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Academic Essay

The Four Roles of L1 in CLIL and Translanguaging: Negotiator, Mediator, Encourager, Facilitator

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Abstract

The current landscape of English language teaching are moving from the monolingual assumption to the understanding that L1 is part of one person's whole linguistic repertoire. However, this shift is still largely occurring in research while the practice of English teaching still largely considers L1 to be an unwanted interference. The potential role of L1 in making the input comprehensible should receive further consideration. This essay will discuss how language teachers should seek to leverage students' L1-encoded prior knowledge rather than viewing it as an impediment within the context of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging because they both explicitly affirm the goal of multilingual competence and involve the use of L1 in teaching practices. The difference lies in terms of the attitudes; the use of L1 is not contemplated as a priori in CLIL yet encouraged in translanguaging. This essay highlights the need for balanced and flexible L1 use in their respective contexts and pedagogies in respect to its roles: (1) L1 can negotiate meaning for L2 learning objects, (2) L1 can address the negative transfer of false cognates, (3) L1 can encourage the engagement of multilingual resources, and (4) L1 can facilitate classroom engagement.

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1. Introduction

Since the late nineteenth century, the predominant pedagogical straitjacket had been 'bilingualism through parallel monolingualisms' or 'monolingual assumption': that is, instruction should be conducted primarily in the target language without L1 interference. The persistence of the immersion ideologies results from a biased reference of L1 use to the traditional grammar-translation method which focused on written texts, grammar, and linguistic forms in isolation from communicative language use (Ghobadi and Ghasemi, 2015). This monoglossic immersion principle is likewise built on the 'maximum input hypothesis' (Krashen, 1982), which aims to provide the most of L2 input possible to facilitate second language learning. However, the one-sided application of this hypothesis fails to take the 'comprehensible input theory' into account (Krashen, 1982), which disrupts the balance between the quantity and quality of the input. Therefore, I assume that the potential role of L1 in making the input comprehensible should receive further consideration. The fundamental principle of learning in engaging prior knowledge also greatly challenges the monolingual instructional approach, as Bransford et al. (2005) claim that existing knowledge and experiences are the foundation of new understandings. In the context of L2 learning, it indicates that language teachers should seek to leverage students' L1-encoded prior knowledge rather than viewing it as an impediment (Stille & Cummins, 2013).

A trend beginning in the 1990s to reconsider the role of L1 in second language education sheds light on the relationship between languages. The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis contests the assumptions on language separation and acknowledges the role of L1 by implying the underlying cognitive, academic or literacy-related proficiency that is shared across languages, hence enabling the transfer between languages (Stille & Cummins, 2013). Debates in twenty-first century go beyond drawing connection between languages entities; instead, scholars started to break the artificial boundaries between languages and claimed that the 'relatively fixed entity' should be questioned (Hülmbauer, 2013, p. 67). According to Blackledge and Creese (2014), the idea of language as independent system may function as a sociopolitical construct, but not as an analytical lens to view language practices. In this framework, L1 merges into one person's 'whole linguistic repertoire' from which bilinguals strategically selected linguistic resources to make meaning clear and construct knowledge (Wei & García, 2022).

As Taylor and Snoddon (2013, p. 440) define the use of L1 as 'a paradigm shift that opens up new approaches to understanding teaching and learning', this essay argues for a more flexible and balanced role of L1 in different pedagogical settings. I have chosen Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and translanguaging because they both explicitly affirm the goal of multilingual competence and involve the use of L1 in teaching practices (Marsh, 2013); however, in terms of the attitudes, the use of L1 is not contemplated as a priori in CLIL yet encouraged in translanguaging. I select empirical studies by Moore (2014) and Rajendram (2021), which both highlight the need for balanced and flexible L1 use in their respective contexts and pedagogies. I hereby situate my argument in 1) an international Catalan university using English as official medium of instruction (Moore, 2014) and 2) a Malaysian primary school with English-only policy (Rajendram, 2021).

