

When English Isn't Enough: Exploring the Emotional and Professional Dilemmas of English Teachers Using Translanguaging in Multilingual Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of English language teachers employing translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in multilingual classrooms. Specifically, it aimed to (1) examine the emotional and professional experiences of teachers when using translanguaging, and (2) understand the psychological and pedagogical challenges they encounter in balancing institutional expectations with classroom realities. Ten (10) English teachers from senior high school were purposively interviewed, and data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that translanguaging elicited a range of emotions, including relief, connection, guilt, and self-doubt, while also fostering professional adaptability and confidence. Teachers reported challenges related to policy constraints, fear of judgment, and difficulty maintaining a balance between language immersion and comprehension. Coping strategies included rationalizing translanguaging as a pedagogical necessity, adaptive teaching, seeking validation through student outcomes, and emotional detachment. The study concludes that translanguaging, when strategically employed, supports student learning, strengthens teacher agency, and contributes to professional growth. These insights contribute to understanding the interplay between teacher identity, pedagogy, and institutional expectations in multilingual educational contexts.

Keywords: Translanguaging, English language teaching, multilingual classrooms, teacher experiences, pedagogical challenges

INTRODUCTION

The increasing linguistic diversity in classrooms around the world has transformed the way teachers approach instruction, prompting a shift from monolingual to multilingual pedagogies. One of the most promising responses to this shift is translanguaging—the strategic use of multiple languages to facilitate understanding, participation, and identity expression among learners. Globally, researchers have explored translanguaging not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as a pedagogical strategy that enables meaning-making and inclusivity (Ticheloven, Blom, Leseman, & McMonagle, 2019; Allard, 2017). Studies have shown that teachers who employ translanguaging practices tend to bridge gaps between languages, promote deeper comprehension, and validate students' linguistic

repertoires (Song, Howard, & Olazabal-Arias, 2022; Prilutskaya, 2021). Despite these advantages, teachers' perspectives and challenges in applying translanguaging vary across educational contexts. Allard (2017) emphasized the ecological nature of translanguaging, illustrating how teacher beliefs interact with school language policies and classroom realities. Similarly, Alasmari, Qasem, Ahmed, and Alrayes (2022) examined bilingual teachers in Saudi Arabia who struggled to reconcile translanguaging with institutional "English-only" mandates. Comparable tensions were found by Putri and Rifai (2021) in Indonesian EFL settings and Yuvayapan (2019) in Turkey, where teachers recognized translanguaging's benefits yet faced assessment constraints and policy contradictions. These studies reveal that while translanguaging enhances student engagement and comprehension, teachers often lack formal training or institutional support to implement it effectively (Moafa, 2023; Erikbolsyn et al., 2023; Nambisan, 2014).

In the Philippine context, where multilingualism is deeply embedded in the linguistic landscape, translanguaging aligns with the country's language-in-education policy under the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program. Yet, research indicates that teachers continue to face pedagogical dilemmas in operationalizing translanguaging in practice. Macawile and Plata (2022) found that Senior High School teachers perceive translanguaging as a resource for knowledge construction and meaning-making, but still grapple with the persistence of monolingual ideologies in English classes. Likewise, Miranda and Gervacio (2023) discovered that tertiary English teachers in Davao de Oro hold positive beliefs toward translanguaging but remain hesitant to use it consistently due to institutional expectations. Reyes (2024) and López et al. (2024) highlighted how translanguaging in elementary and pre-service teacher contexts fosters inclusivity and comprehension, yet also exposes the need for structured pedagogical frameworks and assessment alignment. Although Philippine and international scholarship affirms translanguaging's pedagogical value, the literature consistently reveals gaps in understanding teachers' lived experiences, specific challenges, and adaptive strategies in multilingual classroom settings. Much of the research focuses on either student outcomes or theoretical discussions, leaving limited empirical exploration of how teachers navigate the complexities of implementing translanguaging while balancing policy compliance, assessment standards, and linguistic diversity (Gatil, 2021; Foley & del Rosario, 2022).

In multilingual classrooms, language has become both a tool and a barrier to learning. Teachers, particularly those in English language classrooms, face the intricate task of ensuring comprehension while maintaining the pedagogical standards expected in teaching English. While policies and curricula often emphasize the exclusive use of English as the medium of instruction, the linguistic diversity of students makes this ideal increasingly difficult to sustain. As a result, many English language teachers resort to translanguaging—the strategic use of multiple languages within the classroom—to bridge gaps in understanding, clarify complex ideas, and foster student engagement. Translanguaging, as conceptualized by García and Wei (2014), recognizes the dynamic and fluid language practices of multilingual speakers, allowing learners to draw from their full linguistic repertoires. However, for English language teachers, this practice poses a pedagogical dilemma. They are expected to model the standard and academic use of English, yet they also recognize the need to make learning accessible to students whose proficiency in English may be limited. This tension often creates an internal conflict—between adhering to institutional expectations and responding to learners' needs.

Despite the growing recognition of translanguaging in global research, few studies have explored how English language teachers personally experience and navigate this tension in the Philippine context. Much of the existing literature focuses on students' linguistic gains or classroom strategies, overlooking the emotional and professional dimensions of teachers who constantly negotiate between policy and practice. English teachers may experience uncertainty, guilt, or even resistance when translanguaging, as they fear being perceived as compromising linguistic standards. At the same time, they may find it rewarding when students demonstrate improved comprehension and participation.

