Academic Essay

A Critical Analysis Comparing the Role of L1 in CLIL and Translanguaging

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Article Info	Abstract
	Mother tongue use in the classroom is an emerging practice combatting the old idea of achieving bilingualism through parallel monolingualism. As the discussion of the first language's (L1) role within pedagogical contexts is still in its relative infancy, a critical analysis which compares how the pedagogical affordances of two recent L2 pedagogical approaches, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Translanguaging, influence language teachers' pedagogical choices will contribute to the current understanding of how educators clarify the role of L1. Besides its recency, both pedagogies are also chosen as the scope of this discussion because their aims are not solely to gain knowledge of the target language (TL). Funnelling the discussion with two empirical studies which represents the typical application of these pedagogies, this essay found that L1 has three types of facilitating roles, namely class and task management, scaffolding the target language production, and conceptual clarification. A clear distinction between these two pedagogies is established: while CLIL teachers always prioritise TL and treats L1 as a compensatory measure, Translanguaging teachers are authorised to mobilise a wider range of communicative resources rooted in the learners' mother tongue. This essay recommends further exploration on the role of L1 across other pedagogies to better empower educators in actively and judiciously employing the inevitability of students' L1 in the classroom to their advantage.

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1. Introduction

One contentious issue concerning additional language learning is the practice of excluding learners' L1 from the foreign language classroom, which is heavily influenced by the monolingual ideology (Shin et al., 2020). Imposed by such official discourse, "bilingualism through parallel monolingualism" becomes a pedagogical straitjacket in the L2 classroom, which fully eliminates the role of L1 and seeks to develop students into bilinguals through monolingual immersion (Lin, 2015). Proponents of target language exclusivity claim that the language is made authentic through the exclusive use of the TL whereas switching to the L1 would disrupt the language learning process, and thus maximising the exposure as well as comprehensible input of L2 should be the language educators' priorities (Krashen, 1985; Macaro, 2001; Macdonald, 1993).

However, the late 20th century witnessed "a shift in the pendulum" where the mother tongue was given renewed importance in the foreign language classroom (Lasagabaster, 2013, p. 3). Scholars have questioned whether a larger quantity of L2 input can necessarily lead to greater learner intake and have further challenged that the L2 exclusivity model can be detrimental to L2 development, because of low quality of L2 input (Dickson, 1996; Macaro, 2001). A relatively consistent finding in the recent literature is that L1 is

considered a beneficial and useful resource for L2 learning (García & Hidalgo, 2017; Lin, 2015; Martínez-Adrián, 2020). From the pedagogical perspective, however, while the majority of teachers do employ L1 in their language classroom, they adopt a paradoxical view of its use as necessary but "unfortunate and regrettable" (Macaro, 2005, p. 68), perhaps due to concerns about being divergent from the communicative approach. Thus, a question ensues: if L1 indeed plays a role in additional language learning, what specific roles does it have in different pedagogical contexts? In this essay I argue that the role of L1 in additional language learning requires clarification so that educators can be trained and empowered as active agents to make judicious and pedagogically intentional uses of L1 to enhance L2 learning. Two relatively recent L2 pedagogical approaches, CLIL and Translanguaging, are chosen as the focus of exploration, which will be analysed in detail in the following sections. I am going to first summarise some of the key features of CLIL and Translanguaging, then move on to elaborate and compare the two strategies, discuss some of the common themes found in the two empirical studies regarding the role of L1, and explore how the different affordance of pedagogical approaches can influence teachers' pedagogical choice.

