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OPEN ACCESS

# Intercultural Communication Education

ISSN 2209-1041

<https://www.castledown.com/journals/ice/>

*Intercultural Communication Education*, 4 (1), 90–105 (2021)  
<https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v4n1.442>

## Should Standard Arabic have "the lion's share?": Teacher ideologies in L2 Arabic through the lens of pedagogical translanguaging



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### Abstract

With the multilingual turn in applied linguistics, translanguaging has been envisioned as a pedagogical approach in multiple contexts (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Galante, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019). Recent discussions have turned to teachers' perspectives to understand how teachers' monolingual ideologies and beliefs could limit the potential of such approaches (Hillman *et al.*, 2019; Holdway & Hitchcock, 2018; Tian, 2020). With a focus on Arabic as a multidialectal and multiglossic language, this paper examines teachers' translanguaging ideologies and practices and their nexus to language learning and intercultural communication. It used a focused, semi-structured interview to determine to what degree teachers' practices were consistent or in conflict with their ideologies regarding translanguaging. They were challenged with positions from translanguaging pedagogy to initiate their conceptual development. A discrepancy was found between teachers' ideologies and practices. That is, whereas they initially hesitated to accept translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogy, they were indeed translanguaging. This discrepancy is argued to limit learning. A qualitative analysis of the interviews with some teachers showed the emergence of an internally persuasive discourse about the potential of translanguaging. In light of teacher reflections that specified legitimate challenges, we argue for the judicious adoption of translanguaging pedagogy in multilingual and multicultural settings and discuss pedagogical implications and future research directions.

**Keywords:** pedagogical translanguaging, L2 Arabic, teacher ideologies, teacher practices, Arabic dialects

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**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within this paper.

## Introduction

The field of teaching and learning Arabic as a multiglossic and multidialectal language requires mobile thinking. In surveying and critiquing the status quo of the field, Ryding (2009) noted what she termed “reverse privileging,” in which Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the secondary discourse, is taught first, and the primary discourse, which is the dialect, is taught inadequately second, if it is taught at all. There is no doubt that multi/dialectal competence in Arabic is important in building intercultural awareness. This awareness can be cultivated in a classroom atmosphere that goes beyond venerating MSA as the pure standardized variety and integrates both other Arabic dialects and learners’ additional languages, including English.

Translanguaging has been proposed as a critical pedagogy that allows all the linguistic resources of learners to be brought to the classroom in bi/multilingual settings (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Galante, 2020; Yilmaz, 2019). Zhu and Wei (2020) discuss how translanguaging has implications not only for language learning but also for intercultural communication. As a concept, translanguaging destabilizes language hierarchies and borderlines between/among standard varieties and dialectal varieties and provides a social space in which learners can bring in different dimensions of their language backgrounds, personal experience, and history (García & Wei, 2014). Recent research has turned to teacher perspectives on translanguaging pedagogy due to the central role of teachers as frontliners (Holdway & Hitchcock, 2018; Hillman *et al.*, 2019; Ticheloven *et al.*, 2019; Galante, 2020; Tian, 2020).

In the context of Arabic, recent research has characterized translanguaging practices *in* and *beyond* language classrooms (Abourehab & Azaz, 2020; Al Masaeed, 2020; Trentman, 2021). It has shown the benefits of translanguaging (use of all linguistic resources such as English, Arabic dialects, and other home languages) in knowledge construction, meaning negotiation, and identity affirmation. This research proposes adopting pedagogies informed by multilingual ideologies. These ideologies are predicted to be in conflict with teachers’ monolingual ideologies and beliefs that still reverberate an MSA-only policy. This is due to the status and power of the standard variety of Arabic. Abourehab and Azaz (2020) have recommended opening up a dialogue with teachers to initiate their conceptual development and ideological becoming. Drawing on this research gap in Arabic, this paper focuses on teachers’ translanguaging ideologies and practices and their nexus to language and intercultural awareness in Arabic as a foreign/second language (L2). It used a detailed survey followed by a focused, semi-structured interview to determine to what degree teachers’ practices were consistent or in conflict with their ideologies regarding translanguaging pedagogy. They were challenged with positions from the translanguaging pedagogy to further reveal their perspectives on the challenges of implementing it, to form an internally persuasive discourse, and eventually to initiate their own conceptual development.

## Literature Review

### Translanguaging: A discursive practice and a pedagogical approach

Translanguaging has been put forward as a theory of language practice to understand the intricacies of communication in diverse settings including the language classroom. Originally, the Welsh scholar Cen Williams (1994) coined the Welsh term *trawsieithu* to characterize the pedagogical practice that allowed the learners to alternate languages in bilingual Welsh/English classrooms for the purpose of receptive and productive use (Baker, 2011). Over the last decade or so, the term has been used by many scholars (García, 2009; Canagarajah, 2011; Wei, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2012) to refer to both the complex language practices of multilingual or plurilingual learners and communities as well as the

pedagogical approaches that use those complex practices, with each defining it slightly differently.

