

Translanguaging: Teachers and Pupils' Challenges in ESL Reading Comprehension Lessons in Chinese Vernacular Primary School

SITI AQILAH BINTI ABDUL RAHIM*

Playtime Theatre Speech & Drama, Singapore
aqil.raim@live.com

LEE VUN LEONG

SJK (C) Chi Wen, WP Labuan, Malaysia
leevunleong@gmail.com

KEFFENY ANN JOSEPH

SJKC Chung Hua Mantin, Malaysia
p125161@siswa.ukm.edu.my

**Corresponding Author*

Date Received: 5 January 2023 Date Accepted: 31 January 2023 Date Published: 28 February 2023

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to elicit the challenges faced by both teachers and pupils while translanguaging in ESL reading comprehension lessons. Adopting a mixed-method approach, data from this study were garnered from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and questionnaires with ESL teachers and upper-level primary school pupils who are currently teaching or studying at Chinese vernacular schools in Malaysia. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires while the interviews and classroom observations were audio and video recorded and transcribed. Five challenges faced by the teachers when translanguaging is integrated in reading comprehension lessons were highlighted, which are students' high dependency on translanguaging, time-consuming, lack of formal policy on the appropriateness of adopting translanguaging. Besides that, demotivation of students' learning may occur when translanguaging was overused by teachers and some high proficiency students unexpectedly do not show appreciation on the use of the first language in ESL classroom.

Keywords: translanguaging; translanguage; ESL; vernacular school

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has enabled educators to relook and create innovative approaches of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to learners around the world where there are many English speakers who speak English as their second language who are known as bilinguals or multilinguals, trying to acquire English language in order to develop essential skills for international communication. The English language is somehow essential in globalisation (Elyas, 2008). The status of English as a global language has somehow attracted controversial concerns on the role of English language and academic and social settings, specifically on how it should be taught and learned in diverse multilingual contexts. The use of translanguaging pedagogy fits the emergence

of bilingual and multilingual speakers especially in Chinese vernacular schools in Malaysia where the students are varied in races, ethnicities, as well as social and cultural backgrounds. This study is going to explore the challenges faced by educators during the utilisation of the translanguaging approach while teaching reading skill in Chinese vernacular primary schools in Malaysia. Data is going to be collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and questionnaires.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Malaysia is a multilingual speaking country where the Malay language serves as the national language, English as the second language and other languages such as Chinese, Tamil are the third languages. A Malaysian child can speak different languages in daily life, for example speaking his native language at home, speaking the national language which is Malay at school and learning another foreign language as well. Over half of the population in the world is bilingual and even multilingual, they acquire different languages because they require them for different purposes in their daily life (Holmes, 2008). The medium of education in school may vary in Malaysia and relies on the types of school where we have National or Vernacular type. The national type uses Malay as medium of education while the vernacular school uses either Mandarin or Tamil as the medium of instruction. Pupils from both types of school learn English as an additional language subject. Pupils who study in national school will learn two languages which is Malay and English while vernacular school students will learn Malay, English and Mandarin/Tamil. Malaysian students are mostly bilingual and multilingual. In a Chinese vernacular school, pupils may have different races and backgrounds thus they speak different native languages in the classroom. An ESL teacher might use a translanguaging approach accordingly while teaching different contexts, for example explaining the vocabularies or some important ideas using pupils' first language such as Malay or Mandarin in order to help them understand the text better while teaching reading comprehension. Usage of more than one language has diverse impacts on learners' performances and enhances them cognitively as well (Garcia, 2009). Thus, this might be a huge challenge for teachers and pupils for using translanguaging strategies in the classroom as pupils speak different native languages. Hence, this study aims to examine the challenges experienced by teachers and pupils while adopting translanguaging strategies in teaching reading comprehension in Chinese vernacular schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is carried out to investigate the challenges faced by both teachers and pupils in using the translanguaging strategy during the teaching and learning session in a reading class.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to find out the answers of the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading in Chinese vernacular school?

2. How do the teachers overcome the challenges faced by them while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading?
3. What are the challenges faced by pupils while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading in Chinese vernacular school?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the challenges faced by teachers and pupils while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading in Chinese vernacular schools.
2. To explore the strategies opted by the teachers in overcoming the challenges.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is significant to the ESL teachers who teach English in Chinese vernacular schools in Malaysia. This research helps them in dealing with the possible challenges that they will be facing when they use translanguaging strategies in the reading classroom. This research is beneficial to researchers who want to study in similar areas too, especially in the field of teaching ESL in Chinese vernacular schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TRANSLANGUAGING

Translanguaging is an act performed by bilinguals to access different linguistic features or various modes to maximise communicative potential among the learner (Garcia, 2009). The Welsh Scholar, Cen William (1994) was the first to introduce the term “translanguaging” and he believed that learner’s one language can be utilised to learn another language. He also argues that a learner’s one language can be used to increase the understanding and working ability of the pupils. Translanguaging is defined to be the dynamic use of multiple resources like language and dialects that helps in the process of making meaning towards pupils’ learning (Canarajah, 2018). Translanguaging plays a big role in aiding pupils’ understanding towards the lesson. The intervention of this study was used to observe what happens when the teacher and pupils enter into a translanguaging reading classroom. Zhang and Jocuns (2022) noted that even with moderate scaffolding, translanguaging helped the low proficiency students to participate actively in reading discussion to achieve comprehension. These findings complement Gort and Pontier’s (2012) who grouped teachers’ translanguaging functions into three main categories; academic, communication and management. Every strategy has its purpose related to the study. Translanguaging is adapted to facilitate inference making strategies by using the learner's mother tongue and English in the same classroom lesson.

