

The Experiences of Grade 1 Teachers Implementing Translanguaging Practices

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Abstract: *This research study aimed to identify and describe not just the experiences of the teachers who employed translanguaging in the multilingual classrooms but also its impact on their teaching practices and classroom interactions. The study was conducted in a multilingual classroom, which primarily focused on teachers teaching English language as the medium of instruction. In this study, the qualitative-descriptive research design was utilized. An in-depth interview was used as the main tool in gathering the responses from the participants. The findings of the study revealed that translanguaging had beneficial effects on the knowledge construction, classroom management, interpersonal relationships, and personal and affective meanings. However, the study recommends teachers to maximize the use of translanguaging for developing proficiency in the target language.*

Keywords—experiences; translanguaging; translanguaging practices; multilingual classroom

1. INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging is becoming a common phenomenon in a multilingual classrooms around the world, for it plays a crucial role in facilitating the transition from a learner's first language (L1) to other languages. Translanguaging supports both students and teachers in using their full linguistic repertoire to build meaning, construct knowledge, and solve problems in the classroom (Ticheloven et al., 2019; Garcia & Li, 2014; Wei & Ho, 2018). This practice is particularly valuable in environments where English is taught as a second or foreign language, as it enables teachers to understand students' backgrounds (Omidire & Ayob, 2022), deepens comprehension of academic content (Nur et al., 2020; Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2020; Casalan, 2022), promotes critical thinking and vocabulary (Carroll & Sambolín Morales, 2016), enhances vocabulary (Galante, 2020), encourages identity engagement (Atta & Naqvi, 2022), and challenges linguistic inequalities (Ke and Lin, 2017).

In the Philippine multilingual classrooms, translanguaging becomes an essential tool that helps teachers not just to improve their personal and professional understanding and scholarly achievement but also validates students' identities and cultural heritage, facilitating a more integrated and fair learning environment. Several research have proven these factors as important contributions of translanguaging in teaching-learning process where it provides space for meaning-making and problem-solving (Macawile, 2021), stimulates engagement (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), strengthens confidence (Garcia & Wei, 2014), improves vocabularies, and develops critical thinking by enabling learners to connect across languages as well as facilitates both language acquisition and content acquisition, making learning accessible and useful to all students (Garcia-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Kwihangana, 2021).

Moreover, another recent studies showed that translanguaging does not only improve student's learning but also becomes a teacher's tool for assessing the emotional well-being, facilitating behavior and harmonious relationship in the classroom, and for improving their teaching skills. Back et al. (2020) argue that that when teacher employs translanguaging, the emotional well-being of students will be assessed, the anxiety and behavioral issues will be reduced, and the academic performance will improve since students because they feel at ease, valued, and supported emotionally. On one hand, Hu (2020) highlights that translanguaging helps teachers to deliver classroom instructions where students understand the language and provides a secure environment where students feel safe in speaking their first language. Tai (2022) also supported this findings for he suggests that teachers can benefit the use of other languages to manage misbehaving students inside the classroom. Similarly, Zhang (2021) asserted that translanguaging establishes better teacher-student relationships and create a flexible translanguaging space and harmonious classroom climate.

While others have realized the benefits of translanguaging to improve student's learning and teacher's teaching practices, it also becomes a challenge for teacher as they intertwine their emotional well-being (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Mercer et al., 2018). Ghafouri and Esmaeilee (2024) also argue that translanguaging embraces the emotional aspect of teachers in teaching using translanguaging where it provides an emotionally supportive classroom environment, a enhances sense of self-efficacy, and a self-decentralized teaching context as well as fostering inclusivity and emotional safety, which ultimately improves the overall learning experience.

The use of translanguaging is also supported by the Department of Education (DepEd). DepEd states that from Grades 7 to 12, English must be the primary medium of instruction, except for subjects taught in Filipino (DepEd, 2019). While promoting English, DepEd also acknowledges the importance of using learners' first language (L1) to help them grasp basic concepts, especially in early learning. Teachers are permitted to use the mother tongue or other familiar languages to clarify lessons and enhance communication during instruction. However, these languages should not serve as the main medium for teaching language subjects. This policy is supported by the amendment of Republic Act 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which upholds the

use of English as a second language and its role as the medium of instruction for non-Filipino subjects, following the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (DepEd, 2019).

