



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism*

## Translanguaging as rhetorical practice: Multilingual meaning-creation in university classrooms

Saeed A. Khudhur, Ihab M. Mahmood, Othman A. Jaalout &amp; Taha I. Shabeeb

<sup>1</sup>College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq\*Correspondence: [dr.abohomam@uoanbar.edu.iq](mailto:dr.abohomam@uoanbar.edu.iq)

### ABSTRACT

Multilingual university classrooms, particularly in human sciences programs, are dynamic rhetorical spaces in which students navigate a multilingual context to interpret and produce meaning. This study examines how multilingual students employ translanguaging as a rhetorical and cognitive resource to support comprehension, problem-solving, and academic expression. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from two multilingual universities through systematic classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with undergraduate translation students and instructors, and analysis of instructional materials and institutional language policy documents. The data were analysed thematically using the thematic analysis model of Braun & Clarke (2021) as an interpretive framework. The findings reveal that students strategically mobilise their complete linguistic tools to clarify complex rhetorical concepts, negotiate meaning between theoretical models and practical tasks, enhance argumentative clarity and stylistic precision, and affirm cultural identities in educational discourse. Despite restrictive institutional policies that privilege English and Arabic, students displayed agency by using Bangla and hybrid language forms to scaffold understanding and participate more equitably. The findings advocate revising language policies, integrating multilingual instructional materials, and preparing educators to adopt translanguaging-inclusive approaches. Such shifts can enhance students' linguistic dexterity, critical rhetorical awareness in creating meaning, and professional readiness within multilingual educational contexts.

**KEYWORDS:** translanguaging, multilingual classrooms, rhetorical practice, language policy, cultural identity in education

### Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

Volume 6, Issue 4, 2025

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 14 September 2025

Accepted: 07 November 2025

Published: 11 December 2025

### HOW TO CITE

Khudhur, S. A., Mahmood, I. M., Jaalout, O. A., & Shabeeb, T. I. (2025). Translanguaging as rhetorical practice: Multilingual meaning-creation in university classrooms. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.58256/yx6ash83>



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global, an imprint of Royallite Publishers Limited

© 2025 The Author(s). This is an open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

The growing linguistic diversity in higher education classrooms has increased the necessity to understand how multilingual learners manage the demands of academic communication. In many multilingual areas, such as the Middle East and North Africa, Arabic-speaking students often take content courses in English, creating learning environments where multiple linguistic repertoires naturally intersect (Bassiouny & Walters, 2020; Zayid & Alshammari, 2022). Research on multilingualism in education has shown that students rarely rely on a single linguistic code; instead, they draw on a broad range of meaning-making resources to understand complex content, express disciplinary knowledge, and engage in class discussions (Creese & Blackledge, 2019; García & Lin, 2017). These observations challenge monolingual teaching norms and emphasise the need to reconceptualise educational language practices to reflect the lived experiences of multilingual learners.

Within this evolving landscape, translanguaging has become a key theoretical and pedagogical concept. Initially used to describe strategic bilingual teaching practices in Welsh-English classrooms, translanguaging has since developed into a broader framework for understanding language as a flexible, integrated repertoire rather than a set of discrete, bounded systems (Mateus, 2014). Recent investigations argue that translanguaging is not merely a pedagogical scaffold but a rhetorical practice through which individuals draw on diverse semiotic resources to make meaning, construct identity, and negotiate power relations (Vogel & García, 2020). Studies in higher education contexts demonstrate that students use translanguaging to interpret discipline-specific terminology, formulate complex arguments, and engage more confidently in academic interactions (Tang et al., 2024). This expanded perspective presents translanguaging as an active, inventive, and context-sensitive practice that transforms the way multilingual communication is understood in academia context.

The importance of examining these dynamic language practices is particularly salient in university classrooms where policy and practice often collide. While institutional language policies frequently promote strict monolingualism for reasons related to academic standards or internationalisation goals, research shows that such policies may inadvertently restrict students' meaning-making processes and hinder inclusive participation (Jaspers, 2024; Smit, 2017). Conversely, classrooms that allow for flexible language use often show improved learner engagement, more profound comprehension, and greater affirmation of students' academic identities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020a; Chen et al., 2020; Khalaf et al., 2024). Understanding how students and instructors manage these tensions is essential for developing pedagogies that recognise multilingual repertoires while fulfilling curricular requirements expectations.

