

Translanguaging and its Implications for Teaching English Writing in High School

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Abstract:

In recent years, translanguaging has become a research hotspot in the fields of applied linguistics, foreign language teaching, and bilingual education. Since its inception, translanguaging is not a simple concept but rather a summary of teaching practices with certain educational origins. It is a dynamic process where language users utilize different language, cognitive, semiotic, and modal resources to achieve meaning construction, which breaks the traditional monolingual mode of bilingual language acquisition and has evolved into a bilingual teaching model from a new perspective. It is applied in classroom teaching to enhance teachers' teaching efficiency and help students develop their bilingual abilities more effectively. The application of translanguaging in English writing teaching can disrupt the current monolingual teaching model, providing a new perspective for high school English teachers to efficiently conduct writing classes. Teaching high school English writing from a translanguaging perspective requires teachers to have a high level of professionalism, adopt reasonable translanguaging strategies, and encourage students to use a variety of language resources in classroom tasks. This article reflects on current high school English writing teaching based on the bilingual teaching model from a translanguaging perspective and provides classroom teaching examples for reference.

Keywords:

Translanguaging, Teaching Approaches, English Teaching

1. Introduction

According to the Chinese Standards of English (CSE), high school students' English proficiency is in a transitional period from the basic to the intermediate stage, with a proficiency level ranging from Level Three to Level Four. However, in Chinese high school English classrooms, there is often a phenomenon where, on one hand, influenced by the "immersion" teaching method, teachers tend to increase target language input in the classroom, that is, using all English instruction to create a language environment for foreign language learning. Yet, students with poor English proficiency find it difficult to adapt to all-English teaching in the classroom. On the other hand, to help students better understand difficult points, such as explaining certain challenging grammar points, teachers may choose to teach in Chinese. Both of

the above phenomena to some extent reflect that Chinese high school English writing classrooms follow the traditional monolingual teaching model, which, in the long run, is not conducive to fostering students' bilingual abilities. Therefore, how to balance the use of the native language and the target language in high school English classroom instruction is an important issue that teachers need to ponder and explore in the long term.

The dynamic process of meaning construction in translanguaging goes beyond mere switching between mother tongue and target language. It incorporates a multimodal semiotic view, enriching the theoretical framework and expanding the range of resources available to learners in the learning process. In the specific context of high school English classrooms, the application of metalinguistic practice is significant: teachers can select appropriate metalinguistic teaching strategies based on students and course content to ensure optimal teaching effectiveness; students can consciously engage in metalinguistic practice during post-class learning to enhance their proficiency in weaker languages. Furthermore, there is limited research on metalinguistic practice in high school writing classrooms in China. Therefore, this paper explores the implications of translanguaging on high school English writing instruction by reviewing the origin and development of translanguaging, the emergence of bilingual teaching models and translanguaging pedagogy from a metalinguistic perspective.

2. Translanguaging and Translanguaging Teaching Strategies

2.1. Translanguaging

Translanguaging was first proposed by Welsh educators Bangor and Cen Williams and their team in the 1980s. Williams [18] defines translanguaging as the process of using the target language for acquiring knowledge and the native language for applying that knowledge. He coined the term in Welsh "trawsieithu" to describe this phenomenon, later translated by Baker [1] as "translanguaging" to encapsulate the teaching practices in the Welsh region that involve the alternating use of Welsh and English languages [18]. It is evident that translanguaging, since its inception, is not a simple concept but rather a summary of teaching practices with roots in educational methodologies. Furthermore, according to Williams [20], the process of translanguaging is not merely a direct translation from one language to another but requires the application of various techniques to select and process information during cognitive processes. He emphasizes that the goal of translingual practices is to nurture the weaker language with the stronger language, thus achieving a balanced development of both languages [19]. Therefore, translanguage teaching is designed as a strategy to maintain and enhance learners' bilingual abilities, more suitable for learners who have a good command of both languages, and may not hold significant value for beginners. For high school students, as compared to beginners, most students have established a certain foundation in bilingual abilities, making the utilization of translanguaging teaching strategies in classroom instruction highly beneficial for further enhancement of their bilingual skills.