2. Contextualising CLIL and Translanguaging Pedagogy

2.1 CLIL pedagogy: Questions that remain

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was coined in 1994 by Marsh as an "umbrella term" to refer to a range of educational practices in which "an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to predefined levels" (Marsh, 2013, p. 2). It is thus evident that the central feature of CLIL pedagogy lies in its dual-focused nature that aims at fusing both content and language learning goals (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). While the implementation of CLIL pedagogy can impart a new educational context that differs from that of the traditional FL classroom, it also poses a salient question for teaching practitioners on how to merge the content and language in a balanced way and reach the desired outcome for both. Noteworthily, despite its advertised dual-focus, CLIL class's subject-content-driven nature lead teaching practitioners to focus on the "C" aspect of teaching, whereas the majority of the CLIL research singularly draws upon the "L" attainment and overlooks the "C" aspect of learning outcome (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p. 186).

In terms of the language dimension of CLIL, scholars identify CLIL as a relatively spontaneous approach of acquiring a language and view it as renewing potential to address drawbacks inherent in FL instruction, such as insufficient TL exposure and scarcity of meaningful content input (Coyle, 2007; García Mayo & Hidalgo, 2017). Dalton-Puffer (2011) has thus interpreted CLIL as "a foreign language enrichment measure packaged into content teaching" (p. 184). Moreover, the field has started to move towards the idea that strategic application of L1 can be acceptable due to its support for language production (González Ardeo, 2013). Evidence has been found in a number of CLIL studies that moderate and contextually appropriate use of L1 can have beneficial impacts on learner's language development at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (González & Barbero, 2013; Lin, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010). Therefore, even though the question of whether and how L1 use in CLIL classrooms may enhance L2 acquisition remains to be resolved, the scenario of L1 use in CLIL has gained empirical researchers' attention (Martínez-Adrián et al., 2019).

2.2 Translanguaging pedagogy: L1's evident role

While in CLIL pedagogy, the role of L1 is a newly emerged area of research and its findings remain inconclusive and unstraightforward; in translanguaging pedagogy, the role of L1 is rather strong and evident. By definition, translanguaging can be understood as a pedagogical attitude that encourages both teachers and students to exploit "all of their linguistic and semiotic resources" in the process of language learning and teaching (Mazak, 2016, p. 5). L1 (L1s) occupies a prominent place in one's encompassing linguistic repertoire and is thus viewed as a significant resource in translanguaging pedagogy. The concept "repertoire" refers to "the totality of an individual's language knowledge", which counters the binary notion of competence or incompetence (Hall, 2019, p. 86). Scholars have identified that translanguaging evolved from the Welsh term trawsieithu, which has its origin in a Welsh bilingual classroom in the 1980s, where a

systematic alternation of Welsh and English was pedagogically designed and applied to enhance proficiency in both languages (Carroll & Sambolín-Morales, 2016; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Despite its manifestation as alternating between languages, translanguaging contrasts with code-switching in that it is not merely a shuttle between designated languages, but an attempt to soften the rigid boundaries between languages. Translanguaging takes a holistic view of the speaker's construction of "complex interrelated discursive practices" that are not readily attributable to one or another conventional definition of named language (García & Wei, 2013, p. 22). Therefore, in a translanguaging pedagogical space, boundaries between the target language and L1 can be viewed as soft and fluid. Wei (2018) goes on to argue that through an intentional dismantling of "the artificial and ideological divides" between mother tongue versus target languages, translanguaging centralises the "teaching and learning process on making meaning, enhancing experience, and developing identity" (p. 15).

2.3 CLIL and Translanguaging in empirical research

CLIL and Translanguaging share the similarity that both of their pedagogical aims are not solely to gain knowledge of the L2. As mentioned above, CLIL has a dual-focused objective and Translanguaging aims at developing "the interactional repertoires across all languages" (Lo, 2021, p. 21). However, the L1's role in the CLIL classroom remains ambiguous while in Translanguaging classroom is evident. Based on the traits of these two pedagogical spaces, teachers tend to make different decisions of language use. In order to inform educators about their language choice in the classroom to optimally enhance students' language acquisition, it can be meaningful to compare these two pedagogical approaches. In order to explore and compare the role of L1 in additional language learning in CLIL and translanguaging pedagogical space, I will focus here on two research papers conducted respectively by Gierlinger (2015) and Zhou (2021).

