



Students' Perspectives on Translanguaging Practices in English History Classes at a Private University, Bangladesh

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Abstract

This action research study investigates the effectiveness of translanguaging practices in an English History course at the Department of English Language and Literature, a Private University, Chattogram, Bangladesh. In this context, departmental policy requires an instruction to be conducted in English, despite students being the beginner-level English language learners. This creates significant challenges for the content comprehension, especially in history classes where the complex concepts and unfamiliar vocabulary are prevalent. The study employed qualitative methods to examine how the strategic use of Bengali (L1) alongside English (L2) affects students' understanding of historical content and their engagement in class. Data were collected through the semi-structured interviews with 13 undergraduate students and the systematic classroom observations over one semester. The findings reveal that the judicious use of translanguaging practices significantly enhanced students' comprehension of historical concepts, boosted their confidence in participating in class discussions, and reduced the anxiety related to content learning. Specifically,

students demonstrated improved retention of historical events and concepts when explanations were scaffolded using their mother tongue. The research also identified effective translanguaging strategies, including the concept explanation in L1 after English introduction, clarification of complex historical terminology through the L1 equivalents, and encouragement of initial responses in L1 before transitioning to L2. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on translanguaging pedagogy in the South Asian higher education contexts and challenge the monolingual approaches to the content teaching in the multilingual settings. The study concludes with practical recommendations for instructors teaching the content courses to ESL learners and suggests that the institutional language policies should be flexible enough to accommodate pedagogically sound translanguaging practices that prioritize the content comprehension while still promoting the target language development.

Keywords: Translanguaging, content-based instruction, English as a second language, history teaching

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Introduction

The current marketization of higher education has resulted in a growing focus on English medium instruction (EMI) in non-Anglophone countries. In the country like Bangladesh, where English is acquired as a second language, most of the universities conduct programs through the medium of English at least in the English language and literature departments (Kirkwood 866). Department of English Language and Literature at a private University, Chattogram, Bangladesh, where all the courses, including content subjects like English History, are offered and delivered in English. This policy is designed to increase students' exposure to the target language and to ready them for academic and professional environments where mastery of English is necessary.

Nonetheless, this English-only model poses a great struggle for low proficiency ESL students, especially in knowledge-content classes such as history. Students find it difficult to grasp complex historical ideas, events and terminology when they are taught in the English language only. As a college instructor of British History to second year students in the department the Teaching of English, I found that many students lack the skills to fully participate in a class because of language barriers. Their language proficiency limited their comprehension of lectures, discussion, and the ability to communicate concepts and understanding about historical events and their importance.

This finding is consistent with studies that show that if strict monolingual approaches are pursued in content classes this limits their possibilities of learning through their still developing L2 (García and Li Wei). Academic achievement and motivation on the part of the pupils is in turn hampered when language blurs the message that the pupils are expected to receive. This situation leads to a discussion of how language learning goals and content

learning goals should be balanced in higher education.

In doing so in response to the challenges I identified, I engaged in a research process to observe the impact of a new teaching methodology, with my English History class, that incorporates the principles of translanguaging. This is an important concept from the field of semiotics: that a unit is made up of distinctive features which can combine to make a separate meaning (Williams and García). It also refers to the purposeful use of the students' entire linguistic repertoire (e.g. first language [L1] and target language [L2]) to maximize the learning process in pedagogical contexts (García & Sylvan).

Translanguaging challenges dichotomized views in language education (e.g. monolingual views of language education) that dismiss the home languages of the students as barren (Canagarajah 31). It considers the languages a bilingual or multilingual speaker has not as distinct as one linguistic competence which can be used strategically for various functions (Li Wei 9). In the arena of CBI, the use of translanguaging can be the bridge connecting students' current language levels with their knowledge requirements.

Although there is an emerging critical mass of research on translanguaging in diverse global educational contexts, research on its use and effectiveness in South Asian HE contexts are limited, especially in Bangladesh. The majority of research on translanguaging, up to the present, has been carried out in the West or at school level (Cenoz & Gorter 300). Thus, context-relevant research that focuses on Bangladeshi higher education including its linguistic, cultural and educational particularities is vital.

This action research project will seek to redress this lacuna by examining the impact of translanguaging practices on the learning experiences and achievements of beginner level English language learners

studying an English History course at the private University. The study questions for the study are as follows:

1. In what ways does the strategic use of Bengali (L1) with English (L2), by teachers in the teaching of the English History course, impact students' understanding of the historical content?
2. What do students think about translating in their history class?
3. What trans writing strategies can best foster content understanding and interaction in the English History class?

