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Translanguaging at a Saudi University: discrepancy between English language teachers' attitudes and self-reported pedagogical practices

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Abstract

'Translanguaging' has recently become a buzzword in TESOL scholarship, serving as both a theoretical concept to describe the ways in which language learners fluidly use their whole linguistic repertoires to communicate and convey meaning as well as a pedagogical tool to leverage those repertoires as valuable learning resources. Over the past two decades, numerous empirical studies have been conducted in many corners of the world to investigate pedagogical translanguaging practices inside language learning classrooms. Yet, little is known about this phenomenon within the context of KSA, wherein TESOL policies ban the use of students' native language(s) and render them as an impediment to language learning. This study addresses this lacuna as it firstly explores English language teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging, and secondly examines the extent to which those attitudes are reflected into their reported pedagogical practices. 101 mono-, bi-, and multilingual English language teachers at a Saudi university voluntarily participated in this study. By drawing on survey data, the findings showcase a considerable discrepancy between teachers' stated attitudes and reported pedagogical practices. The findings also illuminate the constraints that hindered the participants' adoption of pedagogical translanguaging in their teaching. The study finally concludes with pedagogical and policy implications.

Keywords: TESOL, Translanguaging, Teachers' attitudes, KSA

Introduction

For much of the twentieth century, the field of Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) was characterized by methods and approaches that encouraged the exclusive use of the students' target language (TL) (e.g., the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, and Communicative Language Teaching) (Hall & Cook, 2012). This 'monolingual assumption' was driven by the belief that successful language learning is bound to maximum exposure to the TL (Phillipson, 1992); this in turn led to viewing students' first language(s) (L1) as detrimental to English language learning and therefore should be left out of classroom (Lin, 2015). As Creese and Blackledge (2010) note, L1 use is

often frowned-upon and regarded as ‘dilemma-filled’, ‘wrong’, ‘bad practice’, and even ‘embarrassing’ (p.112). Indeed, so deep-seated this perspective was that the role of other languages in the classroom was simply overlooked and not even challenged in the literature (Hall, 2020).

However, within the last two decades, this long-accepted ‘monolingual assumption’ that shaped most of the field practices has come under severe scrutiny. Recent scholarship has criticized it for misrepresenting the reality of English language use in today’s world (e.g., Kubota, 2016). In contemporary contexts of globalization, immigration, new technologies, and travel, English language learners are more likely to communicate with people from diverse language backgrounds (Jenkins, 2007); this means that learners can, and usually do, draw on their full linguistic repertoires for communication and meaning-making. As a result, several calls (e.g., Flores, 2013; Kubota, 2016; May, 2013) have been made to reconceptualize the field’s theoretical underpinnings and move beyond the monolingual tradition towards a more bi/multi/plurilingual one. Among a wide range of neologisms that were coined to capture this paradigmatic shift (e.g., codemeshing, polylinguaging, plurilingualism, metrolingualism), the concept of translanguaging “seems to have gained the most attention and adherents” within the field of foreign language learning and teaching (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020, p. 3). Due to its strong pedagogical orientation, that is, translanguaging “has emerged as the term of choice” (Pennycook, 2016, p. 202) for scholars to describe new understandings of multilingual practices in classroom contexts (García & Otheguy, 2019).

This increased recognition of the changing linguistic landscape of the English language has been befittingly mirrored by increased academic research which has contributed to the development of translanguaging theory and pedagogies. Indeed, the literature is replete with studies showing that translanguaging “has long been a reality in many TESOL classrooms around the world”, and demonstrating that the ‘monolingual assumption’ that is “fashionable amongst academics and methodologists does not necessarily reflect the beliefs and practices of English teachers working in varied contexts around the world” (Hall, 2020, pp. 67–68). Despite the expanding empirical research, however, pedagogical translanguaging is still largely overlooked in the specific context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), except for a very few studies that shed light on this phenomenon from the perspective of learners rather than teachers (e.g., Al-Ahdal, 2020; Alsaawi, 2019; Elashhab, 2020). The current study is a step to fulfil that need as it sets to firstly investigate English language teachers’ attitudes towards the use of translanguaging against the backdrop of the institutional rigid ‘English-only’ policies in a Saudi university, and secondly explore the degree to which those attitudes are reflected into the pedagogical practices as reported by the teachers.

Understanding translanguaging

It is no secret that multilingualism is the norm, rather than the exception, for most people around the world as they alter between two or more languages as a matter of course in their daily lives (Canagarajah, 2013a). During the last half century, there has been rich body of literature investigating such linguistic practices. Whereas much of the early work in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics treated languages as bounded and separate entities that exist in isolation of each other, recent scholarship, however,

has begun to question and challenge these assumed boundaries around languages. Indeed, it has been found that rather than moving back and forth between compartmentalized named languages, multilingual speakers draw on a unitary large linguistic repertoire from which they select linguistic features in order to communicate more effectively (Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Goodman & Tantanbek, 2021). This epistemological shift “from how many languages an individual may have at their disposal to how they use all their language resources to achieve their purposes” (Conteh, 2018a, p. 446) has led to an increased adoption of the term translanguageing (García & Wei, 2014, p. 62).

