## TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS TRANSLANGUAGING STRATEGY IN ESL CLASSROOM SETTINGS OF PAKISTANI PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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#### ABSTRACT

As a multilingual country, Pakistan faces a plethora of problems in language as a medium of instruction in educational institutions. This research aims to analyse the teachers' perceptions regarding the use of students' first language (L1) as a language of instruction in English as a second language (ESL) classroom setting. To analyse this, the data was collected from twenty-five English Language Teachers from different private universities of Lahore, Pakistan in the form of a questionnaire: teacher's perceptions regarding translanguaging strategy. This questionnaire was adapted from Nambisan's (2014) work. SPSS was employed to analyse the collected data and the results revealed that using students' first language along with English as a language of teaching in an ESL classroom is beneficial. Moreover, twenty-one teachers have encouraged the use of students L1 in the classroom. After getting the results, the researchers of this study recommend increasing the linguistic resources in classroom setting and to do experimental or case study to measure the true effect of this strategy on students' learning by future researchers.

Keywords: Translanguaging, medium of instruction, teachers' perceptions, ESL classroom

#### INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, with the expansion in bilingual population around the globe, it is evident that there is a need to develop new ways of dealing with languages and languages of instruction. Researchers are working on teaching strategies to improve the quality of learning. Many teachers are trying new teaching techniques in the classroom to make the learning process more effective. Moreover, in the higher education institutes, the process of teaching and learning is one of the main issues which captivates widespread attention. In this study, the researchers tried to focus on teachers' perceptions towards the term 'translanguaging', which shows the effectiveness of implementing it as a medium of instruction in English classrooms for higher education in Pakistan. In the pedagogic strategies, translanguaging plays a significant role because it allows the students and teachers to use their local languages in the English classroom for learning and understanding (Karlsson et al., 2016).

For the educational institutions, García and Leiva (2014) mentioned that how employing this translanguaging strategy in ESL classrooms can result in enhancement of students' academic writing skills and can also help them to develop their linguistic repertoire. The use of translanguaging practice within the school is a pedagogic practice, while at the university level, this exercise can change the learning system of the state as well (Sahr, 2020). Moreover, García and Lin have recommended that pedagogies should be related to the social practices of the learners (2017). They have also mentioned that pedagogic attention allows the students to become critical analysts in society by using their native languages in the classrooms (García and Lin, 2017).

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It is stated that Punjab is considered as a multilingual area where most of the people speak Punjabi, Saraiki, and Urdu, but Urdu is their language of communication and acts as a lingua Franca (Liljegren & Akhunzada, 2017). Local languages are being ignored in the society. Recently, Coleman (2011) has worked on the practical value of English globally, especially in developing countries. According to Wedell (2011), English language in any multilingual context has two major purposes: it serves as the language of administration, and it is also used as an official language of the state. In Pakistan, although Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, whereas English is used officially and is broadly used for written and spoken communication in different contexts (Rahman et al., 2010). English in Pakistan has been playing a very significant and prominent role in various contexts, such as, politics, economics, education, and social life (Mahboob, 2009).

Language restriction is a big problem in the pedagogic system because instructors cannot educate, and students cannot learn without a proper language that they both can understand. Such conditions create an unhealthy environment in the pedagogic system. According to Mahboob (2002), in Pakistan, the informants believe that Urdu is important for school level and English is important for higher education. In addition, many researchers believe that languages are migrating with their speakers but the use of a translanguaging strategy as an instructing means can help in language learning and can improve creativity of students (García & Wei, 2014; Musanti & Rodríguez, 2017). In Pakistan, the reason behind giving importance to the use of English as a language of instruction is to develop the intercultural relations and the communication skills between L1 and L2 users of English.

According to Vallejo and Dooly (2019), monolinguals have a limitation on cognitive, communicative, social, and vocational potential. It shows that there is no freedom to use different languages in the classrooms. It was argued that the connection of language learning and the effect on the different languages in the learning system is debatable in Pakistan. Multilinguals use their local languages in their day-to-day communication which may be associated with their family and community. And the use of these languages is also viewed as an important part for social and professional mobility (Mahboob, 2009). Comparatively, it is far talked about that multilingual people have larger basic linguistic repertoires, and multilingual people can take part in making appropriate language choices because it is more widespread (MacSwan, 2017).

