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EFL Learners' Translanguaging Processes While Getting Prepared for Their Speaking Tasks in Language Classes

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Abstract

The traditional monolingual practices in language teaching are being challenged and the use of the previously known languages as a precious resource while learning a foreign language has come forward lately. In the light of this, the present study aimed to look into the translanguaging processes of Turkish learners of English as they get prepared for their group speaking tasks in the speaking lessons. The instances learners rely on translanguaging and the reasons for using it were analyzed within this study. For this purpose, the learners were assigned in groups to get ready for speaking activities in the classroom and they were audio-recorded as they were planning the speaking tasks they were asked to carry out. These recordings were listened to by the learners as part of a stimulated recall process so that they could remember the instances they had made use of translanguaging and tell the reasons for doing so. While listening to the recordings, the learners were told that they were free to stop the recordings or re-play them whenever they needed to as they filled in the forms they had been given. The forms the learners filled in included questions asking about their reasons for using translanguaging during their study. The learners were also interviewed in order to learn more about the instances of translanguaging applied in speaking lessons and the causes underlying these instances.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Translanguaging in Speaking Classes, Translanguaging Processes.

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1. Introduction

'Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret: like nature, the mother tongue (L1) creeps back in, however many times you throw it out with a pitch-fork' (Cook 2001, p.3). As it is put by Cook, even if it is tried hard to be avoided, the use of mother tongue, and in addition to it the languages learned previously seems to be inevitable in language classes. However, with the "influence of predominant national ideologies and language policies across different countries" (Wang, 2016, p.1), the dominance of the monolingual approaches in teaching a second language was strong while it is actually seen as "undesirable, unrealistic, and untenable" (Levine, 2011, p.70). In addition, the new research and scholars put forward that using the previously learned languages may even be useful rather than inhibiting the target language learning (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Wang, 2016).

In the past, while students or teachers were expected to use only the target language in foreign language classes, the use of mother tongue or the other previously learned languages was mostly seen as a taboo. However, this trend has been changing in recent years, and this change is largely supported by the concept of translanguaging, which has recently emerged in applied linguistics. Translanguaging is "the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson" (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012, p.643). With the concept of translanguaging, students and teachers are supported to benefit from their mother tongue and other languages known while learning or teaching a foreign language.

Translanguaging is a term that has emerged from the need for a new perspective to today's language teaching methods and techniques by linguists and therefore has been included in the field. This term actually covers the issue of individuals' learning a new language benefiting from their mother tongue or from different foreign languages they have learned before in the process of learning the new language (Nagy, 2018). For this purpose, the learners are expected to be able to apply for all their proficiency in previously known languages and benefit from this knowledge and experience. In this context, it is predicted that being able to benefit from more than one language in processing new information will have many benefits for both learners and teachers (Li Wei, 2018). This approach has aroused great interest among various researchers, and the term has been used as a pedagogical term to describe multilingual practices that involve making use of all linguistic resources in the

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language learning and teaching process (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; García, Johnson & Seltzer, et al. 2017).

There are various explanations of translanguaging and considering them, it can be said that in addition to its efficacy in leading the learners to be able to understand the content better, make the communication easier and supporting a safer teaching environment, it is a phenomenon that happens naturally (Canagarajah, 2011), and that is used in order to enhance the learners' meaning making processes in language classes.

In line with the above-mentioned topic and scope, the aim of the present study is to examine the translanguaging processes of students in speaking classes during the foreign language learning process, which has recently come to the fore. In line with this aim, students' language switching processes and the reasons why they make these changes, and most importantly, whether it benefits them and if so, what kind of benefit it provides will be examined.

2. Methodology

In order to gather data for the present study, a stimulated recall process and interviews were applied as part of the qualitative method. Firstly, the students were assigned some speaking tasks to get prepared in groups and they were asked to voice-record themselves as they were preparing for the tasks. After this process was completed, the students were given a table asking them to write down the instances they used their mother tongue as part of translanguaging, and the reasons they did so. Following the stimulated recalls, the students were also interviewed on their uses of translanguaging and the reasons of it. The study aimed to answer the following research question:

1. What are the EFL learners translanguaging instances and their reasons for translanguaging as they are preparing a speech in speaking classes?