The complexity of defining bilingualism and distinguishing between mother tongue and additional languages have been acknowledged in terms of disparities of language proficiency, differences in reasons and sequence for language learning and language dominance (Ferreira et al., 2016; Grant et al., 2011). In this essay, I refer to L1 as the learners' mother tongue which they are first exposed to. For learners who acquire more than one language naturally, I refer to them as home languages. Additional languages are those learned after L1 or home languages, which can alternatively be written in the form of L2, L3 Lx.

This essay is structured into three chapters. Chapter 2 introduces CLIL as a pedagogy dominated by the monolingual fixation despite the aim to deepen both L1 and L2 awareness. I use Moore's study to argue for L1's role in meaning negotiation in two aspects: identifying L2 learning objects and addressing negative transfer of false cognates. Chapter 3 introduces translanguaging as a pedagogical approach that encourages a flexible manoeuvre of all linguistic and semiotic resources including L1 to break the rigid frame of separate languages. I will focus on Rajendram's study to explain how translanguaging facilitates language learning through identity construction in two aspects: the role of L1 in engaging multilingual resources and in facilitating classroom engagement. In the following Discussion section, I will draw comparisons between L1's role in those two approaches and present possible implications for the field.

2. Role of L1 in meaning negotiation in CLIL Pedagogy

Content and language Integrated learning (CLIL) refers to a dual-focused approach where context topics are taught through the medium of the target foreign language (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p.183). In terms of medium of instruction, the exclusive use of target language without reference to local languages in CLIL is usually persistently enforced by official policymakers, which contradicts the fact that teachers and students find learners' L1 proficiency a useful and positive resource (Mahboob, 2011) and typically the target languages accomplish less than 50% of the curriculum (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009). The prospect of using L1 in CLIL classrooms seems optimistic on the basis that in the CLIL Compendium (Marsh, 2013), the conceptualisation of the multilingual goal is clear: to deepen awareness of both mother tongue and target language and to develop plurilingual interests and attitudes, which are in conjunction with the teaching and learning practices above.

The significance of multilingual competence should be reinforced in CLIL pedagogy, since L1 use, orienting to language in content, often clarifies terminologies essential in content and thus scaffolds meaning negotiation and content learning (Nikula & Moore, 2019). In CLIL pedagogy, meaning negotiation on key concepts can be seen as an opportunity to focus on both language and content. In the context of L2 immersion, the empirical study focuses on how local and international students in an Educational Psychology subject at a Catalan university mobilise their linguistic repertoires and achieve task completion in a teamwork over time. The study seeks to investigate how students use their whole linguistic repertoire for knowledge construction in both second language and disciplinary content. I select data from Moore's study to emphasise L1's role in two aspects: first, identifying L2 learning objects to initiate meaning negotiation and second, addressing negative transfer of false cognates to facilitate meaning negotiation.

2.1 The role of L1 in identification L2 learning objects

Monolingual immersion ideologies still dominate many language learning contexts in the world. In the context of internationalisation in Europe, this certainly proves true in Catalan universities where English as lingua franca is introduced into classroom to facilitate the involvement of exchange students and improve local students' abilities to study in an academic field dominated in English (Moore, 2014, p. 586). However, this policy sacrifices the role of local students' L1 for meaning negotiation and ignores the fact that CLIL classes, driven by content rather than language, are often timetabled as content classes and taught by content teachers who are non-native speakers of the target language (Nikula & Moore, 2019), leading to teachers and students' lack of attention to language learning objects. Therefore, I would argue that students' L1 use will assist learners in identifying potential L2 learning objects, thereby initiating the process of meaning negotiation.

Moore's study centres on the learning process of Gisela, one of the Catalan students who raises most questions about key terms in the teamwork and cannot clarify the difference between 'career' and 'occupation' and between 'aspiration' and 'expectation'. In this learning object tracking, Moore uses Conversation Analysis to pinpoint moments when specific language learning objects are oriented to in discussion (Markee, 2008). For the first pair of variables, she initiated a word search by inquiring about the relevance between 'career' and 'trajectory', which her international classmates denied. Then she switched to her L1, turned to her Catalan peer Ariadna and translated the word 'trajectory' into Catalan. Ariadna puts forward the new result 'academic trajectory' with Gisela's consent and finally settled on 'academic history' as the correct term. At this point, the word search was successful with agreement from peers.