Translanguaging generally refers to those practices that allow for the transition from one language to another fluidly, dynamically, and flexibly. They include, but are not limited to, practices that have been described previously as translation, code-switching, code-mixing, and code-meshing. Baker (2011) distinguishes between code-switching that occurs ‘intersententially’ (one sentence is uttered in one language and the next starts with a new language) and code-mixing that occurs ‘intrasententially’ (where the switch of languages is in a single utterance). García and Sylvan (2011) conceptualize translanguaging as a practice that “includes code-switching ... and it also includes translation, but it differs from both these simple practices in that it refers to the process in which bilingual students make sense and perform bilingually in the myriad ways of classrooms – reading, writing, taking notes, discussing, signing, and so on” (p. 389). Translanguaging is similar to code-switching in the sense that it disrupts the traditional isolation and separation of languages in language teaching and learning (García & Lin, 2017). But it is different from code-switching in the sense that the latter assumes separate codes that work in separate channels that can be crossed and mixed. In translanguaging, individuals and learners are assumed to operate using an integrated multilingual repertoire without separation. They strategically and dynamically utilize this repertoire in the various modes of communication for different purposes. This repertoire is arguably not limited by the defined boundaries and categories of *named* languages (Otheguy *et al.*, 2015).

In the context of language learning and teaching, translanguaging practices are “transformative” in the sense that they remove the hierarchy of languaging practices for learners and teachers. They disrupt the notions of “first”, “target”, “second/foreign”, and “heritage” languages. In this view, learners are not understood as possessing a “native” or “first” language, and acquiring a “second” language, but rather as developing an integrated linguistic repertoire from which they strategically draw in particular social contexts (García, 2011; Otheguy *et al.*, 2015). The transformative nature of these practices potentially “creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment” (Wei, 2011, p. 1223).

Although the term was coined in the 1980s, the terms “pedagogical translanguaging”, “translanguaging pedagogy/ies”, and “translanguaging as a pedagogy” have recently gained momentum in language teaching and learning (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cenoz, 2019; Yilmaz, 2019; Abourehab & Azaz, 2020; Galante, 2020, Cenoz & Santos, 2020, among many others). This pedagogical perspective underscores teacher-directed translanguaging (Lewis *et al.*, 2012) to explain terms, to present complex parts of a topic, and to explain something in another language. When embraced by teachers, translanguaging supports the use of a mix of languages to enhance learning. In their elaboration on teachers’ use of translanguaging in bilingual settings, García and Wei (2014) highlight several important things. First, translanguaging could be used as a scaffolding approach for teachers to ensure that learners engage with rigorous content, access difficult texts, and produce new language and new knowledge. Also, it allows the learners to access and discuss texts in their own languages and not only in the target language/s. With these benefits, “translanguaging in teaching is always used in the service of providing rigorous instruction and maximizing interactions that would expand the students’ language and meaning-making repertoire, including practices that fall under what some consider *standard* (emphasis added) language” (p. 233).

The emergence of translanguaging has drawn implications for intercultural communication education. Zhu and Wei (2020) discuss implications for translingual intercultural communication research. With the inextricable link between language and culture (*langugaculture* or *linguaculture*), the field has examined, among other things, the role of the linguistic systems of the native and target

languages as pathways to intercultural communication (Fantini, 2012). Translanguaging allows for going between and beyond the linguistic systems and structures of the common native and target language binaries to include the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual learners. In the orchestration of multiple languages, language varieties, and styles, multilingual learners bring in different dimensions of their knowledge about the world and the values embedded in the cultures they represent. In addition, whereas the field of intercultural communication has focused on researching language and culture differences as sources of miscommunication (Zhu, 2015), the notion of translanguaging challenges this view. It alternatively considers learner differences as communicative resources that need to be utilized critically and creatively to express multiple points of view. It encourages learners to bring in the multiple perspectives of their communities and cultures. One aspect of translanguaging pedagogy is that it allows for the transition from one *linguaculture* to another fluidly and dynamically. This perspective is different from the traditional norm that prioritizes the *linguaculture* of the L2.

These implications for translingual intercultural communication echo pedagogical discussions of the transnational view of *linguculture*. For example, Risager (2006, 2012) argues that the linguistic practices of learners are not culturally neutral. They represent the values of their groups, communities, or cultures. These practices (linguacultural) are seen as flows in social networks of people or groups of people physically and virtually due to migration. In a similar position, Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) further expand the profile of the intercultural speaker in global migration and deterritorialized living conditions. In their conceptualization of symbolic competence, the intercultural speaker is someone who operates at the border between several languages, language varieties, or dialects. He/she has the ability to move consciously and selectively between them according to the context in which one is communicating.

### **Teacher translanguaging ideologies and practices**

With a large body of research supporting the benefits of translanguaging in multiple bi/multilingual contexts (Lewis *et al.*, 2013), recent research has turned to teacher perspectives and ideologies towards pedagogical translanguaging. This interest is obviously driven by the premise that teachers are the frontliners in language pedagogy. Their perspectives need to be studied and considered. Results of research in this area shows that when teacher views are surveyed, they report minimal mixing of languages in classrooms. However, when they are observed while teaching, they are found to engage in translanguaging practices for various pedagogical purposes (Hillman *et al.*, 2019). Also, when teachers are engaged in discussions about the potential of translanguaging, they report common logistic concerns such as how to balance between the languages, how to prioritize the target language as mandated in language programs, and most importantly, how to compromise translanguaging pedagogy and monolingual assessment (Galante, 2020; Ticheloven, *et al.* 2019). Third, when teachers engage in professional development based on pedagogical translanguaging, their attitudes are viable to change. Using action research, Holdway and Hitchcock (2018) found that teachers showed varied acceptance (but also resistance) to encouraging students' first language backgrounds with multilingual learners. Their acceptance was taken as a sign of ideological becoming in a Bakhtinian sense. Similarly, using a case study approach with one teacher educator in a TESOL teacher preparation course, Tian (2020) found that focused engagement helped to create translanguaging spaces in the classrooms and to develop a variety of strategies for implementing translanguaging.

