

TRANSLANGUAGING IN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES CLASSROOMS: AN APPLIED LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classrooms are increasingly characterized by multilingual student populations. In such contexts, learners often draw on their full linguistic repertoires to support academic communication and meaning-making. A number of studies are available on translanguaging but a limited study is available on translanguaging in English for academic purposes classrooms. Thereby, the current study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytic approach. The classroom interactions were examined to identify the forms, functions, and pedagogical positioning of translanguaging. The findings of the study reveal that translanguaging serves as a strategic resource for clarifying disciplinary concepts, facilitating participation, and supporting academic meaning-making. It also emerges as a pedagogically relevant practice embedded within classroom interaction rather than a peripheral or compensatory strategy. The study highlights the importance of recognizing multilingual resources in EAP pedagogy and contributes to ongoing discussions on academic literacy and multilingualism in higher education.

Keywords: Translanguaging, English for Academic Purposes, Classroom discourse, Multilingualism, Applied linguistics

1. Introduction

Linguistic diversity in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classrooms is becoming a growing phenomenon where multilingual learners interact with academic materials using English language but relying on a variety of linguistic tools. Conventionally, monolingual ideologies have influenced EAP teaching, which emphasizes the need to speak English and place the other languages of students in pedagogical irrelevance or even hindrance. This has however been questioned by the recent advances in applied linguistics which has come up with a dynamic and fluid nature of multilingual language practices in learning institutions. In this paradigm shift, translanguaging has become a central concept to be used to explain how learners strategically use their entire linguistic repertoires to form academic knowledge.

Translanguaging is the free usage of various language materials by multilingual speakers in order to create meaning, communicate and learn. Instead of considering languages as distinct and enclosed systems, translanguaging frames language practices as all-embracing and functional. Translanguaging has proven to be helpful in the classroom in facilitating understanding, participation, conceptualization, especially in a multilingual classroom. Although an increasing amount of literature has been dedicated to the practice of translanguaging in primary and secondary schooling, there has been relative underinvestment in the context of EAP classrooms, which have been characterized by the fact that students must work across complicated academic forms, discipline discourse and institution-based regulations.

The EAP classrooms are supported by the pedagogical niche, since they are aiming not at only developing the language, but at academic literacy, knowledge of the discipline, and involvement in the academic practices. Their students must read research texts, write academic texts, discuss and think critically, usually in a second or other language. In these contexts, the role of translanguaging can be quite significant in terms of access to academic materials and allowing students to mediate meaning at the linguistic and disciplinary levels. Nevertheless, translanguaging in the context of EAP has not been studied adequately, especially in the discursive approach to it.

The existing literature on translanguaging in higher education has been mostly split: into policy discussion, teacher philosophy or global pedagogical attainment. There are less studies that include the analysis of the way in which translanguaging occurs on a moment-to-moment basis in classroom interaction, the manner in which it is shared between and among teachers and students, and in which it is discursively placed in instructional practices. Furthermore, not much empirical research exists that addresses translanguaging directly in regards to academic meaning-making and disciplinary sense of EAP teaching.

In response to this gap, the current study takes the applied linguistic approach to examine EAP classroom translanguaging practices. The present study has the following research questions:

1. What translanguaging practices are employed by teachers and students in English for Academic Purposes classrooms?
2. How do translanguaging practices function to support academic meaning-making and disciplinary understanding in EAP contexts?
3. How is translanguaging discursively positioned within classroom interaction and pedagogical practices in EAP instruction?

2. Literature Review

Translanguaging as a concept has become more apparent in the applied linguistics domain as a paradigm to explain the language habits of multilingualism in learning institutions. Translanguaging originated in the study of the bilingual education field that challenges the monolingual ideologies of language use by making language use dynamic, fluid, and integrated instead of being separate and confined (Garcia, 2009; Garcia and Li Wei, 2014). In this light, multilingual speakers use all repertoires of linguistic tools at their disposal to derive meaning, acquire knowledge and express themselves, especially in cognitively challenging situations like education.