After a series of extensions and deepening, Li Wei from the University of London proposed the theoretical framework of translanguaging, used to observe the creative use of language by multilingual users in the process of constructing meaning, such as examining the emergence of new Chinese-English hybrids like "We two who and who." In addition, within the framework of translanguaging, the understanding of the

term “translanguaging” also reveals multiple layers of meaning. Williams [20] believes that “trans” implies “crossing”, so “translanguaging” means learners switch between their native language and the target language; whereas today, “trans” implies “beyond”, and “translanguaging” now signifies surpassing not only the boundaries between multiple languages but also transcending the boundaries of other cognitive and symbolic systems [10].

With the development of the times, the content of translanguaging practices continues to deepen and spread, with Baker’s “Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism” and Ofelia Garcia’s “Bilingual Education in the 21st Century” as the main representative works. On one hand, Baker [2] further developed the concept of translanguaging based on Williams, extending it to the educational domain, pointing out four advantages of translanguaging used in the classroom: promoting learners’ deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the topic, aiding in the development of learners’ weaker language skills, fostering home-school connections and collaborations, and promoting collaboration between novice and advanced learners. On the other hand, Garcia [6] views translanguaging as a bilingual teaching approach, with its core being the communicative practices of bilingual individuals in a natural state. Her innovation lies in seeing students’ language switching in the classroom as a spontaneous process, considering this language alternation to be natural rather than deliberate [8]. Although translanguaging involves language code-switching and translation, it is distinct in that it is essentially the process of bilingual students engaging in bilingual activities in the classroom through various means such as reading, writing, note-taking, and discussions. This is not only a form of scaffolding instruction but also a way of understanding learning and language. Therefore, translanguaging helps break the monolingualism model in traditional classrooms, promoting the development of learners’ cognitive and communicative abilities.

In summary, code-switching emerged in the context of bilingual or multilingual education, thereby being able to leverage its unique advantages in language teaching to help students improve their weaker language abilities. Furthermore, the development of code-switching theory has provided a theoretical framework for academia to study bilingual/multilingual individuals, creating innovative language forms such as New Chinglish from a sociopsychological perspective of how bilingual/multilingual individuals process cognition. Additionally, code-switching can also be applied in interdisciplinary research and, when combined with neuroscience, can lead to the development of a new field in neuro-linguistic cross-usage.

2.2. Translanguaging Teaching and Its Strategies

Translanguaging teaching research focuses on the translanguaging behaviors of teachers and students in the classroom. Based on extensive research in bilingual education in Wales, Jones [7] proposed two types of classroom translanguaging practices. The first type is student-led translanguaging practices without specific learning objectives, known as Basic Interpersonal Translanguaging (BIT), used for personal interaction, enhancing cohesion, and classroom management. The second type is teacher-led with a focus on teaching, called Cognitive Academic Translanguaging (CAT), emphasizing academic language and specific subject terminology. Research on teachers’ translanguaging behaviors in English classrooms at the basic education stage in China indicates that teachers primarily use the mother tongue in class to ensure students understand instructional commands, promote

inclusivity in classroom teaching, and support the overall development of students' bilingual or multilingual abilities. Therefore, students' mother tongue (i.e., Chinese) can be used as a teaching tool in English teaching, to be selected by teachers and students based on classroom teaching contexts and content. Teachers should fully engage students' language resources and utilize multimodal resources (such as gestures, expressions, animations, images, audio, etc.) to guide students in completing classroom tasks. [11,4]

