

Role of Translanguaging in Second Language Education

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Abstract

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Translanguaging, using multiple languages in a language classroom with the intension of achieving certain goals of enabling learners to understand the content is not a novel thing through out the historical records of language teaching. The grammar-translation method propagated the use of more than one language in teaching for the first time. Translanguaging, enables a teacher to reduce the monotony in the classroom since it allows him/her to use more than one language and the language is chosen preferably. The language will be used for exchanging the connotation regarding the content taught in a language classroom. This paper investigates the function of translanguaging within a second or foreign language context in general, particularly in Nepal. The study has been conducted qualitatively since it incorporated themes based on the chosen topic, the theme is supported by the argumentation and the argumentation has been made from the citation of previous studies. Therefore, the data for the present study is from secondary sources which comprise published articles, journals, and other academic works that have been published in the leading publishing houses in the world. The study concludes that using translanguaging enabled the ESL/ EFL teachers to teach effectively and they do not need to depend on the target language whenever a difficult situation arose. Similarly, it impeded the smooth learning proficiency in the desired language in the sense that there was domination and over-dependency on the mother tongue, which only enabled the learners to learn content through their mother tongue. The study suggests that judicious use of translanguaging should be made for effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Translanguage, ESL/EFL, multilingual, arguments, overdependency, content

Introduction

Translanguaging, the matter of wandering discourse practice of language, is the process of integrating languages into communication. It is the dynamic process of using the characteristic

features of multiple languages simultaneously while the bilingual teacher uses and allows students for alternating or blending different languages in a discussion (Suek, 2017). In teaching and learning, translanguaging can be controlled by both teachers and students by providing maximum use of bilinguals to the students. For example, the teacher can provide a lesson presenting in English and may ask the students to discuss about the topic in their own languages, which motivates the learners to learn language focusing on meaning since negotiation of meaning is very important in language learning process. Translanguaging motivates the learners in the classroom through various ways. Such as creating context of discourse, relating cultural and social backgrounds, negotiating and constructing meaningful interaction (Mazzaferro, 2018). Use of translanguaging can be meaningful in the classroom because it identifies the linguistic background and level of the students where students get the chances of developing their metalinguistic abilities in an adequate cross linguistic flexibilities (García & Wei, 2014b). Translingual practices have paradigm shift in classroom discourse rejecting monolingual theoretical orientations (Canagarajah, 2012).

Translanguaging, use of two languages and use of more than two languages in teaching and learning provides justice to the students to preserve meaning creating language friendly situation through using students' mother tongue. Translanguaging, an inevitable part in teaching and learning, is today's need. Translanguaging is the only way to educate the world as it is moving forwards along with different complexities and affecting factors; unplanned language education policy, linguistic background and skills of the learners, knowledge about subject matter to be taught, selection of appropriate classroom tasks and multilingual learners' classroom in the 21 century. For example, use translanguaging can be taken form the context of three States in the United States; Massachusetts, Arizona, and California, where anti-bilingual educational laws and federal education policy was passed in the period of 1998 to 2002. Bilingual students were not supposed to get any motivation, concern and financial contribution for their study in secondary level. According to Wright et al. (2017), following of 15 years of anti-bilingual legislation in these three states, bilingual programme have faced restrictions but not complete elimination. Provisions for waivers, legal loopholes, and differing interpretations of the laws by policymakers have allowed many schools to maintain or even enhance their bilingual education initiatives. Despite Proposition 227 remaining in effect, California has emerged as the pioneering state in the United States to acknowledge the valuable linguistic abilities of graduating bilingual students through the presentation of a Seal of Biliteracy on their high school diplomas. This approach is now being adopted by other states such as New York and Texas. Consequently, bilingual and multilingual education is thriving, showing signs of growth and expansion.

