**1. Institutional Description**

The current study takes place in a small public university located in the Black Sea Region of Türkiye. Established relatively recently, the 16-year-old university houses eight faculties, one of which is the Faculty of Education. The participants in this study are the sophomore students enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at the Faculty of Education. While the institution itself is new, the ELT Department is newer, holding its first graduation ceremony in Spring 2023 Spring. Students who complete their degrees after four years of education in English language, literature, and pedagogy, pursue careers as English teachers in K-12 schools, language centers, etc.

**2. Key Theorists**

**Theory**: I outline the theoretical underpinnings of translingual approach using the leading proponents’ framing of this model in the literature. Drawing on the works of these leading scholars (Suresh Canagarajah, Christiane Donahue, Bruce Horner, Alastair Pennycook), I describe the ideological principles in which translingualism is grounded.

**Practice**: In putting theory into practice, I use Bruce Horner and his colleagues’ (Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Royster, John Trimbur) seminal piece in the *College English* as a framework for pedagogizing translingual approach. While doing this, I use works of scholars such as Anish Bawarshi that contribute to the description of the pedagogical implications of translingual approach.

**Research**: Reporting on the research exploring the pedagogical potentials of translingual approach, I review the extant scholarship on translingual practice and document what we learn from it.

**3. Glossary**

**EFL**: English as a Foreign Language – English is studied as an academic subject at school, not used in society

**ELT**: English Language Teaching – An academic discipline found in most teacher education programs in Türkiye. It focuses on training individuals to teach English language to young and adult learners, spanning across kindergarten to high school.

**Preparatory School**: In the context of Turkish higher education, students enrolled in the ELT Department are required to participate in a one-year academic program to improve their English language skills. Students who pass the English proficiency exam at the beginning of the academic year can skip the mandatory program and start their academic program.

**Translingualism outside the West: A Practitioner Inquiry in the EFL Writing Context**

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“One reason you don’t see translingualism outside the West

is because it’s inspired by top-down Western critical theory,

which is closely connected to neo-Marxist, modernist critical pedagogy.”

(Atkinson & Tardy, 2018, p. 87)

**Introduction**

A translingual orientation to communication, which establishes the pedagogical need to appreciate differences in the ways language is used (Horner et al., 2011; Lee & Jenks, 2016), has been shaping the discourses of literacy and language education in the past two decades, shifting instructional frameworks from standardization to difference. Although translingualism as a theoretical, pedagogical, and research concept has been studied largely in the Western scholarship, a “trans” view of language has not yet fully entered spaces beyond the Anglophonic contexts from where the fundamentals of this approach originated (Canagarajah & Gao, 2019).

Ideologies of monolingualism and standardization have always been at the center of language education in most EFL contexts, including Turkish higher education. While approaches to language education have changed over time (e.g., Grammar Translation, Audiolingualism, Communicative Language Teaching, etc.), the focus on the need for language learners to develop skills in a standardized variety of English has remained the same. This has been reflected in the activities implemented in the classroom, assignments produced for evaluation, and feedback given on language usage. Assessment methods placing emphasis on fixed structures, language standards, and prescriptive rules accentuated the normative views of language, devaluing the realities of language diversity, fluidity, and plurality. Minimizing the possibility for students to use their own languages or varieties of English other than the “Standard”, the rule-bounded EFL classrooms have been unwelcoming spaces for differences in language, which might explain the missing of translingualism studies from international scholarship.

In this practitioner inquiry, I examine the applicability of translingual approach in a collegiate-level EFL classroom through the implementation of an in-class discourse analysis activity and a linguistic diversity cartoon assignment. Drawing on data from in-class discussions, assignments, and interviews with students, I attempt at answering the following questions:

* How can a translingual approach be applied to the teaching of literacy and language in EFL classrooms?
* How do Turkish EFL students perceive language differences in the discourses of oral and written communication?

In what follows, I first outline the conceptual framework of the study, contextualizing the term “translingual” within the theoretical and empirical scholarship. Then, I describe the pedagogy implemented in this research, describing the components of two lessons where I intended to pedagogize translingual approach by raising students’ critical awareness of language. Following that, I present the methodological framework, describing the context in which this study took place, who were involved, and what sources of data were compiled and analyzed. After reporting on the results of my analysis, I end the paper with a discussion of implications, limitations, and future research directions.

