Exploring EFL teachers' beliefs and practices about translanguaging pedagogy: A qualitative study from Iran

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Abstract

In the past decade, research on EFL teachers' beliefs about translanguaging has significantly grown. However, little qualitative research has been done on teachers' translanguaging beliefs and practices and the congruity between them. To address this gap in the literature, the current study investigated Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices, and the correspondence between these beliefs and practices. Data was collected from ten teachers who taught English as a foreign language through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations (three per teachers). The data was analyzed based on the principles of thematic analysis. The results showed that the teachers perceived six dimensions of translanguaging, including diverse beliefs of translanguaging, perceived relevance of translanguaging, pedagogical beliefs and approaches, attitudes toward benefits, concerns and challenges of applying translanguaging, and student-centered approaches. In regard to their practice, the teachers practiced translanguaging in various contexts and through different instructional strategies in their classes. Regarding the correspondence between beliefs and practices, it was found that there was a mainly direct correspondence between beliefs and practices. The study provides implications for teacher educators in running professional development courses that enhance teachers' awareness of using translanguaging in their classes.

Keywords: translanguaging; teacher beliefs; teacher practices; belief-practice correspondence; qualitative study

Introduction

In recent years, research on translanguaging has considerably developed in different contexts and in relation to teachers' professional practices (Tian et al., 2020). Considering the prevalence of linguistic repertoire in today's multilingual world, researchers have extensively paid attention to the multifarious resources that learners use to exchange meaning and deliver their communicational purposes (Gao & Yang, 2023; García & Lin, 2017; Wei, 2018, French, & Armitage, 2020). Increasing research from different educational contexts has shown that teachers and learners could use their linguistic and non-linguistic resources so that they could effectively get their meanings across within intercultural settings (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Leung & Valdés, 2019; Ollerhead, et. al., 2020). For example, in their recent paper on multilingual teacher education, Gao and Yang (2023, p. 4) argued that "language teachers should recognize and value the linguistic and cultural resources of language learners", which highlights the importance of translanguaging in teachers' and learners' language use and meaning-making.
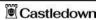
Despite the growth of research on translanguaging in recent years, few studies have explored EFL teachers' beliefs about translanguaging and through qualitative approaches. That is, while research on learners' beliefs (e.g., Huang, 2021; Liu & Fang, 2020; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022; Tian et al., 2020) and teacher experiences (e.g., Cenoz et al., 2022; Kao, 2023; Nazari & Karimpour, 2023) have increased, few studies have explored EFL teachers' beliefs of translanguaging through qualitative research methodologies. Furthermore, as most of the Iranian EFL teachers are at young ages, exploring their beliefs and practices in translanguaging can be generalized to other similar context where young teachers abound. Exploring this issue is likely to unpack new dimensions of EFL teachers' translanguaging beliefs and practices. More recently, Chen et al. (2022) argued that research on translanguaging should account for inclusive beliefs about the concept. Motivated by this gap of knowledge, the present study explored Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices about translanguaging. The study is significant because it offers implications for both EFL teachers and teacher educators in how to effectively use translanguaging to deliver a more learning-conducive pedagogy for learners. Since research on translanguaging beliefs and practices and their compatibility in an EFL context is scant, this study could draw the attention of educational stakeholders to how to integrate translanguaging in their educational documents and teacher education courses to make this concept more relevant to language education.

In this study, translanguaging is operationally defined as the strategic use of multiple languages (here Persian and English) by teachers to facilitate communication, enhance understanding, and promote engagement among students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. As will be shown later, the frequency of translanguaging was assessed through systematic classroom observations, where instances of language use were recorded and categorized based on their context and purpose. Specifically, translanguaging was counted when teachers integrated their students' first language (L1), Persian, alongside English (L2) during instructional activities. This included activities such as complex grammar explanations, vocabulary introductions, strategy instruction, and clarifications of instructions or concepts.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Translanguaging

Translanguaging argues that "rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts" (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 2). In a related fashion,

Lau (2020, p. 1) also describe translanguaging as "an interconnected use of languages and other semiotic resources for communication and knowledge construction". Translanguaging is thus a psycholinguistic perspective that focuses on how individuals get their meaning across through drawing on their whole repertoire from the diverse linguistic resources that are available to them (Canagarajah, 2011, 2013; García & Wei, 2018). This perspective of using multiple resources has been shown to be a key dimension of today's multilingual world in that, as Gao and Yang (2023, p. 4) stated, such "resources should be effectively used in translingual, multimodal, transcultural pedagogical practices to promote language learners' learning and development".

The origins of translanguaging go back to Cen Williams in Welsh/English bilingual classrooms, who discussed how English and Welsh were used in reading and writing classes for meaning-making (García & Lin, 2017). However, some scholars have associated translanguaging with the history of decolonization. For example, Makoni and Pennycook (2006) argued that the perspective that has followed the British colonization in terms of "one language, one people" has been drastically challenged in today's world. In the same vein, Garcia and Wei (2022) suggested that translanguaging enjoys a great decolonial potential in education through which teachers abandon the focus on traditionally standardized languages and engage fully with their students' full repertoire of features and meanings. Moreover, issues such as globalization, multiliteracy, transnationalism, and neoliberalism have all embraced the individuality of learners and that their skills should be recognized in greater depth (Canagarajah, 2011; Conteh, 2018; García & Lin, 2017; Vogel, 2022; Vogel & García, 2017).

