

Article

Translanguaging Pedagogies in EFL Writing Education

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Abstract

Research on translanguaging in applied linguistics and language education is on the rise, and translanguaging application in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing programs has aroused great interest. Research on translanguaging practices testifies to the benefits of deploying multilingual, multimodal, multisemiotic and multisensory resources in multilingual classrooms, of which little presents the specific implementation and outcomes of translanguaging pedagogies applied in EFL writing education. In response, this ethnographic classroom-based research, one taking place in a comprehensive university in southwestern China, aims to explore the educational influence of translanguaging pedagogies particularly on learners' critical thinking, content comprehension and effective communication. To triangulate data types and sources, data-collection methods include e-questionnaires, classroom observations, audio-recorded interviews and student writing samples. Data analysis reveals that translanguaging practices, as part of the classroom writing ecology, promote EFL students' critical awareness. Additionally, translanguaging pedagogies facilitate students' content comprehension and effective communication. This study demonstrates the affordances of a translanguaging lens for EFL writing education provided that it is reframed to serve students' strategies to negotiate language differences.

Keywords

Content comprehension, critical thinking, effective communication, EFL writing, translanguaging pedagogies

1 Introduction

Language users in today's increasingly interconnected world are involved in multilingual practices both

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directly and indirectly. Apparently the boundaries of specific language practices have been weakened, and the world has witnessed more diverse and dynamic human interaction than ever before (Wang, 2021). Contemporary people are living in a transnational world, in which just one single language is inadequate for them to achieve critical and effective communication. Hence, multilingual writers have been trying to purposefully blend their linguistic resources (Gevers, 2018). For example, code-meshing can be found in many kinds of forms such as advertisements, instant messages and bloggings.

To maximize the communicative potential among multilingual writers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, more researchers in applied linguistics and language education are in favor of the construct of translanguaging. The translanguaging theory is proposed to leverage multilingual writers' entire repertoire for learning, identity building and development, as well as promote their academic achievements (Kirsch, 2020; García & Sylvan, 2011). Translanguaging pedagogies have shown to benefit learners' meaning-making and knowledge construction (Kirsch, 2017). Besides, translanguaging practices seem to promote the international community's development towards a direction of real diversity and inclusiveness in the fields of language, culture and education (García & Li, 2014). The development of socio-culture, linguistics and inclusive education can benefit from translanguaging pedagogies as well (Velasco & Fialais, 2018).

With the theoretical advances of translanguaging, writing scholars have increasingly drawn attention to translanguaging in EFL writing programs. Writing instructors have been inspired by the notion to challenge the monolingual bias and pay close attention to the way language differences are overcome and utilized by student writers. (Gevers, 2018). In effect, while translanguaging is a natural instinct in multilingual interaction, translanguaging practice has not yet been the norm in multilingual education (Kleyn, 2016, p. 219). In China's EFL writing classrooms, it is universally seen that the teachers tend to avoid using the students' mother tongue, which is a sign that language education has attempted to eradicate "interference" produced by the norms of different languages (García & Otheguy, 2020). This instruction fails to improve students' critical thinking that has been regarded as part of the 21st century skills (Gandana et al., 2021).

The translanguaging literature has mostly remained theoretical in nature (Gevers, 2018). There is a lack of empirical research on its pedagogical practices in EFL writing (Siegel, 2020). Also, some researchers (Duarte, 2020; Gevers, 2018) have claimed that the empirical data in support of positive educational outcomes remains lacking. Research on the way that translanguaging pedagogies have a positive impact on students' critical thinking, content comprehension and effective communication in EFL writing education still remains scarce. Thus, by researching a group of multilingual students from a Chinese University, the current research applied translanguaging pedagogies in an EFL writing course and analysed corresponding educational outcomes from the aspects of critical thinking, content comprehension and effective communication, hoping to provide empirical evidence for the application of translanguaging pedagogies in EFL writing programs at home and abroad.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Translanguaging

Multilingual speakers are able to instinctively use "sensory, modal, cognitive and semiotic resources" to make meaning and interpret messages (Li, 2018, p. 19). There is a translanguaging instinct for individuals to draw on their diverse cognitive and semiotic resources so as to interpret meaning intentions and design actions accordingly (García & Li, 2014, p. 32; Li, 2016, p. 541). Applied in the fields of education, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and applied linguistics, the theory of translanguaging has been continuously redefined over the last two decades (Kirsch, 2020). In general, the concept can be investigated from two aspects, namely transcendence and languaging.

Firstly, translanguaging has the power of transcendence, that is, going beyond linguistic systems to embrace other forms of resources like semiotic ones. This “transformative power” relates translanguaging to a semiotic rather than a linguistic repertoire (García & Otheguy, 2020). Therefore, translanguaging involves the diverse discursive practices in which bi/multilinguals are involved to make sense of the world (García & Li, 2014, p. 65). While translanguaging, multilingual students strategically deploy their linguistic and communicative resources to participate in creative, critical and self-empowerment cognitive activities (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017).

Secondly, languaging denotes the dynamic and continuous process of language use for meaning-making (Swain, 2006) and the way that people make sense, articulate their thoughts, and gain knowledge (Li, 2011). By combining sets of linguistic resources which may or may not follow the rules and norms of conventionally named languages or language varieties (Jørgensen, 2008), people engage in languaging. Thus, translanguaging practices involve “the strategic deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for the watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015, p. 283). Li (2018) has also stressed translanguaging as a dynamic process of using labeled languages and language varieties in an integrated way.

