

**Meruyert Seitova, Aruzhan Kurban**

*Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan*

## **ENGLISH TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD TRANSLANGUAGING AS A DIMENSION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE**

**Abstract.** Translanguaging, as a dynamic use of many languages to assist learning, has been gathering attention since the rise of multilingual education. However, research on its role in enhancing teachers' professional competence is limited, particularly in southern Kazakhstani state schools. The current study examines the teacher's understanding, attitudes, classroom practices, and beliefs about institutional and personal policies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in 5 state secondary schools in southern Kazakhstan. 16 teachers participated in a structured written interviews, which were analysed using qualitative analysis in MaxQDA. The findings show that the majority of instructors are knowledgeable with translanguaging and have generally positive opinions about using students' native tongues to improve understanding, confidence, and cognitive development. In spite of the fact that institutional English-only policies and insufficient expertise with some languages provide problems, teachers reported strategically using translanguaging in scaffolding, brainstorming, and explanation of complex topics. The research implies the need for professional development and policy changes that balance multilingual pedagogy with institutional expectations by accentuating a discrepancy between ideal teaching philosophies and actual classroom practice.

**Key words:** translanguaging, teachers, teacher's attitudes, professional competence, soft skills, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teacher development, Kazakhstan.

### **Introduction**

English language instructors are expected to exhibit a wide range of professional soft skills, such as pedagogical flexibility, communication skills across cultures, empathy, reflective practice, and being open to innovation, in light of the digital transformation of education and ongoing professional development (Rasulova & Mukhamedov, 2025). These skills are important in multilingual classrooms where teachers must adapt to the language and cultural demands of a wide range of students. Translanguaging is one educational strategy that exemplifies these professional soft skills.

Translanguaging, in its core, is "the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" (Baker, 2011, p. 288). Although a relatively new concept, it has evolved throughout time to change meaning beyond this initial concept to include students' spontaneous, everyday use of their whole language repertoire (Lewis et al., 2012). Translanguaging may be regarded as a way to facilitate learning of the language and encourages learners to use their whole linguistic knowledge to enhance their comprehension (Amaniyazova, 2020). Which further proves that reflective practice, communication, and pedagogical flexibility are necessary for translanguaging to be implemented effectively, making it a soft-skill-dependent professional activity.

Translanguaging has been gaining a considerable amount of attention for its bilingual and multilingual quality, especially in pedagogy. In particular, it is connected to globalisation (Singh et al., 2012). Consequently, the majority of countries are growing awareness of that, as they experience an increase in the students coming from diverse linguistic backgrounds, thus expanding the possibilities of the number of languages used in a single classroom (Blommaert, 2010; Vertovec, 2007). This, in turn, has led teachers and educators to pay close attention to this matter, since they play one of the biggest roles in providing effective teaching (Duarte & GüntherVan der Meij, 2018; Amaniyazova, 2020).

Kazakhstan has always been a home to a variety of languages, and is gradually shifting from bilingual to a multilingual country (Yeskeldiyeva & Tazhibayeva, 2015). In accordance with the Law on Languages (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1997) of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kazakh is the state language; Russian is an official language used on an equal basis with Kazakh in government. Alongside this, English,

though not official, has been seen as “a language of successful integration into global economics” (Karimsakova, 2022, p. 1) and is increasingly prioritized in education and professional contexts. Through programs like the “Trinity of Languages,” which eventually evolved into the Trilingual Education Policy, the government has encouraged citizens to acquire proficiency in Kazakh, Russian, and English (Nazarbayev, 2007). Despite these initiatives, there are still issues, mainly because there are limited numbers English-proficient teachers and students, which causes a disconnect between classroom practice and policy (Kaiypova & Kim, 2024). Therefore, translanguaging attempts to fill this gap.

Majority of the previous studies on this topic in Kazakhstan were conducted either on elite or highly private schools, such as Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools and Bilim-Innovation Lyceums, frequently using very small samples and mostly from northern areas (Alzhanova, 2020; Amaniyazova, 2020; Klyshbekova, 2020; Kuandykov, 2021; Akhmetova, 2021; Tuskeyeva, 2022; Baigulova, 2025). State secondary schools in this area have not received much attention due to the lack of research from the south, which is mostly limited to one top school (Yakshi, 2022). The findings of these studies showcase a mixed viewpoint of the educators, who, in spite of their support to the use translanguaging, hold monolingual point of view and see student’s home languages in English lessons as either a barrier or as a last resort. This, in turn, leads them to restrict translanguaging despite its potential advantages.

As said above, there is still little research on how EFL teachers understand and utilize multilingual practices in state schools, especially in southern Kazakhstan. Since southern and northern parts of Kazakhstan differ in terms of regional variations in sociolinguistic settings, community language practices, and educational contexts, teachers in the south may view multilingual classroom activities differently than their northern counterparts (Jumagaliyeva, 2021; Sadulova et al., 2025). Previous research may not fully reflect the broader national context because these schools may differ from elite institutions in terms of their educational environments, student language profiles, and instructor experiences. As a result, neither the national classroom situations nor the soft-skill-related professional issues experienced by teachers in ordinary educational settings are sufficiently illustrated by the research that is currently available.

In order to address a neglected context and link national policy with regular teaching practice, this study examines how EFL teachers in southern Kazakhstani state secondary schools view and employ translanguaging in their classrooms.

Thus, the current study attempts to address and answer following research questions:

1. What is the level of familiarity and understanding of the concept of translanguaging among English teachers in Kazakhstan?
2. What are English teachers’ attitudes toward using students’ first languages (Kazakh or Russian) alongside English in EFL classrooms?
3. How do English teachers implement translanguaging or multilingual practices in their classrooms, including strategies, tools, and student language use?
4. How do institutional policies and teachers’ personal teaching philosophies influence the use of multiple languages in EFL classrooms, and what gaps exist between ideal and actual practices?