The longitudinal research carried out by Gierlinger (2015) was situated within the context of Austrian secondary school's CLIL classrooms with student participants aged from 14- to- 17- year-old, who all shared German as their L1. Unlike in other European schools, there is no rigid ordinance in Austrian on the set time that teachers should use the TL. Therefore, the five teacher participants in the study had full flexibility in language choice and could resort to L1 in either a spontaneous or principled manner whenever they feel necessary. The focus of the study was on teachers' code-switching behaviour and the data was collected through using classroom recordings to inform reflective teacher interviews, combined with classroom observation to identify a range of scenarios in which L1 might effectively come into play. Meanwhile, the translanguaging research conducted by Zhou (2021) is contextualised in a Shanghai secondary school's EFL classroom with 40 student participants aged from 15- to 16- year-old. It is worth noting that the researcher, who was simultaneously the teacher participant in this study, shared the mother tongue languages of Mandarin and Shanghai dialect with the students. The data was collected through audio-assisted class recordings with the aim of depicting pedagogical moments of classroom translanguaging interactions.

In the CLIL classroom, Gierlinger (2015) identified two main objectives of the teacher's codeswitching to L1: regulative purpose and instructive purpose, which respectively refer to the management of "the classroom's social world" and the communication of "the academic content and skills being learnt" (p. 350). In the EFL classroom that focuses on translanguaging practices, Zhou (2021) extracted four typical translanguaging instances that utilised four types of linguistic and semiotic resources: multimodal translanguaging with pictures, emojis, mime, and dialects. To compare these two studies and draw particular attention to the role of L1 in target language learning, in this instance both are English, I categorise L1's role as follows: task management, scaffolding TL production, and conceptual clarification. The following paragraphs will explore these roles in more detail.

3. The role of L1 in task management

L1 comes into play when class and task management goals take precedence over the teacher's TL delivery aim. When the pedagogical intention is to effectively fulfil task management needs, teachers' language use tends to become more focused on efficacy than L2 input. Yet at the same time, as can be discerned from

both studies, the L1 use in this context, albeit not aimed at furthering L2 learning, can implicitly support students' lexical acquisition of the target language. In Gierlinger's (2015) study, the data reveals that CLIL teachers frequently code- switch to L1 for regulative purposes. As reported by teacher participants in the interview, their use of L1 for the class regulative objective is pedagogically planned on account of the "authenticity and forcefulness" brought by L1 (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 356). L1's authentic power enables it to have the "appeal to attentiveness" effect in CLIL classrooms, redirecting students' attention back to the content and linguistic aspects of the class. This resembles to what Bobadilla-Pérez & Galán-Rodríguez (2020) point out as the affective role attached to L1, where teachers intentionally switch to the mother tongue to manage disciplinary issues and create a positive learning environment. For example, as shown in the interview extract, one of teacher uttered "it is very necessary that you work alone, wichtig, important, it's important, it's very important to work alone now for three minutes" (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 355). The teacher emphasised the instruction "work alone" by reiterating the word "important" several times and also utilising the L1 equivalent "wichtig" to further capture students' attention.

Drawing on the language development dimension of this type of L1 usage occasion, teachers frame the class management utterance into an "L2-L1-L2 sandwich pattern", which potentially opens the possibility for TL learning and lexical acquisition (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 356). Such sandwich pattern of teaching echoes to the "sandwich technique" advocated by Butzkamm & Caldwell (2009) in traditional FL teaching, which is designed to facilitate TL acquisition by providing the mother tongue equivalent whenever teachers identify an unknown word or expression. However, compared to the deliberate use of the sandwich technique in traditional FL classrooms, the sandwich model in CLIL can work more effectively because it happens naturally. As Coyle (2007) states, CLIL provides learners a more natural language acquisition setting because it affords a substantial amount of "real and meaningful input to learners" (p. 548). CLIL teachers' L2-L1-L2 pattern occurs naturally in real situations with the goal of recapturing students' attentiveness in the classroom, during which they provide students with the context for L2 expressions by using L2 in authentic and meaningful scenarios.

