

Translanguaging in multilingual classrooms: Teachers' practices, observations and beliefs about the use of translanguaging in English language classrooms for adult learners in Mumbai

Amita Pai Revankar

Abstract:

This study investigates teachers' practices, observations and beliefs about the use of translanguaging in English language classrooms for adult learners in Mumbai (India). The study employed a questionnaire survey to collect empirical evidence of teachers' practices, observations and beliefs about the use of languages other than English in the English language classroom and semi-structured interviews to investigate teachers' rationales regarding their L1/L2 practices and the complexity of their beliefs regarding these practices. 54 teachers from government, government-aided, non-governmental and private institutions from the adult education classrooms responded to an exploratory survey consisting of 28 quantitative and two qualitative questions which gathered information regarding frequency of translanguaging for various purposes and the perceived importance of these practices.

The survey findings reveal some gap in teachers' classroom practices and their beliefs about the importance of translanguaging. While the majority of teachers

perceive the importance of every use of translanguaging, they only make occasional use of it, and mostly to help students with lower proficiency. And only a small number of teachers promote it actively. Teachers from this study knowingly or unknowingly show an inclination for monolingual instructional practices, which suggests 'guilty multilingualism'. The four interview findings indicate that teachers' beliefs regarding translanguaging use emanating from their experiences and context are quite complex and diverse and affect their classroom translanguaging practices.

Evidence suggests that local teachers with their experiences are best placed to determine the optimal language practices for their environment. It is also expected that English remains the dominant language in English language classrooms. However, since multilingualism and translanguaging exist naturally in the sociolinguistic society of Mumbai, this study argues that translanguaging may well be perceived and preferred as a relevant instructional strategy in English language classrooms of Mumbai to include more groups of marginalised adult learners who are neglected because of the English-only ideological power.