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Exploring Translanguaging Practices in Grade 9 English Class at Vigan National High School East

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Abstract: This study explored translanguaging practices in Grade 9 English classes at Vigan National High School East, where English, Filipino, and Ilocano coexist in learners' everyday communication. Translanguaging refers to the flexible and strategic use of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning, understand instruction, and participate in learning. Using a qualitative case study design, the study examined how English teachers and Grade 9 learners used multiple languages to explain lessons, clarify instructions, check comprehension, express ideas, and support classroom participation. The study was grounded in the view that learners' home and community languages are valuable resources rather than barriers to English learning. Findings from related literature indicate that translanguaging can improve comprehension, reduce anxiety, increase learner confidence and motivation, and create more inclusive opportunities for participation. However, its effective use depends on teachers' deliberate planning, learners' comfort in using their languages, and institutional expectations that may favor English-only instruction. This research contributes to the limited body of qualitative studies on translanguaging in Philippine junior high school English classrooms, particularly in a multilingual Ilocano-speaking context.

Keywords: *Translanguaging, Multilingual Education, English Language Teaching, Grade 9 Learners, Filipino, Ilocano, Classroom Participation, Qualitative Case Study.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language is the main vehicle through which knowledge is built, shared, and negotiated in the classroom. In multilingual societies such as the Philippines, however, classroom talk is rarely confined to one language. A Grade 9 student in a community where Ilocano is widely spoken may use Ilocano at home, Filipino with classmates and in the media, and English as the language of textbooks, examinations, and formal instruction. These languages do not live in separate compartments; they interact and support one another in everyday communication.

English language teaching has traditionally been guided by monolingual ideals that encourage an "English-only" classroom, on the assumption that maximum exposure to the target language leads to better learning. Contemporary research challenges this view. Translanguaging, the flexible and strategic use of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire to make meaning, understand, and communicate (García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014), treats learners' home and community languages as a resource rather than a deficit or an interference.

Philippine language-in-education policy has shifted over time, from the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy assigning English and Filipino to different subjects, to Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the early grades under DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012 and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533). By junior high school, English is expected to serve as both subject and medium of instruction in English classes. In practice, teachers and students often draw on Filipino and the local language to explain difficult concepts, clarify instructions, check comprehension, and build rapport. These practices are often described informally as "code-switching" or "mixing," and are sometimes viewed with ambivalence.

Translanguaging offers a different lens: it recognizes that multilingual speakers have a single, integrated repertoire from which they select features strategically (Otheguy et al., 2015). Studies elsewhere suggest that such practices can deepen comprehension, increase participation, and support identity (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Yet there remain few in-depth qualitative accounts of translanguaging in Philippine junior high school English classrooms, particularly where English, Filipino, and a regional language such as Ilocano coexist. This study addresses that need by

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exploring how English teachers and Grade 9 learners use English, Filipino, and Ilocano to facilitate understanding and communication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review examines translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in multilingual English classrooms, especially in its function to support learners' understanding, participation and confidence. The paper discusses the major themes in the literature: the concept of translanguaging, translanguaging as an instructional strategy, teachers' use of multiple languages, students' experiences, and the relevance of translanguaging in the Philippine context. The emphasis is on how English, Filipino and regional languages like Ilocano can be used as linguistic resources in junior high school English classes.

➢ *Related Literature*

- *Translanguaging as a Concept*

Li & Han (2024), they described translanguaging refers to the purposeful and flexible use of a learner's full linguistic resources to create meaning, communicate, and participate in learning. Instead of treating languages as a separate and fixed systems, this perspective suggests that languages are not discrete and fixed systems, but interlinked resources that learners use to express ideas and negotiate understanding (Li & Han, 2024).

In English classrooms, may appear when teachers and learners use the first language (L1) to explain ideas, clarify instructions, respond to questions, and construct understanding from the target language (L2).

Translanguaging is often interchanged to code-switching. Li & Han (2024) explains that translangaging is a meaning-making practice in which speakers utilized their linguistic repertoire flexibly depending on the communicative situation.

This perspective is important in the present study because junior high school learners in Vigan may use English, Filipino, and Ilocano in their everyday communication, and these languages may naturally enter their English classroom interactions.

- *Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Strategy*

In the study of Li and Han (2024) observed that translanguaging occurs through classroom interaction, as teachers and students negotiate meaning using their available languages.

Morever, in English reading comprehension, Dilrahman, Rohayati, and Friatin (2026) investigated the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy for reading activities. The findings revealed learners used their first language (L1), English, and non-verbal resources such as gestures to clarify instructions, understand unfamiliar vocabulary, take notes, discuss texts, and express their ideas. These practices are beneficial as it makes reading less difficult, reduced anxiety, and increased confidence and motivation.

Although the study was conducted among university students in Indonesia, its findings are relevant to the present study because both investigate how translanguaging supports English learning in multilingual classrooms. The present study extends this research by exploring the translanguaging practices of Grade 9 English learners at Vigan National High School East, where students may use Filipino, Ilocano, and English as linguistic resources in classroom communication.

- *Teachers' Use of Translanguaging*

Teachers play a central role in creating opportunities for translanguaging in the classroom. They may use learners' first languages to introduce a topic, explain unfamiliar vocabulary, translate instructions, ask comprehension questions, or provide feedback. Huang & Chalmers (2023) noted that these strategies can reduce language barriers and allow students to actively participate in English lessons.