Though translanguaging has gained wide acceptance in multilingual and bilingual classrooms as it closes the language barrier between the pupils, yet, achieving meaningful translanguaging practices in the classroom is challenging (Garcia & Klein, 2016; Hornberger & Link, 2012). The individual differences between the teacher and pupils, social and cultural background and educational policy create challenges in the implementation of translanguaging in the classroom. This statement is proved by the research done by Nyimbili & Mwanza (2021) who stated that issues like mismatch of the languages, rigidity of the educational policy, ideology of

monolingualism, time-consuming, challenges in phonetics and phonology, monolingual assessment and lack of teaching aids rises in the translanguaging classroom.

TRANSLANGUAGING STRATEGIES

There are a few strategies that can be implemented in ESL classrooms to overcome the challenges faced by teachers and pupils in translanguaging. The academic and social needs of the lesson can be achieved by the teacher through the opening of a “translanguaging space”. The implementation of translanguaging will allow teachers to create an understandable subject area lesson by anticipating language demands prior to the instruction as a way to enhance language development (Wei, 2011). A study by Jessica (2011) suggested that translanguaging strategies can be implemented in reading lessons during the introduction of vocabulary, the teaching of content, group discussion activities and individual practices.

READING COMPREHENSION

The Malaysian ESL curriculum has experienced many transformations since the introduction of Malaysian Education Blueprint. It focuses on creating a competitive English Language Education system for Malaysians based on the Common European Framework of References for Language (CEFR). This blueprint introduces a couple of innovative pedagogical methodologies to strengthen students’ English proficiency in all four skills, which are listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill. This study will however be focused on the reading skill. As reviewed by the University of Cambridge (2011), it stated that it is essential to develop reading through communicative activities as it helps in building a fruitful reading lesson. The framework also promotes the use of translation in the classroom as it is one of the strategies in engaging pupils in the lesson (Arda, 2015).

Reading can be defined as the process of gaining information through the written information (Grabe & Stoller, 2013). The essential part of the reading activity is always comprehending the reading material. Hence, the reading lesson will not be a success if the pupils are unable to comprehend the reading materials well. Reading comprehension is one of the language skills that are being assessed in CEFR. Reading comprehension is also a skill that is important in the educational success of every individual. Students may struggle in many subject areas if they have no adequate reading comprehension skill. Many scholars related to language have identified the benefits of translanguaging in a reading classroom. Garcia (2020) drew examples of three bilingual readers to demonstrate how a translanguaging space can virtually connect them to the reading text. The first sample, a three-year-old pre-reader used his bilingual and multimodal resources to read aloud a Spanish text without being discouraged from mixing languages. Garcia (2020) then argued that the use of bilingual language enabled the pre-reader to read with confidence as he was able to understand the content of the text. In the following example, Garcia (2020) points out the benefits of translanguaging in a fourth-grade pupil. The teacher allowed the pupil to mix languages in the classroom and this resulted in facilitating the pupil’s reading skill in becoming a competent reader. The final research was collected from a 12-year-old pupil. She was taught on how to adopt the translanguaging strategy when reading the textbook. She then emerged to be an expert reader. From all these findings, Garcia (2020) stated her claim that a translanguaging approach in diverse grade levels have produced benefits for the learners.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

Barron (2006) stressed on the significance of paying attention to the initiative and experience of the learners themselves when conducting an educational research study, especially when depending on learner-initiated practices. Therefore, this study was conducted using the mixed-method approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the research problems (Creswell, 2011). In ensuring the consistency of the findings, the methodological triangulation technique has been applied (Honorene, 2017). The quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire and the qualitative data was garnered through classroom observations as well as interviews with teachers and students.

SAMPLING METHODS

This study involved 10 ESL teachers and one of 20 upper primary level pupils, all of whom are currently teaching or studying at various primary Chinese vernacular schools in Malaysia. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling. Consent from the respective guardians was obtained before the observations and interviews took place (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

A questionnaire adapted from Nambisan (2014) was used as one of the instruments in this study. Several precautions had been taken to ensure that the questionnaire passed the validity and reliability tests. The questions were adapted to align with the multilingual classroom settings in Malaysia Chinese vernacular school. The questionnaire had been peer-reviewed to ensure that it is comprehensible. To fulfil the criteria of internal validity, this research study aimed to make sure that the chosen variables are the only ones affecting the results. Since the students' lack of previous knowledge of some of the terms might have affected their answers during the interview, the researcher asked semi structured questions in order to ensure that the participants could receive clarification of some of the questions, if needed. Researchers also ensured the comparability and the consistency of each procedure and explicit account of the steps that were taken in each part of the process in collecting the data was provided.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