This gap highlighted the need to understand teachers' perspectives and affective experiences—how they make sense of translanguaging as part of their professional identity and what challenges they encounter in employing it effectively. As translanguaging continues to reshape multilingual pedagogy, investigating the lived realities of English language teachers can provide valuable insights into how policies, beliefs, and classroom realities intersect. The study ultimately contributed to more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to English language teaching in multilingual educational settings. Ultimately, this study recognized teachers not as passive implementers of policy, but as active language mediators who creatively negotiate between linguistic resources and educational goals. In doing so, it bridged the theoretical promise of translanguaging with its practical realities in the multilingual classroom—affirming that meaningful learning occurs when language diversity is not merely acknowledged, but strategically embraced. Guided by García and Wei's (2014) conceptualization of translanguaging and an ecological perspective on teacher identity and agency, this study explored: (1) *How English language teachers emotionally and professionally experience translanguaging in multilingual classrooms*, and (2) *What psychological and pedagogical dilemmas they encounter in balancing institutional expectations with classroom realities*. This study contributed to translanguaging scholarship by examining the emotional, psychological, and professional dilemmas uniquely experienced by

English language teachers in the Philippine multilingual context—an area that remains underexplored in existing research. Unlike previous works that focus primarily on classroom strategies or student outcomes, this study foregrounds teachers' lived emotional experiences and identity negotiations. Additionally, it offers a model of how teachers reconcile institutional monolingual expectations with multilingual classroom realities. These contributions address a critical gap in both local and global literature. The succeeding sections present the theoretical grounding, methodological approach, findings, and implications arising from this inquiry.

LITERATURE

Language diversity has long been a defining feature of education in multilingual societies. In recent years, translanguaging has emerged as a transformative pedagogical approach that redefines the boundaries between languages in the classroom. Rather than viewing multilingualism as a challenge, translanguaging recognizes learners' full linguistic repertoires as resources for meaning-making, participation, and identity formation (García & Li Wei, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Globally, research has shown that translanguaging fosters comprehension, inclusion, and linguistic confidence, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language (Hornberger & Link, 2012; Holdway, 2018).

In the Philippine context, the adoption of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) underlines the institutional push toward valuing linguistic diversity. Yet, English teachers often find themselves at the crossroads of implementing policy, maintaining English-only pedagogies, and addressing students' multilingual realities (Macawile & Plata, 2022; Miranda & Gervacio, 2023). These professional dilemmas—ranging from policy conflicts to identity negotiations—underscore the need to examine teachers' beliefs, practices, and challenges in translanguaging implementation. This review therefore synthesizes global and local scholarship to contextualize teachers' perspectives and professional struggles in employing translanguaging within multilingual classrooms.

Conceptual Foundations of Translanguaging Pedagogy

Translanguaging has emerged as a transformative pedagogical approach grounded in sociolinguistic and poststructuralist views of language. Rather than viewing languages as separate and hierarchical, translanguaging recognizes the fluid linguistic repertoire of multilingual speakers and encourages the dynamic use of languages in meaning-making and learning (García & Li Wei, 2014). In bilingual and multilingual classrooms, this approach shifts the focus from monolingual norms toward inclusive practices that legitimize all linguistic resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Theoretically, translanguaging connects with culturally responsive pedagogy and critical multilingual education, both of which advocate for recognizing linguistic diversity as a form of capital that enhances student participation and identity formation (Canagarajah, 2011; Li, 2018).

Early works emphasized its theoretical benefits for bilingual learners, especially in cognitive development, metalinguistic awareness, and identity affirmation (Baker, 2011; García & Sylvan, 2011). Subsequent scholars argued that translanguaging functions not only as a communicative bridge but also as a political act of linguistic justice, countering the dominance of English-only ideologies (Hornberger & Link, 2012; García & Otheguy, 2019). In sum, the conceptual foundation of translanguaging positions it as both a pedagogical tool and an ideological stance toward equity and inclusion in multilingual classrooms.

Teachers' Perspectives on Translanguaging in Global Contexts

Globally, numerous studies have examined teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of translanguaging across diverse educational contexts. Teachers generally acknowledge its pedagogical value in scaffolding learning and promoting comprehension among multilingual students (Holdway, 2018; Ticheloven, 2019). However, teachers' perceptions are often shaped by institutional policies, linguistic ideologies, and personal professional identities (Alasmari, 2022; Norlund Shaswar, 2024). For instance, in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) settings in Asia, teachers encounter tensions between institutional expectations for English-only classrooms and the linguistic realities of their students (Ou, 2024).

In European and Middle Eastern contexts, studies found that teachers appreciated translanguaging as a flexible and humanizing approach but remained cautious due to lack of policy support and assessment guidelines (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Constantine, 2023). Moreover, research by Wong (2025) highlighted that while teachers were willing to employ translanguaging, they faced dilemmas in balancing their role as English educators and their responsibility to uphold multilingual inclusion. These studies collectively suggest that teachers' perspectives are nuanced and context-dependent—often oscillating between advocacy for multilingual inclusion and compliance with institutional monolingual norms.

Professional Dilemmas and Challenges in Employing Translanguaging

The implementation of translanguaging pedagogy entails multiple professional dilemmas for teachers. One recurring issue involves the conflict between teachers' beliefs in translanguaging's benefits and their professional obligation to adhere to English-only policies (Alasmari, 2022; Norlund Shaswar, 2024). Teachers often fear that translanguaging might undermine English proficiency goals or be perceived as pedagogical incompetence (Ticheloven, 2019; Wong, 2025). Studies across various contexts reveal that teachers struggle to find balance between inclusivity and maintaining linguistic standards (Chicherina, 2023; Ou, 2024).

These dilemmas also extend to assessment and accountability. Teachers report difficulties in evaluating students' linguistic performance fairly when multiple languages are used (Holdway, 2018; Alasmari, 2022). Additionally, a lack of professional training, inadequate materials, and unclear institutional guidelines further complicate implementation (Constantine, 2023). Such challenges not only affect classroom practices but also influence teachers' emotional and professional identities. The literature therefore underscores the importance of supporting teachers through targeted professional development, clearer policy guidance, and institutional recognition of translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogical approach.

