

An Investigation into Students' Attitude towards Teachers' Translanguaging Practices in English Class in China

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Abstract: For a long time, scholars and teachers consider monolingualism conducive in language teaching. However, the emergence of translanguaging theory broke the rampart between languages and turned out to be beneficial for language teaching and learning. This study investigates students' attitude towards teachers' translanguaging practices in EFL class in China so as to prove its effectiveness by employing quantitative and descriptive methods. Through questionnaire, the researcher collected data, calculated and analyzed them by SPSS 27.0. The results suggested that students were positive about teachers' translanguaging practices in terms of content-oriented purposes, classroom-oriented purposes, and student-oriented purposes.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Students' Attitude, English Teaching, English Class

1. Introduction

For a long time, the traditional language teaching took the unbridgeable gap between languages as the premise, and regarded language as an entity existing in an isolated, static and closed way, which was the basis of language teaching. It was long deemed that the utilization of native language in foreign language teaching was harmful for language acquisition. It's very common that foreign language teaching considers languages as separate units to avoid being influenced by target language. Since the adoption of immersion teaching method, the positive role of first language in the development and use of foreign language teaching has been suspected. The employment of mother tongue in foreign language teaching was considered as the major taboo in foreign language classroom, whose adverse factor is detrimental for the formation of students' thinking habits of target language. It was considered as the obstacle to second language acquisition. College English teachers and students could only speak English in class, which scholars thought, could increase the input of target language, thus the output of the language could also be enhanced. This "English only classroom teaching" was dramatically embraced in China for a long time. The use of Chinese in English class was reckoned as language deficiency of the teachers, which would have an inactive impact on students' language learning. Teachers and students seemed to have reached an agreement that separation from mother tongue was affective for foreign language teaching and learning.

However, the high popularity of immersion language teaching in Australia, Canada and many countries and regions in Europe cannot prove its' effectiveness in China in college English teaching. Different from the situation of western English-speaking countries, it is difficult to construct a completely closed English language environment for Chinese students all the time. Since they are exposed to their mother tongue except in English class. English and Chinese coexist in students' mind, which makes it impossible to separate the two in English teaching and learning. With limited cognitive level and pragmatic competence, students have to rely on their mother tongue in understanding and learning target language.

Translanguaging, a common practice among multilingual people, provides academic framework for foreign language teaching and learning, which means using all languages and language varieties available to communicate and understand the world around oneself. Translanguaging is a pedagogical process of utilizing more than one language within a classroom lesson or it can be used to describe the way bilinguals use their linguistic resources to make sense of and interact with the world around them

(Li, 2017) [1]. Recent research has shown that first language use can serve important cognitive, communicative, and social functions in communicative foreign and second language learning [2] (Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). [3] There is abundant empirical evidence showing that bilingual learners including teachers and students often move between languages naturally to teach and learn (Garcia & Li, 2014). According to Patton (2013) [4], foreign language learners have extremely limited repertoire from which they can choose resources in communicative situations; they might be still unable to tell what they want in the target language. The use of Chinese in English class can facilitate teachers with text explanation, class management and so on when target language is not accessible or effective for students' cognition.

As a newly born interdisciplinary pedagogy, translanguaging has aroused scholars and educators' interest and attention, but there are also unsettled disputes and heated discussion which needs further proof. This study aimed to study students' attitude towards translanguaging practices of college English teachers in EFL class in China from the perspective of content-oriented purposes, classroom-oriented purposes, and student-oriented purposes.

2. The study

The study adopted quantitative and descriptive research to analyze and code the data for description and themes. Quantitative research is adopted due to the large number of respondents, which will make the research result precise and easily to generalize. Descriptive method is employed to illustrate the current situation, characteristics concerning translanguaging. Since descriptive research usually works to explain why and how a certain phenomenon occurs, and qualitative methods are often adopted to understand such things as people's beliefs, experience and interactions (Bruce&Howard, 2012).

3. Participants

The respondents are college students majoring in science and liberal arts in China. They are non-English majors of freshman or sophomore who study English as a foreign language as undergraduates excluding students from vocational schools. They are from seven comprehensive universities in China. Finally 304 valid questionnaire were selected. Their English teachers all have translanguaging strategy in EFL class, but may be to different extent and for various purposes. English is taught as a compulsory course for them. Each of them has to do a questionnaire on their attitude towards teachers' translanguaging practices in EFL class.

4. Instrument

The study was mainly conducted by questionnaire. Both English and Chinese are offered for better understanding of the questionnaire. All the items are multiple choices based on the 4-point Likert response scale. The design of Students' Attitude Scale is based on Belle Beatriex M. Alemanias (2022) Examining the Attitudes towards Translanguaging [5] and Language Positions of Pre-service English Language Teachers and Huang X. W.'s (2017) A Study on Teacher-student Attitudes towards Teachers' Code-switching in College English Classroom to examine students' attitude towards teachers' translanguaging as to content-oriented purposes (9 items), classroom-oriented purposes (6 items), student-oriented purposes (2 items). 4-point Likert response scale ranging from 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly Disagree was adopted is shown in Table 1.