Answering these questions will facilitate a nuanced understanding of how translanguaging can be adopted in bilingual instruction at Bangladeshi institutions of higher education and also in other South Asian and international settings. The results could have implications for language policies, and pedagogical practices that enhance the content learning of ELLs as they build their English proficiency.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Translanguaging

Translanguaging have come a long way from the 1980s when they were coined by Cen Williams in the space of Welsh bilingual education (Lewis et al. Defined originally as the pedagogical practice of alternating languages for input and output in bilingual education, translanguaging has evolved into a full theory for conceptualizing bilingualism and language education (García and Li Wei 9). Translanguaging contrasts with traditional code switching, where languages are regarded as separate systems and one language suffers interference from the other, because according to translanguaging bilinguals have access to an integrated linguistic repertoire and strategically choose elements from one or other system according to their communicative purpose

(Otheguy, García, and Reid 281). Based on needs, the application of translanguaging in the classroom can make better learning environment.

García and Li Wei define translanguaging as “the process by which multilingual speakers use their languages as an integrated communication system” (20). This working definition highlights that translanguaging is not just the use or switch between languages, but the deployment of all linguistic knowledge as a coherent and interconnected whole for meaning making. From this understanding, the distinction between labeled languages like “English” and “Bengali” are socially constructed, not cognitively grounded.

Translanguaging is based on theoretical objectives, which challenge monolingual ideologies that have reigned in language instruction for years. Such ideologies, often identified as “monoglossic,” believe that languages should be strictly separate in educational contexts and that only the target language should be used in language classes (García). Translanguaging, on the other hand, subscribes to a “heteroglossic” perspective that regards bilingual practices as flexible and constantly changing, and that privileges the selective use of students’ entire repertoires of languages (García & Lin 117). Bilingual language practice can create comfort for the students.

Translanguaging in Content-Based Instruction

CBI is a second language teaching pedagogy in which primary academic subject matter is taught in a second language, and both content and language learning are achieved (Lyster 87). This method is premised on the idea that language is most effectively mastered when it is a vehicle for acquiring meaningful content rather than in isolation (Cenoz and Gorter 300). However, teaching beginners using CBI is full of challenges: students do not yet have the language skills to access complex content

material.

One recent inquiry has investigated how content-based instruction can be enriched through translanguaging and used to scaffold language for students. For example, Lin and García investigated the role of translanguaging in science classrooms in Hong Kong, and their research suggested that to strategically use students' L1 alongside English was beneficial for students' understanding of science, which is a complex subject rich in both concepts and vocabulary. For example, Creese and Blackledge found that indeed, in content classes, translanguaging practices enabled students to have higher levels of involvement with the subject matter and to translate their CS and language learning experience into a more relevant educational experience (20).

Cenoz and Gorter claim that translanguaging in CBI functions as follows: (1) it allows students to access content knowledge that would be difficult for learners of other types who would not use their full language repertoire; (2) it helps make connections between knowledge in L1 and L2, leading to improved understanding of concepts; (3) it keeps cognitive load low enough for students to use more attention with content learning; and (4) it considers students' own linguistic identity and language knowledge as valid, which would result in a positive attitude toward learning (300). While doing the research, it is seen that implementing CBI with beginner-level students can be a significant challenge.

Translanguaging in Higher Education

Most translanguaging scholarship has taken place at the primary and secondary levels, but it is increasingly being studied in the postsecondary context. Mazak and Carroll have assembled an anthology of case studies on translanguaging in universities around the world that testify to the use of multilingual practices to reach content and language learning

goals in several fields of studies. Such studies raise the awareness that, even if language policies in higher education tend to be quite strict in favor of the 'target language' of instruction, various forms of translanguaging can thrive in multilingual university classrooms as a means to address pragmatic language use, especially when in situations of language contact.

In the context of higher education, translanguaging works not just pedagogically but also as identity-affirming practices. Parmegiani discovered that university students in South Africa were equally successful academically and had increased levels of success in their development as academic scholars when they were permitted to use their L1 alongside English (73). Li Wei also points out that university is a site of reconfiguration of translanguaging practices which destabilize linguistic hierarchies and provide more equitable spaces where Linguistically Diverse Students (LDS) learn to thrive (9).

English Language Teaching in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a particularly interesting context in which to study translanguaging given its linguistic past and the contemporary language-in-education policies. Being largely monolingual with Bangla (Bengali) as the national language, Bangladesh still has a complicated relationship with English due to its colonial past and due to the growing role of English in global economy and education (Kirkwood 866). English is a mandatory subject in primary and secondary school, and most universities use English as the medium of instruction, including instruction at English departments.