The construct of translanguaging has changed our understanding of language(s). Translanguaging underscores multilingual speakers’ creativity and criticality. Creativity refers to the ability to choose between following and flouting the norms of behaviour, like pushing and breaking the boundaries between named language. Criticality denotes the ability to use evidence to form views of cultural, social and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to articulate views (Li, 2018).

China’s tertiary language education keeps monolingual in nature. Most teachers of English in this nation consider English immersion programs the best choice despite the fact that they acknowledge the country’s language diversity. Nevertheless, more researchers in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics are calling for bi/multilingual practices (Angelovska & Hahn, 2014). The proposal of translanguaging can also contribute to the transformation of monolingual education.

2.2 Translanguaging pedagogies

Translanguaging is a calque of the Welsh term *trawsieithu*, part of minority language revitalization efforts in Wales (Williams, 1994). *Trawsieithu* originally refers to a pedagogical practice in which the students received English information as an input but used Welsh as an output and vice versa (Vaish, 2020). In general, the Welsh model was concerned with the dynamic feature of languaging, as both teachers and students could systematically switch between different languages.

Different from monolingualism and multilingualism, translanguaging challenges traditional language hierarchies (Kirsch, 2020, p. 2). Monolingualism regards languages and language practices as discrete, uniform and stable (García & Li, 2014). Described as a set of “parallel monolingualisms” (Heller, 1999, 2007), multilingualism enjoys autonomous identity and structure even in contact (Canagarajah, 2015, p. 419). By contrast, translanguaging pedagogies view language differences not as barriers to remove or problems to resolve, but as resources for sense- and meaning-making (Horner et al., 2011, p. 303-307). García and Otheguy (2020) propose that bilingual speakers only own a unitary linguistic repertoire. Translanguagers have the freedom to deploy their full communicative and written repertoire including multilingual, multimodal, multisemiotic and multisensory resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García & Otheguy, 2020; García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018). By allowing the co-existence of language varieties and leveraging students’ unitary semiotic system to make meaning (García & Flores, 2012; García et al., 2017), translanguaging pedagogies help change students’ subjectivities, cognitive structures, and

the social structures around them (Jaspers, 2018). Translanguaging supports “dynamic bilingualism” (García, 2009), thus fostering the development of multilingual literacies as multilingual learners are able to select from their whole repertoires appropriate features in a planned and purposeful way. When translanguaging multilingual speakers go beyond artificial language borders and consider numerous resources, contributing to the synergy of different language use.

Translanguaging pedagogies create opportunities to improve students’ critical thinking about languages, which not only includes the understanding of structural features and pragmatic functions of a particular language, but the socio-political history and symbolic values of this language (García & Li, 2014). A translanguaging approach encourages students to become co-learners with open-mindedness who can participate in problem solving, inference formulation, the calculation of likelihoods and the development of cohesive and logical reasoning patterns, which are characteristics of critical thinking (Halpern, 1997). To develop students’ critical awareness, teachers should pay close attention to not only learners’ knowledge production but also their learning process (Brantmeier, 2013). For tertiary level courses critical thinking plays a key role in success (Floyd, 2011), and the importance of this ability has captured much attention of Chinese educators (Bagheri, 2015). For writing relates to cognitive skills and dispositions, two key components of critical thinking (Gandana et al., 2021), it is of great significance to explore the influence of translanguaging pedagogies in EFL writing education on students’ critical thinking.

Moreover, translanguaging pedagogies may be more suitable for those courses aiming at both language and content comprehension and for students lacking adequate proficiency to take English-only courses (Liu & Fang, 2020). Lin (2015) claims that the use of first language (L1) in content and language integrated lessons enables students to flexibly use languages for language and content understanding. Indeed, students’ translanguaging practices can maximize their learning, and the balance between language learning and content comprehension has been increasingly recognized (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013). Translanguaging concerns effective communication, function rather than form, cognitive activity, as well as language production (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012, p. 1). Translanguaging pedagogies help foster closer communication between teachers and students, so in EFL writing programs, the necessity of using translanguaging pedagogies to build scaffolds has been gradually recognized.

Translanguaging pedagogies have been applied and spread in the field of multilingual education (García & Li, 2014; García et al., 2017; Nikula & Moore, 2019). Following García’s research on translanguaging practices in the Spanish-speaking community of the USA, language teachers and researchers throughout the world have begun to undertake research on translanguaging pedagogies in bi/multilingual classrooms in which English has been the official language of instruction (García & Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2017). In contrast, there is little empirical research on Chinese learners’ translanguaging skills. There is also lesser research on translanguaging pedagogies in EFL writing programs from the perspective of critical thinking, content comprehension and effective communication. Consequently, it is of practical significance to explore how to use translanguaging pedagogies to design an EFL writing course.

3 The Study

Kleyn (2016, p. 203) believes translanguaging is applicable to all language learning and exists in all educational contexts. This research is an attempt to investigate the following questions:

- RQ1. How can translanguaging pedagogies improve EFL learners’ critical thinking?
- RQ2. How can translanguaging pedagogies benefit EFL learners’ content comprehension?
- RQ3. How can translanguaging pedagogies promote EFL learners’ effective communication?