The first coinage of the term ‘translanguageing’ was in the 1980s by Cen Williams, who used the Welsh word ‘*Trawsieithu*’ to delineate pedagogical strategies in bilingual classrooms in Wales wherein students alternatively receive input in one language and respond in another (Lewis et al., 2012). Ever since, the term translanguageing has increasingly been used in scholarly literature, and several attempts have been made to devise its definition. Otheguy et al. (2015), for instance, define translanguageing as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (p. 281). García and Wei (2014) further highlight that translanguageing is not something that multilinguals resort to when they lack the necessary vocabulary to express themselves monolingually. It is, rather, a process in which bi/multilingual speakers fluidly and strategically select language features from their overall repertoire in order to better fulfil their communicative needs.

More recently, the study of translanguageing has extended to embrace non-linguistic multimodal communicative practices that transcend “what we have traditionally called the ‘linguistic’—either named languages or what are seen to be their components—lexicon, morphology, phonology, syntax” (García & Otheguy, 2019, p. 24). It is true that language “has always been regarded as having a central role in interaction, but it is only one mode among many and can assume different positions in interactions. Sometimes, it may take a superior position and, at other times, a subordinated one” (Holmström & Schönström, 2018, p. 93). Grounded on this interpretation, translanguageing thusly views the deployment of multimodal communicative resources such as, to name a few, posture, objects, visual cues, gestures, gazes, facial expressions, and even emojis in technological interactions as a natural and integral form of the dynamic flow of human communication. This is well exemplified in Chang’s (2019) study which demonstrated how 18 lecturers in a Taiwanese EMI university “used different languages (e.g., English, Chinese, and Taiwanese), modalities (e.g., PowerPoint slide, videos, and textbooks), and semiotic resources (e.g., numbers) in the process of teaching and learning” (p. 36). The following section moves to shed light on the potential of translanguageing as an educational practice in the TESOL field.

Potential of translanguageing in TESOL

Translanguageing currently enjoys a high level of popularity within the TESOL field (Canagarajah, 2013b; Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Conteh, 2018a; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Otheguy, 2019; García & Wei, 2014; among many others). The numerous books, articles, new journals, special issues, and international conferences and symposia

devoted to this topic are all signs that “[n]ow we are in the realm of translanguaging” (Jenkins, 2018, p. 72). In spite of its relatively short history, translanguaging scholarship has witnessed notable transitions in its focus. That is, the thrust of these studies, as noted by Conteh (2018b), did not go beyond documenting and describing how translanguaging is a natural phenomenon for many language learners around the globe, a phenomenon that has also been described as ‘spontaneous translanguaging’. In recent years, however, the research focus has shifted to accentuate the vast potential of translanguaging as ‘a legitimate pedagogical approach’ to support language teaching and learning (Omidire, 2019).

Several advantages have been associated with the pedagogical implementation of translanguaging in language education. Abundant evidence has demonstrated that translanguaging has the potential to, for example, strengthen home-school ties and cooperation (Baker, 2011; Tian, 2021), scaffold learners’ understanding of the subject matter (Baker, 2011; Karlsson et al., 2019), promote their independent and autonomous learning (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022), raise their motivation and confidence (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), and create a safe and inclusive learning environment in which all languages are accepted and valued, thereby inviting learners to increasingly participate and invest their identities in the learning process (García & Wei, 2014; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Kwihangana, 2021). Besides its contribution to increased academic success, pedagogical translanguaging has proven helpful in supporting learners’ emotional wellbeing as it mitigates the negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, fear, frustration, and apprehension) often associated with monolingual instruction (Back et al., 2020). On a more socio-cultural level, translanguaging has also been shown to be valuable in raising learners’ critical understanding of language and culture and consequently nurturing positive attitudes and tolerance towards linguistic and cultural diversity among them (Csillik & Golubeva, 2020).

Recent evidence has additionally suggested that pedagogical translanguaging holds the promise of contributing to the development of students’ English language literacy skills. For instance, it has been shown that promoting translanguaging in language classrooms can foster students’ metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021), enhance their reading comprehension skills (Chu, 2017; Rafi & Morgan, 2022; Vaish & Subhan, 2015), improve their academic writing (Sun & Lan, 2020; Velasco & García, 2014), increase their vocabulary knowledge (Galante, 2020; Mwindi & Van der Walt, 2015), and develop their morphological awareness (Leonet et al., 2020).

