-Q14.

The data reflect substantial individual differences (nano-level). There is a discrepancy between the student's experiences with language profiles' multilingual practices, on the one hand, and their ideological construction of "good" language learning and language use, on the other.

Twenty-five students knew their multilingual practices in the language profile classes and the evaluation seminars. Most students used English, Ukrainian, and other languages they know to understand the content of learning (Q4, Q8). The ability to mix languages supported communication. Learners emphasized that they appreciated multilingual practices.

Two students characterized multilingual methods as "liberating" (Q11) and emphasized that these practices gave them the courage to continue learning the second language. The evaluations of five students reflected strong monolingual norms (Q1). The learners used multilingual practices but preferred to use only English exclusively in the future (Q14).

Students shared recommendations for the development of language profiles (*micro* level). They felt optimistic about the existing multilingual practice and described different aspects of the trans-language approach. The learners experienced these practices as a possibility to acknowledge linguistic competencies and implement differentiated instructions when switching the language codes.

The data reflect multilingual practices from the student's perspective as a transitory phenomenon, a kind of interlanguage stage (Q14).

In discussion with students-future teachers of English (Q15), the researchers transitioned to the question of what methods they would use to teach English, keeping in mind the multilingual experience. Most students answered they would use their mother tongue and don't mind vocal support in Ukrainian or Russian. Few students supported the idea: "Teachers should teach English only in English." Talking about preferred teaching methods, many students agreed that supporting a known language would be necessary for teaching English. They were grappling with the tension between exposure to oral English and sufficient comprehensible instructions. The demand for English was strong, and the need for mother tongue support was also vital.

Teachers' evaluations of multilingual practices in language teaching

Qualitative interviews with eight English teachers became the base for analyzing the teachers' attitudes toward multilingual practices. Depending on the teachers' language strategies, they used English, German, French, and Ukrainian (or Russian) in teaching. Teacher 1 (T1) said that she mixed the languages depending on the student's needs. If an English text was complex, students read it in English and drew out understanding in Ukrainian or Russian but talked about the text primarily in English.

T2 created an English-learning setting and encouraged multilingual practices, referring to the teacher as a co-learner of Ukrainian as their mother tongue. T3 represents this practice beyond monolingual norms as fluent language use, which does not imply understanding problems.

T4 and T5 emphasized that the language profiles' primary objective is to enhance the student's language skills in English. In this case, Ukrainian became an additional language in the learning process. The learners could use multiple languages (German, French, Ukrainian, and Russian). Ukrainian appeared in English classes, Russian in Ukrainian-language classes, French, German, and Latin in English-medium classes. The other teachers (T6-T8) noticed that multilingual practices observed at the university were fluid. They admitted that using many languages in a classroom was a pedagogical goal. Participants used Ukrainian to ensure understanding of English learning content and other foreign languages for facilitating discussion.

All the teachers saw it as an advantage to explore all available language recourses and defined trans-language methods as a helpful tool for teaching English.

The teachers emphasized that this experimental environment is an essential aspect of multilingual practices. They created a space where the students could try their language skills and where they learn how to manage several languages in communication. It helped to encourage multilingual practices and support the legitimacy of first-language use.

The teacher discussion showed language attitudes and trans-language teaching methods used in multilingual practices to help students understand the learning content. They expressed the importance of mother tongue support in learning English. The choice of additional languages wares determined by what languages most students would grasp the particular idea they wanted to put across. These teachers described using various languages in the same event as valuable and pragmatic. It saved time and cut cultural barriers for students. Students could understand what they learn better.

Teachers did not need to master all the languages brought to class by students. They encouraged students to explore their ideas through the linguistic resources they possessed.

Implementing trans-language methods encouraged learners to think in at least two languages and explicitly draw comparisons and contrast ideas represented through the languages. Translanguaging was not a direct reproduction of linguistic forms but a development of meaning and overlapping of meaning units across several languages of writing and speaking.

Discussion

This research answers the central question of whether using multilingual practices and trans-language techniques can effectively in enhance language teachers' acquisition of English as a second language. It is also an attempt to examine what kind of multilingual practices and trans-language techniques the teachers use and how they facilitate the students' language learning in intercultural communication.