When seen from an educational viewpoint, translanguaging can be a pedagogical perspective that allows for using learners' multilingual potentials in classroom instruction. In the words of García (2009), given the context-dependent nature of learners' linguistic practices and that they are "multiple and ever adjusting to the multilingual multimodal terrain of the communicative act" (p. 53), recognizing learners' translanguaging potential becomes more important in today's world. In this regard, teachers can use learners', for instance, Persian knowledge as L1 and their English knowledge in the process of communication. This perspective helps learners have a more active role in their learning process (Li, 2022) because they can become agents of their own learning (Vogel & Garcia, 2017), ultimately leading to more development on critical awareness and classroom engagement (Lau, 2020). In this regard, there have been calls for integrating translanguaging in policy documents and teacher education courses based on situational happenings such as the way language education is seen in the broader spectrum of the society or how teacher education courses can effectively enhance teachers' knowledge of the field (e.g., García & Lin, 2017; Gao & Yang, 2023).

Teachers' and Learners' Beliefs About Translanguaging

Over the past decade, research has extensively focused on the important role of teachers and learners in translanguaging practices. For example, Vogel and Garcia (2017, p. 10) discussed the role of teachers and argued that in a translanguaging pedagogy, teachers "aim to build on students' diverse linguistic practices in order to support them in expanding their linguistic repertoires to include features needed to develop different kinds of literacies and subject-matter knowledge, and to perform in academic environments". In addition, Bonacina-Pugh and his colleagues (2021) discuss that learners have the role of drawing on their linguistic resources as part of a unitary conceptualization of the concept in order to make meaning with their interlocutors and peers. Moreover, Garcia and Lin (2017) discuss theoretical roots of translanguaging and acknowledge a framework of translanguaging that accounts for practical and discursive contextualities of promoting translanguaging. This perspective has helped advance the theoretical and practical roots of the term in educational terms.

From this perspective, research has extensively explored teachers' experiences and beliefs about translanguaging. For example, Gorter and Arocena (2020) explored the beliefs of three groups of teachers about translanguaging in Spain. The findings of the study showed that the teachers were positive about using translanguaging in their classes because they assumed that this use is already taking place in their classes, an issue that had a positive psychological impact on the teachers. Similarly, Wang (2019) reported on the challenges that Chinese teachers experienced in effectively implementing translanguaging and that they found this pedagogy effective in reducing psychological burdens on students. Moreover, Nazari and Karimpour (2023) looked at translanguaging from and emotional dimension and reported that the Iranian EFL teachers "engaged in changing, masking, and expressing their emotions, which created clashes in and affordances for their internal sense-making and external manifestations of emotions relative to their translanguaging practices" (p. 1).

In synthesizing these sources, it is evident that teachers and learners play crucial roles in the effective implementation of translanguaging practices. Teachers' beliefs significantly shape their pedagogical approaches, as seen in the positive attitudes reported by Gorter and Arocena (2020) and the challenges highlighted by Wang (2019). Furthermore, the emotional dimensions discussed by Nazari and Karimpour (2023) underscore the complexities involved in translanguaging practices. Together, these studies illustrate that while there is a general enthusiasm for translanguaging among educators, various contextual factors and emotional considerations must be addressed to fully realize its potential in the classroom. This synthesis not only emphasizes the interconnectedness of these findings but also foregrounds the importance of understanding the multifaceted nature of translanguaging in educational settings.

In the past years, research has also explored learners' beliefs about translanguaging. For example, Yasar Yuzlu and Dikilitas (2022) explored the effects of translanguaging on Turkish students' four skills as well as their beliefs about translanguaging. The study was conducted with 120 pre- and upper-intermediate learners, who were assigned to control and experimental groups. Data were collected from tests and semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the interviews showed that "the students reported constructive, cognitive, interactive, and affective benefits through translanguaging pedagogy since they were able to draw upon all the linguistic resources for meaning-making and negotiation, a sense of comfort, and a sense of motivation to use English" (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022, p. 13). In another study, Huang (2021) explored translanguaging in the context of English-medium instruction in Taiwan. Data were collected from interviews and observations. The findings revealed that using translanguaging facilitated the learners' grasp of navigating the content and language within the Taiwanese context.

These studies collectively underscore the positive impact of translanguaging on learners' language skills and beliefs. Yuzlu and Dikilitas (2022) highlight the cognitive and emotional benefits that students experience, while Huang (2021) emphasizes the practical advantages of translanguaging in navigating complex language environments. Together, these findings illustrate that translanguaging not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters a supportive learning environment, encouraging students to utilize their full linguistic repertoire. They emphasize the importance of understanding learners' perspectives on translanguaging, which is crucial for effective pedagogical implementation.