Translanguaging has a vital role and greater impact on student's learning and teacher's teaching practices. The way how students learn and teachers teach inside the classroom depends on how the language is used properly to address the learning needs. For such reasons, the study seeks to identify or determine teacher's translanguaging practices and understand how these practices affect their roles in teaching learners in Grade 1 using English language.

2. FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored to the Translanguaging Framework of Sapitri, Gede, & Myartawan, (2018) which identifies the translanguaging practices: knowledge construction, classroom management, interpersonal relations, and personal and affective. *Knowledge construction* is the application of translanguaging to comprehend the topic which includes elicit students' response, highlight important information, explain new topic, grammatical point, and vocabulary whereas *classroom management* is the application of translanguaging by the teacher to manage students' behavior throughout the learning process create a more inclusive and responsive learning environment that includes negotiating task instructions, inviting pupil contributions, disciplining pupils, specifying a particular addressee, and so on. *Interpersonal relationships* are the application of translanguaging by the teacher to build relationships and allowing for more meaningful communication and connection with students which includes building rapport, making a joke, giving praise and encouraging students, and *personal and affective meanings* are the application of the teacher's personal experiences, emotions, and sociocultural functions.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The research study employed the qualitative-descriptive research design proposed and explained in detail by Sandelowski (2000). The design was employed to investigate and describe individuals' experiences, perceptions, or behaviors in a direct and exhaustive way. It was closely tied to the data and participants' words themselves, seeking to present a rich, detailed picture of events or phenomena without much interpretation. This type of design was particularly beneficial when the aim was to obtain clear, factual information on a particular matter, usually in natural environments. Sandelowski highlighted that qualitative descriptive research was especially suitable when researchers need to know the who, what, and where of things and need clear and accurate information based on participants' views.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were all Grade 1 teachers of a public school under the Division of Malaybalay City. The said participants were chosen purposively according to their grade level assignment. These teachers were using the various languages to ensure that their learners understood the important parts of the lessons.

3.3. Data Collection Method

After the approval of the letter, an informed consent was given to the participants for the formal conduct of the in-depth interview. In the conduct of in-depth interview, the researcher prepared a list of open-ended questions that allow participants to respond in depth and discuss their experiences and thoughts in detail. The researcher began through greetings and told them about the research, making sure the participants were aware of how they will be utilizing their insights. As the interview went on, the researcher actively hears, giving the participant the freedom to speak without interruption. Then, the researcher applied follow-up questions to explore certain matters in depth or to get to the point. Lastly, the researcher made detailed notes or records the interview (with consent) to record the conversation and expressed appreciation to the participant for his or her time and information at the conclusion.

3.4. Validation of Data

Validation of a questionnaire was critical to verify that it could effectively measure the desired outcome of the interview. The researcher started by stating the purpose of the questionnaire and reviewing the literature to determine successful question formats. Subject matter experts' feedback was used to assess content validity. The experts ensured that the questions aligned to the objective of the study. Once checked and approved, the researcher could now conduct the study. Verification of participant's responses was made if the responses were aligned to the practices as stated in the framework.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section the collected data from the conducted in-depth interview were presented. The data underwent a thorough examination and interpretation to address the research questions of the study. The response(s) was/were aligned to the following translanguaging practices focusing on the experiences of the teachers and its impact to their teaching practices and classroom

interaction especially on the knowledge construction, classroom management, interpersonal relationship, and personal and affective meanings.

Translanguaging Practices

The use of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms is an advantage because it allows them to explore the linguistic repertoire of the learners. Although there many beneficial effects which contribute to their teaching experiences, translanguaging is still a challenge for some teachers handling subjects whose medium of instruction is English and these become a primary reason why they shift other languages in teaching the topics of the lesson.

For translanguaging practices as *knowledge construction*, the teacher-participant argued that teaching the lesson using English language for the entire time would become a problem for some of the students who were not capable of understanding the lessons well. With this, she highlighted the following situations she encountered in teaching the lesson.