In the educational system, the medium of instruction is based on the language of status which is questionable in the pedagogy. In Pakistan, at the school level where instructors are from students' language community, the teachers frequently use some of the local and mutually shared languages when explanation is required in the classroom (Batool, et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in the education system, monolinguals and multilinguals must use the language for instructing in classes according to the requirement of their institutions. Therefore, translanguaging is considered as an effective approach for pedagogical practice where the language of instruction is same as learners' native language (Wei, 2018). Moreover, translanguaging in the learning environment allows the additional languages in the learning system (Karabassova & San Isidro, 2020). Gorter and Arocena (2020) stated that teachers' perceptions regarding languages in their research is that one language may be useful in getting to know some other languages and the transfer of L1 to L2 or L3.

This study aims at analysing the teachers' views and observations towards the use and implementation of translanguaging strategy in Pakistani private universities as a medium of teaching. Although language policies are popular and supported by the majority, the proper medium of teaching is not provided by the government, that which language should be used in pedagogy. The study aims at analysing whether the teachers at Pakistani universities are interested in practising translanguaging strategy that would be allowed in ESL classrooms. A small-scale quantitative study is undertaken to understand how teachers of higher education institutions share their professional experiences of languages and the implementation of these languages in ESL classrooms. In the past, researchers' arguments were focused on English and Urdu languages as to which language should be used as a medium of instruction, but the translanguaging strategy particularly focuses on the local languages. It gives freedom to people to use their local languages for the sake of understanding and knowledge.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The term '*translanguaging*' as 'trawsieithu', was used by Cen Williams in 1990 in Welsh schools (Lewis et al., 2012). It was also referred to pedagogical practice to which the English and the Welsh had used for different educational activities (Vogel & García, 2017). Initially, the term

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'translanguaging' was associated with the use of code-switching in education, but afterwards the use of the term translanguaging went beyond code-switching (García & Lin, 2017). It was also referred to as the mixing or switching of two static languages for the sake of understanding and learning (García & Leiva, 2014). According to García & Seltzer (2016), the concept of code-switching is solely linked with using two or more languages for the sake of communication within the society. However, García (2019) preferred the term translanguaging over code-switching and extended its practice beyond the educational setting and multilingual communities (García & Lin, 2017). In the past, it can be seen from the analysts' point of view that translanguaging was also used for learning as the key tool in pedagogy for translating practices (Masood, 2019). After that, it moved into traditional monolingual techniques which were used in certain language systems as well as the linguistic talents and competences of the language learners (Nagy, 2018).

Translanguaging is associated with a language practice that includes the manner of switching between languages (Baker & Hope, 2019). Similarly, it is expressed by Yuan and Yang (2020) translanguaging is to combine various language styles and discourses. Translanguaging is an effective approach that allows written and spoken use of different languages in the classroom settings (Kleyn & García, 2019). It may be understood as the cognitive or communicative linguistic exercise that combines functions of multiple languages, together with translation (García & Lievia, 2015, p. 203). Despite this, translanguaging views language learning as a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond different linguistic structures and systems (Ho & Wei, 2019). Champlin (2016) described this as a phenomenon related to the subject's social identity, and culture which can be seen through linguistic features, like code-switching. It takes into consideration the tradition of a learner through embracing the language that learner carries with them (Champlin, 2016).

Translanguaging is moving away from the idea of different language structures that exist in multilingual thoughts as a part of one fluid language repertoire (Sahr, 2020). According to Leonet et al., (2019), pedagogical translanguaging means that instructors can use the whole multilingual repertoire and languages in the classrooms. Therefore, the concept that translanguaging introduces the traditional isolation of languages used in the classroom is an arguable point among linguists (García & Lin, 2017, p. 1). Having a translanguaging perspective, Nagy (2018) discussed how translanguaging focuses on how the speaker's system uses their complete linguistic repertoire to create meaning through interaction. It is important that translanguaging emphasis on localization of culture, García & Leiva (2014) verified that translanguaging has the potential to give voice to new social realities of education and tries to make an easy pedagogic strategy.