> Context: the students are in group discussions exchanging their views about the characters in the novel 'The Great Gatsby'. The teacher is monitoring each group, participating in their discussions and answering their questions.
>
> T: teacher; S1, S2 and S3: three individual students in a group discussion
>
> **S1** I don't particularly like this character Daisy. I don't think she deserves Gatsby.
>
> **S2** I agree. She is so...bad...and not just bad, but very...very...就是一种老搓克额感觉 (a feeling of very treacherous or sinister) (These words were spoken in Shanghainese, the dialect spoken in Shanghai).
>
> **T** 对额, 搓克各则词用得老形象额 (Yes, I think treacherous is an accurate description here), treacherous, despicable, or sinister. 那么你觉得她哪里搓克了呢 (Then to what extent do you think she is treacherous)? Despicable or sinister in what way?
>
> **S3** She killed her lover's wife and let Gatsby take the blame, and she did not even show up at his funeral.
>
> **S2** Yes, sinister, she is very sinister. She is just using him.

Figure 1. Excerpt of transcripts from classroom interaction (Zhou, 2021, p. 7)

Such implicit language learning furthered through the L2-L1-L2 sandwich pattern is also observable in the translanguaging classroom, though manifested in a slightly different way. L1's involvement in the illustrative excerpt provided by Zhou (2021) has the primary pedagogical function of managing the classroom tasks and, more specifically, eliciting more student voice in group discussions. As demonstrated by the excerpt, the student participant is presumably unable to identify the most suitable expression in either

L2 English or L1 Mandarin, and thus resorts to the other L1 Shanghai dialect to get their desired message across. As multilingual speakers, they navigate between languages and use resources from those different languages to construct multilingual discourses depending on the communicative situation (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). As can be observed from the teacher's response, instead of discouraging students' non-TL output, the teacher valued the accuracy of the expression 搓克 *cuoke* 'sinister' and integrated this Shanghai dialectical expression in her intermixing discourse as well. Such intermingled construction of discourse is very tenable under the translanguaging lens, which viewed languages as "not compartmentalized in a diglossic situation, but rather they overlap, intersect, and interconnect." (García et al., 2008, p. 217). In the example, due to the principled pedagogical aim of evoking more opinions from students, the teacher repeated the Shanghai dialect and combinedly utilised it with the other L1 Mandarin to maintain the flow of the conversation, while simultaneously, the L2 translation of 搓克, sinister, is also provided by the teacher, thus forming the whole multilingual discourse. In this translanguaging space, the boundaries between distinctive languages are considered soft, and linguistic resources from diverse languages are combined to form the "composite language resource" for both the teacher and students in the pedagogical space (Mauranen, 2018, p. 113). Moreover, implicit language acquisition is achieved in this scenario, as can be discerned from the last line of the excerpt, Student 2, who initially resorted to L1 expression 搓克, picked up the L2 equivalent word "sinister" as the conversation progressed, which signifies her acquisition of a new L2 vocabulary.

However, doubts need to be raised as to whether language learners without sufficient linguistic resources in the multilingual classroom can exploit the benefits of translanguaging to the fullest (Nijhawan, 2022). Here in this instance, not all of the students speak the Shanghai dialect to the same level, which can lead to issues of translanguaging practice. As introduced by Zhou (2021), most of the student participants were "born and raised in Shanghai". By assumption, the wording "most" signifies that not all of the students have a high-enough shanghai dialect proficiency for communicative purposes. The researcher did not offer further clarification of each student's linguistic proficiency in their Shanghai dialects. When the translanguaging moment of Shanghai dialect's pedagogical involvement is under analysis, the researcher failed to take participants' distinctive linguistic level into account. Since each student individuals have different languages and linguistic resources in their repertoire, not all the students receive the same chance to engage in classroom translanguaging and the non-Shanghai dialect speakers will become "minority in classroom environment" (Galante, 2020, p. 9).

