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Improving EFL Learning in Benin Context: Translanguaging as Pedagogical Approach

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Abstract

In multilingual Francophone countries such as Benin, the teaching of English as a foreign language gives rise to debate regarding the most appropriate approaches to help learners master the language and develop effective communicative competence for social integration. This research paper investigates translanguaging as a pedagogical approach proposed as an alternative for EFL learning in the Republic of Benin. It first examines the challenges faced by learners and teachers in implementing the monolingual approach, then explores the importance of learners' first language (L1) in the EFL learning process, and finally evaluates the influence of translanguaging on learners' language competences. In this study, Translanguaging is viewed as a pedagogical approach that can significantly improve students' learning outcomes in EFL classrooms in Benin by increasing classroom participation and enhancing learners' confidence. Furthermore, it can contribute to developing of learners' socio-pragmatic and cultural competences, which are essential for effective communication. Data collected through a mixed-methods approach reveal that number of teachers, as a result of difficulties related to syllabus completion and various pedagogical challenges, unofficially adopt translanguaging strategies to achieve their instructional objectives. However, classroom observations also show that some teachers tend to overuse French during EFL lessons, which may limit students' exposure to the target language. Given the numerous linguistic advantages that translanguaging offers, it is recommended that curriculum designers officially mainstream this approach into pedagogical frameworks for both French and English language instruction. Additionally, EFL teachers are encouraged to maintain a balanced use of learners' first language and English, as this can support cultural learning and promote effective social integration.

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Introduction

Benin is a multilingual country where a lot of indigenous and local languages coexist. French language, a colonization legacy, serves as the official language of instruction, while English is taught as a foreign language in many schools in response to globalization and the need for effective social integration. Following this trend, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has gained prominence and is increasingly viewed as a language of

opportunity, sometimes in competition with French. This situation makes learning English both important and challenging. In this context, the monolingual pedagogical approach, which promotes the exclusive use of English in the classroom, has been widely recommended in Benin. While such an approach tends to maximize learners' exposure to the target language and foster immersion, it may not fully reflect the multilingual realities of learners. Indeed, restricting classroom interaction to English-only use may limit learners' ability

to mobilize their full linguistic potential repertoire, thereby affecting their comprehension, participation, and overall engagement. This appears to contrast with the expectation that EFL teachers create a warm and supportive classroom environment that encourages students to speak (Brown, 2007).

In recent years, translanguaging has been conceptualized as the dynamic and flexible use of multiple languages in a learning environment. It has emerged as a promising pedagogical strategy that leverages on learners' linguistic resources to enhance language acquisition and communicative competence. However, despite its potential benefits, translanguaging also raises certain challenges, such as the risk of over-reliance on the first language, the need for adequate teacher training, and possible tensions with existing language policies.

Those aforementioned challenges prompt this study to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent does monolingual pedagogical approach limit or support learners' potential and learning outcomes?
- To what extent can translanguaging contribute to developing effective communicative skills among EFL learners?
- How does translanguaging promote pragmatic transfer and facilitate learners' social integration?

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the implementation and impact of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach through its various strategies in multilingual EFL classrooms in Benin. Specifically, the study aims to:

- 1- examine the advantages and limits of the monolingual pedagogical approach in EFL teaching and learning in Benin;
- 2- analyze the implications of translanguaging as a dynamic approach that fosters effective social communication; and
- 3- explore translanguaging as a bridge that promotes cultural transfer.

This study views translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy expected to:

- 1- improve learners' outcomes in EFL classrooms in Benin;
- 2- foster greater classroom participation and enhancing learners' confidence in using English;

- 3- contribute to developing of learners' socio-pragmatic and cultural competences, which are essential for effective communication.

To test these hypotheses and provide research-based evidence, the study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in order to thoroughly probe these dimensions in multilingual EFL classrooms.

By employing using linguistics theories, especially Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1934), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as well as Code-Switching and Code-Mixing Theories, the research is expected to contribute more to inclusive and effective English language teaching practice tailored to ensuring multilingual realities of Beninese learners.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Language practice is undeniably central to linguistics as it epitomizes the dynamic, social, and cultural ways in which language is used as a social practice, encompassing everyday conversation and communication elements to the development of identity and power structures. While linguistics, as a social science, studies both the inherent structures of language (like phonetics and syntax) and the contextual use of words in real-life situations revealing how language functions and shapes human activity and society, applied Linguistics focuses on using linguistic knowledge to address real-world problems, such as language teaching, translation, and language policy. Applied linguistics serves thus as a bedrock interdisciplinary field for improving EFL teaching by elucidating the rationale and benefits of translanguaging in multilingual EFL classrooms through complementary theories such as Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1934), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as well as Code-Switching and Code-Mixing Theories.

Translanguaging Approach to EFL Teaching

Translanguaging is the dynamic and fluid use of multiple languages within an EFL learning context aiming at facilitating understanding and to quickly reach teaching goals. Drawing on socio-constructivists' view which is a Learner-Center Approach in the learning process, learners play a salient role in the whole process of knowledge production and sharing. Translanguaging appears as an ideal procedure to lead learners to the point in mean time. For, learners often share a common first

language (L1) and have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. However, English-only policies which has for long been recommended by stakeholders has revealed its weakness. In fact, it hinders comprehension, increase anxiety, and marginalize learners' linguistic identities.

