

# “Now get out your Schulübungshefte!”: Translanguaging behaviors of teachers in Austrian upper secondary CLIL and EFL classrooms.

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This study

- reviews previous research on translanguaging behaviors of teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes.
- provides a taxonomy of communicative functions of teacher-initiated episodes of translanguaging.
- reveals differences in teacher translanguaging behavior between CLIL and EFL contexts.
- suggests that teacher-initiated translanguaging can be used as a pedagogical tool.

## 1. Rationale

Until recently, teachers were expected to demonstrate and promote monolingual behavior in language classrooms. Resorting to the first language (L1) was avoided, and the target language constituted the only acceptable medium of instruction (Moore & Nikula, 2016). However, recent research has documented that the presence of the L1 in the language classroom has been reconsidered in the past two decades (Macaro, 2000; Moore & Nikula, 2016). Today, the L1 is perceived as a potential asset in language education by many researchers and practitioners (cf. Gierlinger, 2015). This shift can partially be ascribed to the emergence of CLIL classes, a formal type of multilingual education (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2013; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). In CLIL settings, all linguistic resources and competences, including the shared L1, are mobilized to achieve academic success as well as proficiency in the L2. This contributed to the redefinition of the role of the L1 in the foreign language classroom (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Moore & Nikula, 2016).

Translanguaging is a concept used to describe such multilingual practices. The Welsh expression *trawsieithu*, which was later translated to translanguaging, was initially coined in

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the 1980s to refer to a pedagogical approach in Welsh bilingual education, where student input and output was deliberately alternated between English and Welsh (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). However, scholars and practitioners have not agreed on a standardized definition as the term translanguaging is used to label slightly different concepts in various (research) contexts.

Although scholars often use translanguaging synonymously with code-switching, there are striking differences. Code-switching is defined as “systematic, alternating use of two or more languages in a single utterance or conversational exchange” (Levine, 2011, p. 50). Yet, translanguaging includes code-switching and any other practice “that draw[s] on an individual’s linguistic and semiotic repertoires” (Mazak, 2017, p. 5). Translanguaging assumes that multilinguals have one language continuum rather than separate language systems, which they use to communicate (Mazak, 2017). Also, while code-switching describes the mere act of language alternation, translanguaging wants to confront “linguistic inequalities” and promote the speaker’s multilingual abilities (Gierlinger, 2015, p. 348). For the purpose of this article, translanguaging will be defined as a “pedagogical stance”, which allows teachers and students to use all of their “linguistic and semiotic resources as they teach and learn both language and content material in classrooms” (Mazak, 2017, p. 5).

There is an increasing body of research on teacher-initiated code alternation in EFL settings (e.g. Grim, 2010), as well as in CLIL contexts (e.g. Gierlinger, 2015). Researchers who investigated translanguaging or code-switching behaviors in the field obtained the following results:

- CLIL and EFL teachers use the shared L1 for translations (e.g. García & Wei, 2014; Hopwell & Abril-Gonzales, 2019; Paulsrud & Toth, 2020).
- In CLIL, the occurrence of language alternation by the teacher is mostly attributed to content-related explanations (e.g. Cahyani, de Courcy & Barnett, 2018; Kontio & Sylvén, 2015).
- In EFL settings, some teachers tend to resort to their L1 when explaining linguistic rules (e.g. Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014; Grim, 2010).
- In both EFL and CLIL contexts, the L1 can be used as an instrument to support language and content teaching (e.g. Gené Gil, Juan Garau & Salazar Noguera, 2012; Hopwell & Abril-Gonzalez, 2019).

Nevertheless, comparisons between translanguaging behaviors of teachers in these two educational approaches are rare, and unprecedented in the Austrian setting. To address this gap in research, a small-scale study on teacher-initiated episodes of translanguaging in Austrian upper secondary CLIL and EFL classrooms was conducted.

## 2. Research questions

In light of the above, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1

What are communicative functions of teacher-initiated sequences of translanguaging in upper secondary EFL and CLIL classrooms?

## RQ2

How often do episodes of teacher-initiated translanguaging occur in EFL and CLIL classrooms?