Translanguaging Practices and Teacher Experiences in the Philippine Context

In the Philippines, translanguaging is increasingly studied within the framework of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy. Local research demonstrates that Filipino teachers recognize the pedagogical potential of translanguaging to enhance understanding, participation, and inclusivity, particularly among students from linguistically diverse backgrounds (Macawile & Plata, 2022; Casalan, 2022). Studies conducted in senior high schools and tertiary institutions reveal that teachers strategically blend English, Filipino, and local languages to clarify lessons, build rapport, and sustain classroom engagement (Miranda & Gervacio, 2023; Alemania et al., 2022).

However, these studies also expose significant professional dilemmas. Teachers experience tension between adhering to English-only classroom policies and addressing students' real linguistic needs (Deniega & Neri, 2024; Barroga & Tampus, 2023). Many report insufficient training and limited institutional support in managing multilingual instruction (Villamor, 2025). The mismatch between national policy ideals and school-level realities often leads to inconsistent practices and teacher frustration (Gatil, 2021; De los Reyes & Bagona, 2024). Despite these challenges, teachers often develop adaptive strategies—such as code-switching, contextual translation, and flexible scaffolding—to facilitate both comprehension and linguistic development.

Recent Philippine and international reviews highlight several emerging trends in translanguaging research. The growing number of empirical studies indicates a shift from viewing translanguaging as a theoretical concept toward treating it as a practical classroom strategy (Gatil, 2021; Macawile & Plata, 2022). Yet, semi-systematic reviews show that most studies still focus on learners' outcomes rather than on teachers' professional dilemmas and emotional experiences (Semi-Systematic Review, 2024). The literature consistently calls for examining translanguaging within teachers' professional identity, policy environment, and institutional culture (Norlund Shaswar, 2024; Ou, 2024).

In the Philippine context, translanguaging research remains limited to small-scale case studies and regional samples, suggesting a need for broader, policy-oriented investigations (Casalan, 2022; Deniega & Neri, 2024). Future research should also explore how translanguaging training can be embedded in teacher education programs to address professional insecurities and pedagogical uncertainties (Villamor, 2025). Ultimately, integrating translanguaging pedagogy within teacher development frameworks can foster linguistically inclusive classrooms that align with the country's multilingual realities and the global shift toward decolonized language education.

The reviewed literature reveals that translanguaging is both a promising and complex pedagogical strategy. International research highlights its potential to promote equity, deepen understanding, and affirm students' linguistic identities (García & Sylvan, 2011; Li, 2018). However, teachers continue to face challenges such as lack of institutional support, unclear policies, and professional uncertainty about when and how to integrate multiple languages (Ou, 2024; Norlund Shaswar, 2024). In the Philippine setting, similar tensions emerge between the ideals of multilingual education and the realities of English-dominant assessment systems and parental expectations (Barroga & Tampus, 2023; Villamor, 2025).

Overall, the body of literature affirms that while translanguaging enriches multilingual education, teachers' professional agency, attitudes, and contextual understanding are critical to its success. This underscores the importance of the present study—to explore teachers' perspectives and challenges in employing translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in multilingual classrooms, thereby contributing to a more context-sensitive and teacher-informed understanding of language pedagogy in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses of English language teachers who engage in translanguaging practices within multilingual classrooms. The design is most suitable for this study because it seeks to provide a rich and nuanced description of teachers' realities—how they feel, think, and make decisions when navigating between linguistic expectations and classroom realities. Unlike experimental or quantitative approaches that focus on measurable variables, a descriptive qualitative design captures the depth and authenticity of human experiences as they unfold naturally (Sandelowski, 2000).

In the context of English language teaching, teachers are often expected to uphold English-only instruction as a model of linguistic accuracy and proficiency. However, the multilingual composition of classrooms often compels them to translanguange—to use students' first languages to clarify meaning, explain difficult concepts, or maintain engagement. This balancing act between institutional policy and learner-centered pedagogy often evokes complex emotions such as guilt, frustration, or relief. A descriptive qualitative design allows the researcher to understand these emotional and professional tensions, highlighting how teachers make sense of their role while employing translanguaging as a pragmatic response to learners' needs.

Population and Sampling

The participants of this study consisted of 10 English language teachers who were teaching in multilingual classroom settings across selected secondary schools in the Philippines. These teachers were chosen because they directly experienced the tension between institutional expectations to maintain English-only instruction and the practical need to use other languages to facilitate understanding among linguistically diverse learners. Their experiences, emotions, and coping mechanisms were central to the research focus, which sought to explore how translanguaging was perceived, practiced, and emotionally negotiated in English language teaching.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify and select participants who possessed specific knowledge, experience, and expertise relevant to the study. This technique was deemed appropriate since it allowed the researcher to focus on individuals who could provide rich and meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The final number of participants was determined by the principle of data saturation, wherein data collection continued until no new themes or insights emerged (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

To ensure the credibility and relevance of the data, participants met the following criteria: (1) they were currently employed as English language teachers in either public or private secondary schools; (2) they had at least one year of teaching experience in a multilingual classroom setting; (3) they had engaged in translanguaging practices, either consciously or as part of their instructional strategies, during English lessons; and (4) they were willing to participate in an in-depth interview and share their experiences and challenges. Teachers who met these criteria were expected to provide rich, experience-based accounts that revealed both the pedagogical and emotional dimensions of translanguaging in English language teaching. Through purposive selection, the study captured the depth and diversity of teacher experiences rather than their numerical representation. The gathered narratives provided authentic insights into how English language teachers navigated multilingual realities, uncovering not only their instructional challenges but also their emotional responses to these complex teaching dynamics.