More fundamentally, and particularly germane to the current study, “translanguaging as a pedagogical lens holds great promises to counteract ‘English-only’ monolingual approaches” (Tian et al., 2020, p. 10). Up until recently, monolingualism has dominated language education policy and pedagogy. It is so deeply entrenched that bilingual learners who translanguage are often overwhelmed with feelings of shame and embarrassment. By the same token, bilingual teachers often conceal their natural pedagogical translanguaging due to the pressures exerted on them by administrators and other stakeholders who buy into monolingual ideologies (García, 2009, p. 308). Pedagogical translanguaging, however, has come to “re-examine an age-old question of the role of L1 in second, foreign, and additional language teaching and learning”, remarking that “the actual purpose of learning new languages [is]—to become bilingual and multilingual,

rather than to replace the learner's L1 to become another monolingual" (Wei, 2018, p. 16). From this perspective, the objective of English language teaching and learning is no longer to acquire the unreachable and unnecessary native-like proficiency, but rather to expand the learners' full linguistic repertoire to become successful multilingual users who are capable of creatively and critically engaging in communication in different contact zones. It is true that pedagogical translanguaging stands on the shoulders of a well-established body of research on the possibilities of L1 use in target language learning. However, the value of translanguaging lies in the fact that it has brought a variety of models and terms (e.g., Interdependence Hypothesis, code-mixing, codemeshing, code-switching) -that predated the emergence of the translanguaging construct- together into a single focus.

Teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging

In their translanguaging pedagogy framework, García et al. (2017) underscore the notion of '*Stance*' as an important feature of effectively putting translanguaging into practice. Stance denotes "the philosophical, ideological, or belief system that teachers can draw from to develop their pedagogical framework" (p. 27). Without adopting this stance, García et al. (2017) assert, teachers cannot purposefully leverage students' diverse language repertoires as valuable leaning resources as well as human rights that should be included the classroom.

Despite its widely documented benefits, as previously discussed, existing literature reveals that language teachers hold diverse attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging. For example, in Nambisan's (2014) pioneering study, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to collect data from 19 teachers working in both mainstream and dual language programs in the United States. Findings showed that the majority believed translanguaging to be effective for different of pedagogical purposes (e.g., providing clarification, giving feedback, praising students). In another study in Turkey, Yuvayapan (2019) surveyed the attitudes of 50 English language teachers; The analysis demonstrated that most teachers viewed the use of students' full linguistic repertoire in a positive light, especially its role in increasing the participation of low-proficient learners. These results are consistent with those of Fang and Liu (2020) and Pinto (2020). The authors of these two studies examined the attitudes of tertiary-level Chinese teachers towards translanguaging. Most participants in both studies recognized the value of incorporating students' L1 in classroom and considered it as an effective pedagogical tool, particularly for scaffolding the learning of low English-language proficiency students and building rapport with them. In like manner, the in-service teachers who participated in Deroo and Ponzio's (2019) study "recognized that translanguaging is an inclusive stance toward learners' linguistic diversity" (p. 221).

Yet, it needs to be acknowledged that the literature does not speak with one voice regarding teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging. Doiz and Lasagabaster (2017), for instance, carried out a study with English medium instruction (EMI) teachers at the University of the Basque in Spain, and concluded that "the majority of the participants are prone to exclude the L1 from their everyday teaching practices because the L1 is thought to hinder the acquisition of the foreign language" (p. 157). Along similar lines, Anderson and Lightfoot (2021) surveyed the attitudes of 169 teachers in India towards

translingual practices in English language classrooms. More than half the respondents thought that the use of any language other than English should be kept to a minimum. In a different study, Burton and Rajendram (2019) examined the attitudes of five English language instructors at a major Canadian university, and found that four of the five participants perceived translanguaging “as slowing students’ English learning” rather than “as a resource that can deepen their understandings and extend their knowledge” (p. 40). Likewise, some of the participating teachers in Wang’s (2019) study saw no benefit of translanguaging and consequently felt a sense of guilt whenever deviating from the target language; they therefore reported their adherence to monolingualism in their classroom.

In addition to providing valuable insights into teachers’ stances towards pedagogical translanguaging, these studies have illuminated that neither teachers’ positive nor their negative attitudes necessarily reflect the reality of their pedagogical practices. Factors, including institutional policies, stakeholders’ expectations, personal ideologies (e.g., monolingualism), and concerns about overreliance on L1 were identified as constraints dissuading teachers from adopting pedagogical translanguaging (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019; Fang & Liu, 2020; Yuvayapan, 2019). Intriguingly, such inconsistencies between attitudes and practices have been reported even in studies in which teachers were in disfavour of translanguaging. Doiz and Lasagabaster (2017), for instance, highlighted that “despite their stated beliefs, all but two of the teachers admit to resorting to the L1” (p. 169). Even the participants who were against translanguaging in Wang’s (2019) study were observed to occasionally translanguaging in their teaching.