## **Literature review**

### *The Concept of Translanguaging*

Translanguaging is a relatively recently developing phenomenon (Lewis et al., 2012). First coined by Cen Williams in the 1980s, it has been created with an educational mind in Welsh. At first, it came from the Welsh term “trawsieithu,” which was once understood to mean “translinguifying” before being changed to “translanguaging” (Lewis et al., 2012). Although it appeared in the 20th century, it was mostly popularised by books such as Baker’s “Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism” (2001, 2006, 2011) and Ofelia García’s (2009) “Bilingual Education in the 21st Century.” At first, it mostly referred to a teaching strategy, where it alternated between input and output languages to enhance learners’ language skills. It can be illustrated as such: students may, for instance, read in one language while writing in another or have a discussion in one language while reading in another (Baker, 2011). Translanguaging has transformed progressively to encompass a variety of discursive strategies used by multilingual speakers to create meaning across languages using their whole linguistic arsenal (Garcia, 2009; Wei, 2011).

Despite the various definitions, the term translanguaging remains somewhat ambiguous (Flores, 2014;

Poza, 2017). Poza (2017) argued that in some literature, translanguaging is reduced to code-switching, which misrepresents its full conceptual meaning. Kano (2013) differentiates translanguaging from code-switching by conceptualizing translanguaging as a meaning-making process that mediates between input in one language and output in another through cognitive processing. While code-switching involves formal alternation between languages, translanguaging entails shifts across both languages and communicative modes, including reading, writing, listening, speaking, or a mix of these. As Williams (1996, as cited in Lewis et al., 2012) notes: “translanguaging means that you receive information through the medium of one language and use it yourself through the medium of the other language. Before you can use that information successfully, you must have fully understood it” (p. 64). Moreover, he also points out that, “translanguaging entails using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and in order to augment the pupil’s ability in both languages” (Williams, 2002, as cited in Lewis et al., 2012, p. 40).

Translanguaging essentially entails translating meaning between languages, which calls for complete comprehension. When translating a proverb or saying, for instance, it is necessary to understand the original meaning and choose an equivalent phrase in the target language. Williams (1996), alongside pedagogical implications, envisioned translanguaging as a cognitive process, which included the exchange of two languages that has an impact on educational consequences. He maintained that the process involves various abilities of listening and reading, such as choosing information to effectively deliver and communicate in speech and writing, as well as absorbing and adapting information. Therefore, because translanguaging progresses from identifying parallel terms to processing and communicating meaning, it necessitates a deeper comprehension than simple word-for-word translation.

#### *Theoretical and Pedagogical Significance*

Translanguaging was first introduced as a pedagogical theory (Williams, 1996). Even when not explicitly identified, it occurs naturally in classrooms, without teachers’ influence or initiation. In fact, they happen behind the teachers’ backs secretly, especially when students are not permitted to use a mix of languages (Canagarajah, 2011a). However, as in the research by Creese and Blackledge (2010), when given the opportunity, teachers and learners use translanguaging with proactive goals, thus enabling a comfortable space for students to learn a language.

In addition to allowing speakers to use their entire linguistic arsenal without strictly adhering to socially established boundaries of language (Otheguy et al., 2015) and encouraging integrated application of languages as an evolving framework (Canagarajah, 2011b), translanguaging challenges language hierarchies and promotes a holistic view of languages (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging is especially useful in the classroom settings, where students’ languages are different from that of the subject. It provides a bridge between majority and minority languages, thus empowering both instructors and learners, enhancing learning experience, meaning-making, and identity development (Wei, 2018). Building on the Williams’s conceptualization of translanguaging, Baker (2001, 2006, 2011) advocates for the significance of the idea as a pedagogical activity by discussing four possible educational benefits to translanguaging: 1) it may encourage deeper comprehension of the subject; 2) it might aid in the development of the weaker language (ex. target language); 3) it might enable cooperation and connections between the home and school; and 4) it might be useful for collaboration of fluent speakers with beginners.

#### *Translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching*

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the teaching of the English language from a foreign country’s perspective, where the native language is not English and where English has no usage outside of the classroom. Translanguaging is therefore more likely to occur in EFL contexts, and there is growing documentation of its use (Nambisan, 2014).

Traditional language teaching methods, such as “Direct,” “Audiolingual,” and “Task-Based Language Teaching” methods, emphasized the usage of the target language only (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Howatt & Smith, 2014), thus “English-only policy” during lessons or “the monolingual principle” (Howatt, 1984, p. 173). The idea behind it is that by minimising the mother tongue, there will be maximum exposure to the target language, hence maximum learning results (Portoles & Marti, 2017). However, there have been debates on the efficiency of these practices, and they have been called for re-evaluation (Sridhar, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Therefore, the usage of bilingualism or multilingualism should not be considered a “problem,” but instead an asset to the teaching (García, 2009).

According to Escobar (2020), English policy rules in EFL courses may sometimes clash with learners' innate multilingualism. In their study, it was discovered that students use translanguaging to improve their comprehension of the subject, reduce stress, and express themselves more freely both in and outside of the classroom. Despite the English-only regulations, learners still use translanguaging to compare languages and participate in meaningful discussions. They concluded that the inclusion of translanguaging of EFL in classrooms enables students to feel safe, promoting self-assurance, metalinguistic awareness, and autonomy over their language acquisition.

Another study done by Littlewood and Yu (2011) analysed the strategic use of L1 in Hong Kong EFL classrooms, and found that the teachers, despite the feeling of guilt, use L1 to scaffold the clarification of the words' meanings, which accelerates the language process. Similarly, in China, Wang (2019) discovered that L1 contributes to the enhancement of communicative skills and teacher-student relationships.

The use of L1 in EFL classes in Turkey produced conflicting outcomes. According to interviews, students were generally in favour of using Turkish in class, but they frequently avoided it. On the other hand, observations indicated that a lot of L1 use did occur, despite students' reports that teachers should use L1 infrequently (Yuvayapan, 2019).

These findings demonstrate that translanguaging is a valuable tool in EFL, which makes it more relevant to Kazakhstan.

In the majority of the EFL studies, teachers and students usually use translanguaging in an unplanned, spontaneous way, because of insufficient knowledge of the term and training of the teachers (Nguyen, 2022).

