
A review of research on translanguaging in Türkiye

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Abstract: This study reviews eight selected research articles on translanguaging in Turkey, published in various journals between 2016 and 2022. The articles were selected from the ERIC and WOS databases by using the keywords “translanguaging”, “Turkey”, and “Turkish”. Content analysis was used to analyze the data and the study relayed information on used design, tools, analysis method and participants. Key points, conclusions and the implications for educators were also presented in the discussion section.

Keywords: Translanguaging, bilinguals, EFL, ESL, foreign language teaching

Türkiye'de diller arası geçişlilik (translanguaging) üzerine yapılan araştırmaların gözden geçirilmesi

Özet: Bu çalışma, 2016-2022 yılları arasında çeşitli dergilerde yayınlanmış, Türkiye'de diller arası geçişlilik (translanguaging) ile ilgili seçilmiş sekiz araştırma makalesini incelemektedir. Makaleler ERIC ve WOS veri tabanlarından “translanguaging”, “Türkiye” ve “Türkçe” anahtar kelimeleri kullanılarak seçilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmış ve çalışmada kullanılan tasarım, araçlar, analiz yöntemi ve katılımcılar hakkında bilgiler aktarılmıştır. Anahtar noktalar, sonuçlar ve eğitimciler için çıkarımlar da tartışma bölümünde sunuldu.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Translanguaging, iki dillilik, EFL, ESL, yabancı dil eğitimi

1. Introduction

English Most English teachers, regardless of the level of students they are teaching, use Turkish language during their lessons. The use of L1 either being a slip up or intentional is too common to ignore (Inal & Irmak 2019). The use of L1 may have a pedagogical and ideological background but this impulse mainly might come naturally as most students in the classroom and the teacher share the same first language (L1) and can communicate better through it, typically using idioms and widely used sayings or local utterances. There are, however, instances where some teachers are following the monolingual approach. They are extremely strict on using only English that they do not tolerate any use of L1 and even go as far as to punish students who do. Moreover, further tension is created by the expectation and limitations created by the curriculum given to teachers to even consider using anything but the target language. Given the modern education policies' significant monolingual bias, a lot of work has been done on translanguaging.

The following part initially provides the definition of translanguaging from different point of views, reviews the related literature, then gives the scholars view's on translanguaging practice and finally analyses eight research articles by providing the findings, and implications for teachers as well as researchers.

1.1. Literature Review

According to Cambridge University Press (2022), the term translanguage originates from Welsh bilingual education; in this context it refers to ‘a pedagogical practice which deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms’ (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012a, p. 643).

In 2011 Canagarajah takes up the term translanguage as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (p 401, our italics). And yet, Canagarajah (2011a) points out that we have not developed a taxonomy of translanguage strategies or theorized those practices

To characterize reading or hearing input in a language and writing or speaking about it in another, they created the phrase “trawsieithu.” Translanguage is viewed as a learning facilitator in the class in various studies. For example, Baker and Wright (2017) define translanguage as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, understandings, and knowledge through the use of two languages”.

Canagarajah (2011:401) defines the term as ‘the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system’ and he then adds that translanguage is practiced in the classroom but without any strategies and therefore those practices cannot be theorized (2011a).

Translanguage is different from code-switching as translanguage is “a process of meaning and sense-making while Code-switching refers to the alternation between languages in a specific communicative episode, like a conversation or an email exchange” (Wei, 2018, p. 9).