In order to get further elucidation on the issues (Honorene, 2017), this study applied methodological triangulation in collecting data. Data collection for this study was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, 10 ESL teachers were invited to answer the questionnaires. Questionnaires fulfilled the needs for collecting statistics through a quantitative method, since the questions are always specific and brief (Dörnyei, 2007). The questionnaire consists of 48 items, with 6 of them were used to collect general information of the teachers, 20 of them are Likert-Type scales items while the others are open-ended questions. 20 of the items were used to investigate teachers' perceptions of translanguaging while teaching reading comprehension while two of the other items focused on the challenges faced by the teachers while translanguaging in teaching reading comprehension. The questionnaire was administered by using Google Forms to minimise coding error (Vasanth Raju & Harinarayana, 2016). After that, we invited 3 teachers

for follow up questions and it was audio-recorded. This semi-structured interview focused on the challenges faced by them as well as the strategies that they opted for in order to overcome the obstacles in translanguaging during reading comprehension lessons. Interview was chosen as one of the means in collecting data as it has the benefit of giving detailed personal accounts to research studies (Dörnyei, 2007).

In the second phase, the researchers carried out one classroom observation during reading comprehension lessons to explore the struggles faced by both the teachers and the students. The lesson was audio-recorded and one researcher sat at the back of the classroom to take field notes of contextual elements. In addition, three pupils were invited for follow up questions. During this semi-structured interview, the researchers delved into the students' perceptions of their current and past learning experiences as well as the challenges faced by them when the teacher translanguaged during the reading comprehension lesson.

DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The review of data collected from this study was also done in two phases. In the first phase, data gathered by the questionnaire was examined through descriptive analysis where all the percentages of Likert-type items were calculated to get the general ideas of teachers' perceptions towards translanguaging. The second phase of data analysis focused on the qualitative data obtained through interviews and classroom observations. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and scrutinised through content analysis while the transcription of classroom observation was interpreted together with the field notes taken to give contextual meanings. Pertinent quotes obtained from all of the interviews were grouped according to the challenges addressed by both teachers and students. All the data collected in both phases was further analysed interactively in order to create an in-depth understanding that will be able to avoid bias and answer the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FIRST PHASE: QUESTIONNAIRES AND TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES FINDINGS

Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with the teachers have been conducted in order to answer this present study's first and second research question of what are the challenges faced by teachers while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading in Chinese vernacular school and how do the teachers overcome the challenges faced by them while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading.

Questionnaire responses were analysed and presented in Table 1, the summary of responses from the participants is shown below:

Table 1. Summary of questionnaire responses – Item 1 to Item 7

Questionnaire Questions	Teachers' Responses
1. How long have you been teaching English?	For this question, 30% of the teachers taught for the past one year. One of the teachers has one year of experience. 40% of the teachers have been teaching English for three and seven years.

2. What is your mother tongue?	Mandarin is the mother tongue for 60% of the teachers. Another 10% of the teacher's mother tongue is Mandarin and English. The remaining 30% of the teacher's mother tongue is Malay language.
3. Which language are you fluent in?	From the questionnaire, it is revealed that 80% of the teachers are fluent in Mandarin and one of the teachers is fluent in Cantonese dialect. But, overall, all of the teachers are fluent in both Malay and English languages.
4. Rating of proficiency in Chinese language.	70% of the teachers agreed that they have no problem communicating with native speakers on a wide range of topics in mandarin. 20% of the teachers said that with mandarin, they are able to have limited conversation on an everyday basis. The remaining 10% of the teachers responded that they are only able to converse a few basic words and phrases in Mandarin. This means that 10% of the teachers have low proficiency in Mandarin.
5. Rating of proficiency in Malay language.	80% of the teachers have good proficiency in Malay language as they have no problem in communicating with native speakers in a wide range of topics. The remaining 20% of the teachers agreed that they are able to discuss a variety of topics in Malay language without having much trouble. Overall, all of the teachers are generally good in Malay language as they are able to communicate and discuss among one another in the language.
6. What is the primary language of instruction in the classroom?	For this question, 30% of the teachers use only English in the classroom as no other languages are used. However, another 30% of the teachers use English and Mandarin in their classes when they teach. Another 20% of the teachers use English and Malay language as a medium of instruction in their class as they are unable to speak in mandarin. The remaining 20% of the teachers responded that they use all languages like Mandarin, Malay and English in the classroom when they teach.
7. Do you believe the use of students' mother tongue is beneficial in the English language classroom?	For this question, all of the teachers, which means 100% of them, agreed that the students' mother tongue is essential in helping students learn English in the classroom.