By introducing the Catalan translation for 'trajectory' and inquiring the meaning in her L1, Gisela draws attention from other participants to the difference between 'career' and 'occupation', creating a new language learning object for all participants which will otherwise be neglected. They negotiated the meaning of important terminologies in the content area while their common L1 helps to identify the terms as potential L2 learning objects due to their language difficulties. This process of meaning negotiation has dual benefits: first, promoting content learning, and second, facilitating the location and cognitive process of the language learning targets (Lin, 2015, p. 84) which resonates with the dual emphasis of CLIL pedagogy where language learning is frequently neglected. Furthermore, the differences between variables are questioned by the teacher in the final presentation as central to the students' learning, which Gisela answers in English referring to her notes and previous discussion results. This fluent and confident performance with exclusive use of English produces a unilingual final product in the process of l2 learning, suggesting that Gisela has accurately targeted the language and content learning objects and successfully negotiated the meanings, progressing to an expert in 'articulating definitions in fluent, public discourse in English' (Moore, 2014, p. 604). She progresses from a state of frequent encounter with language difficulties and confusion in content knowledge, to improved comprehension with aid of both L1 and L2, and finally arrives at the state of handling and delivering the knowledge in unilingual mode of the target language under highly stressful situation of classroom presentation. In a nutshell, L1 helps multilingual students to express their language difficulties,

which initiates the process of meaning negotiation and facilitates the knowledge construction of both language and content in CLIL pedagogy.

2.2 The role of L1 in addressing negative transfer of false coguates

A focus on cognates, especially in the case of etymologically close languages, will promote the learners' acquisition of vocabulary in the additional language (Cummins, 2009). Negative transfer, on the other hand, may hamper students' comprehension of the target language, particularly when learners exclusively focus on morphological resemblance. Lin (2015) exemplified that in the explicit contrastive analysis of the L1 (Mandarin) and L2 (English) terms, the Chinese words for 'heat' and 'hot' are morphologically and phonologically identical (热) despite serving different parts of speech, noun and adjective respectively. This exerts a negative impact on Chinese students' understanding of the science concept of 'heat transfer' since they may link it to everyday terms such as hot weather (Fung & Yip, 2014). Engaging students in 'heat' (science term) and 'hot' (everyday term) will enhance students' cognitive processing of the science concept behind the terms and help them negotiate the meanings of key terms in the target content field. Similarly, when students are discussing the key concepts in Moore's study, the false cognates appear an impediment to a deep understanding of the content and language. Since L1 use is prohibited and the method of contrastive analysis is no longer available, Students such as Gisela repeatedly turn to peers and students and remain confused, which eventually does damage to meaning negotiation. Therefore, I will demonstrate L1's role in addressing negative transfer of false cognates to facilitate meaning negotiation in Moore's study.

Another piece of evidence supporting L1's role in facilitating meaning negotiation is that, as extracted from Fragment 3 of Moore's study, Ariadna and Gisela clarify the misunderstanding caused by the resemblance between L1 and L2 by pointing out the false cognate 'carrera' in Catalan and addressing negative transfer of false cognates. Gisela argues that 'career' is more than 'academic history' and seeks clarification. Martin-Beltran (2014, p. 12) suggests that an efficient use of L1 is to encourage the learners to 'play language detectives', to look for and discuss similarities and differences (cognates and false cognates) across languages. In this case, Ariadna understands the cause of her misconception and states that 'carrera', referring to 'degree' in Catalan, appears a false cognate to 'career' for Catalan people. After clearing the misunderstanding, Gisela develops the definition of 'career' and leads to consensus from the group, reaching the final goal of meaning negotiation. As illustrated also in Fung and Yip's study (2014), explicit contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 in meaning negotiation will provide a fruitful learning opportunity to facilitate the conceptualisation of the terms. To be more specific, in this study, if Ariadna do not switch to L1 and attribute Gisela's confusion to the impact of L1 word 'carrera', Gisela will still be perplexed by the negative transfer and the group will not reach a consensus, indicating the failure of meaning negotiation.

