NAVIGATING MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF TRANSLANGUAGING IN GHANAIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' practice and perceptions of translanguaging in junior high school classrooms in Ghana, focusing on how teachers negotiate language use. In this study, the awareness, understanding, and application of translanguaging by teachers were explored through qualitative interviews. The results show that although most participants were unfamiliar with the term ''translanguaging,'' the practice is a common strategy to enhance students' comprehension and participation in classrooms. Teachers use translanguaging as a pedagogical approach to fill in linguistic gaps and to support plurilingual students. In contrast to the language policy that makes English the sole medium of instruction at the junior high school level, Ghanaian teachers in some public junior high schools continue practicing translanguaging, mostly through tacit approval of their circuit supervisors and school heads. The findings underline the need for rethinking language policies to reflect the realities of bilingual classrooms and recommend that intentionally incorporating translanguaging into formal educational frameworks at the junior high level could foster more inclusive and effective teaching and learning in the classrooms. This research contributes to extant literature advocating for the recognition and legitimisation of translanguaging in multilingual educational contexts, emphasising its role in improving teaching and learning outcomes in Ghanaian classrooms.

Keywords: translanguaging, codeswitching, junior high school, teaching and learning, medium of instruction

ABSTRAK

Studi ini menyelidiki praktik dan persepsi guru terhadap penerjemahan bahasa di ruang kelas sekolah menengah pertama di Ghana, dengan fokus pada bagaimana guru menegosiasikan penggunaan bahasa. Dalam penelitian ini, kesadaran, pemahaman, dan penerapan penerjemahan bahasa oleh guru dieksplorasi melalui wawancara kualitatif. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa meskipun sebagian besar peserta tidak terbiasa dengan istilah "penerjemahan bahasa", praktik ini merupakan strategi umum untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan partisipasi siswa

di kelas. Guru menggunakan transbahasa sebagai pendekatan pedagogi untuk mengisi kesenjangan linguistik dan untuk mendukung siswa yang menggunakan banyak bahasa. Berbeda dengan kebijakan bahasa yang menjadikan bahasa Inggris sebagai satu-satunya bahasa pengantar di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama, para guru di beberapa sekolah menengah pertama negeri di Ghana terus melakukan praktik penerjemahan bahasa, sebagian besar melalui persetujuan diam-diam dari pengawas wilayah dan kepala sekolah. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi perlunya memikirkan kembali kebijakan bahasa untuk mencerminkan realitas ruang kelas bilingual dan merekomendasikan bahwa dengan sengaja memasukkan transbahasa ke dalam kerangka pendidikan formal di tingkat SMP dapat mendorong proses belajar mengajar di kelas yang lebih inklusif dan efektif. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada literatur yang mendukung pengakuan dan legitimasi penerjemahan bahasa dalam konteks pendidikan multibahasa, dengan menekankan perannya dalam meningkatkan hasil belajar mengajar di ruang kelas di Ghana.

Kata kunci: *penerjemahan, alih kode, sekolah menengah pertama, pengajaran dan pembelajaran, media pengajaran*

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the phenomenon of language alternation in classroom settings, particularly within multilingual and bilingual communities. Researchers from various disciplines—including linguistics, language education, and sociology—have explored how switching between languages impacts pedagogy and learner outcomes (Kaiza & Chachu, 2024; Agbozo & Rescue, 2020). As a linguistic feature of bilingual or multilingual speakers, this phenomenon has been conceptualized through a range of overlapping terms, such as codeswitching, translanguaging, polylanguaging, heteroglossia, codemeshing, and flexible bilingualism (Yevudey, 2014). Among these, translanguaging has gained increasing prominence for its theoretical and pedagogical implications, particularly within multilingual educational contexts.

Translanguaging, as originally theorized by Cen Williams and later developed by García and Wei (2014), refers to the dynamic and integrated use of a bilingual speaker's entire linguistic repertoire. Rather than viewing bilinguals as managing two autonomous language systems, the translanguaging framework recognizes a unitary linguistic system from which speakers draw features as needed to make meaning. García and Wei (2014, p. 2) describe translanguaging as "an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages." This reconceptualization challenges traditional notions of language boundaries and legitimizes the integrated linguistic practices of bilinguals in educational contexts.