Taken together, although attitudinal studies on translanguaging have targeted different populations in institutionally and geographically diverse settings, it is worthwhile to note that this line of investigation is still in its infancy stage and much more research is needed in this direction. Due to the fact that “research on the attitudes of instructors toward translanguaging *in higher education contexts* [emphasis added] is scarce” (Burton & Rajendram, 2019, p. 26), and even almost non-existent in the Saudi tertiary context, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the attitudes of English language teachers at a Saudi university. Moreover, realizing that the adoption of a translanguaging stance does not necessarily translate into pedagogical translanguaging, the study takes a step further to investigate whether those stances correspond to the teachers’ reported pedagogical practices. Specifically, the study seeks to answer two following research questions:

- (1) What attitudes do teachers have towards pedagogical translanguaging?
- (2) To what extent are teachers’ attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging congruent with their reported pedagogical practices?

Methodology

Setting

This study took place at a major Saudi university with an enrolment rate of approximately 7400 students a year. In order to embark on their 4 years undergraduate studies, all students from different majors are mandated to pass a Preparatory Year Programme

(PYP). The central aim of this PYP is to provide students with the necessary skills in order to bridge the gap between secondary education and tertiary education. Students in this year take an intensive English language program in addition to mathematics, physics, and computer sciences, which are all taught in English. English language courses, nonetheless, form the largest portion of the PYP (20 h a week). This focus on teaching English is because it is the medium of instruction for most academic programs within the university.

The intensive English program within the PYP is run by an English Language Centre (ELC). The ELC consists of 200 full-time English language instructors from 26 nationalities. The main objective of this ELC is to develop pupils' language competence in the basic skills in accordance with their forthcoming academic disciplines. There are four sequential levels in this year, two in each semester. During the first semester, the focus is on equipping the students with the general oral and aural skills of the English language. The program in the second semester moves into focusing on English for Academic Purposes, with a concentration on reading and academic writing. Before the commencement of the PYP, students undergo a paper-based placement test to determine their levels so they are placed in an appropriate level of study according to their linguistic proficiency.

Data collection and participants

An online questionnaire adopted and adapted from Moody et al. (2019) and Nambisan (2014) was administered in this study. Whereas the questionnaire items adopted from Moody et al. (2019) was useful in investigating teachers' general perceptions of translanguaging, the ones adopted from Nambisan (2014) provided valuable insights into "the importance that teachers place on translanguaging in the classroom (to explore their attitudes), and the frequency with which it is used in their classroom (to examine teachers' practices of translanguaging)" (p. 41). In this study, the participating teachers were asked to respond to a total of 44 questions. The first 5 aimed to collect demographic information (i.e., gender, country of origin, native language(s), teaching experience, and qualifications). The remaining 39 questions consisted of 34 closed-ended five-point Likert-scaled ones (ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'; from 'Very important' to 'Not important at all'; and from 'Very often' to 'Never') and 5 open-ended questions. The close-ended questions sought to determine teachers' attitudes towards the possible benefits, harms, functions, reasons, and rationales of translanguaging. The open-ended questions, on the other hand, were utilized as follow-up to allow teachers to expand on their answers or reveal their reasoning for the responses they provided to some key Likert-scale questions. Whereas the teachers' answers to the close-ended questions (i.e., quantitative data) were analysed using a descriptive approach, a thematic analysis was undertaken to analyse the teachers' responses to the open-ended questions (i.e., qualitative data).

The questionnaire was created via Google Form, and the link of which was then disseminated to participants via email. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. No personally identifiable information was collected. The questionnaire was initially sent to 200 teachers. A total of 101 teachers volunteered to participate in this study, leaving

an acceptable margin of uncertainty ($\pm 6.8\%$). Background information on the participating teachers is provided in the following Table 1.

Findings

Teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging

In relation to the first question, 'what attitudes do teachers have towards pedagogical translanguaging?' the questionnaire revealed that teachers' were largely in favour of the use of languages other than English in the classroom (Table 2). For instance, a relatively high proportion of the teachers (69.3%, $n=70$) either strongly agreed or agreed with the appropriateness of using students' native language(s) in the classroom; only 18.8% ($n=19$) thought otherwise. In terms of the role of translanguaging for language learning, the level of agreement was the highest. Most of the participating teachers (71.3%, $n=72$) strongly agreed and agreed that translanguaging was essential for learning a

Table 1 Background information on the participants

	n	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	59	58.41
Female	42	41.59
<i>Nationality</i>		
The USA	17	16.83
India	16	15.84
South Africa	15	14.85
Jordan	14	13.86
Sudan	12	11.88
Pakistan	7	6.93
The UK	6	5.94
Saudi Arabia	3	2.97
Tunisia	3	2.97
Syria	2	1.98
Egypt	2	1.98
Yemen	1	0.99
Estonia	1	0.99
France	1	0.99
Latvia	1	0.99
<i>Native language</i>		
English	39	38.61
Arabic	34	33.66
Urdu	12	11.88
Other native languages	16	15.84
<i>Teaching experience</i>		
More than 10 years	50	49.5
Between 5 and 10 years	42	41.58
Less than 5 years	9	8.91
<i>Educational qualifications</i>		
Ph.D.	6	5.94
M.A	67	66.33
B.A	28	27.72

