

# Translanguaging in ESL/EFL Classes: A Review Paper

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**Abstract:** Translanguaging refers to bilinguals receiving information in one language and then applying it in the other language, which also means that bilinguals use their languages in daily life to make sense of their bilingual worlds. The aim of this review paper is to summarize the functions and influence factors of translanguaging during the communication between students and teachers in EFL/ESL classes by observing the production of codeswitching.

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## 1 Introduction

Translanguaging refers to bilinguals receiving information in one language and then applying it in the other language, which also means that bilinguals use their languages in daily life to make sense of their bilingual worlds (Baker & Wright, 2017). In a broader perspective, translanguaging can be used as a teaching method in ESL/EFL classes among bilingual teachers and students. Codeswitching is used as a measure of translanguaging. It usually happens when a bilingual speaker uses more than one language inside a sentence or across sentences (Baker & Wright, 2017).

The aim of this review paper is to summarize the functions and influence factors of translanguaging during the communication between students and teachers in EFL/ESL classes by observing the production of codeswitching. Previous studies were mostly focused on the teacher's codeswitching and analyze the functions of codeswitching from the perspective of teachers. However, there were few studies taking students' behavior into consideration.

A good class requires the efforts of both teachers and students. Students' behavior will influence teachers' performance while teaching. Therefore, some papers which focused on the behavior of students in classes will be reviewed and combined with studies on the use of translanguaging in both teachers and students' speech.

This review paper will be divided into three parts. First, several papers will be reviewed to connect codeswitching with classroom behaviors. Second, the similarities and differences of the findings will be discussed, and the shortcomings of the studies will be analyzed. Third, by stating what can be learned from the previous studies, the results will be concluded. Additionally, some suggestions will be provided for the further ESL/EFL teaching.

## 2 Related studies on translanguaging

Among the previous studies, some focused on the classroom codeswitching through classroom observation and interview, which also explored the reasons of codeswitching and summarized the functions of codeswitching. However, few studies concerned about the influence of students' behavior on teachers codeswitching.

Tien (2009) studied the conflict and accommodation in classroom codeswitching in Taiwan. This paper explored the nature of classroom talk, focusing on how teachers and learners use more than one language to talk about monolingual textbooks. Tien observed the use of codeswitching in two English classrooms in a university. All the participants were bilingual speakers in different genders and different levels. Both of the teachers speak Mandarin, Taiwanese and English fluently. The results showed that codeswitching mainly plays three functions in the classroom, such as explaining linguistic forms, cuing classroom instructions and management, and

establishing or maintain solidarity.

Gulzar (2010) did research on the awareness of code-switching in bilingual classrooms. The main purpose of this study is to identify the significance of each function of codeswitching. The researcher collected information from teachers of different backgrounds with different regions, socio-economic status, and education of Pakistan. By using relative frequency distribution, comparative studies, and Pearson chi-square test to analyze the data, Gulzar summarized eleven categories of the functions of codeswitching, which includes clarification, ease of expression, giving instructions effectively, creating a sense of belonging, checking understanding, translation, socializing, emphasis, repetitive functions, topic shift and linguistic competence.

Alkathery (2014) also did a descriptive case study on functions of teachers' codeswitching. Data collection was done through class observation and interview, which showed the same results as found in previous studies in other linguistic contexts. However, compared with the previous study, Alkathery found that the use of codeswitching can enhance students' engagement in classroom activity.

Nguyen, Grainger and Carey (2016) analyzed the reasons of codeswitching. Many Vietnamese teachers of English support codeswitching in the classroom and they teach English through the bilingual approach. The researchers found that, due to teachers limited English abilities, students' low levels of English, and also the inadequate classroom resources, it is not likely to avoid the use of first language in teaching and learning EFL. However, Nguyen, Grainger and Carey (2016) believed that the use of codeswitching may be not beneficial for students who wish to advance beyond that stage of proficiency.

Narayan (2019) studied on whether codeswitching can be used as a linguistic resource in the Fijian ESL classrooms. By using questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, Narayan thought code-switching could be seen as an optimistic language learning strategical tool as part and parcel of the ESL classrooms discourse. However, "English only using policy" may block the practice of codeswitching.

Drawing on data from a large research project on multilingual practices in complementary schools, Wei and Wu (2009) focused on the tension between the school policies and the actual practices by the teachers and pupils through examining the use of codeswitching

by Chinese-English bilingual children. The researchers found that the pupils used codeswitching creatively to challenge the teacher's authority in the classroom and traditional ways of Chinese teaching.

The research on bilingual experiences shaping language processing, which was conducted by Beatty-Martínez and Dussias (2017), showed experiments on Spanish-English bilinguals with their codeswitching to examine the different production and comprehension of bilinguals. The subjects compose of two different groups: one group immersed in a dual language context with continued exposure to the codeswitching speech; the other group is immersed in a single language context with little to no exposure to codeswitching. These results showed that switching costs largely depend on the type of codeswitching and bilinguals' language experience.

### **3 Discussion on translanguaging as a teaching method**

According to the previous studies, the functions of translanguaging can be concluded into three types: providing classroom instructions, explaining linguistic forms, and establishing a friendly learning environment.

First, provide classroom instructions and management. Codeswitching is useful to give instructions effectively. By using clarification and repetition, students can understand the concepts better and engage in the classroom activities. Teachers can also check students' understanding by using L1 to make sure they can catch up with the teachers. Besides, using codeswitching is a good way to manage the classroom and emphasize the rules of class to enhance their awareness of the class management. Second, explain the linguistic forms. Teachers can use codeswitching to translate L2 into L1 and compare the different expressions between L1 and L2.

Third, establish a friendly learning environment. Students may have much more sense of belonging and the relationship between teachers and students will be more friendly. However, Wei and Wu (2009) found that students may use codeswitching to challenge the teachers' authority. For example, when the teacher repeated the dictation context, the students were chatting with each other in Chinese. However, when the teacher asked them whether they need help in Chinese, the students replied in English just like they were giving instructions.

The reason for using codeswitching is also explored.

The educational environment plays an important role in using codeswitching. The poor proficiency levels of students and teachers determines that they should utilize the first language to help them express themselves. Additionally, the attitude of the government to the use of codeswitching is also important. “English only using policy” may impede the use of codeswitching.

Although it is believed that codeswitching is a useful way for students to learn, researchers have not had any experiments to assess the improvement of codeswitching by using statistics. More studies should be done to examine the effect of codeswitching. Additionally, researchers found that whether students are exposed in a bilingual environment will influence their using of codeswitching. Students are hypothesized to have the possibility of relying on codeswitching and impede their second language development. Therefore, more studies should be done to observe the influence of codeswitching for several years. Codeswitching as a method of measuring translanguaging in classroom, shows that translanguaging can act as a teaching method when it is used appropriately.

#### 4 Conclusion

Translanguaging is a double-edged sword. By observing the use of codeswitching, it is not hard to find the effect of codeswitching in class activities. Students may understand the concepts better and become more engaged in class. However, some studies

showed that codeswitching may also impede students to improve their language proficiency to some degree. Therefore, teachers need to be conscious of how to use translanguaging as a teaching method in an appropriate time. More studies should be done on the effect of translanguaging. Through comparing the grades of the same test, it may be clearer to observe the results.

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