Translanguaging offers a more inclusive approach by legitimizing the use of learners' L1 as cognitive and pedagogical resources (García & Kley, 2016). Indeed, in lieu of viewing L1 use as interference, Translanguaging theory positions it as a scaffold for learning English. Learners can use their L1 to negotiate meaning, build background knowledge, compare linguistic structures, and engage in higher-order thinking tasks. This approach is particularly relevant in EFL classrooms where English proficiency levels vary widely. Thus, Translanguaging pedagogy encourage purposeful insightful activities with specific instructional strategies that integrate multiple languages to support learning. These strategies may include allowing students to discuss complex concepts in their L1 before producing output in English, using bilingual texts or multilingual glossaries, fostering code-switching during collaborative tasks (See section 1.2) and comparing grammatical or lexical features across languages.

García & al. (2017) have argued that Translanguaging pedagogy has three core components: stance, design, and shifts. Teachers adopt a Translanguaging stance by valuing multilingualism, design lessons that involve multiple languages, and make spontaneous shifts in response to students' linguistic needs. Such practices enable learners to understand deeper, induce them to speak confidently knowing the subject at stake. Linguistically, Translanguaging also promotes metalinguistic awareness, enabling learners to reflect on how languages work and how meaning is constructed across linguistic systems. García and Wei (2014) highlight Translanguaging as both a natural linguistic practice and a deliberate pedagogical tool that enables learners to draw on all their languages flexibly to negotiate meaning, enhance comprehension, and develop linguistic competence.

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing Theories to Translanguaging

Code-switching is the ability to shift from a language to another or many other varieties interchangeably while communicating instantly. Though traditional monolingual teaching ideologies have often viewed

code-switching as an interference or a sign of lack of fluency or insufficient target-language exposure, sociolinguists rather consider code-switching as a systematic and rule-governed phenomenon, not random language use (Poplack, 1980). It is therefore clear that code-switching is purposefully used to accommodate with social settings, express identity and reassure effectiveness of a given message being conveyed. Such a sociolinguistic behavior often occurs unconsciously to navigate different cultural and professional settings. Thus, many scientific works have shown that code-switching serves several pedagogical and communicative functions in EFL classrooms. Teachers may strategically switch to the L1 to ensure understanding, particularly at lower proficiency levels (Macaro, 2005).

According to Gumperz (1982), Code-Switching is the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a conversation, discourse, or classroom interaction. In EFL settings, this typically involves switching between the learners' first language (L1) and English (L2) while implementing teaching. Most of the EFL teachers resort to code-switching when clarifying meaning and explaining complex grammatical concepts. It is also used to manage classroom discourse and maintain discipline and build rapport. This makes learners feel at ease by reducing their anxiety, scaffold their comprehension and encourage their active participation. Another sociolinguistic phenomenon which is commonly used during conversations is the code-mixing. While code-switching refers to a sudden shift from a language to another in a given conversation, code-mixing, though similar to the former, refers more to linguistic units, those are lexical items, grammatical items or morphemes inherited from another language and used within the same sentence.

Muysken (2000) refers to the Code-mixing as the embedding of linguistic elements (words, phrases, or morphemes) from one language into another within a single utterance. Such hybridization is common in classrooms. Quite often, EFL learners mix lexical items from their L1 into English sentences, especially when they lack vocabulary or fluency. As token of example, a student may say "please teacher, jack *insulter* me". This is the insertion of the French word "insulter" into the English sentence. It does not impede the learner from saying their mind. As matter of fact, inserting an L1 word into an English sentence can help maintain communicative flow. Pedagogically, Code-Mixing reflects learners' developing interlanguage systems and supports meaning-making when lexical gaps exist. Using

Code-mixing contributes to a strategic demonstration of competence rather than linguistic failure. The following table summarizes the usefulness of the sociolinguistic concepts developed above:

Sociolinguistic concepts	Realization	Theoretical Orientation
Code-switching	Alternation between languages	Structural & sociolinguistic
Code-mixing	Intra-sentential language blending	Psycholinguistic
Translanguaging	Integrated meaning-making	Sociocultural & pedagogical

Dossoumou (2017)'s work significantly contributes to the study of language contact in Benin. Investigating linguistic practices in border communities between Benin and Nigeria, he reveals how sustained contact between English and indigenous languages has generated hybrid communicative forms. Indeed, by using a mixed-research method, his findings reveal that speakers frequently navigate between English and local languages to facilitate communication, particularly in commercial and intercultural interactions. The study further shows that English lexical items are often integrated into indigenous linguistic structures, creating forms of code-mixing that reflect both linguistic adaptation and cultural negotiation. Moreover, he argues that these multilingual practices contribute to the domestication of English in local contexts and illustrate the dynamic nature of language contact in West Africa. Through his scientific work, he has demonstrated how code-mixing and code switching have contributed to the creation of a new language variety commonly known as “the Pidgin” which particularly facilitates business transactions and ensures cultural negotiations. Academically, his work highlights the benefit of Translanguaging through code switching and code-mixing practices in EFL teaching and learning by showing, not only how they can facilitate students’ fluency, but also how it can foster effective cultural learning.

