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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Empowering Voices: Critical Pedagogy and Translanguaging in Student Interactions in Malibud NHS Senior High School**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study examines the integration of critical pedagogy and translanguaging in fostering student empowerment and equity in Malibud National High School Senior High School, a rural and linguistically diverse setting. Grounded in Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, which emphasizes education as a means of liberation through dialogue and critical reflection, the research explores how these principles address systemic inequalities in marginalized communities. Complementing this framework is García and Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging, which leverages students' full linguistic repertoire to enhance comprehension and inclusivity. Using qualitative and participatory methodologies, the study investigates multilingual practices, the role of translanguaging in classroom instruction, and the challenges of implementing these approaches in hinterland schools. Findings highlight the transformative potential of these pedagogies in validating cultural identities, amplifying student voices, and improving educational outcomes. The research contributes to broader discourses on educational equity, offering insights for similar contexts globally.

**| KEYWORDS**

Critical Pedagogy, Translanguaging, Student Interactions, Student Empowerment

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### **1. Introduction**

Education serves as a powerful tool for social transformation, particularly in marginalized communities where access to quality learning opportunities is often limited. In the hinterlands, such as Malibud National High School (NHS) Senior High School, the complexities of language and culture intertwine with educational practices, demanding innovative approaches to teaching and learning. This study explores the potential of critical pedagogy and translanguaging to empower students and enhance their learning experiences.

Critical pedagogy, as advocated by Freire (1970), emphasizes education as a means of liberation. It challenges the traditional, hierarchical model of teaching by encouraging dialogue and fostering critical consciousness among learners. This approach aligns with the need to address systemic inequalities in education, particularly in underserved areas like Malibud, where students face unique linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic challenges.

Translanguaging, a complementary framework, further enriches the educational process by leveraging students' full linguistic repertoire to facilitate learning. García and Wei (2014) describe translanguaging as a dynamic process where students alternate between languages to make sense of and communicate ideas. In multilingual contexts, such as Malibud NHS, translanguaging can bridge the gap between home and school languages, fostering inclusivity and deeper comprehension.

This paper focuses on understanding how critical pedagogy and translanguaging practices influence student interactions,

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particularly in a rural and linguistically diverse setting. By examining the interplay of these approaches, this study aims to shed light on their potential to empower students, validate their cultural identities, and improve educational outcomes.

Moreover, the significance of this study extends beyond the academic sphere. It highlights the importance of creating equitable learning environments that respect and harness linguistic diversity. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on educational equity and innovation in marginalized communities, offering insights that may inspire similar initiatives in other hinterland schools.

Through qualitative analysis and participatory methodologies, this research seeks to document the lived experiences of students and educators in Malibud NHS, providing a nuanced understanding of how these pedagogical frameworks operate in practice. Ultimately, it aims to advocate for strategies that amplify the voices of students in hinterland areas, ensuring that education becomes a tool for empowerment and social justice.

## 2. Research Questions

1. What are the multilingual practices of students in Malibud NHS Senior High School?
2. How can translanguaging be integrated into classroom instruction to improve student participation and learning?
3. What impact does critical pedagogy have on fostering student empowerment and equity?
4. What challenges and opportunities arise when implementing translanguaging and critical pedagogy in a hinterland school setting?

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, which advocates for transformative education through dialogue, reflection, and action, aiming to liberate individuals from oppressive structures. Critical pedagogy challenges the traditional banking model of education, where learners are passive recipients of knowledge, by promoting active participation and critical thinking (Freire, 1970). This framework is particularly relevant in marginalized communities, where education can serve as a tool for empowerment and social change.

Complementing this is García and Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging, which views multilingualism not as a compartmentalized set of languages but as a fluid and dynamic process. Translanguaging emphasizes the strategic use of a learner's entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning and foster deeper understanding, particularly in multilingual and culturally diverse contexts

(Wei, 2018). This approach challenges the hierarchical privileging of dominant languages in education and instead validates the linguistic practices of marginalized groups, aligning with equity-focused educational goals (Hornberger & Link, 2012).