Translanguage helps support and empowers learners to use their full language repertoire to improve their learning. Similarly, Williams believes that translanguage is using the ‘stronger’ language, which is the language the learner is more dominant in, to improve the ‘weaker’ language in order to achieve more balanced bilingualism. Because students are required to complete difficult activities in both languages, one benefit of translanguage, according to Baker (2003), is that it helps students gain proficiency in their weakest language. This in fact will remove the shyness and reboost self-confidence of students in L2 environments. Likewise, Nagy (2018) and Zhanming (2014) see L1 as the central element affecting SLA and an important basis for language study as it can help learners to improve their language learning ability. Translanguage does not exactly focus on the language but on communication; how multilingual people navigate the world and this will help policy makers, educators and program developers to have deep insights of this navigation to develop learning materials, design language curriculum and language policy accordingly. Furthermore, all learners have a strong background of language skills in their own language, that is ready to be taken advantage of by the educators to transfer these skills to the target language while making it easier and more accessible for the learner in some difficult areas of L2. One essential component of English additional language (EAL) education is the idea of building on the learner's past knowledge. (NALDIC, 1999). To NALDIC (ibid.) in order to respond to the learning needs of bilingual pupils, cognitive development which has a close connection with first language development, a socio-cultural background of the learners need to be taken into account as they define and shape the learning context. Based on this idea, translanguage should be seen as a natural part of students' learning improvement and development. Although translanguage is a relatively new term and has only 20-year of background in the literature it is considered to be against the monolingual approach with its dynamism. Nagy (2018) also considers the use of L1 to be beneficial for students in gaining ground in foreign language teaching methodology.

Translanguage has links to bilingualism/multilingualism and encourages positive attitudes toward multiculturalism and multilingualism. The emphasis on multilingualism goes against conventional viewpoints that emphasize language isolation and strives to eliminate barriers across languages so that language users can fully exploit their own multilingualism. Educators must promote positive feelings by making references and supporting learners to feel proud about their ‘home’ or ‘first’ language(s). According to Levy et al. (2014), students whose first language is seen negatively in schools may feel less involved. Additionally, the first language reflects an individual’s own identity, if the learner feels that part of him is ignored or overlooked this eventually will affect his feeling and sense of belonging that may make him feel insecure, isolated and reticent. Considering multilingual children are the norm throughout the world, one thing they most commonly engage in is translanguage, (Garcia, 2009).

To study how translanguaging works within formal learning contexts, we need to be aware of what language policies have been adopted by the schools. Firstly, what is language policy? Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) defined it as “a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system.” Schiffman (1996) argued that it was a social construct and was based on culture. Similarly, Tollefson (1991) focused on language policy from more of a critical perspective and said that language policy was one way to place language within social structures, which influenced who has access to political power and resources.

The history of mandated language policies in Türkiye dates back to Ottoman times. Second languages taught at schools used to include only Arabic and Persian, knowing these languages indicated one was well-educated. The next added foreign languages to the curriculum were French and German. Finally, after the Second World War, the foregrounded language became English (Küçüköğlu, 2013). English has gained ground on French, which was previously preferred in diplomacy, education, and the arts (Kırkgöz, 2007). Grammar and translation methods like grammar translation method (GTM) were very popular during Ottoman times (Demircan, 1988) However, in 1997, The Turkish Ministry of National Education (MNE) decided to institute a plan called “The Ministry of National Education Development Project”, a significant curriculum shift, that basically reformed the practice of ELT in Turkey. It implemented the introduction of English from grade four and up. The main objective here was to expose students to English for a longer period than previously (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). The new curriculum adopted a communicative approach to foreign language education. Afterward, the revision of the 1997 curriculum in 2005 gave more explicit directions as to how much L1 to use; unless the teacher had a major communication issue, the use of the mother tongue was discouraged (Acar, 2018). Current policymakers are trying to escape the remnants of old language policies made during Ottoman time. As a result, more communicative approaches were adopted and the student talking time was increased through communicative activities.

2. Methodology

The current study is an article review analysis which surveys published research on a specific topic or topics. To Gülpınar and Güçlü (2013), article review does not present new experimental outcomes or any new methods but the main aim to approach any research study critically is to find a gap in the research area and such reviews can open new paths for new studies.

Gülpınar & Güçlü’ (2013) and Pea (2015) affirm that there are two types of article review; one of them is a narrative or literature review and the other one is a systematic review. To Pae (2015) the narrative one reviews a standard, provides available findings and considers the subject within a wide scope with a possible gap in the literature whereas the latter one is a more detailed one, providing detailed literature surveying and critical evaluation of the existing data. Both of the analyses contain the evaluation and summary of another writer’s article.