Purpose of the Study

Although translanguaging has considerably grown in the past decades, little research has been done on EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of translanguaging and the congruity between them. Exploring this gap is significant because it offers implications for EFL teachers in how their

learners receive translanguaging and thus they can better use different linguistic resources to teach effectively. Additionally, it helps teacher educators design teacher education courses that are rooted in both teachers' beliefs and practices of translanguaging, which is likely to increase the effectiveness of those courses. Since translanguaging is considered as one of the most featuring developments on multilingualism in current debates of the field of applied linguistics (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016), it should gain more attention from researchers. The current study aims to fill this gap in the literature by addressing the following questions:

1. What are the beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers regarding the use of translanguaging in their classes?
2. What are teachers' practices regarding the implementation of translanguaging?
3. To what extent is there congruity between Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to translanguaging?

Method

Research Design

The study is designed as a qualitative inquiry, aiming to deeply understand the beliefs and practices of Iranian EFL teachers regarding translanguaging in their classrooms. This design aligns with the exploratory nature of the research questions, which seek to uncover nuanced insights into teachers' attitudes and actual classroom behaviors. The qualitative approach was chosen due to its suitability in exploring complex phenomena like translanguaging, where subjective experiences, beliefs, and contextual practices play a central role (Maxwell, 2012). This approach allows for a more flexible and in-depth exploration of the topic, enabling the capture of rich, detailed data that quantitative methods might overlook (Creswell, 2007). It is particularly effective in addressing the intricacies of language teaching practices and educators' beliefs, which are often shaped by personal experiences and contextual factors.

Participants

The participants of the study were ten Iranian EFL teachers (Table 1). These teachers, comprising six females and four males, represented a diverse range of teaching experiences and backgrounds, which was essential for a comprehensive exploration of the topic. All participants held Bachelor's (B.A.) and Master's (M.A.) degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and were teaching to adults at an Iranian private language institution. Their ages ranged from 22 to 35 years old. On average, the teachers had seven years of teaching experience ranging from four to 10 years. All participants were recruited via purposive sampling, meaning from a single private language institute known in Iran for its innovative teaching methods. The managerial board of this institute is recognized in Tehran for embracing the latest teaching methods, making it a preferred choice for many Iranian EFL learners who seek effective language instruction. Initially, the researcher reached out to potential participants via email, providing information about the study and its objectives. Following this initial outreach, the researcher arranged in-person meetings to discuss the study in more detail and to encourage participation. This purposive selection of the participants was driven by the aim to capture a wide spectrum of insights into translanguaging practices, ensuring that the study captures varied pedagogical approaches across different stages of career development in the Iranian EFL context. This specific context is characterized by a growing emphasis on communicative language teaching and the integration of translanguaging strategies, which allow learners to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire. This context is particularly relevant to the purposes of this

Table 1 Demographic information of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age (Years)	Teaching Experience (Years)	Education Level
T1	Female	28	6	M.A. in TEFL
T2	Male	35	10	M.A. in TEFL
T3	Female	30	8	M.A. in TEFL
T4	Female	32	7	M.A. in TEFL
T5	Male	27	5	B.A. in TEFL
T6	Female	22	4	B.A. in TEFL
T7	Male	33	9	M.A. in TEFL
T8	Female	29	6	M.A. in TEFL
T9	Male	31	7	B.A. in TEFL
T10	Female	26	5	B.A. in TEFL

study as it reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of English language education in Iran, where teachers often navigate diverse classroom environments.

Procedures and Data Collection

Data for this qualitative study were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. These methods were chosen to comprehensively understand the participants' beliefs and practices related to translanguaging in their EFL classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each of the 10 participants. The interviews were designed to be open-ended and flexible, allowing participants to express their beliefs and experiences freely. The interview questions were developed based on the research questions and the existing literature on translanguaging (Appendix A). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis. In addition to interviews, classroom observations were conducted to observe participants' actual teaching practices related to translanguaging. Each teacher was observed during three separate class sessions. During these observations, detailed field notes were taken, documenting the use of translanguaging, instructional strategies, student engagement, and any other relevant observations. The observations aimed to provide contextual insights into how participants integrated translanguaging into their teaching (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data systematically. The analysis followed a series of iterative steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). More specifically, interview data was analyzed based on the following steps: first, all interview transcripts were read multiple times to become familiar with the data. Next, initial codes (e.g. the relevance of translanguaging to Iran's EFL context, or students' engagement) were generated by identifying key phrases and concepts related to participants' beliefs and practices of translanguaging. Third, the codes were grouped into potential themes (e.g., how to balance translanguaging, or how to use Persian language moderately during translanguaging) based on similarities and patterns. Furthermore, themes were reviewed and refined iteratively, with constant comparison between data extracts and themes. Additionally, final themes were defined and named to

represent the essence of the data. Finally, the findings were reported with illustrative quotes from participants. As for the data collected from classroom observations, the field notes were analyzed to understand the practical implementation of translanguaging by the participants. Observational data were used to corroborate and complement the insights gained from interviews. The analysis identified recurring patterns in teachers' translanguaging, instructional strategies, and student interactions.