Table 2 Teachers’ general attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Using students’ native language(s) in the classroom is an appropriate practice	n = 34 33.7%	n = 36 35.6%	n = 12 11.9%	n = 10 9.9%	n = 9 8.9%
Using students’ native language(s) is essential for learning a new language	n = 33 32.7%	n = 39 38.6%	n = 11 10.9%	n = 8 7.9%	n = 10 9.9%
Teachers’ use of students’ native language(s) in class would be helpful for bilingual/multilingual learners	n = 35 34.7%	n = 34 33.7%	n = 15 14.8%	n = 11 10.9%	n = 6 5.9%
Using students’ native language(s) develops the learners’ confidence in English	n = 31 30.7%	n = 36 35.6%	n = 13 12.9%	n = 13 12.9%	n = 8 7.9%
Language teachers should avoid using the students’ native language(s) because it will prevent English language learning	n = 9 8.9%	n = 14 13.9%	n = 17 16.8%	n = 34 33.7%	n = 27 26.7%
Using students’ native language(s) indicates a lack of linguistic proficiency in English	n = 2 2%	n = 12 11.9%	n = 10 9.9%	n = 34 33.7%	n = 43 42.6%

new language. Likewise, the majority of teachers (68.3%, n=69) thought that the use of students’ native language(s) would be helpful for bilingual/multilingual students. In line with the responses to the previous items, 66.3% (n=67) of the teachers believed that translanguaging would develop learners’ confidence in English. The teachers also showed negative attitudes to the statement that ‘Language teachers should avoid using the students’ native language(s) because it will prevent English language learning’. That is, whereas 60.4% (n=61) of the teachers strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement, only 22.8% (n=23) expressed strong agreement and agreement with it. Similarly, when asked to express their views on whether using students’ native language(s) is indicative of a lack of linguistic proficiency in English, 42.6% (n=43) of the teachers strongly disagreed, 33.7% (n=34) disagreed, and only 13.9% (n=14) either strongly agreed or agreed. Taken together, these results indicate that teachers generally believed that translanguaging was a helpful, rather than inhibitive, linguistic resource for successful language learning.

The next section of the questionnaire moved to measure the importance that the teachers associate with their own use of pedagogical translanguaging in a variety of pedagogical situations. As shown in Table 3, the teachers generally considered their use of translanguaging for pedagogical purposes to be ‘very important’ or ‘important’, with the overall mean value being 3.7. The highest mean values were assigned to ‘helping low proficient students’ and ‘explaining concepts’ (M=4.03 and 3.81, respectively). Other pedagogical situations (i.e., ‘praising students’, ‘managing classroom’, ‘giving directions’, ‘building bonds with students’, and ‘giving feedback to students’) were also deemed important by the teachers, with the mean scores ranging from 3.63 to 3.80. Remarkably, the mean value for ‘describing vocabulary’ was the lowest (M=3.06), close to a neutral attitude. In the open-ended portion of this section, some teachers further named ‘teaching grammar’, ‘motivating students’, ‘explaining assignment’, ‘checking comprehension’, and ‘expressing personal emotions and subjectivities’ as pedagogical situations wherein their use of the students’ native language(s) would be important.

The following part of the questionnaire investigated how important the teachers rated the possible use of translanguaging by their students for certain pedagogical

Table 3 Teachers’ attitudes towards the importance of their use of students’ native language(s) in the following situation

	Very important 5	Important 4	Neutral 3	Not important 2	Not important at all 1	Mean
To explain concepts	n=38 37.6%	n=31 30.7%	n=14 13.9%	n=11 10.9%	n=7 6.9%	3.81
To describe vocabulary	n=14 13.9%	n=31 30.7%	n=15 14.8%	n=29 28.7%	n=12 11.9%	3.06
To give directions	n=36 35.6%	n=30 29.7%	n=16 15.8%	n=13 12.9%	n=6 5.9%	3.76
For classroom management	n=35 34.6%	n=33 32.7%	n=13 12.9%	n=12 11.9%	n=8 7.9%	3.74
To give feedback to students	n=37 36.7%	n=29 28.7%	n=19 18.8%	n=10 9.9%	n=6 5.9%	3.80
To praise students	n=34 33.7%	n=30 29.7%	n=16 15.8%	n=14 13.9%	n=7 6.9%	3.63
To build bonds with students	n=33 32.7%	n=34 33.7%	n=18 17.8%	n=11 10.9%	n=5 5.9%	3.78
To help low proficiency students	n=43 42.6%	n=34 33.7%	n=12 11.9%	n=8 7.9%	n=4 3.9%	4.03

Table 4 Teachers’ attitudes towards the importance of the students’ use of their native language(s) in the following situations

