

Translanguaging in Multilingual English Language Teaching in the Philippines: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The debate on language preference in English language teaching in a multilingual setting has stirred the traditional monolingual “English Only Policy” in the Philippines. As a result, the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) was institutionalized in 2009. The question still lies as to the multilingual teaching practices employed in the Philippine schools. This study was conducted in order to review the translanguaging strategies of teachers in teaching English in the Philippines. It utilized the qualitative approach using systematic literature review. 14 papers were initially examined using 4 inclusion and exclusion criteria. 7 papers have qualified and selected as samples. The findings of the literature review showed that: 1.) Both natural and official translanguaging are employed in ELT and 2.) Translanguaging bridges the linguistic gap of learner’s L1, L2 and the target language, which in common in a linguistically diverse country such the Philippines. Future researches may look at building a theoretical framework of translanguaging as a language teaching pedagogy in mainstream education.

1. Introduction

In which medium should the English language be taught? Does allowing students to use their first language negatively affect language learning? How is multilingualism applied in the Philippine education setting? How does multilingualism affect language learning?

There is a strong reason to challenge the rigid monolingual ‘English Only Please’ policy in English as second language classrooms – with both academic and psychological implications. A multilingual English language classroom facilitates contextualized, interactive, inclusive, and positive learning experience in ESL learners. Teaching in a student’s second language, rather than their mother tongue, has been linked to educational under-achievement, poor literacy development and high dropout rates (eg. Benson, 2005b; Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; Pinnock, 2009; Rosenthal, Baker, & Ginsburg, 1983).

Aside from underachievement, globalization, mobility, and a variety of other factors pushed today’s classroom to move towards embracing linguistic diversity. A body of research has studied the ways that teachers and schools adapt to their increasingly multilingual and multicultural student bodies (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010; Garcia & Sylvan, 2011; Janzen, 2008; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008) and the ways teachers can make use of the students’ mother tongue – its linguistic and cultural resources to heighten learning (Catalano, Kiramba & Viesca, 2020).

The Philippines, with its 180 languages and counting is a country of cultural and linguistic diversity (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2013, p. 25). It is not appalling to observe students to have a minimum of two languages to switch to and fro, excluding the target language – mother tongue and Filipino. We Filipinos are exposed daily to a multitude of languages. We are exposed to the local dialect in our community, to Filipino in television and in most digital media, and English in the classroom setting. Learning a second language should not leave out the vast linguistic asset of the students’ L1. Experts highly support this incorporation of languages in learning English (Cook, 2001 and 2005; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Macaro, 2005). When

students enter the classroom, they bring with them this rich linguistic repertoire of their mother tongues and strategically use them in acquiring and learning a second or third language (Carroll and Morales 2016).

The inclusion of students' L1 means that literacy and content can be taught meaningfully from day one, and that this knowledge can then be transferred across into the L2, according to Cummins' (1979) interdependence theory. Studies by Thomas and Collier (1997; 2002) support this assertion reporting that "only those language minority students who had 5-6 years of strong cognitive and academic development in their L1— as well as through L2— did well in Grade 11 assessments". Furthermore, Thomas and Collier (1997; 2002) showed that language development, fluency and literacy in both L1 and L2 is developed, despite lesser exclusive L2 use. This agrees with Krashen's (1981) linguistic theory on acquisition, which holds that "language acquisition, first or second, occurs when comprehension of real messages occurs, and when the acquirer is not 'on the defensive'".

Aside from educational benefits, significant behavioral and affective effects were observed from multilingualism. These include increased participation and teacher-student interaction (eg. Baker, 2001; Benson, 2006), increased self-esteem and confidence in students (eg. Dutcher, 1995; UNESCO, 2006), and greater involvement and support on the part of parents and communities (Dutcher, 2004). These positive effects of multilingualism on the behavioral aspect leverage positive scholastic performances of students in English language learning.

Teachers might ask themselves, "what is the best way to teach English with full use of student's L1 and L2?" An approach that is becoming popular on the multilingual English teaching is called translanguaging. Otheguy, Garcia, and Reid (2015) defines translanguaging as "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages," (p. 281). It is important to consider the use of translanguaging in the classroom. If ESL learners feel demotivated and left out in a rigid monolingual classroom, it is just right to find alternatives that will not marginalize learners.

While MTB-MLE imposes the inclusion of regional dialects as medium of instruction for primary grade teaching, translanguaging is a pedagogical practice which allows students to switch languages in completing an activity or during an interaction (Williams, 2002).

1.1. MTB-MLE Implementation in the Philippines

The Philippine Department of Education institutionalized Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in 2009. This was a huge step in acknowledging the learners' L1 in early childhood or primary education. The MTB-MLE officially included 12 local languages which are Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Iloko, Bikol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Tausug, Maguindanaoan, Maranao, and Chabacano to leverage primary education. This has seen positive impacts considering the criticisms of mono- and bilingual education practiced before.