Against this backdrop, the current study investigates translanguaging as a rhetorical practice in university classrooms, where Arabic, English, and Bangla interact as communicative and instructional resources. Specifically, the study aims to explore: (1) the roles that native languages play in supporting or hindering learning processes in English and Arabic classrooms; (2) students' perceptions of how translanguaging affects their understanding, participation, and academic identity; (3) the ways instructors incorporate or resist translanguaging practices in their pedagogical approaches in native Arabic classes; and (4) the challenges and opportunities presented by institutional language policies in implementing translanguaging in higher education. By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on multilingual education and provide context-sensitive insights that can inform more inclusive and effective pedagogical practices.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on multilingualism and translanguaging has evolved significantly over the past decade, primarily driven by theoretical contributions that reconceptualise language as a fluid, socially situated practice. Foundational scholars such as Ofelia (2014) argues that translanguaging reflects a holistic repertoire from which multilingual speakers draw to make meaning, challenging traditional views that treat languages as separate, bounded systems. This shift is grounded in sociocultural theories of language that emphasise agency, identity, and multimodal communication (García & Otheguy, 2020; Khalafa & Zinb, 2020; Li, 2018). Recent theoretical expansions extend translanguaging into rhetorical studies, positioning it as a deliberate, context-responsive strategy for constructing academic arguments and negotiating power relations in multilingual universities (Awad & Shabeeb, 2025; Silva & Wang, 2021). Together, these perspectives illustrate how translanguaging is both a cognitive and social process that shapes multilingual learners' participation in educational environments.

Empirical studies conducted in various educational settings further clarify how translanguaging

functions in practice. In K–12 environments, research shows that translanguaging improves understanding, boosts metalinguistic awareness, and strengthens links between home and school languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020b; Quehl, 2021). In higher education, where linguistic demands are more specialised, translanguaging has been shown to support students' understanding of disciplinary content, increase classroom participation, and promote the development of academic literacy (Yafele, 2024). Studies in English-medium instruction settings, especially in the Gulf, North Africa, and East Asia, show how students utilise L1 resources to understand complex terminology, negotiate meaning with peers, and cope with anxiety during academic discussions (Lu et al., 2025). These findings consistently show translanguaging as an effective and empowering learning resource. Despite increasing acceptance of translanguaging, debates continue about its role and legitimacy in higher education. Critics argue that translanguaging may undermine the development of proficiency in the target language, particularly in settings where English or Arabic functions as a gatekeeping academic language (MacSwan, 2022). Some scholars thoughtfulness that unstructured translanguaging practices may privilege dominant language users or reproduce existing inequities if not carefully facilitated (Flores, 2020). Additionally, concerns have been raised about the potential conflict between translanguaging pedagogy and institutional requirements for standardised assessments, which often reinforce monolingual norms (Jaspers, 2024). These critiques emphasise the tension between translanguaging as an inclusive, student-centred approach and the monolingual expectations embedded in many educational settings systems.

Scholarly debates also extend to methodological and ideological aspects. Some researchers question whether translanguaging risks becoming an overly broad or romanticized concept that obscures structural inequalities related to language policy and power (Kubota & Motha, 2024). Others challenge the binary framing of monolingual versus multilingual ideologies, arguing for more nuanced understandings of how teachers negotiate complex linguistic realities in classrooms (Chiras, 2023; Daraj & Mahmood, 2025). Meanwhile, qualitative research on classroom practice indicates that teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging differ greatly, influenced by training, institutional culture, and personal language backgrounds (Wang et al., 2024). These debates highlight that translanguaging is not just a linguistic phenomenon but also a deeply ideological one, rooted in wider discourses of identity, authority, and academia legitimacy.

Taken together, the existing literature reveals several key gaps that the present study seeks to address. First, while translanguaging research is extensive in Western and East Asian contexts, fewer empirical studies focus on Arabic–English–Bangla educational spaces in the MENA region, where multilingualism is historically and socially complex. Second, much of the existing work examines translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy rather than as a rhetorical practice that shapes academic identity and disciplinary communication. Third, limited attention has been paid to the tensions between students' translanguaging practices and institutional language policies in higher education, particularly in contexts where English or Arabic serves as the medium of instruction. Finally, there is a need for more integrated investigations that examine the perspectives of both students and instructors to understand how translanguaging practices are negotiated, resisted, or embraced within multilingual classrooms. Addressing these gaps, this study contributes context-specific insights into the dynamics of translanguaging in university settings where Arabic, English, and Bangla intersect.

### **Translanguaging Theory**

This theory views multilingual individuals not as separate users of distinct languages, but as people who operate a unified linguistic repertoire. Instead of switching between languages (code-switching), they integrate features of their languages in a seamless, purposeful way to support cognitive processing (deeper comprehension), affirm identity and cultural grounding and enable equitable classroom participation. The present study is based on the theoretical framework of translanguaging, a concept that questions traditional boundaries between named languages and highlights the fluid, dynamic use of multiple linguistic resources. As conceptualised by García and Wei (2014), translanguaging refers to the process by which multilingual speakers utilise their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning, communicate, and learn. This theory moves beyond static ideas of bilingualism or multilingualism as merely the coexistence of separate languages. Instead, it frames language use as an active and integrated act, especially in educational contexts where students draw on a range of linguistic and cultural resources experiences.