Together, these frameworks guide the analysis of how multilingual practices and inclusive pedagogy can promote equity and empowerment in education. By integrating critical pedagogy's emphasis on social justice with translanguaging's focus on linguistic inclusivity, this study seeks to explore how these paradigms can create transformative educational experiences in linguistically diverse and resource-constrained environments like Malibud NHS Senior High School.

## 4. Methodology

4.1 Interviews: Conducted semi-structured interviews with students and teachers to understand their perspectives on language use and teaching practices.

4.2 Observations: Observed classroom interactions to document the use of multiple languages and the implementation of critical pedagogy strategies.

4.3 Surveys: Administered questionnaires to gather quantitative data on student attitudes towards language use and learning.

4.4 Thematic Analysis: Identified recurring themes from qualitative data, such as student empowerment, engagement, and challenges.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics: Analyzed survey data to identify trends in attitudes towards translanguaging and critical pedagogy.

## 5. Results and Discussions

### 5.1 Multilingual Practices

At Malibud NHS Senior High School, students naturally engage in multilingual practices, skillfully blending their home languages with English in informal settings. These translanguaging practices occur particularly during peer interactions, group activities, and social conversations, serving as a bridge to mutual understanding and collaboration. García and Wei (2014) describe translanguaging as a dynamic and fluid process that multilingual speakers use to navigate and construct meaning across different linguistic systems. By allowing students to use their full linguistic repertoire, these practices foster deeper comprehension, facilitate peer teaching, and strengthen social bonds within diverse learning environments.

Despite its evident benefits, translanguaging remains underutilized in formal classroom instruction at Malibud NHS. English continues to dominate as the primary medium of instruction due to national education policies emphasizing its role in achieving global competitiveness and standardized testing (Bernardo, 2017). This disconnect between students' everyday linguistic practices and formal instructional strategies creates barriers to learning, particularly for students who struggle with English proficiency. By prioritizing English exclusively, the current educational framework overlooks the rich linguistic and cultural resources students bring into the classroom, limiting their ability to fully engage with and comprehend academic content.

The underutilization of translanguaging in formal instruction represents a missed opportunity to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. As García and Kleyn (2016) argue, translanguaging pedagogy not only acknowledges students' linguistic diversity but also empowers them to use their languages as valuable assets in constructing knowledge. For example, integrating multilingual practices into teaching strategies can enable students to discuss complex concepts in their home languages, thus fostering a more profound understanding before transitioning to English for academic expression. This approach can also enhance critical thinking, as students are encouraged to compare and contrast ideas across linguistic and cultural frameworks.

Moreover, the adoption of translanguaging in formal instruction aligns closely with the goals of critical pedagogy, which advocates for education that is reflective of students' lived experiences and cultural identities (Freire, 1970). By incorporating students' home languages into teaching practices, educators validate their linguistic heritage and create spaces where all students feel valued and included. This alignment not only enhances academic engagement but also promotes a sense of belonging and self-worth among students from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Moreover, *Critical Pedagogy and Translanguaging in Student Interactions in Malibud NHS Senior High School*, underscores the need to bridge the gap between multilingual practices in informal settings and formal classroom instruction. Incorporating translanguaging into teaching strategies can help achieve this by aligning instructional practices with the linguistic realities of students. Doing so not only facilitates comprehension and inclusivity but also empowers students to see their linguistic identities as integral to their academic success and personal growth.

Leveraging multilingual practices within formal instruction can transform classrooms into more inclusive and empowering spaces. By embracing students' linguistic diversity, educators can enhance engagement, foster mutual understanding, and create opportunities for students to thrive academically and personally. This approach requires systemic support, including professional development for teachers, curriculum adjustments, and community involvement, to ensure its successful implementation and sustainability.