4 Methodology

4.1 Research background

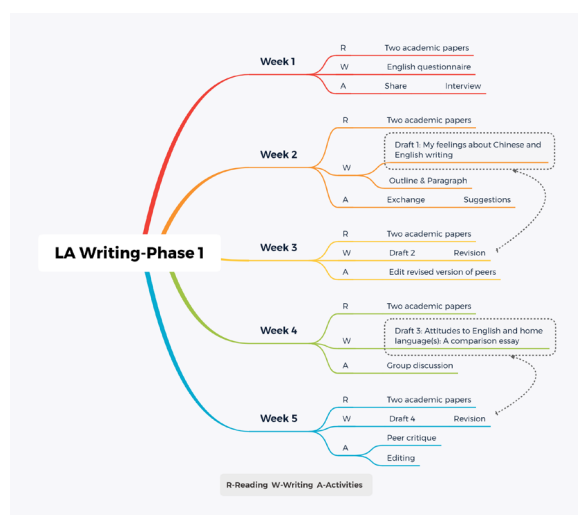
This ethnographic research took place in an EFL writing course of a comprehensive university located in southwestern China, a university characterized by preferential recruitment policies for China's minority students. China is the home to 56 ethnic groups, out of whom the Han group is the overwhelming majority. In China's education system, Han students has a vast population, while minority students generally account for a small part. Since their first school day, almost all of the minority students have been taught Mandarin Chinese. Only when they have the knowledge of their minority languages will minority students use those languages in their ethnic community. However, as a result of Han group's rising influence, nowadays a large number of ethnic students cannot speak their minority languages.

Lasting from September, 2019 to January, 2020, the EFL writing course titled *Intermediate Writing for Translators and Interpreters* was designed and offered by an experienced teacher of English to the freshmen of the Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) program. Engaging in writing Literacy Autobiography (LA) (Canagarajah, 2013, 2020), the postgraduate students were eventually tasked with reflecting on their own experiences, emotions, and understandings about languages, literacies, cultures and their own strategies in handling differing practices in multi-languages. This kind of writing took the form of a memoir, mixing both narrative and academic writing and allowing students to share real life experiences, true feelings or views.

As shown in Figure 1, this course mainly consisted of three phases, and during each phase both reading and writing activities were fully considered. In the Phases 1 and 2, reading and comprehension activities benefited students' content comprehension of LA, preparing them well for subsequent writing practices. Based on their reading associated with the genre in which they would write, learners understood the criteria for good writing in that genre (Townsend, Fu, & Lamme, 1997). They then embarked on LA writing tasks. In the Phase 2, students were instructed to collect and analyse artefacts as data about their own literacy development. In the Phase 3, student writers get down to drafting, revising and polishing the title, outline, abstract and content of LA writing. For the reading and writing activities, the teacher adopted a process-based instruction, involving the students in "pedagogical and spontaneous translanguaging" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017a, 2020; Galante, 2020). Compared with the traditional test-centred writing mode, this teaching plan treated students' personal experiences seriously and made it much easier for them to develop positive attitudes, interest, and motivation for writing.

Figure 1

Phase 1 of the LA Writing Course



The teacher gave assignments and collected student writing samples through an e-platform called *kdocs* (<https://www.kdocs.cn/latest>). After self-assessing their LA writings, students could also receive English and/or Chinese comments from the teacher and their classmates. Writing assessment was beneficial for students to monitor and evaluate their own work. Rather than focusing solely on lexico-grammatical rules of the target language, the teacher evaluated student writings by the content and feelings (Canagarajah, 2020).

Figure 2

Phase 2 of the LA Writing Course

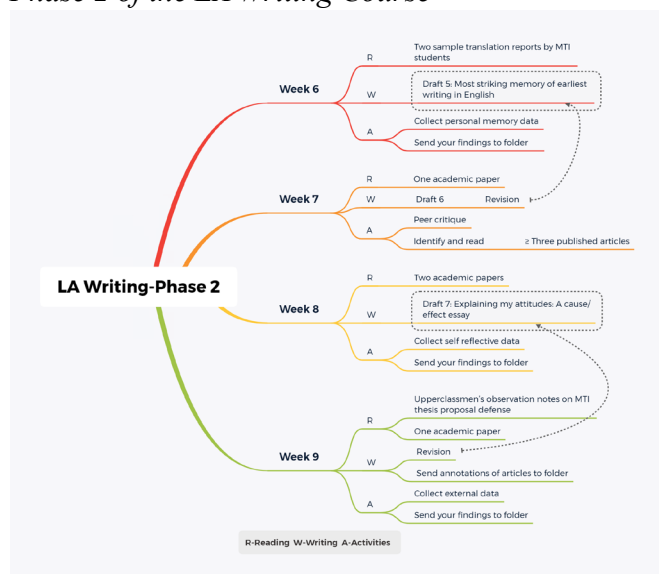
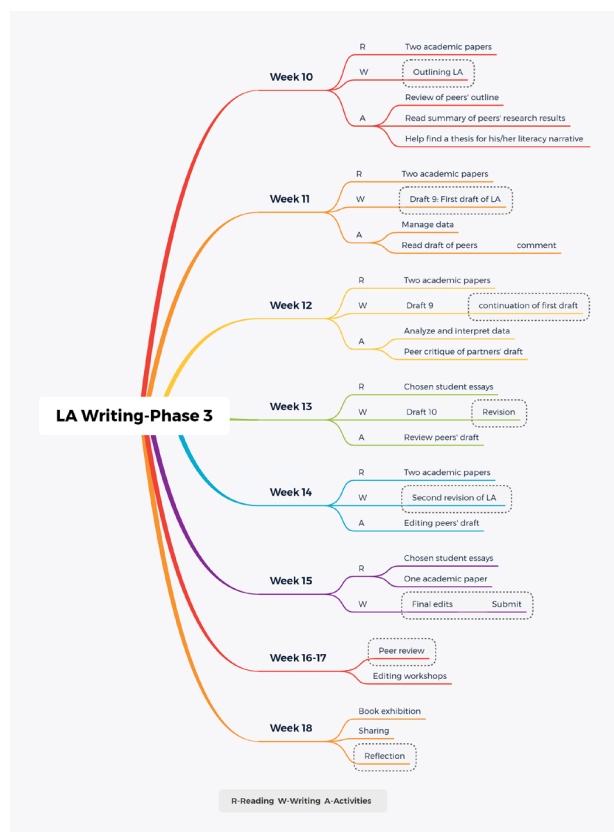