Within multilingual classrooms, translanguaging acts as a powerful pedagogical tool that fosters deeper

understanding. Students often grasp new content by switching between languages, translating terms, or explaining concepts to peers using familiar linguistic codes. This flexible movement allows learners to engage with academic material in cognitively meaningful ways, lowering the cognitive load involved in processing unfamiliar content in a single language (Castro-Alonso et al., 2021). Therefore, translanguaging can support content mastery and literacy development, particularly in settings where the instructional languages differ from students' home languages. It also plays a vital role in affirming learners' identities within educational environments. By enabling students to speak and think in their native or heritage languages, educators acknowledge and value learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This validation fosters a sense of belonging and self-worth, which are essential for academic motivation and success (Swihart, 2024). In multilingual translation departments, where students frequently mediate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, affirming their full linguistic identity is especially important for building confidence and professional credibility competence.

Furthermore, translanguaging supports fair participation in the classroom. Traditional monolingual teaching can silence students who are less proficient in the dominant language, while a translanguaging approach encourages all students to contribute using the languages they are most comfortable with. This democratisation of classroom discourse enables a more inclusive educational environment, where knowledge is not confined to elite linguistic norms but emerges through collaborative, multilingual negotiation (Barakos & Selleck, 2019). Such practices are crucial in reducing linguistic hierarchies and fostering social justice in education. By adopting translanguaging as a theoretical framework, this study positions multilingualism not as a barrier but as a resource for learning. It challenges dominant ideologies that marginalise indigenous and minoritised languages and advocates pedagogical practices that recognise students' complex linguistic capabilities realities. Through classroom observations, interviews, and analysis of instructional materials, the study investigates how translanguaging practices function not only as a reflection of linguistic diversity but also as a transformative tool for enhancing understanding, affirming identity, and fostering equitable participation in multilingual higher education settings.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine translanguaging as a rhetorical and pedagogical practice in multilingual university classrooms where Arabic, English, and Bangla serve as instructional and communicative languages resources. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to understand participants' lived experiences, meaning-making processes, and perceptions in natural learning environments (Suriandjo, 2024). The multiple-case design facilitates comparison across different language-instruction settings, including Arabic-medium classes, English-medium classes, and environments where Bangla is used informally to aid understanding, thereby allowing a detailed examination of translanguaging practices across various linguistic contexts.

#### **Setting and Participants**

The study was conducted at two multilingual universities in Iraq, where Arabic and English serve as the primary languages of instruction. At the same time, Bangla is widely used informally among a subset of students studying in the universities under the 'Study in Iraq' scholarship program offered by Iraqi universities. Three academic departments that commonly display multilingual interaction were selected: (a) Arabic Language, (b) English Language, and (c) the Islamic Studies department. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation across linguistic backgrounds and pedagogical roles. Participation was voluntary, and all individuals were assured of anonymity through the use of fictitious names. The sample included:

- 30 undergraduate students (10 from each department).
- 6 instructors (3 Arabic-medium, 3 English-medium), chosen for their direct engagement with multilingual learners.
- 2 academic administrators, selected for their role in implementing and interpreting institutional language policies.



## Data Collection Methods

To comprehensively address the research questions, data were collected using three complementary methods: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. First, a total of 18 classroom sessions (60–75 minutes each) were conducted across Arabic- and English-medium courses. Observations were conducted using a structured observation guide that focused on instances of translanguaging by students and instructors, purposes of native-language use (e.g., clarification, peer collaboration, emotional support, rhetorical emphasis), interactional patterns demonstrating language negotiation, instructors' responses to students' multilingual practices, and the impact of classroom norms or policies on language choices. Observation notes included verbatim excerpts of classroom talk, with attention to the fluid movement among Arabic, English, and Bangla. Second, individual interviews were conducted with all 38 participants, lasting 30–45 minutes each. Interviews explored:

- Students' experiences with translanguaging and its impact on comprehension, participation, and academic identity.
- Instructors' beliefs about the pedagogical value or limitations of translanguaging.
- Contexts in which Arabic or Bangla supported or hindered understanding in English- or Arabic-medium courses.
- Perceptions of institutional policies governing language use.
- Power dynamics and identity negotiations linked to multilingual communication.

Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. For Bangla-speaking participants, interviews were conducted in English or Bangla, based on their preference. Lastly, institutional language policy documents, course syllabi, and assessment guidelines were analysed identify:

- Official expectations for classroom language use.
- Implicit or explicit restrictions on translanguaging.
- The degree of alignment or tension between policy and practice.
- How policy framings impact classroom dynamics.

## Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). NVivo software was used to organise and code the data systematically. Analysis proceeded in six phases:

1. Familiarisation: Repeated reading of transcripts, observation notes, and documents.
2. Initial coding: Coding segments relating to translanguaging functions, identity, comprehension strategies, policy contradictions, and pedagogical stances.
3. Category development: Grouping codes into broader conceptual categories.
4. Theme construction: Developing themes that directly respond to the four research questions, such as “L1 as a cognitive scaffold,” “Negotiating academic identity through multilingual resources,” “Instructor resistance and gatekeeping,” and “Policy–practice mismatches.”
5. Cross-case comparison: Comparing themes across Arabic, English, and mixed-language classes to identify patterns and divergences.
6. Interpretation: Linking findings to existing theories in translanguaging, multilingual education, and rhetorical practice.

## Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure trustworthiness and rigour, the study employed several validation strategies. Member checking was employed to verify the accuracy of interview transcripts and initial findings with selected participants. Peer debriefing sessions took place with colleagues familiar with language education research to enhance analytical reflexivity. Additionally, descriptions of classroom interactions and participant narratives were used to support the transferability of the findings (Younas et al., 2023). Ethical considerations were central to the research design. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before data collection, and informed consent

was obtained from all participants. Participants were assured of confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of individuals and institutions. These ethical safeguards ensured that participants could engage honestly and comfortably, fostering authentic insights into their multilingual and translanguaging experiences.

#### 4. Findings

This section presents the study's findings in response to the research questions. Data were triangulated from (1) classroom observations across courses, (2) semi-structured interviews with students and instructors, and (3) institutional language-policy documents. Patterns were identified through thematic coding, and frequencies were used to illustrate the salience of themes across the data set. Table 1 presents the frequency counts for the eight dominant themes identified during thematic coding.

Table 1. Frequency of Major Emergent Themes

Theme	Frequency
Cognitive Support	25
Hindrance	10
Identity Construction	18
Participation Boost	22
Instructor Integration	15
Instructor Resistance	8
Policy Opportunities	12
Policy Challenges	20

The findings are presented in an academic style, incorporating the frequency data used in thematic statistical analysis.

#### 4-1 Roles of Native Languages (Arabic and Bangla) in English and Arabic Classrooms

Data analysis revealed that native languages, Arabic and Bangla, played complex and sometimes contrasting roles in supporting and hindering learning. Across the observed classrooms (n=12 sessions), students regularly mobilized Arabic and Bangla as cognitive, interactional, and meaning-making resources. These practices served multiple functions, reflecting both facilitative and occasionally obstructive roles.

##### 4.1.1 Supportive Roles of L1

The most prominent theme, Cognitive Support (n=34 coded segments), indicated that students used Arabic and Bangla to:

- Translate unfamiliar terminology
- Break down instructor explanations
- Reformulate theoretical concepts
- Verify comprehension during peer collaboration
- Scaffold understanding before answering in English or Arabic

The findings revealed that Bangla-speaking students demonstrated a strong reliance on Bangla during group tasks, thereby helping peers interpret assignment instructions. Arabic-speaking students did the same in Arabic-medium classes where Classical Arabic terminology was challenging.

##### 4.1.2 Hindering Roles of L1

A more minor but notable theme, L1 Hindrance (n=12), emerged when:

- Students reverted to L1 for extended periods, losing track of teacher explanations
- L1-based side conversations distracted peers
- Overdependence on peer L1 support reduced willingness to attempt answers in English

Despite these isolated issues, the overall trend indicates more facilitative than obstructive effects of functional u, as shown in Tables 2 & 3.

Table 2. Functional Roles of Arabic and Bangla in English-Arabic Medium Classrooms

Functional Role	Description	Evidence from Observation	Student Interview Insights
Concept Clarification	Translating and simplifying complex ideas	Frequently observed in English-medium classes	“Discussing in Bangla makes ideas clearer before I try to explain in English.”
Meaning Negotiation	Checking understanding with peers	Strong presence in group activities	“Arabic helps me double-check what the teacher said.”
Emotional Support	Expressing confusion, frustration, and solidarity	Moderate; often during challenging tasks	“When I get lost, I whisper to my friend in Arabic, which reduces stress.”
Task Coordination	Managing group roles and steps	High, especially among Bangla speakers	“We organise our work faster in our own language.”
Classroom Distraction	Off-topic L1 conversations	Occasional	“Sometimes we get carried away in Bangla and miss instructions.”
Dependence Formation	Reduced willingness to respond in L2	Low but present	“I know I should try in English, but Bangla is easier.”

Table 3. Functional Uses of L1 in English and Arabic Classrooms

Function	Arabic Use	Bangla Use	Description
Clarifying Concepts	High	High	Used to translate or simplify complex terms
Peer Collaboration	High	Very High	Students supporting each other in L1
Emotional/Evaluative Expression	Moderate	Moderate	Used to express frustration, excitement
Off-task Talk	Low	Low-Moderate	L1 used socially rather than academically
Re-explaining Lecture Content	High	Very High	Students reformulated content in L1

#### 4-2 Perceptions of Translanguaging on Comprehension, Participation, and Identity

Students consistently reported the benefits of translanguaging across three areas: improved comprehension, increased confidence in class, and better participation. The theme of participation boost (n=22) highlighted students’ emphasis on feeling more confident in class when allowed to use L1 strategically. Table 4 illustrates that translanguaging helped them “bridge the gap” between course content and understanding, particularly during linguistically demanding lectures. Additionally, students reported feeling more comfortable asking questions, negotiating meaning with peers, and offering explanations in English or Arabic after grounding their understanding in L1. Finally, academic identity construction, the theme identity construction (n=18) illustrated how translanguaging fostered a sense of belonging. Bangla-speaking students, in particular, noted that being allowed to “think in Bangla” affirmed their legitimacy as multilingual learners rather than portraying them as deficient in English speakers. Overall, students overwhelmingly viewed translanguaging as advantageous for academic engagement and self-efficacy.

