




Translanguaging in EFL classrooms: Teachers' perceptions and practices

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Abstract

The belief that the native language practices of individuals improve their competence in a foreign language gave rise to a number of bilingual language pedagogies, one of which is translanguaging. This term does not merely refer to switching between two languages, on the contrary, it involves a systematic use of two languages in a particular language teaching activity. In this study, English language teachers' perceptions of translanguaging were examined through a questionnaire. Classroom observations were done to examine for what purposes they apply the use of L1 in their teaching and semi-structured interviews were done to figure out the reasons of the differences between their perceptions and actual use of L1. The participants of the study were English language teachers (EFL) who work at state and private schools in Turkey. The Likert-type items in the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and the data gathered from open-ended questions in the questionnaire, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were exposed to structural-coding analysis. The results showed that EFL teachers' perceptions were not akin to their practices. Although they held positive views about translanguaging in some particular situations, they did not frequently employ this pedagogy due to the expectations of their institutions, colleagues and parents of their students.

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1. Introduction

The developments in technology and global communication and the political problems have forced people from different cultural groups to live together and create a bilingual identity in this community. Language contact bound to take place among these people from different language groups also created the notion of bilingualism. Bialystok (2001) labels various reasons of bilingualism "education, immigration, extended family, temporary residence", which have an influence on the cognitive and intellectual development of an individual (p. 183).

In broad terms, bilinguals are defined as people who can speak two languages. For Grosjean (2010), "bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (p. 4). He

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highlights three points in this definition: the regular use of language rather than fluency, dialects of languages, the use of two or more languages. According to Garcia (2009), a bilingual is a person who employ two languages with diverse and unequal experiences within each language. Rodriguez, Carrasquillo, and Lee (2014) provide another broad definition of bilingualism: “the ability of an individual to use two languages in a variety of situations and conditions” (p. 4). Bilinguals appear in every country and social community both in history and in today’s world. However, they confirm that it is not easy to give a certain definition of this concept owing to different proficiency levels in language skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) and domains (phonology, pragmatics, syntax, semantics and morphology) even if a person can speak two languages fluently. Context is another prominent factor since bilinguals may apply these languages in a different way depending on the person who they are talking to and their communicative purposes.

Baker (2011) brings the attention to the importance of context and different combinations of interactions among people on being bilingual and coins a new term: functional bilingualism, which he identifies as the individuals’ use of their bilingual ability to achieve interaction in a variety of everyday contexts. In a monolingual society, a bilingual does not have the chance to use two languages in everyday contexts but they can quickly switch from one language to another if they are surrounded by a bilingual community. Here, the notion of language use comes into the scene, which is influenced by the attitudes and preferences of a bilingual. Identity is another factor that affects the employment of language. To illustrate, teenager in a second-generation community may prefer using the language of majority group owing to its high status. As Appel and Muysken (2005) claim, bilingualism occurs in all societies but the form and the degree of it may vary.

Jaekel et al. (2019) draw our attention to the benefits of speaking two or more languages. A development of two language systems simultaneously or successively enable bilinguals to use both systems actively. A number of hypothesis have suggested on this issue: Inhibitory control advantage hypothesis claims that bilinguals develop an inhibitory control system of the employment one language while using another one. The bilingual executive processing advantage hypothesis highlights the process of efficient problem-solving. The shifting advantage hypothesis focuses on switching to another language in a short period of time. Additionally, Harris (1992) states that bilinguals develop positive attitudes towards their situation that brings about the establishment of a sense of social and cultural identity. They also perceive the world from different perspectives. Rodriguez et al. (2014) summarize the advantages of bilingualism on individuals and society. It is crucially important to achieve intercultural unity and closeness and being a credible member of a society.

Cummins and Corson (1997) explain that bilingual education that dates back to Greek and Roman times refers to the use of two languages as a medium of instruction to teach subject matters. Although the literature on bilingual education goes back to 1920s, there is still much debate about the merits of it. Opponents of bilingualism recognize bilingual educational programs as detrimental to cognitive development and academic success of individuals. Using two languages as a medium of instruction hinders the acquisition of some aspects of two languages, specifically vocabulary. There are also scholars who believe that bilingual education creates a sense of divisiveness in the society rather than maintaining national identity regarding to the educational policy level.

Despite its opponents, bilingual education is on the rise in many countries such as Canada, the USA, Hungary, Norway, and Sweden. These countries implement this sort of education to support students’ cognitive, linguistic, academic and cross-cultural development (Rodriguez et al., 2014). Recently, the potential impacts of bilingualism in education has also been emerged as a significant concern in Turkey. A number of studies have focused on the aspects of bilingualism and learning English (Incecay, 2015; Rathert, 2013; Şeker, 2018).

Whether it is intentional or not, a certain degree of translanguaging happens in English classes in Turkey. In this study, it is intended to explore the perceptions and practices of English language teachers (EFL) towards translanguaging, which receives increasing attention as an emerging teaching method in bilingual education. Canagarajah (2011) claims that the teaching of translanguaging raises many questions in educational contexts and this issue has not received enough attention in the literature. Lubliner and Grisham (2017) state that translanguaging teachers are eager to use different languages purposefully to enrich their teaching by incorporating students' linguistic and cultural resources. The main point to be stressed here is the purposeful use of languages. So as to build bridges between languages and cultures, EFL teachers need to develop a positive attitude towards this method.