5. Results and Conclusion

The results disclose that students approved teachers' translanguaging strategy to clarify difficult teaching content, which corresponded with the primary pedagogical function of translanguaging-clarification. Translanguaging will be employed as a shortcut to assist students' comprehension of the teaching content, which won learners' consent. Fransiskus Dinang Raja's (2022) study supported the result that most students regard translanguaging as appropriate, helpful and supportive and they think that their teacher should deploy translanguaging to clarify and explain difficult teaching content to make them understand difficult materials, which could be concepts or professional terms.

Wang (2019) performed a research in 27 countries concerning students' attitude towards

translanguaging in classroom with the conclusion that “translanguaging in foreign language classroom has by and large contributed to giving voice to students for meaning negotiation at different levels. This has helped to acknowledging students’ input and the importance of rapport among all classroom participants”. EFL learners are generally satisfied with teachers’ translanguaging for the clarification of difficult point, which serves as scaffold for meaning negotiation.

Teachers’ use of native language can help EFL learners master grammar and understand the meaning of vocabulary, expressions and sentences in EFL class are also acknowledged by the respondents for the usefulness. This complied with the pedagogical function of translanguaging-explanation. EFL learners, to a great extent, consider teachers’ translanguaging for explanation beneficial for classroom teaching, since learners can have cognitive and linguistic understanding of the subject matter of the lesson including the conceptual demonstration and explanation of technical terms. Translanguaging for explanation can foster EFL learners’ successful access to information in class, which supported the research of Cahyani, et al. [6] (2016, as cited in N. M. Sapitri, et al., 2018) that learners’ comprehension is mediated by teachers’ translanguaging strategy, in which they can gain linguistic understanding of the lexical meaning, grammar and sentences.

Table 1: Students’ Attitude in terms of Content-oriented purposes

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Teachers’ use of native languages in English class is a natural practice for bi (multi) linguals.	3.24	Agree	7.5
2. Using native languages indicates teachers’ linguistic proficiency in the second language.	3.20	Agree	9
3. Using native languages in English class is an appropriate practice.	3.26	Agree	6
4. Using native languages is essential for teaching a new language.	3.24	Agree	7.5
5. Language instructors should use native languages to assist second language learning.	3.34	Agree	3.5
6. If an instructor used his/ her native language/s in English class, it would be helpful for the bi(multi)lingual students.	3.32	Agree	5
7. Teachers’ use of native language can help EFL learners understand the meaning of vocabulary, expressions and sentences in EFL class.	3.34	Agree	3.5
8. Teachers’ use of native language can help EFL learners master grammar.	3.35	Agree	2
9. Teachers’ use of native language can help EFL learners master difficult and important points.	3.39	Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.30	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Language instructors should use native languages to assist second language learning; if an instructor used his/ her native language/s in English class, it would be helpful for the bi (multi)lingual students; using native languages in English class is an appropriate practice; teachers’ use of native languages in English class is a natural practice for bi(multi)linguals. These items ranked similar, which are to examine learners’ attitude towards teachers’ translanguaging in class. From the data, it could be seen that EFL learners held positive perceptions about teachers’ adoption of translanguaging strategy. It echoed with Fan Fang’s study which revealed that students in an EFL class held a positive attitude towards pedagogical translanguaging and “agree on its effectiveness for content teaching”. Wang (2019) explored students and teachers’ perceptions about translanguaging practices in China’s universities and the result demonstrated that more than half of the EFL learners are content with a multilingual form of EFL teaching, where they could utilize translanguaging for meaning transmission.

The main reason for the least ranking of the item that using native languages indicates teachers’ linguistic proficiency in the second language is that students may think this is not closely related with their acquisition of knowledge, but more connected with the professional qualities of EFL teachers, which may not evoke students’ reflection about it. According to Spivey and Martin (2010) [7], the target language will activate the connections with the mother tongue, no matter how proficient the person is. The links between two languages can make students’ learning conducive and content-

abundant. An EFL teacher will employ translanguaging strategy based on different purposes and various teaching need, which can not only reflect a teacher's proficiency in the second language but also his or her high level of professional qualities as well as his/her teaching experience in the area.