	Very important 5	Important 4	Neutral 3	Not important 2	Not important at all 1	Mean
To discuss content or activities in small groups	n=30 29.7%	n=39 38.6%	n=13 12.9%	n=10 9.9%	n=9 8.9%	3.70
To provide assistance to peers during activities	n=31 30.7%	n=38 37.6%	n=14 13.9%	n=10 9.9%	n=8 7.9%	3.73
To brainstorm during class activities	n=36 35.6%	n=27 26.7%	n=16 15.8%	n=11 10.9%	n=11 10.9%	3.65
To explain problems not related to content	n=33 32.7%	n=35 34.7%	n=15 14.9%	n=9 8.9%	n=9 8.9%	3.73
To respond to teacher’s questions	n=35 34.7%	n=33 32.7%	n=17 16.8%	n=9 8.9%	n=7 6.9%	3.79
To ask permission	n=29 28.7%	n=33 32.7%	n=15 14.9%	n=14 13.9%	n=10 9.9%	3.56

purposes. As described in Table 4, the teachers were predominantly in favour of students’ use of their full linguistic resources. Although the overall mean score (M=3.69) was slightly lower than the teachers’ attitudes towards their own use of pedagogical translanguaging (M=3.7), the difference was not statistically significant. The analysis demonstrated that the teachers attached highest importance to the students’ use of their native language(s) when ‘responding to teacher’s questions’ (M=3.79), equally followed by ‘providing assistance to peers during activities’ and ‘explaining problems not related to content’ (M=3.73); whilst the mean scores for ‘asking permission’, ‘brainstorming during class activities’, and ‘discussing content or activities in small groups’ were 3.56, 3.65, and 3.7, respectively.

Teachers' reported pedagogical translanguaging

The findings related to the second research question, 'to what extent are teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging congruent with their reported pedagogical practices?', are intriguing when juxtaposed against the overwhelmingly positive attitudes the teachers had towards pedagogical translanguaging. That is, the analysis revealed a considerable discrepancy between teachers' stated attitudes and reported pedagogical practices. That is, despite their positive attitudes, the teachers said that they were inclined to avoid using translanguaging as a means to scaffold language learning. The fact that the overall mean for the items in Table 5 was 2.57 is indicative of this ambivalence. Specifically, the least frequent use of students' native language(s) by teachers was with 'describing vocabulary' ($M = 2.38$), whereas the mean scores for 'giving directions', 'managing classroom', 'praising students', 'building bonds with students', 'giving feedback to students', and 'explaining concepts' were also relatively low, ranging from 2.4 to 2.56. The only positive mean value resulted from teachers' use of translanguaging 'to help low proficiency students' ($M = 3.39$).

In much the same vein, encouraging the students' use of their native language(s) was not a regular practice in the classes of the participating teachers (overall $M = 2.58$). As can be seen in Table 6, five out of the six items were neither 'very often' nor 'often' supported by the teachers; contrarily, they were mostly discouraged. For example, most of the teachers did not encourage the 'discussion of content or activities in small groups' in students' L1 ($M = 2.40$). Along similar lines, teachers did not seem to allow their students to use their native language(s) 'to brainstorm during class activities' ($M = 2.41$), 'to explain problems not related to content' ($M = 2.44$), 'to respond to teacher's questions' ($M = 2.54$), or 'to ask permission' ($M = 2.62$). The only pedagogical situation in which students' use of their native language(s) was not discouraged, but was not encouraged either, was when 'providing assistance to peers during activities' ($M = 3.08$).

Table 5 Teachers' self-reported use of their use of students' native language(s) in the following situations

	Very often 5	Often 4	Sometimes 3	Not often 2	Never 1	Mean
To explain concepts	n=9 8.9%	n=17 16.8%	n=19 18.8%	n=33 32.7%	n=23 22.8%	2.56
To describe vocabulary	n=11 10.9%	n=10 9.9%	n=18 17.8%	n=30 29.7%	n=32 31.7%	2.38
To give directions	n=8 7.9%	n=13 12.9%	n=20 19.8%	n=31 30.7%	n=29 28.7%	2.40
For classroom management	n=10 9.9%	n=12 11.9%	n=19 18.8%	n=32 31.7%	n=28 27.7%	2.44
To give feedback to students	n=12 11.9%	n=11 10.9%	n=21 20.8%	n=30 29.7%	n=27 26.7%	2.51
To praise students	n=6 5.9%	n=15 14.9%	n=27 26.7%	n=27 26.7%	n=24 23.8%	2.46
To build bonds with students	n=10 9.9%	n=14 13.9%	n=20 19.8%	n=28 27.7%	n=29 28.7%	2.48
To help low proficiency students	n=26 25.7%	n=27 26.7%	n=20 19.8%	n=17 16.8%	n=11 10.9%	3.39

Table 6 Teachers' self-reported encouragement of the students' use of their native language(s) in the following situations

