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Role of a Barrier or a Bridge: Translanguaging Pedagogy to Expand Vocabulary and Memory of ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Translanguaging pedagogy has earned the fame of a highly approved and flexible approach in learning as well teaching realm. This article was about exploring the productive or unproductive role of translanguaging pedagogy to expand vocabulary knowledge and memory of ESL learners. Male undergraduates enrolled in Associate Degree Program during the session 2021-2023 at the public colleges of district Rahim Yar khan were the population of that study. Cluster random sampling was used to select 426 students. A questionnaire designed by the researcher was utilized to record the responses of the selected students about positive and negative effects of translanguaging pedagogy on vocabulary and memory enhancement. The findings of descriptive statistics showed that translanguaging pedagogy works more as a barrier for vocabulary knowledge rather than a facilitating tool for ESL learner. As far as development of memory was concerned, this pedagogical approach carried both efficient and inefficient effects for refining the memory of ESL learners. Moreover, its efficiency for memory could be improved by its vigilant manipulation in teaching context.

Introduction

Languages were treated as individual and complete entities. The interruption of L1 in L2 classroom was not warmly welcomed and taken as an annoying interference in the process of L2 learning. This linguistic aptitude for L1 in L2 context was taken as a most appreciated norm and the mixture of two languages was characterized as "careless language habits" of learners (Shin, 2004) , or "lack of English language competence" of instructors (Martin, 2005). But in the present scenario of multilingual communities, numerous languages have been used even in the setting of classroom (Hopkyns, Zoghbor, & Hassall, 2021). The trend has changed "in favor of integrating speakers' preexisting linguistic resources – a process termed as translanguaging – for developing their second language".

Translanguaging also subsists as pedagogy. The foundation of translanguaging theory and its application in the field of learning and teaching gave birth to translanguaging pedagogy. As this pedagogy is based on "the ways in which [multi]lingual students and teachers engage in complex and fluid discursive practices that include, at times, the home language practices of students in order to 'make sense' of teaching and learning, to communicate and appropriate subject knowledge, and to develop academic language practices,"(García, Rubdy, & Alsagoff, 2014). It is related with permitting learners to utilize all their linguistic sources at their behalf to shift the learning process into a possibility of pedagogy.

Translanguaging pedagogy affirms diverse conveniences of its implementation in L2 context involving its application for "identity affirmation, as a tool for scaffolding, and as a resource for additional language learning"(Qureshi & Aljanadbah, 2021). Nevertheless, fame of translanguaging pedagogy does not come alone but with some tides of critical queries about its nature and its implementation. This article would deal with some queries related with minuses and pluses of translanguaging pedagogy to extend vocabulary and memory of ESL Learners.

Memory and vocabulary knowledge

Memory and vocabulary knowledge own a remarkable contribution in reading comprehension. They own a coveted status for various skills of reading comprehension. Poor comprehenders have poor memory and poor vocabulary as compared to skilled readers. They cannot give good performance in memorization of words or numbers. They feel themselves helpless to perceive printed text. As retentive memory helps the reader to link the scattered textual information(Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004).

Literature Review

The term "translanguaging" was ,at first, employed by the Welsh researcher (Williams, 1994) to reinforce the significance of one language in the acquisition of another language. He was not in favour of discriminating the languages and held the idea that learner takes help from one language to acquire the second language. He made arguments for "using [learner's] one language to reinforce the other to increase understanding and to augment the pupils' ability in both languages" (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). This translanguaging method was a response to the supremacy of those named languages that were treated as complete and individual whole (Jaspers & Madsen, 2016). García (2012) added that translanguaging was against the division of one's linguistic sources into different linguistic wholes and favored "a unified linguistic mechanism, termed as -repertoire".

In most recent linguistic and academic research works, translanguaging has become a whispering word. It is being projected repeatedly in different educational journals, conferences and seminars and mingled with other terms. Polylanguaging(Jørgensen, 2008), plurilingualism(García & Otheguy, 2020) and metrolingualism(Syvertsen & Steien) are those terms which are brought forth in comparison of translanguaging(García & Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging has been interpreted in multiple ways. As Leung and Valdés (2019) has defined as " an umbrella "multifaceted and multilayer polysemic term". Additionally, Baker and Wright (2011) " described this term as "a process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" . García, Johnson, Seltzer, and Valdés (2017)has elaborated translanguaging as " a process that involves the use of a learner's entire linguistic repertoire in understanding a text, in developing their linguistics proficiencies needed for academic contexts" .