Figure 3

Phase 3 of the LA Writing Course



4.2 Participants

Professor Yang, male, 43, the designer and teacher of the LA writing course, has taught *Intermediate Writing for Translators and Interpreters* for MTI students since 2016. He obtained his Master's degree in English education in the USA in 2002 and PhD in Australia in 2011 when he began to focus on teaching courses of English writing.

There were 21 students (n=21) participating in all of the stages of the research. The overwhelming majority of them were females (17 females vs. 4 males). Their ages ranged from 23 to 33 years old, with an average age of 23.45. There were 18 Han students and three ethnic minority students, from Yi, Tujia and Hui ethnic groups, respectively. All names are pseudonyms. As shown in Table 1, all of them were at least bilingual, speaking Mandarin Chinese and English. The majority were able to speak dialects like Cantonese. Judging by their certificates about English proficiency, each of them could be considered as learners of medium-level proficiency in English.

Table 1

Overview of the Participating MTI Students

Students	Gender	Ethnic groups	Languages spoken by the students	English proficiency levels
Ms. Min	F	Han	MC, Eng, Can	CET4, CET6, TEM4
Mr. Dong	M	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	CET4, CET6
Ms. Yu	F	Yi	MC, Dia, Eng	CET4
Ms. Jun	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	CET4, CET6, CATTI3
Mr. Jian	M	Han	MC, Eng	TEM4
Ms. Ling	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	CET6
Ms. Jing	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM8, CATTI3
Ms. Lan	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM4, TEM8, CATTI3
Ms. Wei	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM8, CATTI3
Mr. Rui	M	Han	MC, Eng	CET4
Ms. Yan	F	Tujia	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM4
Mr. Xiang	M	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM8
Ms. Hua	F	Hui	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM4
Ms. Zhang	F	Han	MC, Eng	CET4, CET6, TEM4, TEM8, CATTI3
Ms. Ran	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	CET6, BEC-V
Ms. Guan	F	Han	MC, Eng	TEM4, CATTI3
Ms. Xi	F	Han	MC, Eng	TEM4
Ms. Guo	F	Han	MC, Dia, Eng	TEM8
Ms. Feng	F	Han	MC, Eng	CET4, CET6, TEM4, TEM8, CSIEI, BEC-H
Ms. Yue	F	Han	MC, Eng	CET6
Ms. Han	F	Han	MC, Eng	TEM4

Note: F=Female; M=Male; MC=Mandarin Chinese; Dia=Dialect; Eng=English; Can=Cantonese; CET4=College English Test-Band 4; CET6=College English Test-Band 6; TEM4=Test for English Majors-Band 4; TEM8=Test for English Majors-Band 8; CSIEI=Certificate for Shanghai Intermediate-level English Interpretation; CATTI3=China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters-Band 3; BEC-H=Business English Certificate Higher; BEC-V=Business English Certificate Vantage.

4.3 Ethnographic classroom research

This was an ethnographic classroom-based study. Ethnography means to generate better understandings of cultures or explanations of participants' thoughts and behaviour in local time and space (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). With a focus on a specific group, events, and cultural scene in a real course rather than a laboratory, ethnography requires sustained personal contact with participants. Ethnographic research foregrounds field investigation in order that teachers' and students' actual language practices can be discovered on the spot and their perspectives can be understood (Wang, 2018, p. 55). According to Jackson (2016, p. 244-245), for ethnographers multiple methods of data collection include participant observation, interviewing, focus group discussions, surveys, ethnographic conversations, the collection of documents, etc. An ethnographic approach can deepen understanding of linguistic and cultural practices (Jackson, 2016, p. 239) in a China's writing class guided by translanguaging pedagogies.

4.4 Data collection and analysis

In order to gather various data for thick description and deep explanation of observable and unobservable language behaviours (Canagarajah, 2006), the ethnographic researchers triangulated data types and sources. Triangulating helped present an accurate portrayal of participants' perspectives and actions, namely the emic voice. It also helped identify the recurrent themes and issues, and researchers were more likely to get a complete picture of the topic under study (Gay et al., 2009, p. 416). In this ethnographic research, multiple data-collection methods were as follows:

1. Two e-questionnaires;
2. 11 classroom observations and note-taking from 14 November to 19 December, 2019;
3. Interviews with the teacher and four volunteering students and verbatim transcriptions;
4. Student LA writing samples.

All semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded online because of the outbreak of COVID-19. Mandarin was predominantly used in the process of interviewing, and the quotes in this article were translated from Chinese into English. Each interview lasted for approximately 40 minutes. Interviewees were invited to review transcripts and statements to check for accuracy and completeness (Gay et al., 2009).

For data analysis, the principles of qualitative thematic analysis (Bazeley, 2013) and triangulation were followed. Essentially, coding, determining themes, constructing an argument, and going back to the data were the main four steps involved (Holliday, 2010).

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Improving EFL Learners' critical thinking

In terms of qualitative data, the researchers transcribed and analysed the non-numerical interviews, classroom observation manuscripts and student writing samples to explore the correlation between translanguaging pedagogies and critical thinking skills. Specifically, the authors examined what effects translanguaging pedagogies had on students' written English and critical thinking, how and why those effects were engendered. According to the empirical data, students achieved improvements on their critical thinking abilities after experiencing translanguaging pedagogies, especially on the open-mindedness dimension and inquisitiveness dimension. On the basis of the interview data, all of the interviewees admitted that translanguaging pedagogies contributed to their critical thinking.

As shown in Table 2, the reading and writing assignments prompted students to reflect on their attitudes towards Chinese as L1 and English as L2, as well as feelings and experiences about L1 and L2 writings. With different acquisitional states and learning experiences, though, they were permitted to navigate between different languages to voice their ideas, and were given the opportunity to critically think of the connection between L1 and L2 acquisition. In translanguaging practices, EFL learners used their “understanding, synthesis, and questions” as a basis for formulating ideas of their own (Paul, 1987). After conceiving her writings with the help of Chinese, Ms. Hua wrote the importance of mastering L1 while learning L2.

While learning a second language, we should not give up the study of our mother language. How to learn a second foreign language well and strengthen the study of the mother language is a topic worth studying. (LA writing of Ms. Hua)

She also thought that the mastery of English through learning skills related to listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating was important, and strengthening the learning of the mother tongue was meaningful as well. When interviewed the student shared that translanguaging pedagogies helped free her from thinking in one single language and thus benefited her divergent thinking. As a consequence, she was able to consider the influence of the languages she had encountered such as her minority language. She also began to ponder over the relation between her language learning and her daily life. In the traditional classrooms, students would be expected to speak and write in the target language, while in the translanguaging classrooms, learners were able to bridge the gap between their L2 learning and L1 learning experiences.

Table 2
Reading and Writing Assignments in the LA Writing Course

Reading assignments	Writing assignments
Academic articles mainly written in English and related to the LA writing task	Essay 1: My feelings about Chinese and English writing; Essay 2: Attitudes to English and home language(s): A comparison essay; Essay 3: Most striking memory of earliest writing in English; Essay 4: Explaining my attitudes: A cause/effect essay.

In order to improve students’ critical thinking, teachers should encourage students to explore and debate specific issues from multiple perspectives and guide students to express their processes of cognition and thoughts by presenting different materials (Gu et al., 2017). The four interviewees agreed that one of the most important aspects for their improvements on critical thinking skills in the translanguaging classrooms was that they learnt to view or think of problems from multiple perspectives. Prof. Yang adopted an inclusive attitude towards the differences of students’ English proficiency and language practices, then allowing them to use whichever language they were most comfortable with. In the translanguaging space (Li, 2018), EFL learners’ critical thinking of language difference was strengthened. This thinking could be shown in some sense by one student’s questioning and challenging the unequal relations among different languages such as the power relations between a mainstream language and a non-mainstream language. Mr. Xiang, one of the four interviewees, claimed that he preferred to think in an English way thanks to his prior experiences and undergraduate learning. In his eyes, the curiosity about the English expressing way made him more professional (transcript of the interview with Mr. Xiang; May, 2020). At the early period of this course, Mr. Xiang seized each chance to speak or practice English, deliberately avoiding using Mandarin and dialects. Nonetheless, he was gradually impressed by translanguaging pedagogies that transcended language differences with a focus on content comprehension and identity construction. His preference for monolingual thinking mode experienced a shift towards a translanguaging direction. As a matter of fact, from a perspective of

cosmopolitan English (Canagarajah, 2013), EFL learners are exposed to not only Standard English but also many other varieties of English.

For Mr. Xiang, the translanguaging pedagogy was conducive to the enhancement of his critical thinking of language practices. As far as he was concerned, Chinese literacy, like a double-edged sword, had double effects on English writing competence. On the one hand, there existed salient differences between Chinese and English thinking modes, which to some extent led to Chinglish (transcript of the interview with Mr. Xiang; May, 2020). On the other hand, Chinese students were so familiar with Chinese expressions that they might choose to use Chinese sentence patterns in English discourses to achieve impressive and authentic effects. Gradually, the student supported that different voices could be also noticed in English writings (Canagarajah, 2020). After accepting the bilingual way of thinking, he spontaneously pondered over the following questions about language use:

When is English use appropriate and when is Chinese use appropriate? Who is better at English, and who is better at Chinese? What are the pros and cons of Chinese writings, and what are the pros and cons of English writings? (Interview with Mr. Xiang; May, 2020)

Thus, translanguaging activities broadened Mr. Xiang's mind to investigate the likelihood of appropriately involving Chinese in EFL writings.