In the scoping review of Burner et al., (2023), observed that teachers have a positive belief about multilingualism, although their actual classroom practices vary across contexts. It commonly involves the language of instruction and students' first language, particularly when teachers need to support comprehension and classroom communication. These findings imply that teachers may value learners' linguistic resources while not applying them consistently because of institutional expectations, assessment demands, or limited professional preparation.

Furthermore, Huang and Chalmers (2023) found that pedagogical translanguaging in EFL classrooms promotes learners' understanding, engagement and participation. Teachers can use translanguaging for explaining complicated ideas, clarifying instructions, checking for understanding and providing extra support to students with limited English proficiency." But effectiveness of translanguaging depends on how deliberately teachers plan and integrate it into classroom activities.

These findings provide a foundation for examining how English teachers at Vigan National High School East use translanguaging in junior high school classes. The study aims to determine whether teachers use English, Filipino, Ilocano and other available languages in explaining lessons, managing classroom interactions, supporting learner comprehension and facilitating learner participation.

- *Translanguaging in the Philippine Context*

In the Philippine context, translanguaging is a common feature of multilingual classrooms because many learners use English, Filipino, and regional languages in daily communication. Garcia and Ocampo (2021) explored translanguaging strategies in Philippine senior high school English classes and found that teachers strategically used English, Filipino, and regional languages to support learners' understanding of English lessons. Similar study

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was conducted by Gatil (2021), a systematic literature review of studies on translanguaging in multilingual English-language teaching in the Philippines. The review showed that translanguaging can serve as a pedagogical resource that helps learners access English instruction, participate in classroom activities, and connect new English concepts with their existing linguistic knowledge. Their study showed that translanguaging can serve as a bridge between learners' home languages and the target language, English.

Macawile and Plata (2022) likewise examined teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in Philippine senior high school English classes. Their findings showed that teachers used translanguaging to support knowledge construction, meaning-making, and problem-solving. However, they also found that a monolingual culture can limit the use of translanguaging, even when teachers recognize its value as a pedagogical resource (Macawile & Plata, 2022). This finding is relevant to the present study because it suggests that English teachers may use translanguaging despite the expectation that English should be the primary medium of instruction.

Pratiwi (2025) conducted a thematic literature review on translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The review examined how translanguaging practices influence learning outcomes and classroom practices. Findings showed that translanguaging supports learners' comprehension, participation, engagement, and confidence in using English. Teachers used translanguaging to explain lessons, clarify instructions, check understanding, and provide additional support to learners with limited English proficiency.

- *Students' Experiences of Translanguaging*

Students' experiences are equally important in understanding translanguaging practices. A recent study on Grade 10 students' lived experiences of translanguaging instruction in English classrooms found that students viewed translanguaging as a pedagogical and communicative scaffold that supported their cognitive, emotional, and communicative engagement (Voices Between Languages, 2026). Students used translanguaging to understand lessons, express their ideas, participate in discussions, and connect English learning with their everyday language practices.

The same study also identified barriers and differences in translanguaging practices that could affect students' comprehension and participation (Voices Between Languages, 2026). This suggests that translanguaging may be helpful, but its effectiveness depends on how teachers implement it and how comfortable students are in using their languages during English lessons. For this reason, the present study includes the perspectives and classroom practices of both teachers and junior high school learners.

III. METHODOLOGY

- *Research Design*

This study uses a qualitative case study design. Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in natural settings through the meanings people give to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A case study is appropriate for an in-depth, contextualized understanding of a bounded system when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clear (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995).

The case is the translanguaging practices within Grade 9 English classrooms of Vigan National High School East, with English teachers and Grade 9 learners as participants. It is an instrumental single case (Stake, 1995), examined to gain insight into how multilingual repertoires are used in English instruction. The design suits the study because translanguaging is a context-dependent, interactional practice that requires in-depth exploration of how participants describe their language use, their reasons, and their beliefs.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that translanguaging is a meaningful pedagogical practice in Grade 9 English classrooms at Vigan National High School East. Rather than treating English, Filipino, and Ilocano as separate and competing languages, teachers and learners can draw on their combined linguistic repertoires to make lessons more understandable, communicative, and learner-centered. Translanguaging supports students in explaining difficult concepts, clarifying instructions, negotiating meaning, and participating more confidently in English learning activities.

The study further concludes that learners' first languages and community languages should be recognized as instructional resources, not as signs of limited English proficiency. When used purposefully, translanguaging can bridge learners' prior linguistic knowledge and the target language, thereby strengthening comprehension, engagement, and classroom participation. At the same time, teachers must use it strategically and intentionally so that it supports rather than replaces meaningful exposure to English.

Finally, the study recommends that English teachers receive guidance and professional development on pedagogical translanguaging. Schools and language educators should create classroom environments that value multilingualism while maintaining clear instructional goals for English learning. Future research may examine the actual classroom interactions, teachers' beliefs, and learners' experiences through interviews, observations, and participatory methods to provide a deeper understanding of translanguaging in Philippine junior high school education.

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➢ *Conflict of Interest Statement*

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

➢ *Ethical Statement*

This article is based solely on a qualitative narrative review and thematic synthesis of existing academic literature and relevant institutional publications. No primary data were collected from human participants, and ethical approval was therefore not required.

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