Table 2: Students' Attitude in terms of Classroom-oriented purposes

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. To give directions	3.28	Agree	6
2. To give feedback to students	3.31	Agree	3
3. To praise students	3.29	Agree	5
4. To build bond with students	3.36	Agree	2
5. To clarify activity rules	3.30	Agree	4
6. To help low proficiency students	3.40	Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.32	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 presents students' attitude in terms of classroom-oriented purposes. The composite mean of 3.32 indicates that most of the students arrived at the agreement that EFL teachers would often turn to translanguaging to manage the class, including giving feedback, complimenting students, disciplining class, building rapport with students, helping low proficiency students. Results revealed that respondents agree that English teachers translanguage to help low proficiency students. It ranked first. Students were positive that teachers also use Chinese to build bonds with students. The weighted mean is 3.36. They also approved that teachers often employ translanguaging strategy to give feedback and clarify activity rules. The two ranked similar with with the respective rate of 3.31 and 3.30. The respondents came to agreement that English teachers translanguage to give directions, which earned the composite mean of 3.28.

Generally, concerning classroom-oriented purpose, most students were positive that English teachers translanguage to help low proficiency students, which plays very crucial role in class. Since all the classroom activities and teaching aim to enhance students' input, which could be accomplished by the deployment of translanguaging. Teachers will translate or give more specific explanation of tasks by leveraging first language to increase the lower foreign language level. All languages construct a repertoire in which one's language progress can pull up another. This supported Belle's (2022) research, in which he contended that learners believe that they obtain concise instructions since translanguaging can decrease misunderstandings who share the same mother tongue. Adam and Coulson (2015, as cited in Belle, 2022) stated that less proficient learners favor translanguaging, which could improve their writing skills.

In light of the result, most Chinese students were beneficiaries of teachers' translanguaging. EFL learners appreciated teachers' use of their mother tongue to help them to be better accessible to the information, which can boost their learning and encourage them to be more active in class. Full comprehension is always considered the primary foundation of all class activities. Only when the learners are clear about the teaching and other instructions, can they sustain interest in the class and enthusiasm for learning can persist.

EFL learners approved of teachers' translanguaging practice to build bond and to praise students, which can enhance teacher-student relationship and students' learning motivation. [8] Burton and Rajendram (2019) contended that students in a Canadian university endorse teachers' translanguaging strategy to develop social and affective relationships in class. [9] Fang and Liu (2020) also found that English teachers in universities build friendly bonds with their students by utilizing translanguaging to inject momentum to classroom teaching. Modern university students attach great importance to good teacher-student relations because harmonious teacher-student relationship is the most basic and important interpersonal relationship in the teaching process, and it is the concrete embodiment of interpersonal relationship in school. It is gradually established through information exchange and communication in common educational activities and partially by translanguaging. Teaching and learning is a bilateral activity process, only when teachers and students cooperate tacitly, can good teaching effect be realized. The classroom atmosphere is easy to be tense and rigid with poor teacher-student relations, which will make students feel uneasy. With nice teacher-student relationship, the classroom atmosphere is warm and harmonious. The psychological atmosphere accompanying the classroom teaching process leaves emotional memories in the minds of students, which will influence their learning enthusiasm.

The results prove that modern university students have more psychological and affective need in class. They hope to establish delightful interpersonal relationships with teachers in class. Through the communications with teachers and peers, they are desirable to express themselves and make both of them enjoyable of the class. English teachers should pay more attention to the psychological and affective development of college students, which has a vital role for their academic performance and character shaping. A favorable teacher- student relationship can also benefit teaching efficiency and improve learners' self- efficacy.

To give feedback to students through translanguaging was also approved by EFL learners. Students supported that feedback is more inclined to be accepted based on a good teacher-student relationship. That's why it ranked after building bond with students. Feedback delivered by translanguaging can ensure students' full understanding of their linguistic mistakes or make them explicit how to make corrections. [10] The result supported De los Reye's (2018) study in which he found that students hold positive stance about teachers' translanguaging to give feedback to enhance understanding and to accomplish assessment work. Giving feedback is considered by EFL learners as an important step in classroom communication. That is because they are eager to know their linguistic and cognitive mistakes in order to improve their English proficiency. Teachers' feedback by translanguaging can provide them guidelines for their mistakes.

To clarify activity rules and to give directions uncovered that college students approve of translanguaging for giving activity rules and directions. Generally, translanguaging occurs for the explanation of activity rules and directions, because this part is usually considered unimportant for the enhancement of students' language proficiency, which is often negligible by students. And EFL teachers often use their mother tongue to go through the part in order to save time.

Table 3: Students' Attitude in terms of Student-oriented purposes

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Teachers' use of native language can attract students' attention more and arouse their interest of EFL learning.	3.26	Agree	1.5
2. Teachers' use of native language can build students' confidence of learning English	3.26	Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	3.26	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 signifies students' attitude towards teachers' translanguaging practices in terms of student-oriented purposes. The composite mean of 3.26 indicates that EFL learners held positive stance about teachers' translanguaging to attract students' attention, arouse their interest of EFL learning and build confidence of language learning. Teachers' use of native language can attract students' attention more and arouse their interest of EFL learning and teachers' use of native language can build students' confidence of learning English are equally beneficial for the respondents. The two got the same rank with the weighted mean of 3.26.