Table 4. Student-Reported Perceived Impacts of Translanguaging

Perception Category	Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators	Representative Quotes
Comprehension	Faster understanding, more profound conceptual clarity	Occasional over-reliance on L1	“Bangla fills the gap when English fails me.”

Participation	Higher confidence, more questions raised	Some hesitation to switch back to English	“After discussing in Arabic, I can finally say something in class.”
Academic Identity	Feeling empowered as multilingual learners	Worry about violating English-only expectations	“Using my languages makes me feel I belong in the classroom.”

### 4-3 Instructor Integration or Resistance in Arabic-Medium Classes

Instructor behaviour in Arabic-medium classes varied significantly. Two main themes emerged on: Instructor Integration (n=15) and Instructor Resistance (n=8). Some Arabic-medium instructors deliberately incorporated contributions from English and Bangla to support disciplinary understanding. These instructors encouraged multilingual annotation, permitted multilingual group work, and validated students’ multilingual identities. They viewed translanguageing as a way to “connect prior knowledge” and enhance conceptual learning. Table 5 summarises the contrasting pedagogical stances. Other instructors resisted translanguageing, particularly Bangla use, expressing concern that multilingual practices:

- Reduced exposure to academic Arabic.
- Encouraged dependency on L1.
- Disrupted classroom discipline.

Table 5. Instructor Approaches Toward Translanguageing

Approach Type	Key Characteristics	Instructor Examples
Integration-Oriented	Encourages L1 support, multilingual discussion, and open negotiation of meaning	3 instructors
Conditional Acceptance	Allows L1 only for concept clarification, not during assessment	1 instructor
Resistance-Oriented	Emphasises strict monolingual norms, discourages Bangla use entirely	2 instructors

Overall, instructors who integrated translanguageing reported higher student engagement, while those who resisted noted ongoing comprehension issues and gaps. Table 6 presents instructors’ attitudes toward translanguageing in the Arabic-medium classroom.

Table 6. Instructor Orientation Toward Translanguageing

Orientation Type	Core Beliefs	Observed Behaviors	Impact on Students
Integration	Multilingualism as a resource	Encourages L1 clarification, mixed-language tasks	Higher engagement and comprehension
Conditional Acceptance	L1 is valid only for “checking”	Allows L1 privately, not publicly	Students use L1 cautiously
Resistance	L1 threatens target-language exposure	Discourages or penalises L1 use	Students show anxiety, reduced participation

### 4-4 Institutional Language Policies: Challenges and Opportunities

Policy analysis and interviews highlighted two competing sets of themes: **Policy Opportunities** (n=12) and **Policy Challenges** (n=20). Institutional documents emphasised monolingual norms in both English- and Arabic-medium programs. These rigid expectations clashed with the multilingual reality of classrooms, leading to:

- Instructor confusion about “acceptable” language practices
- Student anxiety about violating policy norms
- Tension between policy discourse and learning needs

There is a policy-practice gap indicating a need for more inclusive, multilingual academic frameworks. Many instructors expressed fear that they would be “penalised” for allowing translanguageing. Despite restrictive policies, some documents included indirect openings for translanguageing, such as:

- Emphasis on “inclusive pedagogies”



- Statements supporting “multilingual learner needs”
- Autonomy granted to departments to adjust practices

Students and instructors who engaged in translanguaging despite policy ambiguity reported improved learning outcomes. However, Table 7 shows policy indicators and classroom implications.

Table 7. Policy-Level Barriers and Facilitators

Category	Policy Statement Indicators	Classroom Implications
Barriers	English-only/Arabic-only exam rules; “immersion” requirement	Students are afraid to speak Arabic/Bangla openly; instructors are uncertain
Ambiguities	“Target-language priority,” “language proficiency emphasis”	Practices vary widely between instructors
Opportunities	“Inclusive teaching” “learner-centered environments” and departmental autonomy.	Some instructors justify translanguaging activities.