## RQ3

Do translanguaging behaviors of teachers in upper secondary EFL and CLIL classrooms differ, and if yes, to what extent?

### 3. Study description

To answer the research questions, qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted. In the analysis, lesson transcripts from already existing classroom research were examined. Due to copyright issues, direct quotations from the lesson transcripts cannot be included in this article. For the empirical study, the unit of analysis was defined as teacher-initiated episode of translanguaging in CLIL and EFL classrooms. Therefore, every teacher-initiated translanguaging sequence in the data was detected and categorized as one or more communicative function/s. According to Austin (2013), communicative functions describe “the purpose of gestural, vocal, and verbal acts intended to convey information to others” (p. 751). However, in the present study, they were confined to verbal acts as written transcripts were analyzed.

#### 3.1 Database

The database consisted of six lesson transcripts, which were chosen based on the students' shared proficiency levels (A2 to B1 in years 9 and 10). As the study at hand aimed to compare CLIL and EFL, three sessions each were selected. The CLIL lessons were concerned with mathematics and economics. To investigate a range of different teaching contexts, upper-secondary lessons from four different Austrian schools held by four different teachers were selected. The transcripts were taken from various research contexts.<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.2 Methodology

As Dörnyei (2007) suggests combining qualitative and quantitative classroom research in applied linguistics, an interactional analysis from a pragmatics/discourse perspective (Dippold, 2015) was complemented by quantitative descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. An iterative and cyclical coding process of the data resulted in a systematic categorization of teacher-initiated episodes of translanguaging in classroom discourse. The lesson transcripts were coded with the software MAXQDA 2020. To compile a code system for the coding process, deductive and inductive category formation was carried out. Firstly, a preliminary deductive categorization, based on two different models was compiled. Gierlinger's (2015) model on teacher L1 use in Austrian CLIL settings and Wang's (2019) model on the translanguaging behaviors of teachers and students in the CFL (Chinese as a foreign

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<sup>2</sup> The transcripts were provided by Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Ute Smit in the context of the seminar VK Linguistics for Language Teachers (2020S).

language) context were chosen for this purpose. These codes were defined in a codebook including a description of the code, qualifications, and examples from the data (see Appendix 2). Secondly, inductive codes were added to the code system based on interpretation of the data and constant revision of the preliminary deductive codes by means of iterative coding. When applicable, multiple codes were applied to episodes of teacher-initiated translanguageing.

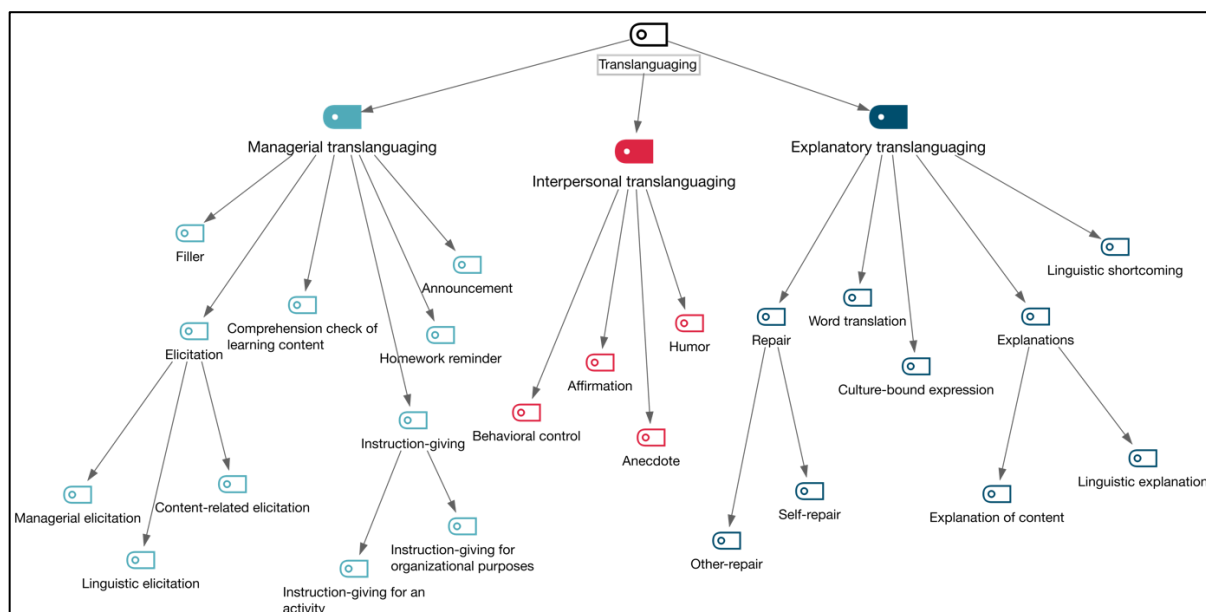
Thirdly, the results were visualized with the help of descriptive statistics. As these illustrations showed salient tendencies, inferential statistics, more precisely, chi-square tests, were performed with the software SPSS 26 to detect possible significant differences between codes in CLIL compared to EFL. Dörnyei (2007) argues that in social sciences, the value of the probability coefficient (p), which measures significance, has to be  $p < 0.05$  to be considered as significant (p. 210). With the effect size, the “magnitude of an observed phenomenon” is computed (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 212). For chi-square tests, Field (2018) suggests calculating odds ratios as measures of effect size because reporting odds ratios facilitates comprehension for the type of effect present.