Defining translanguaging as a mix of languages in the classroom, this line of research has been faced with an important question, which is language naming and categorization. In the theoretical conceptualization, translanguaging refers to the “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic

repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy *et al.*, 2015, p. 281). It is not realistic to survey teachers’ perspectives around the use of multiple languages in the classroom without naming the languages involved. As Galante (2020, p. 2) puts it, “in the context of language learning where students enroll in language classes in order to develop their language skills in one particular language (or two in the case of bilingual programs), not naming languages is pedagogically impractical.” Therefore, whereas language naming and categorization are discouraged by theorists, “there is nothing inherently wrong with the categories of named languages” (Otheguy *et. al.*, 2015, p. 298) as long as we remain aware that naming is not equated with separation and duality. Also, the position of not naming languages can pose challenges related to power among languages in a given context (Jaspers, 2018; Turner & Lin, 2020). This is the case in the context of teaching Arabic as a second language, in which power, high prestige, and status are often assigned to MSA. This will be the focus of the following section.

### **Translanguaging in Arabic as a multidialectal language**

Arabic is a di/multiglossic language in which at least two varieties (MSA and the dialects) are used under different conditions within speech communities, often by the same speakers (Ferguson, 1959). MSA is the written language that represents continuation of Classical Arabic, the language of Islamic and literary heritage. By virtue of this continuation, it has status, prestige, and power (Albirini, 2016; Bassiouney, 2009). The field of Arabic pedagogy has made great strides over the past decade, from teaching only MSA to embracing an integrated approach (Al-Batal, 2017; Younes, 2014) in which MSA and one dialect (at least) are taught side by side. With the increase of study abroad in the Arab-speaking world (Shiri, 2015) and the movement of people from this region to other parts of the globe, studies have examined translanguaging (Arabic dialects, English, and other languages) in and outside of the Arabic classroom. For example, Abourehab and Azaz (2020) analyzed the translanguaging practices in teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions in the context of heritage language learning in the U.S. The study found that translanguaging practices (multiple varieties of Arabic and English) were actively and dynamically employed in the exchanges to negotiate linguistic knowledge (lexical and grammatical) and celebrate learner identities in a setting that venerates the standard variety as a medium of instruction with a monolingual policy. The study concluded that the opportunities for pedagogical translanguaging were augmented in a classroom atmosphere that gave legitimacy to the learners’ dialects and challenged the monolingual institutional ideology.

Focusing on study abroad, Trentman (2021) examined the role of language ideologies in shaping the experiences of the Arabic learners in Egypt and Jordan. Analyzing data from interviews, social media, and participant observation, she demonstrated how student expectations for study abroad (and in telecollaborations) were shaped by monolingual ideologies and distinct language boundaries. Also, she found “plurilingual realities” such as the use of English to learn Arabic, use of multiple languages in social settings, and use of multiple linguistic resources to access new ones, and translanguaging. She concluded that monolingual ideologies limit student learning, and she called for adopting pedagogies informed by plurilingual language ideologies. In a related study, Al Masaeed (2020) examined translanguaging practices (multidialectal and multilingual) outside the classroom between L2 learners and their native speaker conversation partners during study abroad in Morocco. This study also found evidence of translanguaging practices being utilized as resources for meaning-making and knowledge construction.

### **The Present Study**

Three recent studies in translanguaging in Arabic as a multidialectal language (Abourehab & Azaz,

2020; Al Masaeed, 2020; Trentman, 2021) have documented ubiquitous translanguaging practices *in* and *beyond* the classroom. However, these studies have not examined teacher ideologies and beliefs about translanguaging. This present study characterizes teachers' practices and uncovers their ideologies about the potential of pedagogical translanguaging and the challenges they envision for implementation. It opens a dialogue with them to initiate their conceptual development to eventually embrace this approach judiciously. Throughout this paper, translanguaging is used to refer to the teachers' openness to integrating multiple languages, varieties, and dialects in the classroom.

### Research question

This article seeks to answer this research question: What are the teachers' perspectives and signs of conceptual development (if any) as a result of engaging in focused readings and discussions about the potential of pedagogical translanguaging for language learning and intercultural awareness in Arabic as a foreign/second language?