1.1. Literature review

Advances in our understanding of bilingualism have solidified academic interest around the teaching methods in bilingual education. It is well-noted that bilinguals have the ability to shift flexibly from one language to another, which paves the way for the employment of various methods in classrooms. Among these methods translanguaging receives considerable attention by many scholars. Andrews, Fay and White (2018) explain that this concept was first coined by Cen Williams in 1996 as a Welsh term “trawsieithu” which means the systematic switching over between English and Welsh in classroom activities. Since then, the term has got a widespread meaning in personal and professional lives.

Canagarajah (2011) comments on the assumptions beneath translanguaging. Languages are a kind of integrated system for bilinguals/multilinguals to be negotiated for communicative purposes. This system requires a multicompetence working for different languages in one's repertoire. Hence, the proficiency for bilinguals/multilinguals need to be based on the construction of this repertoire rather than developing a total mastery of each and every language. For Garcia (2009), translanguaging is discursive practices of bilinguals to construct meaning in communication. Lubliner and Grisham (2017) define translanguaging as the purposeful incorporation of students' linguistic and cultural resources as a medium of instruction. This reality-based process allows students to shift seamlessly between their L1 and foreign language.

Translanguaging offers bilinguals manifold advantages. It ensures a deeper understanding of content as well as enhancing the weaker language by scaffolding with the dominant one (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Baker (2011) labels four benefits of translanguaging:

- It may promote a deeper and fuller understanding of content
- It may help students to develop skills in their weaker language
- It may facilitate home-school cooperation
- It can develop learners second language ability concurrently with content learning (p. 281-282).

He alleges that the potential problems of this pedagogy can be easily coped with if teachers are aware of the importance of planning their lessons on the systematical use of two languages in the classroom. Moreover, they should reflect and review about the situations in the class and stimulate their students' cognitive abilities by diversing the languages.

It is quite clear that translanguaging pedagogy provides students with different corners to construct their competence of the weaker language by using their knowledge of the dominant one. Here a questions comes to our mind: What are the principles of creating this pedagogy? Rowe (2018) answers this questions in details:

- Teachers need to value their students' languages and cultures and supply activities that focus on aspects of different cultures and languages.

- Modeling in different languages and constructing bilingual texts with students are also important features of this pedagogy.
- Authentic opportunities for bilingual or multilingual communications are also taken into account.
- A two-way translation method is helpful in making the meaning of challenging texts clear.
- Building dual-language or multimodal texts in which students write and record texts in both of their languages is favorable activity.
- Students should present in the classroom to bilingual audience who can be teachers of other classes or members of families and communities.

The flexible use of languages has proven to be beneficial in language learning especially in the education of young learners. The study conducted by Mwindu and Van der Walt (2015) proved that a contextual analysis was necessary on the decision of translanguaging strategies. In their context, translation and preview-review-review strategies were effective strategies to build English vocabulary. Portoles and Marti (2017) investigated translanguaging practices in early language learning and revealed strategical employment of L1, L2 and L3 so as to serve different functions. Thus, the monolingual approach does not facilitate teaching English. Velasco and Garcia (2014) specifically focused on translanguaging pedagogy in the writing of young bilingual learners. The analysis was based on five writing texts of bilinguals' learners and how they used translanguaging in the planning, drafting and production stages of their writings. They found that it worked as a self-regulated mechanism in which bilingual learners actively participated rather than a pedagogy to teach writing to bilinguals. It is a strategy to be employed for bilinguals to scaffold and solve challenges of building their own text in a foreign language.

A number of studies have postulated the beneficial effects of translanguaging in educational settings by following different approaches. Focusing on a socio-cultural approach, Duarte (2019) examined how 15-years-olds applied their linguistic repertoires to maintain tasks in content-matter mainstream classrooms. The analysis of speech acts showed that translanguaging occurred in cognitively challenging task-talk activities. In peer action talks, students used it to clearly present their ideas and to construct new knowledge. Hornberger and Link (2012) reflected on the classroom practices of English language learners in the USA. Drawing on ethnographic data, they claimed that the school policies that strictly used English as a medium of instruction decreased students' bilingual developments while translanguaging practices fostered their learning by balancing two cultures. In another study, Creese and Blackledge (2015) focused on the effects of translanguaging practices in the identity development of individuals in multilingual settings under the framework of sociolinguistic view. They presented some examples of translanguaging in an educational setting in the UK, which showed the potential of this pedagogy in “deepening understandings and sociopolitical engagement, developing critical thinking, and extending metalinguistic awareness and cross-linguistic flexibility” (p. 33).

To date, several studies have attempted to explain the perceptions of teachers or students towards translanguaging in different contexts. In an MA thesis, Nambisan (2014) examined the attitudes and practices of English language teachers in Iowa towards translanguaging and found that the majority of the participants did not implement translanguaging practices in their classrooms although they believed in the importance of them. In another study, McMillan and Rivers (2011) examined the attitudes of Native-English speakers of translanguaging at a Japanese university. They found that these teachers had positive attitudes about the selective use of L1 in English classes contrary to institutional policy. In a recent study, Holdway and Hitchcock (2018) examined K12 public school teachers' perspectives of students' using L1 in the classroom as a pedagogical resource within the context of a 15-week online professional development course and found that these teachers developed an understanding of the importance of L1 use in the classroom as a pedagogical strategy.