“[English] It’s difficult because there are students who are not good in English. There are students who understand the words taught in English but there are also students who understand well when [we] used Bisaya. If they don’t still understand, you need to translate and provide pictures with explanation using Bisaya. Actually, it’s difficult.” You have to ensure that they have understood. It’s hard to teach when they don’t understand the words in the first place. [As a result] They will not listen anymore and misbehave.”

In the contexts where the teacher said, “*It’s difficult because there are students who are not good in English. There are students who understand the words taught in English but there are also students who understand well when [we] used Bisaya.*”, it can be understood that the teacher experiences difficulty in teaching the lesson when English language is used and it finds them difficult for students understand the content of the lesson. This is also corroborated when she said that, “*If they don’t still understand, you need to translate and provide pictures with explanation using Bisaya. Actually, it’s difficult.*”, which means that the only thing for majority of the learners to understand is to use translation [which is also part of translanguaging] and provide concrete examples for them to understand the topic all about. She also added on her statement, “*You have to ensure that they have understood.*” which suggests the important use of translanguaging to ensure that students have understood well about the lesson. Nur et al. (2020), Mbirimi-Hungwe (2022), and Casalan (2022) also claim that when teachers teach lessons using English, some of the students will not be able to completely understand the text and thus, the utilization of translanguaging really improves their knowledge and enhances the comprehension and of the learners.

For translanguaging practices as *classroom management*, the teacher-participant asserted that translanguaging helped her to manage the behaviors of the students and presented a clearer instruction of the lessons. She also added that shifting to other languages create classroom interactions.

“In classroom management, I have to use Bisaya for them to know where and which part I have angered about. Because if you will speak English, they will not understand. Even in our teaching Sir (X), we used Bisaya in delivering the lesson so that they will understand. Even [the subject is] English, we used Bisaya; you are just translating but not all because there are terms which they understand. Mostly, we translate to Bisaya so that the student will listen to us; it is not all the time [we] use Bisaya if got angry but also in giving instructions to them.”

Based on the responses from the participant, it can observed that translanguaging helps her in the classroom management. In the excerpts of the statement like, “*I have to use Bisaya for them to know where and which part I have angered about.*” and “*...Mostly, we translate to Bisaya so that the student will listen to us; it is not all the time [we] use Bisaya if got angry but also in giving instructions to them.*”, it can be understood that translanguaging becomes a tool for correcting behaviors, clarifying the root cause of misbehaviors of the students, and giving clear directions that will lead to better classroom instruction. These experiences are also supported by Hu (2020). His findings revealed that it is an advantage for teachers especially in delivering classroom instructions, clarifying linguistic content and enabling a sympathetic learning environment.

For translanguaging practices as *interpersonal relationship*, the teacher-participant claimed that translanguaging helped them to build connection in communication. She believed that translanguaging became a bridge to communicate the learners especially when students shared their experiences happened in their respective homes.

“I am not really into speaking English most of the time. If you want to build relationship with students like talking with each other in the class, it is necessary to speak Bisaya. Actually, it’s nice when students share [their experience], “Ma’am, you know what, my father...”. If you are going to use English as your strategy to give advices and summarize their key points, they will not understand.

It becomes useless especially when they complain [like] “Ma’am, my mother hit me.” And if you respond using English, they’ll not understand.”

It can be gleaned from the responses that the teacher does not really support the use of English language but rather she opt to choose *Bisaya* as language of communication and building teacher-students classroom relationship. This is also proved by the participant when she clearly states that *If you want to build relationship with students like talking with each other in the class, it is necessary to speak Bisaya.*” which implies that through *Bisaya*, as other language used in the classroom, the teacher and students can communicate each other. She further discusses that student would likely to share their experiences when translanguaging is utilized. This experience is also visible on the excerpt of situations where she said, *“If you are going to use English as your strategy to give advices and summarize their key points, they will not understand.”* The above contexts prove that communication between teacher and students will be possible when both of them understand the language and feel a secured environment. This experience is also supported by Ghafouri & Esmaeilee (2024) and Creese & Blackledge (2010). They argued that employing translanguaging in the classroom will encourage student’s engagement, contribute to an emotionally supportive classroom environment, a boosted sense of self-efficacy, and a self-decentralized teaching context where teachers and students exchanges information and share thoughts with each other.

