
Bridging Languages: Translanguaging and Vocabulary Development in English Language Education

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the role of translanguaging in vocabulary acquisition and its relationship with the evolving concept of Global Englishes. Translanguaging, which involves the dynamic use of multiple languages within a bilingual or multilingual context, has been shown to enhance language learning by allowing students to leverage their entire linguistic repertoire. This practice aids vocabulary retention by providing opportunities to connect new words with familiar concepts from learners' first languages. Through a comprehensive literature review, the study examines how translanguaging supports deeper understanding, better vocabulary retention, and improved engagement in multilingual classrooms. Additionally, the research highlights how Global Englishes, with its diverse varieties across the world, provides a context in which translanguaging becomes a valuable tool for navigating different forms of English. The study also addresses the challenges of native speakerism and how translanguaging can disrupt traditional notions of language purity by embracing linguistic diversity. Despite its advantages, the study notes several challenges to implementing translanguaging in educational settings, such as theoretical debates and teacher preparedness. The findings suggest that translanguaging can play a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition, offering a more inclusive and contextually relevant approach to English language teaching in globalized, multilingual environments.

INTRODUCTION

The global spread of the English language has transformed it from a tool of communication for native speakers to a dominant international language used in various contexts, including education, business, science, and technology. As English continues to expand across the world, the approach to teaching and learning it has evolved significantly. One of the most notable developments in language pedagogy is the concept of translanguaging, a practice that recognizes the fluidity and interconnectedness of languages in bilingual and multilingual contexts. Translanguaging, which involves using a learner's entire linguistic repertoire for meaning-making, challenges traditional language teaching methods that often isolate languages into separate systems (Kesevan et al., 2018; Sharifian, 2009; Tan et al., 2020).

In parallel with the rise of translanguaging, the notion of Global Englishes has gained prominence. English, which was once considered a homogenous language, is now seen as a diverse entity with multiple varieties influenced by geography, culture, and social factors (Lal Basu, 2013; Naji Meidani & Pishghadam, 2012). This recognition of linguistic diversity has led to a more inclusive perspective on what constitutes "correct" English, challenging the traditional dominance of native speaker norms. In this context, native speakerism—the belief that only native speakers of English can be authentic language models—has been critically examined, particularly in light of the growing use of English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) in non-English-speaking countries.

Previous research related to translanguaging and vocabulary acquisition demonstrates that translanguaging has a positive impact on language learning in multilingual environments. García and Lin (2017) highlight how translanguaging allows students to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire, enriching their understanding of new vocabulary by linking it to concepts in their first language. Baker and Wright (2021) also notes that translanguaging supports the development of the weaker language and strengthens the home-school connection, thereby enhancing vocabulary comprehension. Canagarajah (2013) emphasizes that translanguaging gives students flexibility in adapting vocabulary to their social and cultural contexts, while Wei (2011) reveals that translanguaging facilitates the use of vocabulary from various languages students know, without the constraints of strict language boundaries. Additionally, Kachru (1997), through the concept of World Englishes, shows that translanguaging allows for the use of a broader and more diverse range of vocabulary across the global varieties of English, including those from the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. Overall, these studies illustrate that translanguaging enriches vocabulary acquisition by allowing students to integrate various linguistic sources in their language learning, which is highly relevant in the context of global English language teaching.

This study aims to explore the intersection of translanguaging, vocabulary acquisition, and the global spread of English. Specifically, it examines how translanguaging can support vocabulary learning in multilingual classrooms and challenges the traditional boundaries of language use, with a focus on how these concepts relate to the evolving landscape of Global Englishes. By synthesizing existing research on translanguaging and vocabulary acquisition, this paper aims to provide insights into how these concepts can enhance language learning and teaching practices, particularly in multilingual and multicultural educational settings.

The importance of understanding these concepts becomes even more evident as English becomes more deeply integrated into the daily lives of people worldwide, often with multiple varieties coexisting and influencing one another (Cenoz & Santos, 2020; Galante, 2020; Zhu et al., 2020). As such, this study will explore the role of translanguaging in vocabulary development, its implications for teaching and learning, and the relationship between these practices and the broader context of Global Englishes. Through this exploration, the study seeks to offer recommendations for language educators to embrace more inclusive, dynamic, and context-sensitive approaches to teaching English vocabulary.