In the same vein, Koutchade (2019) examines the interplay between language, culture, and communication in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* through the combined lenses of the ethnography of communication and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Drawing on Saville-Troike's ethnography of communication and Eggins' interpersonal metafunction and a mixed research

methodology, the study demonstrates that Soyinka's dramatic discourse reflects the sociocultural realities of Nigeria through the use of Nigerian Pidgin, code-switching, code-mixing, and culturally embedded expressions. These linguistic features contribute to characterization and convey the ideological and cultural dimensions of African literature. The analysis further reveals that declarative, interrogative, imperative, and modal structures are strategically employed to express interpersonal relationships and social roles among characters. The study concludes that integrating sociolinguistic and functional linguistic approaches provides a deeper understanding of how communicative events and cultural contexts shape meaning in literary discourse. Indeed, the study is particularly insightful as it implicitly supports the use of translanguaging in EFL classrooms by demonstrating that multilingual practices such as code-switching and code-mixing are valuable communicative resources that convey cultural meanings and facilitate interaction. It suggests that allowing learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire can enhance communicative competence, intercultural awareness, and meaningful engagement with English.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1934) and Translanguaging

Sociocultural Theory as coined by Vygotsky (1934) considers language as the main vector for achieving cognitive development through social interaction viewing Learning as a socially mediated process. From this perspective, learning is not an individual, isolated process but a socially situated activity that emerges through interaction with others within specific cultural and historical contexts.

In fact, Vygotsky (1934) highlights, on the one hand, the concept of mediation alluding to the way language shapes human cognition which consists of seeing language as both a means of communication and as a psychological tool that enables higher mental functions, including reasoning, problem-solving, and self-regulation, and on the other hand, the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is defined as the distance between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance from a more knowledgeable other. Learning occurs most effectively within this zone through collaborative interaction and scaffolding. It is important to pinpoint that translanguaging make learners multilingual and when multilingual learners draw on all their linguistic resources, they are better able to engage in complex

thinking, negotiate meaning, and participate in social interaction. This practice enhances comprehension and cognitive development by allowing learners to scaffold new knowledge through familiar linguistic forms.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Principles

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles underscores meaningful communication competence rather than mere grammar and structural competence as an approach adapted to L2 and foreign languages teaching and learning. It should be understood that in the process of language teaching and learning, the communicative aspect is paramount. [Richards & Rodgers \(2014\)](#) have unveiled the fundamental assumption of CLT by stating that learners acquire a given language most effectively when they are engaged in using it for real communicative purposes. This is the focus of EFL teachers as their main goal to teaching is basically to help learners build a strong communicative skill.

[Hymes \(1972\)](#) has gone deeper into the concept of communicative competence by highlighting that knowing a language involves understanding when, how, and why to use language appropriately in social contexts. For CLT to embrace social context, and further, include cultural learning, it emphasizes on Meaningful Interaction in classrooms as a fundamental principle. In fact, effective language learning, especially the Communicative competence occurs through interaction and negotiation of meaning. CLT encourages learners to use the target language to express ideas, solve problems, and complete tasks that resemble real-life communication.

[Littlewood \(1981\)](#) argues that communicative activities require learners to focus primarily on meaning rather than form, allowing language structures to be acquired naturally through use. Moreover, CLT encourages the Use of Authentic Materials. These include newspapers, menus, advertisements, interviews, and real-life conversations as authentic materials expose learners to natural language use and cultural contexts, making learning more relevant and motivating ([Harmer, 2007](#)). Such materials help bridge the gap between classroom language and real-world communication which can embody cultural values. Furthermore, it underscores the Learner-Centered Approach which enhances students active participate in the learning process restricting teachers' role to mere facilitators, guide and instructors. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through collaboration, peer interaction, and self-

expression ([Richards & Rodgers, 2014](#)). Teachers organize and design activities which not only bring together different language skills (listening, writing, reading and speaking) traditionally meant to be taught in isolation but also foster critical thinking. In so doing, teachers reflect on the Skills Integration which is an important principle of CLT. For, a role-play can involve listening, speaking, and note-taking at the same time. Role-play activities involve Pair and Group Work, which is another principle of CLT, intended to maximize learners' opportunities for interaction and enable them to develop confidence by using the target language. Unlike prescriptive grammar, CLT tolerates errors by principle. It views errors as a natural and inevitable part of language development. Accuracy is important, but fluency and successful communication are often given priority, especially during communicative activities. Therefore, teachers can provide corrective feedback in ways that do not interrupt communication or discourage learners ([Harmer, 2007](#)).

Above all, CLT proves to be dynamic and adaptative to needs as it is missioned to employ functional and notional syllabi where language is organized around functions such as requesting, apologizing, and inviting, as well as notions like time, quantity, and frequency. This approach reflects how language is used in real-life situations rather than how it is structured grammatically.

In this perspective, by exploring the teaching of communicative grammar in EFL classes in Benin to promote language use in CBA Context, [Bancolé-Minaflinou \(2018\)](#) examines the role of communicative grammar in improving learners' ability to use English effectively in real-life situations. Through classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires administered to teachers and students, she found that although communicative grammar is more effective than traditional grammar teaching in developing learners' communicative competence, relatively few teachers consistently implement it in Beninese secondary schools.

The study attributes this situation to inadequate teacher preparation, limited instructional materials, and persistent reliance on teacher-centered practices. She concludes that grammar should be taught within meaningful communicative contexts where learners actively negotiate meaning and interact with peers rather than memorize isolated language forms. Implicitly, her findings strongly support the central principles of CLT, which advocate authentic communication, learner participation, and contextualized language learning.