The educational value of translanguaging has been widely documented. Lewis et al. (2012) argue that translanguaging enables learners to organize and mediate cognitive processes related to literacy, comprehension, and verbal expression. In multilingual classrooms, translanguaging offers learners and teachers the flexibility

to use available linguistic resources to co-construct knowledge, clarify complex concepts, and enhance classroom participation. Within African contexts, particularly in Ghana, translanguaging aligns with the sociolinguistic reality of plurilingualism in basic education. Despite the Ghanaian language policy mandating English as the sole medium of instruction beyond the lower primary level, teachers frequently integrate local languages into their teaching practices to meet pedagogical goals. This discrepancy between policy and practice points to a need for further empirical investigation into how and why such practices persist.

Existing literature on translanguaging in Ghana has largely focused on lower primary or rural school settings (Yevudey, 2017; Adjei, 2010; Amekor, 2009; Brew-Daniels, 2011). However, limited research exists on translanguaging practices at the junior high school level, particularly in urban or peri-urban public schools where language policy enforcement may be stricter. This presents a significant research gap. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining how translanguaging is practised in selected public junior high schools in Ghana. It explores the pedagogical motivations behind the use of translanguaging, despite the prescriptive monolingual language policy, and the perceived educational advantages associated with this practice. The study contributes to the broader literature on bilingual education by contextualizing translanguaging within Ghana's unique sociolinguistic landscape and by interrogating the tension between language policy and pedagogical pragmatism.

B.   LITERATURE REVIEW

As a language contact phenomenon, bilingualism, in Ghana has been greatly influenced by the language police of education in Ghana (Owu-Ewie, 2007). Every Ghanaian child is compelled to learn English at school, and in cases where the child's L1 is not the lingua franca of the community, he is compelled also to learn the dominant language of the community, because that language is the medium of instruction at the lower primary level. Nine indigenous languages are used as medium of instruction in Ghanaian basic schools. These languages are Akan (Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, and Fante), Dagbani, Dangme, Dagaare-Wali, Ewe Ga, Gonja, Kasem and Nzema (Klu & Ansre, 2018; Opoku-Amankwa 2009). In study on the language policy of education in Ghana, Owu-Ewie (2017) argues that the use of the familiar language of learners as medium of instruction promotes quality education.

Currently, the language policy of education in Ghana mandates the use of the learner's first language as medium of instruction only up to Primary Three (Owu-Ewie, 2017, p.151). This means that the language of wider communication, also known as the Lingua Franca of the community where the school is located is considered and used as the medium of instruction up basic three. English, the official language of Ghana and language of education functions as language that is taught. Klu and Ansre (2018) argue that due to cultural specificities, a language policy that is effective in some countries, may be ineffective in Ghana. They were of the view that before a language of education policy is adopted for implementation, teachers and language-in-education planners must be considered, in addition to findings of qualitative research that explores language use in the classroom. The implication of the argument of Klu and Ansre (2018) is that there is a gap in integrating language of instruction and language teaching as aligned

components of education. In the current situation where English is displaying the indigenous languages in most social contexts, "there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue (or familiar language) as medium of instruction; a careful balance needs to be created to enable people to use local languages in learning and providing access to global languages of communication through education" (Brew-Hammond & Opoku-Amankwa 2012, p.117).

In view of this, the National Acceleration Literacy Program (NALAP) was introduced in Ghana and implemented on pilot basis. The National Literacy Acceleration Program (NALAP) is a program that seeks to help children learn how to read and write in their mother tongue and English. The program is designed to improve literacy skills through mother tongue instruction in the early years of schooling, and then gradually transition to English (Soma & Zuberu, 2021). NALAP, stipulates that that the mother tongue of the pupils should be used as a medium of instruction while English is introduced as a second language with a transition to English medium of instruction from basic 4 onwards. NALAP is based on research that shows that children from multi-lingual societies learn best when instruction is provided in their mother tongue during the early years of schooling (Abreh & Wilmot, 2018).

NALAP implementation requires that teachers at in the classrooms of the lower primary level must be competent in at least two languages, including dominant language of the community of the school. Even though this seems not a problem due to the multilingual nature of the Ghanaian people in general, the practice of transferring teachers from one place to the another implies that some teachers find themselves in communities where they do not have competence in the dominant language of the community (Man et al., 2018). In this study, teachers who practise translanguaging are bilinguals with competence in English language and the Lingua Franca of the community of the school. The study seeks to ascertain why teachers would like to violate Ghana's language of education policy in their classrooms.