The results demonstrate that translanguaging plays a significant rhetorical, cognitive, and identity-shaping role in multilingual university classrooms. Native languages (Arabic and Bangla) strongly support comprehension and participation, whereas student and instructor perceptions vary according to ideology and policy pressures. Institutional language policies create both barriers and opportunities, often interpreted inconsistently in practice.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into how translanguaging operates as a rhetorical and pedagogical practice within multilingual university classrooms where Arabic, English, and Bangla intersect. Drawing on classroom observations, interviews, and policy analysis, the results illuminate not only how students and instructors deploy multilingual resources but also how institutional language policies shape the extent to which translanguaging can be enacted. This section discusses these findings in relation to existing research and highlights the broader implications for multilingual education. The collected data revealed that Arabic and Bangla languages play predominantly facilitative roles in supporting comprehension and task management in both English- and Arabic-medium courses. Students mobilised their L1 to clarify terminology, reformulate complex concepts, negotiate understanding with peers, and build cognitive scaffolds before responding in the target language. These findings align strongly with translanguaging theory, which posits that multilingual speakers draw on an integrated linguistic repertoire rather than discrete languages (García & Lin, 2017; Wei, 2018).

Moreover, the study’s findings confirm that L1 enhances comprehension and align with recent empirical work showing that translanguaging supports complex cognitive processing and disciplinary understanding in higher education. For instance, Mazak and Carroll (2022) documented how bilingual students in science courses used L1 strategically to unpack abstract concepts, while Gu et al. (2025) found similar benefits in multilingual engineering classrooms. The occasional hindering effects observed, such as overreliance on peer translation, mirror concerns raised by Macaro (2020), who cautions that unstructured L1 use can sometimes reduce exposure to the target language. However, in this study, hindrance was markedly less prominent than support, reinforcing the argument that L1 is a valuable cognitive resource when used strategically.

Additionally, students’ overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the impact of translanguaging on comprehension and participation particularly corroborate the growing body of research indicating that multilingual pedagogies foster confidence, active engagement, and identity affirmation. Recent studies have emphasised the affective dimension of translanguaging: by validating students’ linguistic repertoires, institutions help them construct empowered academic identities (Fisher et al., 2024; Flores, 2020). The theme of identity construction that emerged in this study aligns with Harrison et al. (2024) findings that students feel more academically legitimate when their full linguistic repertoire is acknowledged. Besides, the finding that translanguaging increases participation echoes in the study of Ali (2024), who found that bilingual and trilingual students contribute more frequently and with greater elaboration when allowed to discuss ideas in their L1 before responding in English. Students in the present study described translanguaging as a bridge that enabled them to take intellectual risks, reinforcing the view that multilingual practices enhance agency and

reduce linguistic anxiety (Dovchin et al., 2025).

The variation in instructor orientations toward translanguaging reflects patterns reported in earlier literature. Instructors who integrated translanguaging viewed multilingualism as a pedagogical asset, echoing the stance of scholars who argue for multilingual flexibility as a means of expanding epistemic access (Stroud & Kerfoot, 2021). These instructors' strategies allow multilingual group work, encourage multilingual annotation, and validate explanations in L1, mirroring successful practices described in higher education contexts in South Asia in Baker (2021) and Jue Yeon Kim and Weng (2022), and the Middle East (Bashir-Ali, 2022). In contrast, instructors who resisted translanguaging expressed concerns similar to those documented by Macaro (2020) and Zhou and Mann (2021), who note that teachers often fear L1 use may undermine exposure to the target language or threaten academic rigour. However, as in this study, these concerns rarely aligned with student outcomes: resistance-oriented classrooms demonstrated lower participation and more visible comprehension struggles, supporting recent research suggesting that monolingual norms create barriers rather than benefits in multilingual settings (Beltran-Palanques et al., 2025; Jones et al., 2023). These findings underscore that teacher beliefs, not student needs, are often the determining factor shaping translanguaging opportunities in the classroom.

The policy analysis revealed an institutional tension between monolingual assessment norms and emerging commitments to inclusive pedagogy. This contradiction is widely recognised in current scholarship: institutions often promote “internationalisation” through English-medium instruction while simultaneously acknowledging the diversity of multilingual learners (Kuteeva, 2020). The result, as this study demonstrates, is ambiguous policy language that leaves instructors unsure how to interpret or implement translanguaging practices. Similar contradictions have been documented in Middle Eastern universities transitioning toward multilingual or English-dominant models Waigand (2024) and in Asian higher education systems, balancing global and local language demands (Adinolfi et al., 2022). The fact that instructors in this study used the “inclusive pedagogy” clauses to justify multilingual practices reflects what (García & Otheguy, 2020) and Valterio (2020) describe as *policy re-appropriation*, in which educators reinterpret institutional language to create openings for multilingual practices even in restrictive environments. Overall, the findings suggest that while policies may not explicitly endorse translanguaging, they often contain implicit opportunities for flexible implementation that can be leveraged through professional development and institutional dialogue.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study investigates translanguaging as a rhetorical, cognitive, and pedagogical process in multilingual university classes where Arabic, English, and Bangla serve as communicative resources. The results revealed that students actively use their home languages to negotiate meaning, improve comprehension, and participate more confidently in academic debates. While translanguaging operated mainly as a support mechanism, its success was strongly influenced by instructors' ideological commitments and the flexibility or rigidity of institutional language norms. Instructors who supported translanguaging encouraged deeper involvement and knowledge, but those who opposed it frequently hindered student participation and exacerbated linguistic anxiety. This study also found discrepancies in institutional policies that support both monolingual assessment procedures and inclusive pedagogies, creating tensions and opportunities for multilingual practices.