Moreover, an increasing number of studies have shown the potential of pedagogical importance of translanguaging in classroom interaction. Research in both primary and secondary school settings has demonstrated that translanguaging helps in generating understanding, increasing the engagement of learners, and enabling higher levels of conceptualization (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011). Translanguaging provides an opportunity to access knowledge of content by enabling mobilization of the familiar linguistic resources, but also facilitates language growth. The results have led to a wider trend of applied linguistics to perceiving multilingualism as an asset and not an issue.

In addition to this, within the context of higher education, translanguaging studies have mainly concentrated on multilingual academic practices and the institutional language policies. Researchers have contested that in the context of multilingual university realities, it seems that regardless of the scholarly multilingualism, the monolingual standards of academic space dominate, even as they deny students employment of their linguistic resources (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Translanguaging has thus been suggested as a method of providing epistemic access and equity in the higher education classrooms, especially in classes that are taught to students studying in a second or more language (Li Wei, 2018).

More so, English as an academic purpose (EAP) classrooms can serve as a very specific location where the study of translanguaging practices can be carried out. EAP teaching is not limited to issues of language proficiency but academic literacy, genre consciousness, and disciplinary discourse (Hyland, 2006). EAP students must read and write formally, and undertake scholarly discourse under linguistic pressure often. It has been argued that students who are multilingual often use their first languages as a source of thinking and communicative tool in interaction with academic text (Lillis and Scott, 2007).

Much of the current studies on EAPs have, however, been used in the traditional framework of the monolingual or English-only pedagogical framework. Although in recent research, there has been an attempt to call into question these assumptions, translanguaging is not yet a research topic that is sufficiently represented in mainstream EAP studies (Pecorari and Malmstrom, 2018). In the context where the concept of translanguaging is recognized, it is commonly addressed implicitly or through the perspective of a student strategy application instead of considering it as an interactional and pedagogical practice, which is a part of classroom conversation.

The research of classroom discourse provides valuable information regarding the way in which translanguaging functions in the interaction of the classroom. Based on research using discourse analysis, it has been established that translanguaging can also be used strategically in the process of explanation, scaffolding, and feedback (Sert, 2015). These studies emphasize that translanguaging is interactive and it plays a significant role in negotiating meaning between the teachers and students. However, these discourse centered analyses are still very minimal within the EAP context especially at the tertiary level.

However, empirical studies of translanguaging have been focused on teacher beliefs, language policy, or general learning outcomes, and a number of studies have analysed the discursive placement of translanguaging in pedagogy (Macaro, 2018). The question remains on how translanguaging is justified or not, as well as its limitation within EAP classrooms, and its interaction with the institutional demand of English-medium teaching.

2.1 Research Gap

A number of studies are available on translanguaging in applied linguistics. But a limited study is available on empirical research that systematically examines translanguaging practices in English for Academic Purposes classrooms from a discourse-analytic perspective. In particular, limited attention has been paid to how translanguaging is enacted in real-time classroom interaction, how it supports academic meaning-making and disciplinary understanding, and how it is discursively positioned within EAP pedagogy. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates translanguaging practices in EAP classrooms through detailed analysis of classroom discourse, thereby contributing empirical evidence to ongoing debates on multilingual pedagogy and academic literacy in applied linguistics.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, discourse-analytic research design, grounded in applied linguistics and classroom discourse analysis. The qualitative approach is appropriate given the study's focus on examining naturally occurring translanguaging practices and their discursive functions within EAP classroom interaction. Rather than quantifying language use, the study seeks to understand how translanguaging is enacted, interpreted, and positioned within pedagogical practices.

3.2 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in English for Academic Purposes classrooms at the tertiary level, where English serves as the primary medium of instruction and students come from multilingual backgrounds. The participants included EAP instructors and undergraduate or postgraduate students enrolled in academic English courses. These classrooms focused on academic skills such as reading scholarly texts, academic writing, and oral presentations. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the presence of multilingual interactional practices.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through observation of audio-recorded classroom sessions, capturing teacher–student and student–student interaction during instructional activities. Classroom observations were conducted over multiple sessions to ensure sufficient interactional data and to capture recurring translanguaging practices across different pedagogical moments, such as explanation, discussion, and feedback. Field notes were also taken to document contextual information, including instructional objectives and classroom dynamics.