1. Translanguaging/Codeswitching in the classroom

The concepts of translanguaging and code-switching have long occupied significant positions in discussions of bilingual language use, particularly in educational settings. Although the two are often used interchangeably, current scholarship underscores their conceptual and functional differences. Code-switching, as described by Balam (2021) and Chan (2021), refers to the alternation between two discrete language systems, typically occurring within or between sentences. This framework rests on the assumption that bilingual speakers operate within clearly bounded linguistic codes, which they shift between based on contextual demands. In contrast, translanguaging challenges this binary view of language. Otheguy et al. (2015) and Yevudey (2017) argue that translanguaging draws from a bilingual's full linguistic repertoire, allowing speakers to make use of all available linguistic resources without adhering to the boundaries of named languages. In this view, named languages are considered social constructs, and translanguaging reflects the speaker's unitary mental grammar and internal idiolect.

This theoretical divergence between code-switching and translanguaging has important pedagogical implications, especially within the second language (L2) classroom. Translanguaging, unlike code-switching, is not simply a matter of

linguistic alternation but a pedagogical and cognitive strategy that facilitates learning. According to Otheguy et al. (2015) and Chan (2021), translanguaging enables learners to deploy their full linguistic capacities in the service of understanding, expressing, and acquiring knowledge. When applied in classroom contexts, translanguaging transforms the learning environment into a space that validates and utilizes learners' multilingual resources. This fluid approach promotes deeper engagement with content, supports comprehension, and enhances the development of linguistic competence in the target language. Rather than seeing the first language (L1) as a hindrance, translanguaging views it as an asset for meaning-making and knowledge construction.

Empirical studies conducted in Ghana further illuminate the pedagogical functions of translanguaging and code-switching in classroom interactions. Yevudey (2017) reports that translanguaging is actively used by both teachers and pupils to achieve specific instructional goals such as reiterating concepts, explaining unfamiliar terminologies, and encouraging participation. His study revealed that both groups hold positive attitudes toward translanguaging, considering it a valuable tool for enhancing comprehension. Similarly, Adjei (2010), in her study of Ewe-English code-switching in a rural primary school, found that teachers used repetitive inter-sentential code-switching to reinforce understanding when students struggled with content delivered solely in English. This approach allowed them to translate complex ideas into Ewe, thereby improving clarity and learner engagement.

Further evidence from Amekor (2009) and Brew-Daniels (2011) indicates that code-switching is not only widespread but often essential in classroom settings. Teachers in these studies reported that due to students' limited English proficiency, they had to rely on code-switching to meet instructional objectives. These practices, while technically contravening Ghana's language policy—which mandates English as the sole medium of instruction—are viewed as necessary to facilitate understanding and participation. In fact, Brew-Daniels (2011) noted that students taught using code-switching performed better academically than those taught exclusively in English.

It is observable that much of the existing research has been concentrated at the primary school level. This leaves a gap in our understanding of how translanguaging functions in junior high school classrooms, particularly under the constraints of official language policy. The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring why junior high school teachers resort to translanguaging despite policy prescriptions. It contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation by examining how teachers navigate institutional language ideologies and how they use translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy to support learner success.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigates the use of translanguaging in junior high school classrooms in Ghana, focusing on the perspectives and practices of teachers in Sovie (Kpando Municipality) and Winneba (Effutu Municipality). The central aim is to understand whether teachers continue to switch between languages—now conceptualized as translanguaging—and the motivations behind such practices, particularly considering the Ghana Education Service (GES) policy mandating

English as the sole medium of instruction at this level. The study also explores how and why teachers choose to deviate from official language policy to meet their pedagogical goals.

A qualitative research design was adopted to allow for in-depth exploration of teachers' language practices and attitudes. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select three public junior high schools: Evangelical Presbyterian Junior High School and Roman Catholic Junior High School in Sovie, and Saint John's Anglican Junior High School in Winneba. The schools were chosen based on proximity and accessibility, as the researcher resides in both towns, thereby facilitating fieldwork. While this introduces an element of convenience sampling, purposive selection was primarily motivated by the study's focus on public schools that are required to uphold the English-only instruction policy, providing a suitable context to examine policy-practice discrepancies.