Current study employed the narrative article review analysis which is mainly based on the description of the existing data and the major aim is to review the research conducted on translanguaging within the educational contexts in Türkiye. The articles were collected from WOS (Web of Science) and ERIC (Educational Research Information Centre) databases; the database was utilized since it contained articles from high-impact journals. The keywords “translanguaging”, “Türkiye”, and “Turkish” were used to find published articles on translanguaging research done in the Turkish context. Starting from 2011 through the current year of 2022, only eight studies were found on the databases combined. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. Content analysis stands for a systematic, impartial way of describing and measuring occurrences (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utrianien & Kyngärs, 2014); descriptive analysis helps summarize points. The study relayed information on what design, instruments, and analysis methods were used, as well as discussed key points and conclusions. The following research questions are addressed:

1. What are some common points and conclusions about translanguaging in the Turkish context?
2. What areas of translanguaging do the selected papers cover?
3. What is the current research lacking about translanguaging?

3. Findings

3.1. Translanguaging in the development of EFL learners' foreign language skills in Turkish context (Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022)

The aim of this study was to investigate the possible effects of translanguaging pedagogy on EFL students' four language skills and their attitudes regarding its use as a pedagogy in class. The research took 10 weeks to conduct. The control groups received instructions based on GMT, the experimental groups were taught with translanguaging principles by Garcia. For design, quasi-experimental mixed methods design was used in this study. As data collection tools pre and post-skill tests, interviews were used on 60 pre-intermediate and 60 upper-intermediate students at a high school. In the semi-structured interviews, the students were able to use the linguistics elements to create and negotiate meaning and use English enthusiastically. To analyze the quantitative data, the authors used paired samples t-test and one-way analysis of ANCOVA; followed grounded theory to analyze their interview data. This study concluded that translanguaging was more effective than monoglossic teaching methods. It was found that the majority of students reacted positively to translanguaging, which made them feel “secure, motivated and open to learning, and increased comprehension”. It improved communication between teachers and learners. Rest of the students expressed their concern on using L1 as they thought other languages shouldn't be involved in learning English. Translanguaging groups outperformed their peers in both receptive and productive skills. Finally, translanguaging can be linked with positive perceptions. These results suggest that translanguaging is effective and aids language learning. Furthermore, it is implied that the use of translanguaging that is going back and forth between the Turkish and English languages as instructional and interactional languages should be encouraged instead of being seen as detrimental. Additionally, translanguaging practices are suggested for policymakers, educators and language teachers in particular. It was suggested that they need to reconsider one-language policy, and experiment with integrating translanguaging practices into the curriculum, materials, consider the assessment criteria and recommend a training of teachers about the benefits and drawbacks of translanguaging to further more comprehensive target language use.

3.2. Translanguaging in EFL classrooms: Teachers' perceptions and practices (Yuvayapan, 2019)

The aim of this study was to look into EFL teachers' perceptions and practices towards the use of Turkish in their classrooms. The study used a questionnaire with both Likert-type items and open-ended questions; classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The study followed a mixed methods design. The Likert-type items in the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and the data from open-ended questions, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were exposed to structural-coding analysis. 50 EFL teachers were the participants and 10 of them were interviewed. The main conclusion of this research was stated as “EFL teachers' practices went against their perceptions in some particular situations”. Their perceptions were expressed for they thought Turkish was an important language to take advantage of and thought they were encouraging the use of it, however, the results showed some instances where it was the opposite. The article indicated that institutional and contextual constraints were the prominent causes, that the teachers felt constrained. They also found out that the usage of translanguaging was “dependent on classroom-oriented and student-oriented purposes”. There were no goals in sight for the future of language learning. The data imply that in consequence of most teachers not knowing how to consciously and systematically implement translanguaging, this pedagogy does not seem to help students achieve long-term goals. A developed program is suggested to build up EFL teacher's knowledge on translanguaging; “EFL teachers need to be aware of the potentials of translanguaging to enrich their teaching and students' learning English. They must continually scaffold what their students know with what they will need to learn.”