The perceptions of students in higher education have received attention in some studies. Cartens (2016) evaluated the impact of translanguaging for the development of African bilinguals' academic literacy in English. In this study, the participants reported the benefits of this pedagogy especially its cognitive gains. It enabled them to scaffold their understanding of the concepts by creating an overall picture, simplifying the concepts and making distributions among them. Affective gains such as the collaboration and safe environment were also emphasized by the participants. In another study, this issue was examined in Puerto Rican university classroom by Rivera and Mazak (2017). Following a case study approach, they found that the participants were indifferent to this pedagogy, which showed that it was not frequently applied in their learning context. In a Vietnamese context, Kim and Petraki (2009) revealed an agreement between teachers and students about the supportive role of L1 in EFL setting especially in the early stages.

In sum, a judicious use of L1 by EFL teachers serves as a pedagogical resource in a learning environment where bilinguals switch over between their L1 and the target language to enhance communication. The underlying philosophy of this method is that two languages can complement each other and lead to deepen students' understanding of the content, create a bilingual identity and make sense of their bilingual world. In this sense, EFL teachers' developing positive outlook on translanguaging is crucially important to implement this pedagogy effectively in their classrooms. As Holdway and Hitchcock (2018) claim, teachers should recognize the importance of benefiting their students' L1 both for teaching and their students' learning and provide models of translanguaging for their students in the mainstream of their classes.

1.2. Research questions

Data from some studies (Sali, 2014; Yavuz, 2012) have identified EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of L1 in Turkish context. However, these studies were limited regarding the number of participants and teaching contexts. Hence, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the literature on translanguaging by identifying the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers working in different institutions across Turkey. The following research questions constitute the essence of this study:

1. What are the perceptions and practices of English language teachers towards translanguaging?
2. For what purposes do EFL teachers use Turkish in their classrooms?

2. Method

2.1. Sample / Participants

The current study aimed to gauge EFL teachers' perceptions and practices towards the use of Turkish in their classrooms. 50 EFL teachers who work in different schools and cities of Turkey completed the questionnaire. 37 of them were female and 13 were male. 54 % of the participants have working experience between 1-10 years while 46 % of them have working experience of 11 years and above. Five classroom observations were done with five EFL teachers who work in three different private schools of Osmaniye, Turkey. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 10 EFL teachers who completed the questionnaire.

2.2. Instrument(s)

A questionnaire adapted from Nambisan (2014) was used to explore teachers' attitudes and practices towards translanguaging. It included items to collect general information about teachers' age, gender and years of experience. The other items were Likert-Type scale items to examine how the use of

Turkish by the teachers and the students is perceived by the teachers and how they apply Turkish in their classrooms. With two open-ended items, the researcher tended to figure out whether and in what situations the use of Turkish in the class is beneficial or detrimental and to expand on their answers regarding their perceptions of translanguaging in their classes.

2.3. Data collection procedures

The study was carried out by using three different types of data collection to achieve data triangulation. Denzin (2009) defines it as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena” (p. 297). It allows researchers to deal with the deficiencies of one method and to explore alternative explanations of the data. Firstly, a survey adapted from Nambisan (2014) was used to explore teachers’ attitudes and practices towards translanguaging. Cargan (2007) points out that questionnaires enable researchers to describe the characteristics of a large population. Besides, a large number of variables can be included flexibly to many questions on a topic. On the other hand, they have the requirements of standardization, which brings about some missing points about the topic to be searched in addition to only assessing what participants are willing to say rather than revealing their actual perceptions or practices. In order to overcome with this problem, five English classes in three different private schools in Osmaniye were observed by the researcher to examine their actual practices in their classes. Finally, a semi-structured interview was held with 10 EFL teachers to investigate the reasons of the conflicts between their perceptions and practices. Galletta (2013) states that this data collection tool has a remarkable potential of addressing specific dimensions of a research question.

For participant sampling of the first phase, the questionnaire was sent to the principals of state and private schools in Osmaniye and the head of Foreign Language Teaching Departments of some private schools is informed about the study and kindly asked to forward it to their EFL teachers working in different cities of Turkey. 50 EFL teachers who teach at all grades of state and private schools in many cities of Turkey engaged in this phase. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants of classroom observation. Nugent (2010) states that this type of sampling is practical in situations in which the researcher uses the participants whoever meet the criteria of the study and are willing to take part in the study, but it cannot represent the population. The researcher had no influence on the selection of the participants of classroom observations. Consents from the head of some private schools in Osmaniye, Turkey were obtained and the aims of the study and the role classroom observations were explained to the leader of EFL teachers. They informed the other teachers in their schools about the study and the observations were done by making audio-recording of the classes of EFL teachers who voluntarily accept to engage in this part of the study. It was the teachers’ decisions to be audio-recorded. Only one teacher chose her class to be video-recorded. In general, the teachers and the students were not inhibited by audio-recoding classroom observation and straightforward data were collected since the focus was on the teachers and the students only. The researcher also transcribed translanguaging extracts taken from the classes being audio-video recorded. These extracts will be explained in detail in the findings and discussion section. As Wragg (1999) explains audio-recoded classroom observations are a good means of collecting data which can be replayed several times for analysis. In addition, transcribed data permit the analysis of specific aspects of language both by researchers and readers. Semi-structured interviews were done with 10 voluntary participants to figure out the differences between their attitudes and practices. The interviews were done through e-mails and face-to-face conversations.

2.4. Data analysis

For the analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaire, the researcher used descriptive statistics to calculate the percentages of each Likert-type item in the questionnaire. The scales of two parts of the questionnaire were 5-point Likert-type, so they were reduced to three to equate the scales of all items in

the questionnaire. The analysis was performed based on 3-point Likert-type scale. To analyze the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions, classroom-observations and semi-structured interviews, structural coding was used. The data were first coded independently keeping the research questions in mind. Then, the codes were re-examined and attributed to themes about for what purposes Turkish was used in the classes observed. As Saldana (2009) explains coding is a good means of organizing similarly coded data into categories due to shared characteristic and reflecting on the emergent themes from these categories.

