How Chinese Senior High English Teachers Utilize and Perceive Translanguaging Practices in Classrooms: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract:

The past two decades have seen the rapid development of translanguaging research. However, due to the acceptance of English immersion instruction, research on translanguaging in Chinese EFL classrooms at the senior high level has been relatively limited. Notably, there is a critical gap in understanding teachers' translanguaging practices and attitudes in senior high schools. The present mixed-methods study contributes to this research agenda and seeks to explore specific practices and attitudes towards translanguaging. Following translanguaging pedagogy and sociocultural theory, the study included video recordings of five teachers' classes and interviews with four of these teachers, complemented by a questionnaire survey of 63 teachers. The study found that teachers employed these types of translanguaging: explaining unplanned vocabulary, clarifying grammatical concepts, localising content knowledge, provoking critical thoughts, and facilitating tasks. As for attitudes, teachers held generally positive but contextually grounded attitudes, showed greater acceptance of their own translanguaging than of students' translanguaging, and positioned translanguaging as student-centred scaffolding despite favouring the monolingual principle. Implications include the strategic value of translanguaging in enhancing comprehension and participation, underscoring the need for teacher development focused on language ideology. Limitations include the absence of data on teachers' emotions and student perspectives. Future research could explore the longitudinal effects of translanguaging on language learning and how monolingual ideologies influence classroom practices and perceptions.

Keywords: translanguaging practices, attitudes towards translanguaging, English as a Foreign Language, Chinese senior high schools

1. Introduction

The monolingual principle, emphasizing target-language-only instruction over students' L1 (Howatt, 1984; Cummins, 2007), has led second language teaching to traditionally frown upon code-switching (Zuo & Walsh, 2021). However, in recent decades, the multilingual turn (May, 2014) and educational decolonization (Li, 2022) have challenged these traditional ideologies.

Because of this trend, translanguaging, which refers to a language practice of switching between multiple languages and utilizing multimodal, semiotic, and embodied communicative resources to form a whole new linguistic repertoire to construct meaning (Li, 2018; García & Li, 2018), is the subject of burgeoning literature in educational settings. Rather than investigating detailed features of language variation caused by code-switching, the concept of translanguaging opens up room to explore how participants utilize their entire linguistic repertoire to achieve the goals of meaning negotiation and knowledge construction.

Although it has much potential in language learning, translanguaging lacks recognition and localisation in EFL classrooms in the Chinese mainland (Zheng & An, 2022) because of the monolingual principle upheld (Li & Shen, 2021), especially in middle school contexts. However, using only the target-language in foreign language classes may hinder learners' intercultural communication competence (Shen & Chen, 2024). Instead, translanguaging facilitates the use of multiple resources in classrooms (Li, 2018). Additionally, the awareness of translanguaging and its effects, such as allowing students to draw on their prior knowledge, is highly important in senior high school EFL classes in China. Though translanguaging research in China ranks 5th in publications and 4th globally in citations (Xin et al., 2021), existing research has focused heavily on higher education (e.g., Li et al., 2024; Jiang & Zhang, 2023) and bilingual programmes (Teng & Fang, 2024), with limited attention given to basic education (Zhou, 2023; Guo, 2023). Notably, translanguaging in Chinese EFL senior high schools remains understudied. Thus, further exploration in basic education in this area is needed, and the present study endeavours to contribute.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Translanguaging and attitudes towards it in educational settings

With the multilingual turn in language education, translanguaging has transformed from a two-language interchange (García, 2009; Baker, 2010) to a dynamic multilingual practice (Lewis et al., 2012a, 2012b). From the perspective of dynamic multilingualism, Otheguy et al. (2015, p. 283) defined translanguaging as "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages", which emphasized no boundary between different named languages through a psycholinguistic lens (García & Li, 2014, p.44; Li & Ho, 2018). Moreover, grounded in distributed

cognition (Hutchins, 2014), which characterizes languaging as "an assemblage of diverse material, biological, semiotic and cognitive properties and capacities" (Li, 2018, p.17), the concept of translanguaging has expanded to include multimodal practices (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018; García & Otheguy, 2020; Canals, 2021) and semiotic repertoires (Blackledge & Creese, 2017, 2020; Zhu et al., 2020a, 2020b), which include gestures, posture, gaps, silence and other embodied communicative practices.