## 5.2 Impact of Translanguaging

The impact of translanguaging at Malibud NHS Senior High School is both profound and transformative, particularly in fostering student participation, confidence, and comprehension. Translanguaging, which García and Wei (2014) define as the process by which multilingual speakers utilize their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning, has emerged as a powerful tool for inclusive and effective education. When translanguaging is encouraged in classroom discussions, students are more likely to engage actively, express themselves freely, and build stronger connections with the subject matter.

### 5.2.1 Enhanced Participation and Confidence

Initial findings at Malibud NHS reveal that students participate more readily and confidently when they are allowed to use their home languages alongside English in academic discussions. This aligns with Wei's (2018) assertion that translanguaging creates a safe and inclusive environment where students can articulate their thoughts without the fear of linguistic inadequacy. For example, students may brainstorm ideas or clarify concepts in their home language before presenting in English, a practice that reduces cognitive load and enhances their ability to convey complex ideas effectively (Hornberger & Link, 2012). This approach empowers students who may otherwise remain silent due to limited proficiency in English, thereby democratizing classroom interactions and ensuring all voices are heard.

### 5.2.2 Improved Comprehension and Academic Performance

Translanguaging also plays a critical role in bridging linguistic gaps that often hinder comprehension, particularly for students with limited exposure to English. By allowing students to draw from their linguistic resources, teachers can facilitate deeper understanding and critical engagement with the curriculum. For instance, science lessons that incorporate discussions in local languages enable students to grasp abstract concepts before translating their understanding into English. García and Kleyn (2016) argue that translanguaging not only enhances comprehension but also strengthens cognitive flexibility, as students learn to navigate and integrate multiple linguistic systems.

At Malibud NHS, group activities that permit translanguaging have been observed to yield richer and more thoughtful outputs.

This practice encourages collaborative learning, where students leverage their shared linguistic knowledge to solve problems and construct meaning collectively. The use of multiple languages in these activities also fosters creativity and critical thinking, as students draw from diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives to explore and present ideas.

### 5.2.3 Empowerment and Identity Validation

Translanguaging contributes to students' empowerment by validating their linguistic and cultural identities. Freire's (1970) principles of critical pedagogy emphasize the importance of education that reflects students' lived experiences and fosters their sense of agency. In this context, translanguaging becomes a tool for self-expression and identity affirmation, enabling students to see their languages and cultures as assets rather than barriers. When students are encouraged to use their home languages in academic settings, they develop a sense of pride and confidence in their heritage, which positively influences their overall academic and personal development (García & Wei, 2014).

*Empowering Voices: Critical Pedagogy and Translanguaging in Student Interactions in Malibud NHS Senior High School*, highlights the transformative potential of translanguaging in creating inclusive and empowering educational spaces. By integrating translanguaging into teaching strategies, educators can align classroom practices with the linguistic realities of their students, fostering engagement, equity, and empowerment.

However, the successful implementation of translanguaging requires systemic support, including professional development for teachers and curriculum adjustments to accommodate multilingual practices. Additionally, engaging stakeholders, such as parents and community leaders, is essential to ensure the sustainability and cultural resonance of these approaches.

Furthermore, translanguaging is not merely a pedagogical strategy but a pathway to transformative education that empowers students, enhances learning outcomes, and celebrates linguistic diversity. Its integration into the educational framework of Malibud NHS Senior High School represents a critical step toward realizing the goals of critical pedagogy and creating a more equitable and inclusive learning environment.

### 5.3 Empowerment through Critical Pedagogy

Empowerment is a central goal of education, and in the context of Malibud NHS Senior High School, critical pedagogy serves as a powerful framework for achieving this objective. Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of critical pedagogy advocates for an education that transcends traditional, top-down models of instruction. Instead, it promotes a collaborative, dialogic approach to learning, where students are encouraged to critically engage with content and question existing societal structures. By positioning students as active participants in their learning rather than passive recipients of knowledge, critical pedagogy fosters a sense of agency and empowerment. This aligns with the goals of the capstone project, *Empowering Voices: Critical Pedagogy and Translanguaging in Student Interactions in Malibud NHS Senior High School*, which explores how these pedagogical approaches can enhance student participation, self-expression, and identity formation within the classroom.