**Translingual Framework[[1]](#footnote-0)**

***Theoretical Underpinnings***

Challenging traditional views of language as idealized, discrete, and stable, the notion of “translingual” practice has become a pillar of our changing understandings of language and language relations in the 21st century communication (Canagarajah, 2012). As Pennycook (2008) remarks, language descriptions “have always relied on abstractions” (p. 303) and been based on the frameworks of monolingualism and standardization that characterize languages as “static tools with fixed meanings” (Lu & Horner, 2013, p. 600). In reality, however, language use has always been multilingual with the majority of world population speaking more than one language or more than one variation of these languages, and therefore, with speakers, listeners, readers, and writers of more than one language and/or variety (Horner et al., 2011; Trimbur, 2010). Even more so, language usage has long been translingual in terms of “contact”.[[2]](#footnote-1) With the language contact being higher than ever in the transnational era we are living in, communicative contexts get more and more complex “by the way populations are diversifying within countries and communities” (Donahue, 2018, p. 25) and as societies change with the influx of globalization, so do the ways in which we communicate.

While the globalization of English might appear to produce a more monolingual world, in reality, it means a more expansive spread of English across the globe, generating more varieties of the language through interlanguage contact (Horner, 2010). The dispersion of English within international circles changes the landscape of language standards and brings unique variations of the language being used across the world, producing new meanings and forms (Canagarajah, 2018; Donahue, 2018; Pennycook, 2008). In meeting the communicative needs of language users in the socio-linguistically dynamic world, translingualism offers a way of rethinking language, shifting focus away from historically, politically, and ideologically defined norms to language diversity, fluidity, and dynamicity (Horner, 2010, 2018). Diverting attention from form-based and abstract notions of language, it introduces the idea of language as an emergent, contingent, and negotiable practice (Canagarajah, 2012; Donahue, 2018; Guerra, 2016; Lu & Horner, 2013; You, 2018).

Canagarajah (2015) argues that a translingual orientation differs from the traditional models of language in four ways: first, unlike the traditional models considering languages as separate systems, a translingual orientation treats languages as interrelated; second, while the direction of language acquisition is linear in the traditional models, it is multidirectional in the translingual model; third, the traditional models assume that each language has its own competence, whereas the translingual model acknowledges competence as integrated; fourth, unlike the traditional models presenting competence as complete, the translingual model presents competence as an evolving concept. Consequently, the translingual model gestures toward a decentralization of the monolingual worldview that has long been dominating the discourses of communication.

While involvement with translingual practices is conceived as a political act since translingualism challenges the ideology of monolingualism (De Costa et al., 2017), Lee (2016) argues that the monolingual mindset that is challenged by the translingual approach is “not the assumption that people should speak one and only one language. Rather, it is the ideology that contains languages from contact with each other, associating language mixing with contamination and lack of proficiency” (p. 176). The ideology of monolingualism takes norm and privileges the idealized standards, separating languages with reference to these norms (Lee, 2016). Such separatist ideology goes against the everyday language practices because languages have always been in contact and negotiated between language users, transcending the conventional boundaries defined ideologically by communities (Alvarez et al., 2017; Canagarajah, 2012; Horner et al., 2011; Lee, 2016).

***Pedagogical Framework***

While translingual approach is broadly characterized as openness to language difference (Horner et al., 2011; Lee & Jenks, 2016), efforts to put it into practice, or pedagogize it, have gained much currency in the last few years. These efforts have often involved pedagogical rationales and description of how translingual approach operates in challenging the linguistic injustice forced by the ideologies of monolingualism and standardization that denigrate languages, varieties, and dialects “and by extension their speakers” (Richardson, 2010, p. 109). The standard language ideology, as Mao (2010) puts, “sees only one variety of language – which is always privileged and prescribed – as correct, as not susceptible to the whims of time or influence of individual users” (p. 190). It establishes that speakers and writers of English must follow a set of prescribed language rules to achieve effective communication, which, in Young’s (2010) view, “force people into patterns of language that aint natural or easy to understand” (p. 112). Instead of dictating language users how to speak or write, Young (2010) suggests that we teach “how language functions within and from various cultural perspectives (p. 112)”.

A translingual approach offers an alternative to dominant approaches ignoring the repertoires of communicative resources students possess (Bawarshi, 2010). As De Costa et al. (2017) remark, translingual pedagogy “values the fluid communicative practices of learners who mobilize multiple semiotic resources to facilitate communication” (p.464). Appreciating the wealth of resources that students bring with them to the classroom, translingual pedagogy promotes the agentive use of discursive and linguistic resources to negotiate meaning in communication (Bawarshi, 2010). Unlike monolingual policies that establish norms on correctness and separation of languages, language varieties and dialects, Horner et al. (2011) point out that translingual pedagogy argues for

(1) honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; (2) recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally; and (3) directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations. (p. 305)***.***

A monolingualist ideology treats differences in language as “language deficits – “errors” to be eradicated” (Lu & Horner, 2013, p. 583), whereas translingual pedagogy encourages educators to adopt a critical approach to deviations as what seems “errors” on paper might be active negotiation choices. Articulating the sentiments into language difference and error in writing, Horner et al. (2011) argue that in translingual approach, if a person encounters difference in language, they ask: “What might this difference do? How might it function expressively, rhetorically, communicatively? For whom, under what conditions, and how? The possibility of writer error is reserved as an interpretation of last resort” (pp. 303-304). Such practice, however, calls educators to reform their ever-existing dispositions toward literacy instruction and assessment. Yet, however difficult it is, these learned inclinations, “our learned distaste for non-idiomatic English lexicons and grammar” (Lu, 2010, p. 51), need to shift toward pedagogies that are responsive to differences in language.