Participants were selected through criterion sampling. In each school, three teachers were interviewed, focusing on those who teach English, Religious and Moral Education (RME), and Social Studies—subjects that involve conceptual and discursive complexity and are therefore likely to elicit instances of translanguaging. This yielded a total of nine interviews across the three schools. In order to broaden perspectives and ensure gender representation, the final participant pool included 12 teachers (five females and seven males), as additional teachers volunteered and were included due to their subject relevance and willingness to participate.

An interview guide was developed to elicit detailed responses from participants. The guide was structured around the study's core objectives and included open-ended questions addressing (1) the teachers' understanding of translanguaging, (2) frequency and contexts of language alternation in their classrooms, (3) their reasons for deviating from the English-only policy, (4) the perceived benefits and challenges of translanguaging, and (5) their views on the effectiveness of monolingual versus multilingual pedagogies. Follow-up and probing questions were used during interviews to encourage elaboration and clarification. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interviews were conducted in English, although participants were free to use other languages where necessary, reflecting the spirit of translanguaging. The audio data were transcribed verbatim, ensuring that nuances in participants' responses were preserved.

The transcribed data were analysed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Coding was both deductive—guided by the research questions—and inductive, allowing for emergent themes to surface from the data. This method facilitated a nuanced understanding of how and why translanguaging is employed by teachers and what it reveals about the interaction between language policy and classroom realities.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
1. Teachers understanding of the term translanguaging

The teachers who participated in the study confirmed that they engage in translanguaging in their classrooms. Most teacher participants responded in

affirmative to the question: do you engage in translanguaging in the classroom? However, as prevailed in the literature, none of the teachers interviewed seems to have an idea what term *translanguaging* is used to mean. The researcher had to veer a bit from the objective of the study to explain the term to the teachers. Thus, though the teachers are aware of the phenomenon of translanguaging, the term seems to be foreign to them. The researcher had to explain the concept to them. Some of the participants had this to say:

Things are always changing in research; today, it is called this, tomorrow it will change to something else. We ended getting confused. Your explanation of translanguaging doesn't seem too different from codeswitching which we are familiar with. [a female social studies teacher at St John's basic School, Winneba]

Translanguaging is really a new term to me, I don't think I have heard it before, maybe I would have been exposed to it if I had started or done my master's degree. But why do researchers keep changing the terms like this? Is it like they are tired of codeswitching? Maybe they want to increase the vocabulary in the field of sociolinguistics. I think I will read on it anytime I get some free moment to spare. [RME teacher of RC JHS, Sovie]

Please, could you explain the term to me? I don't think I understand it…. From your explanation, it seems to say translanguaging is codeswitching in the classroom. I translanguage a lot. [an English language teacher at E.P JHS, Sovie]

From the responses of the teachers, it is understandable that most teachers are not familiar with the term translanguaging as some claimed they were hearing the term for the first time. This confirms the assertion of Yevudey (2014) that the term translanguaging, though not too different from the notion of codeswitching, is relatively new in the literature of sociolinguistics and language and education research.

2. Teachers' practice of translanguaging in the classroom.

Responding to the question of whether they practise translanguaging in their classrooms, the respondents indicated that it is a daily practice; hardly has a lesson ended in the classrooms of their schools without the practice of translanguaging. The responses of the teachers indicate that the practice of translanguaging has nothing to do with the teacher or the subject being taught. The teachers who took part in the study concurred that they, together with their colleagues in the schools, practise translanguaging. In their response to the question: do you engage or practise translanguaging in the classroom when you are teaching, some of the teachers provided the following responses:

I have been combining Fante with English in most of my teachings; though I wish to speak English always that does not help mostly. I sometimes use Fante alongside English. What I do is that after saying the word in English I try to find a way of repeating it in Fante. That is the only way I become convinced that my students have understood what I have conveyed to them [RME teacher at St John's Basic School].