Teachers' use of native language enables students to establish language identity, which can build students' confidence of learning English. According to Moyer's research on German as a foreign language, there is a positive circular relationship between language identification, confidence and language proficiency. Learners who establish a foreign language identity through teachers' strategy of translanguaging will use the target language more confidently, thus promoting language acquisition. In turn, the progress of the target language will enhance learners' self-confidence and further develop their learning motivation.

Teachers' employment of translanguaging can attract students' attention and arouse their interest of learning, which won students' general approval. The result was in alignment with Tian's [11] (2012, as cited in Ouyang Shiming, 2021) study based on sociolinguistic approach, in which she found that 78 percent of students think it may be necessary for teachers to use their native language in class because it can boost learners' comprehension of the teaching content and arouse their interest in English learning.

Table 4 signifies students' attitude towards teachers' translanguaging practices. The composite mean of 3.29 indicates that students generally agreed with teachers' use of translanguaging concerning content-oriented purposes, classroom-oriented purposes, and student-oriented purposes. Respondents

were positive with teachers' translanguaging strategy with the purpose of classroom management. The weighted mean was 3.32, which ranked first. Teachers' translanguaging for content-oriented purposes was also recognized by students. The composite mean for this was 3.30. The findings display that students also held positive attitude towards teachers' use of Chinese for student-oriented purposes, which got the rate of 3.26.

Table 4: Summary Table on Students' Attitude

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Content-oriented purposes	3.30	Agree	2
2. Classroom-oriented purposes	3.32	Agree	1
3. Student-oriented purposes	3.26	Agree	3
Composite Mean	3.29	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

For classroom-oriented purposes, students held a positive attitude, which suggests that they approved the effectiveness of teachers' use of translanguaging to give directions, build bonds with students, praise and encourage students, help low proficiency students and manage classroom discipline. The participants recognized that teachers could transmit instructions with great effect by integrating the mother tongue with English, such as giving instructions, clarification of activity rules, which can eliminate misunderstandings. They also regarded that building rapport with students effective such as making humorous remarks, telling jokes. EFL learners perceived that the employment of translanguaging helpful to give constructive feedback and express emotions, such as, praising students and giving them feedback and assessment, which can boost their learning enthusiasm and build their confidence. It echoed with Belle's (2022) study in which he found learners possess a positive view of teachers' translanguaging for classroom-oriented purposes and there is a need for teachers to incorporate translanguaging into the curriculum.

For content-oriented purposes, EFL learners also possessed a positive stance for teachers' translanguaging practice. The result implies that the participants believed that the use of first language is a valid teaching strategy to expound difficult important points, grammar, vocabulary, complex sentences, bridging the gap between the mother tongue and English; and students maintained a positive perspective towards teachers' translanguaging practices, considering it as a natural and essential tool for language acquisition. EFL learners' English proficiency is increased and metalinguistic awareness is activated from the existing language repertoire by teachers' use of translanguaging. First language is used as a scaffold to convey instructions and enhance both content and language learning [12] (Duarte, 2018).

EFL learners undertook a positive attitude towards teachers' use of translanguaging for student-oriented purposes, which includes the use of translanguaging to attract students' attention, arouse their interest of learning and build their confidence of learning. [13] Students perceived that teachers' use of native language is more authoritative than the target language, which can easily capture their attention and make them more focused on learning. On the other hand, students may have language identity through teachers' translanguaging practices, which can motivate them to study harder; teachers' use of native language can make them have clearer comprehension of the content, which can build up their confidence of language learning (Chen, 2019) [14-15].

Interestingly, according to the result, EFL learners were more concerned with the classroom-oriented purposes than the content-oriented purposes. They perceived that a favorable teaching atmosphere and good teacher-student relationship are more important than knowledge transmission. One of the reasons is that learners have realized a pleasant atmosphere created by teachers' use of native language is the premise of knowledge acquisition, which can make them relaxed and full of confidence about language learning, encouraging them to have more participation in class activities. Close teacher-student relations can boost affective and academic communications and cooperation, which will evoke their inner learning motivation and cognitive positivity [16-17].

Another reason may be that not all students no longer regard academic performance the most important as years before. They pursue all round development. Academic score is only part of their college life. Student-oriented purposes ranked last because college students are adults with mature mind so that they do not need as much psychological dependence on teachers as middle school students. They are self-disciplined, so they don't think teachers' translanguaging for catching their attention so important.

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