***Empirical Research***

The pedagogical value and potential of translingual approach has been empirically documented in the extant scholarship over the past two decades. Several practitioner-inquirers focused attention on situating the translingual framework within the context of U.S. college writing instruction (Ayash, 2020; Canagarajah, 2016; De Costa et al., 2017; Kiernan et al., 2016; Sánchez-Martín et al., 2019). Describing a graduate-level second-language writing course informed by a translingual framework, Canagarajah (2016), for example, demonstrated the affordances of such a course for students to learn how to negotiate language differences in writing. De Costa et al. (2017) reflected on their translingual practices in teaching first year composition, concluding that affirming and appreciating the diverse linguistic resources students bring with them to the classroom contributed to critical awareness development and decolonization of minds for students whose languages have been undervalued and marginalized in educational settings. Furthermore, Ayash (2020) described the implementation of a translation assignment in a first-year writing course to demonstrate the potentials of translingual pedagogy for promoting multilingual students’ engagement with difference and critical examination of language standards and norms. Elsewhere, Kiernan et al. (2016) offered a similar assignment to illustrate the enactment of translingual approach in teaching multilingual composition. For this assignment, students were asked to compare their translations of scholarly articles or cultural stories with the original sources for similarities and differences, reflecting on their translation processes. Facilitating students’ movement across languages, the assignment helped students develop skills of language metacognition on negotiation of languages and cultures. Adding to these conversations, Sánchez-Martín et al. (2019) demonstrated the application of translingual approach in teaching digital composing to students from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, reporting on the benefits of creating translingual spaces in which students could gain a critical awareness of the possibilities for composing through multiple resources.

Past research also established that educational activities and practices grounded in translingual framework can cultivate students’ awareness of possibilities for multi-language practices in writing (Griffo, 2015; Lee & Jenks, 2016; Wang, 2017). In her investigation of the teaching practices of three Chinese instructors of rhetoric and composition, Griffo (2015) found that the instructors could “negotiate challenges, co-construct meaning, and provide space for students to diversify their understanding about English writing” (p. 29) by adopting pedagogies based on translingual theory and practice. Furthermore, Lee and Jenks (2016) described their online classroom partnership project designed to foster American and Chinese university students’ translingual dispositions through writing. Within the scope of the project, the students from two higher education institutions in the United States and Hong Kong shared drafts of their works with each other and gave feedback on their peers’ works. Lee and Jenks (2016) suggested that the pedagogical value of translingual framework was evident in the students’ increased understanding of the multiple ways in which people use language. Similarly, Wang (2017) illustrated how a writing theory cartoon assignment could help to cultivate multilingual basic writers’ translingual dispositions toward language and writing. These studies revealed that translingual practices can enhance students’ linguistic and cultural sensitivities to diverse Englishes used in a variety of local and global contexts.

Another line of research introduced translingual identity-as-pedagogy paradigm and investigated the use of translingual identity as a pedagogical resource in the teaching of language and writing (Flores & Aneja, 2017; Jain, 2014; Motha et al, 2012; Rudolph, 2012). Looking into the ways in which pre-service non-native English speaker teachers could enact what they learnt in a teacher education course informed by translingual theory, Flores and Aneja (2017) found that the teachers developed strategies by which they could draw on their multilingual identities and incorporate languages other than English into their English teaching practices, challenging monoglossic language ideologies. Meanwhile, Jain (2014) reported on a practitioner inquiry into using her own translingual identity as a pedagogical strategy in teaching writing to linguistically diverse community college students. Similarly, Motha et al. (2012) presented self-narratives of their experiences in teaching English to language learners to demonstrate their use of identities as pedagogical resources in the classroom. Results from these studies suggest that the multifaceted linguistic identities teachers have represent an important resource, rather than a barrier or challenge in teaching.