3.4 Data Analysis

The recorded data were transcribed and analyzed using discourse analysis, with particular attention to instances of translanguaging. Analysis focused on identifying (a) the types of translanguaging practices employed, (b) their interactional positioning within classroom discourse, and (c) their pedagogical and meaning-making functions. Extracts were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and examined in detail to illustrate how translanguaging operates as a communicative and instructional resource.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained before data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and provided consent. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality, and all data were handled in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents a detailed discourse-based analysis of translanguaging practices observed in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classrooms. Drawing on classroom interaction data, the analysis focuses on how teachers and students enact translanguaging, how it functions in academic meaning-making, and how it is discursively positioned within pedagogical practices. Rather than treating translanguaging as a peripheral or compensatory strategy, the analysis demonstrates its central role in facilitating academic engagement and disciplinary understanding. The findings are organized into four thematic subsections corresponding to recurrent patterns identified in the data.

4.1 Forms of Translanguaging Practices in EAP Classroom Interaction

The classroom data analysis indicates that there are various translanguaging practices that both teachers and the students may use in the process of instructional interaction. Such practices are lexical switching, explanatory reformulation, parallel bilingual explanation, and strategic use of first languages of students to negotiate academic meaning. Translanguaging often happens during some of the most important pedagogical events like explanation of concepts, clarifying tasks and provision of feedback.

Teachers tend to engage in translanguaging when presenting complicated academic ideas or the disciplinary language. As an example, English explanations are sometimes accompanied by brief switches to a common first language of students to explain abstract concepts or get them to understand. These changes do not happen by chance but are made at times when conceptual density is great which signifies intentional pedagogic design. Instead of substituting English teaching, translanguaging serves as a tool that facilitates access to the academic discourse amongst learners.

There is also translation engaging among the students, especially when they interact among themselves and when they are doing group activities. During group discussions, students utilize their multilingual skills to make meaning of instructions, interpretation of academic text, and in co-constructing responses. The practices enable students to think through information cognitively and subsequently rephrase ideas in the English language, thus, enabling them to engage in academic work.

Notably, translation is not restricted to verbal communication only. It can also be observed in the written planning phases where students negotiating ideas in their mother tongue come up with English academic texts. This observation supports the idea behind monolingual assumptions that academic thought has to take place exclusively in English and the cognitive significance of multilingual meaning-making procedures. Altogether, the information indicates that translanguaging in EAP classes is multifaceted, systematic, and interactionally oriented. They are the strategic application of linguistic repertoires by learners and teachers instead of linguistic incompetence.

4.2 Translanguaging as a Means of Academic Making of Meaning

One of the key findings of the analysis is that translanguaging becomes one of the main resources of academic meaning-making in EAP. Instead of being a facilitation tool of comprehension, translanguaging helps a learner approach disciplinary content at a higher conceptual level. Translanguaging is also often applied during teacher explanation to unpack complicated academic vocabulary and abstract ideas. As an illustration, in the case of explaining theoretical terms or methodological concepts, teachers alternate between languages to elaborately give concepts. The practice enables students to relate the new academic knowledge with prevailing conceptual frameworks thus understanding.

In the same way, students negotiate meanings through translanguaging when undertaking academic roles. Students tend to discuss meanings in their native language when they are faced with unfamiliar academic texts before writing in English. The process facilitates critical analysis of content as opposed to the superficial understanding. Translanguaging therefore allows the students to engage in meaningful academic discourse even at the point that their command of the English language is not yet proficient. In a discourse approach, translanguaging facilitates sense-making in the disciplinary sense since it enables students to cut across their daily knowledge and scholarly knowledge. The findings indicate that translanguaging is an intermediary of access to disciplinary discourse, especially on those tasks where analysis, evaluation, and synthesis are involved.

Besides, translanguaging helps in the epistemic congruence between instructors and learners. Teachers can recognize the multilingual resources of students thus placing them in a legitimate academic stance, and not as external speakers of language. This orientation creates a more accommodating academic atmosphere and promotes long-term interaction.