#### *Teachers' Attitudes Toward Translanguaging*

Numerous studies have tried to explain how instructors view translanguaging in various circumstances thus far. For instance, Wang (2019) investigated the attitudes and behaviours of Chinese students and teachers and discovered the mixed reception of translanguaging: some teachers welcomed the idea of using L1 in classrooms as long as it achieves its goal; others objected to the idea, referring to the policy or to protect the "national language from contamination" (p. 6). Another Chinese study (Pinto, 2020) showed that teachers, conversely, felt positive about the idea and importance of translanguaging as long as it concerns the lesson. The research done in Russia (Chicherina & Strelkova, 2023) uncovered that teachers' translanguaging is useful in introducing difficult material, explaining complex concepts, and facilitating translation techniques. In addition, they agreed that ignoring or banning L1 is harmful, as it decelerates the learning of students, but they believe that its overuse causes interference with English acquisition. As such, these studies showcase a trend of teachers acknowledging the importance of translanguaging, yet fearing its overuse among students.

#### *Translanguaging in the Kazakhstani Context*

The use of translanguaging in English classes by Kazakhstani instructors has been the subject of a modest but expanding body of study. Similar to international research, the majority of the instructors endorse translanguaging practice, but rarely use it in the classroom due to "English policy," their monolingual ideologies, fear of appearing "unprofessional," assessment expectations, teaching training, or simply guilt (Amaniyazova, 2020; Akhmetova, 2021; Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023; Tastanbek et al., 2023). From her personal experience, Klyshbekova (2025) notes: "Before proceeding, it is important to note that I have had a fair share of self-doubt and feelings of guilt when it comes to using multiple languages in my teaching. Although I was an English language teacher at a Kazakhstani trilingual school, I was also educated in the idea of maximum exposure to the target language and viewed resorting to multilingual practices as some sort of problem or deficiency. Partially, my resistance derived from the fact that multilingual teaching practices are not part of the status quo in Kazakhstani schools (p. 124)".

Most of the research shows a pattern of teachers who show disparities between their beliefs and practice. Due to the usefulness of the translanguaging, especially in situations such as clarification, comprehension of complex tasks, or simply scaffolding, the majority of the educators used translanguaging even when they held monolingual views (Akhmetova, 2021; Tuskeyeva, 2022; Yakshi, 2022).

Nevertheless, there are still significant limitations with the presented works. Most of the studies were conducted with small samples and originated from either elite or selective schools, so the results may not represent the whole country. The literature mainly ignores public schools, particularly in the southern regions of Kazakhstan. Thus, there is a need to study to capture teachers' views from more typical

educational contexts in light of these limitations.

## Methods and materials

### Research Design

The current study utilised a qualitative approach to investigate English teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging in EFL classrooms. The reason for qualitative research, more specifically for the interview, lies in the fact that it allows a deeper understanding, knowledge, views, and experiences of the given topic (Hussein, 2022). The goal was to determine the teacher's ability to understand translanguaging and how they utilise or evade it in the real classroom settings.

### Participants

A total of 16 English teachers from 5 various state secondary schools of South Kazakhstan were selected for this study. The participants were chosen based on convenience sampling. 6 participants were between 20–25 years old, 5 were 26–30, and 4 were over 30. Teaching experience varied as well: 7 teachers had 0–4 years of experience, 5 had 5–9 years, and 4 had been teaching for more than 10 years. Regarding educational background, 10 participants held a bachelor's degree, 5 held a master's degree, and 1 participant had completed a PhD in a related field. Participation was voluntary. Before the study, all teachers were informed of the study's goal, their right to withdraw at any time, and the fact that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

### Procedure

The interview was distributed online through Google Forms to schools, which was then shared via teachers' official emails and official group chats. Before taking the interview, the participants were informed of the research's aim and, to make sure the participants agreed to be part of the study, a consent statement was placed inside the form. The study took place in the 2025-2026 academic year's autumn semester.

### Instrument

The data were gathered via a structured written interview developed for this study, which was validated by 3 experts. The interview included 8 open-ended questions, which were divided into four main categories: teachers' understanding of translanguaging (conceptual knowledge), their attitudes and opinions toward using multiple languages, their classroom practices and pedagogical strategies, and the influence of institutional expectations or personal teaching beliefs.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used in order to examine the interview data from 16 participants. To facilitate methodical coding and organisation, the responses were imported into MaxQDA 24. The analysis began featuring numerous readings of the transcripts to identify important units that are related to participants' understanding, perspectives and their teaching practices. Related codes have been grouped into broader groups and subcategories once these units were inductively coded. This procedure resulted in a structured set of topics that represented the perspectives and translanguaging experiences of instructors (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Categories, Subcategories, and Codes from Qualitative Content Analysis of Teacher Interviews*

№	Category	Subcategory	Code
1	Understanding of Translanguaging		Not familiar Basic understanding Intermediate understanding Advanced understanding
2	Attitudes on Multilingualism	Native Language Use	Balanced Approach Positive/Facilitative View Flexible Or Multilingual Approach Negative/Opposed View
		Perceived Benefits	Comprehension Support Learner Confidence

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural Connection</li> <li>Inclusive Environment</li> <li>Policy Alignment</li> <li>Cognitive Growth</li> <li>Collaborative Learning</li> <li>Global Mindset</li> </ul>
		Perceived Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language Balance</li> <li>Reduced English Practice</li> <li>Insufficient Training</li> <li>Curriculum Limitation</li> <li>Diverse L1s</li> <li>Teacher Proficiency</li> <li>Time Constraint</li> <li>L1 Attitudes</li> </ul>
3	Teaching Practices	Language Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L1 Explanation</li> <li>English Practice</li> <li>Translation Support</li> <li>Confidence Building</li> <li>Time Efficiency</li> <li>L1 Brainstorming</li> <li>Translanguaging</li> <li>Inclusive Approach</li> </ul>
		Students' L1 Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controlled Use</li> <li>Concept Clarification</li> <li>Confidence Building</li> <li>English Emphasis</li> <li>Level-Based Allowance</li> <li>Balanced Approach</li> </ul>
		Usage of Dictionaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bilingual &amp; Online Dictionaries</li> <li>From Bilingual To Monolingual</li> <li>One Type Dictionary</li> </ul>
4	Institutional Influences		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English-Only Policy</li> <li>Multilingual Support Philosophy</li> <li>Policy-Philosophy Balance</li> <li>Ideal-Practice Gap</li> <li>Strategic L1 Use</li> <li>No Clear Influence</li> <li>Respectful Multilingualism</li> </ul>