In the classroom, teachers' translanguaging can be summarized as weak and strong versions. The former emphasizes that teachers introduce translanguaging teaching methods to serve as a scaffold for teaching the target language effectively, while the latter focuses more on developing students' bilingual abilities [15,21]. It can be seen that for teachers, translanguaging can be used as a teaching method in the classroom. However, how to improve students' proficiency in both their native and target languages through translanguaging practices in the classroom is a matter that needs to be considered in practical teaching, that is, the combination of "weak translanguaging practices and strong translanguaging practices" [5]. When conducting English teaching in a translanguaging paradigm, four translanguaging teaching strategies are employed. Firstly, elucidating complex knowledge points, which involves explaining grammar, vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and other content that students find difficult to understand in the target language. Secondly, promoting teacher-student interaction, where teachers use translanguaging practices to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere and provide feedback on students' performance (praise or criticism). Thirdly, supplementing extracurricular content by enhancing students' understanding of knowledge through the use of multiple languages. Fourthly, managing the classroom more efficiently by using the first language in situations such as assigning homework and maintaining classroom discipline. Additionally, based on Williams' [20] point of view, cultivating students' bilingual abilities through translanguaging in the classroom not only involves developing learners' translation skills through the translation from the source language to the target language but also requires learners to undergo a complex cognitive process to "rephrase" the target language materials. This process involves teachers immersing learners in unfamiliar language contexts, allowing learners to creatively produce results based on their perception of the target language. This process, also referred to as "translanguaging performance" by Shi [15], requires teachers to step back and become spectators and learners, leaving the platform for students to showcase their abilities and maintaining the most authentic interaction.

Although several scholars emphasize the crucial role of translingual practices in foreign language teaching, some scholars also indicate that excessive use of the native language in L2 classrooms could affect its effectiveness as a teaching resource [12]. In view of this, teachers need to carefully consider during lesson planning and combine teaching purposes to reasonable arrange the application of translingual teaching strategies in different classroom settings and stages, as much as possible to maximize the role of the native language and cultivate students' bilingual abilities.

3. The Implications of Transcultural Practice on High School English Writing Instruction

The English teaching mode under the guidance of transcultural practice theory emphasizes the interactive use of two languages at the same time. Its principle can be summarized as activating prior knowledge to serve as a scaffold, achieving interactive

growth of language knowledge and skills, as shown in Figure 1 [21]. Unlike the traditional teaching method where the teacher dominates and students passively listen, in this mode, the subject of the class changes, shifting from the teacher to the students. The teacher becomes the facilitator of the class, and students are actively involved in the teaching process. Combining the PWP (Pre-learning, While-learning, Post-learning) teaching model mainly applied in high school English writing instruction and the teaching philosophy of promoting writing through reading, this section mainly unfolds from three steps: pre-writing preparation, writing process, and teacher feedback. Based on the bilingual teaching model under the transcultural perspective, examples of classroom teaching are provided for reference. Taking the article “Living Legends” from Unit 3 Sport and Fitness in the new senior English for China (2018 version) as the introducing text, the article introduces the achievements of two sports legends, Lang Ping and Michael Jordan.