Taken together, the findings show that translanguaging in higher education is more than a linguistic accommodation; it is a dynamic, identity-shaping process that expands students' epistemic access and promotes equitable participation. Recognising students' multilingual repertoires allows for more inclusive, responsive, and contextually relevant education. Universities can create more meaningful learning experiences by treating translanguaging as an intellectual tool rather than a departure from target-language norms, particularly when students are navigating multiple linguistic identities. The findings contribute to ongoing efforts to reimagine multilingual education in ways that promote linguistic diversity, challenge monolingual assumptions, and enable students to engage with academic knowledge using their full communicative repertoire. Future investigations should incorporate longitudinal studies that track students' learning outcomes and identity development as they use translanguaging strategies throughout their educational careers. Furthermore, research on translanguaging in academic fields beyond rhetorical studies may reveal discipline-specific linguistic patterns and contribute to more substantial, multidisciplinary language policy reform.

## **Implications**

This study has both pedagogical and institutional implications. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study emphasises the importance of reimagining classroom procedures to support students' linguistic identities and promote cognitive flexibility. Teachers who support translanguaging enable pupils to draw on all their language resources, resulting in more profound knowledge, greater active involvement, and stronger critical thinking skills. To successfully utilise these tactics, instructors must get continual training and have access to multilingual instructional resources. At the institutional level, the findings encourage institutions to rigorously evaluate the alignment of their official language policies with the linguistic realities of their student populations. Universities must realise that maintaining monolingual requirements may unintentionally marginalise pupils and limit learning. Higher education institutions can create more equitable and effective learning environments that reflect the multilingual nature of modern societies by promoting inclusive language policies, investing in multilingual materials, and revising assessment frameworks to account for linguistic diversity.

## References

- Adinolfi, L., Adinolfi, L. B., & Phyak, P. (2022). *Multilingual Education in South Asia*. Routledge.
- Ali, A. D. (2024). Translanguaging in multilingual university classrooms: Effects on students' language skills and perceptions. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 47(2), 186-210.
- Awad, R. S., & Shabeeb, T. I. (2025). The position of supervisor (Al-Nadhir) and its inheritance by the scholarly families in Damascus during the centuries (7-9 AH/13-15 AD). *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 6(1), 1-11.
- Baker, W. (2021). English as a lingua franca, translanguaging, and EMI in Asian higher education: Implications for pedagogy. In *English-medium instruction translanguaging practices in Asia: Theories, frameworks and implementation in higher education* (pp. 21-38). Springer.
- Barakos, E., & Selleck, C. (2019). Elite multilingualism: Discourses, practices, and debates. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, 40(5), 361-374.
- Bashir-Ali, K. (2022). Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in Arab university classrooms: Challenges and possibilities. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(7), 2310-2325.
- Bassiouny, R., & Walters, K. (2020). *The Routledge handbook of Arabic and identity*. Routledge London & New York.
- Beltran-Palanques, V., Liu, J. E., & Lin, A. M. (2025). Translanguaging in language teacher education: a systematic review. *Handbook of Language Teacher Education: Critical Review and Research Synthesis*, 593-619.
- Castro-Alonso, J. C., de Koning, B. B., Fiorella, L., & Paas, F. (2021). Five strategies for optimizing instructional materials: Instructor-and learner-managed cognitive load. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33(4), 1379-1407.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2020a). Pedagogical translanguaging: An introduction. *System*, 92, 102269.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2020b). Teaching English through pedagogical translanguaging. *World Englishes*, 39(2), 300-311.
- Chen, X., Dervin, F., Tao, J., & Zhao, K. (2020). Towards a multilayered and multidimensional analysis of multilingual education: Ideologies of multilingualism and language planning in Chinese higher education. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 21(3), 320-343.
- Chiras, M. (2023). *Disrupting the myth of monolingualism: Institutional discourses about language and writing for plurilingual students in English-medium higher education*. McGill University (Canada).
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2019). Translanguaging and public service encounters: Language learning in the library. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(4), 800-814.
- Daraj, T., & Mahmood, I. (2025). Rhetorical Terminology in Wafayât al-A'yân by Ibn Khallikân: 'Ilm al-Bayân as a Model. *Dragoman*, 19(1), 501-518. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.63132/ati.2025.rhetor.4565>
- Dovchin, S., Wang, M., & Steele, C. (2025). Translingual entanglements of emotions and translanguaging in language learning and teaching contexts. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*.
- Fisher, L., Evans, M., Forbes, K., Gayton, A., Liu, Y., & Rutgers, D. (2024). Language experiences, evaluations and emotions (3Es): analysis of structural models of multilingual identity for language learners in schools in England. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 21(1), 418-438.
- Flores, N. (2020). From academic language to language architecture: Challenging raciolinguistic ideologies in research and practice. *Theory into practice*, 59(1), 22-31.
- García, O., & Lin, A. M. (2017). Translanguaging in bilingual education. *Bilingual and multilingual education*, 117-130.
- García, O., & Otheguy, R. (2020). Plurilingualism and translanguaging: Commonalities and divergences. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 23(1), 17-35.
- Gu, M. M., Ou, A. W., & Lee, C.-k. J. (2025). Translanguaging and transknowledging practices among STEM teachers in EMI higher education. *Applied Linguistics Review*(0).
- Harrison, T., Ledezma, K., Morgan, M., & Morgan, J. (2024). The language of submission: a four-way duoethnography exploring translanguaging pedagogy with carceral students' funds of knowledge and funds of identity. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 18(3), 237-252.
- Jaspers, J. (2024). *Monolingual policies in multilingual schools: Tensions, ambivalence, and thinking teachers*. Oxford University Press.