One of the best-known translanguaging projects is research by Ofelia García and her colleagues on the bilingual development of "emergent bilinguals" (García, 2009; García & Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2017). For instance, García and Kleifgen (2020) showed that translanguaging strategies in multilingual classrooms enhanced text comprehension and production, literacy development, and critical metalinguistic awareness. Elsewhere, translanguaging has been researched in many other programmes, and the main findings include: pedagogical translanguaging raises students' critical language awareness in minority language programmes (Leonet et al., 2024), teachers' and students' translanguaging provides instructional and communicative affordances in bilingual education (Zheng, 2021), and preservice English teachers' translanguaging space construction and translanguaging stance display facilitate ELT methodology training in an EFL context (Li et al., 2024).

Additionally, some studies have focused on translanguaging in teacher–student interactions and, in particular, on teachers' translanguaging strategies (e.g., Wang, 2019; Zhou & Mann, 2021; Liu et al., 2020) for meaning-making and knowledge construction. They have investigated translanguaging practices in diverse contexts and identified context-based strategies. Kevin Tai's work, for example, explores meaning co-construction in Hong Kong's EMI classrooms through out-of-school knowledge, multimodal resources, and playful talk (Tai & Li, 2020, 2021b), offering key insights and an analytical framework for this study.

Recent research (Rajendram, 2023; Safont, 2022; Cai & Fang, 2022; Cenoz et al., 2022; Syed et al., 2025; Xiong, 2025) has explored stakeholders' perceptions of translanguaging, particularly teachers' and students' attitudes. They often show that teachers tend to have a negative attitude towards translanguaging, which is mainly because of concerns about language policies, as pointed out by Rajendram (2023) and Safont (2022), fears of demotivating students, as found by Cai and Fang (2022), and constraints of the monolingual principle (Syed et al., 2025; Xiong, 2025). Moreover, Cenoz et al. (2022) noted that teachers might feel guilty about using translanguaging, which reflects the influence of the monolingual principle. Student attitudes on the other hand vary contextually, with reservations about implementing translanguaging as a formal pedagogy in EMI/EFL classes where L1 is not dominant (Kwihangana, 2021).

While these contributions are valuable, many are grounded in multilingual contexts that differ significantly from the exam-oriented, monolingual norm of Chinese high school EFL classrooms. This study responds to the need for context-specific research by examining how translanguaging is enacted

and perceived in Chinese senior high schools, where English instruction traditionally emphasizes standardisation over fluid language practices.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study employs translanguaging pedagogy and sociocultural theory to investigate EFL teachers' translanguaging practices in Chinese senior high schools. Conceptually, it aligns with the view of translanguaging as a flexible umbrella term covering multilingual practices like code-switching, translation, and multimodal/semiotic resource use (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, 2021). Rather than treating languages as separate systems, this perspective emphasizes the dynamic mobilisation of learners' full linguistic repertoires for meaning-making and interaction.

From the translanguaging pedagogy perspective, "translanguaging as pedagogy" (García & Li, 2014, p.92) advocates leveraging students' linguistic strengths, sustaining their dynamic languaging, and encouraging teachers' strategic translanguaging as scaffolding—providing rationale for this study. Additionally, "pedagogical translanguaging" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021, p.14), which is defined as teachers' planned language use or strategies based on the whole linguistic repertoire, focuses on multilingualism, which involves three dimensions: the multilingual speaker, the multilingual repertoire, and the social context. The theoretical basis of pedagogical translanguaging highlights prior knowledge as foundational, with scaffolding bridging prior knowledge and language development, and with connected growers identified for more efficient development of the multilingual repertoire. This pedagogical translanguaging framework provides an analytical approach to translanguaging practices and perceptions in the present study.

Translanguaging conceptualisation and translanguaging pedagogy are closely related to sociocultural theory. According to this theory, learning is a socially-mediated process, and language, or languaging, functions as a primary mediational tool through which individuals internalise knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Qin, 2018). From a sociocultural theory lens, translanguaging can be seen as a socially situated practice that supports learners' meaning-making, tailored to learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) by creating a translanguaging space (Li, 2018), where linguistic boundaries are fluid and cultural and linguistic identities can be developed. In addition, sociocultural theory provides an important foundation for analyzing teacher perceptions, which are not seen as socially constructed beliefs.