### Context and Participants

This article is part of a larger study that was conducted with ten teachers of Arabic as a foreign/second language in three multilingual sites: eight teachers in the United States, one teacher in Australia, and one in an extension campus of a prestigious, private U.S. institution in the Arabian Gulf. Participants were recruited via email, using a database of Arabic teachers maintained by a national association. All participants were identified as native speakers of an Arabic dialect. Additionally, all spoke English, and two also knew French, because it was widely spoken in their country of origin. Most were in their 40s ( $M = 40.5$ ;  $SD=5.03$ ), and they had almost 12 years of teaching experience on average ( $M = 11.7$ ;  $SD = 6.23$ ). Six of them held Ph.D. degrees and six held M.A. degrees in applied linguistics or closely related fields. They taught all levels of Arabic in their programs (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) and four of them were currently coordinating the basic Arabic programs at their institutions. They all explicitly stated that they use the integrated method by including one dialect in their teaching. The home languages of their students included English, Spanish, Arabic dialects (for heritage learners), European languages (Russian and Romanian), Urdu, and Farsi.

### Instrument

Data for the larger project were collected using a detailed survey that was followed by a semi-structured interview. Data for this short article came from the interviews with three teachers. These interviews were conducted by the first author of this article. Because the instructional level could be a factor, the instructors were told that the study focused on their perspectives about the use of multiple languages in lower division courses of Arabic (defined as the first and second years).

During the interview, the teachers were asked to read two things: (i) a summary of the theoretical tenets and benefits of translanguaging in the language classroom as laid out by García (2011) in an interview. This summary was taken from *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB Guide for Educators* (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, pp.1-6), and (ii) a summary of how to use translanguaging in teaching reading, listening, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and culture in Arabic language classrooms. This second summary was prepared in light of the above-mentioned guide with adaptation to Arabic. Relevant parts from these two summaries were used as needed in the interviews. They were envisaged as a catalyst to motivate tensions between the ideologies expressed by the participants and the arguments for translanguaging pedagogies presented in the scholarly literature. All interviews were conducted with each teacher individually, video-recorded, and transcribed to probe into their ideologies. They were given the option to speak in Arabic (MSA or dialect) or in English. Due to

space limitations, six excerpts by three teachers in the format of an interaction between the teacher (T) and the interviewer (I) are presented and analyzed along with the contexts in which they appeared. These excerpts were selected because they showed either tension with and/or a conviction of a certain tenet from the translanguaging pedagogy.

## Results

### Teacher perspectives

All the teachers reported that they were not familiar with the terms “translanguaging” or “pedagogical translanguaging” before this study. This suggests that this approach is not quite popular yet in their contexts. The scripts of the interviews reflected multiple perspectives vis-à-vis the idea of using multiple languages in the classroom. Overall, the teacher responses reflected evidence of their raised awareness of learners’ languages as important resources for language learning and intercultural awareness; however, there was some variation in the way they demonstrated their awareness and conceptual development.

### *Zustaadh (teacher) Marawan*

#### **Excerpt 1 - Marawan: Translanguaging for discussing reading content**

This excerpt is taken from the interview conducted with Marawan (a pseudonym). He is an Egyptian native, and holds a PhD in second language studies. He has been teaching Arabic as a foreign/second language for almost ten years in a public university in the United States. The context of the extended talk is a dialogue about his openness to integrating other languages to discuss content students read in MSA. This dialogue was initiated after he read a summary from the translanguaging guide about negotiation of meaning in reading. This summary encouraged the teachers to allow the learners to read in MSA and discuss the content in any language.

T: *I still strongly agree that they should discuss the content they read in MSA.*

I: *What about English?*

T: *English is only for (silence). It has to do with a specific task, may be in some reading task, I would ask for one part of the task to discuss something in English or an answer something in English, so I agree now but depending on the task.*

I: *What about the dialects? How flexible are you now in allowing them to appear?*

T: *I can agree to have it appear, but I will make sure that it's understood by everyone and I can do something like recast or feedback to clarify to everyone that they all got the message and I try to rephrase it.*

I: *What about their home languages?*

T: *Umm..., home languages, umm...*

I: *They can read something in Standard and they discuss it now in their home languages. Would you now allow them to discuss it in their home languages?*

T: *Again, I have the same impression, the same comment, like (pause) I disagree to (pause), because again the class is a community, a common thing and also to discourage mixing. If you are talking about Standard Arabic and the dialect to some degree they overlap and to some degree we are flexible to integrate these, although sometimes they are totally off, but I cannot allow mixing with other languages, like their home languages.*

Before this excerpt, Marawan stated that he would not allow the learners to use the dialects, English, or home languages in discussing content they read in MSA. The appearance of silence in the interaction could be an indication of internally revisiting his position. He confessed that it could be

“task-dependent”, but this is a change in stance as he earlier strongly rejected any other language. He was more tolerant now towards allowing the dialect. He agreed to “have it appear”, but this appearance is contingent on *all* students understanding it. He was willing to use recast or give feedback to make sure that all students understood it. To him, the overlap between the dialects and MSA was a good justification for integrating the dialects, but not the home languages (other than English); however, he also used the interjection “umm” that could be taken to express doubt, uncertainty, or hesitation about his inflexibility to integrate home languages.

**Excerpt 2 – Marawan: Translanguaging for cultural awareness**

The context of this excerpt is a conversation with Marawan about the use of multiple languages for meaning-making in the presentation of culture.