Likewise, [Hindeme \(2022\)](#) investigates strategies for fostering communicative competence among Beninese EFL learners through motivational classroom activities. Through a mixed research method, he has collected significant data which reveal that learners develop greater oral proficiency when teachers incorporate communicative tasks such as role plays, discussions, pair work, problem-solving activities, and collaborative learning. He argues that motivation and classroom interaction are indispensable conditions for meaningful language acquisition because they provide learners with opportunities to use English for authentic purposes. Rather than viewing learners as passive recipients of grammatical knowledge, the study portrays them as active participants who construct communicative competence through continuous interaction with teachers and classmates. Therefore, the researcher recommends that English teachers adopt learner-centered pedagogical practices that encourage spontaneous communication and reduce excessive dependence on traditional lecture methods. These recommendations closely reflect the philosophy of Communicative Language Teaching.

Both studies converge in emphasizing that effective EFL instruction should prioritize communicative competence over grammatical accuracy taught in isolation. The former highlights the integration of communicative grammar into classroom practice, whereas the latter posits motivational and interactive classroom activities as vehicles for developing communicative skills. Jointly, they show that language learning becomes more effective when learners engage in authentic communication, collaborate with peers, and participate actively in classroom discourse. These shared principles justify the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching as the theoretical framework guiding the present study. However, despite their valuable contributions, neither study specifically examines how CLT principles can be integrated with multilingual pedagogical practices such as Translanguaging or other socio-linguistically responsive approaches within Beninese EFL classrooms. This gap provides a strong rationale for the present study, which seeks to extend the application of CLT by considering the multilingual realities of English teaching and learning in Benin.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mix research (quantitative and qualitative research) design aimed at exploring the practices, perceptions, and effects of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in multilingual EFL classrooms in

Benin. Qualitative methods are appropriate for capturing the complexities of language use, teacher and learner attitudes, and classroom interaction dynamics in their natural settings. It focuses on a systemic selection of nearly 60 teachers, according to their experience teaching EFL in multilingual classrooms, and about 200 students, representing varying proficiency levels in English and local languages from different language backgrounds in urban and semi-urban areas, where multilingualism is prominent to provide diverse perspectives on translanguaging practices. Classroom observations, Semi-Structured interviews on the basis of a questionnaire are some methods to be put up for reliable data collection.

Data collection and Analysis

This section is dedicated to the data collection based on questionnaires addressed to both EFL teachers and learners requesting their points of view about translanguaging.

Data collection from EFL teachers Applying Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Approach in English Classes

Reporting Findings on EFL Teachers Applying Translanguaging

As stated in the methodology, the survey is conducted considering a sample of 60 Respondents. They hold different views as distributed in the tables below.

As Table 3.1 exudes most teachers belong to from 21-50 age bracket with predominance noted among those of 30-50. Their distribution along gender line gives (70%) for men against 30% for women. Almost half of the teachers graduate from Teachers Training Collge while the second half hold only academic degrees which make them eligible for teaching. The section is about more experienced teachers, that is, those capitalizing 6 to 10 years practicing EFL teaching. This includes 50% of those over 10 years work experience. These findings show that the sampled teachers are resourceful and more experienced; as a result, their point of views are preponderant to comprehend the usefulness of Translanguaging in EFL teaching and Learning.

This section reveals and exposes the ongoing teaching procedure. The analysis shows that 55% of EFL teachers sometimes switch from English to French (85%) not in any other local language, when giving instructions or

checking understanding and managing classroom. Notwithstanding, there is only a few EFL teachers (5%) who use only English language during class practices. Unanimously-like, EFL teachers tend to adopt such an alternative EFL teaching approach to shed light on some grammatical structures (83.33%), vocabulary (58.33%), words pronunciation (91.76%), motivating learners to speak fluently (75%). Based on the experience, 50% of the Respondents confess that learners accept this alternative language teaching approach positively while 35% view it very practical. Only 10% of the Respondents think learners do not appreciate at all such an approach. Interestingly, no teacher reports he/she never uses French or Local language (0%) while instructing students. More specifically, the instructions are delivered in English-French, not English and local languages (0%). Those findings corroborate the thinking according to which teachers spontaneously resort to Translanguaging to quickly achieve academic their pedagogical goals and foster learners' linguistic competence. They regularly shift in French as is considered L1 in Benin republic.

The findings in this section are contradictory. Although 55% of the Respondents have not heard about "Translanguaging" before, they agree, in the same proportion that allowing students to use English and L1 and or L2 can help improve their learning. In their opinion, Translanguaging potentially enables better understanding of class practices; it increases participation by reducing learners' anxiety. It promotes a strong cultural connectivity and improve communication in English. As a matter of fact, Respondents identify the limits of monolingual approach to teaching by practice. Thus, they intuitionally resort to such a strategy through which they quickly reach their pedagogical goal. However, more than half of the Respondents, that is 55%, presume that Translanguaging can slow EFL acquisition. 50% of Respondents think it can raise other classroom management challenges, and 20% evoke the issue related to overreliance on L1 while 25% think Translanguaging can lead learners to confusion. It is particularly awesome as teachers acknowledge themselves the usefulness and the weaknesses of Translanguaging.

