

## TRANSLANGUAGING IN HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE MA LT PROGRAMME, WIUT

**Yuldasheva Nazira**

Westminster International university in Tashkent

**Abstract.** This study examines the role of translanguaging in the MA LT programme at WIUT, focusing on its impact on rapport-building, feedback practices, and knowledge construction from teachers' and students' perspectives. Using a qualitative case study design, data was collected via questionnaires (N=59), interviews (N=6 teachers, N=5 students), and a focus group discussion (N=4 students). Findings reveal that translanguaging fosters inclusivity and comprehension but risks over-reliance on L1 and cultural exclusivity. Recommendations include context-aware policies and multilingual resources to balance linguistic flexibility with academic rigor. The study highlights the need for strategic implementation to optimize translanguaging's benefits in higher education.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, bilingual education, higher education, language policy, multilingualism

### 1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the linguistic landscape of higher education reflects the diverse backgrounds of students and teachers. Translanguaging—a pedagogical approach that integrates multiple languages inside and outside the classroom—has emerged as a strategy to create inclusive learning environments (Li & Garcia, 2017, cited in Vallejo, 2018). However, its effectiveness remains debated due to the dominance of monolingual approaches.

Language, as an evolving technology (Dor, 2010), adapts to societal needs. Translingualism, embodying spontaneous multilingual practices and language hybridization, aligns with Labov's (1927) 'Substratum Theory' (Schreir, 2003). While English-medium education facilitates global academic exchange (Macaro et al., 2018), it also raises concerns about linguistic equity (Bromham et al., 2021). Hybrid language forms, such as global Englishes (Kachru, 1985; Crystal, 2003), challenge traditional linguistic norms (Adrada, 2020).

In international universities, disparities in students' English proficiency and disciplinary knowledge create exclusive learning environments (Dewaele & Stawans, 2014; Grapin, 2019). This study explores how translanguaging affects different aspects of the learning process in the MA LT programme at WIUT from teachers' and students' perspectives.

The research addresses three key aspects:

1. The role of translanguaging in rapport-building.
2. Its significance in feedback practices.
3. Its effect on knowledge construction.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

A qualitative case study approach was adopted to explore translanguaging's role in the MA LT programme (Mills et al., 2010). This method allowed for an in-depth analysis of participants' perceptions (Trumbull & Watson, 2010).

### **2.2. Participants and Setting**

The study was conducted at WIUT's MA LT department, involving:

- 6 teachers (with local and international teaching experience).
- 68 students (mostly practicing teachers from diverse linguistic backgrounds).

### **2.3. Data Collection**

Four methods were used:

1. Student Questionnaire (Google Forms, distributed via Telegram) – Mixed open- and closed-ended questions.
2. Teacher Interviews (Semi-structured, 20-35 minutes each) – Audio-recorded with consent.
3. Student Interviews (Semi-structured, 15-20 minutes each) – Conducted offline and online.
4. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) – Four students, 1 hour 20 minutes, using the Nominal Group Technique.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

- Audio recordings were transcribed using TurboScribe.
- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied using Insight7 software.
- Triangulation ensured validity (Carter et al., 2014).

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Student Questionnaire**

- 90% used English as a second language (C1 proficiency).
- 42% valued translanguaging for creating an inclusive environment.
- 55% supported regulated L1 use in verbal interactions but preferred English in written communication.
- 60% found translanguaging helpful in clarifying complex theories.
- Concerns included over-reliance on L1 (25%) and cultural exclusivity (30%).

### **3.2. Teacher Interviews (N=6)**

- 83% acknowledged translanguaging's role in rapport-building and feedback clarity.
- Challenges included teachers' lack of Uzbek proficiency and cultural sensitivity in multicultural classrooms.
- Some associated translanguaging with the 'mediation strategy', enhancing comprehension.

### **3.3. Student Interviews (N=5) & FGD (N=4)**

- Translanguaging improved rapport and reduced academic anxiety.
- Useful in peer feedback but risked excluding students in diverse classrooms.
- Suggested multilingual course materials for beginners.

### **4. Discussion**

This study reveals translanguaging as a dual-edged tool in the MA LT program. While it effectively builds rapport, enhances peer feedback (Double et al., 2020), and reduces student anxiety (Bruen & Kelly, 2017), it shows limitations in written feedback contexts (Canagarajah, 2011) and risks promoting L1 overreliance (Liu et al., 2022). The tension between multilingual flexibility and English-medium policies (Tsui & Cheng, 2022) remains unresolved, particularly in culturally diverse classrooms where translanguaging may inadvertently exclude some students. Findings suggest its strategic implementation must balance cognitive benefits (Campbell & Lassiter, 2014) with institutional language requirements.

#### **4.1. Key Findings**

##### **Rapport-Building**

Translingual practices significantly facilitate emotional connections between teachers and students (Bruen & Kelly, 2017). By allowing the strategic use of shared languages, these practices create more comfortable learning environments where students feel psychologically safe to express themselves. This linguistic flexibility helps bridge cultural gaps and fosters stronger interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

##### **Feedback Delivery**

While translanguaging enhances clarity in verbal feedback exchanges (Canagarajah, 2011), its effectiveness in written feedback remains limited. The multimodal nature of written communication in academic contexts often requires maintaining standard language conventions, suggesting a need for balanced language use depending on feedback format and purpose.

##### **Knowledge Construction**

Translanguaging serves as a valuable scaffold for content comprehension (Ahmad, 2024), particularly when explaining complex theoretical concepts. However, this benefit must be carefully balanced with maintaining the rigor of English-medium instruction to ensure students develop necessary academic language competencies while accessing disciplinary knowledge.

#### **4.2. Recommendations**

##### *1. Context-aware policies:*

- Split-level approach (regulated use for beginners).
- Avoid in multicultural classrooms.

##### *2. Free local language courses for teachers and students.*

##### *3. Multilingual course materials (English, Uzbek, Russian).*

##### *4. Monitoring translanguaging's impact on English proficiency.*

### 4.3. Limitations

1. *Methodological constraints*: The qualitative case study, while insightful, relies on self-reported data that may introduce bias. The imbalance in participation rates (86% teachers vs. 56% students) risks overrepresenting teacher perspectives.

2. *Generalizability*: As a single-institution study, findings may not extend to contexts with different demographics or language policies.

3. *Applicability*: Practical barriers like resource limitations and institutional policies may hinder implementation of the proposed split-level translanguaging approach.

### 5. Conclusion

Translanguaging in the MA LT programme enhances learning through rapport-building and feedback but requires strategic implementation to balance inclusivity and academic rigor. Its findings suggest further research, long-term with mixed-method investigations, to examine recommended policies throughout different educational settings. For educational authorities and teachers, main question remains: How can university and institutions take an advantage of translingual practices by navigating its challenges at the same time? The response lies in adopting flexibility, encouraging communicative and inclusive environment, and continue enhancing approaches so every single person's input is respected while complying academic objectives.

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