- T: *I strongly agree for English for culture, but disagree for the others, (laughs out loud). I'm talking about discussions about culture, I'm more like into a discussion in English as a common language in the class with few references if needed to the other examples in Standard Arabic, and the dialects.*
- I: *What about MSA, you said you disagree with that in culture.*
- T: *I agree with that now, dialects are also okay.*
- I: *What about their home languages now?*
- T: *Still disagree.*
- I: *I just wanna complicate the situation a bit for you. When we present these cultural practices and perspectives in Arabic culture, would not these enrich the class if presented in or about their home languages?*
- T: *Umm, yes, I agree.*

In Excerpt 2, Marawan was in strong support of using English as a common language in the presentation and discussion of culture. He initially disagreed with MSA, dialects, and other home languages. This represents a continuation of the perspective he articulated in Excerpt 1 about the shared language and how it creates community in the class. In discussing the possibility of integrating MSA and the dialects, Marawan agrees but only for “few references if needed”. These varieties are okay, but he still disagrees with the integration of home languages other than English. When faced with the position that the flexibility in integrating these home languages could enrich the discussions about culture, he agrees to use them when teaching cultural practices and perspectives.

Marawan’s perspective is insightful. He sides with mutual intelligibility through one shared language in the class as a community. As he believes, the problem is that more languages for meaning-making could create more boundaries in the class as a community. The point that Marawan raised about shared language and the class as a community frequently appeared in other parts of the interview. He had concerns about how to use translanguaging in situations where Standard Arabic and English are the only shared languages. When he was asked at the end of the study whether he would accept translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogy that leads to tangible learning outcomes in Arabic as a foreign language, he strongly disagreed with the statement. When he was asked to elaborate more, he focused on what he views as an apparent paradox of using all learner languages and the pressure to focus on the target language and culture in the curriculum.

**Zustaadh Adam**

**Excerpt 3 - Adam: Translanguaging for enhancing linguaculture learning through vocabulary**

This excerpt is taken from an interview conducted with Adam (a pseudonym). He is a Palestinian



native, who has been teaching Arabic as foreign/second language for 28 years in multiple contexts. At the time of the study, he was teaching Arabic in the Arabian Gulf in an extension campus of a private, American university. The context of this excerpt is a dialogue about the integration of multiple languages in teaching vocabulary. He was asked to read part of the translanguaging guide about teaching vocabulary as an inquiry across languages. Earlier in the interview, Adam expressed his conviction that vocabulary should mostly be presented in MSA (80%-90%) with just a little bit of dialect. The interviewer problematized this position by showing the connection between translanguaging in teaching vocabulary and enhancing cultural awareness by citing a common example in Arabic, which is the kinship system.

### Speaker Original

I: طيب أستاذ آدم، سوف أتحدى وجهة النظر هذه قليلا كما قرأنا، هناك من يأتون إلى ميدان التدريس من مدرسة الترانسلانجوجنج ويقولون وما المشكلة في (translanguaging) أن نقدم المترادفات بلغات مختلفة ليس فقط بالفصحى والعامية؟ هذا ربما يعطى مساحة للنظر في جذور الكلمات، أصولها ومعانيها ودلالاتها، هذا سيمكننا من أن نرى مثلا كيف أن الثقافة العربية لها كلمات لا توجد في الثقافات الأخرى (مثل الكلمات التي تعبر عن القرابة في العائلة)، وبالعكس. وطبقا لهذا الطرح، فلو أعطينا المساحة للثقافات الأخرى في تدريس المفردات ربما سيثري البيئة الصفية، ربما يساعدنا أن نرفع وعي الطلاب بالثقافات الأخرى والمفاهيم الثقافية فيها من خلال المفردات. كيف ترى ذلك الآن من خلال تدريس المفردات في تدريسك للغة العربية؟

T: هذا أيضا موضوع طيب، يعني أنا سأسمح للطلاب، والحمد لله عندي طلاب أسميهم "قوس قزح" من جميع أنحاء العالم، عندما يكون هناك مفردة يعني حقيقة أنا أتفاجأ أحيانا كيف أن هذه اللغة تعدت إلى حدود أخرى مثلا في رومانيا أو روسيا، فقد تكون هناك كلمة قريبة أعطيتهم مساحة في التكلم عنها إذا كانت الكلمة في اللغة العربية ولها جذور أو مشابه في اللغات الأخرى أستغل هذه الفرصة مع الطلاب وتكلم عنها ربما لو كان لها علاقة بتاريخ معين المسلمين أو الجاليات الإسلامية أو غير ذلك، غير أنها قليلة في الحقيقة

### Translation

*Okay, Mr. Adam, I will challenge this viewpoint a bit as we read. There are those who come to the field of teaching from the school of translanguaging and say what is the problem in presenting the vocabulary in different languages and not only in Standard and the dialects? This may give some space to consider the root of words, their origins, meanings, and connotations. This will enable us to see how for example how the Arabic culture has words that do not exist in other cultures (for example words that denote the kinship system), and vice versa. According to this position, if we give space to these cultures in teaching vocabulary this will enrich the classroom environment and this will help us to raise learners' awareness of other cultures and the other cultural concepts in them throughout the teaching of vocabulary. How would you look at this throughout teaching the vocabulary in your teaching of Arabic?*