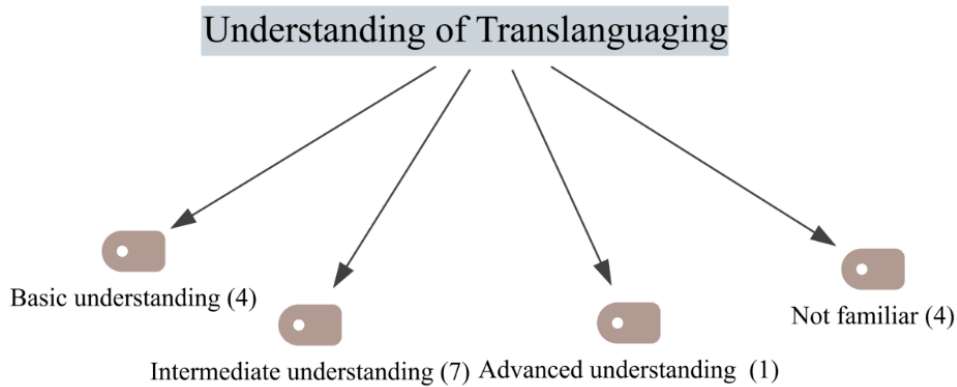
### Results

The results of the qualitative content analysis of 16 English instructors' interview replies are shown in this section. The four criteria that shaped the interview are used to arrange the results: 1) teachers' understanding of translanguaging; 2) attitudes toward the use of multiple languages; 3) classroom practices; and 4) institutional and personal factors influencing multilingual pedagogy.

#### *Teachers' Understanding of Translanguaging*

Teachers' familiarity with the term varied across the sample. Out of 16 participants, 12 were familiar with the concept, while 4 were not and could not provide a description. The degree of comprehension was divided into 3 groups: basic understanding (4), intermediate understanding (7), and advanced understanding (1) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**  
*Participants' knowledge of translinguaging*



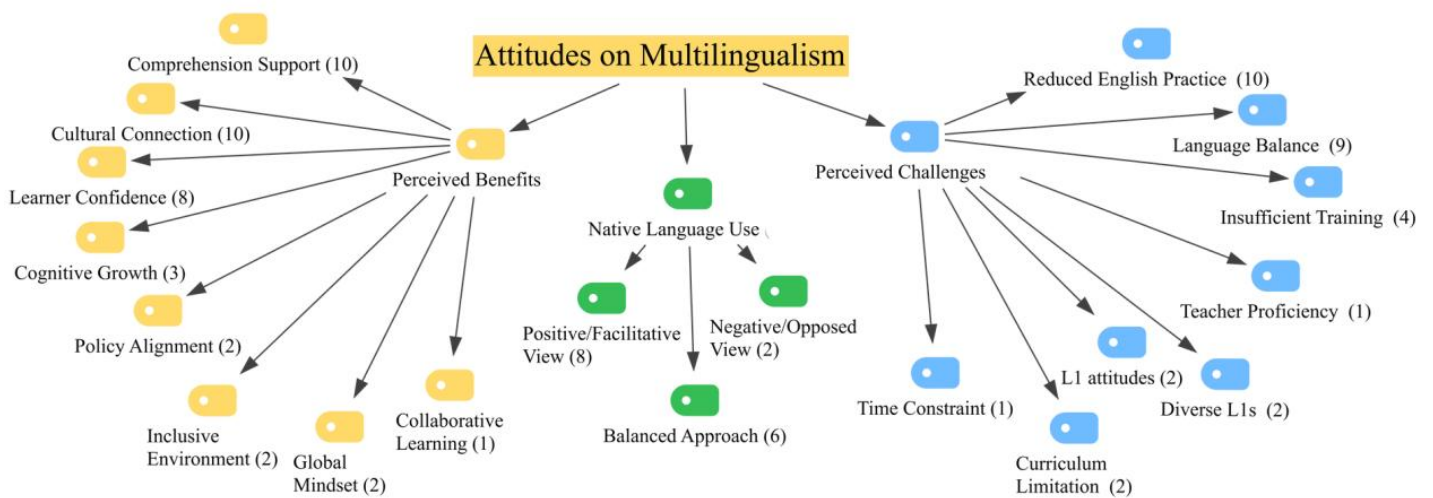
Teachers with basic comprehension referred to translinguaging mostly as “*mixing more than one languages at the same time,*” “*being able to speak multiple languages at the same time,*” and “*using more than one language to help students understand and learn better.*” Whereas teachers with intermediate knowledge pointed out the complexity of the term, as well as to mention its purpose of it in the educational field. The participant with advanced level, alongside with the explanation of the term, emphasised the differences of translinguaging and code-switching, and stressed pedagogical implications:

Translinguaging is the process in which multilingual speakers use all their language resources flexibly and dynamically to communicate, think, and learn rather than keeping their languages separate. In simple terms, it means using more than one language in a fluid way to make meaning. For example: A student might read a text in English, discuss it in Kazakh, and write reflections mixing Kazakh and English. A teacher might explain a concept in English but allow students to ask questions or give examples in their home language. It’s not just “code-switching” (changing from one language to another); translinguaging sees all of a person’s languages as one integrated linguistic system that supports learning and expression.

*Teachers' Attitudes on Multilingualism*

The interviewees generally showed positive attitudes towards using their native language in the classroom alongside the English language. As shown in Figure 2, out of 16 participants, 8 held a positive stance, 6 leaned towards a balanced approach, and 2 opposed the practice.

**Figure 2.**  
*Teachers' attitudes on multilingualism*



### *Native Language Use by Students*

Supporters highlighted the usefulness of this practice, as one participant noted that it helps students “understand difficult ideas, feel more confident, and save time when something is too hard to explain in English.” Those who were inclined toward a mixed approach maintained a positive point of view, but stressed the need to use the target language more. Some participants indicated that L1 use is acceptable for beginner-level students, but should be limited as proficiency increases. For instance, one participant stated, “I think it’s appropriate to use students’ native language while teaching lower levels like beginner, elementary. But in order to make them speak fluently, students should be surrounded by the target language.” Another participant added, “If we’re talking about young learners, I mean it’s ok until they learn new words to use them in a classroom. However, if it’s about high school students, then they have to try to talk in English while they are in a classroom.” The teachers with negative stance mostly referred to this practice as “incorrect” and “not good.”