These findings clearly reveal teacher' attitude to language-switch while teaching students. Beyond the fact that most Respondents confirm they resort to Translanguaging strategy to explain grammar, teach vocabulary, instruct, manage class and check understanding, 60% of them believe "Translanguaging"

has a positive influence on learners by increasing their confidence. However, 15% think it rather decreases learners' confidence and 15% cast a doubt on it, while 10% do not see any danger or risk in using it. The Respondents' points of view are various and diversified regarding the different findings. These various points of view are critical and subject for technical and scientific discussions.

Data collection from EFL Learners views Applying Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Approach in English Classes

Reporting Findings on EFL Learners views Applying Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Approach in English Classes

Unlike the number of Respondents foreseen, as mentioned in the methodology, a sample of 307 Respondents have been considered. The results have been neatly displayed in the tables below.

The Respondents are of two categories. These includes only 35.5% of university students and the dominant secondary students (64.49 %). Putting the two categories together, the distribution along gender line gives 50.8 % for men against 49.2 % for women. Regarding age distribution, most Respondents belong to from 15 over 25 age brackets with predominance noted among those of 19-25, representing 56.1% followed by 31.9% of those between 15-18 age bracket. Besides, the section is about more experienced learners, that is, those capitalizing 6 to more than 10 years of EFL learning. They represent 139 (45.3%) of learners attending EFL classes for about 10 years now and 101 learners (32.9%) beyond 10 years, alongside a lower proportion, respectively 14% and 10.4%, representing those who have been learning English language for only 2 to 5 years and those under 2 years. This suggests that the study is conducted on conscious Respondents who can contribute their view effectively.

This section gives an overview of how students handle teaching procedure regarding the unofficial use of Translanguaging. The findings have revealed a diversity in their points of views. In fact, 141 learners (45%) have jointly admitted that EFL teachers sometimes shift from English to French on the course of the teaching while 27% of the interviewees have stated that the EFL teachers do shift but rarely. According to 17.27% of them, their teachers do switch languages quite often while 8.47 % have confirmed they usually do when only

4 over 307 have proved the monolingual approach in EFL teaching. In any of the cases, EFL teachers have developed the bilingual or multilingual approach to EFL teaching which often appears like a mysterious potion to rescue learners from vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation problems instigating them to be more participative. Thus, nearly all the interviewees, but only 19 of them (6.2%), have expressed, in substantial proportions, their deep satisfaction as the outcome of the “Translanguaging”.

As the analyses indicate, although the students were not aware of Translanguaging (82.1% for no against only 17.9% for yes), a large majority (69.2%) supports the fact that Translanguaging provides them with a better understanding of lessons. 76 (24.9%) of the students have confessed that they feel more confident with it and 83 (27.2%) have stated that it makes them more active and participative.

In the same vein, 55 (18%) have revealed that it lessens their fright when speaking. However, an important number of the students (210 over 307) recognized that overreliance on French or local language during EFL class wouldn't enable them to practice English language enough while 63 over 307 do not mind. 51 over 307 rather think it may create confusion.

This section reveals how much teachers use Translanguaging and the purpose for which it is used. The analysis corroborates the findings in the Table 3.2 by suggesting that teachers alternate between French and English to teach grammar (27%), vocabulary (38.4%), words pronunciation (91.76%), manage classroom (25.1 %) and mostly to check understanding (70.4%). Furthermore, 30.3% of Respondents think that Teachers resort spontaneously to Translanguaging while 41.7% consider it being strategic, yet well planned, alongside 32.6% of Respondents who think that Teachers' use of Translanguaging is mixed (planned and unplanned). Besides, more than the half of Respondents (69.7%) feel more comfortable with Translanguaging being implemented in EFL classroom while only 11.1% feel uninterested.

Consequently, a huge proportion of Respondents (75.6%) advocate for the use of Translanguaging (49.5% agree and 26.1% strongly agree) against only 11.1% rejecting it (7.8% disagree and 3.3% strongly disagree). A close scrutiny of the different results makes it worth challenging monolingual approach to EFL teaching and revealing its weaknesses or fixing its comfort zone of application.

Discussion of the findings

While [Brown \(2007\)](#) highlights that EFL instruction focuses on developing communicative competence in environments with limited natural exposure to English; [Ellis \(1994\)](#) views EFL learning as a context of L2 acquisition in which English is learned in a setting where it is not dominant societal language, making classroom instruction the primary source of input. From the above points, it is clear that EFL learning appears in light of English language acquisition for which the central goal is to foster learners' ability to communicate effectively in English. This involves the ability to speak English language accurately, fluently, and appropriately in real-life situations depending on the context in which speakers find themselves. Communicative competence goes beyond grammatical knowledge; it includes the ability to use language appropriately in social context ([Hymes, 1972](#)). Thus, language teaching is to enable learners to achieve communicative competence, integrating grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences ([Brown, 2007](#)). Acquiring sociolinguistic competences, mastering contextual grammar and discourse involve strategic study of the language. Therefore, successful EFL acquisition typically relies on a blend of studying (to build structural foundation) and learning (to gain communicative fluency)

Drawing on [Krashen \(1985\)](#) distinction between learning (conscious knowledge of rule) and acquisition (subconscious development through exposure), EFL learning may include both formal English language studying and its natural development requesting a more appropriate teaching approach.