	Very often 5	Often 4	Sometimes 3	Not often 2	Never 1	Mean
To discuss content or activities in small groups	n = 7 6.9%	n = 14 13.9%	n = 23 22.8%	n = 26 25.7%	n = 31 20.7%	2.40
To provide assistance to peers during activities	n = 17 16.8%	n = 25 24.8%	n = 24 23.8%	n = 20 19.8%	n = 15 14.9%	3.08
To brainstorm during class activities	n = 10 9.9%	n = 12 11.9%	n = 24 23.8%	n = 28 27.7%	n = 27 26.7%	2.41
To explain problems not related to content	n = 6 5.9%	n = 11 10.9%	n = 30 29.7%	n = 29 28.7%	n = 25 24.8%	2.44
To respond to teacher's questions	n = 9 8.9%	n = 16 15.8%	n = 19 18.8%	n = 34 33.7%	n = 23 22.8%	2.54
To ask permission	n = 5 4.9%	n = 16 15.8%	n = 21 20.8%	n = 29 28.7%	n = 30 29.7%	2.62

Several of the participating teachers who opted to avert and discourage pedagogical translanguaging in their classes explained their reasoning further in their open-ended responses. For instance, salient in the teachers' responses was the attribution of their choice to the forced institutional pressure on them to adhere to the 'English-only' policy, making comments such as "it is not always my choice. I work in a university which has its rules and regulations. I have to use English only during my classes", "we are required to use English only. I realize the value of using Arabic in certain cases, but I don't want to jeopardize my job. I have to comply with the rules", "I work under contractual basis and I'm not willing to risk it by breaking the university rules", and "we are not supposed to use Arabic. Actually, we were explicitly told to use English ONLY in our classes". Other teachers justified their avoidance of using students' native language(s) by stating that they do not share the students' linguistic backgrounds (e.g., "I don't speak Arabic", "I don't know the students' first languages", and "my knowledge of the students' mother tongue is very limited"). For another small group of teachers, the lack of translanguaging was a deliberate and conscious choice stemming from their assumption that a language is best taught and learned through the sole medium of that language itself. It was firm in their belief, for instance, that "it [students' native language(s)] hinders learning and deprives learners of contact with the second language" and "little learning happens when the teacher relied of students' native language".

Discussion and implications

The present study was set with the aim of: first, investigating English language teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging, and more importantly, second, examining the extent to which those attitudes are reflected into the teachers' reported pedagogical practices. Most prevalent in the findings was the marked incongruence between the responses to these two questions. Echoing the findings reported in previous studies (e.g., Fang & Liu, 2020; Nambisan, 2014; Pinto, 2020), the results of this study have demonstrated that teachers were, for the most part, positive in their attitudes towards translanguaging and aware of its efficacy and value in their classrooms. However, and similar to the findings obtained by Yuvayapan (2019), the teachers' positive attitudes were not

reflected into their pedagogical practices. As Prilutskaya (2021) points out, “while teachers’ attitudes tend to be powerful mediators of new pedagogical practices in the classroom, a positive view on translanguaging does not necessarily translate into rigorous learner-centred teaching practices” (p. 9).

Typically, the literature on translanguaging “rarely reports the problems faced by researchers and teachers in enacting this pedagogy in the classroom” (Vaish, 2019, p. 287). A case in point is Carroll and van den Hoven’s (2017) experience in the UAE where the participants found it unduly risky to allow researchers to observe their classes to report and document their translanguaging practices. However, unlike personal interviews and observations, the anonymity that the questionnaire offers encouraged the participating teachers at this study to be relatively receptive to candidly discussing their attitudes and practices. A main concern this study’s participants voiced, which forced them to act against their attitudes and beliefs, is connected with the relentless institutional pressure to coercively enforce the restrictive ‘English Only’ policy that precludes any use of the students’ L1 (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019). Even though “there is now a reaction against the traditional views of teaching languages based on the isolation of the target language and the reference to the ideal monolingual speaker” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021, p. 14), the ELT policies in most Saudi tertiary institutions are still fundamentally rooted in the unexamined monolingual ideologies (Almayez, 2019; S. Jenkins, 2010). Given the participants’ precarious status as contracted teachers, aligning their pedagogical practices with the institutionalized ‘English-only’ policy could be viewed as an attempt to avoid risking their jobs if they promote linguistic practices that oppose this policy.

Besides language policy, not sharing students’ linguistic background was additionally named by teachers as a cause for their low uptake of translanguaging in their teaching. Specifically, teachers perceived their unfamiliarity with the students’ L1 in conflict with translanguaging. This is illustrative of the teachers’ inadequate understanding of the complex and fluid nature of translanguaging. It is scholarly recognized that teachers’ proficiency in their students L1 is not a prerequisite for adopting translanguaging pedagogies (Burton & Rajendram, 2019; Deroo & Ponzio, 2019; Flores & García, 2013). Indeed, it is impossible for teachers to know all the languages spoken by students. Yet, “it is possible for teachers to create a classroom ecology where students’ voices and inputs are legitimate and valued” (Wang, 2019, p. 9). Another hinderance to the implementation of translanguaging that the data revealed was the teachers’ subscription to the ‘monolingual fallacy’, which posits that ELT “should be entirely through the medium of English” because “an exclusive focus on English will maximize the learning of the language, irrespective of whatever other languages the learner may know” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185).