The findings of this research echo multilingual patterns in previous literature; namely, translanguaging, as Canagarajah (2011) noted, is the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system.

The solutions of the study revealed positive experiences of adopting multilingual practices which oriented to the simultaneous use of different languages in the same lesson. Trans-language methods break boundaries between the target language and linguistic repertoires that students bring to class. Trans-language techniques to master English are at the core of the trans-language approach (or translanguaging), which goes beyond the exchange of the language of input and another of output as in the original conceptual framing by Williams (1996) and Baker (2015). The trans-language approach can be beneficial when learners use more than two languages as normal multilingual pathways (Garsia & Wei, 2014).

The research is in agreement findings of Blommaert and Rampton (2010) and shows that IFL teachers, under the auspices of maintaining bilingual education, always encourage monolingual classroom practices. Garcia and Wei (2014) concluded that teaching English is to take a more complex account of language use and match multilingual spaces.

One of the study's findings is that multilingual practices provide students with multilingual spaces to transform personal identities. Students gravitated from perceiving themselves as

belonging to a particular language group to viewing themselves as users of languages that extend beyond discrete language boundaries.

Outcomes gave the reason to conceptualize classroom spaces like microcosms of societal multilingualism, as Hornberger and Link (2012), Wei (2022), and Makalela (2017) mentioned too. The results proved the validation of trans-language methods. The language experiences of students in the class were not different from their linguistic behaviors outside of class. Their performances of mixing languages showed that the boundaries between traditional language labels such as home language and mother tongue are fluid.

Translanguaging facilitates breakaways from artificial language boundaries and reconnection with L1 and L2 worldviews as a dynamic continuum of social and linguistic resources to enhance knowledge transmission.

This research supports the view of Tarnopolsky and Goodman (2014) that the studies of multilingual practices offer insights into the possibilities afforded by translanguaging in teaching English.

The multilingual communicative approach emphasizes what students do with languages. It offered an open-ended space to react to grammatical items emerging in situated language use to determine whether the language error would impede mutual comprehension. EFL teachers can transform monolingual practices into multilingual spaces.

The term translanguaging is transformational as it attests to the constant evolution of language practices and sees these practices as normal and natural. This research agrees with Cenoz and Gorter (2022), and Cenoz, Leonet, and Gorter (2022) that teachers who use trans-language methods as pedagogical practices index other cultural meanings, depending on the participants' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. EFL teachers encourage students to use English, help them overcome language-related confusion about content in multilingual space, keep them moving forward in learning, and develop linguistic repertoires.

While many researchers document the usefulness and authentic nature of multilingual practices, a critique of the term and its implications is necessary (Carroll, 2017). The question remains: How to make this practice effective for students? Translanguaging directly from one language to another without strategies may do more harm than good. A de facto result of the lack of planning for the transitions in media of instructions terms "unplanned simultaneous bilingual education." Khubchandani (2008) admits the importance of multilingual practice and calls for better planning for the transition in media of teaching to develop "positive attitudes to speech variations in multilingual repertoires." The practitioners should use translanguaging strategically for effective communication (Mohanty, Panda & Pal, 2010) and determine which methods are the most effective.

The researchers defined the following teachers' scaffolding strategies in multilingual practices:

1. Multilingual lexical contrasts – explicit attention to vocabulary in three to five languages.
2. Use of more than one reading-comprehension material: students read or listen to texts in one language and respond to questions in a different language, and vice versa.
3. Students compare and contrast various cultural contrasts in multiple languages, identify everyday situations bilingually, and give explanations in multi-languages (English, mother tongue, and other languages).

Conclusion

The study investigated the effectiveness of multilingual practices and trans-language methods in teaching English. It attempted to explore how multilingual practices exist within teaching English contexts. The results justified that strategic use of multilingual resources in the intercultural context may facilitate intercultural communication. Multilingual practices incorporate students' communicative repertoires as resources for learning and intercultural communication. It gave the practitioners the ground to think critically about the advantages and limitations of adopting a trans-language approach. Findings emphasize the importance of respecting and building natural multilingualism and making multilingualism a resource, strategy, and goal. More research is necessary regarding multilingual practices' impact on language acquisition: the purpose of using trans-language methods when switching a code and the types of modalities that occurred.

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