Supporting to using monolingual teaching instruction, utilizing English as the means of language instruction expands the horizon of professional opportunities, progress, harmony with mother tongue (Paudel, 2021). However, focusing monolingual in the multilingual context can create barriers for learning in social, cultural and linguistic context and terms. Secondary level of study can have little contribution for career development in the context of Nepal because content and knowledge of the students is evaluated through paper and pencil test for which they have to understand the contents. Nevertheless, translanguaging in teaching and learning generates access and space to integrate their knowledge and subject matters in the social and cognitive development creatively and constructively so that the students keep on modifying the traditional values and norms through interaction (García

& Wei, 2014a). Translanguaging provides the chance to make concepts and ideas clear and effective in the context while the authenticity of rules, norms, values, and assumptions can be preserved. For example, in the context of Nepal, the government has decided to teach social studies in the medium of students' native language or the Nepali tongue. After the decision of the government of Nepal, even the institutional schools have to use students' mother tongue or Nepali language as a medium of instruction, which provides room for using their mother language or Nepali tongue. They can preserve the meaning of technical and register terms only if they are motivated by translanguaging. Paudel (2021) opines that translanguaging enhances students' participation in learning promoting their level of literacy and knowledge depending upon social, cultural and linguistic identities.

Moreover, translanguaging, a broad term replaces the terms, code-mixing, code-switching, polylingual languaging, polylinguaging, heteroglossia, hybrid language practices, translanguaging practice, metrolinguistic, flexible bilingualism for academic discourse space' (Wei, 2018, p. 1). In translanguaging, the meaning of dual literary discourse is linked through different cultural and linguistic contexts, in which everyday communication and experiences generate conceptualization about the subject matters (Lewis et al., 2012).

Likewise, use of bilingualism is not only justice for the social production of minority language communities but also the right for educational opportunities because every student is guided by their own linguistic level and background, concepts and ideas, which can be sources and linguistic tools for learning (García & Lin, 2017). For example, Pennycook (2017) has taken Foucault's concept of governmentality, and argues that teaching mother tongue through the use of colonial language cannot empower knowledge inherently. He uses the examples from Hong Kong and Malaya as there were two projects; colonial subjects were the means of teaching British culture and vernacular languages were the means of teaching superiority of British culture effectively. The second way of teaching was more effective and productive. In the setting of Nepal, secondary level schools try to implement English as the language of instruction even in the multicultural and multilingual classroom. Parents and stakeholders also focus on English medium but they have little concern about local language and materials even if local government is trying to implement local language in the curriculum. Therefore, it seems controversial in practice and policy about translanguaging. Phyak (2018) supports translanguaging in the classroom provides favourable environment to engage in the different activities using their own existing knowledge and skills of negotiating meaning in the classroom discourse with deeper understanding of context. Therefore, unplanned policy of monolingual use of language in the classroom creates challenges in learning activities where as language learning is for understanding and delivering meaning or sense. Sah and Li (2020) argue that other than English and Nepali languages can be used to accommodate flexible environment in the classroom addressing minority group of students using local language as an effective way of expressing themselves. Neupane et al. (2019) state that use of native language even in higher secondary level education encourages learner centered approach so that the students use their knowledge fluently, creatively and confidently establishing good rapport between students and teachers. To those who have lower level of knowledge to the target language than the higher level of students, translanguaging creates unlimited context to expand students' knowledge creating socially secured homely and friendly environment. In such a way, only translanguaging can be a crux in teaching and learning in secondary level where varieties of technical, cultural, legal, dialect

and register language are found in multicultural and multilingual society to address the knowledge of the students in the context of Nepal.

Therefore, translanguaging not only creates opportunities for the learners to understand the content contextually enhancing their level of knowledge but also encourages them to express themselves in the horizon of languages with their expanded linguistic, cultural and social identities even if they are from minority, deprived and marginalized group of society. Translanguaging, one of the techniques of critical pedagogy to create opportunities for promoting the voice of voiceless, reserved and shy students as they can easily share their existing unexpressed knowledge. In the context of Nepal, translanguaging can be medium of teaching not only to social studies but also science, English and other language based subjects if students are expected to learn content in their own ways.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary literature. Metalinguistic data have been chosen because prospective policy and practice of translanguaging are used with different perspectives. It is because a qualitative study allows the researcher go into depth to explore other researches and how the practices are going on in the policy making and implementing those policies within classroom activities for delivering and learning content in real life situation and how is the impact of policy and practices. The data, for the present study, have been used the secondary source because of limited time period prescribed to us to carry out the research paper. The data comprise with books, journal articles, published research works and other standard publications published in leading websites around the world. As the paper demands to be an argumentative, a claim is made in the beginning section of each theme and it is supported by argumentation. Argumentation, in this case, has been made from the assertions that has been made in those previous studies. Hence, argumentation has been done by citing secondary sources' assertion that respective authors have made on their research works, finding and recommendations for using target language or translanguaging in multicultural and multilingual classroom where students with multilingual context need to be respected for the linguistic knowledge.