2.1. Setting and Participants

The study was carried out in the fall term of the 2022-2023 academic year at the School of Foreign Languages, Pamukkale University, Turkey.

A total of 22 learners studying English at the preparatory class have participated in the stimulated recall part of the present study while 50 learners took part in the interviews.

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2.2. Data Collection

Stimulated Recall

For the stimulated recall procedure, different tasks were prepared for the learners concerning the aim of the study, and an expert's view was asked on the tasks. When the tasks were ready, the learners were assigned into groups and they were asked to carry out each task in a different day. As the learners were getting prepared for their speaking tasks within their groups, they were voice recorded. After they finished their tasks, they were asked to listen to the recordings, and as they were listening, they were asked to fiil in a formmprepared by the researcher. The table had parts where the students needed to take notes on the instances they made use of translanguaging, reasons for doing so, and if it helped them or not. The learners were informed about the stimulated recall procedures before they started.

Interviews

The semi-structured interview questions were prepared in accordance with the research question of the present study. There were three open ended questions asking about the instances the students make use of translanguaging in the speaking lessons during group works, why do they use it, if it is useful for them, and how.

After the questions were formulated, four different experts were asked for their opinions concerning the validity of the questions, and the interview questions were piloted by five students that are in a similar condition with the actual participants of the study.

2.3. Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Before the data collection procedure started, the participants were informed about the procedure of the study and they were asked for their consent. The participants for the interviews were chosen randomly, the interviews were recorded to be listened to for inductive content analysis.

The data from the stimulated recall procedure was also analyzed through inductive content analysis.

Another expert was asked to carry out the same procedure for the reliability of the results of the study.

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3. Results:

Research Question: What are the EFL learners translanguaging instances and their reasons for translanguaging as they are preparing a speech in speaking classes?

Results from the stimulated recall process:

Table 1
Codes for translanguaging instances of the learners during their preparation for the speaking tasks.

Codes for Translanguaging Instances	Total Turns
Lexical Difficulty	15
Scaffolding Friends	12
To gain time	9
Asking for Lexical Help	8
Keep the task going	4
Getting Attention	4
Task Management	3
Asking for Help to make a Sentence	3
To emphasize something	2
Grammar Deliberation	1
Asking for clarification	1

As it is seen in the table above, the most frequent reason for the learners in the present study to use translanguaging was the "Lexical Difficulty" they had during their preparation for the speaking tasks they were assigned as a group. Some of the comments of the learners concerning the reasons for using their mother tongue for translanguaging are as follows:

L 1: "İngilizcesini bilmediğim için kullandım" [I used it because I did not know it in English]

L 23: "I did not know that word's meaning, I know that word's meaning now."

L 4: "Aslında anlamını biliyorum ama aklıma gelmedi." [I actually knew its meaning but I could not remember.)

L 30: "İngilizcesini unuttum." I forgot it's English meaning].

"Lexical Difficulty" is followed by "Scaffolding Friends" with the frequency of 12. The learners give the following reasons for using translanguaging for scaffolding their friends:

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L8: "Çünkü İngilicesini arkadaşlarım anlamadı, Türkçe anlatmak zorunda kaldım" [Because my friends did not understand the English version. I had to explain it in Turkish].

L17: "I said it in Turkish because the meaning of the word was not understood"

L23: "I used Turkish because I did not think that my friends understood it in English. It helped. We carried out the task after I said the Turkish meaning"

L8: "Arkadaşım bir şeyi anlamadığı için Türkçe açıkladım" [Since my friend did not understand something, I explained it in Turkish].

"To gain time" is the third most frequent reason for the learners to use translanguaging during their preparation for the speaking tasks they were assigned to do. Some of the explanations the learners make for this item are as follows:

L10: "Yes, it worked. I could tell it without losing time."

L17: "Aslında anlamını biliyordum ama kafamda yaptığım çeviri çok yavaş olduğu için Türkçesini kullandım. This speeded up the conversation." [Actually I knew the meaning but I used Turkish because the translation I was making was very slow).

L21: "I had to ask quickly."