Lastly, for translanguaging practices as *personal and affective meanings*, the teacher-participant emphasized the significant contribution of translanguaging inside the classroom. She believed that through translanguaging, it enabled her to make lessons fun.

“It depends Sir (X), we translate some words that are difficult to understand and with matching pictures and examples that are common to their experience when our subject is English. Sometimes, I just have say it in a funny way. “I, myself, I have to make fun of the words for them to understand the context of their daily experiences like the words they used at home. I have to relate it for them to easy understand. [With that], they will think and then, we will understand each other sooner.”

It can be seen on the responses from the teacher-participant like *“...we translate some words that are difficult to understand and with matching pictures and examples that are common to their experience when our subject is English..”* and *“I, myself, I have to make fun of the words for them to understand the context of their daily experiences like the words they used at home.”* she uses translanguaging for the purpose of translating English vocabulary with pictures and examples that are relevant on the students’ experiences and making learning fun in a form of jokes. Zhang (2021) claims that translanguaging establish better teacher-student relationships and create a flexible space and harmonious classroom climate.

Impact of Translanguaging Practices

Translanguaging practices in teaching is important, for it influences the language teachers' teaching practices and classroom life by promoting an inclusive and active learning environment. On the study conducted, several responses were provided by the participant signifying the relevant impact of utilizing translanguaging in teaching.

For knowledge construction, the teacher-participant believed that it helped her to develop the vocabulary of the students. She also suggested that translanguaging helped her for it allowed her to clarify difficult ideas and terms to be understood by the students.

“Their vocabularies will be develop if you shift it into other languages – English, Filipino, and Bisaya. If they don’t understand the word in English translated in Filipino, you need to translate it again in Bisaya for them to understand better. [Does it help?], Yes, it helped me. In fact, I tried to teach lessons in plain English for example in story reading. Along the story, you need to translate it because will not listen anymore when they don’t understand.”

The response *“Their vocabularies will be develop if you shift it into other languages – English, Filipino, and Bisaya.”* from the participant signifies that translanguaging is really a helpful tool to developing vocabularies of the students. This means that when vocabularies of the students are develop, they may be able to understand better the words written in English. When she similarly said that *“...Along the story, you need to translate it because will not listen anymore when they don’t understand.”*, she believes that translanguaging has helped in her teaching because students tend to listen if they wide vocabularies they will understand the language. Similarly, Galante (2020) also agreed that translanguaging provides engagement in vocabulary learning in ways and thus, students who employ translanguaging can interact during classroom discussions.

For classroom management, the teacher-participant shared a scenario where she used English language in giving instructions and managing students' participation. She found out that when translanguaging was utilized, there would be a classroom collaboration among students.

“Actually, it's difficult when the content of the lesson is English. They find difficulty in English. They only understand basic words in English; how much more if you teach and get angry using English. [Bisaya?] Indeed, it can help for managing classroom. Like for example, they will cooperate each other if they understand it correctly. Unlikely [in speaking] English most of the time in class, the classroom will be disorganized; your temper will be tested.”

The response “*Actually, it's difficult when the content of the lesson is English. They find difficulty in English.*” as shown above is a discourse where the teacher realizes that when English is used in teaching the lesson, it will be difficult for she knows that most of the students find it difficult to understand. Likewise, when she said, “*They only understand basic words in English; how much more if you teach and get angry using English.*”, she implies that it will always be better to use the language understood by many. However, when she also said that “*Indeed, it can help for managing classroom. Like for example, they will cooperate each other if they understand it correctly. Unlikely [in speaking] English most of the time in class, the classroom will be disorganized; your temper will be tested.*””, she intended to clarify that translanguaging can help managing students' behavior since they have understood her as she speaks in front of the class. Tai (2022) also supported these experiences of the teacher. The findings of his study suggest that teachers can benefit from the use of other languages to manage misbehaving students inside the classroom.

For interpersonal relationship, the teacher participant underlined the important role of translanguaging in making connections with students.

“The level of comprehension will lead you to connect to their personal life. If you [speak] purely one language or use one language in delivering the lesson, you can't expect to build a relationship to them; the three languages are necessary – English, Filipino, or Bisaya.”