The summary of questionnaire responses for likert scale questions are presented in Table 2 to Table 5 as below:

TABLE 2. Summary of questionnaire responses – Item 8

<u>Question 8:</u> How often do you observe or encourage the use of mother tongue in the classroom for the following purposes?	Never / Not often	Somewhat often	Often / Very often
To discuss the content of reading comprehension materials?	10%	10%	80%
To provide assistance to the peers during reading comprehension?	10%	30%	60%
To explain problems not related to reading comprehension?	40%	10%	50%
To enable active participation by lower proficiency students in answering the reading comprehension questions?	10%	10%	80%
To respond to teacher's questions related to reading comprehension?	20%	20%	60%

How often do the students use their mother tongues in the classroom? The findings revealed that most of the teachers encourage the use of mother tongue to discuss the content of reading comprehension materials and they too agree that mother tongue should be used to promote active participation among the lower proficiency students to help them answer the reading comprehension questions. This is in accordance with a study conducted by Oribabor and Adesina (2013) that suggested the instruction given in mother tongue aids learning better as it gives encouragement and motivation for the students to learn. Besides, some of the teachers agree that their mother tongue gives assistance to the students to work among their peers. Since the pupils

are of varying proficiency levels, their mother tongue will be able to be a connector in helping their peers to share their ideas regarding the lesson. Rajathurai (2020) mentioned that students' mother tongue enhances their cognitive development and gives support in other language acquisition too. It is noted that none of the teachers discouraged the use of the mother tongue during the reading comprehension lesson.

TABLE 3. Summary of questionnaire responses – Item 9

<u>Question 9:</u>	Never / Not important	Somewhat important	Important / Very important
From your point of view, how important is it for the students to use their mother tongue in the classroom within the following contexts?			
To discuss the content of reading comprehension materials?	10%	0	90%
To provide assistance to the peers during reading comprehension?	10%	30%	60%
To explain problems not related to reading comprehension?	50%	0	50%
To enable active participation by lower proficiency students in answering the reading comprehension questions?	10%	10%	80%
To respond to teacher's questions related to reading comprehension?	20%	20%	60%

How important is it for the students to use their mother tongue in the classroom? While the majority of the teachers agreed that mother tongue plays a vital role in assisting the pupils in discussion about the reading comprehension materials, half of the teachers argued that problems unrelated to the reading comprehension should not be attended to in mother tongue. In order to ensure that mother tongue is not being excessively used in ESL classrooms, teachers need to set limitations for the students so that they will not rely too much on it. This aligns with the study by Yusri et al. (2022) that stated students should only be allowed to use their L1 to build knowledge for discussion purposes as using mother tongue too often in the classroom will not provide space for the students to learn the target language. None of the teachers argued that translanguaging is not important in ESL reading classrooms.

TABLE 4. Summary of questionnaire responses – Item 10

<u>Question 10:</u>	Never / Not often	Somewhat often	Often / Very often
How often do you use students' mother tongue in the classroom for the following situations?			
To describe vocabulary?	20%	0	80%
To give directions while doing the reading comprehension activities?	20%	20%	60%
To explain the content of the reading materials?	20%	10%	70%
To quickly clarify during reading comprehension activities?	20%	20%	60%
To help low proficiency students?	20%	20%	60%

How often do you use students' mother tongues in the classroom? The majority of the teachers agreed that they use students' mother tongue very often in the ESL reading classroom to help the lower proficiency students cope with the lesson. Most of the teachers use students' mother tongue

very often in the classroom to explain vocabularies, to give directions on what the students should do, to give a quick clarification of the lesson and to explain the content of the reading materials to the students. The use of students' mother tongue is really essential as it helps students in giving a better understanding towards the lesson. Nishantini (2020) claims that children across the world have minimal learning in school as teaching takes place in a language that they do not fully understand. Therefore, teachers should use students' mother tongues more often to enable students to learn effectively. The use of students' mother tongue in the classroom will definitely improve the outcome of the learning.

Table 5. Summary of questionnaire responses – Item 11

Question 11:	Never / Not important	Somewhat important	Important / Very important
From your point of view, how important is it for the teachers to use their students' mother tongue(s) in the classroom for the following situations?			
To describe vocabulary?	20%	20%	60%
To give directions while doing the reading comprehension activities?	20%	20%	60%
To explain the content of the reading materials?	20%	20%	60%
To quickly clarify during reading comprehension activities?	20%	20%	60%
To help low proficiency students?	20%	20%	60%

How important is it for teachers to use their students' mother tongue in the classroom? Most teachers strongly agree on the use of students' mother tongue in explaining the content of the reading materials and also to help the lower proficiency students in better understanding of the lesson during the learning process. However, two of the teachers do not find it important to use students' mother tongue in the classroom as they felt that the English lesson should only be carried out in English. This view is somehow opposed by Makulloluwa (2016) as she believed neglecting learners' L1 creates power and knowledge imbalance between the teacher and the student. As a result, the students will feel demotivated and will eventually isolate themselves as the language barrier within them fails to connect them to the lesson.