#### 4. Findings

*RQ1: What are communicative functions of teacher-initiated incidents of translanguageing in upper secondary EFL and CLIL classrooms?*

In the coding process, 27 communicative functions were identified and organized into a hierarchical taxonomy consisting of three levels (see Figure 1). There are three supracategories named managerial translanguageing, interpersonal translanguageing, and explanatory translanguageing (see Appendix 1 for further descriptions). Each supracategory was assigned at least one further level of subcategories.

Figure 1: Taxonomy of communicative functions of teacher-initiated translanguageing



While sixteen deductive categories were established based on Gierlinger’s (2015) and Wang’s (2019) models, eleven inductive categories were developed during the coding process. The

latter are linguistic explanations, repair (including self-repair and other-repair), elicitation (encompassing managerial elicitation, linguistic elicitation, and content-related elicitation), fillers, culture-bound expressions, and affirmation.

*RQ2: How often do episodes of teacher-initiated translinguaging occur in EFL and CLIL classrooms?*

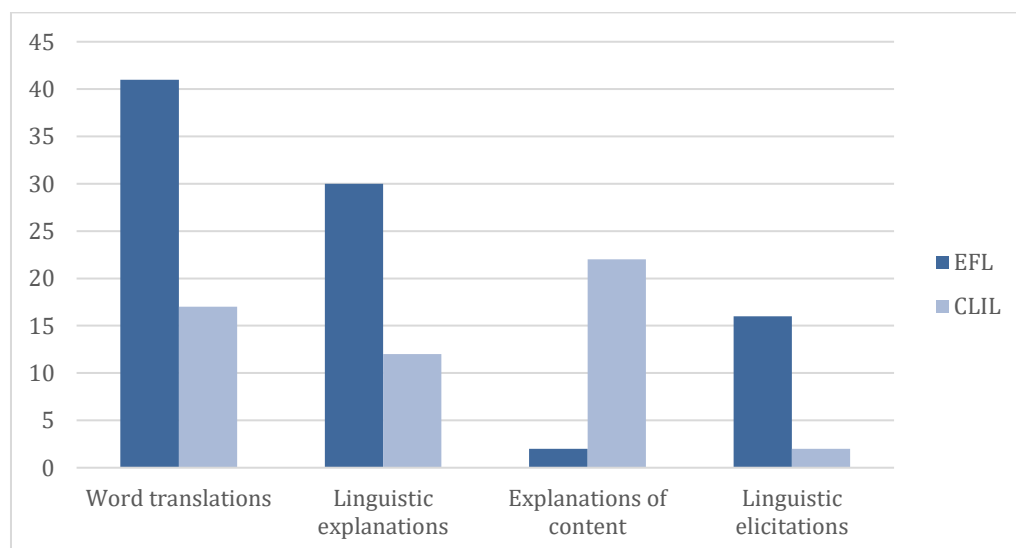
In the data, 442 sequences of teacher-initiated translinguaging were detected. Concerning the distribution of sequences within the supracategories, managerial translinguaging occurred 205 times (46.4%), whereas explanatory translinguaging accounted for 155 instances (35.1%), followed by interpersonal translinguaging with 82 instances (18.6%).