### *Perceived benefits of Translanguaging*

Participants generally identified multiple benefits in using the first language (L1) in EFL classrooms. The majority of the answers (10) reported that multilingual practices enhance comprehension, commenting that “Using multiple languages in EFL classrooms helps students understand better...,” “It makes learning English easier to understand...,” and “...understand complex ideas more easily...” Likewise, cultural relevance was equally brought up by most teachers (10), writing that “It ...builds cultural and linguistic awareness...” or “It...respects students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds.” Others (8) indicated that it boosts confidence, as one participant noted: “Using multiple languages in EFL classes helps students feel more confident and comfortable.” In addition to the confidence, it “...reduces anxiety, and keeps them engaged.”

Several teachers (3) mentioned the cognitive growth that students face when using L1 during class hours. They observed that it develops their critical thinking, adapting, and building knowledge to the existing one. One participant explained:

“Well, by using multiple languages in a classroom, we built new one on already existing knowledge. By that I mean they already know the rules and the structures of Kazakh and Russian, by connecting them with English, we help them learn it fast and easily.”

2 participants linked multilingual practices to Kazakhstan’s trilingual education policy, noting that it “fits well with Kazakhstan’s trilingual education policy.” Others (2) pointed to inclusivity, and by using multilingual use, “teachers make learning more meaningful and inclusive.”

A few more individual remarks suggested broader possible results, such as promoting a more global perspective (2) or fostering more seamless student collaboration (1).

### *Perceived challenges of Translanguaging*

As illustrated in Figure 2, Teachers noted many recurring difficulties associated with employing several languages in English classes. A common issue among respondents (10) was students’ excessive reliance on their mother tongue, which teachers claimed may limit opportunities for English practice. This was illustrated by one participant: “Students may rely too much on their first language and speak less English.” Additionally, many participants reported problems in achieving an appropriate balance (9) between English and students’ native languages, especially in courses with limited time or challenging subjects. This was reflected in one respondent’s comments: “The main challenges are that students may depend too much on their first language, use less English in class, and it can be hard for teachers to balance both languages,” and “The main challenges...balancing when and how to switch languages effectively.”

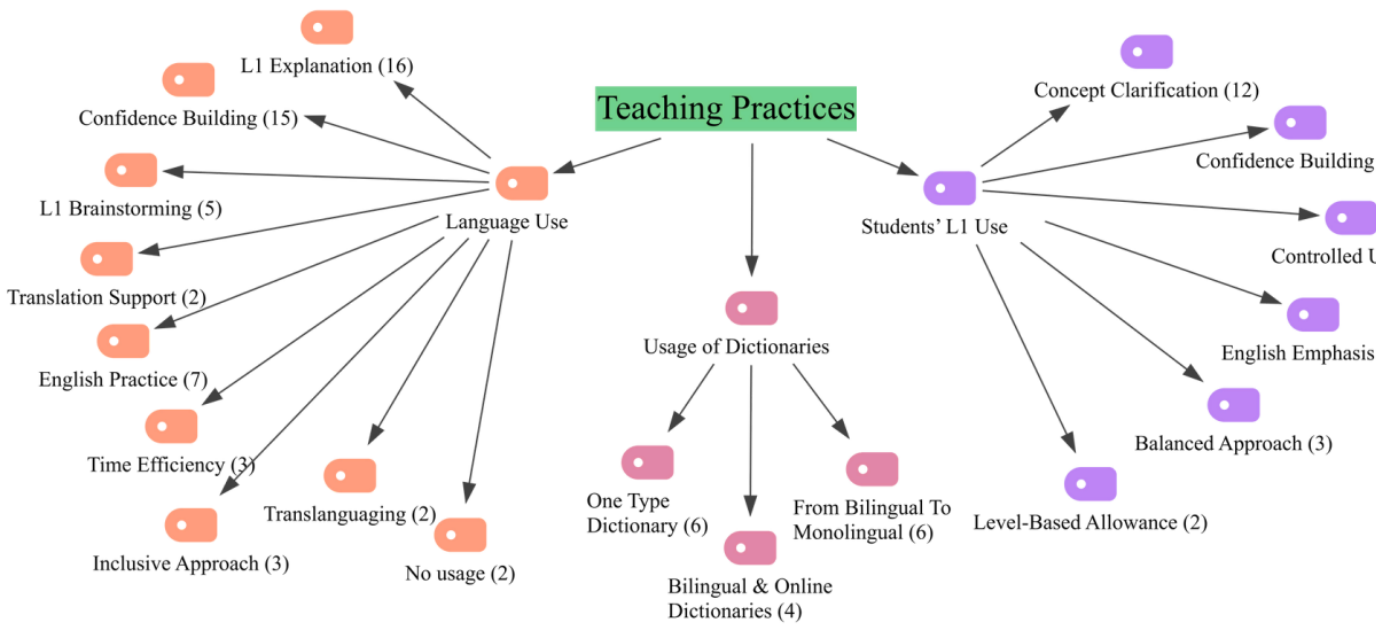
Some participants described the lack of guidelines for teachers in this particular field and limited teacher training (4) on how to integrate multiple languages strategically into lessons. Another point was that teachers may not be knowledgeable of the students’ languages (1): “Not all teachers are equally fluent in all local languages.” Moreover, the same L1 diversity was applied to the students as well (2), as a teacher described it, “Learners may or may not know a certain language,” while another wrote, “not everyone shares the same first language.”

Furthermore, there were mixed opinions (2) on the usage of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms. As

one teacher expressed, “...some teachers and students believe only English should be used....” Others pointed to curriculum constraints (2), explaining that, “Curricula often emphasise grammar, written tests, and exam-performance, and less focus on communicative competence, speaking, and real-world use of English.” Time management was highlighted as a minor challenge by 1 teacher.

### Teachers’ teaching practices

**Figure 3.**  
Teachers’ teaching practices



### Language Use by Teachers

Teachers reported employing various languages in their English courses in strategic and diverse ways, as seen in Figure 3. All of them (16) said they utilized Kazakh and Russian in addition to English to help them understand, especially when introducing new language, grammatical rules, or difficult directions. One participant put it this way:

*Personally, while teaching new vocabulary, I use flash cards and ask: “What is that?” in Kazakh or Uzbek, after their answer I explain the English translation, so by that I’m building a new knowledge on existing one, by connecting it.*

Moreover, teachers stated that they do so to elevate learners’ confidence (15) in language, accentuating that it will lead to natural English speaking. For instance, a respondent noted: “I make these choices because it saves time, reduces confusion, and helps students feel more confident before they start using English independently.” Another participant added, “This helps students understand better and feel more confident before fully switching to English.” It was also shown that it helps students use their cognitive skills and active involvement, as claimed by a teacher, “This process makes their thinking richer and promotes participation, especially among lower-level learners.”