After "to gain time", "Asking for Lexical Help" follows as a reason to use translanguaging in speaking lessons. An explanation made by one of the participant learners is given below:

L24: "Kelimenin İngilizcesini bulamadığım için Türkçesini sordum. Arkadaşlarım yardımcı oldu." [I asked the word in Turkish because I could not remember it in English. My friends helped me].

With the frequency of 4, two items; "Keep the task going" and "Getting Attention" follows. For "Keep the task going", one of the learners made the following explanation:

L10: "Saying it in English was very complicated. To continue, I had to use Turkish."

For the item "Getting Attention", the learners made the following explanations:

L26: "When I use English, I feel my friend does not listen to me. That's why I used Turkish. When I said it in Turkish, they all looked at me."

L10: "It worked because when I used Turkish, my friend paid attention to what I was saying. Otherwise, he would think I was just talking with others as part of the task."

L13: "I used Turkish to make my friends listen to me"

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After these two items, "Task Management" (N: 3), "Asking for Help to make a Sentence" (N:3), "To emphasize something" (N:2), "Grammar Deliberation" (N:1), and "Asking for clarification" (N:1) follow.

Results from the interviews:
Table 2
Codes for the reasons learners give for using translanguaging in the speaking classes.

Codes for Translanguaging Reasons	Frequency
To express oneself better	28
Lexical Difficulty	23
Asking for Help to make a Sentence	15
Asking for clarification	6
To keep the flow of speech	5
Difficulty in pronunciation	4
Scaffolding Friends	4
Asking for Lexical Help	4
To gain time	2
Task Management	1

As it is clearly shown in the table above, the most frequent reason to use translanguaging the learners give during the interviews was the need for them "To express oneself better". Some of the comments of the learners concerning this item are as follows:

L3: - Söylemek istediğimi İngilizce şekilde nasıl ifade edeceğimi bilmediğim zaman Türkçe kullanıyorum. [I use Turkish when I don't know how to express what I want to say in English.]

L7: Nasıl söyleyeceğimi bilmediğimde Türkçe konuşuyorum. [I speak Turkish when I don't know how to say it.]

L8: Tam kendimi ifade edememekten korkuyorum. [I am afraid of not being able to express myself.]

L22: Kendimi ifade edemediğim zamanlarda Türkçe kullanıyorum, o zaman arkadaşlarım ve öğretmenim beni anlıyorlar. [I use Turkish when I cannot express myself, then my friends and teacher understand me.]

L28: Kendimi daha iyi ifade edebilmek, sorunlarıma daha anlaşılır çözümler bulmak için Türkçe kullanırım. [I use Turkish to express myself better and to find more understandable solutions to my problems.]

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L34: Kendimi ifade etmekte zorlandığım ya da ifade edemediğim zaman ve heyecanlanıp bir şeyler söyleyemediğim zaman kullanıyorum. [I use it when I have difficulty in expressing myself or when I cannot express myself and when I get excited and can't say anything.]

L37: During the lessons, sometimes I want to express myself more understandably, and I think I need to tell something but sometimes I can't. That's why I use Turkish.

L46: Kendimi anlatamadığım bazı durumlarda Türkçe kullanıyorum. [I use Turkish in some situations that I cannot explain myself.]

The second frequent item as a result of the interviews is "Lexical Difficulty". The comments of the learners are as follows:

L5: Çünkü bazen kelimeler aklıma gelmiyor, o zaman Türkçesini kullanıyorum. [Because sometimes I cannot remember words, then I use Turkish.]

L16: Kelime eksiğim olduğu için zorlandığım zamanlarda kelimenin Türkçesini söylüyorum. [When I have difficulties because I lack the necessary knowledge of vocabulary, I say the Turkish of the word.]

L18: Türkçeye ihtiyaç duyuyorum çünkü kelime bilgim çok geniş değil. [I need Turkish because my vocabulary knowledge is not extensive enough.]

L33: Cümle kurarken bilmediğim ya da hatırlayamadığım kelimeleri Türkçe söylüyorum. [While making sentences, I use Turkish to say words that I do not know or cannot remember.]