Keeping an eye on these definitions, the sum up is that translanguaging pedagogy includes the employment of all previous linguistic sources that can be utilized by a learner to learn a second language. Dahlberg (2017) argued that "translanguaging can be used as a scaffold in L1 to clarify or solidify a concept covered or confronted in class". There were different ways of its application e.g. the prominence of L1 in the text (Hughes, 2010), through mutual discussion in prior languages of the students (Kwon & Schallert, 2016), by applying same or different directions (Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014) and by elaborating grammatical and lexical entities in L1 text (Vaish, 2019).

The pedagogical implementation of translanguaging is overpowering now a days. In this context, Cummins (2000) reinforced that knowledge is not restricted to a language . So, the learners should not have any compulsion of using a specific language. Danan (1992) expanded its canvas by arguing that learners of second language can never abandon their

first language as they are used to employ it on regular basis. Cohen (1995) loaded that research by adding that learners of L2 constantly move between different language sources. However, L2 learners should be motivated to utilize their semiotic sources for educational objectives (García & Otheguy, 2020). Allard (2017) asserted that L2 learners defined L1 linguistics sources as a 'disempowering aspect of their school experience" and a reason of "insufficient exposure" to the target language. Extending this, MacSwan (2019) opined that these repertoires had different internal systems. These entities were not opted by multilingual only to employ them socially but also to connect with different grammatical features of that repertoire.

Previous research work showed that there were some controversial findings about employment of translanguaging pedagogy in the process of L2 learning. As Lyster and Sato (2013) had described that recurrent drill of L1 might polish it but at the worth of L2's competence. Prior studies of translanguaging pedagogy could be divided into two categories: 1) research that supported translanguaging pedagogy for reading mastery of L2 along with practical drawbacks and 2) research work that discouraged or given diverse results about the effect of translanguaging pedagogy on reading comprehension of L2. Detailed description of these research works would be given ahead.

The findings of first group promoted the application of translanguaging pedagogy for teaching L2. These works concluded that translanguaging pedagogy bestowed the students with supplementary assistance (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003) and also enables the learners to refine their mastery of second language (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2019). Moreover, both teachers and students recurrently take support from translanguaging(Vaish, 2019) and this approach supported them to create and convey ideas (Hawras, 1996). While the second group of research did not favourtranslanguaging pedagogy for reading comprehension and its contributing factors. Study of Cohen (1974) did not show positive attitude towards the application of translanguaging pedagogy in the setting of L2 learning. Kwon and Schallert (2016) also declared that learners preferred L1 and L2 sources to proceed L2 text by Korean/English readers. They found no clear reason that urged the students to prefer one language to the other one. The results of these research works highlighted that target language should be kept away from prior repertoire in case of abundant utilization of target language. To fill the gap of previous research studies, this work highlighted the role of translanguaging pedagogy as a barrier or a bridge for enhancing the vocabulary knowledge and memory according to the perceptions of ESL learners.

Material and Methods

This descriptive quantitative research intended to evaluate the role of Translanguaging pedagogy as a barrier or as a bridge for expanding the vocabulary knowledge and the memory of ESL learners in multilingual context. This evaluation was based on the perceptions of male undergraduate ESL learners of all public colleges in District Rahim Yar Khan.

Research Tool: A Questionnaire

In this survey based study, Five Point Likert Scale questionnaire was used as a research tool. This research tool was designed by the researcher to collect the responses of male undergraduates of all public colleges in district Rahim Yar Khan. There were sixteen items about the positive and negative role of Translanguaging pedagogy for enhancing vocabulary knowledge and memory of ESL learners in this questionnaire. At the next stage, experts of questionnaire development in the faculty of Humanities and Arts at Khawaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology, Rahim Yar Khan checked and approved sentence structure, subject appropriateness and idea concentration of this survey.

Reliability

To evaluate the reliability of the research tool, a pilot study was conducted. 14 male undergraduates of Associate Degree Program during the session 2021-2023 (at Govt. Associate College, LiaquatPur) participated in that pilot study. Their responses were collected through questionnaire. Reliability of the questionnaire based on this feedback was analyzed using SPSS-20 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences).Brown (2003) has defined reliability as consistent results in diverse situations. It deals with inner constancy of results.Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) determined that the research tool would be reliable in case of Alpha (α)>0.70. Reliability scale in SPSS-20 was used to examine reliability of the questionnaire. 4 test items were deleted to make the questionnaire more reliable. Obtained results (Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (α) = 0.723) showed that the questionnaire was reliable as Alpha (α) value was >0.70.

Population

The population of this research work was male students of Associate Degree Program (ADP) during the session 2021-2023 enrolled in all public colleges of District Rahim Yar Khan.