Many teachers reported using L1 for brainstorming (5) or translating (2) and used English afterwards (7) or mainly for communication purposes. For instance, several participants commented: “I let students discuss ideas in their first language before sharing in English,” “However when it’s comes to discussion or sharing ideas, I encourage students to use English as much as possible,” “I introduce new vocabulary in English, then briefly translate it into Kazakh or Russian,” and “In group work, I allow students to brainstorm ideas in their L1 first, then express them in English.”

Additionally, respondents indicated that using L1 saves time (3) and creates inclusive environment (3). As one participant noted, “I make these choices because I believe that all languages are valuable learning tools.”

Several teachers (2) described using translanguaging strategically to support learning. For instance, one teacher stated, *“I use all three languages strategically depending on students’ level and the lesson goal.”* Another explained, *“During vocabulary lessons, I often encourage translanguaging activities: students might write English definitions but give examples in Kazakh or Russian, or discuss differences in meaning across the three languages.”*

2 participants reported using English exclusively, without incorporating the students’ first languages, stating that they *“speak in English in classes.”*

#### *Students’ L1 Use*

A majority of instructors said that they permit students to speak their home languages during English classes, but in a restricted or limited manner. Most of the teachers stated that they allow L1 usage, as long as it helps with comprehension of the topic (14): *“For example, they can use Kazakh or Russian to ask questions, discuss difficult topics, or help each other understand new material.”* Teachers generally allowed native language use to help students understand difficult material, clarify ideas, or support peer explanations. Furthermore, some noted the benefits of reducing anxiety and increasing confidence (6) in students, as commented by one teacher, *“I allow this because it supports learning, reduces stress, and helps students feel more comfortable.”* However, several respondents would mostly limit the usage of L1 and ask students to swiftly return to the English language (7). As one teacher stated: *“However, I remind them that the goal is to communicate as much as possible in English, so we always return to English after short explanations.”*

Some were more lenient and mostly emphasised (6) the balanced approach of L1 and English (3). In the words of one respondent: *“I also remind them to use English as much as possible so they can improve their speaking skills. Using both languages in balance makes learning easier and more effective.”* According to certain teachers, using L1 is especially helpful for younger students or lower-level learners who are still honing their vocabulary and comprehension abilities (2).

#### *Usage of dictionaries*

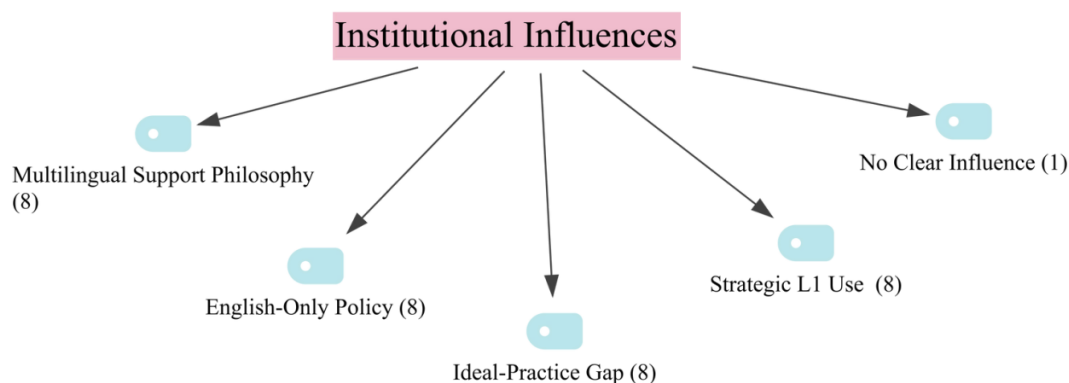
The use of dictionaries to assist in vocabulary development was usually recommended by teachers, but their choices varied depending on the students’ level of ability. Out of 16 participants, 6 advocated for one type of dictionary, such as monolingual or bilingual; another 6 stated that they first use bilingual, then gradually move on to the monolingual; and 4 allowed all dictionaries, mostly emphasising bilingual and online dictionaries. Those who supported one type of dictionary mostly stated that bilingual is *“easy,”* or that students *“can’t understand definitions,”* whereas online dictionaries were claimed to be more on a *“convenient”* side. The monolingual, in this case, was described by the respondent as *“it’s better to focus on one language when remembering new words.”*

Other instructors believed that learners should use bilingualism in their low-level state to later move on to monolingual, as they gradually become independent in English. For example, a teacher wrote: *“I encourage using bilingual and online dictionaries because they help students understand meanings quickly and learn correct usage. As they improve, I also suggest monolingual dictionaries to help them think more in English.”*

Those who preferred to use both bilingual and online explain that it is easier and faster for the students to learn the language that way (Figure 3).

### ***The Influence of Institutional Expectations or Personal Teaching Beliefs***

**Figure 4.**  
The Influence of Institutional Expectations or Personal Teaching Beliefs



Both institutional rules and individual teaching philosophies had an impact on teachers' usage of several languages in the classroom.

Most of the teachers (8) reported that their ideology encourages the flexibility between English, Kazakh, and Russian to improve comprehension and confidence among learners. However, the majority of interviewees (8) also noted that school regulations prioritise English-only learning, especially in official courses or upper grades. Thus, this clashes with their ideal and practical settings in classrooms (8). For example, one participant said:

*My teaching philosophy supports using multiple languages to help students learn more effectively and feel confident. However, institutional policies often encourage using only English in class, so I try to balance both. Ideally, I'd like to use Kazakh and Russian more for clarification and discussion, but in practice, I limit it to short explanations or support when students really need it.*

Some claimed to balance between policy and their own philosophy, therefore using L1 strategically (7) in their lessons: *"So, there's a bit of tension between institutional rules and my personal beliefs. I try to balance both by using L1 purposefully only when it clearly supports learning."*

1 teacher mentioned no influence from the institution: *"They don't have a significant influence."*

## Discussion

The analysis of 16 teachers' interview answers presents us with interesting results regarding their perception of translanguaging. As seen from the results, the majority of the teachers demonstrated their acknowledgement and at least basic understanding of translanguaging, with a smaller portion being intermediate and advanced. It likely suggests that the popularity of the term is growing amongst educators, although not to a knowledgeable state. Tastanbek et al. (2023) pointed out that theoretical knowledge is needed to get the instructors to believe in translanguaging pedagogical benefits, although they emphasised that simply teaching them might not be enough. These results indicate that educators are becoming more proficient at teaching inclusively and are open to experimenting with methods that involve all type of students, which illustrates their professional abilities and willingness to grow.