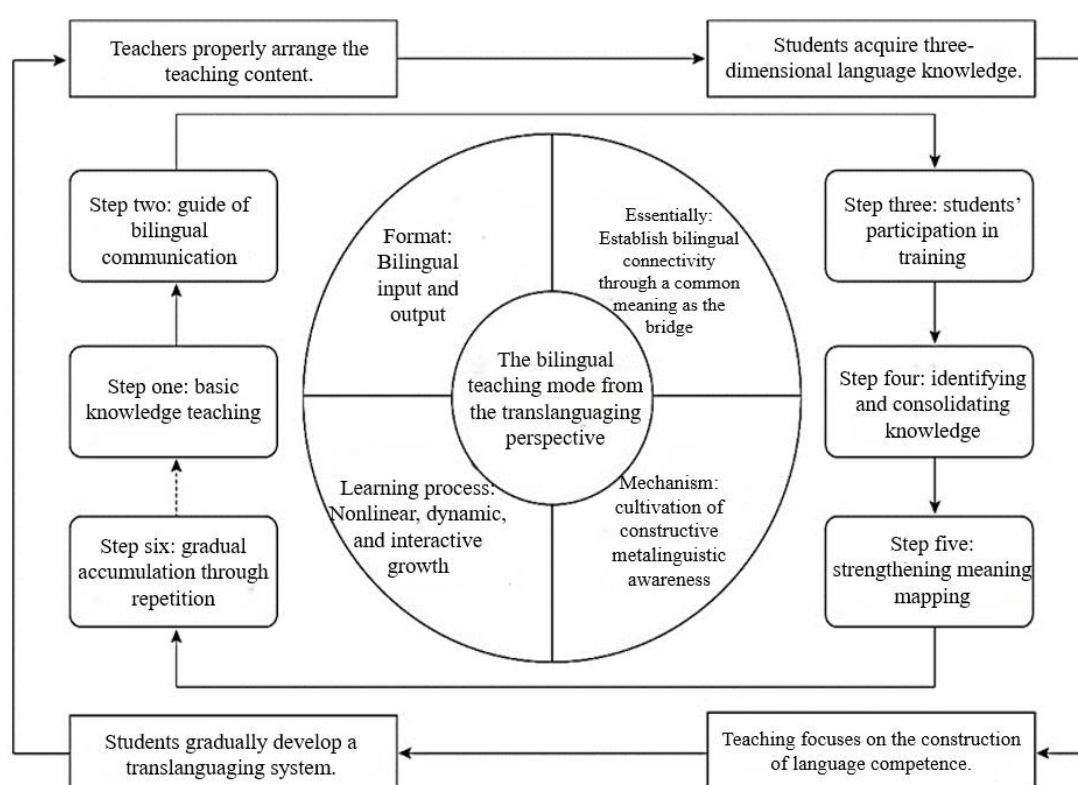


Figure 1. The bilingual teaching mode from the translanguaging perspective [21].

3.1. Pre-Writing

During the teaching preparation, teachers can use bilingual guided cases (as shown below), where the Chinese can help students better understand the content of the English text.

(1) It's my great honor to announce (announce) that I am running for chairman of the Students' Union. 很荣幸在此竞选学生会主席。

(2) I feel honored (honor) to be invited here to deliver a speech. 我很荣幸能受邀来此演讲。

In the introduction part, we can introduce with familiar scenes to activate students' already mastered knowledge and to stimulate students' interest in learning, for

example, the teacher can ask students “What's your favorite sports star? Why?”, and students can have group discussions in Chinese, English, or both languages interchangeably. After the discussion, the teacher can ask random questions, encouraging students to express their thoughts without being restricted by language. While students answer, the teacher can take note of key words used by students, and it's preferable for these extracted key words to resonate with expressions appearing in the article. For instance, if a student says “团结一致” in Chinese, the teacher can provide the English equivalent “work together as a team” in the feedback. Additionally, the teacher can selectively show Olympic volleyball match videos from sports channels (with Chinese commentary) as an introductory activity. After watching the video, students can be asked “What have you learned from the spirit of the Chinese women's volleyball team?”, and the teacher can provide some simple English phrases and sentence structures for students to use as reference in their answers.

During pre-writing, teachers should focus on improving students' metalinguistic skills, emphasizing the interpretation of basic text knowledge to help students understand the target language articles as much as possible, facilitating their independent completion of writing tasks later on. This can be achieved by offering bilingual explanations of the bold vocabulary words in the article, extracting key phrases, and providing sentence structures that can be applied in subsequent activities.

3.2. *While writing*

After the introduction and pre-writing preparation, students have gained a preliminary understanding of the target language article's vocabulary, sentence structures, and content. At this point, the teacher can search for some bilingual materials from the China Daily Bilingual website, focusing on the life experiences of Lang Ping and Michael Jordan (examples excerpted below, bolded content indicates expressions that can be used in subsequent writing), allowing students to engage in additional reading. During the reading process, also summarize some practical expressions, presenting them in bilingual form.

The Legend of Basketball: Michael Jordan

When it comes to basketball, one name stands out above all others: Michael Jordan. He is widely regarded as the greatest basketball player of all time and his influence on the sport and American culture is immeasurable.

Born on February 17, 1963, in Brooklyn, New York, Jordan grew up in Wilmington, North Carolina. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he played college basketball and won a national championship. He was selected by the Chicago Bulls as the third overall pick in the 1984 NBA Draft. In his rookie year, Jordan averaged 28.2 points per game and was named the NBA Rookie of the Year. He quickly became one of the most dominant players in the league and led the Bulls to six NBA championships in the 1990s.

Jordan's athleticism, skill, and competitive spirit made him a fan favorite and an icon of American culture. He was known for his signature “Air Jordan” sneakers and his famous “flu game” in the 1997 NBA Finals, where he scored 38 points despite suffering from flu-like symptoms. After retiring from basketball in 2003, Jordan became a successful businessman and owner of the Charlotte Hornets NBA team. He has also been active in philanthropy, donating millions of dollars to various charities and organizations.

