

EXPLORING THE PERCEIVED ATTITUDES, INSPIRATION, AND PERSUADING ASPECTS ON THE ROLE OF TRANSLINGUAL PEDAGOGY IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

Nimrah Khan

M.Phil candidate at UMT

nimrakhan0324@gmail.com

Shabana Zafar

Program Head: BSELL, Department of Linguistics and Communications, University of
Management and Technology

zafar@umt.edu.pk

Amina Shah

Lecturer, UMT

Abstract

The increasing linguistic diversity of contemporary classrooms has challenged traditional monolingual approaches to education and created a need for more advanced pedagogical practices. Translingual pedagogy has emerged as an innovative approach that recognizes students' diverse linguistic repertoires as valuable resources for learning. This study investigates teachers' perspectives on the implementation of translingual pedagogy in multilingual classrooms in Pakistan. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving six teachers working across school, college, and university settings in Punjab, Pakistan. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. The findings reveal that teachers perceive translingual pedagogy as beneficial for improving student comprehension, engagement, confidence, and cultural inclusion. Participants reported using translanguaging practices strategically to bridge conceptual gaps and support learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, teachers also highlighted significant challenges, including institutional English-only policies, curriculum constraints, limited professional training, and societal preferences for English-medium instruction. Despite these barriers, teachers demonstrated considerable agency in adapting their instructional practices to meet students' needs. The study contributes to the growing literature on multilingual education by foregrounding teachers' voices within the underexplored Pakistani context. The findings suggest that effective implementation of translingual pedagogy requires policy reforms, teacher training initiatives, and institutional support that recognize multilingualism as an educational resource rather than a barrier.

Keywords: Translingual Pedagogy, Translanguaging, Multilingual Education, Teacher Perspectives, Pakistan, Language Policy

Introduction

Globalization, migration, and technological advancement have transformed educational environments across the world, making multilingual classrooms increasingly common. In many countries, linguistic diversity is no longer an exception but a defining characteristic of contemporary education. As students bring diverse linguistic and cultural resources into classrooms, educators face the challenge of creating learning environments that accommodate and value this diversity. Traditional monolingual approaches to education often fail to address the realities of multilingual learners, leading researchers and practitioners to explore alternative pedagogical frameworks. Translingual pedagogy has emerged as a promising response to the linguistic complexities of modern classrooms. Unlike conventional monolingual or bilingual approaches that treat languages as separate systems, translingual pedagogy recognizes language practices as fluid, dynamic, and interconnected. It encourages learners to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning, solve problems, and participate in academic activities. This perspective aligns with contemporary understandings of multilingualism, which emphasize the interconnected nature of language resources rather than viewing languages as isolated entities.

The significance of translingual pedagogy is particularly evident in multilingual societies such as Pakistan. Pakistan possesses a rich linguistic landscape where Urdu, English, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and numerous regional languages coexist. Despite this diversity, educational policies and classroom practices often privilege English and Urdu while marginalizing local languages. Consequently, students frequently encounter challenges when the language of instruction differs from their home language. Teachers dealing within these environments must navigate complex linguistic realities while simultaneously meeting institutional expectations and curriculum requirements. Although substantial research has examined the theoretical foundations and student outcomes associated with translingual pedagogy, comparatively little attention has been paid to teachers' lived experiences and perspectives. Teachers play a crucial role in translating pedagogical theories into classroom practice. Their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences significantly influence how multilingual strategies are implemented and sustained. Understanding teachers' perspectives is therefore essential for developing educational policies and professional development programs that support effective multilingual instruction. This study investigates teachers' perspectives on the implementation of translingual pedagogy in multilingual classrooms in Pakistan. Specifically, it explores the perceived benefits of translingual practices, the challenges teachers encounter, and the strategies they employ to support multilingual learners. By foregrounding teachers' voices, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about linguistic inclusion, educational equity, and multilingual pedagogy in the Global South.

Literature Review

Multilingualism has become a defining characteristic of contemporary educational settings across the world. Traditionally, multilingualism was understood as the ability to communicate in more than one language. However, recent scholarship conceptualizes multilingualism as a dynamic social practice through which individuals utilize multiple linguistic resources depending on context and communicative needs (Wei, 2011). Increasing globalization, migration, and intercultural interaction have transformed classrooms into linguistically diverse spaces, requiring educational approaches that accommodate students from different language backgrounds.