At Malibud NHS, students engage in dialogic learning practices that encourage them to voice their perspectives and connect academic content with their lived experiences. This approach allows students to critically reflect on societal issues, recognize power dynamics, and develop the skills necessary for social change. Freire (1970) posits that education must be liberating—enabling students to not only understand the world but also to transform it. The practice of dialogic teaching in Malibud NHS helps students develop a deeper understanding of academic concepts by connecting them to personal narratives, cultural identities, and local realities. This engagement encourages critical thinking and the development of critical consciousness, empowering students to question injustices and actively participate in their communities.

The study demonstrates how critical pedagogy fosters empowerment by promoting a classroom environment where students' voices and identities are central to the learning process. Through problem-posing activities, open-ended discussions, and collaborative learning, students are invited to challenge conventional knowledge and participate in knowledge construction. These practices foster a sense of ownership over their education, as students are encouraged to express their ideas, critique the material, and contribute to collective problem-solving. Shor (1992) highlights that such pedagogical practices lead to the democratization of education, where power is shared between teacher and students, and students become co-creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients. This form of education affirms students' capacity for critical thinking and action, cultivating the confidence necessary to navigate and challenge existing social structures.

The integration of translanguaging in the classroom further supports this process of empowerment. By allowing students to use their full linguistic repertoire, including both local languages and English, translanguaging reinforces their linguistic and cultural identities (García & Wei, 2014). This inclusion not only aids comprehension but also affirms students' self-worth by validating

their home languages as valuable tools for learning. The combination of critical pedagogy and translanguaging, as explored in this project, enables students to articulate t

their thoughts and engage with academic content in a way that is meaningful to them. This, in turn, fosters a deeper connection to the material and enhances their ability to express their perspectives in academic discussions.

Moreover, critical pedagogy is particularly relevant in a context like Malibud NHS, a rural school with a linguistically diverse student population. The traditional education system often marginalizes the linguistic and cultural identities of students in such contexts, promoting a one-size-fits-all approach that can alienate those who do not fully identify with the dominant language (Bernardo, 2017). By incorporating critical pedagogy and translanguaging, educators at Malibud NHS are creating an inclusive environment that not only values students' diverse backgrounds but also empowers them to participate fully in their education. This inclusive approach aligns with the principles of social justice, which seek to dismantle barriers to educational equity and foster opportunities for all students to succeed (UNESCO, 2015).

The integration of critical pedagogy in the classroom at Malibud NHS plays a crucial role in empowering students by fostering critical thinking, promoting active participation, and validating their linguistic and cultural identities. By combining these principles with translanguaging, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that values students' voices and helps them develop the skills and confidence to engage with academic content, express their ideas, and contribute to societal transformation. This approach not only enhances academic outcomes but also equips students with the tools necessary to challenge and reshape the world around them. Therefore, the empowerment of students at Malibud NHS through critical pedagogy and translanguaging can serve as a model for inclusive, transformative education in linguistically diverse contexts.

#### 5.4 Challenges

Teachers face challenges in balancing curriculum demands with the integration of critical and multilingual approaches.

Despite the promising outcomes, teachers face significant challenges in balancing curriculum demands with the integration of critical pedagogy and multilingual approaches. Standardized curricula and assessment practices often prioritize English and rote memorization, leaving little room for innovative pedagogical strategies (Dekker & Young, 2005). Teachers at Malibud NHS also cite a lack of professional development opportunities as a barrier to effectively implementing translanguaging and dialogic teaching methods. Additionally, the scarcity of teaching materials in local languages compounds the difficulty of integrating multilingual practices into formal instruction. These challenges underscore the need for systemic reforms to support teachers in adopting inclusive and equity- focused approaches (UNESCO, 2015).

