

Voices between Languages: Lived Experiences of Grade 10 Students in a Translanguaging Instruction in English Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of the Grade 10 students on Translanguaging Instruction in the English Classroom in terms of their perspectives, participation, and barriers encountered by the students in the context of translanguaging practices. The research used qualitative phenomenological research. Validated semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight informants from Alaminos Integrated National High School and two classroom observations were used to record the practice of translanguaging. The findings revealed five developing themes: (1) Translanguaging as a Pedagogical and Communicative Scaffold; (2) Translanguaging as a Cognitive, Emotional and Communicative Drive of Learning; (3) Constraints and Variations in Translanguaging Practices Affecting Classroom Comprehension; (4) Translanguaging as a Normalized Academic Practice and an Adaptive Everyday Communicative Resource; and (5) Awareness of Translanguaging as an Academic Discourse Practice. The repeating trends across the data suggest that translanguaging promotes cognitive development, vocabulary growth, inclusivity and student involvement. But the results also show that the benefits are not absolute, since they depend on the quality of training, and an over-reliance on one language could lead to problems, particularly in instances when official fluency in English is required. These findings indicate a need for a balanced approach, which forms the basis of the study's suggestions for enhancing translanguaging in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Translanguaging Practices, Translanguaging Pedagogy, Lived Experiences, Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Language is central to how learners listen, speak, read, and write to make sense of, express, and construct knowledge in the classroom. In multilingual settings such as the Philippines, classrooms reflect the linguistic diversity of the country where English, Filipino, and regional dialects are used; hence, there is a need for flexibility in language use. As a result, translanguaging has evolved as an effective instructional strategy based on Ofelia Garcia's (2009) theoretical viewpoints as it fosters linguistic variety by allowing learners to draw from their complete repertoire to construct meaning. Also, research such as Casalan (2022) pointed to the spontaneous occurrence of translanguaging in MTB-MLE classrooms and Gatil (2021) found it helpful in bridging the gaps between L1, L2 and English. However, despite these good findings, the majority of the material is teacher-centric and provides little insight into students' own experiences of translanguaging methods. Therefore, this study titled "Voices Between Languages: Lived Experiences of Grade 10 Students in Translanguaging Instruction in the English Classroom" seeks to explore the lived experiences of Grade 10 students of Alaminos Integrated National High School who learn through translanguaging-based instruction using Tagalog Laguna and English only. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following: (1) What are the lived experiences of Grade 10 students in the translanguaging classroom? (2) How do students perceive the use of translanguaging in comprehension of lessons? (3) How does translanguaging affect students' participation and confidence? (4) What challenges do students face in using translanguaging? This study contributes to the knowledge of translanguaging as a learner-centered approach by articulating their perspectives and the continuing discourse on multilingual education in the Philippines.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Grade 10 students in relation to teachers' translanguaging instruction in the English Classroom. To begin, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight (8) purposively chosen students from Alaminos Integrated National High School, identified with the guidance of their class adviser. Next, the main instrument utilized was a research-made semi-structured interview consisting of open-ended questions, which underwent content validation by three (3) English teachers to ensure relevance, clarity, and appropriateness. Then, during the interview process, data saturation was reached as responses became repetitive and sufficient to address the research objectives. Moreover, data collection involved a brief orientation to discuss objectives and secure informed consent, followed by scheduling of one-on-one interviews and administering one session with the selected students. Five carefully crafted core questions were used to elicit in-depth descriptions of their learning experiences, and follow-up questions were used to clarify and expand responses, concentrating on how different languages influenced their comprehension, engagement and expression. The interviews were supplemented with two (2) classroom observations by their English and Mathematics professors. Finally, all data were reviewed to discover emergent patterns and themes by MAXQDA for correctness and reliability, and provided a good foundation for the study Voices Between Languages and for making meaningful suggestions. In conclusion, the study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical standards and legal regulations, with the approval of the Dean's Office and School Principal, obtaining informed consent, voluntary participation and adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Emerging Themes from Grade 10 Students' Lived Experiences in a Translanguaging Instruction in the English Classroom.