This study mainly aims to investigate Translanguaging as a pedagogical approach intended as an alternative for EFL teaching and learning in order to give it a new impetus in Benin Republic.

The various findings from different Respondents (Learners and Teachers) reveal the same reality: EFL teaching and learning has always been challenging when using monolingual teaching approach. In fact, more than half of sampled teachers, despite their reputations and their substantial years of experience at teaching, quite often use both French and English while teaching EFL. Other teachers even use mother tongues to instruct students. In so doing, they unofficially use Translanguaging. The analyses show that such a sudden or quick code-switching during EFL class occurs when

teachers face some difficulties to explain vocabulary words or expressions, grammar, pronunciation, complex concepts. It is also used to give incentives and motivate learners. This can foster critical thinking. In fact, comparing ideas across languages helps learners analyze similarities and differences in grammar, vocabulary, and culture and promote deeper language awareness. Learners' first language serves as a cognitive resource that supports additional language acquisition rather than interfering with it (Cummins, 2007).

Findings from learners' feedback support the thinking according to which Teachers spontaneously resort to Translanguaging in order to quickly achieve their pedagogical goals.

This suggests that teachers are aware of the limits of monolingual approach which could help foster learners' fluency; for, according to Krashen (1985), sustained exposure to comprehensible input in the target language facilitates language acquisition.

Most teachers would love to use Translanguaging during EFL class as they think it helps them reach their academic purpose which is to have students have excellent grades at the end of each term and during examinations. As such, Translanguaging proves to be an asset for academic achievements which teachers are usually judged on in Benin republic. Moreover, teachers confess that they are pressurized on to cope with the syllabus in mean time. Therefore, resorting to Translanguaging seems a getaway for them as it is time-saving, unlike monolingual approach to EFL teaching which is time-consuming and demanding. It is used to enhance comprehension. That is, by alternating between L1 and L2, learners understand new vocabulary, grammar, and complex concepts more easily when they can relate them to their first language(s). This reduces confusion and cognitive overload, especially for beginners.

Consequently, it improves communicative competence as it enables students to focus on expressing meaning instead of worrying about using only English. In the same lens, this encourages more active participation in classroom interactions. Furthermore, through interviews, teachers reveal that they use Translanguaging as it can facilitate collaborative and inclusive learning. It can enable learners, no matter their different language background, to discuss tasks in their stronger language before presenting or writing in English. This often leads to higher-quality language production.

Besides, the findings have revealed that the conscious shift from English to French is not planned before. It is automatic and instantly to repair a linguistic break-down. The choice is purposefully made on French language, much more than on local languages, as it is Beninese official language, as the left-over of colonization, which learners are exposed to from nursery schools. The political policy behind French language using in Benin makes it more valuable.

Most families even adopt French language as their L1 instead of their mother tongues in perspective of fueling their kids' academic excellency as far as French subjects are concerned. The analysis reveals that learners pair with teachers by supporting the use of Translanguaging for the benefits it offers them.

Beyond linguistic outcomes, Translanguaging is crucial for learners' identity and educational equity. Monolingual EFL practices often position native-speaker norms as ideal, which can disfavor learners and teachers alike, Translanguaging can promote their linguistic and cultural identities. Wei (2018) strongly supports this point by advocating that Translanguaging disrupts this hierarchy by validating local languages and varieties of English.

By recognizing students as legitimate multilingual users rather than deficient English learners, Translanguaging fosters a more empowering learning environment. This is particularly significant in postcolonial and Global South EFL contexts, where English has historically been associated with power and exclusion.

Overall, this discursive section reveals Translanguaging as a well-thought pedagogical practice which can enhance comprehension, participation, confidence, and communicative competence while recognizing multilingual learners' linguistic resources as assets rather than barriers, even though some teachers and learners experience over-reliance on it. There is, therefore a need to well frame it.

Suggestions and recommendations

In light of the current research work, the researcher has discovered that EFL teaching has been employing translanguaging approach in Benin Republic, although the Monolingual Approach seems the one required by the stakeholders. The fruitful opportunities Translanguaging offers to EFL teaching and learning lead to the following suggestions and recommendations.

Table.1 Teachers' Background Information

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section A: Demographic	Gender	Male	42	70
		Female	19	30
	Total		60	100
	Age	Under 20	0	0
		21–30	06	10
		31–40	30	50
		41–50	24	40
		Above 50	0	0
	Total		60	100
	Qualifications	Under graduate	18	30
		Graduate	14	23.33
		BAPES	12	20
		CAPES	16	26.67
	Total		60	100
	Work Experience	< 2 years	0	0
		2–5 years	9	15
		6–10 years	21	35
		>10 years	30	50
	Total		60	100

Table.2 Teachers Current EFL Learning and Teaching Practices

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section B: Current EFL Learning and Teaching Practices	How often do you use French or local languages in your English classes?	Never	0	0
		Rarely	12	20
		Sometimes	33	55
		Often	12	20
		Always	3	5
	Total		60	100
	What is your main language of instruction in English classes?	English only	9	15
		English and French	51	85
		English and local languages	0	0
		Mixed (please specify)	0	0
	Total		60	100
	What are the main difficulties you face when teaching/learning English in Benin?	Vocabulary	50	83.33
		Grammar	35	58.33
		Pronunciation	55	91.76
		Speaking Fluency	50	83.33
		Motivation	45	75
	How do students usually react when teachers use French or a local language to explain English concepts?	Very positively	21	35
		Positively	30	50
		Neutral	3	5
		Negatively	6	10
		Very negatively	0	0
	Total		60	100