García & Lin (2017) widened the meaning of the term "translanguaging" beyond pedagogy and introduced a pedagogic variation of input and output. According to García & Lin (2017), following are the effective translanguaging strategies in the classroom setting that can help in learning.

- Students can be asked to share the name of the images or figures from their books in their first languages. Students find opportunities, where possible in the classroom.
- Instructors can use multilingual resources to support their concept.
- Instructors can place the students in groups according to their native languages and can discuss their issues and difficulties in comprehending any concept using their home languages.

In the results of the study done by Champlin (2016), he mentioned that translanguaging promotes the growth of students in English language development. Fang & Liu (2020) researched about the English learning process. They argued that English medium of instruction is not always meaningful because sometimes it becomes a barrier in the monolingual classroom settings. The study of Fang & Liu (2020 showed that translanguaging is an appropriate practice and the learners have accepted this approach as a beneficial practice. Similarly, Romanowski's (2020) experimental study investigated students' exposure and verified their general attitudes towards translanguaging then approved the results through the general perception of translanguaging.

Perception involves the way one sees the world. Linguists use it as a tool to uncover and perhaps reframe the perception of a group or teachers (Pickens, 2005). The teachers' perceptions are considered as, an individual giving meaning to the situation because perception consists of three elements: selection, organisation, and interpretation (Pickens, 2005, p. 66) and it is closely related to attitude. Whittle et al., (2018) have worked on how teachers perceive the students' performance in the learning classroom. The perception held by all teachers who were involved in the previous studies was that to

help students learn, to overcome their learning difficulties, and for this, a variety of strategies is also required in the pedagogy.

Chai and Merry (2006) investigated the teachers' perceptions towards translanguaging strategy and according to them, students are more suitable to learn through this strategy and it can enhance their ability in comprehending knowledge. Moreover, García has recommended that pedagogies should be related to the social practices of the learners (García & Lin, 2017). Several research investigated multilingualism and translanguaging concepts as their focusing investigations; one of the studies has focused on translanguaging from teachers' perceptions and students' attitude towards translanguaging. The researchers of this study also worked on the students' attitudes towards translanguaging strategy, in their previous study (Batool et al., 2022). According to that study, students want from their educational institutions to employ the translanguaging strategy in learning.

## METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researchers have analysed the teachers' perceptions towards translanguaging strategy in ESL classroom settings of Pakistani private universities. The steps of methodology are discussed below under the separate headings.

## **Type of Research**

The researchers have used quantitative methods to collect data. The participants responded to a series of questions in the form of a survey. They have answered the questions according to their understanding. This type of data helps in collecting the same kind of information from different points of views (Mann, 2011). The research objectives of this study are to focus on teachers' perceptions about the L1 use of the students by the teachers in ESL classrooms, and to know through the responses of teachers whether the use of the students' first language in ESL classrooms is effective?

## Subjects

The population of this research is all the English language teachers from private universities of Lahore, Pakistan. And as, Andrade (2020) stated that a sample is very necessary to represent the better population and it provides the accurate results, a sample of twenty-five English language teachers from the English Departments of selected private universities were recruited through random sampling technique to collect the data.

#### **Research Tool**

The tool used for the data collection comprises a questionnaire: teachers' perceptions. The questionnaire for this research was adapted from the work of Nambisan (2014) to measure the teachers' perceptions towards translanguaging in ESL classrooms. The first part of the questionnaire consists of the demographics (department and university name) of the respondents and their use of English language in exclusive settings such as university and classrooms. In the second part, Likert scale is used to get the perceptions of the respondents about the use of native languages of students in ESL classrooms.