In this chapter, I have claimed that a flexible and balanced use of L1 should be encouraged in CLIL classrooms. In the context of internationalisation, the use of L1 will leverage local students' whole linguistic repertoire and build multilingual competence. Drawing from the fragments from Moore's study which depict local students' manoeuvre between L1 and L2, this study has demonstrated how a flexible and balanced use of L1 contributes to the identification of the potential language learning objects and addressing negative transfer of false cognates, thus initiating and facilitating meaning negotiation. These observations promote plurilingualism in an L2 immersion university as a resource ensuring participation and facilitating clarification, conceptualisation and saturation of emerging knowledge objects (Gajo and Berthoud 2008; Moore, Nussbaum, and Borràs 2013, as cited in Moore, 2014, p. 605).

3. Role of L1 in identity affirmation in Translanguaging Pedagogy

The shift from monolingualism towards translanguaging is advancing in twenty-first century language classrooms, promoting hybridity and creativity of language use and abolishing the monoglossic view of separating learners' linguistic resources or regarding their L1 as non-existent or contaminating the pure monolingual ideologies (García et al., 2011). However, with sufficient research presenting positive results

from translanguaging in foreign language classrooms, English-only policies still dominate foreign language classrooms. Rajendrum's study looks into the tension between students' affordance of translanguaging and the constraints to learners' use in a primary school EFL classroom. In this study, translanguaging process is both a cognitive and social activity influenced by the distinct sociocultural contexts where learners are situated in (Martin-Beltran, 2014). This sociocultural perspective leads Rajendrum's study to collaborative learning, where students draw on their shared knowledge in a group-structured translanguaging space (García & Kleyn, 2016).

Fuller's (2007) and Norton and Toohey's (2011) theory argue that the choice to use L1 is interwoven with identity constructions (as cited in Ghobadi & Ghasemi, 2015, p. 247). Learners' level of confidence can be enhanced by their freedom to use their home languages. Moreover, recent sociocultural studies have convincingly shown that translanguaging is a natural process through which students use their L1 as a resource in developing capability and confidence in L2 (Conteh, 2018). In light of this, I will analyse Rajendram's argument for implementing translanguaging based on two major benefits related to identity construction: engaging multilingual resources and facilitating classroom engagement. Both justifications contest the tension from monoglossic views and teacher-dominated pedagogies.

3.1 The role of L1 in engaging multilingual resources

Translanguaging, incorporates the use of multilingual and multimodal resources, brings together different dimensions of learners' personal history, experience and environment (Wei, 2011). To engage learners' prior understandings and multilingual resources, as Bransford et al. (2005) summarises, is one of the fundamental principles for effective learning. Swain (2013) also states that using the L1 or the familiar language resources of the students helps make the content comprehensible for it allows teachers/students to build from the known. This rule is applied to bilingual educational context and infers that L1 lays foundation for L2 learning, on the basis that multilingual speakers' prior understandings are encoded in their L1 (Cummins, 2008). It refers not just to information previously acquired in an instructional sequence but also to all the experiences that have shaped the learners' identity. Hence, learners' accessibility of multilingual resources, including prior knowledge and cultural heritage etc, will reflect how strongly and confidently they affirm their unique identities. In this section, I will support this claim with evidence from learners' interaction during collaborative activities.