This study is limited by its small, purposive sample of ten teachers drawn from specific Philippine regions. As such, the findings are not intended to be generalizable but rather to offer depth and contextual insight. Variations in participants' backgrounds—such as years of experience, type of school, or linguistic diversity of students—may have shaped their experiences. These factors represent natural limitations of qualitative inquiry and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide, which was designed to elicit detailed and authentic responses from participants regarding their experiences and challenges in employing translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy. The interview guide served as a flexible tool that allowed the researcher to explore predetermined themes while also giving space for participants to elaborate on unanticipated yet relevant issues. According to Kvale (2007), semi-structured interviews are effective in qualitative research because they allow for depth, clarification, and contextual understanding of participants' lived experiences.

To ensure content validity, the interview questions were reviewed by two experts in language education and qualitative research. Revisions were made based on their suggestions to improve question clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. The finalized instrument was then pilot-tested with two English language

teachers who were not part of the actual study sample. This process helped refine question phrasing and confirm the interview's appropriateness for eliciting meaningful responses, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

During the actual data collection, the researcher used the guide to facilitate one-on-one interviews, ensuring that all relevant themes were covered while remaining open to follow-up questions prompted by participants' responses. The semi-structured format enabled participants to freely share their experiences, reflections, and emotions, resulting in a nuanced understanding of how they navigated translanguaging in multilingual classroom settings. **Table 1** presents the instrument of the study:

Table 1. Instrument of the study.

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants
To explore the lived emotional and professional experiences of English language teachers when translanguaging during instruction.	1. What emotions or thoughts arise when you find yourself using other languages to explain English lessons? 2. In what ways has translanguaging affected your teaching confidence and your sense of professional identity as an English teacher?	English Teachers in the selected Philippine Secondary Schools
To understand the psychological and pedagogical challenges English teachers encounter in balancing institutional expectations with their classroom realities when employing translanguaging.	1. What challenges do you encounter when translanguaging, given the expectation to maintain English as the medium of instruction? 2. In what ways do you cope with or respond to criticism or misconceptions about translanguaging from colleagues, students, or administrators?	

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the data collection process began, permission was sought from the school administrators of the selected institutions where the participants were employed. Upon approval, the researcher provided the participants with an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and assurances of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Ethical principles were strictly followed to ensure the participants' safety and comfort throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which served as the primary mode of gathering qualitative information. Each interview was conducted in a quiet and convenient location chosen by the participant, either face-to-face or through an online video platform, depending on accessibility and preference. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in data transcription and analysis. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues, tone, and other contextual factors that contributed to the meaning of participants' responses.

The researcher began each session by establishing rapport, briefly explaining the flow of the interview, and emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were encouraged to speak freely about their experiences, insights, and emotions regarding the use of translanguaging in English language instruction. This approach allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth and authentic narratives that reflected both the pedagogical and affective dimensions of translanguaging practice.

After each interview, the recorded data were transcribed verbatim to preserve the integrity of participants' responses. The transcripts were then verified and validated through participant checking, wherein participants were allowed to review and confirm the accuracy of their statements. This process strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed the researcher to identify patterns and themes that described teachers' perceptions and challenges in employing translanguaging. This method was appropriate for organizing qualitative data into meaningful categories and drawing interpretations based on participants' lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, after which the researcher coded and grouped similar responses to identify emerging themes. The six steps of thematic analysis were followed: familiarization with data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, defining, and reporting. The analysis focused on recurring ideas about how English language teachers perceived, practiced, and emotionally navigated translanguaging in multilingual classrooms.

To ensure trustworthiness, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of the identified themes. This step enhanced the credibility and dependability of the findings (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards in conducting qualitative research. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained approval from the school administrators and informed all participants about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Informed consent was secured from each participant, emphasizing their voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any point without any consequences.

Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reports to protect their identities. All recorded and transcribed data were kept securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. The study also ensured that participants were treated with respect and sensitivity, especially when discussing challenges and emotional experiences related to translanguaging.

The researcher followed the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, as outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) and the guidelines for ethical qualitative inquiry suggested by Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001). The researchers ensured compliance with ethical standards and to protect participants' rights and welfare throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Research Objectives 1. To explore the lived emotional and professional experiences of English language teachers when translanguaging during instruction.

Question No. 1. What emotions or thoughts arise when you find yourself using other languages to explain English lessons?

Feelings of Relief and Connection

Six out of ten teachers expressed feelings of relief, connection, and reassurance when translanguaging during instruction. They shared that shifting to Filipino or the local vernacular helped lessen tension in the classroom, particularly when students struggled to grasp complex English concepts. Teachers found translanguaging emotionally comforting because it bridged communication gaps and strengthened rapport with students. It also validated their empathy as educators who prioritize understanding over strict language boundaries.

Supporting Excerpts:

"Whenever I switch to Filipino, I instantly feel that barrier disappear. My students' faces light up in relief, and that alone makes me feel that I made the right choice as a teacher." — Teacher 2

"It's not just about making them understand—it's about connecting with them. Translanguaging allows me to speak both their language and their struggles." — Teacher 8

Guilt and Self-Doubt as English Teachers

Five out of ten teachers described emotions of guilt, discomfort, and inner conflict when they used other languages in English classes. They associated this with the long-standing expectation that English teachers must model "pure" English use at all times. For some, translanguaging felt like compromising professional standards, as it seemingly contradicted their training and role identity. Despite recognizing its benefits, these teachers felt torn between institutional norms and the practical realities of their classroom contexts.