Hwɛɛ! Please I hope you are not thinking we use English throughout the whole period of the lesson. You do that and I can bet you, you will repeat the lesson several times. I am not sure it is the teachers in this school alone who use both English and the local language in the classroom. Well, maybe schools that have Ghanaians who speak only English at home may use only English, but in this my school and some others that I know, trasns…. translanguaging. I hope I got it correctly, is a common practice. [the social studies teacher at St John's Basic School, winneba]

The assertions of the teachers confirm the findings in the literature that teachers in the classroom have positive attitude towards the practising translanguaging. Thus, as explained by Adjei (2010), teachers who employ codeswitching have positive attitudes towards the use of the phenomenon in the classroom. Yevudey (2017) on the reasons teachers have positive attitude towards translanguaging posits that teachers believe that translanguaging is a code choice that increases pupils' understanding during lessons as the principal objective of every teacher is make his pupil understand whatever is being taught. The teachers practise translanguaging to make them convinced that their students have understood the lesson.

3. Importance of translanguaging to the teaching and learning process

From the literature, it prevailed that translanguaging in the classroom serve a great deal of benefits to the teaching and learning situation (cf. Yevudey, 2017; 2013; 2012; Adjei, 2010; Brew-Daniels, 2011; Amekor, 2009). From the interview, it prevailed that teachers in the sampled schools engage in translanguaging, and the practice benefits both the teachers and their students. The results show that the practice helps teachers minimise their efforts in relaying whatever idea they intend to put across to their students. The practice enhances easier comprehension of the ideas by the student. Concerning the importance of translanguaging in the classroom, some of the teachers had this to say:

When I was posted to this place first, I did not know they had problem with English, so I was conducting my teachings in English alone. I realised that anytime I gave them exercise those who get zero were many, so I complained to my colleague, and he revealed the secret to me: "you have to blend English with Eve" he advised. So since then, I have realised a significant improvement. The number of zeros got reduced. Moreover, as I explain the concept in both English and Ewe, I also feel relaxed because I get convinced my students have understood what I have taught them.

(A social studies teacher, Sovie RC JHS)

When I repeat what I say in English in Ewe, my students tend to become involved in the lesson, they start to contribute and ask questions. I allow them to sometimes express themselves in Ewe, especially when they want to contribute. However, when they finish saying whatever they have to say in Ewe, I attempt to say it in English for them to repeat after me. I do this with the intention of helping the pupil to be able to write the same idea in the external examination, BECE.

*(*RME teacher, Sovie EP JHS)*

The explanation of the teachers concerning why they resort to translanguaging in the classroom is consistent with the finding of Brew-Daniels (2011) which revealed that teachers switch code in the classroom to facilitate their pupils' understanding and participation in the lesson and cover up the inability of the pupils

to express themselves comprehensively in English (Brew-Daniels 2011, p. 50). The views expressed by the respondents on the importance of translanguaging in the classroom have confirm what has been found in other studies (cf. Amekor, 2009; Adjei, 2010; Yevudey, 2017, 2013).

However, it prevailed from the analysis of the result that none of the teachers who participated in the study indicated that he or she resorts to the practice of translanguaging because she or he has fallen short of vocabulary or was unable to remember the appropriate terminology in English and therefore had to switch code. In the responses, the teachers maintained that the goal of switching was to help the understanding of the students. However, some of the teachers confessed that as they seek to make their students understand the concepts they are teaching better, and therefore resort to translanguaging, they tend to minimise their effort in explaining the concepts to them since it is easier making the students understand something using the native language than English. A female English teacher at St John's JHS had this to say:

> *You know, sometimes the concepts are not familiar to the learner. In that case I may struggle and explain in English. But look at something like 'libation', immediately the teacher mentions 'nsaguo' they all understand, and you move on. When I am teaching adjectives, for instance, I always say 'ɛkyerɛkyerɛ adzemu'[it describes how something is] then I use something in the classroom to illustrate. You can imagine how I will struggle making these children understand that 'adjectives describe nouns. I may have to explain 'describe' before I would be able to explain what I mean by adjectives describe nouns.*

This assertion of the English teacher contradicts the finding of Brew-Daniels (2011, p. 50) that teachers use translanguaging as "a cover up for their inability to express themselves comprehensively in one language."