What are the challenges faced when other languages are used in ESL reading comprehension lessons? For this question, all teachers voice out the challenges that they face when they use various languages in the classroom. Four teachers face the common challenge as they say that translanguaging in the classroom is time consuming because they have to translate from one language to another and this takes a lot of time. For instance, when the teacher translates the lesson in Mandarin, not all students will be able to understand it, so there will be a need for the teacher to retranslate it a few times in different languages. Translanguaging too often in the classroom requires extra effort and time from the teacher and this will slow down the teaching and learning process (Ticheloven et al., 2019)

Besides, teachers too find it challenging when some of the students are unable to understand the lesson when English is fully utilised in the classroom. However, teachers agreed that the pupils rely too much on translanguaging when it is used too often in the classroom and this prevents them from learning the target language, English. One of the responses given by the teacher was:

“The weaker students tend to not speak in English if I often use their mother tongue. Instead, I should limit the use of their mother tongue by encouraging them to speak and write in English as it will enhance their level of understanding in reading comprehension lessons.”

This scenario can be overcome if teachers set limitations on translanguaging and give space for students to practise English. It is important for teachers to set a limit in the classroom when it comes to using students’ home language as it helps in fostering pupils in learning the target language (Semiante, 2016).

In addition to the challenges listed above, teachers too find it difficult to engage higher proficient pupils in the lesson as they tend to get bored when the teachers translanguage during the lesson. This is because the pupils are good in English and they don't have the need for the teachers to explain to them in another language. Therefore, they get bored and distracted when the lesson is translated a few times to the rest of the class. However, this could be overcome when teachers give enrichment activities for the students as a way to encourage and motivate them. Students who are good in a particular language or have been taught not to mix languages may regard the approach of translanguaging as unusual, and they may require encouragement to continue with the learning (Wlosowicz, 2020). From this point, it gives a solution for teachers on how to tackle the higher proficiency student in engaging them throughout the lesson.

TEACHERS’ QUESTIONNAIRES FINDINGS

The finding of the interviews with three teachers revealed that teachers do face challenges while adopting the translanguaging approach in teaching reading comprehension though they agreed that it is important to use students’ second language in reading lessons and it brings a good impact on students from the questionnaire's finding. On the other hand, teachers share and provide solutions that they use to overcome the challenges they faced while practising the translanguaging approach.

Students relying too much on Translanguaging. One of the biggest challenges that ESL teachers face while adopting the translanguaging approach in teaching reading comprehension is the overuse of the translanguaging approach which might cause students to rely too much in translanguaging during the lesson (Heller, 1995). Teacher 3 said:

“This is actually another reason why I do not encourage the usage of other languages. Students will be expecting me to translate every single thing. They will not have the initiative to look up the meaning of words in the dictionary”.

In this case, the teacher did not agree to adopt translanguaging in the reading comprehension lesson. Students relied on the teacher to explain the vocabulary in their mother tongue and did not find initiative to find the meaning of the word. The vocabulary that the student learned is a “shallow knowledge” which means the students lack a deeper meaning that helps them in understanding and remembering the knowledge they constructed (Daniel T., 2002). To overcome this, the teacher suggested not using the translanguaging approach in every teaching step during the lesson. Limitation has to be set for the implementation of the translanguaging approach in the lesson, such as making a decision of implementing translanguaging only while teaching complex concepts and vocabularies.

“I will try my very best not be translating in all lessons. I only use it whenever I need to. Maybe as I explain a complex concept or if the text is a bit heavy or difficult for them to understand.”

Time consuming. The adoption of translanguaging is time consuming as teachers have to translate the learning content to one or more languages at the same time. The teaching will be interrupted too and some students might lose focus when teachers keep on repeating the same learning content in different languages. Students' attention is important for them to learn and receive the language input given by the teacher, unnecessary information should not distract students' learning from time to time (Prakash, 2015). Teacher 1 mentioned this in the interview:

"I will say that it takes more time, comparing to just use English because you'll have to translate to the students, of course it will take more time, especially when you want to write out the definitions. Instead of just using English to explain the meaning to them, you also sometimes have to write other languages as well."

The time constraints problem on applying the translanguaging approach is in line with Palmer's (2009) study where she mentioned that some schools are still in accordance with traditional language boundaries and language lessons are mostly segmented to certain times daily in the syllabus. The solution that Teacher 1 took to overcome this challenge is to do selection on the learning content that is needed to be translated. Some of the vocabularies that are easy to understand and the meaning can be found in dictionaries can be skipped for translating it to students' first language.

"So, what I normally do is I will try not to translate in too many languages at the same time. I will just translate it in either Malay or Mandarin. I also do not translate the whole thing."

Another solution to reduce the time consuming in adopting translanguaging is not translating the learning content to many languages but choosing only one. Students in Chinese vernacular schools are mostly multi-ethnic and multi-race, they speak different languages as their first language. Teachers may choose one language for translating the learning content at one time so that teacher can reduce the time consumed. The selection of language to be translated into should be based on the learning content, for example a teacher can use cognate words in a particular language to teach vocabulary. Teachers should clearly understand that the translanguaging approach is used as a didactic means but not the ultimate aim for the entire classroom learning activity. The translated learning content is the goal for the language acquiring process, but not the learning tool (Vermes, 2010).