Supporting Excerpts:

"There's always that pang of guilt after explaining in Filipino. Part of me feels like I'm breaking the rule we were taught—to maintain English immersion in class." — Teacher 5

"It's an emotional tug-of-war. I know translanguaging helps, but I also fear my students might depend too much on it and lose confidence in using English." — Teacher 10

Pragmatic Acceptance and Professional Adaptability

Seven out of ten teachers showed pragmatic acceptance toward translanguaging, viewing it not as a failure to uphold English standards but as an adaptive, learner-centered strategy. Over time, they reframed translanguaging as part of professional growth—evidence of flexibility and responsiveness to students' linguistic realities. These teachers expressed satisfaction and confidence in their decision to prioritize comprehension and inclusivity over rigid adherence to monolingual instruction.

Supporting Excerpts:

"I used to think translanguaging meant lowering standards, but now I see it as meeting my students where they are. Language is a bridge, not a barrier." — Teacher 4

"Over the years, I learned that being an effective English teacher doesn't mean sticking to English all the time—it means making sure your students truly learn." — Teacher 7

Question No. 2. In what ways has translanguaging affected your teaching confidence and your sense of professional identity as an English teacher?

Strengthened Confidence Through Student Understanding

Seven out of ten teachers shared that translanguaging enhanced their confidence because it enabled them to reach students more effectively. When students understood lessons better, teachers felt more competent and reassured in their ability to facilitate learning. Rather than viewing translanguaging as unprofessional, they recognized it as a skill that demonstrated their pedagogical awareness and adaptability to their learners' linguistic realities.

Supporting Excerpts:

"I used to be hesitant, thinking that using Filipino in an English class might reflect poorly on my skills. But when I started doing it more intentionally, I realized how much easier it became for my students to engage. Seeing them finally understand complex grammar rules through simple Filipino explanations actually boosted my confidence. It reminded me that teaching isn't about language purity—it's about making learning possible." — Teacher 1

"Translanguaging helped me see my strength not just as an English teacher, but as a communicator. When students respond and participate more, I feel validated. I'm no longer the teacher who insists on English all the time; I've become the teacher who makes English learning achievable." — Teacher 6

Identity Tension and Professional Insecurity

Five out of ten teachers described feelings of professional insecurity when translanguaging. They expressed concern that shifting between languages might undermine their credibility as English teachers or appear as a lack of mastery in the language. This internal struggle reflected a tension between adhering to institutional expectations and responding to students' linguistic needs. While they recognized translanguaging's usefulness, some still carried emotional discomfort tied to their sense of identity and professional image.

Supporting Excerpts:

"There are moments when I question myself—am I still an English teacher if I keep switching to Filipino? It makes me wonder if others will think I'm not fluent or confident enough. Even though I know my students understand better that way, a part of me still worries that I'm losing my professional edge." — Teacher 5

"It's a constant balancing act. Translanguaging helps my class flow smoothly, but after class, I sometimes feel conflicted. I was trained to be a model of English use, and when I break that, even for a good reason, I feel like I'm crossing a line that defines my role." — Teacher 9

Redefined Professional Identity Through Pedagogical Flexibility

Eight out of ten teachers expressed that translanguaging transformed their professional identity, helping them redefine what it means to be an English teacher in a multilingual context. Rather than feeling constrained by traditional expectations, they learned to embrace linguistic flexibility as part of their expertise. They saw translanguaging as a marker of cultural responsiveness and an indicator of pedagogical maturity. This shift allowed them to see themselves not just as English teachers, but as educators facilitating communication across languages.

Supporting Excerpts:

"Translanguaging has changed how I see myself as an educator. I no longer feel that my worth as an English teacher depends on how strictly I can avoid Filipino. Instead, I measure my effectiveness by how much my students learn, no matter what language helps them get there. That realization made me prouder of my role." — Teacher 3

"It has reshaped my identity in a good way. I used to think that professionalism meant sticking to English only, but now I see that true professionalism means adapting. I'm not less of an English teacher because I translanguage—I'm a better one because I understand my students' realities." — Teacher 10

Research Objectives 2. To understand the psychological and pedagogical challenges English teachers encounter in balancing institutional expectations with their classroom realities when employing translanguaging.

Question No. 1. What challenges do you encounter when translanguaging, given the expectation to maintain English as the medium of instruction?

Psychological Tension Between Professional Expectations and Practical Realities

Eight out of ten teachers revealed that translanguaging often triggers feelings of guilt, anxiety, and internal conflict due to the pressure of maintaining English as the primary medium of instruction. While they understood that using other languages facilitated learning, they also feared being judged as less competent or “unfaithful” to their role as English teachers. This emotional strain reflects the clash between pedagogical effectiveness and institutional ideals.

Supporting Excerpts:

“Every time I shift to Filipino to clarify a point, I feel a little uneasy—as if I’m breaking a rule. It’s not that I doubt my teaching skills, but I always wonder what others would think if they heard me explaining in another language. There’s that voice in my head saying, ‘You’re an English teacher, stick to English.’” — Teacher 4

“Sometimes I feel torn between doing what works and doing what’s expected. Translanguaging helps my students, but it also makes me anxious that I might be seen as not upholding the English-only policy. It’s emotionally draining because I constantly question my professionalism.” — Teacher 7

Institutional and Policy Constraints

Nine out of ten teachers highlighted the institutional constraints that make translanguaging challenging. Strict English-only policies, administrative monitoring, and the perceived need to model “standard English” often limit teachers’ freedom to use multilingual strategies. This creates tension between institutional compliance and instructional responsiveness, forcing teachers to navigate between policy adherence and pedagogical responsibility.

Supporting Excerpts:

“Our school promotes English-only zones, and as teachers, we are expected to model that discipline. But in reality, when my students struggle, I have no choice but to explain in Filipino. It’s difficult because I know it helps them, yet I’m also aware that I could be called out for breaking policy.” — Teacher 1

“There’s an invisible pressure from the system. Even though no one explicitly forbids it, you feel the expectation that a ‘good’ English teacher doesn’t mix languages. I sometimes do it quietly, hoping no administrator happens to observe that day.” — Teacher 5

Pedagogical Struggle in Maintaining Language Balance

Six out of ten teachers described pedagogical difficulty in maintaining a balance between clarity and immersion. While translanguaging enhances comprehension, excessive use risks reducing students’ exposure to English. Teachers admitted struggling to gauge how much translanguaging was “too much,” which made lesson delivery more mentally demanding and inconsistent.