3. Results and Discussion

The first research question addressing the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers towards translanguaging was probed through a questionnaire analyzed by calculating percentages in descriptive statistics. 58 % of the participants believed that the use of L1 in English classrooms is beneficial while 42 % thought it is detrimental to students' acquisition of English. The first Likert-type question was about how often they observe or encourage the use of Turkish in the classroom. As shown in Figure 1, participant teachers let students' use of Turkish to enable participation with lower proficiency students (58 %), to explain problems not related to content (42 %), to respond to teachers' questions (40 %), to brainstorm during class activities (38 %), and to promote assistance to peers during activities (33 %). They generally had a tendency of not encouraging the employment of Turkish by their students to discuss content in pair-work or group work activities (72 % never/not often) and to promote assistance in these activities (66 % never/not often). They did not seem to let their students to respond to their questions in Turkish (60 %). These results are in parallel with Nambisan's study (2014). In this MA thesis, allowing the use of L1 to facilitate the participation of low level students, to promote assistance to peers during activities were favored by the participant teachers while the other instances were not prone to be encouraged.

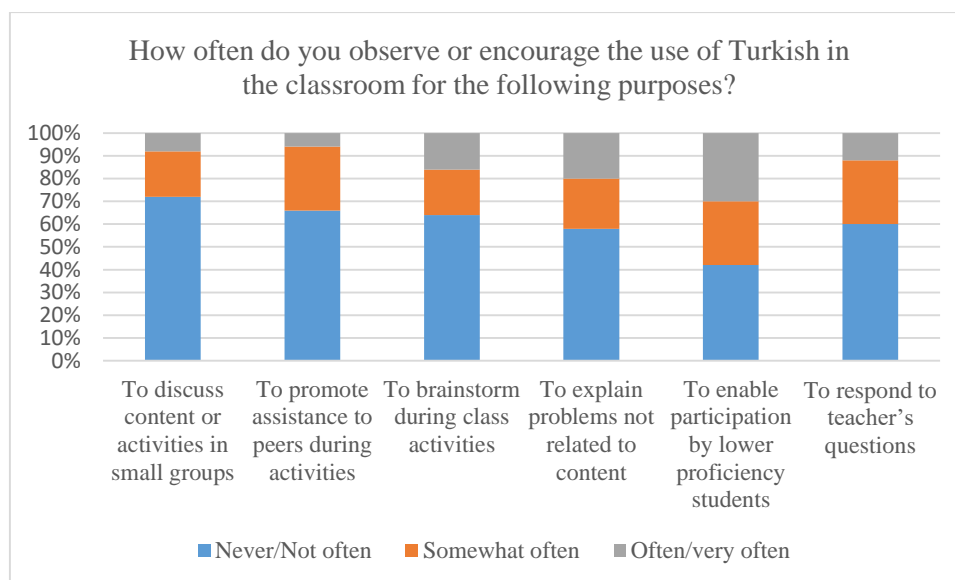


Figure 1. Percentages about the allowance and encouragement of students' use of Turkish in English classes

As displayed in Figure 2, a great majority of English language teachers agreed that students' use of Turkish was important to enable participation by lower-level students (75 %), to explain problems not related to content (63 %) and to promote assistance to peers during activities (59 %), which goes in line

with McMillan and Rivers (2011). A comparison of the percentages of some items in Figure 1 and 2 revealed that although over half of the participants stated that they did not observe or encourage students' use of Turkish to explain problems not related to content and to promote assistance to peers during activities, they accepted the prominence of translanguaging in these particular instances. It would not be wrong to claim that their perceptions and existing practices about students' translanguaging in some particular situations were different.

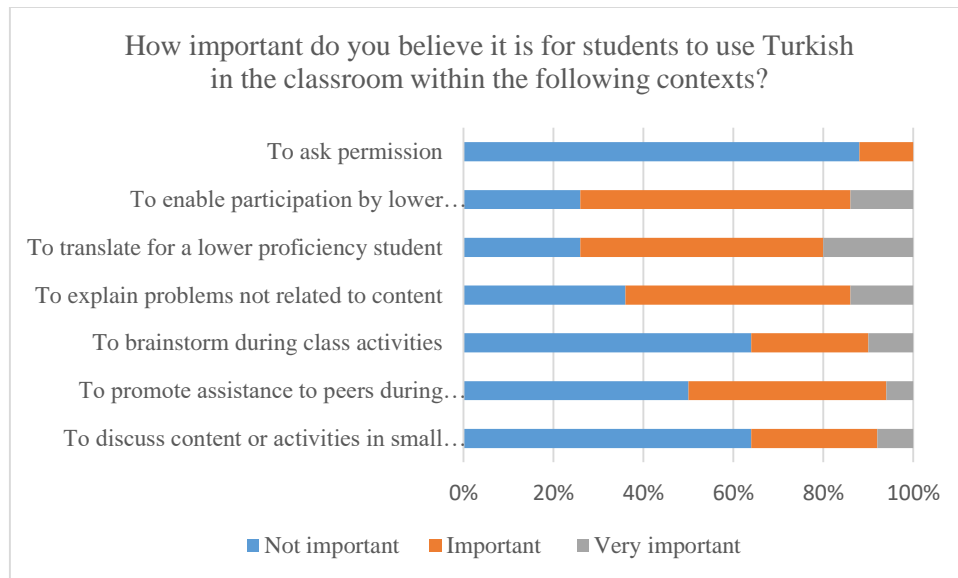


Figure 2. Percentages of EFL teachers' beliefs about the prominence of students' use of Turkish in English classes