To uphold the rigor and trustworthiness of this qualitative study, a multifaceted approach was adopted, focusing on both reliability and validity (Creswell, 2008). Reliability was ensured through consistent data collection procedures, where each interview and observation followed a structured yet flexible format, allowing for comparability across different participants while accommodating the depth and nuances of individual responses. This consistency was crucial in ensuring that the data reliably reflected the participants' beliefs and practices. Regarding validity, the study employed several strategies. Participant validation, often referred to as member checking, was a key component. After the transcription of the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to review these transcripts, ensuring that their responses were accurately captured and interpreted. This process allowed participants to clarify, elaborate, or correct their statements, thereby enhancing the authenticity and credibility of the data.

Research Context and Researcher's Positionality and Reflexivity

The researchers actively engaged in reflexive practices throughout the study. We acknowledge our positionality, recognizing how personal background, beliefs, and experiences shape our engagement with the research. We approached the study with an awareness of potential biases. This awareness guided us in maintaining a critical lens throughout the research process, ensuring that the participants' voices remained at the forefront of the findings.

In fact, reflexivity played a crucial role in this study, as the researchers consistently engaged in self-reflection regarding their influence on the research process. This involved acknowledging biases and perspectives that could affect data interpretation. By maintaining a reflexive stance, we strived to uphold a neutral position, ensuring that the conclusions drawn were firmly grounded in the data rather than personal preconceptions.

To enhance transparency, the findings include detailed descriptions and direct quotes from participants. This approach serves two key purposes: first, it allows readers to see the basis on which interpretations were made, thereby fostering trust in the research outcomes; second, it provides a richer, more authentic representation of the participants' perspectives. This level of detail not only supports the credibility of the findings but also enables readers to evaluate the validity of the interpretations independently.

Findings

The first research question was concerned with the EFL teachers' beliefs regarding the use of translanguaging in their classes. Data analysis revealed six main themes about their views (i.e., beliefs) on translanguaging pedagogy, as shown in Table 2.

Diverse Beliefs of Translanguaging

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of interviews centered around the diverse beliefs of translanguaging among participants. These beliefs ranged from viewing translanguaging as a valuable pedagogical tool to harboring skepticism or misconceptions about its effective usage. T1, for instance, expressed a positive view of translanguaging, highlighting its potential benefits for language learners. She noted, "*I believe that translanguaging can help students bridge the gap between their native language and English. It's a way for them to make connections and*

Table 2 Frequency of themes in teachers' beliefs regarding translanguaging

Theme	Description	Frequency (Number of Mentions)
Diverse Beliefs of Translanguaging	Ranging from positive views of translanguaging as a beneficial tool to skepticism about its efficacy	T1, T4, T3, T5, T6
Perceived Relevance of Translanguaging	Opinions on translanguaging alignment with curriculum requirements and its utility in different class levels	T7, T10, T8, T9, T5
Pedagogical Beliefs and Approaches	Strategies for implementing translanguaging, including creating a bilingual learning environment	T9, T6, T2, T7, T5
Attitudes toward Benefits	Views on the positive influences of translanguaging on student engagement, comprehension, and inclusivity	T4, T9, T2, T3, T6
Concerns and Challenges	Worries about the balance between languages, student and institutional resistance, and policy constraints	T2, T7, T8, T6
Student-centered Approaches	Beliefs of translanguaging as a tool for enhancing student engagement, motivation, and personalized learning	T4, T7, T1, T9, T5

better understand complex concepts." T4 provided a similar viewpoint. She saw translanguaging as a natural and effective means of communication in the EFL classroom. "*I use translanguaging when needed. It's a practical way to ensure my students grasp the content, especially when explaining complex grammar rules.*" In contrast, T3 held a more cautious perspective. She stated, "*While I acknowledge translanguaging, I'm not entirely convinced of its efficacy. I worry that relying too much on students' native languages might hinder their English language development.*" T6 echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing her concern about potential overreliance on native languages. She mentioned, "*I've heard about translanguaging, but I'm not sure if it's the right approach. It feels like we might be taking a step back in promoting English proficiency.*" However, T5, while acknowledging the potential benefits of translanguaging, emphasized the importance of moderation. He noted, "*Translanguaging can be useful in moderation. It helps students who might feel lost in a sea of English words. But, of course, we should strike a balance.*"

Perceived Relevance of Translanguaging

The second theme that emerged from the analysis of interviews centered on the perceived relevance of translanguaging in the Iranian EFL context. Teachers held diverse opinions regarding whether translanguaging aligns with curriculum requirements, enhances students' language learning, or facilitates better communication in the classroom. T7 expressed a strong belief in the relevance of translanguaging, particularly in the context of Iran's EFL context. He stated, "*Our curriculum is demanding, and translanguaging can be a bridge for students. It aligns with our goals and helps learners understand complex texts.*" In contrast, T10 questioned
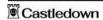
the relevance of translanguaging, especially in higher-level language courses. She commented, "*For advanced learners, relying on their native language feels counterproductive. We should be pushing them to use English exclusively.*" Additionally, T8 emphasized the practicality of translanguaging in facilitating communication. She noted, "*In some situations, you need to clarify things quickly. Translanguaging helps ensure everyone is on the same page, which is crucial for effective teaching.*" T9 viewed translanguaging as a valuable tool for lower-level students. He explained, "*In beginner classes, it's a lifesaver. Students can get overwhelmed easily, and translanguaging eases their transition into an English-rich environment.*" Finally, T5 saw the relevance of translanguaging as context-dependent. He commented, "*It depends on the class, the students, and the goals. In some cases, it's essential; in others, not so much.*"