Research suggests that multilingual learners possess significant cognitive and academic advantages, including enhanced metalinguistic awareness, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving abilities (Baker, 2011). Despite these benefits, many educational systems continue to operate under monolingual assumptions, often privileging dominant languages while marginalizing students' home languages (May, 2014). Such approaches may restrict learners' opportunities to utilize their full linguistic repertoires in educational contexts.

Translingual Pedagogy and Translanguaging

Translingual pedagogy has emerged as a response to traditional monolingual approaches to education. The concept is closely associated with translanguaging, which refers to the process through which multilingual speakers draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate, learn, and construct meaning (García & Wei, 2014). Unlike traditional bilingual approaches that separate languages into distinct systems, translanguaging recognizes the fluid and interconnected nature of multilingual communication.

Canagarajah (2013) argues that translingual practices challenge rigid language boundaries and acknowledge the realities of communication in multilingual societies. Through translingual pedagogy, learners are encouraged to utilize all available linguistic resources to facilitate understanding and participation. Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) further contend that multilingual speakers do not operate within separate language systems but instead access an integrated linguistic repertoire that supports communication and learning.

Research has demonstrated that translingual pedagogies can enhance student comprehension, participation, confidence, and academic achievement. Hornberger and Link (2012) found that multilingual practices promote biliteracy development and provide learners with greater access to academic content. Similarly, García (2009) argues that bilingual and multilingual educational approaches foster more equitable and inclusive learning environments by recognizing students' linguistic identities and resources.

Translanguaging Theory provides a framework for understanding how multilingual individuals use multiple linguistic resources in flexible and dynamic ways (García & Wei, 2014). Rather than treating languages as separate entities, the theory views multilingualism as an integrated system through which learners construct meaning.

The Language as Resource Orientation proposed by Ruiz (1984) further supports the educational value of multilingualism. Ruiz argues that linguistic diversity should be viewed as a resource rather than a problem. This perspective challenges deficit-based approaches and encourages educators to recognize students' linguistic backgrounds as assets that contribute to learning and academic success.

Theoretical Foundations of Translingual Pedagogy

The present study is informed by three interrelated theoretical perspectives: Sociocultural Theory, Translanguaging Theory, and Language-as-Resource Orientation.

Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of language as a mediational tool in learning and cognitive development. According to this perspective, knowledge is constructed through social interaction, and language functions as a critical means through which learners make sense of new concepts. In multilingual classrooms, students' home languages can serve as valuable scaffolding tools that facilitate comprehension and learning.

Teachers' Perspectives on Multilingual Education

Teachers play a central role in implementing multilingual pedagogies. Their beliefs, experiences, and instructional practices significantly influence how language policies are translated into classroom realities. Research indicates that teachers who view multilingualism positively are more likely to adopt inclusive language practices and create supportive learning environments (Cummins, 2000).

However, teachers often face tensions between pedagogical effectiveness and institutional expectations. Lin (2013) notes that many educators strategically employ code-switching and multilingual practices to support learning despite operating within English-dominant educational systems. Similarly, Shohamy (2006) argues that official language policies frequently fail to reflect classroom realities, placing teachers in challenging positions where they must balance policy requirements with students' learning needs. Studies conducted in multilingual educational contexts have consistently reported that teachers use students' home languages to improve comprehension, reduce anxiety, and increase participation. At the same time, concerns remain regarding language proficiency, curriculum requirements, and assessment practices. These tensions highlight the need for greater understanding of teachers' experiences within multilingual classrooms.

Multilingual Education in Pakistan

Pakistan presents a unique context for examining translingual pedagogy due to its rich linguistic diversity. Urdu functions as the national language, while English serves as an official language and the primary medium of instruction in many educational institutions. Alongside these languages, numerous regional languages including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, and Saraiki are widely spoken.

Despite this multilingual reality, educational policies frequently prioritize English-medium instruction because of its association with academic achievement and socioeconomic mobility

(Phillipson, 1992). Consequently, many students encounter difficulties when the language of instruction differs significantly from the language used at home.

Although multilingual education has attracted increasing scholarly attention internationally, limited research has explored teachers' perspectives on translingual pedagogy within Pakistan. Existing studies tend to focus on language policy, English language teaching, or student outcomes. Therefore, there remains a need for research that examines how teachers navigate multilingual classroom realities and implement translingual practices in their everyday teaching.