*This is a good topic, well, I will allow the learners, thanks to God I have students that I call them 'rainbow' from all over the world. When there is a vocabulary item, I really feel stunned how this language went beyond other borders like Romania or Russia. When there is a word that is close to this word, I will give them the space to talk about it when it is attested in Arabic and has roots or a similar word in other languages. I use this opportunity with the students and talk about it and whether it has a relation to a certain point in Muslim history or Muslims in diaspora and so on, but these are few in fact.*

The interviewer presented the integration of students' languages as "enrichment" and Adam expressed a more tolerant position and he connected this to his particular context, teaching Arabic in a multilingual setting in the Arabian Gulf. The focus on vocabulary by the interviewer made him think of how the roots of words in other languages spoken by the students might enrich the classroom. The use of the future tense "will allow" marks the beginning of an ideological change. However, he also expressed that these words that can cross the boundaries are "few in fact," suggesting a limited role for translanguaging.

I: هل يمكن أن تتبنى هذا الطرح في تدريس المفردات بشكل عام؟ يعني أقصد الآن سوف تدرس قائمة من المفردات بها عشرون كلمة، هل يمكنك أن تتبنى طرحا يدفعك الى أن تقرأ عن أصول العشرين كلمة وبعد ذلك تناقش الكلمات بتاريخها ومدلولاتها واستخداماتها في صف اللغة العربية فقط أم ستقتصر على الكلمات بالفصحى والعامية؟

*Can you adopt this position in teaching vocabulary in general? I mean now you are going to teach a list of 20 new words, can you adopt an approach that motivates you to read about the origins of these 20 words and after that you discuss their meanings, histories, connotations and use in Arabic or you are going to be restricted to words in Standard and the dialects?*

T: أنا شخصيا من عشاق الغوص، أحب الغوص في أي شيء له علاقة باللغة أنا لن أستثنى تلك القاعدة، بالعكس أنا أعتبرها أكثر إثرة أكثر تشويقا لدراسة اللغة... نوع من الامتداد وبناء الجسور مع الثقافات الأخرى، فأرى هناك نوع من التقريب في أشياء نحسها نحن كبشر. هذا الطالب الروماني الذي عنده مثلا في قاموسه كلمة عربية لا يدرك ذلك لأنه لا يعرف العربية، فلو عرف المفردة باللغة العربية أصبح عنده نوع من الشغف أكثر في دراسة اللغة العربية، فهناك مقاربات، وأنا لن أمنع ذلك.

*I'm personally a lover of delving (going in depth) in anything that has a relationship to language, and I will not exclude this rule. On the contrary, I consider this (rule) more interesting in the study of language...it is a sort of extension and building bridges/linkages with other cultures. I see that there is some kind of getting all people close to each other in things that we feel as humans. This Romanian student who has an Arabic word in his dictionary and he does not realize that because he does not know Arabic. If he got to know this word in Arabic, he will develop a sense of more interest in studying Arabic. There are similar words and I will not prevent this.*

In the second half of the interview, the interviewer questioned whether Adam believed translanguaging could be adopted as a strategy for teaching vocabulary more generally and not just for a few words and whether it could be extended to all learner languages, and not only MSA and the dialects. Adam responded affirmatively stating that he would use this "rule," referring to the idea that raising awareness of the relationships between vocabulary and cultural learning could be a valuable aspect of learning. At the same time, referring to this as "a rule" may mark growing acceptance of translanguaging. He elaborated on how this translanguaging strategy could be used to build up cross-cultural connections and to motivate students. For Romanian students, there are words in their language with cognates in Arabic, of which they are not aware. Once they are prompted to recognize these words, they would (perhaps) become more inquisitive to study Arabic and know more about these similar items. And Adam stated that he would not "prevent" students from making these kinds of connections.

#### **Excerpt 4 - Adam : Translanguaging for cultural awareness**

I: طيب، وماذا عن الثقافة؟  
T: كما قلنا عندما كنا نتكلم عن موضوع الثقافة

*Okay, what about culture?  
As we said when we were talking about the*

نحن نتكلم الآن عن استخدام خليط من اللغات، لا نستطيع أن نستخدم أو نلتزم بالفصحى فقط.

I: طيب، لماذا؟

T: فيه بعض المواضيع الثقافية ربما تكون صعبة جدا وذات مفهوم مجرد للطلاب، وعندما نتكلم مثلا عن الوضوء على سبيل المثال أو عن القبلة مع الطلاب، ووردت كلمة صلاة فيجب أن أجا إلى اللغة الإنجليزية في هذه الحالة، وأعترف أنني سأتكلم الإنجليزية هنا (يضحك بصوت عالي).

I: وقعت يا بطل (يضحك بصوت عالي).

T: نعم، أحاول أن أغمس برميل من الفصحى وفيه نسبة الآن من العامية والإنجليزية، ولكن الفصحى تأخذ نصيب الأسد، أقول ستين أو سبعين بالمائة والباقي للإنجليزية والعامية فقط، وإذا كان هناك مفهوم ثقافي مثل الأمثال الشعبية مثلا، أنا أتكلم عن مصطلحات ثقافية ربما تكون هناك خمسين بالمائة.