Themes	Sub-themes	Key Insights
1. Translanguaging as a Pedagogical and Communicative Scaffold	Dual-Language as Pedagogical Tool Filipino as a Lexical Bridge and Comprehension Strategy Limitations of Monolingual English Instruction Translanguaging as a Facilitator of Participation and Engagement	Translanguaging is an important scaffold connecting English and Filipino to make the lessons clearer, more engaging and emotionally helpful.
2. Translanguaging as a Cognitive, Emotional, and Communicative Drive of Learning	Cognitive Reinforcement and Knowledge Expansion Emotional Empowerment through Translanguaging Translanguaging as an Enabler of Expression and Communicative Clarity Translanguaging for Social Mediation and Peer Communication	Translanguaging acts as a comprehensive learning mechanism that enhances cognitive development, empowers learners emotionally, enables clearer expression, and strengthens social interaction by leveraging learners' full linguistic resources.
3. Constraints and Variations in Translanguaging	Variably Structured Translanguaging as a Learning Barrier	Limitations in structure, content complexity, teacher clarity, learner affect, and overuse of translanguaging

Practices Affecting Classroom Comprehension	Limitations in Handling Complex or Specialized Content Dependence on Teacher Clarity and Instructional Quality Affective Barriers in Classroom Participation Perceived Language Overuse and Threshold Effect of Translanguaging	can reduce classroom comprehension and effectiveness.
4. Translanguaging as a Normalized Academic Practice and an Adaptive Everyday Communicative Resource	Translanguaging as a Normalized Practice in Academic Discourse Translanguaging as a Flexible Everyday Resource	Translanguaging is a normalized academic practice and a flexible everyday resource that supports adaptive, effective communication across learning contexts.
5. Awareness of Translanguaging as an Academic Discourse Practice	Onset of Conscious Understanding Embracing Language Fluidity	Growing awareness of translanguaging fosters conscious understanding and encourages learners to embrace language fluidity as part of academic discourse.

Table 1 presents the five (5) emerging themes emerging from the data gathered in Grade 10 students' lived experiences in translanguaging instruction in the English classroom.

The findings show that translanguaging functions first as a *pedagogical and communicative scaffold*. Students repeatedly described how teachers alternate between English and Filipino in explaining concepts in English and Filipino, so that lessons become more understandable. In this sense, the use of Filipino becomes an intentional support system that helps students enter an English-mediated lesson with less fear and more clarity. This is consistent with Cenoz and Gorter's (2021) view that pedagogical translanguaging purposefully uses learners' full linguistic repertoire to improve both language and content learning.

The results also revealed that translanguaging strengthens the *cognitive dimension of learning* when students reported that difficult words, unfamiliar concepts, and test items become easier to process when teachers and fellow students allow the fluid movement between languages. Their accounts show that translanguaging helps them decode vocabulary and organize thoughts to recall lessons and strengthen their retention. Across disciplines like English, Science, Mathematics, and other content subjects, the participants did not translate words, instead they used language movement as a thinking strategy. This practice proves Garcia's Translanguaging Theory would make discipline-specific knowledge more accessible in other content-subject areas.

At the same time, the study also spotlights the *emotional value* of translanguaging. Students associated translanguaging with "relief" and "comfort"; all the more, they give precedence to translanguaging as a booster of their confidence and excitement for the lesson being taught. With these accounts, when teachers permit the use of both English and Filipino, students feel less threatened by the demand to perform in English. The classroom becomes less intimidating and becomes more responsive to the learner's actual linguistic realities. This means that "voice between languages" is an emotionally protected voice where it becomes willing to ask questions, or to answer, or to merely participate, for it is not forced to sound in pure English. This is in accordance with Song et al. (2022) who show how translanguaging can act as a way to turn classrooms into collaborative emotional places where learners can build confidence and lower anxiety