Research Gap

While translingual pedagogy has been extensively discussed within international scholarship, empirical research examining teachers' lived experiences in multilingual classrooms of the Global South remains limited. In Pakistan, little research has explored how teachers negotiate tensions between English-dominant institutional expectations and the linguistic realities of multilingual classrooms. By investigating teachers' perspectives on the benefits, challenges, and implementation of translingual pedagogy, this study seeks to address this gap and contribute to the growing literature on multilingual education.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist approach was selected because it facilitates an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective experiences, beliefs, and perceptions regarding social phenomena. Since the study aimed to investigate teachers' perspectives on the implementation of translingual pedagogy in multilingual classrooms, a qualitative approach was considered most appropriate for capturing the complexity of participants' lived experiences and classroom practices.

Participants

The study was conducted in Punjab, Pakistan, where multilingualism is a common feature of educational settings. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who possessed relevant experience teaching in multilingual classrooms. The sample consisted of six teachers from different educational levels, including three school teachers, two college instructors, and one university lecturer. All participants had a minimum of two years of teaching experience and regularly interacted with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The inclusion of teachers from various educational contexts provided a broader understanding of translingual practices across different levels of education.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method because they allowed participants to discuss their experiences, beliefs, and classroom practices in detail while providing flexibility for probing and clarification. Interview questions focused on teachers' understandings of translingual pedagogy, perceived benefits of multilingual practices, challenges encountered in multilingual classrooms, and strategies used to support students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted in a setting convenient for the participants. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis.

To complement interview data and enhance credibility, non-participant classroom observations were conducted. Observations focused on language use, teacher–student interactions, translanguaging practices, student participation, and instructional strategies employed to facilitate learning in multilingual classrooms. Observation notes provided contextual information that supported and triangulated interview findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. The analysis began with repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes to achieve familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated and organized into meaningful categories representing recurring ideas and patterns. These categories were subsequently reviewed, refined, and grouped into broader themes that addressed the research questions.

The thematic analysis resulted in four major themes: (a) translingual pedagogy as a tool for comprehension and inclusion, (b) negotiating linguistic diversity through adaptive teaching strategies, (c) institutional constraints and English-dominant educational practices, and (d) teacher agency, professional development, and student success. These themes captured teachers' experiences, perceptions, and practices related to multilingual instruction.

Several measures were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Data triangulation was achieved through the use of interviews and classroom observations. Member checking was conducted by sharing interpretations with participants to verify the accuracy of findings. Reflexive journaling and detailed documentation of analytical decisions were maintained throughout the research process to enhance transparency and credibility. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and removing identifying information from transcripts and reports. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Findings

Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of incorporating students' home languages into classroom instruction. Participants reported that allowing students to use familiar linguistic resources enhanced comprehension and reduced barriers to learning. Teachers viewed translanguaging as a practical strategy for supporting students who struggled with English-medium instruction.

Many participants described using Urdu, Punjabi, or other local languages to explain complex concepts before transitioning to English. This practice enabled students to grasp difficult content while simultaneously developing English proficiency. Teachers noted that multilingual approaches fostered greater inclusivity by validating students' linguistic identities and creating more welcoming learning environments.

Enhanced Findings

Theme 1: Translingual Pedagogy as a Tool for Comprehension and Inclusion

Teachers generally viewed multilingual practices as beneficial for facilitating student understanding and promoting inclusive classroom environments. Several participants emphasized that students comprehend concepts more effectively when familiar linguistic resources are incorporated into instruction. One teacher explained that using students' home languages "made my task easier as the student grasp more concept easier." Another participant reported mixing Urdu and English because some learners "do not get the whole lecture in English," making bilingual explanations necessary for comprehension.

Participants also highlighted the role of multilingual practices in fostering confidence and participation. Teachers observed that students became more willing to contribute to classroom discussions when linguistic barriers were reduced. These findings suggest that translingual pedagogy functions not only as a linguistic support mechanism but also as a strategy for enhancing educational equity.

Theme 2: Negotiating Linguistic Diversity Through Adaptive Teaching Strategies

Participants reported employing a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Common approaches included simplifying vocabulary, using synonyms, incorporating visual materials, facilitating peer support, and encouraging collaborative learning activities.

One participant described consistently providing multiple synonyms when introducing unfamiliar vocabulary to ensure student comprehension. Another teacher highlighted the use of bilingual explanations and visual communication, noting that images and illustrations function as alternative forms of language that support understanding.

