

Week 2: Task 1

Read the following passages. Pay attention to the case study of translanguaging in a classroom provided in the second part. How could these strategies be modified to fit the Greek EFL classroom? Write your suggestions and post them on the forum.

Part 1: Translanguaging in the classroom

‘Translanguaging’ is a relatively new term for an age-old practice – that of switching between the languages one knows in order to maximize communicative potential. Translanguaging is flexible multilingualism. Whether it involves combining elements from different languages in the same utterance (‘codeswitching’) or alternating between languages in different parts of a task, it is a natural means of employing one’s linguistic resources to their greatest effect. It occurs because individuals associate a given language with a specific task, topic or situation, or because some concepts (such as ‘the Internet’) tend to be more commonly expressed in a given language, or because it can be playful and witty. Translanguaging is something most people do all the time with their friends, family and other members of the community without even thinking about it.

In the classroom, translanguaging may involve:

- translating between languages
- comparing and being playful with different languages
- mixing words and expressions from different languages in the same spoken or written utterance
- using the home language in one part of an activity and the school language in another part.

Thus, students might listen to information in one language and explain the gist of it orally or make written notes about it in another. Similarly, they might read a text in one language and talk about it or summarize it in writing in another.

As a resource for both teachers and students, translanguaging has many educational benefits because it:

- validates multilingualism, viewing it as a valuable asset rather than a problem or a temporary transitional interactional tool in early schooling
- represents a more efficient and effective teaching and learning technique than is possible in one language only

- offers opportunities for individuals to develop rich and varied communicative repertoires for use within and outside school.

Part 2: Case Study Translanguaging in the classroom

Mrs Indra, a Class IV teacher in a rural school outside Bhopal, describes how she has started to incorporate translanguaging in her language lessons.

Many of my students are not first-language Hindi speakers. Since I started incorporating translanguaging practices into their language lessons three months ago, they have become much more talkative and engaged in their learning. Their confidence in using Hindi has noticeably improved too. I have observed that monolingual Hindi speakers in my class are starting to pick up words and phrases from their classmates as well.

If my students are going to read a section or page of their Hindi textbook, I begin by introducing the topic, inviting my students to volunteer anything they know about it and encouraging them to translate the key Hindi vocabulary into their home language. I ask them to help me if I can't follow what they are saying.

I then ask my students to read a section or page of their Hindi textbook aloud in pairs or small groups, or silently and independently on their own. In either case, I invite them to pause at the end of each page or section and discuss what they have just read with their partner or other group members, making sense of it and establishing the meaning of any unfamiliar words together. I suggest to them that they use their home language for this. I encourage them to add any new words or expressions in the dictionaries they have created.

If I want pairs or groups of students to present something to the rest of the class in the school language, I encourage them to use their language to discuss how they will express their ideas first. I do the same if I want them to write a summary or report in the school language.

To maintain the interest of all my students, I try to vary the organization of the pairs and groups, while ensuring that they include at least two students of the same home language each time. Sometimes I place students with similar competence in the school language together. At other times, I place a more confident student with a less confident one, so that the former can support the latter in their shared home language. If there is someone in the group who does not speak the shared home language, I ensure that my students translate what they are discussing into the school language.

Recently I located a traditional short story that was available in Hindi and my students' home language. I used this with my Class VII students. I made copies of the stories in each language and got small groups of students to read them in parallel. I then invited them to use their home language to compare the different versions of the two stories, including the key words that had been used in each.



Figure 3 Students discuss a topic in pairs using their home language.



Pause for thought

- Notice which parts of the activities Mrs Indra encouraged her students to do in their home language and which in the school language. Are there any patterns here?
- What instructions might Mrs Indra have used to support the translanguaging practices described in the case study? Make a list of all those you can think of.

Here are some possibilities:

- ‘In Hindi we say xxx, in [your home language], we say yyy.’
- ‘How do you say xxx in [your home language]?’
- ‘What [home language] words do you know for this topic?’
- ‘Work in pairs. One pupil says the word in Hindi, the other in [their home language]. Then change over.’
- ‘I’m going to ask the questions in Hindi. You can tell me the answer in [your home language].’
- ‘You can start in [your home language], then move to Hindi.’
- ‘You can use [your home language] to discuss this topic in your pairs [or groups], and then give your report back to the class in Hindi.’
- ‘Now we have some time for questions in [your home language].’
- ‘Make a list of new words in your notebook. Write the Hindi word on the left and the [home language] equivalent on the right.’

(Adapted from Simpson, 2014)