The advantage of using this questionnaire is that it allows great flexibility in data collection (Brown, 2001) and hence it is adapted, it proves its reliability measures. Questionnaire was designed by Nambisan in the form of Bipolar and Unipolar Likert scale. Survey items comprise close-ended questions: 5 Unipolar, 3 Bipolar (from negative to positive for a single statement), and 3 questions with multiple options. This type of method is used in the field to collect data in order to measure the attitudes of the respondents (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

#### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

This study investigated the use of translanguaging with the theoretical perspectives of Ofelia García. It helped in analysing the perceptions, and behaviours of the respondents. The results were analysed after collecting the data. The data is gathered from an online google sheet questionnaire. After the data collection, we coded the responses for analysis. Then, the data was analysed on SPSS. The tool clearly showed the statistical results of the data. It showed the numbers of frequencies, percentages, and means of the responses.

#### ANALYSIS

The researchers have analysed each question of the survey individually, and then presents the findings of this study at the end. Before conducting the data for this research, some demographic information was collected from the participants and in the second section, data was collected from the university teachers that pertain to the research objectives guiding the study which is the main part of the survey.

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To analyse the perceptions of teachers towards translanguaging practice, mean scores (averages) are presented in the form of tables. Results have been discussed against each main question as below.

The 1st question of demographic information is about the native language of the participants, and most of the participants have selected Urdu as their native language. The 2nd question is about the medium of instruction in their institutes and for that, twenty-one participants chose 'bilingual' and the rest of the four respondents selected 'monolingual' as their medium of instruction of their institutes. In response to the 3rd question, fifteen participants selected 'English' as a language of instruction in their classrooms, nine teachers mentioned that they use both languages: Urdu and English, and only one teacher selected the option of 'Urdu' as a language of instruction in their classrooms.

The 4th question of the survey is about the teachers who rated their proficiency level of L1 at four-point Likert scale. None of them rated themselves at the first two response categories which are a) 'I only know a few basic words and phrases', and b) 'I am able to have limited conversation on everyday topics'. Four participants rated themselves on the third Likert scale option which is 'I am able to discuss a variety of topics without too much trouble'. Besides this, twenty-one participants rated themselves at the fourth Likert scale option 'I have no problem communicating with native speakers on a wide range of topics' in which eight were having Punjabi as their native language, and thirteen teachers with Urdu as their first language. According to question no 5, nineteen participants believed that using students' L1 in ESL classrooms is beneficial, and 6 participants gave a negative response to this question.

The 6th question is the main question in the survey which has further six items in which teachers were supposed to rate their observations towards their use of students' L1 on Likert scale. Participants were supposed to rate the frequency of its use at five points Likert scale i.e., never, not often, somewhat often, often, and very often. Mean or average scores are present in the table below which show the teachers' perceptions towards their use of L1 in ESL classrooms.

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	Items	Mean score
1.	To discuss content or activities in small groups	2.88
2.	To provide assistance to peers during activities	2.92
3.	To brainstorm during class activities	2.84
4.	To enable participation by low proficiency students	3.44
5.	To respond to teachers' questions	3.08
6.	To ask permission	2.36

Table No. 1 "How often do you observe or encourage use of students' native language in the classroom for the following purposes?"

Table no. 1, shows that teachers encouraged the use of students' L1 in ESL classroom more, to cheer the participation by low proficiency students in the classroom (M=3.44). Then, they also encouraged the use of students' L1 in ESL classrooms for the purpose of responding to teachers' questions in classrooms during delivering lectures (M=3.08). The results further show that teachers encourage less use of students' L1 in the ESL classroom to seek permission by students to do something (M=2.36). The next question is about asking the participants to respond to the eight question items on a three-point Likert scale i.e., very important, important, and not important that how important they think the use of students' L1 in the classrooms. The Mean or average scores have been presented in table no 2 below.

Table no. 2 shows that teachers have considered the use of students' native language in the classroom important with highest mean of (M=2.24), to encourage the participation by the students having lower proficiency. Then, they also considered it important to use their native language to translate for low proficiency students (M=2.16). It means whenever they have to deliver their lectures in a very comprehensible way, they tend to use their native language to make it easier for the students to understand. Teachers also importantly use their native language to brainstorm the necessary topic in class activities for students (M=2.08). They do not consider it important to use their native language to ask permission in a classroom or to allow the students for some activities (M=1.40).