METHOD

This study employs a library research methodology, also known as secondary research, to explore the role of translanguaging in vocabulary acquisition and its relationship with Global Englishes. Library research involves gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing existing academic literature, articles, books, and research studies that discuss translanguaging, vocabulary development, and the impact of Global Englishes on language teaching and learning. The goal is to build a comprehensive understanding of how translanguaging can support vocabulary learning and how this practice aligns with the broader evolution of English in global contexts. Since this research is based on a literature review, data collection involves the following steps:

1. Literature Search: Comprehensive searches will be conducted in various academic databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, ERIC, Scopus, and ProQuest. Keywords

such as “translanguaging,” “vocabulary acquisition,” “Global Englishes,” “language teaching,” and “native speakerism” will be used to identify relevant sources.

2. **Selection Criteria:** The selected literature will include peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, and other scholarly sources that address the theoretical and practical aspects of translanguaging in language learning and vocabulary development. Sources will be chosen based on their relevance, credibility, and publication date, prioritizing research conducted in the past two decades.
3. **Data Extraction:** Information relevant to the study will be extracted from the selected literature, focusing on definitions and explanations of translanguaging, theoretical perspectives on translanguaging and vocabulary acquisition, and the influence of Global Englishes on language teaching practices and vocabulary learning.
4. **Synthesis and Analysis:** The collected data will be organized and synthesized to identify key themes, patterns, and findings across the literature. The analysis will focus on the intersection of translanguaging and vocabulary acquisition and how these concepts contribute to the development of vocabulary in multilingual and globalized contexts.

Data analysis will be conducted using a thematic analysis approach. The process involves:

1. **Coding:** Key themes and concepts related to translanguaging and vocabulary acquisition will be identified through an open coding process.
2. **Thematic Grouping:** The identified themes will be grouped into categories, such as the benefits of translanguaging for vocabulary learning, challenges in implementation, and the role of Global Englishes in language acquisition.
3. **Synthesis:** The themes will be synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of how translanguaging supports vocabulary development and how this practice aligns with the diverse ways English is used globally.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Translanguaging and Vocabulary Acquisition

Translanguaging has emerged as a significant pedagogical tool in multilingual classrooms, facilitating more inclusive and effective vocabulary acquisition. Research on translanguaging in language learning highlights several key findings that demonstrate its potential to enhance vocabulary skills in diverse linguistic environments.

Support for Vocabulary Learning Translanguaging allows students to use their entire linguistic repertoire, including their first language (L1), to support learning in their second language (L2). According to García and Lin (2017), translanguaging helps students understand and internalize new vocabulary by drawing connections between words in different languages. This practice can be particularly beneficial for English language learners (ELLs), as it enables them to use familiar words and concepts from their native language to make sense of English vocabulary. By providing a means to leverage prior linguistic knowledge, translanguaging helps bridge the gap between new and existing vocabulary, making the learning process more meaningful and contextually relevant.

The benefits of translanguaging for vocabulary acquisition are further supported by the research of Baker and Wright (2021), who notes that translanguaging promotes a deeper

understanding of subject matter and facilitates the development of the weaker language (L2). In the case of vocabulary, this means that learners can more effectively understand the meaning of new words, recall them when needed, and apply them in real-life contexts.

Contextual Learning and Vocabulary Retention A major advantage of translanguaging in vocabulary acquisition is its emphasis on contextual learning. As Baker and Wright (2021) and García and Lin (2017) assert, when learners are able to use their full linguistic resources, they engage more deeply with the language and are better able to retain new vocabulary. This approach goes beyond memorizing vocabulary lists and instead encourages learners to use vocabulary in meaningful contexts, such as conversations, writing, or reading comprehension tasks. By using vocabulary in context, students are more likely to remember and accurately use new words in different situations.

For example, in a multilingual classroom, students might be asked to describe a picture using both English and their native language, allowing them to draw on words from both languages. This approach strengthens their understanding of the meaning and usage of words and helps them retain vocabulary in both languages.

Empowering Learners and Reducing Language Barriers Translanguaging also empowers learners by recognizing and valuing their native languages, which can help reduce the psychological barriers that some learners face when learning a second language. Hinkel (2011) discusses the challenges of native speakerism, where learners often feel inferior if they do not conform to native speaker norms of pronunciation or grammar. Translanguaging challenges this model by promoting the idea that all varieties of language are valid and that learners' linguistic identities should be respected. This recognition of multilingualism can boost learners' confidence and motivation, encouraging them to engage more actively in language learning and vocabulary acquisition.