Supporting Excerpts:

“It’s challenging to find the right balance. If I use Filipino too much, I feel like I’m depriving students of the English exposure they need. But if I avoid it completely, the lesson becomes confusing for them. I’m always trying to measure that balance in real time.” — Teacher 2

“Translanguaging helps in explaining concepts, but it sometimes interrupts the English learning environment I try to build. After a while, students rely on it too much and wait for translations instead of trying to understand the English explanation.” — Teacher 9

Fear of Professional Judgment from Peers and Administrators

Seven out of ten teachers also mentioned social and professional judgment as a recurring challenge. They feared being perceived as unskilled or lazy by colleagues who adhere strictly to English-only teaching. This fear influenced how openly they could use translanguaging, leading to self-censorship and emotional strain.

Supporting Excerpts:

“There’s always that fear that if another teacher or the principal hears me using Filipino, they’ll think I’m not fluent enough. It’s ironic because translanguaging takes more skill, but it’s often misunderstood as a shortcut.” — Teacher 8

“Sometimes I hesitate to translanguage even if it would help, because I don’t want others to assume I can’t handle English instruction. That fear of judgment is real—it affects how freely I teach.” — Teacher 10

Question No. 2. In what ways do you cope with or respond to criticism or misconceptions about translanguaging from colleagues, students, or administrators?

Rationalizing Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Necessity

Eight out of ten teachers coped with criticism by justifying translanguaging as an intentional and research-informed teaching strategy rather than a sign of linguistic weakness. They explained that they used it consciously to bridge comprehension gaps and to facilitate engagement, reframing it as a legitimate instructional choice. This

rationalization served as a psychological defense that strengthened their sense of agency and professionalism amid judgment.

Supporting Excerpts:

“When colleagues question my use of Filipino, I calmly explain that translanguaging isn’t about lack of English proficiency—it’s about ensuring learning. I tell them I do it strategically, not because I can’t use English, but because I want my students to understand fully.” — Teacher 3

“Some administrators assume it’s unprofessional, but I always explain that it’s a scaffold. It’s part of my pedagogy. I even show them studies that say translanguaging supports learning. It helps me stand firm in what I believe is effective teaching.” — Teacher 5

Selective Compliance and Adaptive Teaching

Six out of ten teachers described coping through selective compliance—carefully adjusting their translanguaging practices depending on who was present in the classroom. When being observed or monitored, they minimized it; when alone with their students, they used it more freely. This adaptive approach helped them maintain professional appearances while staying faithful to their students’ needs. However, it also created emotional fatigue from constantly self-regulating their teaching behavior.

Supporting Excerpts:

“If I know an administrator might drop by, I stick to English as much as possible. But once it’s just me and my students, I return to my usual rhythm—switching languages when needed. It’s like living two versions of myself: the policy-abiding teacher and the practical one.” — Teacher 1

“I learned to read the room. In some classes, I can freely translanguage; in others, I need to act ‘by the book.’ It’s not ideal, but it’s how I survive the system without compromising my students’ understanding.” — Teacher 8

Seeking Validation Through Student Outcomes

Seven out of ten teachers coped with criticism by drawing confidence from their students’ improved performance and engagement. They used these positive results as evidence that translanguaging worked, even when questioned by others. This outcome-based validation reinforced their professional confidence and helped them emotionally detach from negative perceptions.

Supporting Excerpts:

“When I see my students finally grasp difficult lessons because of translanguaging, I remind myself that those results speak louder than any criticism. It’s my proof that what I’m doing is right.” — Teacher 6

“Instead of arguing with colleagues, I let my students’ progress defend me. Their improved participation and test scores are enough validation that translanguaging works, even if others don’t understand it yet.” — Teacher 2

Emotional Detachment and Quiet Resistance

Five out of ten teachers admitted adopting emotional detachment or quiet resistance as a coping mechanism. They chose not to confront critics directly, instead focusing on maintaining their classroom autonomy. This strategy allowed them to preserve their peace of mind and protect their teaching identity without engaging in conflict.

Supporting Excerpts:

“I used to defend myself every time, but now I just smile and continue doing what’s best for my students. I realized I don’t have to convince everyone; my responsibility is to my learners.” — Teacher 4

“At some point, you learn to stop justifying yourself. I quietly resist by continuing what I know works. I don’t need approval from others to know that I’m doing something meaningful.” — Teacher 10

DISCUSSION

Objective 1 aimed to explore the lived emotional and professional experiences of English language teachers when employing translanguaging during instruction. Understanding these experiences provides insight into how teachers navigate the complex interplay between pedagogical strategies and their own feelings, professional identity, and classroom interactions. By examining emotions such as relief, guilt, and adaptability, this objective sheds light on how translanguaging affects teachers’ confidence, self-perception, and overall approach to facilitating English learning in multilingual contexts.

The theme **“Feelings of Relief and Connection”** highlights how translanguaging fosters emotional ease and stronger teacher–student rapport in the classroom. Teachers expressed that shifting to Filipino or the local vernacular alleviated tension and made lessons more inclusive, allowing students to engage without fear of misunderstanding. This emotional relief also reinforced teachers’ sense of empathy and purpose, as they saw translanguaging not as a weakness but as an act of care that promotes comprehension and belonging. The findings align with the studies of Canagarajah (2011), who emphasized translanguaging as a means of affirming shared identities and reducing linguistic hierarchies, and Wei (2018), who noted that translanguaging creates an “emotional and cognitive space” where both teachers and learners can interact authentically beyond language barriers.