Figure 3 presents how often they translanguange in their classes. The general tendency was the avoidance of Turkish to give directions, to explain concepts, to give feedback to students, to maintain classroom management, to build bonds with students, to clarify during activities and to help with lower level students. Only small percentages of the participants held the idea that Turkish is beneficial to help with low proficiency students (38 %), to quickly clarify during the activities (23 %), to describe vocabulary (23 %), to build bonds with students (20%), and to explain concepts (10 %). Similarly, some of the participants of the study of McMillan and Rivers (2011) indicated that L1 use may be of help to teach some vocabulary items and to build rapport. In Schweers' study (1999) using L1 to joke around with students was favorable among teachers, which can be considered as a means of building bonds with students. The use of L1 is effective for rapport building (making jokes, showing concern..., etc.) and explaining difficult concepts (Paker & Karaağaç, 2015). However, in our study, translanguaging was not seen as an acceptable strategy to explain concepts.

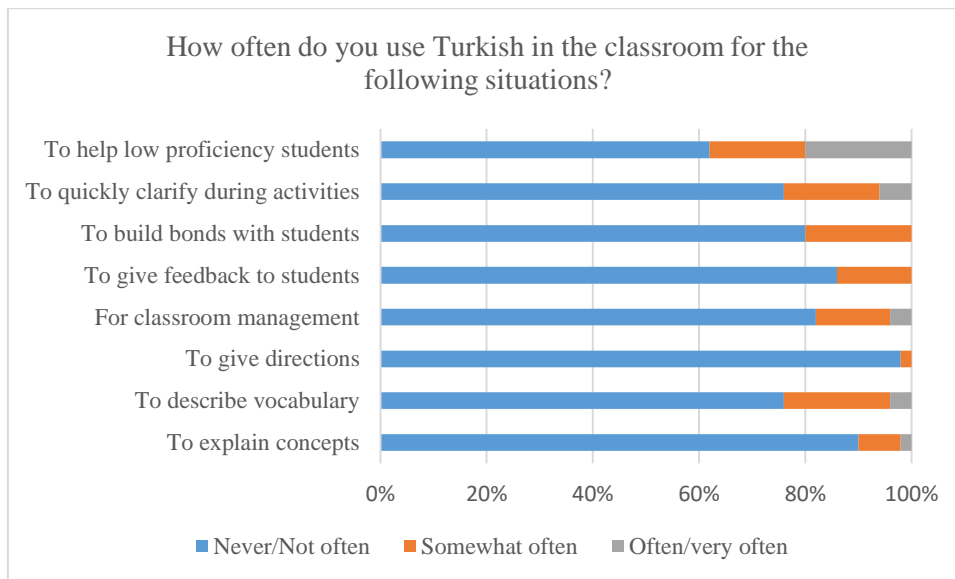


Figure 3. The percentages of how frequently Turkish was used by EFL teachers

Figure 4 below illustrates the beliefs of teachers about their use of Turkish in the classroom. There was an overwhelming agreement among the participants that the use of Turkish was (very) important to help lower proficiency students (73%). The other items for classroom management (44%), to build bonds with students (40%), to give feedback to students (37%), to describe vocabulary items (37%) and to praise students (37%) were in the high places in the ranking list. They looked negatively upon translanguaging to give directions (82%), to explain concepts (68%) and, to clarify during the activities (65%). Seemingly, the participants were prone to use Turkish for classroom-oriented and student-oriented purposes and preferred to maintain content matters in English, which is similar to Nambisan's (2014) findings. Some conflicting issues emerged from the findings displayed in Figure 3 and 4. Although nearly half of the participants recognized the value of the use of Turkish to help with lower level students, for classroom management, to build bonds with students, to give feedback to students, it only had a limited and compensatory role in their teaching compared to Figure 3.

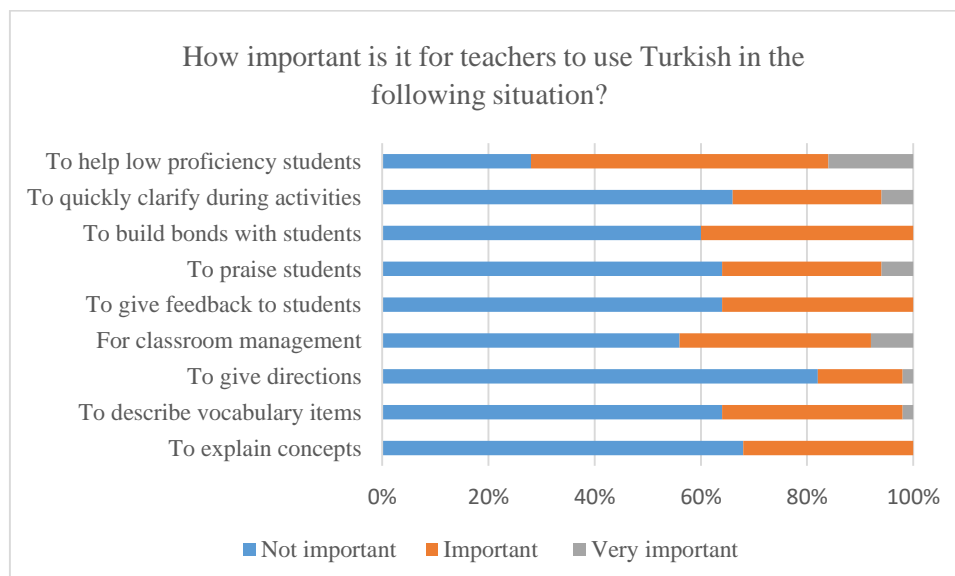


Figure 4. Percentages of teachers' beliefs about the prominence of the use of Turkish in English classes