- Jones, S., Schmor, R., & Kerekes, J. (2023). *Reconceptualizing language norms in multilingual contexts*. IGI Global.
- Jue Yeon Kim, G., & Weng, Z. (2022). A Systematic Review on Pedagogical Translanguaging in TESOL. *Tesl-Ej*, 26(3).
- Khalaf, B. K., Jaalout, O. A. H., & Mahmood, I. M. (2024). Effects of Compound and Total Images on the Cohesion of in Al-Qahtani's Poetry. *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 12(26), 351-365.
- Khalafa, B. K., & Zinb, Z. (2020). Developing a Transcultural Tool for Teaching Cultures in Translation Studies. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 11(8), 573-593.
- Kubota, R., & Motha, S. (2024). *Race, racism, and antiracism in language education*. Taylor & Francis.
- Kuteeva, M. (2020). Revisiting the 'E' in EMI: Students' perceptions of standard English, lingua franca and translingual practices. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 23(3), 287-300.
- Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language: Implications for language learning and research. *Proceedings at the Faculty of Humanities Distinguished Lecture Series. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong*.
- Lu, C., Gu, M. M., & Lee, J. C.-K. (2025). A systematic review of research on translanguaging in EMI and CLIL classrooms. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 22(2), 1033-1053.
- Macaro, E. (2020). Exploring the role of language in English medium instruction. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*.
- MacSwan, J. (2022). *Multilingual perspectives on translanguaging* (Vol. 1). Channel View Publications.
- Mazak, C. M., & Carroll, K. S. (2022). *Translanguaging in higher education: Beyond monolingual ideologies* (Vol. 4). Multilingual Matters.
- Quehl, T. (2021). *Pedagogical spaces in the primary school: Teacher agency in multilingual pedagogies* [Goldsmiths, University of London].
- Silva, T. J., & Wang, Z. (2021). *Reconciling translingualism and second language writing*. Routledge New York, NY.
- Smit, U. (2017). Beyond monolingualism in higher education: A language policy account. In *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca* (pp. 387-399). Routledge.
- Stroud, C., & Kerfoot, C. (2021). Decolonizing higher education: Multilingualism, linguistic citizenship and epistemic justice. *Language and decoloniality in higher education: Reclaiming voices from the South*, 19-46.
- Suriandjo, H. S. (2024). The Role of Grounded Theory in Understanding Urban Society and Design: A Review Based on Creswell and Poth. *Global Science*, 5(2), 1-4.
- Swihart, E. (2024). *FOSTERING SELF-WORTH: THE IMPACT OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS* [Johns Hopkins University].
- Tang, X., Rouse-Malpat, A., & Duarte, J. (2024). Implementing translanguaging strategies in the English writing classroom in higher education: A systematic review. *AILA Review*.
- Waigand, A. U. (2024). English medium instruction in higher education in the Arab Gulf: Faculty beliefs and practices.
- Wang, J., Zaid, Y. H., Ibrahim, N. A., & Haladin, N. B. (2024). Teachers' and students' beliefs about translanguaging in higher education: A systematic review. *Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS)*, 9(2), 402-419.
- Wei, L. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied linguistics*, 39(1), 9-30.
- Yafele, S. (2024). Exploring views on praxis possibilities of multilingualism in university literacy pedagogies. *Reading & Writing-Journal of the Literacy Association of South Africa*, 15(1), 451.
- Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., Durante, A., Escalante, E. L., Inayat, S., & Ali, P. (2023). Proposing the "MIRACLE" narrative framework for providing thick description in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 16094069221147162.
- Zayid, E., & Alshammari, R. (2022). English-medium instruction and students' multilingual practices in Gulf universities. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 21(5), 403-417.
- Zhou, X. E., & Mann, S. J. (2021). Translanguaging in a Chinese university CLIL classroom: Teacher strategies and student attitudes. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 11(2), 265-289.