L48: Bir cümle kurarken zorlanıyoruz. Bunun yerine hemen Türkçe kelimelere ihtiyaç duyuyoruz. [We have a hard time forming a sentence. Instead, we immediately need Turkish words.]

Following "Lexical Difficulty", "Asking for Help to make a Sentence" is expressed to be a reason to apply translanguaging by the learners during the interviews. Some of the comments of the learners are given below:

L15: Türkçe söylediğim bir cümleyi öğretmen İngilizcesini söylediği zaman ben de tekrar İngilizcesini kuruyorum ve bana yararlı oluyor. [When the teacher tells the English of a sentence that I said in Turkish, I set it up again in English and it helps me.]

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L29: Cümleyi nasıl kuracağımı bilemiyorum, o zaman Türkçesini söyleyip hocamdan yardım istiyorum. [I don't know how to construct a sentence, and then I say it in Turkish and ask my teacher for help.]

"Asking for clarification" follows with the frequency of 6. The following comments are made by the learners:

L21: Çünkü bazen anlamıyorum konuşulanları, hemen arkadaşıma soruyorum, o zaman anlıyorum. [Because sometimes I do not understand what is being said, I immediately ask my friend, then I understand.]

L39: Sınıfta genellikle hocanın söylediğini anlamadığımız zaman bunu belirtiriz. Hocamız İngilizce söylediğini Türkçe bir şekilde tekrar ediyor. [In class, we usually point it out when we don't understand what the teacher is saying. Our teacher repeats what s/he says in Turkish.]

L47: Etkinlikleri veya söyleneni anlamadığımız zaman Türkçe sorarız. [When we do not understand the activities or what is being said, we ask in Turkish.]

"To keep the flow of speech" follows "Asking for clarification". The comments made by the learners are as follows:

L1: Yazarken daha kolay ama konuşurken uzun süreli düşünmem gerekiyor bir kelime ya da cümleyi. Bu durumlarda akışı bozmamak için Türkçe kullanıyorum. [It's easier when writing, but when speaking, I have to think for a long time about a word or sentence. In these cases, I use Turkish in order not to disrupt the flow.]

L22: Yeterli gramer ve kelime bilgim olmadığı için konuşurken arada boşluklar oluşuyor. Boşlukları doldurmak için direk Türkçeye başvuruyorum. [Since I do not have the necessary grammar and vocabulary knowledge, there are gaps when speaking. I apply Turkish directly to fill these gaps.]

After this item, "Difficulty in pronunciation", "Scaffolding Friends", "Asking for Lexical Help", "To gain time", and "Task Management" follows.

4. Discussion

The results of this study illuminate the intricate nature of translanguaging processes in EFL classrooms. Interestingly, "Lexical Difficulty" emerged as the most frequently occurring

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reason learners engaged in translanguaging during the recall process of their speaking tasks preparation. This demonstrates that the learners resort to their mother tongue when they are unable to find the right words in English. This also signals a need for educators to focus more on vocabulary development in their teaching practices, as the lack of lexical knowledge appears to be a significant barrier in EFL speaking tasks.

Notably, the second most frequent reason for using translanguaging, as revealed by the recall process, was "Scaffolding Friends". This shows that learners, in a sense, are acting as 'teachers' and guides for their peers, supporting one another's language learning processes by explaining difficult concepts in Turkish. In this way, the learners are actively facilitating comprehension and learning in their classroom community, an aspect that has implications for the understanding of peer-peer interactions in EFL classrooms.

While the recall process showed "Lexical Difficulty" as the prime reason, interviews with the learners yielded a different result. Here, the primary reason learners gave for using translanguaging was the need "To express oneself better". It seems that learners perceive their use of the mother tongue not merely as a workaround for the lack of vocabulary, but also as a means of conveying their thoughts and ideas more clearly and effectively.

Another interesting finding from the interviews was the use of translanguaging for "Asking for Help to make a Sentence". It implies that students use their first language not only for peer communication but also to clarify their doubts from the teacher. It suggests the importance of a supportive and understanding environment where students feel free to ask for help.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the reasons and processes of translanguaging in an EFL context. However, as with any study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The findings are based on the self-reporting of Turkish EFL learners and may not represent all learners' experiences in diverse contexts. Future research should also consider other factors such as learners' proficiency levels, their language learning backgrounds, and attitudes towards translanguaging.