So far, the overall results indicated that translanguaging was not a regular practice in the classes of the participants and their beliefs and language choice in their teaching did not seem to correspond. This result is similar to Paker and Karaağaç's study (2015) who found that what English language instructors believed and what they performed in their teaching was different. They stated that they used L1 for rapport building and explaining difficult concepts but they tended to translanguaging to present the topic, to give feedback, to teach vocabulary, to translate sentences in a text in their actual use. To explain differences between their attitudes and practices, interviews were done with 10 teachers. The results will be explained at the end of this section.

Two open-ended questions in the survey aimed to delve into teachers' beliefs underlying their translanguaging practices. When teachers were asked about their opinions not stated in the items of the questionnaire, some themes have emerged. Firstly, some participants think that L1 use is a short-cut since it limits learners' autonomy and competence in English.

“Using Turkish in English classrooms will always hinder students from learning English language in an effective way and they will always be drawn back to their mother tongue”
(Participant 2)

“The use of L1 hinders the possibility of exposure to i+1 level of English” (Participant 21)

Second theme emphasizes the influences of students' proficiency level in English. Seemingly, teachers have a consensus about the use of Turkish at lower levels.

“If you are with the low profile students, sometimes you have difficulties in explaining the content and the only way to make them comfortable in the class is unfortunately using mother tongue.” (Participant 32).

“If you are teaching to lower level students, I think it is necessary to explain some information in Turkish. Because the translation is in every part of our life. The traffic signs or other signs are actually translation of their original meaning. So we can use a little Turkish in order to make the main point understandable.”
(Participant 5)

“In order to explain unclear grammatical subjects, using Turkish is beneficial in the classroom atmosphere. We sometimes need to give Turkish meanings of the words in lower grades if English explanation and definition are not enough for the students.” (Participant 22)

Third theme is related to institutional policy. This quote may also explain the difference between teachers' beliefs and their actual use of Turkish.

“The amount of Turkish I use in my classes is very little, sometimes 1 or 2 percent and most of the time it's none but I wish I could use a little bit more. You know in most educational institutions, it's the policy not to allow teachers to use Turkish in their classes” (Participant 35)

The other open-ended question was concerned with the beneficial and detrimental effects of translanguaging in foreign language setting. As you may understand from the quotes below, they mostly focus on the benefits of L1. The themes about the benefits of L1 are: helping low proficiency students, keeping up pace with the curriculum, explaining grammar, clarifying the subject and vocabulary, changing the mood of the students, for classroom management, building rapport, and increasing motivation. As can be understood from the last quote below, some teachers believe that the use of L1 becomes habitual for students and teachers in English classes and this hinders students' L2 proficiency.

“While working on vocabulary especially with phrasal verbs, some phrases and idioms using Turkish is beneficial. Thus, it is possible to tell the Turkish phrases or idioms and students comprehend better.”
(Participant 7)

“If your students feel down or demotivated about new subject, using short and simple Turkish instruction can help us. But I prefer to explain Turkish to those students in a quiet way and one to one.” (Participant 9)

“For class management, to overcome some discipline problems, communication in mother tongue is more efficient. Also students feel more confident when some information is given in Turkish because they feel they understand what they are supposed to do clearly.” (Participant 30)

“Using Turkish is sometimes necessary when students stop listening. They pay more attention when they hear some words from their mother tongue and easily get involved to the lesson again.” (Participant 36)

“However, it can be detrimental when Turkish dominates the target language in class most of the time because students need to get the sufficient amount of input from the target language.” (Participant 35)

The themes emerged from the open-ended questions are in line with many studies of translanguaging. Sali (2014) examined the functions of L1 in English classes in a secondary school. The classroom observations and interviews showed that the participants used L1 to clarify and review the content, to maintain classroom routines, to construct rapport and to increase students’ involvement. Some studies suggested that teachers clarify the grammar points and vocabulary by using L1 (McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Kim & Petraki, 2009).

Five English classes were audio-video recorded and observed by the researcher to investigate EFL teachers actual use of L1. This issue was associated with the second research questions in this study.

The first class observed was a 6th grade having seven hours of English classes in a week. This teacher mostly preferred to speak in English during the class hour. The only instance of translanguaging was to clarify the meaning of a word. This teacher saw the benefits of L1 in vocabulary teaching.

“- Teacher: What is sofa?

- Student: “Kanepe” (a kind of coach)

The second observation was done at 1st grade and they had eight hours of English. This teacher seemed to establish classroom routines in English. She mostly used Total Physical Response to convey the meaning of the words or to explain students what they would do in the activity and for classroom management. She usually ignored students talking in Turkish or waited for them to speak in English. Sometimes she translated what they said in Turkish as seen in the extract below.

“Student: Sırayla gitmiyoruz.

Teacher: Yes, not one by one”

In the extract below, there existed some problems during pair-work activity although she modelled it with some students. She used Turkish to quickly clarify the activity.

“Teacher: Tamam dinleyin beni. Sıra arkadaşına soruyorsun o da cevap verecek.” (OK. Listen to me! Ask your partners and they will reply.)