The response shows that a teacher can build classroom relationship when translanguaging is used. When the teacher-participant argued that: “*If you [speak] purely one language or use one language in delivering the lesson, you can't expect to build a relationship to them.*”, she emphasizes that home languages of the students are far more important in building connections with students. It can also be observed in her statement when she said that “*The three languages are necessary – English, Filipino, or Bisaya.*” In this context, she stresses that knowledge of multiple languages is very essential in making connections with students. MacIntyre et al. (2019) and Mercer et al. (2018) argued with these experiences for they believed that it becomes an emotional challenge. Parallel to this, Wang (2016) asserted that in translanguaging, teachers showed mixed feelings about which language to use in the classroom. He believes that some teachers struggled to include multiple languages in their teaching, while others welcomed the idea and created teaching methods that use different languages together.

For personal and affective meanings, the teacher-participant was very clear to share the significant implication of translanguaging to her teaching. She asserted that translanguaging had a positive effect on her teaching practices.

“[Translanguaging] It has a positive effect on the students. Why? In grade 1 we have reading and we must let the students read and understand the meaning of what they are reading. What will happen if there is only one language? You only focus on one language and they even didn't use that language in their home?” Also, during the assessment Sir (X), we assist the student's level of understanding and which level they belong. Majority of them are Bisaya and a few of them understand English but not fluent. So, we need to translate it and allow them to have repetitive reading and translate it to Bisaya with matching pictures.”

The responses above from the teacher-participants show that there are positive effects on the use of translanguaging across diverse contexts. The excerpt from statements, “*In grade 1 we have reading and we must let the students read and understand the meaning of what they are reading. What will happen if there is only one language? You only focus on one language and they even didn't use that language in their home?*” and “*...So, we need to translate it and allow them to have repetitive reading and translate it to Bisaya with matching pictures.*”, the teacher-participant confirms that translanguaging is vital in her teaching of the content of the lesson. This has been supported by Back et al. (2020). They underlined that when a teacher employs translanguaging, the emotional well-being of students will be assessed, the anxiety and behavioral issues will be reduced, and the academic performance will improve since students are more likely to feel at ease, valued, and supported emotionally.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Translanguaging had benefits for students and teachers in that it offers a dynamic, inclusive learning situation in which languages are respected and valued. It was a very useful tool for teachers to make connections with pupils, respond to diverse learning difficulties, and help regulate classroom communications better. Through translanguaging, teachers were able to provide scaffolding on instruction, redefine complex concepts, and establish a more culturally aware classroom. For learners, it improved learning, increased confidence, and contributed to emotional well-being through being able to use their full linguistic capacity to access the material. It also reduced language barriers, facilitated active engagement, and increased learning. Translanguaging, in turn, supported shared respect, improved relationships, and enhanced learning outcomes for all students.

In the case of multilingual classrooms, translanguaging played an important role in teaching-learning process because it allowed teachers to create a wider space not just for constructing knowledge but also for managing behaviors, interacting/ establishing connections with students, and sharing thoughts and experiences. In knowledge construction, translanguaging was particularly crucial because it lead to teachers in assisting young learners in constructing meaning, feeling secure, and remaining engaged. It enabled learners to construct knowledge more securely and correctly. For classroom management, using a combination of languages enabled teachers to clarify rules, routines, and tasks and minimize confusion and enable children to feel safer. It also enhanced improved behavior because children knew what was required of them. With regards to classroom interpersonal relationships, permitting students to use their home language helped them to feel valued and accepted, which solidified the relationship of trust between the teacher and student, fostered friendship among peers. For personal and affective meanings of teachers, translanguaging provides additional means to engage with students and facilitate their learning and emotional well-being. Thus, translanguaging makes the Grade 1 classroom more inclusive and effective for all children to learn and develop.

Generally, translanguaging fosters an inclusive, student-centered, and supportive learning atmosphere. For these reasons, teachers are encouraged to implement translanguaging in their classrooms since their experiences demonstrate its positive impact on teaching practice and student interaction. However, teachers also need to maximize the use of translanguaging for developing proficiency in the target language.

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