Jordan's influence on basketball and American culture is undeniable. He set the standard for excellence on the court and his influence extended far beyond basketball. He is a cultural icon and a true legend. His story is an inspiration to millions of people around the world, proving that with hard work, determination, and talent, anyone can achieve greatness.

篮球传奇：迈克尔·乔丹

说到篮球，一个名字高高在上：迈克尔·乔丹。他是有史以来最伟大的篮球运动员，他对篮球这项运动和美国文化的影响是无法估量的。

乔丹于 1963 年 2 月 17 日出生在纽约布鲁克林，成长于北卡罗来纳州威明顿市。他在北卡罗来纳大学教堂山分校上学期间打过大学篮球，并赢得了全国冠军。他在 1984 年 NBA 选秀中被芝加哥公牛队选为第三顺位。在他的新秀赛季，乔丹场均得分 28.2 分，被评为 NBA 年度最佳新秀。他很快成为联盟中最具统治力的球员之一，带领公牛队在 20 世纪 90 年代赢得了六个 NBA 总冠军。

乔丹的运动能力、技术和竞争精神使他成为球迷们的宠儿和美国文化的象征。他以标志性的“Air Jordan”运动鞋和 1997 年 NBA 总决赛中的著名“流感比赛”而闻名，尽管他患有流感症状，但仍得到 38 分的高分。在 2003 年从篮球场上退役后，乔丹成为了一名成功的商人，拥有夏洛特黄蜂队的 NBA 球队。他还积极参与慈善事业，向各种慈善机构和组织捐赠数百万美元。

乔丹对篮球和美国文化的影响是不可否认的。他在球场上树立了卓越的标准，他的影响超越了篮球。他是一个文化偶像和真正的传奇人物。他的故事是全球数百万人的榜样，证明只要拥有努力、决心和天赋，任何人都可以取得伟大的成就。

After completing the extracurricular reading, the teacher requires students to engage in group discussions combining the text learned in class with supplementary materials. The discussion topic is "Do you like Lang Ping or Michael Jordan best? What can we learn from him/her?" Similarly, during the discussion, students can choose to use either Chinese or English. Following the discussion, each group will have a representative report in English, using the accumulated phrases for expression. A sample student response may include:

(1) Michael Jordan played basketball in a graceful way, but also showed great strength. He never let failure stop him and never gave up his dreams.

(2) Lang Ping brought glory and honor to the country as both a player and a coach. She always showed great determination and never lost heart, proving she is a true champion.

After finishing the extracurricular reading, the teacher instructs students to describe their favorite sports star based on the expressions learned in the lesson, presented in Chinese. Students are required to write a 100-word composition in class, with the teacher listing out the suitable expressions on a PPT or blackboard to reduce any obstacles during the writing process. The purpose of this task is to review, repeat, and consolidate the expression forms of the target language learned in the lesson. Mastery of new knowledge by students necessitates repetitive reinforcement, and the task design follows a principle of gradual progression.

3.3. Teacher's feedback

After completing the composition, teachers can randomly select a few students in the classroom to share their essays, promptly correcting any Chinglish errors that appear in the compositions. According to Vygotsky [17] and his zone of proximal development theory, students have two levels of development: one is the student's actual level, indicating the level of problem solving they can achieve independently; the other is the potential level of development, which refers to the potential gained through instruction. The difference between the two is the zone of proximal development. Therefore, teachers need to judiciously switch languages within the

students' zone of proximal development [16]. During the teaching process, teachers can flexibly adjust the ratio of Chinese and English language used in the classroom based on student feedback to ensure students can fully understand teacher's instructions, and when necessary, appropriately use Chinese for instructional assistance.

4. Conclusions

This research contemplates the current high school English writing teaching from the perspective of translanguaging by examining relevant literature on translanguaging, its practice, and teaching strategies. The application of translanguaging in English writing instruction can break the existing monolingual teaching model, providing high school English teachers with a new perspective to effectively conduct writing classes. Future research could include more case studies, on-site observations of the use of translanguaging in the classroom, further exploration of teachers' actual use of translanguaging in teaching, or the impact of translanguaging practice on students' learning outcomes.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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