	Items	Mean score
1.	To discuss content or activities in small groups	1.68
2.	To provide assistance to peers during activities	2.00
3.	To brainstorm during class activities	2.08
4.	To explain the problem, not related to the content	1.80
5.	To translate for low proficiency students	2.16
6.	To enable participation by lower proficiency students	2.24
7.	To respond to teachers' questions	1.76
8.	To ask permission	1.40

# Table No. 2 How important do you believe it is for students to use their native languages in the classroom within the following contexts?

The next question is about asking the participants about the frequency of their use of students' L1 in the classroom against further nine contexts. Participants were supposed to rate the frequency of its use at five-point Likert scale i.e., never, not often, somewhat often, often, and very often. Mean or average scores are present in table 3, which shows teachers' perceptions of which situation they are more inclined to use students 'native language.

Table No. 3 How often do you use students	' native language in the classrooms for the following
situations?	

	Items	Mean score
1.	To explain concepts	2.92
2.	To give feedback to students	2.60
3.	To praise students	2.08
4.	To build bonds with students	2.40
5.	To quickly clarify things during activities	2.96
6.	To help low proficiency students	3.00
7.	To describe vocabulary	2.92
8.	To give directions	2.40
9.	For classroom management	2.52

Results in table 3 demonstrate that teachers are more often inclined to use students' first language in the classroom to help the students having low proficiency in ESL classrooms (M=3.00). Then, they also tend to use students' L1 to explain a concept and to describe vocabulary in their course work to students in ESL classrooms (M=2.92). Moreover, teachers use fewer students' native language to build the bond with students and to provide them with the proper directions and guidelines (M=2.40). It further shows that teachers tend to use less students' native language to praise the students in the class (M=2.08). Whenever any student makes progress and achieves high scores in a subject, teachers are supposed to reinforce and praise the students, but they do not usually use students' L1 for this specific purpose.

The next question is about asking the teachers that what do they think about the importance of their use of students' L1 within nine different contexts. Participants were supposed to rate the frequency of its use at three points Likert scale, i.e., very important, important, and not important. The mean scores of their responses have been mentioned in table no 4 below.

Table No. 4 "How important is it for teachers	s to use their students'	' native language in the
following situations?"		

	Items	Mean score
1.	To explain concepts	1.92
2.	To describe vocabulary	1.88
3.	To give directions	1.56
4.	For classroom management	1.88
5.	To give feedback to students	1.76
6.	To praise students	1.56
7.	To build bonds with students	1.52
8.	To quickly clarify during activities	1.84
9.	To help low proficiency student	2.04

Results in table no. 4 indicate that teachers are more often inclined to use students' first language in the classrooms to help the low proficiency students (M=2.04). Furthermore, they also tend to use their native language to explain the concepts in a much easier way (M=1.92). They also want to describe vocabulary in the course work of students in their classrooms and also for the proper management of classroom activities (M=1.88). Moreover, teachers use less of their native language to give proper directions and guidelines to students and to praise the students in the class for making progress (M=1.56).

Table No. 5 Do you believe that the use of students' native language is beneficial in the English language classroom?

	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	21	84.0 %
No	4	16.0 %

The responses from table no 5 indicate that yes, it is beneficial to use students' L1 in an ESL classrooms. Twenty-one teachers responded as 'yes' and they encouraged the use of students' L1 in the classroom. On the contrary, according to four teachers, the implementation of the use of students' native language might not be useful for the development of students learning, and it must not be used.