Hamid and Jahan have claimed that English language in Bangladesh has been taught based on grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods paying less heed to communicative competency (75). This has led to a situation in which many English students spend years in the classroom but continue to be unable to communicate

beyond the most basic functions. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) efforts have been attempted more recently; however, they are defied by overwhelming class size, scarcity of resources, and teachers' language proficiency and pedagogical training (Rahman et al. 1).

Kirkwood completed a baseline study for the 'English in Action' project in Bangladesh and noted that students in Bangladesh demonstrated a poor proficiency level in communicative English skills despite being compelled to study English for many years (866). This is indicative of traditional methods taken to teaching English and is likely to not be preparing learners as well for using their English in realistic academic and professional contexts in Bangladesh.

There is scarce academic investigation on translanguaging practice in Bangladeshi educational settings. But research from neighboring South Asian countries does offer some insights. If, for example, Canagarajah studied the enactment of translanguaging practices in Sri Lankan classrooms, he found that they worked to transmit significant pedagogical work as much as they worked as resistance to linguistic imperialism (31). Also, Ramanathan investigated how multilingualism in Indian higher education permits access to content knowledge for students regarding their existing proficiency in English (290).

Translanguaging and History Education

Teaching history through an additional language brings its own questions given the specific vocabulary, abstract concepts, and cultural capital relevant to a non-native language-learner (Morton 7). Doing history (talking about past events, people, society, ideas, etc.) involves not just knowing particular words—that is, it is not just a matter of memorizing lists of words in the context of history—but also being able to process, interpret, and make arguments with historical evidence, something that is

a significant linguistic demand even for monolinguals.

Though nascent, research on translanguaging in history education has begun. Lorenzo and Moore investigated the role of translanguaging in connection with the conceptual understanding of secondary pupils at a history CLIL school in Spain (347). They discovered that providing strategic L1 support helped students to understand complicated historical concepts and involved them in higher levels of historical thinking about events. In the same vein, Dalton-Puffer found that within the context of history, at the school level, CLIL-ers resorted to translanguaging as a bridge to historical thinking when their L2 resources were not enough (1172).

Gap in the Literature

Although research on translanguaging has developed in different education settings, there are still some deficits in the literature, which this study tries to overcome. Second, translanguaging studies are guided from the Western perspective, and very few such studies are found from South Asian context such as Bangladesh. Second, since the research on translanguaging in higher education is relatively new, and few studies, in particular, have been conducted in undergraduate content courses such as history. Third, there is little research into the tactical use of translanguaging practices in settings that support or require English only.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how translanguaging practices are effective in an English History course for undergraduate beginner-level ELLs at a Bangladeshi university. Through investigating the use of translanguaging as well as its effect of students' content understanding and engagement, the study provides context-specific knowledge to Bangladeshi higher education and adds to the global knowledge of translanguaging pedagogy.

Methodology

Research Design

The present research follows qualitative action research designed to identify how Campus model would work in an English History class at the private University, Chattogram, Bangladesh. Action research was selected as a methodological approach as, through this means, practitioners can systematically reflect on their own teaching practice to enact change and measure the impact on identified issues (Burns 1). This converged with the goal of the study to enhance pedagogical practices based on deficiencies identified in the English History classroom.

The action research cycle for this study involved the following four stages: (1) noticing a problem (students struggle to make meaning of history content when it is only taught in English), (2) planning for an action (undertaking specific translanguaging strategies), (3) taking the action itself and collecting data; and (4) taking stock of the results and using them to inform further practice. This recursive process provided real-time refinement to translanguaging practices as new data emerged and was collected over time from the classroom.

Research Context

This study was carried out at the Department of English Language and Literature, Premier University, Chattogram, Bangladesh. The four years undergraduate level in English Language and Literature is delivered by this department and the English History is a obligatory course offered in the third semester. It is an institutional policy to teach all courses in the department in English, to improve students' English capabilities while learning their academic fields.

Although with this English-medium instruction policy, the department enrolls students who are at beginner-level in English and have had 2 years of tertiary level education learning English, they still face

difficulty in academic English. Students mostly from Bengali-medium where they have been taught in Bengali Namely (Bangla) with English as one of their subject and not in English medium.

The English History course stretched from the Anglo-Saxon period to the Victorian era, and dealt with the most important historical periods, events, and characters of British history. The goal is to improve students' knowledge of historical events/ periods, as well as the cultures, society and politics of the period, and their academic English skills. The class is held twice a week in 90-minute segments and is scheduled for over 14 weeks.

Participants

The subjects in this study were thirteen EFL learners (seven females and six males) in the English History course. All participants were students of their second year (third semester) in the English Language and Literature programme at the age of 19-21 years. All participants were native speakers of Bengali who had been exposed to English as a second language during their schooling from primary through secondary level in Bengali-medium schools.