4. The role of L1 in scaffolding TL production: sufficient or limited?

L1 can be utilised as a scaffolding tool to complete an utterance when faced with the linguistic deficiency in the L2. Some of the CLIL teachers in the study were providing opportunities for "a rich and joint learning potential" because they serve as exemplars of language learning and engage in collaborative language development with their students. Extracting from Gierlinger's data, when teachers have a struggle with the target expression, indicated by "pauses and repeated hesitation marks", they switch to L1, and such incidents are initiated either by students engaging in the construction of the whole sentence and providing the L1 word or students directly saying, "you can speak German if you like," (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 362). Teachers then resorted to L1 as a scaffolding tool to effectively get the desired message communicated. Simultaneously, an in-class foreign language learning model is demonstrated by teachers searching for the corresponding TL words in an online dictionary and students following the learning process by looking at the projector. The learning of the target word is further enhanced through the teacher "repeating it, writing it on the board, and telling them to look for it in their handouts," (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 362). With the scaffolding role played by L1, the whole process of such TL learning conversation takes no longer than ninety seconds. In this scenario, the educators act both as subject knowledge facilitators and language learners who involve their students in the additional language learning process. However, L1's effective scaffolding role demonstrated in this study is context-dependent because the teachers and students share the same L1 German. It may not function as

effectively in other contexts where students' linguistic background is more diverse and do not have a shared L1.

It is evident that L1 can play a role in scaffolding teachers' and learner's TL production (Pladevall-Ballester & Vraciu, 2017), however, the scaffolding effect brought by L1 can be limited and one may need to resort to other semiotic tools to further aid the target language learning. As exhibited in the translanguaging classroom in Zhou's (2021) study, apart from linguistic resources, multisemiotic tools such as visual aids and body language can also be mobilised for the aim of sense-making. Garcia & Wei (2013) has proposed that translanguaging perceives the communicative repertoire of a multilingual speaker as constituted by both language and other semiotic resources, which should be viewed holistically. Zhou (2021) demonstrated a pedagogical moment when the teacher initially tried to explain the word "gable" in English (TL) and realised that students failed to understand the meaning, so she immediately provided the literal translation "Sanjiaoqiang (三角墙)" in L1 Mandarin. However, afterwards she realised that the scaffolding role played by L1 was not effective enough because students remained looking puzzled, so her translanguaging practice went beyond utilising linguistic resources to leveraging semiotic tools, which was manifested by her using the chalk to draw the picture of the gable to provide the visual aids to enhance students' understanding. The translanguaging happening here transcends the code-switching that took place in the CLIL classroom because it reconceptualises language as a multimodal semiotic system that demolishes the conventional divide between what is perceived as "linguistic and non-linguistic" (Wei, 2018, p. 20).

Moreover, the mobilisation of semiotic resources in the translanguaging class served a dual purpose of explaining both the target language term "gable" and the L1 equivalent, which improved students' L1 ability as well. This is in line with the principle of translanguaging pedagogy, which seeks to deepen the comprehension of the meaning and enhance proficiency in both the stronger and weaker language rather than focusing exclusively on the weaker ones (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). As elaborated by Wei (2018, p. 16), the translanguaging pedagogy helps to re-examine the actual purpose of additional language learning, which is to grow from monolingual to multilingual, rather than to "replace the learner's L1 to become another monolingual". Therefore, the translanguaging pedagogy deeply impugns the target-language- only monolingual ideology and revitalises the neglected role of L1 and semiotic resources in language development.