Within managerial translinguaging, fillers occurred 80 times (39%) and elicitations 55 times (26.8%). Instruction-giving, comprehension checks, announcements, and homework reminders constituted the remaining 70 instances (33.6%). Regarding explanatory translinguaging, explanations accounted for 66 translanguageed utterances (42.6%), and word translations were detected 58 times (37.4%). The remaining 31 cases (20%) were instances of repair, linguistic shortcomings and culture-bound expressions. Within interpersonal translinguaging, affirmations made up for 61 detected sequences (73.5%), while the rest amounting to 21 cases (26.5%) covered behavioral control, anecdotes, and humor.

*RQ3: Do the translinguaging behaviors of teachers in upper secondary EFL and CLIL classrooms differ, and if yes, to what extent?*

While 277 cases (62.7% of all episodes) occurred in EFL classes, 165 (37.3% of all episodes) happened in CLIL classes. Assumptions inferred from descriptive visualization of the data lead to the calculation of inferential statistical analyses. In fact, Pearson’s chi-square tests revealed that regarding two communicative functions, the translinguaging behavior of upper secondary teachers differed significantly with regard to the educational approach (EFL or CLIL). Chi-squares for word translations, linguistic explanations, content-related explanations, and linguistic elicitations were calculated as in these categories (see Appendix 2 for definitions), descriptive differences between CLIL and EFL settings were noticeable.

Figure 2: Differences in the use of teacher-initiated translinguaging between CLIL and EFL



The calculation of chi-square tests for word translations [ $\chi^2(1)=1.84$ ,  $p=.175$ ] and linguistic explanations [ $\chi^2(1)=1.52$ ,  $p=.217$ ] did not yield significant results. However, significantly more linguistic elicitations [ $\chi^2(1)=5.51$ ,  $p=.019$ ] were found in EFL classes. The odds ratios showed that the odds of linguistic elicitations to occur in EFL were .2, and hence, five times lower than in CLIL. Moreover, explanations of content occurred significantly more often in CLIL [ $\chi^2(1)=32.03$ ,  $p<.001$ ]. Here, the calculation of the odds ratios showed that the odds of the occurrence of explanations of content were 21.2 times higher in CLIL than in EFL.

## 5. Discussion

Although this was a small-scale study, some conclusions can be drawn:

- EFL centers around language acquisition while the learning of content is secondary. Therefore, the finding that translanguaged linguistic elicitations occurred significantly more often in EFL can be attributed to the focus of this educational approach.
- In contrast, CLIL aims at supporting both language and content learning equally. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that there are significantly more translanguaged explanations of content in CLIL compared to EFL.
- The descriptive tendency that word translations occurred more frequently in EFL could suggest that CLIL students are often already familiar with the vocabulary items necessary to talk about a topic.

As the study's database was limited to lesson transcripts, gestural and vocal acts of communication could not be considered in the analysis. Therefore, future research involving video recordings as well as video-stimulated recall interviews with teachers is necessary to find out more about teachers' motivations for translanguaging. These data collection methods could also provide valuable insights into how the classroom atmosphere and the relationship between students and teachers contribute to teachers' translanguaging behaviors. Moreover, as Covid-19 currently demands teachers to partially relocate their classes to e-learning platforms, it would be interesting to determine whether and if yes, how teacher-initiated translanguaging behaviors have changed due to the new teaching situation.