*topic of culture, we are now talking about a mixture of languages, we cannot use MSA only.*

*Okay, why?*

*There are some cultural topics that may be difficult for the students and they of an abstract concept to the students. For example, when we talk about wuḍuu? (ablution or washing oneself) or about the Qibla (the direction of the Sacred Mosque, the direction to which Muslims pray) with the students and the word ṣalaah 'prayer' came in the context, here I resort to English. And I confess I would use English here (laughs out loud).*

*I caught you hero (laughs out loud).*

*Yes, I try to dip in a barrel of MSA and it has a portion now of dialects and English, but MSA takes the lion's share. I would say now 60% or 70% and the rest is in English and the dialects. However, if there is a cultural concept such as proverbs in pop culture, I talk about cultural terms there may be 50% for the dialects and 30% for English on other occasions.*

Prompted by the interviewer, Adam acknowledged he would use English when complex cultural constructs are presented. This is a common use of code-switching. At the same time, he still thinks that MSA is "the barrel" in which he dips in English and the dialect. It is the standard variety that takes the "lion's share," with 60% or 70% percent of classroom discourse in MSA unless there is a highly cultural concept such as a proverb. In this case, the dialect would take around 50%. The variation of how much English is used according to the point in focus is considered as a sign of reconsidering his position. What seems important in this excerpt is that the friendly banter or atmosphere helped him to acknowledge that his position was not as absolute as he thought. When Adam was asked at the end of the dialogue whether he would accept translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogy that leads to tangible learning outcomes in Arabic as a foreign language, he disagreed. Further discussions with him probed into reasons for his perspectives. He said that although using the learners' first languages sometimes provides some sort of comfort, it may result in reducing the use of the target language. Over time, the learners may get used to that. At the end, he is "a teacher of Arabic". He thinks that the frequent use of languages, other than Arabic may "do harm" to the learner linguistically.

### *Rustaadha Sherine*

#### **Excerpt 5 - Sherine: Translanguaging for meaning negotiation in reading and/or listening**

The extended exchange from which Excerpt 5 is taken is from a discussion between the interviewer and Sherine, an Egyptian native who has been teaching Arabic for 12 years. At the time of the study, she was teaching Arabic as a foreign language in Australia. She is a fan of a certain mode of an integrated approach that generally supports the use of dialects in speaking and MSA in reading and

writing. She was not in great support of allowing the learners to use MSA, English, or their home languages in oral discussions. For her, this is less likely to happen. After surveying her views, she read a summary that focused on how to translanguage in teaching reading and listening. Prior to this excerpt, she stated that she uses the dialect to discuss content that the students read or listened to in MSA.

T: *You said you mostly use dialect. Right?*

I: *Yes, and for students themselves, I would now allow them to use English 100%.*

T: *100%?*

I: *But of course, if they started to translating everything into English, I would stop them and start speaking, so in the negotiation language, I do not stop them if they are not negotiating in English.*

T: *Would you allow them to use Standard Arabic when they negotiate?*

I: *Yes, if some of them, sometimes it happens with students from a Muslim background, it does not happen often, I would not enforce them to use the dialect.*

T: *To what degree would you allow them to use Standard? Is it much less than English?*

I: *I would say equally actually.*

T: *What about their home languages?*

I: *Ha!!, that is very interesting now. If two students their first language is Urdu or Farsi, I would let them use it. Of course, that's okay. I would allow them to use it 100%.*

Before the focused discussion in the interview, she was less likely to allow the learners to use English in negotiation of meaning. She was also willing to use MSA with those students who have a Muslim background, but said she would not force them to use the dialect. In this moment, she seems to recognize that she would also allow some flexibility in the use of English, but she differentiated this from translating everything to English. Both English and MSA could be used "equally" in the negotiation of meaning. Although Sherine was initially against the use of students' home languages, by the end of the conversation, she thinks that this choice is "very interesting." This change is marked by the use of the sentence opener "ha!" with an exclamation mark and a rising intonation to show surprise. She would now give voice and space to use home languages other than English or Arabic such as Urdu or Farsi

Sherine raises an important point, which is the fear of using English persistently. This may result in translating everything into English. This represents a threat to the target language/s in the class, which are MSA and the dialects. She distinguishes between translation and negotiation of meaning. She seems to represent a teacher who is open to translanguaging, but she has not really had a chance to consider its implications and how it compares to the integrated approach.

#### **Excerpt 6 - Sherine: Translanguaging fluidity to overcome challenges in the classroom**

The context in which Excerpt 6 appeared is a dialogue between the interviewer and Sherine about the potential of translanguaging in diverse Arabic classrooms nowadays, and how diverse learners offer not only challenges but also opportunities for learning.