After this pair-work activity there was too much noise, so she warned the students in English for a few times. Then, she said “1B” (the name of the class) in Turkish and the students stopped talking. In this instance, her aim was to achieve classroom management.

The third classroom observation took place at 5th grade that had 21 hours of English in a week. Teaching vocabulary was the focus of this class. The teacher gave the instructions in English but there were some students who did not understand what they would do. So, the teacher explained in Turkish to make the instruction clear.

“Teacher: Ok. Bring your green and red pens”

“Yeşil ve kırmızı kalemlerinizi alıyorsunuz”

A student did not seem to get the instruction and she asked him in English to explain what they would do in Turkish. In this particular situation she encouraged the use of Turkish to help with a low level student.

“Teacher: Can you tell me what we will do in Turkish?”

During the vocabulary teaching she let her students to use their dictionaries to clarify the meaning of the words and got feedback.

“Teacher: What is asymmetric?”

Student: “Simetrik olmayan” (opposite of symmetric)

The fourth classroom-observation conducted at 10th grade. These students had 10 hours of English class in a week. There was a reading activity and the students did some comprehension questions related to the text. The teacher mostly preferred to speak in English. She just encouraged her students to make the meaning of some words clear and sometimes translated some sentences in the activity.

“Teacher: Unique means just one

Student: Tek”

The fifth classroom-observation was videotaped due to the teacher’s decision. This teacher usually video-taped her classes to self-evaluate her own teaching. This class was about the teaching of a grammar point “so that” and “to”. The teacher explained the use of these structures in English and then wrote a kind of verse on the board. The students sang it and played Turkish folk. It was a fun activity to help them remember the content of the lesson.

“Hele bakın kim gelmiş (Look, who is coming)

“to” gelmiş, (“to” is coming)

“To” dan sonra fiil gelmiş. Hoşgelmiş (“to” is followed by a verb, Welcome)

Hele bakın kim gelmiş (Look, who is coming)

“So that” dan sonra cümle gelmiş. Hoşgelmiş.” (“so that” is followed by a sentence, Welcome)

The classroom observations were done at different grades from elementary to high schools to examine for what purposes they were actually using Turkish in addition to validating their responses in the questionnaires. In general, they seemed to utilize Turkish to frame their practices as responsive to their students’ needs during the lesson. The most frequent uses of Turkish gathered from the classroom observations were to teach vocabulary and to quickly clarify during the activities, which is in line with many studies (McMillan & River, 2011; Schweers, 1999; Kim & Petraki, 2009). A new function of the translanguaging that was not stated in the survey also emerged from the last observation: to help students remember the content.

The findings of the present study indicated that the participants mostly taught vocabulary by using Turkish with a supportive instruction. Such kinds of implementation were usually at the surface level which did not contribute to students’ cognitive gains of L2. Lubliner and Grisham (2017) explained a study focusing on teaching vocabulary similar to our observed contexts. They argued that this method in which students were expected to look up for words identified by their teachers resulted in poor grades in the exams despite the hard work of the students and the teachers. They observed that this well-meaning supportive instruction brought about teacher-dependent students for their own learning. As a result, they suggested the implementation of practices that foster the growth of independent learners who know how to acquire the word knowledge and skills for comprehension. As a result, it would be more valuable applying translanguaging activities aiming to improve students’ self-growth as independent learners may be more valuable in English classrooms.

To explore the differences between teachers’ attitudes towards translanguaging and their actual use, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers. Five teachers explained that this difference was associated with the current policy adopted by their institutions and parents of their students. The use of Turkish was not considered as an appropriate way of teaching English. Seemingly, a monolingual approach based on English was prescribed by institutional policies of the participants. Portoles and Marti (2017) explain that the monolingual bias is the requirement of successful foreign language programs in

traditional view. As McMillan and Rivers (2011) claim, English has a hegemonic status in many foreign language teaching contexts. Faced with an educational setting in which translanguaging was unacceptable, teachers may not have felt comfortable switching over between two languages in their classes. For Creese and Blackledge (2010), teachers often feel guilty of moving between two languages since it is not accepted in their educational settings.

A teacher focused on a different reason and asserted the reasons why he did not employ Turkish in his classes. A possible explanation of the extract below is that the use of Turkish hinders students from speaking English, so some teachers may not tend to apply it.

“I want to speak English both with my colleagues and students. In class, when I use Turkish or allow the use of Turkish by my students especially the ones with lower proficiency levels, the other students see it as an opportunity for them to speak in Turkish, which distracts the classroom atmosphere. That’s why I am trying to give up Turkish in my classes.”

Another teacher explains that she holds positive views towards Turkish and uses it in her classes. However, she thinks that there is a kind of monolingual pressure on her so she does not mention the use of this methodology to her colleagues because it is not embraced by them although she knows they employ Turkish in their classes too.

“When I was at university, our professors advised us to use Turkish because it is an effective method for teaching English but I do not talk about my use of this method in my teaching because my colleagues find it inappropriate. There is a sort of pressure of not using Turkish in the class among English language teachers.”

What seems to emerge from the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews was that participants of this study perceived and practice translanguaging differently due to the pressure to train their students by using a monolingual approach, which is approved by the institution, the public, and their colleagues. They agreed to be strongly influenced by the pressures and expectations of their environment and pretended to create no space for translanguaging in their teaching. Not producing a monolingual type of register in the class is believed to be a failure by many teachers. Schissel, De Korne and Lopez-Goper (2018) point out that, this methodology has traditionally been considered as a problem and an obstacle for students to acquire a native-like competence in the target language.