Bilingualism is nothing new in the Philippine education. Bilingual Education Program has been established since 1974. It institutionalized the use of both English and Filipino in English. Indeed, Filipino is the national language of the Philippines and the lingua franca throughout the archipelago, regional dialects remain the mother tongue of more than half of the population.

It is a slap to other languages that, with this rich linguistic resource, the secondary education still adheres to monolingualism. If you are at school, passing through the corridors and in the hallways, you can read a lot of the dominant language in signs, posters, announcements, etc. This is what constitutes the linguistic landscape (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). We can readily assert that English reigns supreme as the official language in education.

Albeit, MTB-MLE is not the legal backbone of multilingual secondary-level ESL classroom. the 2012 MTB-MLE policy (Department of Education, 2012) resembles BEP, especially where teaching and learning of languages are concerned: English and Filipino should be taught in English and Filipino, However, students' mother tongues are considered as auxiliary languages essential in learning English. DEPED explicitly enforces English as the medium of instruction in the country as Secondary level students are expected to speak and understand basic English. Still, on lived experiences, English teachers are considerate enough to make use of students' L1 in the English classroom.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1990) coined the term "submersion" to describe a child made to study a language apart from his mother tongue (p. 105). Submersion in education affects both the quality and inclusivity of education programs. In the formal instruction setting, students tend to shy away from interaction due to discomfort in using the target, which is imposed as the exclusive language in the classroom.

A pool of researchers mentioned that students whose home/mother tongue is not used inside the classroom generally have lower levels of achievement and attainment relative to their peers (Bamgbose, 2004; Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; Rong & Grant, 1992; Rosenthal, et al., 1983). These students may acquire the grammatical competence but are likely to fail in communicative competence.

1.2. Translanguaging

Hornberger & Link (2012) describes this as a widely recognized practice across educational context in an increasing globalized world, was first used in Welsh by Cen William (Garcia, 2009). Williams (2002) defines translanguaging as pedagogical practices where students hear or read a lesson, a passage in a book, or a section of text in one language and develop their work in another (P.342). In other words, translanguaging allows students to shift from one language to another as they do reading (a receptive activity) and writing (a productive activity) in existing researches. Translanguaging is comparable in code switching inside the classroom. Students are given the leeway to switch L1, L2, and L3 during interactions inside the classroom.

In context, translanguaging allows 'language learning and language use work together. People learn the language as they use them. They decode the other's grammar as they interact, make inferences about the other's language system, and take them into account as they formulate their own utterances' (Camagarajah & Wurr, 2011). This could be observed among learners of linguistic background (Waray, Cebuano, Tagalog, and English). These students eventually pick up linguistic codes from these different languages through casual and meaningful interaction, and occasionally mixing some features from each other. This solidifies that language may not be observed, but it already constantly developing as multilinguals utilize them in discourse. Reyes (2018) demonstrated translanguaging in multilingual 3rd grades in Mindanao as crucial in ESL classroom. Through translanguaging, the teacher-participants were able presenting the lesson (Khosa, 2012), conducting class discussions (Wang 2005), and managing learners' behaviors (Macaro, 1997; Břenková, 2007).

Reyes (2018) concludes that it is through nuanced understanding and purposeful accommodation of learners' languages and language practices that the translanguaging can help multilingual learners play active roles in ESL classroom, primarily in fulfilling their communicative functions that are helpful in learning English, which is indispensable to succeed in today's highly globalized world.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

With the mentioned implications, this paper aimed to review and examine multilingual practices, particularly translanguaging strategies, in the English language classrooms in the Philippines. Specifically, this review was employed with the question:

1. What are the translanguaging practices of teachers in English language teaching in the Philippines ?

2. Methodology

This study employed the qualitative approach using the systematic literature review (SLR) which was conducted to "identify, select and critically appraise research to answer a clearly formulated question" (Dewey & Drahota, 2016). The existing material surveyed directly in this review was gathered and selected with the following inclusion and exclusion criteria: 1. Literature and studies shall be exclusive from the implementation of MTB-MLE in 2009 up to the present; 2. Literature and studies are focused on multilingual practices in Basic and Higher Education; 3. Literature and studies are conducted among English language learners and teachers and; 4. Literature and studies conducted in the Philippines. Of the 14 initial related literature, 7 have qualified under the criteria above. All studies were carefully reviewed and analyzed to pull relevant themes regarding the translanguaging strategies of teachers in teaching English in the Philippines.