Table.3 Teachers Perceptions of Translanguaging

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section C: Perceptions of Translanguaging	Have you ever heard of the term “translanguaging”?	Yes	27	45
		No	33	55
		Total	60	100
	Do you believe allowing students to use both English and their home languages can improve learning?	Strongly agree	15	25
		Agree	33	55
		Neutral	3	5
		Disagree	6	10
		Strongly disagree	3	5
		Total	60	100
	What are the potential benefits of translanguaging in EFL classrooms?	Better understanding of content	36	60
		Increased participation	39	65
		Reduced anxiety	27	45
		Stronger cultural connection	24	40
		Improved communication	24	40
	What are the possible drawbacks of translanguaging in EFL classrooms?	Overreliance on L1	12	20
		Slower English acquisition	33	55
		Classroom management challenges	30	50
		Confusion between languages	15	25
		None	3	5

Table.4 Teachers’ Attitude to Translanguaging Practices in the Classroom

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section D: Translanguaging Practices in the Classroom	In what situations do you (or your teacher) use French or local languages in English classes?	To explain grammar	24	40
		To translate vocabulary	45	75
		To give instructions	30	50
		To manage class	12	20
		To check understanding	24	40
	How do you switch between languages during lessons?	Unplanned (spontaneous)	27	45
		Planned (strategic)	21	35
		Both	12	20
	Total		60	100
	How do you think translanguaging affects students’ confidence in using English?	Increases confidence	36	60
		No effect	6	10
		Decreases confidence	9	15
		Not sure	9	15
	Total		60	100

Table.5 Students' Background Information

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section A: Demographic	Gender	Male	156	50.8
		Female	151	49.2
	Total		307	100
	Age	Under 15	3	1
		15–18	98	31.9
		19-25	200	56.1
		Above 25	6	2
	Total		307	100
	Level of Study	Secondary School	198	64.49
		University	109	35.50
	Total		307	100
	How long have you been learning English?	< 2 years	32	10.4
		2–5 years	43	14
		6–10 years	139	45.3
		>10 years	101	32.9
	Total		307	100

Table.6 Students' Attitude to Current EFL Learning and Teaching Practices

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section B: EFL Learning abilities	How often does your teacher use French or a local language in English class?	Never	4	1.30
		Rarely	83	27.03
		Sometimes	141	45.93
		Often	53	17.27
		Always	26	8.47
	Total		307	100
	What language does your teacher mostly use in English class?	English only	49	16.3
		English and French	231	75.9
		English and local languages	8	2.6
		Mixed	19	6.2
	Total		307	100
	What is difficult for you when learning English?	Vocabulary	109	35.5
		Grammar	119	38.8
		Pronunciation	131	42.7
		Speaking	173	56.49
		Understand lessons	64	20.8
	How do you usually feel when teachers use French or a local language to explain English concepts?	Very happy	87	28.3
		Happy	154	50.2
		Neutral	58	18.9
		Unhappy	19	6.2
		Very Unhappy	3	1
	Total		307	100

Table.7 Students' Perceptions of Translanguaging

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section C: Students' Views on Using More Than One Language	Have you ever heard of the word "Translanguaging"?	Yes	55	17.9
		No	252	82.1
	Total		307	100
	Would you enjoy using both English and French languages during English class?	Strongly agree	102	33.2
		Agree	165	53.7
		Not sure	31	10.1
		Disagree	7	2.3
		Strongly disagree	2	0.7
	Total		307	100
	What are the good things about using more than one language in English class?	I understand lessons Better	211	69.2
		I feel more confident	76	24.9
		I participate more	83	27.2
		I feel less afraid to speak	55	18
	What problems can happen when too much French or local language is used?	I don't practice English enough	210	68.4
		I get confuse	51	16.6
		No problem	63	20.5

Table.8 Students' Attitude to Translanguaging

Sections	Survey items	Items feedback	Respondents	Percentage in %
Section D: Classroom Languages	When does your teacher use French or local languages?	To explain grammar	83	27
		To translate vocabulary	118	38.4
		To give instructions	34	11.4
		To manage class	77	25.1
		To check understanding	216	70.4
	How does your teacher change languages in class?	Unplanned (spontaneous)	93	30.3
		Planned (strategic)	128	41.7
		Both	100	32.6
	Total		307	100
	Using French or local languages in English class makes me feel:	More confident	214	69.7
		The same	50	16.3
		Less confident	34	11.1
		Not sure	15	4.9
	Total		307	100
	Do you think teachers should use both English and French or local languages?	Strongly Agree	80	26.1
		Agree	152	49.5
		Not sure	61	19.9
		Disagree	24	7.8
		Strongly Disagree	10	3.3
	Total		307	100

Suggestions and recommendations to Education Authorities

Education authorities should allow EFL teachers to officially use Translanguaging strategy in EFL classrooms as a resource for instructions. Curriculum Designers should include clear guidelines by defining when and how Translanguaging should be used during EFL teaching.

Teachers should be trained on using Translanguaging strategies for their professional development and classroom management.