In line with prior studies (Amaniyazova, 2020; Alzhanova, 2020; Tuskeyeva, 2022), the majority of the participants expressed positive attitudes toward multilingual practices. Respondents noted that such practices make it easier for students to understand topics, create a comfortable space, and boost confidence. It aligns with the general notion of benefits that can be acquired through translanguaging (Lewis et al. 2012). It was especially useful with tasks that required explaining complex ideas, particularly to lower-level students. Many argued that it makes all students included and builds their cognitive skills. It may be supported by the fact that students feel comfortable with teachers whom they can relate to and understand. Because they intentionally modify lessons to meet students' affective and cognitive requirements, these perceptions show instructors' emotional intelligence and communication sensitivity. In multilingual and digitally mediated learning contexts, pedagogical flexibility and reflective professional judgment are essential soft skills that are demonstrated by such behaviors.

However, the teachers would allow translanguaging in a controlled manner, indicating that students should use the target language only when they reach higher-level proficiency. Baker (2011) supports this

method by remarking that “*the teacher can allow a student to use both languages, but in a planned, developmental and strategic manner, to maximize a student’s linguistic and cognitive capability, and to reflect that language is sociocultural both in content and process*” (Baker, 2011, p. 290). Teachers’ professional autonomy and desire to use creative instructional approaches may be restricted by this constrained approach, which implies an unwavering commitment to monolingual beliefs and institutional expectations.

This major positive attitude contrasts with other Kazakh research, where a strong monolingual approach is often reported (Amaniyazova, 2020; Akhmetova, 2021; Yakshi, 2022). However, interestingly enough, in Tuskeyeva’s (2022) research, the most positive viewpoint was from Kazakh-speaking teachers, whereas Russian teachers showed a negative approach to it. The participants’ nationality was not recorded for this study, so it might be important to consider in future research.

Nevertheless, the participants list several challenges regarding the use of translanguaging. Most mentioned a limited time to balance all the languages, being unacquainted with some of the languages, and coordinating practices with institutional regulations or curricular requirements. A recurring concern was the conflict between individual teaching philosophies and institutional demands. A number of instructors noted that their ability to properly employ translanguaging is hampered by English-only mandates. Kuandykov (2021) writes that “*school language policy, which is based on monolingual rule, was found to have a substantial impact on teachers’ beliefs and decision-making.*” It is interesting to note, however, that EFL teachers are more likely to be expected to teach only in English and limit L1, whereas other fields, such as STEM, may be expected to practice multilingualism (Klyshbekova, 2025). Conversely, Shymkent teachers from the study of Yakshi (2022) would use translanguaging in their classrooms despite the institutional policy, which highlights variability in how teachers negotiate policy constraints and personal beliefs.

Teachers reported using L1 to scaffold, brainstorm, and support comprehension, and it illustrates a deliberate, conscious usage of translanguaging in the lessons. However, as this current study relied on self-report only, it has to be noted that the real practice might be quite different, as research from Yuvayapan (2019) revealed that, despite the teachers’ claim of strategic use of translanguaging, most of the time it came unplanned and spontaneously.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, despite current institutional limitations, this study shows that EFL instructors in southern Kazakhstani state secondary schools usually see translanguaging favorably and strategically use it to improve student comprehension and engagement. Though their limited application shows the need for more institutional support and focused professional development, teachers’ attitudes and actions reveal rising professional soft skills including pedagogical flexibility, communicative sensitivity, and reflective judgment.

In spite of these findings, we must acknowledge the study’s limitations. As the research sample contained only 16 instructors from various state schools, it may not represent the whole southern or Kazakhstani generalizability. Moreover, the study utilised self-reported data, which might not fully reflect real classroom practices. It is recommended to do observations of classroom practices to validate the findings.

The results highlight the significance of integrating multilingual teaching and translanguaging into ongoing professional development programs, especially in light of Kazakhstan’s wider digitization of education. In order to help educators better adapt to the challenges of multilingual classrooms, CPD programs should focus on improving teachers’ soft skills, such as professional self-efficacy, reflective autonomy, and digital pedagogical competence.

It should be noted that research has practical implications for policy creation and teacher preparation. Programs for professional development should place a strong emphasis on translanguaging programs for teachers to make them informed of the matter, as there have been numerous benefits to language learning. Institutions, on the other hand, attempt to balance the English-only and multilingual expectations, especially in light of Kazakhstan’s trilingual educational system.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interests regarding the research, authorship, or publication

of this article

### Author Contributions

Meruyert Seitova: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration.

Aruzhan Kurban: Investigation, Data Collection, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Literature Review, Writing – Review & Editing.