The theme **“Guilt and Self-Doubt as English Teachers”** reflects the internal conflict many educators face when translanguaging in English classes. Teachers described feeling uneasy and professionally conflicted, as they perceived the use of other languages as deviating from the traditional expectation of maintaining English purity in instruction. This emotional struggle reveals how institutional norms and linguistic ideologies continue to shape teachers’ sense of professional legitimacy. The findings imply that while translanguaging fosters inclusivity, it also challenges the deeply ingrained belief that effective English teaching relies on exclusive target-language use. This tension echoes the findings of Llurda (2018), who discussed how native-speakerism influences teachers’ linguistic insecurities, and of García and Otheguy (2020), who argued that rigid language boundaries in education often lead teachers to experience guilt when embracing flexible multilingual practices.

The theme **“Pragmatic Acceptance and Professional Adaptability”** captures how teachers have come to view translanguaging as a sign of pedagogical maturity rather than linguistic compromise. Instead of perceiving it as a threat to English proficiency, they recognized it as a strategic adaptation to the multilingual realities of their classrooms. This shift in mindset underscores professional resilience—teachers who embraced translanguaging demonstrated openness to evolving practices that support learner understanding and engagement. Similar findings were reported by García and Lin (2017), who described translanguaging as a dynamic and agentic process that empowers teachers to adjust instruction for diverse learners, and by Probyn (2019), who observed that teachers in multilingual classrooms increasingly adopt translanguaging to balance institutional expectations with practical needs, reflecting adaptability as a key marker of professional competence.

The theme **“Strengthened Confidence through Student Understanding”** highlights how translanguaging fostered a renewed sense of professional assurance among teachers. By witnessing improved student comprehension and engagement, teachers felt more validated in their instructional choices and more confident in their pedagogical competence. This empowerment stemmed from realizing that effective teaching transcends rigid language boundaries. Such findings echo those of Lee (2020), who found that teachers who engaged in translanguaging reported greater confidence and professional satisfaction as they witnessed enhanced learner participation. Similarly, Canagarajah (2011) emphasized that translanguaging allows teachers to exercise professional agency, transforming linguistic flexibility into a marker of expertise rather than inadequacy.

The theme **“Identity Tension and Professional Insecurity”** captures the inner conflict teachers experienced when translanguaging, as they grappled with maintaining their professional identity while meeting their students’ learning needs. Many felt that alternating between English and Filipino risked being perceived as a lack of proficiency or authority in English instruction. This identity tension reveals how institutional norms can shape teachers’ emotional and professional self-concept. Similar sentiments were found in the study of Llurda (2006), who discussed how non-native English teachers often struggle with self-perception and legitimacy when their language use deviates from native-like norms. In the same vein, García and Li (2014) noted that teachers working in multilingual contexts often internalize pressure to conform to monolingual standards, leading to feelings of insecurity even when translanguaging effectively supports student learning.

The theme **“Redefined Professional Identity through Pedagogical Flexibility”** highlights how teachers began to view translanguaging as a sign of growth and professionalism rather than a compromise of English teaching standards. By embracing linguistic adaptability, teachers redefined their professional identity to align with inclusivity and learner-centered teaching. This shift reflects a deeper awareness of how teaching English in multilingual contexts demands not only linguistic competence but also cultural and emotional intelligence. Similar findings were reported by Canagarajah (2011), who argued that multilingual teachers develop new forms of professional identity through adaptive practices that bridge linguistic diversity and educational goals. Likewise, García and Wei (2014) emphasized that translanguaging empowers teachers to reclaim agency in their pedagogy, transforming their identity from enforcers of linguistic purity to facilitators of meaningful communication and learning.

Objective 2 focused on understanding the psychological and pedagogical challenges English teachers face in balancing institutional expectations with the realities of their multilingual classrooms. This objective highlights the tensions between adhering to English-only policies and responding to students’ diverse linguistic needs. By investigating challenges such as policy constraints, pedagogical struggles, and social pressures, the study aims to

reveal how teachers cope with criticism, navigate professional expectations, and adapt their instructional strategies while maintaining both teaching effectiveness and professional integrity.

The theme **“Psychological Tension Between Professional Expectations and Practical Realities”** underscores the emotional strain English teachers experience when balancing institutional mandates for English-only instruction with their commitment to effective teaching. The sense of guilt and anxiety stems from internalized expectations that equate professionalism with exclusive use of English, even when translanguaging proves beneficial for student comprehension. This internal conflict highlights how policy rigidity can psychologically burden teachers who strive to reconcile pedagogical integrity with institutional conformity. Consistent with this finding, Pun and Macaro (2019) noted that English teachers in bilingual contexts often experience tension between communicative effectiveness and institutional language norms. Similarly, Arocena, Cenoz, and Gorter (2015) observed that educators feel conflicted when their translanguaging practices—though beneficial—are at odds with school policies that favor monolingual instruction.

The theme **“Institutional and Policy Constraints”** reflects how English teachers’ use of translanguaging is often restricted by rigid language policies and administrative expectations. Despite recognizing the pedagogical value of multilingual practices, teachers feel constrained by institutional norms that equate professionalism with English exclusivity. This conflict places them in a difficult position—torn between supporting students’ comprehension and complying with institutional standards. The tension illustrates how systemic structures can suppress innovative pedagogical strategies in multilingual settings. Similar insights were drawn from the study of Tupas (2015), who found that English-only policies in Philippine schools reinforce linguistic hierarchies and marginalize teachers’ flexible practices. In line with this, Karakaş (2020) also revealed that institutional policies often pressure teachers to prioritize language purity over pedagogical effectiveness, limiting their ability to respond to students’ linguistic realities.