No formal policy on the appropriateness of adopting translanguaging. Another challenge faced by ESL teachers in adopting the translanguaging approach is that teachers are still unclear with how the translanguaging approach should be implemented in the classroom teaching. There is a lack in policy of indicating the appropriateness of adopting translanguaging in classroom teaching. Though there's a multilingual classroom setting in Chinese vernacular school, the language subjects taught in school are still separated. Teacher 2 mentioned this in the interview and agreed by teacher 3:

"Actually, in English lessons, we are not allowed to translate from English to other languages, like Bahasa or Chinese. But, at times, when the students can't really understand, then we'll consider using other languages as a medium of explanation."

In this case, the teacher is not allowed to use translanguaging but the teacher intended to use it as it helps students to understand better with the use of their first language while explaining difficult concepts. To overcome this, policy makers and stakeholders should concern this issue and policy regarding the implementation of translanguaging in classroom teaching especially in

multilingual classroom settings should be made. This is to ensure the standardisation of implementing the translanguaging approach to align with our education system and teaching syllabus. Marqués Aguado and Solís-Becerra (2013) also mentioned that translanguaging competence is totally a different repertoire from language skills, it's much more psychologically complicated and educators should be trained specifically for translanguaging skill.

SECOND PHASE: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND STUDENTS' INTERVIEWS

In the second phase of data collection, a pre-reading ESL lesson and interview with three students have been carried out in order to answer the third research question of what the challenges are faced by pupils while practising the translanguaging approach in teaching reading in Chinese vernacular school.

Table 6. Classroom observation field notes (adapted from Anderson, 2022)

Activities	Language(s) Used		
	English	Malay	Chinese
Greeting students	✓	✓	
Clarifying lexis (vocabulary)	✓	✓	✓
Explaining complex concept (grammar, metaphor)	✓	✓	
Mediating text	✓	✓	
Giving instructions	✓	✓	
Building schemata	✓		
Writing on board	✓		
Checking students' comprehension	✓	✓	✓
Praising student/Correcting behaviour	✓		

Table 6 illustrates the languages used by the teacher in the ESL reading comprehension class based on data obtained from the researcher's field notes through classroom observation. As demonstrated in her lesson, the teacher occasionally utilised three languages (English, Malay and Chinese) in isolation; but more often integrated through translanguaging.

The main concern identified in translanguaging practice in reading comprehension is the arduous process. This corroborates Ticheloven et al. (2021) who argued that the lesson may be slowed down when translanguaging is employed. There were a few instances when the teacher had to halt her lesson to explain the meaning of the words or check on students' comprehension in three different languages. The repetitions will consume time and eventually may disrupt the learning process for the pupils with better proficiency in English.

STUDENTS' INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Confusion. One of the major challenges faced by students during translingual practices in reading comprehension concerns confusion. Some pupils acknowledged that switching between languages can be confusing.

“I want my teachers to use it less. Because sometimes I don’t understand with the words that (the) teacher translated because I don’t really use Malay or Chinese to speak at home or with my friends.”

Another student reported that he is unable to comprehend the lexical meaning when the explanation was made in a language that is not his mother tongue.

“I will feel confused because some words I don’t understand if teacher explain in BM (Malay Language).”

Parmegiani and Rudwick (2014) also found this in their research where some learners do not feel comfortable using their first language in particular classroom learning situations. While some studies (Ambele, 2019; Madkur et al., 2022) suggested that translanguaging helped to reduce students’ anxieties in conversing in English, a student admitted that there are times when he is unsure of the language that he should use to respond to the questions asked by the teacher.

“Sometimes different-different language than using only English. But sometimes I don’t know which language to answer (the) teacher’s question.”

Inhibit students’ participation. Anderson (2020) and Wong and Yong (2019) suggested that the implementation of translanguaging in ESL classrooms can promote students’ participation in the lesson’s activities. However, excessive usage of translanguaging may reverse this effect as one of the students revealed that he feels bored and struggles to stay focused as the teacher uses multiple languages in explaining a concept.

“I don’t feel comfortable because I prefer English. Sometimes I feel bored too if teacher keep talking the same thing.”

This is supported by another student who disclosed that there are times when he is unable to contribute in the ongoing conversation because he is not fluent in the languages spoken by his teacher and peers.

“But sometimes when they use BM (Malay Language) or Chinese to discuss, then I don’t know what to talk (about).”

Although the mother tongue for a vast majority of the students is Chinese, there are still a number of students who do not share the same L1. This resulted in the usage of three languages: English, Chinese and Malay, being often used in class, consequently posed as a challenge for non-Chinese and non-Malay speakers.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As a conclusion, this study supported the argument made by (Hawras, 1996; Kern, 1994) that the implementation of translanguaging in reading lessons facilitates the students in comprehending and generating the ideas. This present study highlights five challenges faced by the teachers when translanguaging is integrated in reading comprehension lessons. The posed challenges faced are students’ high-dependency on translanguaging, time-consuming, lack of formal policy on the appropriateness of adopting translanguaging. Though translanguaging is proven to be beneficial

in enhancing students' second language acquisition and helpful in improving students' reading skill, some high proficiency students don't appreciate the use of their first language in ESL classrooms. The overuse of translanguaging also demotivates students' learning and hinder their language development which deviates the ultimate goal of translanguaging in improving learner's first and second language repertoire.