The findings indicate that successful multilingual teaching requires flexibility and responsiveness. Rather than relying on rigid instructional methods, teachers continuously adapted their pedagogical practices to address students' varying linguistic needs.

Theme 3: Institutional Constraints and English-Dominant Educational Practices

A notable finding was the presence of contrasting perspectives regarding language use in classrooms. While several participants supported multilingual pedagogies, others expressed concerns about extensive use of students' home languages. One English teacher argued that allowing students to speak home languages could "disrupt the decorum of class" and emphasized maintaining English as the primary medium of communication. Similarly, another participant expressed concern that multilingual practices might confuse learners and reduce opportunities for English language development. In contrast, teachers who supported translingual approaches argued that multilingual instruction increases accessibility and removes barriers to learning. These differing perspectives reflect broader tensions between multilingual classroom realities and English-dominant educational ideologies in Pakistan.

Theme 4: Teacher Agency, Professional Development, and Student Success

Despite institutional constraints, participants demonstrated considerable agency in adapting their teaching practices to support multilingual learners. Teachers described modifying lessons, incorporating additional language support, and creating opportunities for participation to ensure student success. Student achievement emerged as a major source of professional motivation. Participants cited examples of learners who initially struggled with English but later demonstrated confidence through presentations, discussions, and classroom participation. One teacher described a student who first discussed concepts in a native language before successfully explaining them in English, while another highlighted the success of students who voluntarily participated in English-speaking activities. Participants also emphasized the importance of continuous learning and professional development. Several expressed a desire for additional training related to multilingual education, language pedagogy, and classroom management. These findings underscore the critical role of teacher agency in implementing translingual pedagogies within linguistically diverse educational environments.

Discussion

The findings highlight the complex realities of multilingual education in Pakistan. Consistent with international research, teachers viewed translingual pedagogy as an effective means of promoting comprehension, engagement, and inclusivity. The strategic use of students' home languages functioned as a form of instructional scaffolding, enabling learners to access academic content while developing additional language competencies. The study also underscores the importance of teacher agency. Despite institutional constraints, participants actively adapted their practices to meet students' needs. This finding aligns with sociocultural perspectives emphasizing teachers' role as mediators of learning. Rather than simply implementing prescribed policies, teachers negotiated linguistic realities through context-sensitive pedagogical decisions. At the same time, the findings reveal persistent tensions between multilingual pedagogies and monolingual institutional structures. English-only

policies, standardized assessments, and curriculum demand often constrained teachers' ability to implement translanguing strategies systematically. These challenges reflect broader language ideologies that continue to privilege English as a marker of academic achievement and socioeconomic mobility.

The study further demonstrates that multilingual practices extend beyond linguistic considerations. Teachers emphasized the cultural, emotional, and motivational dimensions of language use. By validating students' home languages, stronger classroom relationships, enhanced confidence, and promoted a sense of belonging. These findings support arguments that translanguing pedagogy contributes not only to academic success but also to educational equity and social inclusion.

Conclusion

This study explored teachers' perspectives on the implementation of translanguing pedagogy in multilingual classrooms in Pakistan. The findings indicate that teachers view multilingual practices as valuable tools for enhancing comprehension, participation, confidence, and inclusion. At the same time, they face significant challenges stemming from institutional policies, curriculum demands, limited resources, and insufficient professional training.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on multilingual education by foregrounding teachers' experiences within the Pakistani context. It demonstrates that successful implementation of translanguing pedagogy depends on teacher agency, institutional flexibility, and supportive language policies.

The findings suggest several implications for educational policy and practice. Teacher education programs should incorporate training in multilingual and translanguing pedagogies. Educational institutions should recognize linguistic diversity as a resource and provide greater flexibility regarding language use in classrooms. Assessment systems should also be reconsidered to align more closely with multilingual learning objectives.

Future research should expand the participant pool, include students' perspectives, and examine translanguing practices across different regions of Pakistan. Longitudinal studies would also provide valuable insights into how teachers' beliefs and practices evolve over time.

References

- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translanguing practice: Global Englishers and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal*, 8(2), 15–34.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Hornberger, N. H., & Link, H. (2012). Translanguaging and transnational literacies in multilingual classrooms. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15(3), 261–278.
- Lin, A. M. Y. (2013). Classroom code-switching. In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Wiley.
- May, S. (Ed.). (2014). *The multilingual turn*. Routledge.
- Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6(3), 281–307.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. Routledge.
- Wei, L. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(5), 1222–1235.