The two languages [English and Chinese] have synergistic relationship. Without the understanding of Chinese, we are unable to have a clear comprehensibility of the complex and logical structure [of English]; without the charm of hypotaxis language, we are unable to think and write methodically in Chinese. (LA writing of Mr. Xiang)

The ideas showed his "structural sensitivity" (Kuo & Anderson, 2010). His attention on structural features is one of the foci of metalinguistic awareness (Nagy & Anderson, 1995). Metalanguage plays an important role in our daily language use (Jakobson, 1990 [1960], p. 75). One of the critical functions of pedagogical translanguaging is to enhance EFL learners' metalinguistic awareness and facilitate their thinking (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017b; Liu, Lo, Lin, 2020). Mr. Xiang thought it greatly significant for language learners to have a good command of their mother tongue, since it laid a basic foundation for L2 learning. He was willing to embed Chinese characters and other symbolic resources in English writings so as to convey real emotions or recount personal experiences.

As there are soft boundaries between different languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020), students are able to benefit from translanguaging pedagogies concerning a deep understanding and critical thinking of linguistic and cultural differences. In the LA writing course, since different linguistic resources were accessible to multilingual students, they could consciously and unconsciously consider how to involve L1 knowledge into L2 writings. Ms. Yu, a female student of Yi ethnic group, shared her ideas:

Language features vary from one language to another, and those features should not be simply regarded as good or bad. Rather, cultures and languages of different races and regions should be treated in a critical way. (Interview with Ms. Yu; May, 2020)

She also wrote:

Only when we have a good ability of expression [in the mother tongue] can we organize well and translate other languages clearly. (LA writing of Ms. Yu)

Instead of ignoring the role played by the mother tongue, Ms. Yu connected first language literacy with foreign language translating and organizing abilities. In the process, language learners could also develop their academic language skills in different languages (Li, 2011, p. 1223). Likewise, Ms. Yue shared her opinion about the relation between L1 and L2 acquisition.

After handling the basic L1 knowledge, the acquisition of L2 can be easier. (LA writing of Ms. Yue)

There was a sign that she did not separate the knowledge of different languages. She even decided on the appropriate occasions to write in Chinese, showing her analytical skills. For instance, when she felt very discouraged to translate some proverbs and poems, she would choose to adopt Chinese characters.

5.2 Benefiting EFL learners' content comprehension

As shown in Figure 2, with the purpose of helping students comprehend content knowledge Prof. Yang pedagogically organized a series of translanguaging activities, including group discussion, classroom interaction, translation, explanation, and question-raising. First, the pedagogical value of translanguaging was to make the most of the teacher's "linguistic toolkit" to develop students' academic content learning (García & Li, 2014). Prof. Yang definitely had recourse to his own resources as scaffolding so that students could understand and analyse English academic texts. "In addition to his personal experiences, our teacher told us how his minority language and other languages had influenced his writing and his self," said Ms. Hua, a Hui student. Writing samples merely conceived in English were not what Prof. Yang desired to read. Instead, he expected students to critically rethinking their own background, culture and language as evidence for LA writing.

Second, in different forms of translanguaging practices the students tried to classify useful information, identify all kinds of fallacies and prejudices, and then make judgments based on evidence, which required the participation of critical thinking to analyse various arguments. In those activities, students themselves could alternate between different language codes, such as English, Mandarin Chinese and minority languages. More specifically, after a group of students discussed the reading content in any language, all of them were invited to read the English material and then translate it into Chinese. Subsequently, this group shared their explanation or put forward relevant questions either in English or Chinese. Apparently, students' home language literacy was respected in the translanguaging space. Home language use in second language acquisition was beneficial for the multilingual students to absorb new knowledge and produce ideas in English, a new language for them (Cummins, 2007). The freedom of language use facilitated student agency to make-meaning and construct knowledge (Canagarajah, 2013). Later, Prof. Yang communicated his assessment of students' performances largely in English. When necessary he would explain in Chinese. For instance, autobiography and autoethnography were two key notions for LA writing. After elaborating on their meanings, Prof. Yang invited students to explain the differences between them. (The original utterances in English are in normal font, those in Chinese in italics.)

Excerpt 1

S: Autoethnography differs from autobiography.

T: Autoethnography differs from autobiography. Yeah. How? In which way?

S: Autobiography in Chinese is *自传*, and autoethnography can be regarded as a method to...

T: Okay. Very good.

S: To research problems.

T: To research problems. Okay. That is very close to the true or to the truth, because autoethnography, actually, is a method, a research method to help us produce an autobiography in this case Literacy Autobiography. That is ... That is analytical. That is also academic. Okay. Yeah. So we are moving bit by bit together.

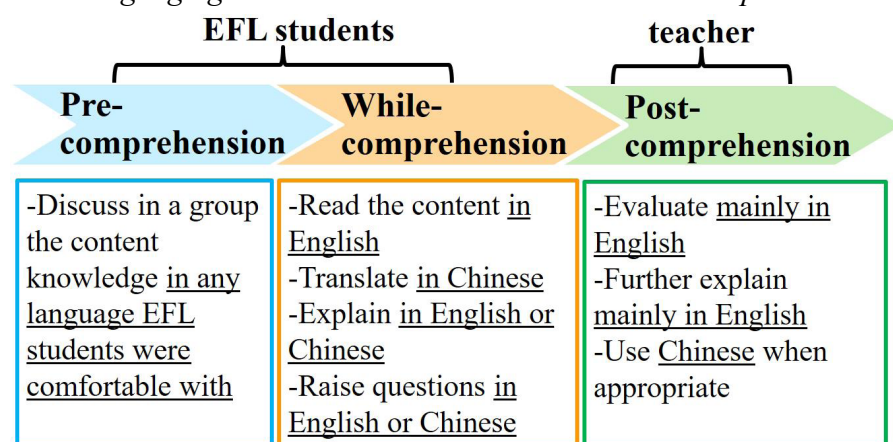
This case indicated the shift of translanguaging (García et al., 2017). Despite purposefully designing the translanguaging classroom activities, Prof. Yang flexibly adjusted pedagogical translanguaging to meet students' needs of content comprehension. Hence, he added a Chinese explanation in order that students could gain a better understanding. Eventually, with the help of Chinese translation the learners understood the content knowledge well. Prof. Yang shared one student's voice on this translanguaging shift.