T: *The challenges that arise in the classroom push me to be fluid, but if...*

I: *Could you elaborate more?*

T: *I agree now, it does allow us to celebrate language learner identities, as far as fuṣḥa and ʿaamiyya (Standard and colloquial) are considered, but not home languages.*

I: *Why?*

T: *I am referring to the dialects as home languages of my heritage students. That's if I have a*

*class, which happened recently, I learned that a couple of refugee students who came in after the Syrian crisis, so in class they use the dialects in discussions, and in that sense, it could work like a bubble, not like a bubble, like a safe place that's full of English around them, to feel at home and use the dialect. So, if the task eventually is to present Standard Arabic, I do not feel I have the right to take away the experience of the dialect from the classroom, in that sense I do agree that allowing the fluidity does accommodate migration.*

In this excerpt, Sherine thinks that the fluidity offered by translanguaging is sometimes a way to overcome certain challenges in the classroom. She acknowledges that this fluidity is sometimes driven by what she sees as “challenges” in the classroom. She gives the example of a couple of Arabic heritage learners who joined her class after they migrated to Australia after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution. Sherine allows the fluidity to celebrate their identities. Importantly, she describes her tolerance towards the integration of their Syrian Arabic as “a safe place” in a bigger environment that is full of English. She is referring to an additional advantage of translanguaging (psycho-social) for this particular community of learners. She now does not have the “right to take away the experience of the dialect”. Fluidity is legitimate in this context. When she was asked at the end of the interview whether she thinks that translanguaging could be a legitimate pedagogy in Arabic as a foreign language, she disagreed. She indicated that although the tenets of translanguaging are totally legitimate in an era where learners in the same class come from different backgrounds, she finds it hard to compromise between translanguaging and proficiency testing that is still directed towards the target language.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Conceptualizing pedagogical translanguaging as the use of and openness to integrating multiple languages and dialects and using a semi-structured interview, the current study examined three teachers’ practices and ideologies. It opened a dialogue with them to uncover their perspectives and initiate their conceptual development. Whereas they reported resistance, they were indeed translanguaging in some ways. The dialogues showed numerous instances of language mixing (MSA, dialects, and English) for a myriad of purposes. This result is compatible with previous research that documented discrepancies between teacher practice and beliefs around translanguaging (Hillman *et al.*, 2019). The different types of language mixing were part of their practice and in some cases, they expressed willingness to use these practices when needed. These results carry some good news about the changing reality in Arabic pedagogy. The three teachers may be no longer certain about the rigid borderline between Standard Arabic and the dialects; however, in certain cases there is still a clear divide between the potential classroom uses of Arabic and English.

Furthermore, the scripts of the interviews have numerous instances of acceptance of using dialects, English, and, in few cases, home languages, which suggests that the teachers themselves translanguaged more than they are aware. The trajectory of this ideology is perhaps shaped in part by the programs that mandate MSA in reading and writing with some dialect component for listening and speaking. We argue that the instances of acceptance show the teachers’ openness to the potential of translanguaging over the course of the dialogue. It is worth mentioning that despite this openness, the three teachers expressed some caution about the frequent use of languages other than Arabic. English was mostly accepted as a means of easing comprehension. Except for Sherine who talked about fluidity to overcome certain challenges, translanguaging was not embraced as a legitimate form of language use. Marawan and Adam seemed to still view the codes as distinct and not as part of a multilingual repertoire.

The themes illustrated in the two excerpts from Adam suggest how a translanguaging pedagogy can contribute to intercultural awareness. In their discussion of the implications of translanguaging for

intercultural communication, Hua and Wei (2020) discuss how the “transdisciplinary” dimension of translanguaging is part and parcel of its potential. The examples provided in Adam’s excerpts speak to this potential. A translanguaging pedagogy that brings in the origins of words could be a channel to forefront the earlier history of the Muslims in Europe and the current Muslims in the diaspora. What the focused dialogue with Adam suggests is that as teachers become open to normalizing translanguaging practices, they help learners to convert their language and cultural repertoires into strategic resources for learning. This is an essential aspect of intercultural communication. It is important to note, however, that the participants, particularly Adam and Marawan, were open to translanguaging to talk about culture, but not (yet) to translanguaging as an intercultural practice. They did not further discuss how translanguaging can be used as a resource to allow the learners to go back and forth between languages to present their cultural perspectives and identities.

Egaña, Cenoz, and Gorter (2015) have shown that teachers’ beliefs about multilingualism change only *gradually* (see also Galante, 2020; Holdway & Hitchcock, 2018). In the context of this study, the teachers’ ideological stances were viable to change after they were engaged in focused readings and discussions that provided an alternative discourse challenging the tradition of considering MSA the target language. The three teachers did also raise legitimate concerns and major challenges related to translanguaging pedagogies; however, they all expressed willingness to accept translanguaging as an approach when it is tested and proved effective in the context of Arabic as a multidialectal language. This raises the question of what effective pedagogy is in the context of a multiglossic language like Arabic and suggests a need for future classroom-based research, something all of the participants supported. We argue that Arabic teachers could be more open to this dialogue about translanguaging once they recognize that multidialectalism is inherent in Arabic, and it should be one of the main outcomes of Arabic pedagogy.

If, as scholars have argued, translanguaging pedagogy offers a paradigm shift from skills-based frameworks that are more compatible with pedagogies that underscore intercultural communication, then the results of this study underscore the pressing need for dialogue between teachers and scholars in order to realize this. Investigating teacher ideologies and perspectives related to translanguaging pedagogy in the context of Arabic requires future study with a more systematic design. There is no doubt that normalizing and legitimizing official translanguaging in Arabic programs is a long and complex journey. As noted by one of the reviewers, this study is a first step.

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