Translanguaging and Global Englishes

The impact of translanguaging on vocabulary acquisition is closely linked to the concept of Global Englishes, which refers to the diverse varieties of English spoken around the world. Kachru's (1997) model of World Englishes divides English into three circles: the Inner Circle (where English is the native language), the Outer Circle (where English is used as a second language), and the Expanding Circle (where English is studied as a foreign language). This model highlights the diverse ways in which English is used globally and challenges the notion of a single, "standard" variety of English.

Flexibility and Inclusivity in Vocabulary Learning In the context of Global Englishes, translanguaging aligns well with the idea of linguistic diversity, as it allows learners to move beyond the rigid boundaries of "standard" English. The widespread use of English in various forms across different regions has led to a situation where learners of English are exposed to various versions of the language, each with its own vocabulary, pronunciation, and usage patterns. Translanguaging enables learners to navigate these differences by integrating the vocabulary they encounter in different contexts, helping them build a more adaptable and practical vocabulary.

For example, in an ESL context like Singapore or India, learners may encounter words from both British English and American English, along with local expressions that are specific

to their region. Translanguaging helps learners become more comfortable with these variations, as they can switch between languages or varieties depending on the context. This flexibility in vocabulary acquisition makes learners more capable of using English in diverse situations, from formal academic settings to informal conversations.

Challenging Native Speakerism Translanguaging directly challenges the idea of native speakerism, which has historically shaped English language teaching and the assessment of language proficiency. As discussed by Hinkel (2011), native speakerism has led to a preference for native English speakers as the ideal model in language education. This can create anxiety and feelings of inadequacy among non-native learners. However, translanguaging reframes language learning by embracing multilingualism and recognizing that learners can be proficient in English without needing to conform to the norms of native speakers.

By valuing the linguistic resources that learners bring from their native languages, translanguaging promotes an inclusive approach to language teaching that respects cultural diversity. This shift away from a single native speaker standard aligns with the growing acceptance of Global Englishes, where different varieties of English are considered equally legitimate for communication.

Global Englishes and Vocabulary Diversity The diverse nature of Global Englishes means that vocabulary acquisition must go beyond learning a single set of standardized words. As English evolves in different regions, new words and phrases emerge, influenced by local cultures, traditions, and languages. Translanguaging allows learners to incorporate these regional variations into their vocabulary, enhancing their ability to communicate with speakers from various parts of the world.

For instance, a learner from Singapore might use English vocabulary in conjunction with terms from Malay or Chinese, reflecting the multilingual nature of the country. Similarly, in India, learners might blend English with Hindi, Bengali, or other regional languages. This mixing of languages enriches vocabulary acquisition and allows learners to express themselves in ways that are culturally and contextually relevant.

Challenges and Limitations

While translanguaging has many advantages, there are challenges to its widespread implementation. One major challenge is the tension between different theoretical perspectives on translanguaging. As García and Lin (2017) note, there is a debate between the strong version of translanguaging, which advocates for the complete integration of languages, and the weak version, which recognizes the importance of language boundaries but allows for flexibility. This debate can create confusion about how to best apply translanguaging in educational settings.

Another challenge is the lack of teacher training in implementing translanguaging practices effectively. Educators may be unfamiliar with translanguaging as a pedagogical tool and may struggle to incorporate it into their lessons without sufficient training or support (Akbar & Taqi, 2020; Duarte, 2020). Additionally, some educational systems may have policies that discourage the use of multiple languages in the classroom, limiting the opportunities for translanguaging.

CONCLUSION

Translanguaging offers significant benefits for vocabulary acquisition by allowing learners to use their entire linguistic repertoire, bridging the gap between their first and second languages. It supports contextual learning, enhances vocabulary retention, and empowers learners by valuing their linguistic identities. When viewed in the context of Global Englishes, translanguaging becomes an even more powerful tool, allowing learners to navigate the diverse varieties of English used around the world. By embracing translanguaging, educators can create more inclusive and dynamic language learning environments that prepare learners to use English effectively in a globalized world. However, challenges such as theoretical debates and teacher preparedness must be addressed to fully realize the potential of translanguaging in language education. Future research and professional development programs for teachers will be essential to overcome these barriers and enhance the implementation of translanguaging in classrooms worldwide.

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