Pedagogical Beliefs and Approaches

The third theme that emerged from the interviews focused on the participants' pedagogical beliefs and approaches related to translanguaging. Teachers discussed their strategies for implementing translanguaging in their classrooms, leveraging students' native languages, and creating a bilingual learning environment. T9 emphasized the importance of creating a bilingual learning environment. She explained, "*Our students bring a wealth of mother tongue resources to the classroom. I encourage them to use their native languages when it enhances their understanding and expression.*" In contrast, T6 had reservations about translanguaging. She stated, "*While I see the value in students using their native languages to clarify concepts, I worry that excessive translanguaging can hinder their English language development.*" T2 discussed his approach to translanguaging, saying, "*I use it strategically. When a student is struggling to grasp a concept, I might provide a brief explanation in their Persian, but I always steer the conversation back to English.*" Moreover, T7 shared his belief in the power of students' native languages. He commented, "*Our students are more confident and engaged when they can express themselves in their native language. It fosters a positive learning environment.*" Additionally, T5 highlighted the importance of scaffolding. He noted, "*Translanguaging can be a scaffolding tool. It supports students as they gradually transition to using English more independently.*"

Attitudes Toward Benefits

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews focused on teachers' attitudes toward the perceived benefits of using translanguaging. Teachers shared their perspectives on how translanguaging positively influenced various aspects of the classroom, including student engagement, comprehension, language development, and the overall classroom environment. T4 expressed enthusiasm for the benefits of translanguaging. She stated, "*Translanguaging creates a dynamic classroom where students feel more engaged. It's like a bridge that connects their native languages to English.*" T9 emphasized the role of translanguaging in language development. He noted, "*Our students need opportunities to use their native languages as they learn English. It helps them build a stronger linguistic foundation.*" Additionally, T4 highlighted the inclusivity aspect. She shared, "*Translanguaging makes our classroom more inclusive. Students who face language barrier can actively participate and share their perspectives.*" Furthermore, T2 discussed the interactive classroom environment facilitated by translanguaging. He explained, "*It encourages peer collaboration. Students often help each other understand concepts by explaining in their native languages.*" In contrast, T3 and T6 had reservations about its benefits. For example, T3 commented, "*I'm not entirely convinced that translanguaging always leads to better comprehension. Sometimes, it feels like a distraction.*"

Concerns and Challenges

The fifth theme that emerged from the interviews with Iranian EFL teachers centered around their concerns and challenges related to translanguaging. In this regard, teachers shared their worries and the obstacles they faced when implementing translanguaging practices in the class-room. T2 expressed concerns about maintaining a balance between languages. He stated, "*It's challenging to strike the right balance between using students' native languages to support learning and ensuring that English remains the focus.*" T7 highlighted potential student resistance. He commented, "*Some advanced level students resist using their native languages in class. They believe English-only is the way to go.*" Furthermore, T8 discussed institutional constraints. She shared, "*Our school policies emphasize English-only instruction. It's difficult to navigate these constraints while promoting a translanguaging-informed pedagogy.*" Finally, T6 voiced concerns about colleague and administrator resistance. She explained, "*Not all colleagues are on board with translanguaging. Some think it deviates from up-to-date language teaching methods, and* supervisors *may not fully support it.*"

Student-Centered Approaches

The last theme that emerged from the interviews revolved around how teachers perceived translanguaging as a means to create student-centered learning experiences. Teachers shared their views on how it could enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. T4 emphasized the role of translanguaging in fostering student engagement. She stated, "*Translanguaging* allows *students to express themselves more comfortably, making learning more engaging.*" T7 discussed how translanguaging motivated students. He mentioned, "*When students can use their native languages to clarify concepts, they feel more motivated to participate actively.*" T1 shared her observations about improved learning outcomes. She noted, "*I've noticed that students who use translanguaging tend to grasp complex topics better and achieve higher language proficiency.*" T9 highlighted the importance of tailoring instruction to individual student needs. He explained, "*Translanguaging enables personalized learning, catering to students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses.*" Moreover, T5 described translanguaging as a tool for building a supportive classroom environment: "*It creates a sense of stress-free classroom, where all students feel valued and understood.*"

The second research question was concerned with the teachers' practices regarding the implementation of translanguaging. Data collected from classroom observations revealed insights concerning EFL teachers' translanguaging patterns and instructional strategies.

Translanguaging Patterns

The first main finding derived from classroom observations revolves around the patterns of translanguaging observed among participating teachers (Table 3). The observations provided insights into when and how often translanguaging occurred, as well as the linguistic features or contexts that triggered it.