3.3. An Investigation into Arab Students' Translanguaging of Turkish Language (Baradi, 2019)

The purpose of this study was to examine how Arab students learn Turkish as a foreign language at a TÖMER center which offers Turkish courses to international students. 38 intermediate Arab students participated in it. The author states their focus is about “how well students were able to switch between Arabic and Turkish”. The study followed a mixed method design. The instruments included a 2-hour classroom observation, a survey, and an interview with open-ended questions. Only 3 students volunteered to participate. The author concluded from the study that there was a frequent switch between both L1 and L2, the students used one to understand the other. To promote multilingual access, the instructor and students were utilizing translanguaging efficiently. Use of flexible translanguaging techniques and

achievement of discourse goals in the classroom were observed. The results imply that there should be a space for students to learn and practice using translanguaging strategies in the classroom. At the end, the author suggests for educators to be co-learners and for students to learn in an environment involving others with similar backgrounds.

3.4. Preschool English teachers gaining bilingual competencies in a monolingual context (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2019)

The purpose of this study was to inspect and observe the journey of 3 pre-school teachers going from FL to bilingual teachers. The study adopted a longitudinal and qualitative design, and the data was collected through observation notes, interviews and teachers' logs about the children's uses of translanguaging. The qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis inspired by Benson's BE teacher competencies. The context was a private pre-school where bilingual training was given to the participants. This longitudinal study lasted over 9 months. What the authors gathered from this research were "teachers' roles of pedagogue, interactive communicator, and a previously uninduced role, translanguaging facilitator". They are believed to have observed a connection between all three. Allegedly, the teachers were able to support children's bilingual development through cooperating with Turkish teachers and achieve "meaningful classroom interactions." Learners scaffold each other and learn and thus translanguaging diminishes the authoritative role of teacher and facilitates a community-like learning environment. The implication here is that kindergarten school teachers need to embrace and develop roles other than foreign language teachers. We can infer from the results that more emphasis on collective learning and engagement can aid children in developing better social skills and (bilingual) language development. This should be achieved through translanguaging, scaffolding, and teachers accepting a more facilitative role.

3.5. Teacher's beliefs and flexible language strategies in a monolingual preschool classroom (Gelir, 2022)

The main purpose of this research is to investigate teachers' beliefs on Syrian students' Turkish language acquisition and the strategies the teachers use in a multilingual city. The study adopts the (qualitative) ethnographic method. The context is a preschool classroom with a higher number of Syrian children (3). The researcher collected the data through observation of students, recordings of audio of classroom interactions, and interviews with the teacher. A bottom-up approach was used to analyze the data. The author concluded from her gathered information on the teacher-student relationship was that of using flexible language strategies despite being constrained by the curriculum. The teacher advocated and supported the children in using their own languages. The author argues that "the teacher's agency might be influenced by the practices (use of these three languages) and culture (respectful for using the languages) of the community" and not just by the created school culture. The author also proclaims that the usage of three languages had a positive impact on the teacher's agency to value these students' home language; although she felt some tension caused by expectations and limitations in her power. The results suggest that the impact of teachers' agency was significant on their practices of translanguaging. Additionally, the teacher's agency is likely to be influenced by the culture and the "social realities of the city." The author suggests that teachers need support from administrators and fellow colleagues on working with refugee kids.

3.6. Grappling with the transformative potential of translanguaging pedagogy in an elementary school with Syrian refugees in post-coup Turkey (Toker & Baytaş, 2022)

The aim of this study is to discover the possibilities and difficulties of adopting a translanguaging pedagogy in a monolingual Turkish primary school with a varied ethnic and linguistic population. The study follows qualitative design and the data was collected by semi-structured interviews and lesson plans; two ethnic teachers participated in the research. The authors discussed with the teachers how they can implement translanguaging into classroom activities. They designed 4 week- lesson plans to create a space for translanguaging. The teachers reflected on their practices and talked about them in the interviews. For data analysis, coding and thematic approach were used. The study concluded that "translanguaging pedagogy enabled teachers to raise meta-linguistic awareness, support academic learning of refugee students, and facilitated rapport and empathy among local and refugee students." The challenges included some negative reactions to the use of Arabic by refugee students and the teachers were doubtful about a sustainable usage of minority languages in Turkish schools. As well as some political fears were involved, so they didn't feel fully safe to employ agency. We can conclude from the results that teachers can benefit from

translanguaging as a pedagogy to enhance refugee students' learning and linguistic awareness. The second implication is that translanguaging can aid in fostering rapport and empathy among both local and foreign students.