Translanguaging plays a vital role in leveraging multilingual resources from their unique culture and linguistic repertoire, which can be displayed in students' use of L1 for brainstorming in classroom tasks. In this context, Riya suggests in her L1 that her group use a trilingual Hindu prayer book to get information for a writing task on the topic of family traditions. Another student, Tarum, raises the idea of using the popular festival Diwali to create a script for a drama. Harini also gets inspirations from popular local culture as they suggest doing their presentation like a popular Tamil language TV show in Malaysia. It clear to see that the Hindu prayer book, Diwali, and the TV show are all all tangible manifestations of their prior culture knowledge. These students, with their Malaysian Indian identity, tend to use L1 to give suggestions drawn from their multilingual resources in order to complete tasks in another language. Without the reference to multilingual resources related to unique cultural heritage, they would probably get stuck in the presentation and writing tasks designed in L2 which may therefore hinder task completion and motivation in L2 learning. In conclusion, students' confidence, and efficiency with using multilingual resources stem from their recognition and affirmation of language identity.

In addition to oral use of L1, translanguaging in this collaborative learning context also entails the use of multimodal resources. For example, students brought bilingual food labels from home and located the words on the labels to make themselves understand and use the L2 learning objects such as nutrition, protein and ingredients. Their multilingual competence, which is inaccessible to other monolingual peers, helps students choose the food labels and creates a precious opportunity to gain learning autonomy and enhance their cognitive processing of the L2 learning objects. Students independently seek multilingual assistance outside

of classroom and tries to leverage her unique linguistic resources in L1 to scaffold their own language learning. As Jørgensen et al. (2010) propose, language users create, construct, and negotiate identities on the basis of a range of resources which can be associated with meaning. In this case, the use of multimodal resources (food labels), which scaffold the process of meaning negotiation in the group discussion, support students' construction and indicate their affirmation of their unique multilingual identities.

3.2 The role of L1 in facilitating engagement in collaborative tasks

Translanguaging is a process in which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include ALL the language practices of ALL students in a class in order to communicate and appropriate knowledge, and interrogate linguistic inequality (García & Kano, 2014). The emphasis on 'ALL' indicates the fact that a certain group of students may not be able to access their full linguistic resources and feel refrained in participating in language practices such as collaborative tasks. Hence, in this section I will argue for the role of L1 in facilitating engagement in collaborative tasks as the acceptance of translanguaging empowers language-minoritised students to voice their opinions, affirm their language identities, and get engaged in collaborative tasks.

The more confidently students affirm their identities in a classroom with free access to translanguaging, the more active and involved students are in collaborative tasks. This tendency is supported by the goals of translanguaging pedagogy, which includes two aspects pertaining to identity construction: first, identity investment and positionality (to engage learners) and second, to alleviate linguistic inequality and challenge linguistic hierarchies and social structures (García & Wei, 2015). Linguistic hierarchy here implies that some students who conform to the English-only policy restrict peers' L1 use, weaken their confidence in using L1, and dominate the position of leadership. This phenomenon can be seen in Rajendram's study: Suren, the enforcers of English-only policy, often claim to be the final decision maker and solve the misunderstandings in an inequitable way. Learners whose multilingual resources are restricted by teachers and peers, demonstrate a lower level of engagement in class since they are unable to voice their opinion due to their weakened level of confidence and identity affirmation. For instance, Meena conveyed her frustration that 'If we say we want to share, Suren doesn't let us because he only must tell all the creativity in English, his idea only must use for the group work. That's what I don't like. He didn't take our idea' (Rajendram, 2021, p.17). As Sato and García (2023) argues that translanguaging as pedagogy has the potential to liberate the voices of language-minoritised students, in this case, translanguaging would empower those alienated students to show their full talents with their identities affirmed and creates an equal and collaborative atmosphere where all students can engage in the activities. .

In this chapter, I have shown that L1 use in translanguaging can affirm students' identity by helping student engage multilingual resources and facilitating classroom engagement. As learners' language use is deeply embedded with a sociocultural milieu and never occurs in a vacuum (Walqui, 2006), more attention should be paid to an equal and collaborative atmosphere where all students with different language identities can all feel free to participate. Rajendram's study has provided evidence of multilingual students' increased engagement in class and the negative effects of monolingual ideologies. Therefore, it is imperative that policymakers, teachers and all students reconsider the capital of English and recognise and embrace the benefits of L1 and students' agentive translanguaging practices.