4. Violation of language of education policy in Ghana

Another objective of the present study is to examine how teachers in junior high school classrooms perceive their use of translanguaging practices, particularly in relation to the official language-in-education policy in Ghana. Specifically, the study seeks to explore teachers' interpretations of their deviation from the Ghana Education Service's stipulation that English should serve as the sole medium of instruction at the junior high school level (Ministry of Education, 2003). The research further aims to determine whether these educators are aware of the professional and institutional implications of engaging in translanguaging within a policy framework that explicitly discourages the use of indigenous languages in upper basic education. To this end, the researcher investigated teachers' familiarity with the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP), a bilingual pedagogical initiative introduced to enhance early-grade reading and learning through the use of local languages alongside English (Casely-Hayford & Lynch, 2003). Teachers were questioned about their awareness of the program and whether they understood that the use of indigenous languages in junior high school classrooms is technically in contravention of current language policy.

Analysis of the responses revealed that all participants demonstrated knowledge of NALAP and its provisions. Several teachers acknowledged that the use of Ghanaian languages at the junior high level contradicts the official language policy,

thereby rendering translanguaging practices an informal, albeit pedagogically motivated, transgression. Their responses reflect a tension between policy expectations and classroom realities, echoing findings in prior research which suggest that teachers often adopt translanguaging as a practical strategy to enhance comprehension and learner engagement, despite policy restrictions (Opoku-Amankwa, Edu-Buandoh, & Brew-Hammond, 2015; Bamgbose, 2000). This dissonance between policy and practice underscores the complexities educators face in linguistically diverse classrooms, where students' limited proficiency in English may impede content mastery if instruction is conducted exclusively in the target language (Heugh, 2011). While teachers are cognizant of formal expectations regarding language use, they simultaneously demonstrate a pragmatic orientation towards translanguaging, driven by a desire to foster effective teaching and learning outcomes. As García and Wei (2014) note, translanguaging is not merely a deviation from normative language use but a pedagogical practice that recognizes and leverages the full linguistic repertoire of learners in multilingual settings. Thus, the teachers' self-reflections in this study align with broader discourses that advocate for more inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to language-in-education policy implementation in postcolonial contexts (Benson, 2005; Hornberger, 2009). Some of the teachers made the following assertions:

On paper, we are not supposed to be speaking Ewe in the classroom if the subject we are teaching is not Ewe; however, do we have option? The kind of students or probably where we are teaching forces us to use it against the policy.
[a teacher at Sovie, RC JHS)

I know that I am not supposed to use Fante because what I teach is not Fante; the law says I should use English, but I think me using Fante is in the interest of the students and not the law. You know, I could have been home and obey the law, but as the students are brought into the matter, we have to be considerate and look at their interest too. I don't think my head would have done differently should he find himself in my shoes.

[A teacher at St John's JHS, Winneba]

From the responses, it observable that the teachers know they are not supposed to practise translanguaging in the classrooms of junior high schools in Ghana. This means that these teachers are fully aware of the language of education policy in Ghana which requires that only English should be used as medium of instruction in the classrooms. However, as explained by some of the teachers, the need to violate the policy requirement to ensure that their students understand what they teach them. This agrees with the works of Yevudey (2017) and Brew-Daniels (2011), who noted that translanguaging has a positive effect on classroom dynamics and learning.

5. Tacit approval of translanguaging by supervisors

The researcher went on to enquire from the teachers what the implication of their action would be should their circuit supervisors meet them translanguaging in the classroom. In their response, the teachers were of the view that some of their circuit supervisors are aware of the situation they find themselves; the supervisors know they must resort to translanguaging to make progress in achieving the objectives of the lessons they teach. Hence, when they are translanguaging in the classroom, they do it without fear. In other words, translanguaging in the classroom is not something

they practise without the knowledge of the heads or circuit supervisors. What they are told mostly by their superiors that they should make sure the local language does not dominate English in the classroom teaching and learning process. In expressing their view on the matter, some of the teachers asserted that:

Sometime, when the circuit supervisor comes, he does not come to the classroom; but on rare occasions that he does visit the classroom, he even speak the local language with the students. These people are aware of the competence level of the children in the English language, so they don't force us to use English throughout the entire lesson. If they were to be serious on us to always use the English language throughout the lesson, I am not sure any teacher would want to put his employment on the line to violate their rules. [A teacher at Sovie E.P JHS]

I am sure they would have wished we comply with the rule or follow the principles of NALAP; but looking at the reality, they have to make it flexible so that the students can maximise the opportunity to learn something in the classroom. If teachers are sanctioned for engaging in translanguaging or whatever you call it, I am not we would be too concerned about the students and still practise it in the classroom. Maybe other teachers would do. [A teacher at Winneba, St John's JHS]