3. Results and Discussion

Author/s	Title of Study	Findings	Recommendation
Lartec, et. al. (2014)	Strategies and problems encountered by teachers implementing mother tongue-based instruction in a multilingual classroom	Teachers used translation of the TL to the mother tongue, multilingual teaching, and lingua franca in instruction. "These innovative strategies help the students attain maximum learning and build firm foundations, valuing and developing oral and written skills that children bring to school without rushing literacy."	Increase administrators and teachers' awareness and improving MTB-MLE policy in a multicultural and multilingual setting.
Reyes (2018)	Translanguaging in multilingual	Translanguaging is crucial in	Consideration of learner's

	third grade ESL classrooms in Mindanao, Philippines	mediating the communicative functions. "Through translanguaging, the teacher-participants were able to present their lessons, conduct classroom discussions, enhance students' understanding, and manage students' behaviors more effectively and efficiently; and the student-participants, in turn, were able to participate in classroom discussions and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding substantially."	contexts in teaching and learning of English to facilitate learner's active roles in learning.
Parba (2018)	Teacher's shifting ideologies and teaching practices in Philippine mother tongue classrooms	Both teachers and students use translanguaging in order to negotiate and resist language standardization and idealization as a result of MTB-MLE implementation.	Engagement of pre- and in-service teachers to MTB-MLE seminars and ideological conversations on multilingual education.
Lopez, Coady & Grail (2019)	Rural indigenous experiences in mother tongue education in the Philippines: counter-stories of resistance	Students in the rural area lacks access to educational opportunities to learn English compared to mainstream students. Teachers constantly adjust teaching practices by incorporating English with mother tongue and employing literal translations.	Establishing of bridging practice in transitioning from mother tongue to L2 (Filipino) and L3 (English).
Harder, Sowa, & Punjabi (2019)	Language Usage Study in Bahasa Sug, Chavacano, Magindanawn, and Meranaw Mother Tongue Schools Findings Report	More teachers were comfortable in speaker the school mother tongue than the individual mother tongues of the learners. Lack of TLMs for other MTs (Meranaw, Nahasa Sug, and Magindanawn)	Bringing in volunteers from the community who speak the MT to support the teacher. Class sectioning according to the mother tongue spoken.
Perfecto (2020)	English language teaching and bridging in mother tongue-based multilingual education	Teachers used various translanguaging strategies like direct translation, code-switching, metalinguistic comparison-contrast and metalinguistic explanation.	
Belvis & Gutierrez (2019)	Amorphous language as alternative model for multilingual education in the Philippines. Cogent Education	The article argued that amorphous language model can account for language practices of a multilingual classroom.	The paper proposed amorphous language as an alternative model to serial monolingualism and contributes to the theorisation of translanguaging as a tactic in a language classroom.

In this systematic review, two thematic points were taken – Mother tongue-based multilingual education and translanguaging in English language teaching. The implementation of MTB-MLE as a medium of instruction in the Philippines opened translanguaging practices as the translated strategy in utilizing students' mother tongues, L2, and L3 simultaneously in classroom interaction, either planned or spontaneous. Majority of the studies found translanguaging as a vital strategy in successful MTB-MLE. Translanguaging is crucial in mediating the communicative functions (Reyes, 2018). *Perfecto (2020)* further identifies translanguaging strategies *that* allow for more efficient teaching and learning and more active participation from the students in the language learning activities. Belvis and Gutierrez (2019) even proposes the amorphous language as alternative model which seeks to theorize translanguaging as a tactic in the language classroom. Lartec, et. Al. (2014), *Lopez, Coady, & Grail (2019)*, and *Harden, Sowa & Punjabi (2019)* found similar problems in the implementation of mother-tongue in the Philippines – lack of

mother-tongue teaching and learning material and lack of teacher training as the major hurdles in implementing MTB-MLE in the classroom.

To sum up, based on the literature review presented here, the MTB-MLE as a medium of instruction offshoots translanguaging as the strategy in implementation in the multilingual classroom. Academically, MTB-MLE reaps positive effects especially in negotiation of meaning, fostering student-teacher interaction, embracing diversity, and in slowly removing the stigma of serial monolingualism.

4. Conclusion

This paper reviewed how multilingualism is exercised in the English language classrooms – though translanguaging. The paper found natural and official translanguaging as commonly used practices in multilingual English language teaching. Natural translanguaging occurs spontaneously during classroom interactions in order to enhance understanding and participation while official translanguaging happens in a designed activity where teachers allow for use of L1, L2, and L3 to complete the task (Williams, 2012). According to Garcia and Wei (2014, p. 227), ‘adopting a translanguaging lens means that there can be no way of educating children inclusively without recognizing their diverse language and meaning-making practices as a resource to learn’. Translanguaging is necessary in bridging the linguistic gap of learner’s L1, L2 and the target language – which is a staple in a linguistically diverse country such as Philippines. Translanguaging greatly aids in presenting the lesson (Khosa, 2012), conducting class discussions (Wang 2005), and managing learners’ behaviors (Macaro, 1997; Břenková, 2007). The existing literature and studies reviewed focused mostly on translanguaging in mother-tongue based classrooms which is in kinder to G3 level and secondary level, missing out on higher education translanguaging practices. Translanguaging, as reviewed in the literature and studies is seen as a support to avoid disruptions in learning momentum during classroom discussion. Translanguaging in the language classrooms is growing in practice but needs to be established as a teaching pedagogy. Further research may look at translanguaging practices in higher education and building a theoretical framework of translanguaging as a language teaching pedagogy in mainstream education in the Philippine context.

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