The table above provides an overview of translanguaging patterns observed among the ten Iranian EFL teachers. It is evident that teachers vary in their frequency of translanguaging, ranging from low to high. These patterns mostly aligned with the teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward translanguaging. T1 and T4 displayed a high frequency of translanguaging, consistent with their belief in the benefits of fostering a bilingual learning environment. They utilized translanguaging as a pedagogical tool to vocabulary and grammar instruction, promoting strategic language use, and fostering language awareness mainly. T7, T9, T2, T5, and T8 exhibited a moderate level of translanguaging. Their practices also aligned with the view that translanguaging can be employed strategically to support students' understanding and

Table 3 Translanguaging patterns among participant teachers

Teacher	Frequency of Translanguaging	Contexts for Translanguaging
T1	High	Complex grammar explanations, vocabulary introduction, strategy instruction
T4	High	Promoting strategic language use, fostering language awareness
T7	Moderate	Vocabulary and grammar instruction
T9	Moderate	Writing instruction, clarifying on grammatical concepts
T2	Moderate	Clarification of instructions, vocabulary, grammar
T5	Moderate	Supporting struggling students' understanding, translations from Persian to English
T8	Moderate	Enhancing students' engagement through L1 use, vocabulary and grammar instruction
T3	Low	Very occasional emphasis on key concepts in Persian
T6	Low	Minimal translanguaging for vocabulary assistance mainly
T10	Low	Rare translanguaging for minimal translation needs

enhance engagement. They used it primarily for clarification. On the other hand, T3, T6, and T10 engaged in minimal translanguaging. Their observed practices were congruent with their belief in using translanguaging sparingly, mainly for essential vocabulary assistance or minimal translation needs.

Instructional Strategies

Classroom observations revealed diverse instructional strategies employed by teachers to implement aspects of translanguaging (Table 4). These strategies encompassed a range of approaches, including translation, the use of bilingual materials, leveraging students' language skills for peer teaching, and utilizing multilingual resources like dictionaries.

   Table 4 provides insights into the instructional strategies employed by Iranian EFL teachers to implement translanguaging in their classrooms. These strategies vary significantly across teachers, reflecting their beliefs and approaches to language instruction, as revealed in the interviews. T1 and T10 adopted a strategy of occasional translation to clarify complex concepts and instructions. While T1 regularly used translation, T10 employed it more sparingly, emphasizing the importance of English proficiency. T2 incorporated bilingual materials such as dictionaries in his lessons, recognizing the value of leveraging students' native languages as a pedagogical resource. T4 encouraged peer teaching, allowing students to explain concepts in their native language. This strategy promoted collaborative learning and recognized students as valuable resources for one another. T5 utilized bilingual dictionaries as a resource for vocabulary expansion, acknowledging the potential benefits of bilingualism in language development. T7 and T9 embraced a collaborative approach, integrating students' linguistic resources to co-construct knowledge. They facilitated group discussions in which students drew on their L1, fostering a dynamic and interactive learning environment. Conversely, T3, T6, and T8 displayed minimal

Table 4 Instructional strategies employed by Iranian EFL teachers

Teacher	Examples of Instructional Strategies Employed
T1	Regularly uses translation to clarify complex concepts and instructions
T4	Encourages peer teaching, allows students to explain concepts in their native language when they are not able to use L2 effectively
T7	Integrates students' L1 resources to teach language skills
T9	Facilitates group discussions in which students draw on their L1 to come-up with ideas and then to use L2 for discussions
T2	Incorporates bilingual materials (e.g., dictionaries, websites, posters) in lessons
T5	Utilizes bilingual dictionaries for vocabulary expansion
T8	Adopts a flexible approach, using translanguaging when needed for clarity
T3	Minimizes the use of L1, focuses on English-only instruction
T6	Primarily relies on English-only instruction
T10	Uses translation for key terms, emphasizes English proficiency

use of translanguaging strategies in their instruction. T3 primarily focused on monolingual instruction in English, while T6 and T8 occasionally employed translanguaging when needed for clarity but generally favored an English-only approach.

The third research question was concerned with alignment between Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices concerning translanguaging. The investigation into the alignment between Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices concerning translanguaging revealed a substantial degree of congruence (70%), wherein, out of the 10 teachers, 7 exhibited full congruence, indicating a consistent alignment between their stated beliefs and observed classroom practices. The remaining three teachers demonstrated partial congruence, signifying a notable degree of alignment with occasional variations. For instance, T2 firmly believed in the effectiveness of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool for enhancing student comprehension. This belief was consistently mirrored in his classroom practices. During observations, T2 consistently utilized translanguaging strategies to facilitate student understanding, including explanations in students' native language when needed. This alignment between belief and practice was further reinforced by his high frequency of translanguaging instances throughout the lessons. T6, although exhibiting partial congruence, demonstrated a significant alignment between her beliefs and practices. T6 held a belief in the importance of creating a bilingual learning environment. While her classroom practices occasionally varied, with some lessons focusing more on English-only interactions, most observations revealed her deliberate efforts to foster a bilingual atmosphere, encouraging students to draw upon their linguistic resources for enhanced understanding and expression.