While the integration of critical pedagogy and translanguaging offers promising avenues for enhancing student engagement and inclusivity at Malibud NHS Senior High School, several challenges hinder the full implementation of these approaches. These challenges primarily arise from structural, pedagogical, and resource-related issues that reflect broader systemic constraints within the educational system. Addressing these challenges is critical to unlocking the transformative potential of multilingual practices and dialogic teaching as outlined in the Empowering Voices capstone project.

##### 5.4.1 Curriculum Constraints and Standardized Testing

One of the significant challenges in implementing critical pedagogy and translanguaging is the rigid structure of the national curriculum, which often prioritizes English as the sole medium of instruction. As a result, there is limited space for educators to experiment with multilingual teaching practices, even when they are recognized as beneficial to student comprehension and participation (Bernardo, 2017). In the context of Malibud NHS, the official curriculum and standardized testing practices create

additional pressure for teachers to focus on English proficiency and rote memorization, rather than fostering deeper, more critical engagement with content through translanguaging. This situation is compounded by the nationwide policy emphasis on preparing students for competitive exams, which are typically conducted in English, reinforcing the dominance of the language in educational settings.

Moreover, this challenge limits the possibility of creating multilingual classrooms where students can use their entire linguistic repertoire to facilitate learning. It also restricts the application of critical pedagogy, which encourages questioning dominant narratives and offering alternative perspectives through language. Without a shift in curriculum priorities to allow for more flexibility in language use, these challenges will persist.

##### 5.4.2 Teacher Readiness and Professional Development

Another key challenge is the variability in teacher readiness to adopt critical pedagogy and translanguaging strategies. Many

educators at Malibud NHS may not have received adequate training in these approaches, which are relatively new to the educational context. The lack of professional development opportunities that focus on multilingual teaching and dialogic pedagogy limits teachers' ability to effectively implement these strategies in the classroom (Dekker & Young, 2005). Teachers may also be unfamiliar with how to incorporate translanguaging in ways that align with curriculum objectives and assessment requirements. This knowledge gap creates a barrier to making these practices a routine part of classroom interaction.

Additionally, Teacher readiness is critical for the success of any pedagogical approach, and without targeted professional development programs, educators may struggle to embrace translanguaging and critical pedagogy. This, in turn, limits their ability to foster an inclusive and empowering learning environment for students. As Freire (1970) asserts, education must be a transformative process for both students and teachers, requiring continuous reflection and adaptation on the part of educators.

#### 5.4.3 Lack of Resources and Support Materials

The scarcity of resources to support multilingual teaching practices in schools like Malibud NHS presents another significant challenge. Educational materials that incorporate local languages are limited, and teachers often have to rely on materials written primarily in English. This shortage of multilingual resources makes it difficult to implement translanguaging in formal instruction, as students are required to engage primarily with English-language texts and learning tools. The absence of resources in local languages reinforces the dominance of English and leaves multilingual students with fewer opportunities to use their full linguistic capacities in academic contexts.

Furthermore, the lack of teaching materials in local languages not only makes translanguaging more difficult but also perpetuates a monolingual approach to education. This limitation hinders the development of an inclusive pedagogy that fully acknowledges the linguistic diversity of students, an essential element of critical pedagogy (García & Wei, 2014). The integration of local language materials into lesson plans and assessments is necessary to support multilingual practices and ensure that students can navigate both their home languages and English in academic contexts.

#### 5.4.4 Institutional and Policy Resistance

Beyond the classroom, there are institutional and policy-related challenges in the integration of multilingual practices and critical pedagogy. Many educational systems, including the one that governs Malibud NHS, are resistant to change, particularly in terms of incorporating alternative pedagogical methods like translanguaging (García, 2009). Educational policies often prioritize standardization, focusing on uniform learning outcomes and language proficiency in English, which can create tension with the goals of critical pedagogy that emphasize student-centered, dynamic learning processes. Additionally, administrators may be reluctant to adopt multilingual and critical pedagogy approaches because of concerns about the potential impact on students' performance in standardized assessments.