5. The role of L1 in conceptual clarification

Informed by data of Gierlinger's (2015) study, CLIL teachers code-switch to L1 when they either notice or foresee the comprehension problem of a concept. Such type of L1 use is mainly manifested in quick clarification checks such as "what does X mean?" or "briefly in German so that we have understood it" (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 358). In such incidents, L1 plays a conceptual clarification role because the mother tongue allows for discursive flexibility and helps teachers avoid exclusively resorting to their "smaller stock of discursive devices" in L2 to explain things in potentially misleading manners (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010, p. 280). In line with CLIL teachers' overreaching commitment to their subject teacher role, Gierlinger (2015) has argued that L1 use in this context is pedagogically designed for enhancing conceptual understanding rather than supporting TL learning. However, despite these teacher's initial intention of L1 use and their "unanimous rejection of doing deliberate vocabulary work", the dual-focused nature of the CLIL enables the happening of implicit "lexical acquisition of the target language word" (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 360-361). Moreover, the interview data suggests that the L1 usage is decided based on teachers' constant monitoring and evaluation of the comprehension difficulty, which is largely reliant on their prior knowledge of each student's linguistic competence. This reveals that for optimal learning results and for the teacher to ensure that each student is able to improve both content and language skills, CLIL class cohorts cannot be too large so that the teacher can use L1 in the classroom in the most efficient way.

The L1 use for clarifying concepts in CLIL classrooms is pedagogically planned based on teachers' monitoring and evaluation of the level of conceptual complication. The principal aim is successful content delivery and the L1 utilisation in this context can be understood as "a use of last resort". In translanguaging classroom, on the other hand, attributable to the judicious space it provides for L1 usage, the students themselves are actively engaged in the translanguaging process for the purpose of the conceptual clarification. The L1 is mobilised proactively rather than unavoidably. In Zhou's (2021) study, during a pedagogical moment when the teacher explicated the complex phenomenon of people crying and laughing simultaneously, the students proactively bring up the concept "笑 cry", which they can more easily relate to and comprehend. Translanguaging space provides a legitimate territory for students to not feel pressured to use L2-only but mobilise their L1 to do the meta-thinking, reducing the cognitive load and saving time (Lo, 2021). The combination of L1 and L2 can accurately explain the complex concept that the teacher was trying to expound on. This classroom translanguaging incident happens serendipitously rather than pre-planned, owing to the organic space offered by translanguaging (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021).

6. Conclusion

In light of the empirical findings from Gierlinger (2015) and Zhou (2021), this essay has endorsed the positive role played by L1 in language learning and identified three types of facilitating roles, namely class and task management, scaffolding the target language production, and conceptual clarification. Though L1 has an active involvement in both of the teaching practices, the two pedagogical approaches provide different affordances for the L1 involvement, and thereby influencing teachers' pedagogical choice. For CLIL teachers, the use of L2 (TL) is always prioritised in the class and the switching to L1 serves as a compensatory measure; contrariwise, translanguaging teachers are authorised to mobilise a range of communicative resources. The code-switching to L1 that occurred in the CLIL classroom was previously perceived as a sign of pedagogical deficiency, and despite being under gradual modification, such negative association persisted; whereas translanguaging is by definition more positively associated with the L1 use because the L1 is framed as part of the indispensable resource in the whole linguistic repertoire (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014). By comparing these two pedagogical approaches, translanguaging sheds lights on CLIL that the L1 use should be justified as to better forward both the language dimension and content dimension of leaning. Moreover, it would be essential for teaching practitioners to acquire a thorough understanding of the concepts and theories and how to implement these in their context-specific educational settings (Liu et al., 2020). Regrettably, the aim of leveraging L1's facilitative power in additional language learning still has a long way to go due to the confines imposed by the monolingual education policy and the lack of counter-official discourse that justifies linguistically inclusive practices such as translanguaging (Carroll, 2016; Liu et al., 2020, p. 4; Galante, 2020). More empirical research should explore the role of L1 in a more diversified pedagogical context to provide groundings for teachers' L1 use in the classroom, informing educators to design their L1 use more purposefully and strategically.

6. Acknowledgement

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