The finding of this study clearly initiated the complexity of implementing translanguaging in ESL classrooms. In this globalisation era where English is widely spoken by bilingual and multilingual language learners around the world, the appropriateness of implementing the traditional norm of teaching English with the English-only EFL pedagogy should be reconsidered and reexamined. Translanguaging approach should be adopted in multilingual settings classrooms, especially in Malaysia's Chinese vernacular school where the students are mostly multi-ethnics and have different social backgrounds. However, the adoption of translanguaging practices should be adopted purposefully and it should be implemented to some extent in classroom teaching but not to the whole lesson (R. Zhang & B. H. S. Chan, 2021). The overuse of the translanguaging approach sometimes might demotivate students and obstruct students' language learning (Fang & Liu, 2020). For reading skill, translanguaging is mostly used by educators in explaining vocabularies and complex ideas from comprehension passages. For other reading activities such as answering comprehension questions, educators might try to reduce the frequency of translanguaging as it might cause students to rely on it too much and this will eventually hinder their English language learning.

Educators should create a conducive translanguaging space that caters to every students' needs and is compatible with their proficiency level. The adoption of the translanguaging approach should cater to every student's learning needs instead of being beneficial only to a certain proficiency level of students. Thus, educators should pedagogically implement translanguaging in some extent in the reading comprehension lesson and align with every student's academic performance and language used in order to enhance students' first and second language acquisition. Translanguaging serves as an aid for enhancing students' language acquisition, but it should be referred to students' need and right (Cook, 2010).

In spite of Malaysia's Chinese vernacular school ESL classroom being linguistically diverse, the language instruction in the classroom are still kept separated and the language purism is still emphasised in our education system. Though the translanguaging approach has proved to be beneficial in the acquisition of both the first and second language of language learners, the appropriateness of implementing the translanguaging approach in a language classroom is still unclear. Policymakers and stakeholders should undergo deep study for the appropriateness of adopting translanguaging in ESL classrooms and policies regarding this should be made for the standardisation of implementing the translanguaging approach.

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this study is the demographic context. Since participants were selected based on convenience sampling, this study may not be able to highlight, and perhaps overlook some other challenges that are faced by pupils and teachers in different schools. Moreover, due to limited time allotment, we only managed to observe one pre-reading lesson, therefore we may have missed the challenges encountered during the other two crucial stages of teaching reading, which are while and post-reading lessons.

REFERENCES

- Ambele, E. A. (2022). Supporting English teaching in Thailand by accepting translanguaging: Views from Thai university teachers. *Issues in Educational Research*, 32(3), 871-886. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier32/ambele.pdf>
- Arikan, A. (2015). The CEFR Reading: A Document Analysis. *Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 199 (2015), 501 – 504.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Cook, G. (2010). *Translation in language teaching: an argument for reassessment*. Oxford University Press.
- Daniel, T. W. (2002). Ask the Cognitive Scientist: Inflexible Knowledge: The First Step to Expertise.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elyas, T. (2008). The attitude and the impact of the American English as a global language within the Saudi education system. *Novitas ROYAL*, 2(1), 28-48.
- Fang, F., & Liu, Y. (2020). 'Using all English is not always meaningful': Stakeholders' perspectives on the use of and attitudes towards translanguaging at a Chinese university. *Lingua*, 247, 102959.
- García, Ofelia. (2009). *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Malden, MA and Oxford: Basil/Blackwell.
- Göksu, A. (2015). European Language Portfolio in Turkish High Schools: Attitudes of EFL Students. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 15(1), 121–132.
- Hawras, S. (1996). *Towards describing bilingual and multilingual behavior: Implications for ESL instruction*. [Unpublished thesis]. University of Minnesota.
- Heller, M. (1995). Language, Minority Education and Gender Linking Social Justice and Power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 5(1), 105.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Honorene, J. (2017). Understanding the Role of Triangulation in Research. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(31), 91-95.
- Jessica, D. (2021). Translanguaging in action: Pedagogy that elevates. *ORTESOL Journal*, 38, 19-32.
- Kern, R. G. (1994). The role of mental translation in second language reading. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 16, 441–461. doi:10.1017/S0272263100013450
- Madkur, A., Friska, Y., & Lisnawati, L. (2022). Translanguaging Pedagogy in ELT Practices: Experiences of Teachers in Indonesian Pesantren-based Schools. *VELES Voices of English Language Education Society*, 6(1), 130–143. <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v6i1.5136>
- Makuloluwa, E. (2016). Benefits of Mother Tongue in the ESL Classroom (Review of *Benefits of Mother Tongue in the ESL Classroom*). *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.20533/licej.2040.2589.2016.0317>
- Marqués Aguado, T., & Solís-Becerra, J. A. (2013). An overview of translation in language teaching methods: implications for EFL in secondary education in the region of Murcia. *Revista de Lingüística y Lenguas Aplicadas*, 8, 38-48. <https://doi.org/10.4995/rlyla.2013.1161>