The study contributes to a growing body of research recognizing the potential benefits of translanguaging in language teaching and learning. It suggests that rather than being viewed as a problem or deficiency, translanguaging should be understood as a natural and resourceful part of

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the language learning process. This, in turn, has important implications for classroom practice, pedagogy, and language education policies.

This study aimed to uncover the reasons for and the frequency of the instances of translanguaging among Turkish learners of English during their preparation for group speaking tasks in language classes. The findings suggest that translanguaging played a significant role in facilitating learners' task completion, especially in terms of managing lexical difficulties and scaffolding friends. This is in line with previous research that highlighted the importance of utilizing all linguistic resources in learning environments (García & Li Wei, 2014; Lewis et al., 2012).

The study also showed that the most common reason for translanguaging was the need to express oneself better, closely followed by managing lexical difficulties and asking for help to make a sentence. This resonates with previous studies which found that learners often resort to their first language (L1) when they find it hard to express their ideas or concepts in their second language (L2) (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Cook, 2001).

Interestingly, there were also instances of learners using translanguaging to keep the task going, gain attention, manage tasks, and even deliberate on grammar. These diverse uses of translanguaging underscore the dynamic and complex nature of this linguistic strategy, echoing Grosjean's (1989) assertion that bilingual individuals are not two monolinguals in one person.

Despite the growing body of research on translanguaging, more studies are needed to further understand this phenomenon and its implications for teaching practices. This study contributes to this need by providing a snapshot of how Turkish learners of English use translanguaging in their speaking tasks. It also underscores the importance of developing pedagogical strategies that can harness the potential benefits of translanguaging in language teaching.

This study aimed to examine the translanguaging processes Turkish learners of English used when preparing for their speaking tasks and their reasons for using translanguaging. It revealed that students resorted to translanguaging most frequently due to "Lexical Difficulty". This suggests that students who encounter difficulties in vocabulary in the target language tend to switch to their native language to overcome these challenges, corroborating with findings by García and Wei (2014).

The second most common reason for students resorting to translanguaging was "Scaffolding Friends". This indicates that learners utilized their native language to support each other, underlining the importance of social interaction in language learning, and is also in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development.

"To gain time" is the third most common reason why students use translanguaging, suggesting that learners view translanguaging as an efficient strategy to convey their ideas without spending too much time thinking about how to express their thoughts in the target language.

Moreover, the analysis of the interviews demonstrated that the most common reason students resort to translanguaging is the need "To express oneself better". This is consistent with findings from previous research that demonstrates that using one's own language can facilitate self-expression and comprehension in the classroom (Hall & Cook, 2012).

These findings underscore the critical role of translanguaging as a strategy to support foreign language learning and suggest the need for teachers to appreciate and encourage the productive use of students' native language as a learning resource. While the traditional monolingual approach in language teaching has been dominant, the current research provides empirical evidence that supports a multilingual approach. Rather than viewing the use of a native language as an impediment to language learning, educators should recognize its potential in enhancing language acquisition.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that translanguaging can serve various functions and meet different needs of EFL learners during their preparation for speaking tasks. The findings also suggest that language teachers should be open to and supportive of learners' use of translanguaging, considering it as a valuable tool for learning rather than an obstacle. Further research should continue to explore translanguaging in different educational contexts, examining its benefits and potential drawbacks in enhancing learners' language proficiency and communicative competence.

In conclusion, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on translanguaging by offering insight into the processes and reasons why EFL learners resort to their native language when preparing speaking tasks. The findings underscore the significance of translanguaging as a resource for EFL learners and suggest the need for language teachers to incorporate

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translanguaging into their teaching practices to facilitate learning and increase student engagement.

The study, however, is not without its limitations. As the study only focused on Turkish learners of English, future research should explore the translanguaging processes of learners from different linguistic backgrounds to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of translanguaging in foreign language learning. Furthermore, it would also be beneficial to investigate the perspectives of language teachers on translanguaging and its implementation in classroom practices.

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