The findings from this study hold significant implications for both praxis and policy. First and foremost, the findings point to a need to consider one vital issue: how can language education programs and in-service professional development courses promote pedagogical translanguaging in the face of the pervasive monolingual ideology that detrimentally dominates many language teaching and learning practices in the context of this study and many other similar contexts around the globe? Firstly, it is essential for these programs and courses to deliberately and systematically open up opportunities for (preservice) teachers to critically reflect on and deconstruct the normative assumptions

that permeate many teaching settings around the globe (e.g., English-only policy) (Caldas, 2019; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Ponzio & Deroo, 2021). One way to do so is through exposing them to critically-oriented scholarship and involving them in discussions about, for example, issues relevant to bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism, and translanguaging (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019). Besides raising teachers' awareness about the potential advantages of translanguaging, promoting such discussions can equip teachers with a sense agency to engage in attempts to disrupt and resist the monolingual forces that could constrain their actions. As Wang (2019) notes, "[a]ccommodating translanguaging in foreign language education requires the reconstitution of teachers' knowledge of language and language teaching" (p. 9). Most importantly, it is vital to realize that "destigmatizing language practices other than English is not enough" (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019, p. 228). Such programs and courses need also to provide teachers with explicit guidance and introduce them to practical models on how to implement translanguaging in class; "otherwise their translanguaging pedagogy will remain in a trial and error manner" (Wang, 2019, p. 9).

Furthermore, I acknowledge that raising teachers' awareness and empowering them, though important, is not enough to eradicate monolingual bias and incorporate translanguaging practices. That is to say, promoting pedagogical translanguaging should not be left entirely to individual teachers; explicit policies also need to be laid down (Stille et al., 2016). Hence, at the level of policy, educational officials, curriculum planners, and decision makers need, as a first step, to break away from the current outdated policies that are at odds with today's globalized, multicultural, and plurilingual world (Wiley & García, 2016). To this end, it seems incumbent to promptly eliminate the prejudiced monolingual policies that downgrade the value of the learners' full linguistic repertoires. It is only, as Cummins (2007) explains, "when we free ourselves from exclusive reliance on monolingual instructional approaches, a wide variety of opportunities arise for teaching languages" (p. 222). At the same time, policy makers "need to advocate for equitable policies that promote multilingualism as a norm, and create official structures and resources within the education system for a translanguaging pedagogy" (Rajendram, 2021, p. 23). This, as Cummins (2011) proposes, would allow us to embrace "the reality of diversity, not as a problem to be managed or resolved, but rather as an opportunity to enrich the lives of students and teachers" (p. 5).

Conclusion

Much attention has recently been paid to the phenomenon of translanguaging within the field of TESOL. Despite the growth in empirical studies, however, there has been a paucity of research on this topic in the Saudi context. This study tackles this gap and adds to the existing scholarly literature as it surveys English language teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical translanguaging and examines the degree to which those attitudes are translated into their reported pedagogical practices. The discrepancy between teachers' attitudes towards and practices of pedagogical translanguaging is the most obvious finding to emerge from this study, providing invaluable insights into the complexity of the relationship between teachers' attitudes and classrooms ground reality and the various internal and external factors that could contribute to this complexity.

Nevertheless, as with any study, the current one certainly has its limitations too. Rather than diminishing the true value of the findings, however, these limitations should be viewed as suggestions for new research avenues in the future. Firstly, even though the current study had a relatively moderate sample size of 101 participants, it might not have been representative the entire population of English language teachers at Saudi universities. Hence, further research would be needed in other faculties and universities across the KSA. Another notable limitation is the absence of other stakeholders' voices. That is, whereas the data in this study were collected from language teachers only, future studies may benefit from exploring pedagogical translanguaging from the perspectives of, for instance, teacher educators, policy-makers, students, and parents. Finally, and most profoundly, the findings of this study are drawn mainly from quantitative data, thereby limiting the findings to what teachers *believe* they do in terms of pedagogical translanguaging rather than what they actually do in reality. Besides triangulating the quantitative survey data and validating the reported findings, follow-up qualitative classroom observations would have overcome this limitation and provided a powerful means to better understand the abovementioned disparity between teachers' positive attitudes and their lack of in-class pedagogical translanguaging. Finally, it must be acknowledged that disrupting the deeply rooted traditions of language separation is not always easy and straightforward. Thus, more rigorous scholarly research is needed if we are to foster a translanguaging shift in the TESOL field.

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Author contributions

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Competing interests

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