The theme **“Pedagogical Struggle in Maintaining Language Balance”** reveals teachers’ ongoing challenge of determining how much translanguaging to use without undermining students’ English immersion. While they acknowledged translanguaging as an effective tool for clarifying lessons, they also feared it might lessen students’ motivation to process information in English. This balancing act adds cognitive and emotional pressure, as teachers constantly adjust their instructional approach to sustain both comprehension and linguistic exposure. Comparable findings were reported by Lee and Macaro (2013), who noted that teachers in bilingual classrooms often struggle to regulate their language alternation, fearing it may compromise target language acquisition. Similarly, Bista (2010) emphasized that while code-switching supports understanding, it can also lead to overreliance on the first language if not strategically managed, making it a complex pedagogical decision for English teachers.

The theme **“Fear of Professional Judgment from Peers and Administrators”** highlights the social pressures that constrain teachers’ use of translanguaging in the classroom. Many expressed concern that colleagues or administrators might interpret multilingual practices as a lack of proficiency or effort, leading to self-censorship and heightened emotional stress. This fear demonstrates how professional image and peer expectations can influence pedagogical choices, sometimes at the expense of student-centered strategies. Similar findings were reported by Llurda (2006), who noted that teachers often experience anxiety about their credibility when using flexible language practices in contexts that value monolingual norms. Likewise, García and Li (2014) observed that teachers in multilingual classrooms may limit translanguaging due to concerns about judgment from colleagues or institutional authorities, even when it benefits student learning.

The theme **“Rationalizing Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Necessity”** reflects how teachers cope with criticism by framing translanguaging as a deliberate and evidence-based instructional strategy rather than a sign of linguistic inadequacy. By consciously presenting it as a tool to enhance comprehension and engagement, teachers defend their professional choices and maintain a sense of agency despite external judgment. This approach allows them to uphold both pedagogical effectiveness and personal confidence. Similar findings were reported by Allard (2017), who emphasized that teachers use translanguaging strategically to navigate classroom dynamics while adhering to policy constraints. Likewise, García and Wei (2014) highlighted that justifying multilingual practices helps teachers reconcile institutional expectations with practical classroom needs, reinforcing their professional legitimacy.

The theme **“Selective Compliance and Adaptive Teaching”** highlights how teachers navigated the tension between institutional expectations and classroom realities by adjusting their translanguaging practices based on context. By strategically limiting language alternation when observed and using it more freely when unmonitored, teachers managed to uphold professional appearances while addressing students’ comprehension needs. This adaptive approach, however, required constant self-regulation, contributing to emotional fatigue and cognitive load. Comparable findings were reported by Allard (2017), who noted that teachers in multilingual classrooms often modify their practices to align with administrative expectations while preserving pedagogical effectiveness. Similarly, García and Li (2014) emphasized that adaptive strategies allow teachers to maintain professional legitimacy in the eyes of colleagues and administrators while still supporting students’ linguistic needs.

The theme **“Seeking Validation through Student Outcomes”** illustrates how teachers relied on their students’ learning progress to cope with criticism and reinforce their professional confidence. By observing improved comprehension, engagement, and performance, teachers were able to justify their translanguaging practices and emotionally distance themselves from negative judgments. This outcome-oriented approach positioned student success as the primary measure of pedagogical legitimacy, strengthening teachers’ sense of agency despite external skepticism. Similar findings were reported by Song, Howard, and Olazabal-Arias (2022), who emphasized that teachers draw reassurance from student engagement when implementing translanguaging. Likewise, Canagarajah (2011) noted that positive learner outcomes serve as a powerful source of professional validation for educators using multilingual strategies, reinforcing their confidence and instructional choices.

The theme **“Emotional Detachment and Quiet Resistance”** reflects how teachers cope with criticism by maintaining focus on their instructional priorities while minimizing emotional engagement with detractors. Rather than confronting colleagues or administrators, they preserved their professional autonomy and peace of mind by quietly continuing translanguaging practices that benefit students. This strategy allowed teachers to protect their teaching identity and reduce stress, emphasizing learner-centered decision-making over external validation. Similar findings were reported by Allard (2017), who observed that teachers in multilingual classrooms often practice quiet resistance to navigate institutional pressures without compromising pedagogy. Likewise, García and Wei (2014) highlighted that emotional detachment enables teachers to sustain innovative teaching practices in the face of criticism while safeguarding their professional confidence and agency.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the emotional, professional, and pedagogical experiences of English language teachers when employing translanguaging in multilingual classrooms, addressing the gap in understanding how teachers reconcile institutional expectations with classroom realities. Findings revealed that teachers experienced a range of emotions, from relief and connection to guilt and self-doubt, highlighting the complex interplay between professional identity and instructional practice. While translanguaging enhanced comprehension and engagement, it also triggered psychological tension and concerns about professional judgment. Teachers coped through pragmatic acceptance, adaptive strategies, outcome validation, and emotional detachment, demonstrating resilience and flexibility in navigating these challenges.

Overall, the study successfully achieved its goal of uncovering both the emotional and professional dimensions of translanguaging practices. It underscores that while English teachers are expected to maintain language purity, effective multilingual instruction requires balancing policy with practical pedagogical needs. Translanguaging, when strategically employed, not only supports student learning but also promotes teacher agency and professional growth. These findings provide valuable insights for educational institutions, highlighting the need to recognize and support translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogical strategy that aligns with learners’ linguistic realities and teachers’ professional expertise.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language refinement, grammar checking, and improving clarity of sentences. No part of the study’s design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or theoretical framing was generated by AI. After using the tool, the authors carefully reviewed, revised, and edited the content, and they take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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Ethical Approval Statement

The study followed ethical standards in conducting research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality and voluntary participation were ensured.

Informed Consent Statement

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written/verbal consent was obtained prior to participation.

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