- MOE (Ministry of Education Malaysia). (2015). *English Language Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015–2025*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/35736437/The_Roadmap.
- Nambisan, K. A. (2014). Teachers' attitudes towards and uses of translanguaging in English language classrooms in Iowa. *Iowa State University*.
- Nishanthi, R. (2020). Understanding of the Importance of Mother Tongue Learning (Review of Understanding of the Importance of Mother Tongue Learning). *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 5(1).
- Nyimbili, F., & Mwanza, D. S. (2021). Translanguaging Challenges faced by Teachers and Learners in First Grade Multilingual Literacy Classrooms in Zambia. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 9(3), 20-31.
- O'Reilly, M., & Dogra, N. (2017). Ethical issues with respect to interviewing. In M. O'Reilly, & N. Dogra *Ethical Issues with Respect to Interviewing* (pp. 129-148). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526419439>.
- Oribabor, O. A., & Adesina, A. D.O. (2013). Mother tongue instruction and academic achievement of pupils in nursery schools. *International Research Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2(5), 131-133.
- Palmer, D. K. (2009). Code-switching and symbolic power in a second-grade two-way classroom: A teacher's motivation system gone awry. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 32(1), 42–59.
- Parmegiani, A., & Rudwick, S. (2014). English bilingualisation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: An exploration of students' attitudes. *Multilingual universities in South Africa: Reflecting society in higher education*, 107–122.
- Prakash, J. (2015). What is the importance of attention in learning? Retrieved from <http://www.preservearticles.com/201105206854/importance-of-attention-in-learning.html>
- Rajathurai, N. (2020). Understanding of the Importance of Mother Tongue Learning. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*, 5(1), 77-80.
- Zhang, R. & Brian, H. S., (2021): Pedagogical translanguaging in a trilingual context: the case of two EFL classrooms in a Xinjiang university. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1-12.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researches*. New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Sah, P. K., & Kubota, R. (2022). Towards critical translanguaging: A review of literature on English as a medium of instruction in South Asia's school education. *Asian Englishes*.
- Sembiante, S. (2016). Translanguaging and the multilingual turn: Epistemological reconceptualization in the fields of language and implications for reframing language in curriculum studies. *Curriculum inquiry*, 46, 45-61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2015.1133221>
- Tan, N. S., & Low, H. M. (2017). Socio-environmental factors impacting on teachers' attitudes towards code-switching in ESL classrooms in a rural district in Malaysia. *Kajian Malaysia* 35(2), 105–125.
- Ticheloven, A., Leseman, P., Blom, E., & McMonagle, S. (2019). Translanguaging challenges in multilingual classrooms: scholar, teacher and student perspectives (Review of Translanguaging challenges in multilingual classrooms: scholar, teacher and student perspectives). *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 18(3), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2019.1686002>

- Uri, N. F., & Aziz, M. N. (2018). Implementation of CEFR in Malaysia: Teachers' Awareness and the Challenges. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 24(3), 168–183. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2018-2403-13>.
- Vasanth, R. N., & Harinarayana, N.S. (2016, January). *Online survey tools: A case study of Google Forms*. [Paper Presentation]. National Conference on "Scientific, Computational & Information Research Trends in Engineering, GSSS-IETW, Mysore, India.
- Vermes, A. (2010). Translation in foreign language teaching: a brief overview of pros and cons. *Eger Journal of English Studies*, X, 83-93.
- Wang, D. (2019). Translanguaging in Chinese foreign language classrooms: students and teachers' attitudes and practices. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(2), 138–49.
- Wei, L. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(5), 1222– 1235.
- Wlosowicz, T. (2020). The Advantages and Limitations of Translanguaging in Teaching Third of Additional Languages at the University Level. (Review of *The Advantages and Limitations of Translanguaging in Teaching Third of Additional Languages at the University Level*). *Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.35765/mjse.2020.0917.08>
- Yusri, N. S., Huzaimi, N. H. A., & Sulaiman, N. A. (2022). Translanguaging in Malaysian ESL Classroom: Teachers' Perceptions (Review of Translanguaging in Malaysian ESL Classroom: Teachers' Perceptions). *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(9), 607–619. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i9/14542>
- Yuvayapan, F. (2019). Translanguaging in EFL classrooms: Teachers' perceptions and practices. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 15(2), 678-694.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Siti Aqilah binti Abdul Rahim, is an English Speech and Drama instructor. She obtained her Degree in English as a Second Language (TESL) (Hons.) from faculty of education, MARA University of Technology in 2011, minoring in Literature. Her research interests are on ESL literacy, literature in ESL and second language acquisition.

Lee Yun Leong is a Mandarin and ESL primary teacher. He obtained his Degree in 2020 from Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Raja Melewar, Seremban, major in Chinese Language and Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) as minor subject. His research interests are on Sociolinguistics and ESL literacy.

Keffeny Ann, is an ESL primary teacher. She obtained her Degree in English as a Second Language (TESL) from faculty of education, IPG Teknik in 2016. Her research interests are on ESL literacy, multilingual/ multicultural and second language acquisition.