Suggestions and recommendations to EFL Teachers

Based on teachers and learners' positions, although Monolingual approach can help perfectly reach academic purposes, it does not offer learners the opportunity to fully develop their communicative competences. As a matter of fact, Translanguaging is recommended to be officially adopted as an alternative approach to EFL teaching.

Thus, teachers can use it, as a pedagogical strategy to develop learners' effective communication skills by allowing them to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning, negotiate understanding, and express ideas more confidently.

Rather than strictly separating languages, Translanguaging enables learners to use both their mother tongue and the target language as complementary resources for learning and communication. Therefore, teachers should implement translanguaging by:

Facilitating Comprehension through the First Language (L1)

Teachers can explain complex concepts, instructions, or cultural nuances in learners' L1 when necessary before guiding them to express the same ideas in English. This reduces cognitive overload and promotes deeper understanding of communicative functions.

Encouraging Collaborative Learning

Learners may discuss tasks, brainstorm ideas, or solve problems in their L1 before presenting their conclusions in English. Such interaction enhances critical thinking and allows learners to focus on message construction rather than struggling with language limitations.

Developing Pragmatic and Sociolinguistic Competence

Teachers can compare politeness strategies, speech acts, and conversational norms across languages and cultures. By examining how requests, apologies, compliments, or refusals are expressed in both languages, learners become more aware of contextually appropriate communication.

Promoting Meaningful Classroom Interaction

Translanguaging activities such as bilingual debates, role-plays, group discussions, and storytelling encourage learners to participate actively. These activities foster fluency, confidence, and communicative competence.

Using Multilingual Resources

Teachers can integrate bilingual texts, glossaries, videos, and digital resources that allow learners to access information through multiple linguistic channels. This broadens vocabulary development and improves comprehension skills.

Supporting Academic and Intercultural Communication

Learners can analyze similarities and differences between languages and cultures, helping them develop intercultural awareness and communicative sensitivity. Such awareness is essential for effective communication in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Encouraging Gradual Movement toward Target-Language Production

Teachers may initially permit learners to formulate ideas in their L1 and then scaffold their reformulation in English. This process strengthens learners' ability to communicate complex meanings accurately and appropriately.

Translanguaging should be strategic, balanced, and learner-centered by enhancing comprehension and participation while keeping English as the primary target language

In conclusion, this study was premised on probing the effectiveness and practicability of Translanguaging in an EFL context. More specifically, it sets to examine the challenges faced by learners and teachers in

implementing the monolingual approach, to explore the importance of learners' first language (L1) in the EFL learning process, and finally, to evaluate the influence of translanguaging on learners' language competences.

In order to deliver those specific objectives, this research has followed a mixed-research method. As a matter of fact, it was all about collecting qualitative and quantitative data by administering questionnaires to both EFL teachers and students and conducting classroom observations.

On this basis, this study comes up with some critical conclusions about Translanguaging. Based on the findings, it can be said that the first research objective is delivered as the analysis reveals that the students hardly understand lessons when teachers use only English language as means of instruction. Moreover, learners face difficulties to express their ideas, thoughts and beliefs in English.

However, those who were eager to speaking use code-mixing strategy which can be assimilated to Translanguaging. As a matter of fact, the use of learners' L1 (French or local language) is revealed particularly awesome during the EFL teaching and learning to encourage learners' effective linguistic and socio-linguistic competence.

In the same vein, the results match with the various premises previously set. From a socio-constructivist and sociolinguistic perspective, the study underscores that Translanguaging promotes effective communication by creating a bridge between learners' existing linguistic knowledge and the target language. It facilitates meaning-making, increases participation, reduces language anxiety, and supports the development of grammatical, discourse, strategic, and pragmatic competences. As a matter of fact, learners become more capable of communicating not only accurately but also appropriately and effectively across diverse social and cultural contexts.

These reported findings on Translanguaging serve as fertile ground to provide clear and accurate answers to the Research Questions raised at the onset of this research work. By the way, Monolingual pedagogical approach limits learners' potential and learning outcomes while Translanguaging contributes to developing effective communicative skills among EFL learners. Eventually, Translanguaging promotes pragmatic transfer and facilitate learners' social integration.

By considering or reviewing multilingualism as a resource rather than a problem, it challenges monolingual ideologies and aligns pedagogy with learners' linguistic realities. When thoughtfully applied, translanguaging can enhance comprehension, support identity development, and promote more equitable and effective EFL education. The translanguaging approach transforms EFL teaching from enforcing language separation to embracing linguistic diversity as an asset. It promotes equitable, inclusive, and cognitively rich learning by allowing students to use their whole linguistic repertoire-making English learning more meaningful and empowering. It should not be viewed merely as a compensatory strategy for linguistic deficiencies, but as a legitimate pedagogical approach that leverages multilingual learners' full linguistic resources to foster communicative competence, pragmatic awareness, and intercultural effectiveness in EFL classrooms

However, despite its advantages, translanguaging in EFL teaching faces several challenges. Teachers may lack training or confidence in managing multilingual classrooms, and institutional policies may still enforce English-only norms. Critics also argue that excessive reliance on L1 may reduce exposure to English, especially in contexts where input is already limited (Macaro, 2005). Translanguaging theory does not, therefore, advocate unrestricted L1 use. It rather emphasizes strategic and purposeful integration of languages to support learning outcomes. Effective implementation therefore requires careful planning and professional development.

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