4. Discussion

In this section, I seek to draw comparisons between CLIL and translanguaging, in order to demonstrate the significance of a more balanced and flexible L1 use in language learning classrooms. A close examination of Moore's and Rajendram's studies reveals that L1 use has the potential to improve multilingual competence in both pedagogical contexts, yet the position of language learning are quite different. Finally, I will summarise the implications of both studies and how they can contribute to the field in the future.

A more balanced and flexible L1 use enables language learners to employ transglossic resources to achieve task completion in both pedagogies. In Moore's study, given that monolingual students have not read the content material, bilingual students' first language plays a significant role as it scaffolds the comprehension of key terminologies locates the language problems. Participants in collaborative tasks, leveraging their multilingual resources, such as bilingual notes, and conducting an explicit contrastive analysis of cognates in their L1 and L2, finally accomplish the presentation task. Well-marked task performance and the smooth delivery in unilingual mode echo the dual goals of CLIL pedagogy. Similarly, though the use of multilingual resources is hindered by sociocultural contextual factors at play in Malaysia (linguistic hierarchy among peers, parental pressure, limitations to provision), students in Rajendram's study persist in drawing on multilingual assistance: bilingual dictionaries, food packages, as well as cultural icons. L1 use engages more multilingual students with a wider range of resources in the collaborative tasks by affirming their unique identity, which therefore facilitates the completion of collaborative tasks.

On the other hand, since CLIL and translanguaging have different pedagogical expectations and requirements on language learning, the affordances of L1 also differ. In most CLIL classrooms, language learning takes a secondary role despite what the compendium states as 'dual emphasis' on both language and content. For one thing, the selection of language learning objects is determined by the need to understand the content. Improved language, in turn, facilitate the cognitive process of content. For another, CLIL classes are often led by content teachers without enough experience or expertise in language teaching and scheduled as EMI content classes. These two factors contribute to the neglected attention to language learning in CLIL pedagogy while increasing multilingual competence and other language related skills is the main goal of translanguaging pedagogy. It highlights L1'role in raising the awareness of language learning and locating the L2 learning objects in CLIL pedagogy. Moreover, the unilingual delivery of content as final goal in Moore's study indicates that the language aspects of CLIL pedagogy still targets one named language entity and views other linguistic resources as secondary scaffolders. However, in translanguaging pedagogy with enhancing the leverage of whole linguistic repertoire being the final goal, learners' gradually break the boundaries between traditionally separated language systems. Students in Rajendram's study turn to multilingual resources encoded in L1 to defense themselves against the linguistic hierarchy and restrictions from self-expression imposed by monolingual peers and teachers advocating English-only policy.

In summary, to stimulate learners' multimodal, and semiotic resources is significant for additional language learning, to highlight the role of language leaning in CLIL and to enhance multilingual competence and liberate students' idea in translanguaging. For this reason, I have argued for the active integration of L1 use in both CLIL and translanguaging pedagogies, as this suggestion responds directly to the contextual challenges that feature in each empirical study.

6. Conclusion

This essay has highlighted that the role of first language in learning additional languages could be more balanced and flexible in CLIL and translanguaging pedagogies. In both linguistically diverse and English-only policy contexts, the empirical evidence I have discussed illustrates the potential for L1 use to initiate meaning negotiation by identifying potential L2 language objects and to facilitate the process by addressing negative transfer of false cognates in CLIL pedagogy and the role of L1 in identity affirmation by engaging multilingual resources and facilitating classroom engagement in collaborative tasks. In light of the empirical findings in Catalan and Malaysian universities, I call upon the field to address the issue of teachers' insufficient knowledge and resources to create an equal, discursive and collaborative translanguaging space, by refining theoretical models of L1 use which will support teachers' future practices in their respective contexts.

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