4.3 Discursive Positioning of Translanguaging in Pedagogical Practices

In addition to its functional form, translanguaging is discursively placed in the context of classroom interaction in a manner that shows some underlying pedagogical ideologies. It can be analyzed that the idea of translanguaging is frequently discussed as an interim but acceptable pedagogical tool, instead of as the permanent alternative to English. In most cases, teachers keep the English language as the main language of instruction and tolerate the use of translanguaging at critical points. This discursive positioning will contain a balance between the institutional demands of English-based instruction and pedagogical responsiveness to the

linguistic demands of students. Translanguaging thus is proposed to be helpful, intentional, and scholarly.

Translanguaging is hardly identified or problematized in classroom discourse. Rather it is normalized by using it over and over again, especially in the process of explaining and feedback. This is implicitly normalized to indicate a developing pedagogical approach of referring to multilingualism as a strength and not a limitation. On their side, students are oriented towards translanguaging as a valid and fruitful exercise. They interact in more than one language without any reservation, especially when working in groups. This orientation implies that even though it is not explicitly stated in the curriculum documents translanguaging is discursively approved in the classroom setting.

The data however also show instances when translanguaging is implicitly limited, especially when it comes to activities based on assessment. When the explicitly evaluated tasks are carried out, students are more likely to revert to interaction only in English. This change draws attention to the conflict between institutional norms and pedagogical practice which means that translanguaging is taking a middle ground in teaching EAP.

4.4 Pedagogical Implications and Patterns of Translanguaging Use

The last analytic topic is related to the greater pedagogical consequences of translanguaging activities in EAP classrooms. It has been analyzed that through translanguaging, there are various pedagogical roles, which are; scaffolding, clarification, engagement, and confidence-building.

Table 4.1 summarizes the primary functions of translanguaging identified in the data.

Function	Description	Interactional Context
Conceptual clarification	Explaining abstract academic concepts	Teacher explanations
Task negotiation	Clarifying instructions and requirements	Group work
Meaning-making	Interpreting academic texts and ideas	Peer discussion
Affective support	Reducing anxiety and encouraging participation	Classroom interaction

Table 4.1
Functions of Translanguaging in EAP Classrooms

These patterns depict that translanguaging exists within the pedagogical ecology of the EAP classroom. It helps learners to be cognitively and affectively involved in academic content and progressively master academic English. Notably, translanguaging does not devalue learning of English, on the contrary, it facilitates learning of English through access to academic discourse. The learners apply their entire linguistic repertoires to build meaning that is recontextualized to English academic work.

Combined, the results clearly indicate that translanguaging is not a secondary or compensatory activity but rather a key element in multilingual EAP classroom academic communication. The discursive and pedagogical roles it plays bring into prominence the need to redefine EAP teaching outside of monolingual standards. It has been demonstrated that EAP classroom

translanguaging practices are complex, intentional, and pedagogically important. The study, through discourse analysis of classroom interaction, illustrates how translanguaging facilitates academic sense-making, intermediates disciplinary sense-making, and finds discursive place in the practices of instruction. The results of the study support the empirical evidence of the utility of translanguaging as an applied linguistic resource in EAP teaching.

5. Conclusion

The paper has studied translanguaging in English as an academic purpose (EAP) classroom through the lens of applied linguistics and considered the way translanguaging is applied in the classroom and how it facilitates academic meanings making. The findings of the study indicate that translanguaging is a deliberate pedagogical and discursive tool, which allows teachers and students to explicate ideas, bargain meanings and interact better with academic matters. Translanguaging encourages access to the disciplinary knowledge and helps the students to be included in the academic discourse instead of slowing down the development of English. The analysis further shows that there is strategic and contextual use of translanguaging, and it is an indication of the growing legitimacy of translanguaging in multilingual EAP classrooms even though English-mediated norms still prevail.

It is concluded that multilingual resources should be regarded as an important asset in the academic development of literacy, and monolingual assumptions in EAP pedagogy should be reevaluated. Nevertheless, the research is confined to a set of context and data. Future studies can investigate the nature of translanguaging in various EAP contexts, fields and levels of proficiency and observe how it is associated with academic writing development and pedagogy. Such studies will also help in clarifying the role of translanguaging in encouraging the multilingual students in higher education.

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