Moreover, institutional resistance to these pedagogical changes poses a significant barrier to their implementation at the school level. For these practices to be fully integrated, systemic support is essential, including policy reforms that prioritize inclusivity and recognize the value of multilingualism in the classroom (UNESCO, 2015). This includes developing strategies to address the tension between standardized assessments and the need for flexible, student-centered pedagogies.

#### 5.4.5 Student Perceptions and Language Attitudes

Although students at Malibud NHS use multiple languages in informal settings, they may still internalize attitudes that devalue their home languages, especially when they are taught in English-centric environments. The societal stigma often associated with speaking local languages can create resistance among students, who may feel pressure to conform to the dominant language practices in school (May, 2014). Furthermore, some students may lack the confidence to use their home languages in formal settings due to concerns about academic success or social acceptance.

Moreover, overcoming student resistance requires cultivating an inclusive classroom culture where all languages are equally valued. Teachers can play a critical role in changing students' attitudes toward their home languages by explicitly encouraging translanguaging and reinforcing its academic value. This aligns with the goals of critical pedagogy, which seeks to empower students by validating their linguistic identities and promoting their active participation in learning.

## 6. Conclusions

Integrating critical pedagogy and translanguaging in Malibud NHS Senior High School creates inclusive learning environments that value students' linguistic and cultural identities. These approaches enhance student engagement, participation, and empowerment.

The challenges to implementing critical pedagogy and translanguaging at Malibud NHS Senior High School are significant but not insurmountable. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including curriculum reforms, teacher professional development, resource allocation, and institutional support. By tackling these barriers, Malibud NHS can better utilize its students' multilingual resources to foster more inclusive, empowering, and effective learning environments. Through a commitment to these practices, the school can transform its approach to education, embracing linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a hindrance. Ultimately, this will enable students to become active, engaged learners who see their multilingualism as a strength and a valuable tool for academic and personal success.

This study underscores the transformative potential of integrating critical pedagogy and translanguaging in educational settings like Malibud NHS Senior High School. Students' frequent use of multilingual practices, blending local languages and English, highlights their linguistic adaptability and the role of these practices in fostering peer understanding (García & Wei, 2014). However, the underutilization of these practices in formal instruction reflects a disconnect between students' linguistic realities and the rigid, English-dominated structure of the curriculum (Bernardo, 2017). Addressing this gap by embedding translanguaging into teaching strategies can significantly enhance inclusivity and comprehension in the classroom.

Encouraging translanguaging in classroom discussions has been shown to improve student participation and confidence, creating an inclusive space where learners can draw from their full linguistic repertoire (Wei, 2018). These practices enable students to engage more deeply with academic content and articulate their ideas effectively, as demonstrated in group activities that permit local language use before presenting in English (Hornberger & Link, 2012).

Moreover, dialogic teaching, rooted in Freire's (1970) principles of critical pedagogy, has empowered students to critically engage with academic content and express their identities. By fostering open-ended discussions and reflective learning, this approach transforms students into active participants in their education, allowing them to question assumptions and contribute meaningfully to classroom discourse (Shor, 1992). Such practices affirm the value of students' voices and identities, positioning education as a tool for empowerment and social transformation.

Despite these benefits, challenges remain. Teachers face significant barriers, including curriculum constraints, a lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient resources to support multilingual and critical approaches (Dekker & Young, 2005). These obstacles highlight the need for systemic reforms to create a supportive infrastructure that enables educators to implement inclusive and equity-focused strategies effectively (UNESCO, 2015).

Thus, integrating translanguaging and critical pedagogy into the teaching framework at Malibud NHS can enhance student engagement, participation, and empowerment while addressing the unique linguistic and cultural contexts of rural schools. However, achieving this vision requires institutional support, teacher training, and a reimagining of education policies to prioritize inclusivity and equity.

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