According to the result of a pre-semester placement test, all the participants were categorized as novice English as a foreign language (EFL) learners whose L2 proficiency levels were between the European Common Framework Reference (CEFR) level A1-A2. They also reported limited academic language competence, especially in the areas of reading academic texts, understanding abstract concepts, and articulating sophisticated thoughts in English, although they had some social conversational competency in English.

The study was conducted with voluntary participation and all participants gave informed consent. Participants' pseudonyms are used in this paper to maintain their anonymity.

Data Collection Methods

This study employed two primary methods of data collection: classroom observations and semi-structured interviews.

Classroom Observations

Observation of Instruction Observation of classroom practice occurred for the entirety of the 14-week semester to capture the ways of enacting and the effects of translanguaging on student engagement and comprehension. The first classes during the first 4 weeks were given only in English, as decided by the department. Translanguaging strategies were systematically introduced from week five and their impact was monitored.

The observations concentrated on the following field notes:

1. Identification of students' verbal and non-verbal feedback about teaching types (English-only and Translanguaging)
2. Students' participation and engagement patterns
3. Comprehension questions and test results

Examples of student-led translanguaging 1) Using culture as a crutch: Translanguaging as support. In the first example, the sixth-grade students sometimes use Spanish to assist each other as they make sense of what they are reading in the new language. 2) Comprehensive field notes were taken during and immediately after each class, noting both the activities the teachers engaged in and the students' reactions. In addition, six class sessions (three for pure ESL instruction and three for translanguaging) were audio-recorded with the consent of students for a more in-depth analysis.

Semi-structured Interviews

Data Collection Semi-structured individual interviews took place during the last 2 weeks of the semester with all 13

informants. All interviews were 20-25 min in duration, conducted in a combination of English and Bengali so that participants could respond in the language they felt most comfortable using. Participants were audio-recorded during the interviews after gaining their consent, and transcripts (or translations where required) of the interviews were prepared for analysis.

The IFPDS interview schedule covered:

1. Learners' stories of learning history through English-medium instruction
2. Their understandings of how translanguaging practices influenced their understanding of the content
3. Specific examples of historical concepts or events that became more accessible to them with the translanguaging assistance
4. Their sentiments about teaching in Bengali and English in school
5. The recommendations for the improvement of content-based instruction in the course for ESL context.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis approach was used for the data analysis. Several steps were involved in the process:

1. Data familiarization: All interview recordings were transcribed in full and Bengali language responses were translated into English. Classroom observation field notes were arranged in temporal order. The researcher read repeating all of the data to familiarize herself with the content.
2. Primary coding: Data were coded line by line to capture features that were pertinent to the research questions. A combination of deductive codes (based on translanguaging theory and research questions) and inductive codes (following the data) were employed.
3. Theme: Related codes were grouped together to develop

potential themes around the impact of translanguaging on language comprehension, students' interest, and successful translanguaging practices.

4. Reviewing themes: The themes were reviewed to check if they were coherent, clear and represent the data appropriately. To this end, a return to the actual raw data was made to verify that the themes reflected participants' experiences and classroom dynamics.
5. Theme definition and labelling: The themes were defined and named so that the core meaning and how it relates to the research questions were caught in the title of the theme.
6. Reporting: The results were structured according to the main themes, with illustrative quotes from interviews and examples from classroom observations.
7. For trustworthiness, preliminary findings were member checked with a selection of participants who provided feedback. Peer debriefing also occurred by describing the analysis process and the findings to an experienced qualitative researcher who was not involved with the study.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical standards for research in schools. The study was approved by the department research committee of Premier University. Informed consent was obtained from all subjects after they had received thorough explanation about the purpose of the study, the objectives of the procedures and the use of their data. Participants were informed that their participation decision would have no impact on their grades in the course and that they would be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Pseudonyms are used in this paper to maintain participants' privacy and confidentiality to maintain participants'

anonymity and utmost care has been taken to ensure that identifiable information has been removed from reported data. The audio files and transcripts were securely stored and will be deleted after the study is finished.

Moreover, as this research involved a departure from the English-only policy of the department, permission to engage in the practice of translanguaging for research purposes was sought from the head of department. The host teachers shared view was that the ultimate aim was still to support students' English proficiency, and that translanguaging was intended as a scaffold—rather than substitute—for English teaching.

Results

The results of this action research study provide insight into the effects of the use of translanguaging in learning processes within the English History subject. Three key findings emerged from the qualitative analysis of nested classroom observations and interviews: (1) Enhanced content understanding from the use of L1 scaffolding, (2) Heightened classroom participation and engagement and (3) Effective use of translanguaging for history instruction. We present these findings in annotated form under these themes, which are illustrated with data from observations and the teachers' own words from the interviews.