Results and Discussion

The results of the research have been analyzed and discussed under three different themes: Translanguaging in SLA, Importance of Translanguage in ESL Classroom and Challenges of Translanguaging.

Translanguaging in SLA

Learning is building confidence and performance to use content and meaning either by first language or by using other languages. To learn second language the students can transfer their previous knowledge not only to form new knowledge but also to reform and restructure previous knowledge into new knowledge. According to Sharwood (1994), SLA typically denotes "any language other than the first language" (p. 7) without considering the thought the number of additional languages acknowledged by the pupil. This opinion of SLA demonstrates the concentration on the expected language itself rather than on the pupil's repertoire and his/her knowledge of diverse languages. Research investigation on tertiary language acquisition (TLA) have revealed that, although TLA and SLA have several features in common, there are also significant variances among them due to bilingualism as a feature of the apprentice can affect the achievement of extra languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014). For years, language literacy and second language acquisition scholars have emphasized

the importance of translanguaging, which involves utilizing various languages, modes, and tools to facilitate literacy development among multilingual learners (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Present scholars in research of SLA admit that the learners of language continually engage in translanguaging, utilizing their complete linguistic resources to create meaning in their environment (Cook, 2001). Translanguaging education have been usually studied for their significance in refining learning, chiefly in bilingual schools (Martinez et al., 2017) where learners have prospects to practice, associate, and weave languages when joining in diverse linguistic and cultural events where as language and culture are intertwined each other in their daily activities. Those activities are experiences for knowledge can be used in SLA classroom activities. It can not only be learning language but also learning culture to adjust in the multicultural society.

Importance of Translanguage in ESL Classroom

Though schools believe on using English as an instructional mean, it is judicial use of translanguaging in multilingual context because those who can not actively participate in learning activities can use their own language to express their knowledge easily. Researchers employed in multilingual classroom have initiated to use the term ‘translanguaging’ to define multilingual oral communication (Garcia & Kano, 2014) and employing various languages in written documents. For example, Conteh (2018) mentions a critical examination of utilization of translanguaging as a teaching method, disagreeing that the focus of research has predominantly been on comprehending procedures of interaction instead of teaching prospective. Recent work, such as that by Mertin et al. (2018) demonstrates the possibility of opening spaces for educators’ opinions in scholarly research and academic discussions concerning to translanguaging.

The term “trans” in translanguaging concept is significance as it divides the theory of translanguaging from alternative public language theories of learning (Bakhtin, 2010). In the ESL classroom, the students can associate and exchange their cultural and historical, socially positioned ways of everyday communication, and a cohesive lexical-grammatical structure that has developed gradually over an extended period. In the theory of heteroglossia, there can not be any order of language use whatever is inherent and known can be used on the completion of the tasks. Such situation leads to a limiting action on the language users’ actions. Although Bakhtin (2010) gives chief opinion of emphasis on heteroglossia, he comprehended an active polyglossia, paving the way for heteroglossia. There occurs the chances of transformation along with constrains in the translanguaging theory due to the ‘trans’, two or more cohesive systems that individuals typically identify as the languages they use are coming into conflict with each other. Hypothesized in this manner, the societal construction of designated languages can be emphasized as pivotal to translanguaging theory, not just in terms of disruption but also as tools for expanding and revitalizing a speaker's dialect or language proficiency or competence. Translanguaging bridges the linguistic, cultural and contextual gaps increasing students’ linguistic competence, performance and awareness in the ESL classroom activities.