More than a decade ago, Worden (2013) argued that although translingual framework “has already demonstrated its value as theoretical and research concept, its value as an *instructional approach* remains largely untested” (p. 238, emphasis in original). Since then, the literature established the value of translingual pedagogy as a useful frame for facilitating opportunities to engage in linguistically inclusive literate practices. Research on translingual teaching practices demonstrated the power of the appreciation for language differences to promote linguistic justice in spaces where “discriminatory and hegemonic ideals of language can be subverted” (Lee & Jenks, 2016, p. 320). Moreover, empirical inquiries into translingual identity-as-pedagogy approach suggested that the teachers learn and benefit as much from the repertoires of their linguistic resources as the students. The issue is, therefore, no longer whether translingual theory should be put into practice, but how to materialize it in the course design, assignments, and assessment in diverse educational landscapes presenting unique classroom ecologies and environments.

**Current Study: Pedagogical Description[[3]](#footnote-2)**

Horner et al. (2011) called literacy educators to take up translingual approach “by changing the kind of attention we pay to our language practices, questioning the assumptions underlying our learned dispositions toward difference in language, and engaging in critical inquiry on alternative dispositions to take toward such differences” (p. 313). In my own pedagogical work, I enacted this approach through an in-class discourse analysis task and a post-task assignment that students completed as part of their coursework. In a second-year linguistics course I taught in Fall 2023, I invited students to think critically about language by asking them to discuss selected chapters from Lippi-Green (2012) on standard language ideology. After familiarizing themselves with the ideological tenets of standardization and how it operates within the discourses of oral communication, students watched 2-3-minute scenes from three movies – My Fair Lady (Cukor, 1964), Akeelah and the Bee (Atchison, 2006), and Sorry to Bother You (Riley, 2018). With purposeful selection of these scenes that illustrate marginalization of non-conforming language users in different social contexts, I facilitated a class discussion based on students’ analyses of the scenes in relation to the ideological processes involved in the subordination of language (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Building on the previous lesson where students explored standard language cultures, in the next lesson I shared works of Young (2010) and Canagarajah (2011) to introduce students to translingual texts, furthering their inquiry into variances in textual discourses of communication through readings that challenge standardization in writing. I chose these readings to develop students’ awareness of possibilities for not only writing in diverse varieties of English (e.g., Young, 2010) but also for bringing their own languages into their English writing, as demonstrated in Canagarajah (2011). Engaging in conversations about how the texts connected to their own lives and experiences with writing in English, students assessed whether their writing truly represented their identities and explored the potential impact of the texts on them. These reflections guided students toward translingual insights about their own language use and writing practices.

Inspired from Wang’s (2017) writing theory cartoon assignment, the affordances of which facilitated opportunities for multilingual basic writers to take a critical look at the repertoires of their linguistic and semiotic resources and to explore “the value of composing across differences” (p. 80), I assigned students a cartoon project in which they were to communicate their understanding of linguistic diversity through text, images, and drawings. Working individually or collaboratively on their projects, students were instructed to establish a clear and consistent narrative about the concept of linguistic diversity by drawing their own cartoons or using an online cartoon maker. They also developed an artist’s statement explaining their intentions and choices in the composition process of their cartoons.

**Research Context & Participants**

The current study takes place in a small public university located in the Black Sea Region of Türkiye. Established relatively recently, the 16-year-old university houses eight faculties, one of which is the Faculty of Education. The participants in this study are the sophomore students enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at the Faculty of Education. Students in the ELT Department receive training to become teachers of English at the completion of their four-year degree program, during which they study English language to develop their skills in four main skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), language acquisition theories, pedagogical methods of teaching EFL, teacher-development subjects such as curriculum development, syllabus design, assessment, classroom management, etc. In their second year at the program, among the courses students are required to take is Linguistics where they explore the origin, nature, structure, and diversity of human language while being introduced to the major subfields of the scientific study of language, i.e., phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax. They further delve into language and variation, regional and social, and explore implications of each for language and literacy education.

In Fall 2023, I taught two sections of *Introduction to Linguistics* course: thirty-eight (38) students (11 Male, 27 Female) were enrolled in Section A, and 27 (7 Male, 21 Female) in Section B. All students were aged between 18-24 and they were all sophomores, except for five juniors and two seniors taking this course for the second time as a result of failing it in the previous academic year. The students transitioned into the ELT Department after studying English in the preparatory school for an academic year and passing the TOEFL-like proficiency exam. It was therefore their third year at the university, while second in the department.

**Data Collection & Analysis**

**Results** **&** **Discussion**

**Conclusion**

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1. Part of content in this section is based on my dissertation. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Canagarajah (2012) reminds us of that translingual practice is not a new development and has been around for centuries as seen in the studies of pre-colonial communities’ literacy practices (e.g., a South Indian community called Dravidians’ combining Tamil and Sanskrit in their traditional *manipravala* texts). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. I described the lesson in greater detail (e.g., rationale, learning outcomes, procedures, etc.) in a pedagogical article forthcoming in an edited collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)