Increased Understanding in Content with the Help of L1 Scaffolding

A pervading theme in both classroom observations and interviews with students was the extent to which translanguaging enriched student understanding of historical content. During the first four weeks of English only instruction, several indicators of confusion were observed in the classroom, such as blank looks on the students' faces, poor responses to comprehension checks, and problems in responding to content questions. In response

to questions to describe significant historical events and to state in English explanations of historical concepts, most pupils reported partial or inaccurate understanding.

Consolidation occurred in the fifth week with the introduction of translanguaging techniques, and strong evidence of comprehension emerged. Lena also found that when complex historical concepts were translated into Bengali following their presentation in English, students showed greater comprehension through more correct answers to content questions and more sophisticated discussions of historical events. For instance, during a teaching session about the Norman Conquest, more pupils were able to describe the feudal system in general and its social consequences in some detail following teaching of the concept in both languages as compared with teaching on Anglo-Saxon society which focused on the use of English alone.

All participants (13) found that strategic use of Bengali with English helped them to develop their understanding of history content. Fahim, 20 years old, male student said:

When you were lecturing solely in English, only about 40-50% of the lecture made sense to me. I recognized the words but couldn't assemble the full meaning, especially for complex ideas, like the reasons behind the English Civil War. But when you announced in Bangla [Bengali] after introducing in English what a wonderful world and history there was, all became clear. I could see everything, not bits and parts of it.

Nusrat, a 19-year-old female student, similarly reflected on my use of translanguaging to help her grapple abstract historical concepts:

History contains a lot of abstractions like "divine right of kings," or "constitutional monarchy." When these challenges were described in English, I

could memorize the definitions but often did not fully understand what they meant. But when you broke them down for me in Bengali and grounded them in our own history and culture, I was actually able to understand the concept, not just commit the words to memory.

The interview data made it clear that there were four aspects of historical content that appeared to be particularly easy to understand through translanguaging:

Complex cause- and- effect: For understanding cause and effect relationships in events (like causes and effects of the English Reformation), learners felt much relieved when the same were explained in Bengali after being introduced in English.

Abstract political and philosophical ideas: Terms like absolutism, enlightenment, or constitutional monarchy are easier to comprehend when laid down in both languages.

Cultural and sociological contexts of historical events: The understanding of the cultural and social relevance of a historical event was enhanced for the students when the same was explained by way of analogy and comparison with Bengali culture and history.

Specialized historical terms: Words related to British history (e.g., "enclosure," "yeoman," "Puritan") were more accessible and more likely to be retained when they were glossed in Bengali in addition to English definitions.

This was also corroborated by assessment data. Students did better on content-based assessments after implementing translanguaging activities. Positive results were obtained in a mid-term test, with the overall class scores improving from an average of 63% on topics taught in English to 78% on topics taught with a translanguaging approach. This increase was most evident among the questions that called for explanation and analysis over that of simple rhetoric or recall of facts.

Increased Classroom Participation and Engagement

The second finding that was indicated by the data was the potential influence of these translanguaging practices on students' participation and engagement in class. A clear student contrast in behavior was observed in the classroom in the two conditions (English only and translanguaging). From an English-only context, a smaller number of students participated during lessons, with a number being silent, and only contribute when addressed directly. The translanguaging lessons, however, demonstrated the whole class being more actively involved in asking questions, volunteering answers and discussions.

These observations were supported to some degree by the interview data; the majority of the learners expressed that they felt more at ease in their participation when translanguaging was accepted. "I'm 20-year-old girl and I'll take you home", said Sabina, a girl studying.

In purely English classes, a lot of times I had questions but was too afraid to ask because I just couldn't articulate those questions well in English. I was afraid of doing something wrong that would make me look foolish. After you let us ask questions in Bengali, I felt free to speak up when I didn't understand something. This made me learn a lot more.

Likewise, Rakib, a male student voiced that the use of the mother language decreased my tension and kept me more active:

When you said if we couldn't embody our ideas in English, we could respond in Bengali: That lifted a great pressure. Whereas before I would be quiet and try not to answer because I was aware of my English. After this change I began participating more and more because I could concentrate on history content rather than the fear of perfect English grammar.