I think he is a positive and active student. During the early period of this course, he had trouble in understanding the content as I spoke English almost the whole time and at a little bit fast speed. At that moment, he thought the course was so challenging that he even wanted to give up. However, the timely involvement of Chinese facilitated his content understanding and participation in classroom activities. (Interview with Prof. Yang; June, 2020)

L1 literacy has valuable implications for multilingual speakers' content and language learning (Canagarajah, 2013), because their implicit knowledge about L1 fosters the acquisition of L2 explicit knowledge. Translanguagers often instinctively use the stronger language to develop the weaker language so as to realise a relative balance between their two languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). In this case, the student's analytical skills of critical thinking also got developed (Bagheri, 2015).

Figure 4

Translanguaging Classroom Activities about Content Comprehension in the LA Writing Course



Using the language(s) learners are familiar with for content understanding helped reduce students "cognitive load" (Sweller, 1988). When interviewed, Ms. Yu, who regarded herself as a non-proficient English user, claimed that the involvement of different languages in EFL writing class was useful for students to gain a clear understanding of content knowledge. She believed,

English proficiency level varies among individuals. If English is the only language which can be used in class, there will be more barriers or misunderstandings in the process of interpersonal interaction. (Interview with Ms. Yu; May, 2020)

Third, those translanguaging activities of content comprehension presented multimodal features. Indeed, after-class communication involves the simultaneous use of several modes of communication that complement each other for meaning-making. All language communication is multimodal in nature (Dahl & Ludvigsen, 2014). By mobilizing students' all senses, like sight, touch and hearing, those multimodal classroom practices facilitated mutual understanding in learner-learner or teacher-learner interaction (Dahl & Ludvigsen, 2014).

Translanguaging pedagogies reduced students' frustration and confusion ordinarily brought about by monolingual settings. For example, Ms Hua expressed an interest in the genre of LA, showing how the relief of frustration paved the way of enjoyment.

5.3 Promoting EFL learners' effective communication

Prof. Yang used to place much more importance on English language use in a native way:

In the early period of my teaching career, I thought I should use English the whole time in

class and my students were supposed to do so even though they would encounter a number of difficulties in using the foreign language constantly. (Interview with Prof. Yang; June, 2020)

Nonetheless, affected by the proposition of transliteracy, he came to realise that native(-like) competence is too ideal to achieve (Yang, 2018). Due to the ideological shift from traditional literacy to transliteracy, he began to explore the trans- orientation, and embraced many features of translanguaging pedagogies (García & Li, 2014). Having realised his prior thinking and teaching practices had already separated other linguistic resources from the communicative process, he held a more critical attitude towards multiple linguistic resources in teaching, and meanwhile allowed students to capitalise on their entire repertoires in learning. This was why he designed and taught the LA writing course under the guidance of translanguaging pedagogies. When the teacher had the awareness of critical thinking, he could consciously improve students' critical thinking (Gandana et al., 2021).

The resources we own should not be treated as a stumbling block but a stepping stone or a springboard to academic writing. (Interview with Prof. Yang, June, 2020)

To achieve reading and writing objectives, language learners not only use Standard English but other language styles, symbolic systems, and semiotic resources, thus cultivating their abilities to deal with diverse cultural discourses (Canagarajah, 2011, 2013). While interacting with students, Prof. Yang added necessary Chinese explanations in oral communication for them to better absorb the content and respond to the requirements of LA writing (as discussed above in 5.2). For student writers, they were encouraged to take advantage of their mother tongue to conceive LA writing samples, such as title, abstract, outline and drafts. Excerpt 2 was one example. (The original utterances in English are in normal font, those in Chinese in italics.)

Excerpt 2

S1: 我只想好了中文版的, 可以用中文说吗? [Only Chinese title I have in my mind. Can I speak Chinese?]

T: 当然可以。[Yes, of course.]

S1: 写作是怎样炼成的? [How is the writing ability developed?]

T: Very interesting. Who can translate it into English?

S2: How is writing tempered?

T: temper 有性格形成的意思 ... [Temper has the meaning of the shape of one's character], I have a different expression like The Way to Improve Writing.

S3: Better Self in the Writing and Reading.

T: Why do you use writing and reading not reading and writing?

S3: 我心里想的是 reading and writing 但是说成了 writing and reading [Laughter of the students] [I thought about reading and writing in my mind, but spoke it as writing and reading.]

T: So why do you use reading and writing?

S3: 因为应该是先 reading 再 writing [Because reading goes first and writing second.]

S4: The Road of Language Acquisition.

T: It's academic by using acquisition, but here language is a little big and we can narrow down like My Road of Chinese and English, My Road on Acquisition of Reading and Writing.