# FINDINGS

The results of the teachers' perceptions showed that teachers of ESL classrooms find it easier to use translanguaging strategy in the classroom in all different contexts and situations mentioned in the analysis. They find it interesting to apply translanguaging strategy, as this pedagogy can change the learning outcomes of the students. Translanguaging strategy is very beneficial for those students who belong to different areas and teachers can easily teach them by using it. The findings of this study indicate that in the pedagogic situation, an instructor can use translanguaging strategy in the classroom; it will help the students in learning English or any other foreign language. The results from the previous study of Batool et al., (2022) represents that students' attitude related to the translanguaging approach determines the teachers' willingness to use this translanguaging strategy in ESL classrooms and that it is beneficial. The finding of this current study comprising the teachers' perceptions has also indicated

that this is beneficial for the students of ESL classrooms. It was also supported by Wang and Kirkpatick (2012) that teachers should encourage the multilingual students and appreciate the students' first language for their learning in the classroom.

## DISCUSSION

This research has focused on the teachers' perceptions towards the translanguaging strategy in ESL classrooms. The research question has a further part that focused on teachers' beliefs whether the use of the students L1 (first language) as a translanguaging strategy in ESL classroom is useful? The finding of the results showed that teachers have considered using the native language of students important, in the classroom, particularly to encourage and enhance the participation ability among lower proficiency students. Then, they also considered it important to use the native language of students to translate the difficult words for low proficiency students (M=2.16). It means whenever they want to deliver their lectures in a very comprehendible way, they tend to use the native languages of students to make it easy for them to understand the concept. Similarly, in the Pakistani context, the monolingual classroom settings led to many language policies. In that case, many instructors believe in the importance of immersing learners in only the English medium of instruction (only English) (Rahman et al., 2010). While Fang & Wang (2018) argued that the use of English as a mean of learning should be considered as a linguistic diversity from multilingual paradigm, and monolingual approach as an English medium of instruction is not appropriate for learning strategy (p. 36). In the previous study, Masood (2019) has researched teachers' and students' attitudes towards translanguaging in the context of Bengal. Masood has quoted William (1996) as the students could discover the chance to use their local languages in class; it would encourage them to share learning and knowledge (Masood, 2019).

Results of the second question indicate that teachers were more often inclined to use students' native language in the classroom to help low proficiency students in ESL classrooms. In the same way, Lewis et al., (2012) discussed that translanguaging is useful in a lot of methods because it will prevent second language learning. Then, teachers also tend to use students' L1 to explain a concept and to explain the meaning of a vocabulary to students in classrooms. Moreover, teachers use fewer students' native language to build the bond with students and to give proper directions and guidelines to students. The reason is that those teachers are restricted to use only one language in the classroom as the policies of the university departments restrict them. As translanguaging is used as an alternative language for teaching/learning, pedagogy becomes cited within the speaking rubric as evidence of a breakdown in conversation (Baker & Hope, 2019). Teachers give their answers according to their experience and observation. Teachers observe and encourage the use of students' L1 in the classroom because it is helpful for asking questions or holding discussions to capture the students' attention. Similarly, Wang (2019) finding implies that teachers should consider students' motivation for language learning.

Teachers' perceptions have statistically a significant effect in English classrooms at the undergraduate level. Moreover, the results of this research showed that the perceptions of teachers are a more effective factor in motivating the students to learn the English language at an undergraduate level. Furthermore, the data also suggests that there is an importance of translanguaging for pedagogic strategy. It can also be noted from the data presented above that the translanguaging strategy influences the teaching and learning methods.

#### CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in a Pakistan context related to teachers' perceptions towards translanguaging strategy at the BS Hons. English level. It highlighted that Pakistani educational institutions do not have a uniform approach for the use of language as a medium of instruction. Monolingual and multilingual students are also concerned about their L1 use by their teachers (translanguaging strategy) in the classrooms. Teachers' perceptions showed that universities should focus on the use of this strategy in learning English. Therefore, Pakistani educationists prefer to use Urdu or local languages in the English classrooms. The results of the study showed that the translanguaging strategy holds potential for making classrooms rich with languages.

#### SUGGESTIONS

- This study also gives an idea for researchers to extend this study through case study.
- Future researchers can investigate the reasons for not using translanguaging strategies in the Pakistani educational system.
- Similarly, teachers can easily express their lectures in their local language for the sake of comprehensive lectures and the development of students' knowledge and understanding.

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