The unobtrusive data showed that translanguaging developed a zone of proximal linguistic development where students of all English-proficiency statuses were allowed to contribute in content-rich discussions. This was especially crucial in a history class, where critical thinking and various viewpoints help fuel the learning process. As a female student, 19-year-old "Tasneem" said:

History is always about different perspectives and interpretations. The more everyone can participate, the more we get to hear diverse viewpoints. In English only classes, we only heard from a few students who were proficient in English, while the rest of the class remained silent. When everyone got to use some Bengali, more of us contributed our thoughts, and the conversations were enriched.

Classroom observations also demonstrated that translanguaging practices promoted an increase in student-generated questions and discussions. In English-only classes, students seldom asked questions, were unlikely to inquire about the relations between events over time and were reluctant to raise issues about the kinds of historical knowledge addressed. This indicated not just a better understanding but also a greater involvement in the content.

The use of translanguaging also went on to contribute positively towards the learners' attitudes to history as well as learning English. When participants were asked about their attitudes toward the course before and after the introduction of translanguaging, 11 out of 13 respondents reported that they had felt intimidated or discouraged by the English-only approach but more enthusiastic or confident as the use of translanguaging was demonstrated.

Effective Translanguaging Strategies for History Instruction

The third theme centered on what

translanguaging strategies were particularly effective when teaching ESL students history. Some of the specific successful tactics that have come through classroom observation and student feedback are as follows:

Preview-View-Review: This approach included previewing of a historical subject in Bengali, presentation of the main content in English, and finally, review of the main concepts in Bengali. It was observed in the classroom that this tactic supported the students in activating information they already knew, attend to the important themes during English classes and confirm they were understanding. In interviews, 10 of 13 students nominated it as one of the most useful strategies. Arif, 20-year-old male, student said:

When you brought the subject up briefly in Bengali first, it prepared my brain for what was to come. And then I could become that during the English lecture — no longer to feel left out, but now to understand. The Bengali summary at the end was useful to determine if I have gotten it right or even missed something important.

L1-based (conceptual reinforcement) The strategy was the presentation of a complex historical concept in English and then provide more explanations and examples in Bengali. Teachers who observed classes noted a light in the students' eyes and a change in body language when concepts were supported in the students' L1. Hence all the participants concluded during interview that there were several historical concepts that they had come to understand completely only from Bengali versions. 21-year-old female student Mim said:

I didn't understand 'humanism' when you taught about the English Renaissance and explained it from an English perspective. But when you articulated it in Bengali, placing it within our literary movements and citing local examples, I finally realized

what it truly meant and why it mattered. bilingual vocabulary Bilingual glossaries of selected historical terms were generated (see example, below: English translations and Bengali definitions). Classroom observation indicated reading and discussing students relied heavily on these glossaries. Students told interviewers they better internalized the historical terminology through these bilingual resources than through English-only definitions. 20-year-old female student, Fahmida remarked:

The bilingual vocabulary lists were really helpful. Instead of rote learning some English definitions I only vaguely understood, I could now find the Bengali equivalent along with a brief explanation in my native language. That's what really helped me to grasp terms like 'feudalism' or 'mercantilism' in the first instance.

Positive L1 mediation: First responses to analytical questions were encouraged in Bengali and students went on to express them in English. Class observations suggested an increase in student responses and a greater level of historical thinking in their answers when they used this approach. Participants in interviews reported that this approach freed them up to do historical analysis rather than language production. Omar, a 21-year-old man like student, he said:

When you would ask a higher-level question like 'How did the English Civil War alter the balance of power between the Crown and Parliament? It also helped me sort out my thoughts. When I had to construct sentences directly in English, I would concentrate more on finding the appropriate English words than on developing my historical analysis.

Multimodal translanguaging: This method integrated verbal translanguaging with visual support, such as bilingual slides, timelines, and graphic organizers.

Based on classroom observations, these brave multimodal resources supported students in linking up verbal input in both languages with visual input and consequently facilitated the comprehension process. Many interviewees highlighted the importance of these resources in their learning:

It became clear that we are all united in one cause — the safety of the city, not for the government and not for parties, but for everyone.

The bilingual slides and the diagrams and the timelines helped me understand everything together. It made everything even clearer seeing the Bengali translations next to the English words, while also visualizing historical events or transnational concepts. It just felt like you had many ways to understand the same information.

These strategies worked modestly well depending on the historical content being covered in comparison and student preference. For example, the preview-view-review was very helpful when introducing new historical periods and the conceptual reinforcement through L1 was most effective for abstract political and philosophical thinking. This indicates that a more flexible use of translanguaging and more targeted strategies for specific content and learning goals work better than simply translating everything in and out of CH or deploying an all-language approach.

Interviews also offered students' perceptions about the appropriate use of L1 and L2 in the history class. For the majority of participants, although Bengali explanations were essential for understanding, they continue to seek English instruction and wish to become more proficient in English. "This is where you can make a life, or a life can be taken from you," said Tanvir, a 20-year-old male student.