Sample

Using Cluster Random Sampling, 426 male undergraduates of Associate Degree Program enrolled in session 2021-2023 were selected from public colleges of district Rahim Yar khan. Firstly, the population of all male public colleges at district level was divided into four Tehsil clusters. Then two Tehsils named LiaquatPur and Rahim Yar Khan were selected randomly as clusters. The detailed student description of Associate colleges in these selected tehsil clusters was given as under:

Table 1
Cluster table

Sr.No	Name of Tehsil cluster	Name of colleges within cluster	No. of students
1	LiaquatPur	Govt.Associate College, TarandaMuhammdPanah, tehsil LiaquatPur	87
		Govt.Associate College, LiaquatPur	218
		Govt. Associate College , 87 bank, LiaquatPur	05
2	Rahim Yar Khan	Govt.Associate College, Rahim Yar Khan	116
		Total	426

Collection of Data

For collecting data from 426 students, researcher posted required number of copies of questionnaire to the concerned ESL teachers and requested them to coordinate for getting the responses of the students. After getting the responses of the male undergraduates, the data was shifted to SPSS-20 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) to evaluate Descriptive Statistics.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics (Frequency and Percentage) was evaluated to find out whether translanguaging pedagogy plays the role of a barrier or a bridge to enhance the vocabulary knowledge and memory of ESL learners. The interpretation of that statistics was given in the following tables.

Table 2
Frequency Table for the role of translanguaging pedagogy to enhance vocabulary knowledge of ESL learners

Sr.No	Test Items	Item Statistics	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Translanguaging pedagogy helps ESL learners to understand the meaning of difficult English words in an easy way.	Frequency	28	48	55	143	152
		Percentage	6.6	11.3	12.9	33.6	35.7
2	Translanguaging pedagogy works as a barrier to keep English words in its original form in the memory of ESL learner.	Frequency	23	35	39	168	161
		Percentage	5.4	8.2	9.2	39.4	37.8
3	Translanguaging pedagogy encourages ESL learners to focus on meaning of vocabulary rather than its pronunciation and spelling.	Frequency	78	136	63	81	68
		Percentage	18.3	31.9	14.8	19.0	16.0
4	Translanguaging pedagogy discourages ESL learners to concentrate on pronunciation and spelling of English word.	Frequency	32	38	52	148	156
		Percentage	7.5	8.9	12.2	34.7	36.6
5	Translanguaging pedagogy assists ESL learners to equip their word bank with new vocabulary.	Frequency	98	116	49	97	66
		Percentage	23	27.2	11.5	22.8	15.5
6	Translanguaging pedagogy hinders ESL learners to equip their word bank with new vocabulary.	Frequency	43	47	63	153	120
		Percentage	10.1	11.0	14.8	35.9	28.2

*Note: Detail of only high values was described.

Above given table 2 interpreted that 35.7% ESL learners strongly agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy assists ESL learners to comprehend the meaning of difficult English words in an easy way. While 39.4% students agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy works as a barrier to keep English words in its original form in the memory of ESL learner. 31.9% disagreed that Translanguaging pedagogy encourages ESL learners to focus on meaning of vocabulary rather than its pronunciation and spelling. 36.6% strongly accepted that Translanguaging pedagogy discourages ESL learners to concentrate on pronunciation and spelling of English word. 27.2% disagreed that Translanguaging pedagogy assists ESL learners to equip their word bank with new vocabulary. 35.9% agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy hinders ESL learners to equip their word bank with new vocabulary.

Table 3
Frequency Table regarding the role of translanguaging pedagogy to develop memory of ESL learner

Sr.No	Test Items	Item Statistics	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Translanguaging pedagogy helps ESL learners to store English words with good comprehension in their long term memory.	Frequency	61	96	44	125	100
		Percentage	14.3	22.5	10.3	29.3	23.5
2	Translanguaging pedagogy helps ESL learners to store its meaning rather than English word in their long term memory.	Frequency	62	80	56	103	125
		Percentage	14.6	18.8	13.1	24.2	29.3
3	Translanguaging pedagogy boosts up working memory related to data of target language of ESL student.	Frequency	36	52	85	159	94
		Percentage	8.5	12.2	20.0	37.3	22.1
4	Translanguaging pedagogy weakens working memory related to data of target language of ESL student.	Frequency	28	25	61	181	131
		Percentage	6.6	5.9	14.3	42.5	30.8
5	Translanguaging pedagogy triggers memory by enabling ESL learners to comprehend English text more rapidly.	Frequency	58	87	72	127	82
		Percentage	13.6	20.4	16.9	29.8	19.2
6	Translanguaging pedagogy weakens the memory of ESL learners by letting them to rely on translation of English text.	Frequency	22	61	50	133	160
		Percentage	5.2	14.3	11.7	31.2	37.6

*Note: Detail of only high values was described.