In this case, students blended English and Mandarin Chinese while discussing the title of one piece of writing with Prof. Yang. For group communication work, some students would choose to speak dialects for convenience. In translanguaging practices, the multilingual learners were encouraged to think of different languages as a useful channel of communication, instead of a precise code with either right or wrong criteria, thus being able to create new language practices as their own (García & Li, 2014, p.

61). Here students' home language literacy was drawn on to conceive LA titles. Both the teacher and the students translanguage between different linguistic systems, resulting in active interaction and hot discussion. In the end, the learners brainstormed appropriate titles.

Not only was LA writing related to fluent expressions, but also to the account of EFL student writers' previous literary experiences and education backgrounds. (Interview with Prof. Yang; June, 2020)

For Prof. Yang, one of the objectives of this course was to guide students to rethink the roles their resources played in EFL writing. Prof. Yang posited:

For novice writers, especially challenging might be writing an abstract, which should be well-structured, informative and concise. The writing of outlines is an elementary step before student writers set out to write the whole LA. (Interview with Prof. Yang; June, 2020)

Thus, when drafting the abstract and outline, student writers could consider using a wide range of linguistic resources. As shown in Excerpt 3, their mother tongue was available for them to express proverbs when they found English translation intractable. (Utterances in English are in normal font, those in Chinese in italics.)

Excerpt 3

T: 比如说中文你要说的是什么呢? [Please give an example to show what you want to express in Chinese?]

S: Such as 感情深, 一口闷. [Drink up for the deep friendship]

T: 感情深, 一口闷. Yeah. [Drink up for the deep friendship] [Laughter of the teacher and the students]

S: I can't express it in English.

T: Okay, so you have the idea right here. But when you come to [Laughter of the teacher] English, the words fail you. Right. Okay. Thank you.

In this case, the student failed to translate the Chinese proverb 感情深, 一口闷, but she was permitted to share it in Chinese, promoting her communication with Prof. Yang. Ms. Yu also thought when she was unable to convey the contents with local characteristics, she might write Chinese characters, along with English annotations. The process of problem-solving showed that she critically thought of the response of the target readers.

In the conventional EFL classrooms, students would hesitate to use other languages but English. In contrast, translanguage classroom activities alleviated their anxiety over EFL writing, making them feel comfortable to exchange ideas about content comprehension in the language(s) they were confident of. Pedagogical translanguage helped students of intermediate English proficiency gradually overcome the horror of embarking on EFL writing. For example, Ms. Hua thought that she had a weak foundation of Chinese and English writing, and it was challenging for her to complete a piece of English writing. With the help of various resources in class, she could gradually engage in professional English writing. When having the opportunities to use or not to use, the L1 students' agency and self-responsibility could be augmented (Adamson & Coulson, 2015). In translanguage practices, the practitioners and the students assembled features of their linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic repertoires (Kirsch, 2020; Li & Lin, 2019). Therefore, lower English proficiency no longer hindered them from undertaking professional EFL writing mainly because they could utilize different resources as a useful channel for sense- or meaning-making. In the eyes of Prof. Yang, taking different language practices into consideration was beneficial for EFL students to understand content knowledge, and then they were able to convey their ideas in a clearer way. Even though not every abstract and LA writing was ultimately completed in a bi- or multilingual form, the practice of leveraging diverse resources contributed to students' effective communication both in oral and written forms.

6 Conclusion

This article sets out to analyse the outcomes of translanguaging pedagogies in EFL writing education. Translanguaging is representative of the new approaches that embrace multilingual, multimodal, multisemiotic and multisensory resources (García & Li, 2014). The present research has contributed to our understanding of the educational outcomes of translanguaging pedagogies in terms of learners' critical thinking, content comprehension and effective communication.

Considering China's multilingual reality, EFL writing teachers are expected to not only embrace the co-existence of different languages but also deploy a range of linguistic resources to promote students' transliteracy (Yang, 2018). In this respect, translanguaging pedagogies help create a more inclusive environment for multilingual learners to develop their critical thinking. The high regard for student learners' entire repertoires promotes their abilities of interpreting, analysing, evaluating, inferring, and self-regulating a problem or a case.

Besides, when critically using different languages to participate in classroom activities, multilingual learners attempt to understand the content knowledge deeply. Diverse language practices serve as scaffoldings for students' receptive and productive learning, then fostering their classroom involvement. With the addition of multimodalities, students' senses can be mobilised in class. Multimodal resources, including but not limited to oral, written, visual and audio forms, enrich the approaches to learning so that students find it more fascinating to attend second language writing programs (Sun et al., 2021). With the development of students' critical thinking and content comprehension, they are able to engage in effective communication.

To carry out translanguaging pedagogies, teachers need not be multilinguals. Instead, they should be co-learners, valuing multilingual speakers' full linguistic and semiotic repertoires (Liu, Lo, Lin, 2020) and learning experiences. They must learn that each voice is valuable, that different perspectives are an asset to the whole group (Canagarajah, 2013). We live in a translanguaging world, and we should do our part to keep it that way.

While the research proves the contribution of translanguaging pedagogies in EFL writing education, it is necessary for teachers to consider occasions in which L1 use in teaching practices is appropriate. Furthermore, the teachers should be aware of the pedagogical purposes of translanguaging application. While the research on translanguaging in an EFL writing course is still rather tentative and exploratory, it may provide insights into the fields of bi/multilingual education and EFL writing.

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