While most teachers demonstrated alignment, two teachers exhibited incongruence between their beliefs and practices. Teacher T1, for instance, expressed a strong belief in the relevance of translanguaging but exhibited incongruence by seldom implementing translanguaging strategies in their classroom. This incongruence may be attributed to contextual factors or pedagogical challenges not fully reflected in their practices. T8 displayed incongruence in terms of her beliefs (i.e., effectiveness of translanguaging for comprehension). While T8 expressed a belief in the effectiveness of translanguaging in interviews, observations revealed limited use

of translanguaging strategies in the classroom. This incongruence could stem from factors like classroom dynamics or beliefs of student preferences.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of translanguaging. The results of data analysis showed that the teachers considered various dimensions of translanguaging in their classes. Regarding their beliefs (the first research question), it was found that the teachers held different beliefs about translanguaging. Similar findings have been reported in Vogel and Garcia (2017) who stated that teachers might have different perspectives about translanguaging, but the results of this study highlight the power of translanguaging in the context of Iran and as related to its complex nature. Considering that the Iranian participants in Nazari and Karimpour (2023) also considered translanguaging as having both positive and negative points, this finding shows that translanguaging in the Iranian EFL context should be treated cautiously because the context may not be ready enough to face it. Additionally, the teachers considered the relevance of translanguaging in the Iranian context differently in terms of its multidimensional nature. This finding is in line with Bonacina-Pugh (2021) who argued that teachers should find translanguaging relevant to their work so that they can embrace it optimally. However, the teachers referred to the relevance of translanguaging as related to curricular issues, which is a noteworthy finding reported in this study contributing to the literature. The teachers also underscored their strategies in tailoring translanguaging to their instruction and mentioned how they can enhance translanguaging pedagogically through engaging activities. This result complies with the argument by Li and Garcia (2014) who stated that teachers need to act strategically in employing translanguaging. However, this study is among the very first to unpack the strategy-based nature of teachers' translanguaging beliefs; a finding that adds new insights to the translanguaging literature in Iran.

The teachers were generally welcoming in treating translanguaging in their classes and referred to its positive effects. This finding has also been reported in previous studies including Huang (2021) and Yuzlu and Dikiltas (2022), which shows that Iranian EFL teachers, like teachers of other contexts (e.g., van Viege, 2020), view translanguaging as a positive consideration in their teaching and beliefs, but with relation to the significant role of learners, an issue that has little been reported in the literature of translanguaging. In addition, the teachers enumerated challenges and constraints in relation to effectively practicing translanguaging, especially institutional demands and obstacles, a result that has less been conspicuously highlighted in previous studies. Previous research has also shown that institutional expectations and demands may largely impede teachers' effective practice of translanguaging (e.g., Huang, 2021; Nazari & Karimpour, 2023), yet the teachers of this study mentioned such challenges as resistance of school supervisors, which, as per the literature, is a new finding and adds to the literature of translanguaging. Furthermore, the teachers believed that translanguaging is centrally a student-oriented perspective. Although many scholars (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Li, 2018) have discussed the student-centered nature of translanguaging, few empirical studies have been available on this point. The present study has shown that teachers view translanguaging as a student-centered approach, a perspective that also shows a new finding related to EFL teachers in the literature of the concept.

The second research question of the study explored the teachers' translanguaging practices. In this sense, the teachers' classes were observed, and it was found that the teachers used translanguaging to different degrees, including high, moderate, and low levels. This finding is significant since few studies have reported on EFL teachers' classroom practices of translanguaging through observational schemes. It has consistently been stated that it is important to

explore teachers' translanguaging practices in order to unpack how they practice this technique in their classes (e.g., Gorter & Arecona, 2020; Wang, 2019). This result shows that while teachers may generally welcome translanguaging, they may not always practice it. Additionally, it was observed that teachers practice translanguaging for different purposes including bilingual materials, dictionaries, peer teaching, and L1 use. This finding is novel in that it unpacks new dimensions of teachers' use of translanguaging in Iran as an EFL context, given the fact that most of the studies conducted in this regard are in an ESL setting. Thus, this finding contributes to the literature by showing how EFL teachers practice translanguaging in their classes through multifarious resources and for differential purposes.

The third research question investigated the alignment between the teachers' beliefs and practices. Generally, there was a one-to-one correspondence between the teachers' translanguaging-related beliefs and practices. Consistency between translanguaging beliefs and practices has been a concern of different scholars (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Li, 2018; Li & Garcia, 2014) because such a correspondence shows that teachers openly welcome and practice it in their classes, as a technique that can effectively help learners learn better. This finding shows that when teachers' beliefs are oriented toward considering the positive outcomes of translanguaging, they are likely to practice it in their classes. However, there were two teachers who did not display alignment between beliefs and practices. This finding shows that teachers may equally need some more focused education in how to translate their beliefs into workable practices positively responding to students' needs.