According to Table 3, 29.3% agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy helps ESL learners to store English words with good comprehension in their long term memory. 29.3% strongly agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy helps ESL learners to store its meaning rather than English word in their long term memory. 37.3% agreed that Translanguagingpedagogy boosts up working memory related to data of target language of ESL student. 42.5% agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy weakens working memory related to data of target language of ESL student. 29.8% agreed that Translanguaging pedagogy triggers memory by enabling ESL learners to comprehend English text more rapidly. 37.6% strongly agreed Translanguaging pedagogy weakens the memory of ESL learners by letting them to rely on translation of English text.

Discussion

The objective of this research work was to explore the role of translanguaging pedagogy as a positive or negative approach for the development of vocabulary and memory in the context of ESL learning. Keeping an eye on the purpose of the study, the researcher designed a questionnaire having merits and demerits of translanguaging pedagogy for enhancement of vocabulary and memory of ESL learners. After achieving the reliability of the research tool, the responses of undergraduates were collected through that research tool. The obtained responses were entered in SPSS-20 and Descriptive Statistics was calculated to find out potent and impotent contribution of translanguaging pedagogy for vocabulary and memory of undergraduate ESL students. "What is the role of Translanguaging pedagogy to expand the vocabulary knowledge of ESL learners?" was the first research question. The findings of this research question were elaborated in frequency table 2. Those findings concluded that translanguaging pedagogy worked as a bridge to polish the vocabulary knowledge of ESL undergraduates by:

- Helping ESL students to understand the meanings of difficult English words in an easy way (35.75% students strongly agreed).

On the other hand, impotent effects of translanguaging pedagogy were more influential. These effects declared this approach of pedagogy as a barrier to enhance vocabulary knowledge of ESL learners. As translanguaging pedagogy:

- Hinders ESL learners to store English words in its original form in the memory of ESL learner (39.4% students agreed).
- Promotes ESL learners to concentrate on meaning of English word rather than its pronunciation and spelling (31.9% students disagreed).
- Demotes ESL learners to focus on pronunciation and spellings of English word (36.6% students strongly agreed).
- Helps ESL learners to load their word bank with new items of vocabulary (27.2% students disagreed).
- Hurdles ESL learners to equip their word bank with new vocabulary (35.9% students agreed).

"What is the role of Translanguaging pedagogy to develop memory of ESL learners?" was second research question of this study. Frequency table 3 explained the answer of that research question in a very obvious manner. The findings revealed that translanguaging pedagogy plays a constructive role to facilitate ESL learners:

- To keep English words with good understanding in their long term memory (29.3% students agreed).
- Store its meaning rather than English word in their long term memory (29.3% students strongly agreed).

- Boosts up working memory related to data of target language of ESL student (37.3% students agreed).
- triggers memory by enabling ESL learners to comprehend English text more rapidly(29.8% students agreed)

o Contrarily, Translanguaging pedagogy:

- Weakens working memory related to data of target language of ESL student (42.5% agreed).
- Weakens the memory of ESL learners by letting them to rely on translation of English text (37.6% strongly agreed).

Conclusion

This quantitative descriptive research aimed to explore the positive and negative role of translanguaging pedagogy for increasing the vocabulary knowledge and memory of ESL learners through a questionnaire. The population of this study was male undergraduates of Associate Degree Program enrolled in session 2021-2023 at public colleges of district Rahim Yar Khan. Cluster random sampling was used to select 426 male undergraduates from public colleges. Data was collected through a questionnaire designed by the researcher. This data was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics. Findings of this study threw light on the role of translanguaging pedagogy in terms of vocabulary and memory of ESL learner in a broad way. According to the research questions, detail of the findings was given ahead.

Regarding the first research question i.e. what is the role of Translanguaging pedagogy to expand the vocabulary knowledge of ESL learners? , the conclusion (according to Table 2) was that translanguaging pedagogy played a constructive role for enabling ESL learners to perceive the meanings of complex English words in a convenient way. But drawbacks to employ this strategy for enhancing vocabulary knowledge were mightier than its merits. As this pedagogy worked as a barrier to:

- store English words in its original form in the memory of ESL learner
- concentrate on meaning of English word
- focus on pronunciation and spellings of English word
- load their word bank with new items of vocabulary .

As far as second research question (i.e. "What is the role of Translanguaging pedagogy to develop memory of ESL learners?) was concerned, interpretation of frequency table 3 concluded that translanguaging pedagogy assisted ESL learners to bridge up the gap of poor memory by facilitating ESL learners to store English words and its meanings with efficient perception in their long term memory. Conversely, this approach weakened the working memory related with target language by encouraging the ESL learners to rely on translation of text.

To cut a long story short, the conclusion was that impotent effects of translanguaging pedagogy on vocabulary knowledge were more significant than its potent impression. This approach worked more as a barrier than a bridging tool. While in case of memory, the role of this pedagogy carried some positive as well as negative results. Additionally, this approach could be more useful for development of memory with its careful manipulation in multilingual context.

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