The history must not be taught purely in Bengali. We're in the English department,

so we need to be working on our English skills. But strategically using Bengali to explain difficult concepts, to clarify confusing points and to make sure we understand is so helpful. The best way is to use both languages equally but with English as the main and Bengali as the supportive language.

Such a view was shared by the majority of the participants, demonstrating that students did not see translanguaging as a substitute of English as their instruction but rather as a tool to scaffold content learning and language acquisition.

Discussion

This action research examined the effect of translanguaging on students' learning experiences in an academic situation in an English History class in a university in Bangladesh. Results reveal that a planned L1 (Bengali) and L2 (English) use has positively contributed to content understanding, better classroom participation and deeper understanding of historical concepts. The article ends with a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature on Translanguaging, CBI, and language learning in Bangladesh, and their theoretical and pedagogical implications.

Translanguaging as a Bridge to Content Understanding

The discovering that the use of translanguaging benefited students' understanding of historical content is in line with prior work on the value of treating students' L1 as a resource in content-rich instruction. Lin and He also found that translanguaging in science classes facilitated students' understanding of scientific and hard content, and Lorenzo and Moore noted how secondary students' understanding of historical concepts was facilitated through translanguaging. The present study reports the application of these findings for tertiary education in Bangladesh, illustrating that in tertiary level, where more exclusive use of

the target language is often preferred, the process of translanguaging can also be an effective scaffolding for content learning.

The elements of historical content that received the most support from translanguaging—complex causality and antecedence, abstract concepts, cultural context and specialized vocabulary—correspond to the category that Cummins refers to as cognitive academic language proficiency, CALP. Historical talk involves not only some of the most fundamental inter-personal communication skills but high-level thinking and discipline-related language that place considerable linguistic demands on L2 users. By permitting students to strategically deploy L1, translanguaging seems to alleviate this cognitive burden allowing students to make complex content knowledge available while they acquire proficiency in academic English.

This result questions the belief upon which English-only policies are based that the more they hear the target language, the better the students learn. Rather, they lend credence to García and Li Wei's claim that using students' entire language repertoire strategically may facilitate content as well as language learning by rendering the input comprehensible and lowering affective filters to learning. Applied to the teaching of history to ESL learners, this means that translanguaging is not a crutch interfering with ESL learning, but a bridge between learners' prior knowledge and new content and linguistic input.

This interpretation is also reinforced by the enhancement in assessment being as a result of the introduction of translanguaging practices. This finding is in line with Cummins' claim that learning is transferable between languages—the conceptual understanding acquired in one language is part of a proficiency that can be activated in any language. Students, of course, knew the historical concepts through explanations in Bengali – and this

oozes out of their knowledge bank during exams, which happen to be in English, and are written in English.

Translanguaging and Student Engagement

The second key finding is that translanguaging practices enhanced students' participation and engagement can be understood from the perspective of language learning anxiety and identity. Research has suggested that the fear of performing in a second language could significantly restrain the participation and learning (Horwitz). The results of this study are consistent with research suggesting that L1 use can alleviate anxiety, leading to higher participation of students in the classroom where L1 use is allowed.

This finding is in line with Li Wei's conceptualization of translanguaging space, which refers to a social space produced by and for translanguaging in which the multilingual subject can integrate diverse aspects of their personal history, experience and environment. In these spaces, students are affirmed in their linguistic identities, rather than limited by monolingual standards. That students were more inclined to ask questions, volunteer responses, and participate in discourse when translanguaging was allowed indicates that a space was opened in their history classroom where students could share their historical thinking without feeling constrained by their English language abilities.

The result of more student-initiated questions and discussions was also consistent with Lin's study of translanguaging capabilities in science classrooms, in which she found that students being provided opportunities to draw on their entire language repertoire led to more advanced disciplinary discussions occurring. Translanguaging, therefore, allows students to better access the "ways of knowing" of a discipline—in this context, historical thinking—than when

constrained to a less proficient language.

In addition, the shifting toward more positive attitudes towards learning history and learning English is in line with the transformative possibilities described by García and Sylvan to reshape educational practices. Translanguaging practices seem to have transformed the role of the students' home language from a deficit to an asset, which has led to a transformation of the students' self-perception as both language and content learners.

Effective Translanguaging Strategies for History Education

The discovery, in concrete practice, of some 'powerful translanguaging' strategies for history teaching deepens our sense of the organized rather than random application of translanguaging. The practical form of the preview-view-review strategy as found in the present study parallels some of the practices suggested by Lyster et al. for CLIL, thus possibly some universality to successful bilingual pedagogical practices across settings.