Challenges of Translanguaging

Teachers are frequently challenged with different encounters such as there can be some conditions in which learners speak languages that teachers do not have any knowledge elevate inquiries and may generate quandaries regarding language policy within the classroom. For example, do students require their supposed 'native' languages to feel comfortable and secure? Under what

circumstances do they require these languages? How and when can other languages be employed as a means of instructions? (Dooly, 2007). One educational approach that addresses these inquiries and challenges is translanguaging. Translanguaging has been described as the ability of multilingual individuals to move seamlessly between languages, disregarding socially and politically imposed boundaries, and as a teaching methodology in which educators, through supportive techniques, empower students to recognize and utilize all of their languages for learning (MacSwan, 2017). The studies on translanguaging disclose several merits of implementing translanguaging as teaching and learning matter. For instance, it provides apprentices with convinced cooperation approaches in many places translanguaging can be an crucial device to interrupt the domination of English when English is used as a medium of classroom instruction (Garcia, 2011).

Still, in teaching translanguaging pretenses hurdles to both learners and educators as Pacheco and Miller (2016) asserts that “implementing translanguaging pedagogies can be an intimidating task, particularly when the teacher does not speak students’ inheritant languages and students speak several different inhabitant languages in the classroom” (p. 2). Thus, translanguaging is challenging in a sense that the students will not be able to focus on the global language as well as they will be deprived of the opportunities that the international language can provide them. Not only that there will be lack of understanding in the class when the students speak multiple languages. In case of multilingual country like ours there will be confusion for both the students and teachers for the medium of instruction as there will be dispute for whose language to use. Within the situation of Nepal, though schools, parents, policy makers and stakeholders focus on monolingual technique to teach in the classroom, it is an imposition for the learners which can address only to those who are active and talented in target language use. It is just focusing on teaching about language but not language and content. Therefore, it is necessary to create self learning environment which directly addresses the problem and challenges in the classroom having active participation of the students. It can be learning place for the teachers also from the students as the teachers may not have multilingual knowledge.

Conclusion and Implications

Translanguaging is a process of using more than one language in the classroom since the concern here is on meaning. Translanguaging addresses the students’ needs, interests and demands as curriculum also focuses on achieving learners’ objectives. In the multilingual and multicultural classroom, content product learning can be possible using translanguaging which can be prime technique to achieve desired goal because teaching and learning is always guided by the objectives of accomplishing content and meaning. Therefore, learning becomes easier for the learners relating their previous knowledge to new restructured and reformed knowledge. It is procedure as such multilingual learners employ their languages as a unified approach in the communicative process. Because of the complexity of the society the use of language has also become same. For example, a person from Birjung speaks Nepali once he meets Nepali speaking people and switches to another language once he meets Bhojpuri, Awadhi and other language speaking people. In the same way, in the classroom it is not wise for a teacher to be a monolingual rather bilingualism and/ or multilingualism is the cry of the day and such teachers can teach and handle the classes in an effective way. It is because whenever there needs an elaborated explanation, the teacher and students switch into students’ native language or the national linguistic medium of the country and the teacher makes the concept clear using that

language. Hence, whatever the definition of the term, it is very useful in second or foreign language context in the sense that it enables the learners to negotiate meaning in an effective way.

The role of translanguaging is very important for studying the English language as an additional or non native language in the sense that translanguaging provides an opportunity to have diversified linguistic repertoire. Learning a second language using mother tongue provides the opportunity to develop linguistic competence on both languages in one side and on the other it enables the learners to obtain the content in a specific way. It is because the content might not be understood in the target language but if it is presented in the mother tongue, students can learn easily. Translanguaging is being practiced in many levels and institutions in Nepal. For example, we happen to see our teachers teaching English language using Nepali language. In such a context, the teacher first reads some parts in the English language, then describes in the Nepali language. Using this procedure the students not only become able to negotiate meaning in an effective way but also share their ideas and knowledge creating self motivation independently. Independent learning maintains the learners' autonomy and confidence in their performance.

However, use of translanguaging can be counterproductive since its overuse may lead towards mother tongue domination in the sense that all the teaching and learning activities are done in the students' mother tongue and there will be slim chance of using the target language. Therefore, the judicious use of mother tongue should be practised and whenever need arises, switching the code towards students' mother tongue or language spoken by all students within the classroom. Finally, the research suggests that utilization of translanguaging is very good concept but its use should be made in an optimal limitation because of several reasons. In Nepal its use can be facilitative in the sense that the country is multilingual and a teacher can utilize this diversified language for learning cultural, dialectical, technical, register, regional varieties of language, meaning of content to make learning lively, confident and negotiation without having any hesitation. Use of translanguaging can make learning as a living phenomenon.

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