### Application Box

- Although the L1 plays a role in modern foreign language and content classes, it has to be borne in mind that usually in upper secondary classes, the majority of an EFL or CLIL session will still be taught in the target language. However, teacher-initiated episodes of translanguaging have shown to serve certain communicative functions (see Figure 1). Therefore, they do not have to be perceived as an unfavorable teaching method, but rather as an additional resource for teaching and meaning-making.
- As translanguaged word translations, linguistic explanations, and linguistic elicitations (see Appendix 2 for definitions) were frequently occurring communicative functions in EFL, teachers could use them to support EFL teaching and learning actively. The same applies to explanations of content (see Appendix 2 for a definition) in the context of CLIL lessons.



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## Appendix

The appendix is a shortened version of the codebook that was created by Astrid Maria Kristl and me during the coding process. Here, the definitions of the categories relevant to this article are offered. Due to copyright issues, the descriptions in the codebook cannot be illustrated with examples for the codes.

### 1. Supracategories

The taxonomy of communicative functions of teacher-initiated translanguaging is a hierarchical code-subcode model and consists of three supracategories, which are further divided into subcodes. In the following, the supracategories are defined.

- **Explanatory translanguaging (deductive supracategory):**  
 The teacher explains a concept or structure “to provide cognitive or metalinguistic scaffolding for meaning-making activities” (Wang, 2019, p. 144). Teachers make use of explanatory translanguaging when “explaining and elaborating grammar rules and lexical uses, translating new words, and interpreting cultural meaning” (Wang, 2019, p. 144). Furthermore, this type of translanguaging is often used by teachers when explaining the learning content or how to use learning tools, and when repairing their own or the students’ utterances.
- **Managerial translanguaging (deductive supracategory):**  
 The teacher provides “operational classroom instructions” (Wang, 2019, p. 144). This includes giving “instructions for an activity” or organizational purposes, “checking the comprehension of learning content”, announcing important events or organizational matters, and explaining homework (Wang, 2019, p. 144). In addition, the teacher also uses elicitation techniques to help the students to actively participate in class and to arrive at understanding of content.
- **Interpersonal translanguaging (deductive supracategory):** The teacher uses interpersonal translanguaging to signal approval, to tell personal stories, to make humorous utterances, and to control the students’ behavior. While Wang (2019) asserts that this category was predominantly used by students, and not teachers, in Gierlinger’s categorization (2015) and in the study at hand, this supracategory applies to teachers’ interpersonal use of translanguaging.

### 2. Codebook

The codebook was created and continuously updated during the coding process to facilitate iterative coding. In the table below, descriptions of the codes responsible for statistically relevant results are provided.

Table 2: Selected definitions of codes from the codebook

Code	Description	Qualifications
<b>Word translation</b> (deductive code; based on Gierlinger, 2015 & Wang, 2019)	The teacher provides the students with direct translations of words, terms and phrases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- equivalent L1 (German) word is given by the teacher to ensure understanding</li> <li>- German expression is used by the teacher in order to explain a concept or theory</li> <li>- often used in connection with linguistic explanation or explanation of content</li> </ul>
<b>Explanation of content</b> (deductive code; based on Gierlinger, 2015)	The teacher explains the learning content by resorting to their L1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to ensure the students’ understanding of the subject matter</li> <li>- tendency to be found more frequently in CLIL settings</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- usually refers to the topic of the lesson or activity in EFL classes</li> <li>- includes explanations on how to use learning tools, such as a calculator or a dictionary</li> </ul>
<p><b>Linguistic explanation</b> (inductive code)</p>	<p>The teacher explains a linguistic structure or a language-related rule. A linguistic explanation can refer to the forms. language can take, and its meaning (in context).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- includes the fields of phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics</li> <li>-encompasses explanations of upcoming issues from the two areas of the language system: grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, metalinguistic explanations of grammar rules and accounts of vocabulary items or phrases are included in this code.</li> <li>- pronunciation- and spelling-related issues are also addressed</li> <li>- tendency to co-occur with word translations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Linguistic elicitation</b> (inductive code)</p>	<p>The teacher elicits an utterance by asking a language-related question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher wants the student to contribute an answer to a grammar-, or vocabulary-related question</li> </ul>