4. Conclusions

Translanguaging, the systematic use of L1 in the teaching of a foreign language, has been increasingly embraced by researchers in the field of foreign language teaching. The current literature on translanguaging proves that incorporating this pedagogy into language classrooms enhance students’ competence in L2. The purpose of the current study was to explore the EFL teachers’ perceptions and practices of translanguaging in their teaching. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that EFL teachers’ practices went against with their perceptions in some particular situations. The majority of the participants felt that the use of Turkish by students was important to enable participation with lower proficiency students and they encouraged the use of Turkish in their classes. However, there was a sense of avoiding the use of Turkish to promote assistance to peers during activities and to explain problems not related to the content although over half of them emphasized the significance of these instances. When they asked about teachers’ use of Turkish in the class, a small number of the participants agreed on the prominence of using L1 to help with lower proficiency students, to quickly clarify during the activities and to describe vocabulary but conflicting practices arose from the data: nearly two-thirds of them utilized L1 to help with lower proficiency students. Classroom management and rapport construction were widespread employments of Turkish among the participants. In the interviews of the

participants about the conflicts between their attitudes and actual practices, two discrete reasons were explored: institutional and contextual constraints.

It is probable that translanguaging is traditionally viewed as a barrier to ensure successful foreign language teaching among Turkish EFL teachers and policy makers in Turkey. Many teachers see their role to help their students to acquire a native-like competence in English, which interferes from applying Turkish in their classes. The pressure from institutional and contextual factors lead teachers to prioritize an English-only context and to discourage the use of translanguaging pedagogy. However, they covertly appropriate a translanguaging teaching pedagogy in their teaching. Canagarajah (2011) claims that translanguaging occurs naturally in foreign language classes with minimum pedagogical efforts by teachers and it cannot be limited by monolingual education policies.

The analysis of the data in this study showed that most of EFL teachers' use of translanguaging were largely dependent on classroom-oriented and student-oriented purposes. They did not seem to have a systematic way of translanguaging to increase students' performance in English. This said, this pedagogy did not help to achieve a long-standing goal of learning English in their teaching. They integrated translanguaging to devote less time to clarify the content of the lesson, to establish classroom management and interaction, which may be due to the curriculum that they need to catch up and some other pressures from institutions and colleagues that value monolingual norms of teaching English. On the contrary, as Ebe and Chapman-Santiago (2016) state, translanguaging is a scaffold that needs careful and systematic implementation although it is usually perceived as the translations of materials. It can occur in the teaching of four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in the form various interaction (teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher, student-to-student, student-to-self).

Garcia and Wei (2014) suggest that translanguaging that improves metacognition and deeper thinking skills of students requires the systematic use of students' existing linguistic repertoire. Lubliner and Grisham (2017) emphasize that translanguaging stresses the importance of purposeful incorporation of students' linguistic and cultural bodies of knowledge into the teaching and learning process. As caring and professional educators who always strive to improve their students' learning English, EFL teachers need to be aware of potentials of translanguaging to enrich their teaching and students' learning English. They must continually scaffold what their students know with what they will need to learn. Developing a translanguaging teaching environment in which students develop their critical thinking skills and comprehension strategies provides the key to accomplish this. Moreover, it leads to deepen students' understanding of the content, create a bilingual identity and make sense of their bilingual world.

The results of our study cannot be generalized to all EFL teachers and teaching contexts due to the number of the participants. However, since they teach different grades and work in different institutions from different cities of Turkey, we would suggest that the results may offer insights about the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers in Turkey towards translanguaging. A program evaluation of a professional development program to enhance EFL teachers' knowledge and practices of translanguaging might be a fruitful area for future work. It may be an attempt to deconstruct traditionally accepted monolingual approach of foreign language learning. A further study could assess the long-term effects of translanguaging activities on students' academic success.

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İngilizce derslerinde dil alışımı: Öğretmenlerin tutumları ve uygulamaları

Öz

Bireylerin anadil uygulamalarının yabancı dil öğrenimlerini geliştirdiği düşüncesi iki dillige dayalı birçok yöntemin oluşturulmasını sağlamıştır ve bunlardan biri de dil alışımı metodudur. Bu terim sadece iki dil arasında basit geçişler anlamına gelmemektedir, tam aksine iki dilin sistematik bir şekilde bir dil öğrenimi aktivesinde kullanılmasıdır. Bu çalışmada İngilizce öğretmenlerinin dil alışımı metodu ile ilgili tutum ve uygulamaları bir anket yoluyla ortaya konmuştur. Sınıf içi gözlemleriyle bu metodun sınıflarda nasıl uygulandığı araştırılmıştır ve yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle öğretmenlerin tutum ve uygulamalarındaki farkların nedeni belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları Türkiye’de devlet ve özel okullarda çalışan İngilizce öğretmenleridir. Anketteki Likert-tipi sorular tanımlayıcı istatistik ile açık uçlu sorular, sınıf-içi gözlemler ve yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapısal kodlama metodu ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar İngilizce öğretmenlerin tutum ve uygulamalarının aynı olmadığını göstermiştir. Bu öğretmenler bazı durumlarda dil alışımı metoduna karşı olumlu tutumlara sahip oldukları halde, kurumların, velilerinin ve meslektaşlarının beklentileri doğrultusunda bu metodu derslerinde kullanmamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: İngilizce öğretimi, iki dillilik, dil alışımı yöntemi

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