The findings suggest that teachers' engagement in translanguaging within the classroom is influenced not only by pedagogical considerations but also by the tacit approval of school leadership and supervisory authorities. Respondents indicated that they operate within a localized culture of understanding, where both headteachers and circuit supervisors are aware of the challenges associated with exclusive English-only instruction and therefore do not penalize deviations from the official language policy. This aligns with García and Wei's (2014) assertion that translanguaging practices often emerge as pragmatic responses to sociolinguistic realities in multilingual classrooms, particularly where language policy is misaligned with learners' linguistic competencies. Further, as Heugh (2011) notes, the strict enforcement of monolingual language policies in multilingual contexts frequently leads to pedagogical inefficiencies, prompting educators to adopt translanguaging as a strategic tool to facilitate comprehension and learner participation. In such scenarios, institutional actors—such as circuit supervisors—may unofficially condone these practices, recognizing their contribution to educational effectiveness despite policy constraints. This phenomenon underscores Hornberger's (2009) notion of "policy-in-practice," where the realities of classroom teaching necessitate adaptive strategies that diverge from top-down language mandates.

Moreover, research by Opoku-Amankwa, Edu-Buandoh, and Brew-Hammond (2015) on language policy implementation in Ghana reveals that teachers often navigate between policy prescriptions and contextual exigencies, particularly in resource-constrained settings. In this context, the absence of punitive measures for translanguaging reflects a broader institutional accommodation of informal pedagogical norms, wherein language policy is interpreted flexibly to meet classroom needs. Thus, the teachers' reliance on translanguaging, reinforced by the permissiveness of school leadership, highlights a critical disjuncture between the

Ghanaian National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP)'s monolingual stipulations and the complex multilingual realities of junior high school classrooms. Rather than being viewed as a breach of policy, translanguaging is locally legitimized as an essential pedagogical practice that aligns with the linguistic ecology of the learners.

E. CONCLUSION

The study shows the widespread but often unnoticed phenomenon of translanguaging in Ghanaian junior high school classrooms. Although the practice is prevalent and employed by teachers to make the language of instruction more comprehensible and increase the learners' participation, many teachers are not conversant with the term ''translanguaging'' or its conceptual basis. The findings corroborate the works by Agbozo and Rescue (2020) and Kaiza and Chachu (2024), in that although translanguaging deviates from strict classroom language policies, it is an efficient tool to tap into the students' linguistic resources in a plurilingual context. The study also reveals that junior high school teachers believe that translanguaging is something they must do to fill the gap between the learners' linguistic realities and the demands of the curriculum. This makes them adapt to the challenge brought about by the students' inadequacy in English and to make them understand and take part in classroom lessons effectively. At the same time, however, the present study indicates a mismatch between policy and practice. For instance, though teachers do know that they are infringing on the language of education policy at the junior high level by using indigenous languages together with English, they still practise translanguaging to maximise the teaching and learning outcome.

The study shows that pragmatic reality invariably overrides stringent policy adherence. The study reports tacit approval of translanguaging from heads of schools and circuit supervisors, indicating a degree of flexibility in enforcing the language policy. The results call for re-evaluation of language-in-education policy to integrate translanguaging as a legitimate and intentional pedagogical approach at all levels of basic education in the country. The findings of the study suggest that when teachers are provided with the opportunity for professional development to understand and practise translanguaging intentionally in their classrooms, it can further enhance the benefits of translanguaging for teaching and learning at the junior high school level. This study therefore highlights the potential of translanguaging to improve teaching and learning outcomes by aligning classroom instructional practices with the linguistic reality of the students. A change towards policy that legitimises and supports translanguaging at the junior high level could reduce the gap between theory, practice and policy, ultimately improving learning outcome.

Future research should explore how structured professional development programs on translanguaging influence teachers' instructional strategies, confidence, and awareness of the concept in relation to educational policy. Such studies could adopt an experimental or longitudinal design to assess whether teachers who are trained in translanguaging pedagogy demonstrate improved classroom practices and whether their students exhibit enhanced comprehension, engagement, and academic performance. This would provide empirical evidence to support the formal integration of translanguaging into teacher training curricula, as

suggested by García and Lin (2017), who argue that intentional pedagogical use of translanguaging requires both conceptual clarity and practical know-how.

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