Conclusion

In this study, the beliefs and practices of Iranian EFL teachers regarding translanguaging were explored to gain insights into their perceptions and instructional strategies. The findings revealed both positive and negative viewpoints toward translanguaging, with a general inclination toward its benefits in enhancing students' multilingual literacies. Teachers emphasized its utility in bridging linguistic gaps, though they also pointed to institutional constraints that hinder its full application. The study also highlighted a correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, suggesting a strong alignment in most cases. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion about the role of translanguaging in EFL contexts, especially in settings where multiple languages coexist.

This study holds significant implications for teachers, teacher educators, and educational administrators. For teacher educators, it is essential to develop professional development courses that focus on effective translanguaging practices. These courses should not only provide theoretical insights but also practical strategies for implementing translanguaging in diverse classroom settings. Pairing teachers who consistently use translanguaging with those who do so less frequently can facilitate the sharing of best practices, thereby enriching the pedagogical approaches of all participants.

Given that two teachers in this study exhibited a misalignment between their beliefs and practices regarding translanguaging, professional development initiatives should specifically address this gap. Workshops and mentoring sessions can serve as platforms for teachers to share their experiences, discuss challenges, and collaboratively explore solutions to effectively integrate translanguaging into their teaching. Additionally, incorporating reflective practices, such as classroom observations and peer discussions, can enhance teachers' understanding of their own translanguaging practices and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the implications of this study extend to institutional policies. Educational administrators should consider integrating translanguaging principles into curriculum design and teacher training programs. By fostering an environment that values and supports

translanguaging, institutions can better prepare teachers to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of their students. This alignment between policy and practice can lead to more inclusive and effective language education, ultimately benefiting students' learning outcomes.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the complexities of translanguaging in EFL contexts. By implementing targeted professional development, fostering collaboration among educators, and revising institutional policies, stakeholders can create a more supportive framework for translanguaging that enhances both teaching practices and student engagement. Ultimately, these efforts can contribute to a richer educational experience that acknowledges and utilizes the linguistic diversity present in today's classrooms.

This study has limitations that warrant attention in future research. The participation of only ten teachers may limit the generalizability of findings, suggesting the need for a larger and more diverse sample to comprehensively capture teachers' beliefs and practices in translanguaging. Additionally, observing only three sessions provides a snapshot, prompting the necessity for longitudinal research to understand how teachers' translanguaging practices evolve over time and how their beliefs undergo changes. Exploring different cultural contexts is recommended to establish cross-cultural variations in teachers' beliefs and practices of translanguaging.

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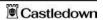
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Castledown

Appendices

Appendix A. Interview Guide for Exploring the Beliefs of Iranian EFL Teachers Regarding the Use of Translanguaging in their Classes:

General Background Questions:

1. Can you please describe your background and experience as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching EFL?
3. What level(s) and age group(s) of students do you typically teach?

Beliefs of Translanguaging:

4. Have you ever used multiple languages (English and Persian) during your teaching? Have you ever heard the term "translanguaging"? What does it mean to you as an EFL teacher? (Note: For this question, if the term "translanguaging" was unfamiliar to them, the interviewer gave them some brief information. only two participants needed that).
5. In your opinion, how relevant is translanguaging in the context of EFL teaching in Iran?
6. Can you provide examples of situations in your classroom where you have consciously used translanguaging as a pedagogical approach?
7. What are the perceived benefits of using translanguaging in EFL teaching, according to your experience?

Challenges and Concerns:

8. Have you encountered any challenges or concerns related to the use of translanguaging in your EFL classes?
9. How do you address or mitigate these challenges?

Professional Development:

10. Have you received any training or professional development related to translanguaging in EFL teaching?
11. How has this training influenced your perception of translanguaging?

Student Engagement:

12. How do you think students respond to translanguaging in the classroom?
13. Have you observed any changes in student engagement or learning outcomes when using translanguaging?

Conclusion:

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs of translanguaging in EFL teaching?

Appendix B. Observation Checklist for Research Question 2: What are Teachers' Practices Regarding the Implementation of Translanguaging?

Classroom Environment:

1. Is the classroom arranged in a way that supports interactive learning?
2. Are there any visual aids, resources, or materials that facilitate translanguaging?
3. Is there evidence of a multilingual environment, such as signs or student work in different languages?

Use of Translanguaging:

4. Does the teacher use multiple languages (including the native language) during instruction?
5. How does the teacher transition between languages during the lesson?
6. Are there specific moments or activities where translanguaging is more prominent?

Interaction with Students:

7. How do students respond to the teacher's use of multiple languages?
8. Does the teacher encourage students to use their linguistic resources for meaning-making?

Assessment and Feedback:

9. How does the teacher assess students' language proficiency and comprehension?
10. Does the teacher provide feedback that acknowledges and supports translanguaging practices?

Student Engagement and Participation:

11. Observe and note instances of student engagement, active participation, and collaboration.
12. Are there any challenges or issues related to student engagement in translanguaging activities?

Conclusion:

13. Overall, how effectively does the teacher implement translanguaging as observed in this session?
14. Are there any specific practices or strategies that stand out during the observation?