On the other hand, the findings are also a warning that translanguaging doesn't work automatically. Students were confused when language shift was too sudden or ambiguous. This suggests that translanguaging can be conscious and instructionally guided. Thus, the study does not romanticize translanguaging as a panacea, but as a strong method whose effectiveness is contingent on the teacher's clarity, the difficulty of the lesson, the learners' preparation and the right mix of the languages. In other words, the aim is not to comprehend translanguaging as an unbridled language mixing, but to propose an intentional switch between the languages for learning purposes. This result is echoed by García and Sylvan (2011) who revealed that teachers have an important role in influencing the ways in which languages are used to generate meaning and that clarity and pacing are important for understanding. Thus, translanguaging is effective only when supported by well-structured and clearly paced, scaffolded education that guarantees learners can actively absorb and interact classroom content.

The study therefore shows that translanguaging is already a mainstream academic and everyday communicative activity among students. It was described as natural, routine in the English classroom, but also in group assignments, in peer talks, in reporting, in asking questions, in all daily contacts. This demonstrates that translanguaging is not invented in the classroom but rather a reflection of how multilingual learners talk. Schools that acknowledge this approach affirm students' linguistic identities instead of correcting their multilingual utterances as mistakes or deficits. Mazzaferro (2018) follows up on this point, highlighting that translanguaging is not confined to academic settings but also occurs in other areas such as family interactions, businesses, communities, and everyday conversations. He stresses that translanguaging is "a locally situated, interactional accomplishment," applied in real-life scenarios in a range of social contexts.

Most crucially, the results reveal a transition from unconscious usage to conscious awareness. Students first experienced it as "Taglish" or a combination of languages and then subsequently as translanguaging, an academic discourse technique that supports their learning. Such consciousness turns their multilingual voice from an informal or erroneous voice into a pedagogically meaningful one. Is this a failure of English — a fluidity or movement of languages? In short, the answer is no. Students start to regard their mobility among languages as a valid approach for meaning formation. Thus, the English classroom becomes a domain of linguistic negotiation. Learners are empowered to go from silence to involvement, from perplexity to understanding, from worry to confidence and from casual language use to academic knowledge. Apostol (2025) discovered that students originally saw translanguaging as informal mingling of two languages, but later recognized it as an academic strategy that improves understanding and minimizes cognitive burden.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results highlight repeated trends indicating that translanguaging can promote participation and inclusiveness. Students said they feel more comfortable participating in class and sharing ideas when they're not confined to one language. Students valued the access and empowerment offered by translanguaging but also realized the limitations of using technology too heavily, especially when formal English was demanded. Translanguaging is a powerful learner-centered strategy that links linguistic variety and engagement in the classroom, affirming students' identities and allowing kids to understand and participate. It also depends on a methodical educational embedment which guarantees that it will supplement English development rather than replace it. Therefore, this study suggests explicit guidelines and a systematic implementation of translanguaging strategies in ESL classrooms so that students gain confidence and inclusivity and reach the level of English proficiency required for academic and professional success. This balance is the foundation for the ideas for the development of translanguaging teaching in English classrooms.

The findings of this study indicate that the systematic use of translanguaging in ESL classes can improve inclusion, confidence and comprehension among students without any deleterious effects on their English language abilities. The above concerns such as over-reliance on Filipino and difficulty in maintaining formal English language usage should be addressed by clear-cut educational standards and balanced language practice. Teachers are advised to employ translanguaging carefully to assist learning, build vocabulary and confidence, and boost usage of English without losing English progress. Translanguaging exercises are supported to improve knowledge and engagement whereas progressive usage of English is employed in oral and written work.

Curriculum developers are encouraged to embed systematic translanguaging tools throughout the curriculum to support purposeful integration for comprehension, vocabulary and confidence. Future research need to investigate the long-term effects of translanguaging on academic achievement and engagement, and to develop systematic strategies that can be evaluated using quantitative or experimental approaches.

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