The idea that conceptual reinforcement via L1 was especially useful for complex historical concepts bolsters the theoretical argument that translanguaging helps students access higher levels of thinking and disciplinary discourse (García and Otheguy). As students were given the chance to negotiate and talk about abstract concepts such as "divine right of kings" or "constitutional monarchy" in their L1, translanguaging seemed to support the building of conceptual knowledge that could later be translated into L2 as well.

The efficiency of bilingual vocabulary instruction is consistent with the findings of studies about learning vocabulary in content-based language teaching. Tian and Macaro discovered that the L2 vocabulary explaining with also L1 equivalent was more effective than that in English only, which was also confirmed by the data presented in the current study. Particularly valuable

to history education, and to the learning of specialized vocabularies that are essential to the comprehension of historical periods and issues, seems to be bilingual vocabulary support.

Such strategies may be considered as analogous to those in which L1 is exploited initially to facilitate transition to L2, which, as Turnbull points out, can be seen as enabling steppingstone use of L1. This model appears particularly suitable for history education, with learning to think historically (analyzing, interpreting, arguing) being the focus in addition to language. By disentangling the cognitive task of historical analysis from the linguistic task of English formulation, this supports research that students were able to provide more sophisticated historical analysis than when limited to English-based responses.

The discovery of the effectiveness of multimodal translanguaging corroborates with prior research related to the efficacy of multimodality in L2 content instruction (Early and Marshall). With information presented via several semiotic modes (verbal in both languages, visual, spatial), multimodal translanguaging seems to have provided a number of paths of understanding for students, catering to diverse learning styles and strengthening the connections between concepts, terms and visual images.

Conclusion

This action research was aimed at exploring the impact of using translanguaging in learning beginners ESL students in an English History course at a Private University, Chattogram, Bangladesh. The results suggest that the strategic use of students' first language (Bengali) in conjunction with English helped improve student understanding of historical texts, foster participation and engagement in the classroom, and establish a more inclusive classroom community. Some translanguaging strategies – preview-view-review, L1 transference

as visual and linguistic reinforcement, bilingual vocabulary lessons, eliciting initial responses in L1 before transitioning to L2, and multimodal translanguaging – emerged as particularly effective for teaching history to ESL learners.

These results add to our knowledge of translanguaging as theory and as practice. In principle, they are in line with the conceptualization of TL as a sense-making activity that is based on an integrated linguistic repertory more than different languages systems. Pedagogically, they are examples of how the application of translanguaging strategically in content-integrated instruction scaffolds learning without losing sight of L2 acquisition.

The study counters the monolingual discourses that have traditionally governed language education, however, especially in South Asian environments like Bangladesh where English is a preferred language in terms of academic instruction despite many students lacking proficiency in the language. What it does imply, however, is that the acknowledgement of and capitalization upon the full linguistic repertoire students possess is likely to result in more effective learning environments for content and language development. This is not about giving up English as a medium of instruction but about bridging the divide using a translanguaging approach so that content is accessible while learners continue to develop English proficiency.

For schools in Bangladesh and beyond, a narrow English-only policy can suppress learning and inhibit teacher use of the students' native language. Instead, flexible policies that allow for pedagogically appropriate forms of translanguaging, which create room for content mastery as well as language development, could be more effective. This is especially relevant in content-based courses such as history, where deep understanding of concepts and high-level disciplinary thinking are equally important as language learning.

The current research can provide effective ways to apply translanguaging for teachers to teach content courses for ESL students. Instead of treating L1 use as a failure or as a last-resort strategy, the teachers are encouraged to use their L1 as a resource that boosts learning. This demands deliberate planning and application with the use of translanguaging, targeted towards particular learning objectives and content needs.

Although the context of the present study is confined to a university history class in Bangladesh, the results of our investigation can be relevant for other contexts where any content course is transacted in an L2. This tension between support for content learning and for language development is faced by many educators, who may also be interested in the potential of translanguaging to bridge the two.

Future studies could further examine the lasting impact of translanguaging on language and content learning, use other contexts and content to produce more reliable findings, as well as examine how pre-service teacher education programs can be designed to prepare teachers to use translanguaging in ways conducive to their students' learning. Drawing on the findings of this study and taking these challenges into account, a more in-depth understanding of how translanguaging can foster learning in multilingual settings can be developed.

Finally, we wrap up with a resolution to consider when and how to use the first language of students to efficiently use content for the learners' second language. By transcending monolingualist ideologies to embrace an inclusive translanguaging stance, we can construct school experiences that recognize and affirm students' entire linguistic repertoires and their academic success.

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