3.7. Investigating the perceptions of students on the use of L1 in departmental courses in a Turkish EMI university (Cosgun, 2020)

Aim of the research was to investigate students' perceptions on the use of L1 in departmental courses. The paper encompasses a mixed method design. The data was gathered by a questionnaire from 237 students at a foundation university in Turkey; semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 students. For quantitative data analysis, SPSS was used; for qualitative data analysis, comparative methods and discrepant data analysis were adopted. Results revealed that students were more comfortable using L1 and found it useful. During classroom activities, both teachers and students feel the urge to transition from English to Turkish. However, students still think English-medium instruction should be adopted because they believe English is fundamental to their career. Although students believe that the medium should be English, they feel that using Turkish in an EMI context can contribute to the learning of the subject matter. The implication of this study is that educators (in EMI contexts) may choose to ignore the language policy of only using English if it helps students' understanding. The author suggests that teachers may allow translanguaging at least until students feel more competent in the target language.

3.8. Troubling translanguaging: language ideologies, superdiversity and interethnic conflict (Charalambous, Charalambous & Zembylas, 2016)

The purpose of this study is to investigate how a group of Turkish-speaking students from Pontian and Turkish-Bulgarian backgrounds connect to their Turkish speakerness in classroom interaction. This is a case study that adopted the ethnographic perspective. There were two phases to the study; first six weeks of observation and the second was implementing peace-related lesson plans. Six interviews with the three participating teachers were conducted afterwards. To analyze the data a linguistic ethnographic perspective was used to code an ethnographic description of observed practices and micro-analysis. The setting is a primary school with a super diverse (mostly migrant background) population. Turkish was the home language of 6 out of 11 student participants. The results of the study showed that, despite the multilingual and hybrid reality of this specific school, in official educational practices Turkish-speaking pupils kept a low profile as to their Turkish-speakerness. Even though the teacher advocated translanguaging techniques and a public demonstration of students' proficiency in Turkish, this was received with emotional difficulties, which were reinforced by the worry that "speaking Turkish" may be seen as "being Turkish." The discussion of these findings highlights the influence that various overlapping histories of ethnonationalist conflict have on translanguaging practices in education, in our case by associating Turkishness with the "enemy group" and educating kids in essentialist notions of language and national identity. The findings suggest that in this instance, conflict discourses foster ecologies that are unfavorable to hybrid language practices, which in turn suppress creative polylingual performances. The findings suggest that history, especially that of an ethnonational conflict, has a significant impact on translanguaging practices in education; there is a link between nationalist ideologies and students' reluctance to participate in hybrid and diverse language practices.

4. Conclusion

This paper was written to shed light onto the current research we possess on translanguaging in Türkiye. It was intended to be a more top down review of recent research however after some in depth inquiry, the author came to notice that there were only a handful of studies, it was lacking enough to be calling it a huge research gap. Five out of the eight studies followed mixed-method design, the rest was qualitative. Out of these five, two were ethnographic research. Most researchers focused on refugees and foreign students in Türkiye which is understandable given the current circumstances. Almost all of them used interviews and some observations to analyze the data. The results of most papers showed translanguaging to be generally aiding in language teaching. It helped scaffolding learners to improve in the target language and learning skills.

Some common points were to highlight how limited and restricted teachers feel due to curriculum, expectations and mandated language policies such as using only the target language and using L1 if absolutely necessary. One-language policies were pointed out to be harmful for bilingualism. Another

common point is that most teachers believed in the effectiveness of translanguaging and when implemented it was proved to be correct. But another question raised here is do all language teachers believe in the value of translanguaging? Do they all know where and to what extent translanguaging is really needed? The aforementioned studies are reflecting some part of the reality, therefore, the researcher proposes a nationwide survey to obtain the realistic outcomes of it. It is believed that translanguaging promotes a secure and positive environment where the teacher isn't an authoritative figure but a co-learner. Additionally, to promote this, the Ministry of National Education should encourage teachers to create such an environment by delivering in-service training and seminars. Overall the research is lacking in different contexts, more teacher perceptions and the impact of translanguaging has to be conducted on the improvement of the target language.

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Note on Ethical Issues

The author confirms that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in his country (Date of Confirmation: 22/11/2022).