### References

- Akhmetova, I. (2021). *Practitioners' views on translanguaging in Kazakhstani EFL classrooms* (Unpublished master's thesis). Nazarbayev University. <http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/5623>
- Alzhanova, S. (2020). *EMI content teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in secondary education* (Unpublished master's thesis). Nazarbayev University. <http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/4913>
- Amaniyazova, A. (2020). *Kazakhstani teachers' beliefs on translanguaging: Evidence from a trilingual context* (Unpublished master's thesis). Nazarbayev University. <http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/4853>
- Baigulova, Z. (2025). Exploring teachers' perceptions of translanguaging and technology in English-medium STEM classrooms in Kazakhstani secondary schools. *Педагогикалық өлшемдер ғылыми-практикалық журналы*, 2(2), 82–94.
- Baker, C. (2001). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (3rd ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011a). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 401–417.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011b). Translanguaging in the classroom: Emerging issues for research and pedagogy. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 2, 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110239331.1>
- Chicherina, N. V., & Strelkova, S. Y. (2023). Translanguaging in English language teaching: Perceptions of teachers and students. *Education Sciences*, 13(1), 86.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *Modern Language Journal*, 94, 103–115.
- Duarte, J., & Günther-Van der Meij, M. (2018). A holistic model for multilingualism in education. *EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages Special Issue*, 5(2), 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.9.153>
- Flores, N. (2014, July 19). Let's not forget that translanguaging is a political act. *Educational Linguist.* <https://educationallinguist.wordpress.com/2014/07/19/lets-not-forget-that-translanguaging-is-a-political-act/>
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howatt, A. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Howatt, A. P. R., & Smith, R. (2014). The history of teaching English as a foreign language, from a British and European perspective. *Language and History*, 57(1), 75–95.
- Hussein, H. (2022). Interview method. In M. R. Islam, N. A. Khan, & R. Baikady (Eds.), *Principles of social research methodology* (pp. 1–17). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5441-2\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5441-2_14)
- Jumagaliyeva, A. (2021). *Choosing between Kazakh and Russian: A study of young ethnic Kazakhs' language choices through the lens of habitus* (MA thesis, Nazarbayev University). <https://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/5604>
- Kaiypova, F., & Kim, T. Y. (2024). Recent advancements in English education in the multilingual context of Kazakhstan. *영어학*, 24, 934–952.
- Kano, N. (2013). *Translanguaging as a process and a pedagogical tool for Japanese students in an English writing course in New York* (Doctoral dissertation, ProQuest Information & Learning, AAI3512508).

- Karabassova, L., & San Isidro, X. (2023). Towards translanguaging in CLIL: A study on teachers' perceptions and practices in Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 20(2), 556–575.
- Karimsakova, A., Kупenova, A., & Kuzembayeva, G. (2022). The state policy of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Multilingual Education*, (21), 80–85.
- Klyshbekova, M. (2020). *The trilingual education policy in Kazakhstan: Language choices for teaching-learning purposes in the classroom* (Master's thesis, Nazarbayev University).
- Klyshbekova, M. (2025). A Kazakhstani English language teacher's perspective on multilingual practices. *ELT Journal*, 79(1), 123–126.
- Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Alemany Press.
- Kuandykov, A. (2021). *EFL teachers' translanguaging pedagogy and the development of beliefs about translanguaging* (Unpublished master's thesis, Nazarbayev University). <http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/5608>
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2018). Looking ahead: Future directions in, and future research into, second language acquisition. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 55–72.
- Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (1997, July 11). On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan (No. 151). Adilet Legal Information System. <https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z970000151>
- Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7), 641–654.
- Nambisan, K. (2014). *Teachers' attitudes towards and uses of translanguaging in English language classrooms in Iowa* (Master's thesis, Iowa State University).
- Nazarbayev, N. (2007). Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the people of Kazakhstan. [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses\\_of\\_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazahstana-28-fevralya-2007-g](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazahstana-28-fevralya-2007-g)
- Nguyen, T. N. T. (2022). A review of studies on EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 2(3), 324–331.
- Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6(3), 281–307. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2015-0014>
- Pinto, J. (2020). Chinese teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging and its uses in Portuguese foreign language classrooms. *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition*, 1(6), 11–30.
- Poza, L. (2017). Translanguaging: Definitions, implications, and further needs in burgeoning inquiry. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 6(2), 101–128. <https://doi.org/10.5070/B86110060>
- Rasulova, N., & Mukhamedov, A. (2025). Conceptualization of Competence and Competency in Pedagogical Theory. *Western European Journal of Linguistics and Education*, 3(05), 132–138.
- Sadulova, Z., Karimsakova, B., Yessenova, K., Kamarova, N., Kurmanova, B., Smagulova, K., Karagulova, B., & Amangazyeva, M. (2025). Bilingualism and multilingualism in Kazakhstan: Sociolinguistic and educational perspectives. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 7(7), 785–795. <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i7.10172>
- Singh, N. K., Shaoan, Z., & Parwez, B. (2012). Globalization and language policies of multilingual societies: Some case studies of South East Asia. *Belo Horizonte*, 12(2), 349–380.
- Sridhar, S. (1994). A reality check for SLA theories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(4), 800–805. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587565>
- Tastanbek, S., Kazymbek, A., Kalizhanova, Z., & Kaipova, D. (2023). Changes in teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging. *NUGSE Research in Education*, 3–9.
- Tuskeyeva, A. (2022). *Perceptions on translanguaging from EFL teachers with different linguistic backgrounds in Kazakhstan* (Unpublished master's thesis). Nazarbayev University.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465>
- Wang, D. (2019). Translanguaging in Chinese foreign language classrooms: Students and teachers' attitudes and practices. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(2), 138–149.

- Wei, L. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(5), 1222–1235.
- Wei, L. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039>
- Williams, C. (1996). Secondary education: Teaching in the bilingual situation. In C. Williams, G. Lewis, & C. Baker (Eds.), *The language policy: Taking stock* (pp. 39–78). CAI.
- Williams, C. (2002). *Ennill iaith: Astudiaeth o sefyllfa drochi yn 11–16 oed [A language gained: A study of language immersion at 11–16 years of age]*. School of Education. [http://www.bangor.ac.uk/addysg/publications/Ennill\\_Iaith.pdf](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/addysg/publications/Ennill_Iaith.pdf)
- Yakshi, S. (2022). *Translanguaging in EFL classrooms: Teachers' beliefs and purposes in Kazakhstan*. Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education.
- Yeskeldiyeva, B. Y., & Tazhibayeva, S. Z. (2015). Multilingualism in modern Kazakhstan: New challenges. *Asian Social Science*, 11(6), 56.
- Yuvayapan, F. (2019). Translanguaging in EFL classrooms: Teachers' perceptions and practices. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 15(2), 678–694.

**Information about authors:**

**Meruyert Seitova** - PhD, Associate Professor, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan, [meruyert.seitova@ayu.edu.kz](mailto:meruyert.seitova@ayu.edu.kz), ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0735-2469,

**Aruzhan Kurban** – PhD student, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan, [aruzhan.kurban@ayu.edu.kz](mailto:aruzhan.kurban@ayu.edu.kz), ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0527-4911, (*corresponding author*)

*Received: 09.12.2025*

*Revised: 23.02.2026*

*Revised: 03.06.2026*

*Accepted: 17.06.2026*

*Published: 30.06.2026*