To summarize, while translanguaging pedagogy views translanguaging practices as tools to enhance learning, sociocultural theory emphasizes that teacher beliefs are shaped by social and contextual factors. Thus, grounded in translanguaging pedagogy and sociocultural theory, this study examines both how teachers use translanguaging in practice and how they perceive its role in teaching, to contribute empirical insights to translanguaging studies in China's exam-driven and monolingual

learning environments. A comprehensive understanding thus requires attention to both practice and perception. Accordingly, this study poses two interrelated research questions (RQs):

> RQ1: What types of translanguaging practices have been adopted by teachers in EFL classrooms in senior high schools in China?
>
> RQ2: How do English teachers in Chinese senior high schools perceive translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

Since the research concerns contextualised practices and attitudes, this study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach (Leavy, 2022), utilizing multiple methods in the same study for triangulation (Williamson, 2018). This design is justified by the need to first capture broad patterns of teacher attitudes (RQ2) through quantitative data and then contextualise these with in-depth qualitative insights into classroom practices (RQ1) and underlying reasons for attitudes (RQ2). Firstly, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted to ensure item reliability (Cronbach's α). Then, using convenience sampling, the questionnaire was distributed to senior high school English teachers via WeChat groups and other online platforms, aiming to capture teacher perceptions of their own and their students' translanguaging practices (RQ2). Subsequently, video-recorded classroom observations (to provide contextualised examples for RQ1) and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews (to explain underlying reasons for RQ2) were conducted with teachers who were observed in the classroom and agreed to be interviewed. Data analysis involved using SPSS for quantitative results, multimodal conversation analysis for classroom data, and qualitative content analysis for interviews.

3.2 Context and participants

This study was conducted from October to December 2021. The classroom observation data were collected in 3 schools in Beijing and one in Nanning, China. Sixty-three senior high EFL teachers completed the questionnaire, who came from 13 provincial-level administrative regions of China and had a wide range of teaching experience (See Table 1), providing insights into translanguaging in senior high EFL teaching. The sample size is considered adequate for small-scale survey research in applied linguistics (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). The five EFL classes, each taught by a different teacher (labeled as T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5 for anonymity), were observed. The five lessons were taught to students who had completed China's nine-year compulsory education, with English proficiency ranging from CEFR A2 to B1 (See Table 3 for an overview). Four of the teachers from these classes (T1, T2, T3, and T4) agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews (see Table 2).

Table 1. Background Information of Questionnaire Participants: Years of English Teaching

Year(s) of Teaching English	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Less than 1	7	11.1%
1–6	29	46.03%
7–12	8	12.7%
13–18	5	7.94%
19–24	9	14.29%
25–30	4	6.35%
More than 30	1	1.59%
Total	63	100%

Table 2. Background Information of the Interviewees

No.	Master's Degree	Professional Title
T1	MEd	First-Grade
T2	MEd	Senior
T3	None	Senior
T4	MA	First-Grade

Table 3. Overview of the Observed Lessons

Lesson No.	Grade	Class Type	Duration	Main Content	Teacher No.
L1	Senior 1	Reading	40 min	Read the passage "Living Legends", featuring brief biographies of Lang Ping and Michael Jordan.	T1
L2	Senior 1	Reading	40 min	Read the two argumentative passages: "The Internet Harms Friendships" and "The Internet Helps Friendships".	T2
L3	Senior 1	Reading	40 min	The same content as L2.	T3
L4	Senior 2	Reading	40 min	Read a passage about Helen Keller's language acquisition journey.	T4
L5	Senior 1	Pre-writing	50 min	Write a short event description. Before writing, students analyze a model passage about a grandfather's 70th birthday celebration.	T5

3.3 Data collection

The questionnaire was adapted from Nambisan (2014), whose framework guided our design. Before the formal questionnaire survey, a pilot study with 12 teachers confirmed the reliability of the questionnaire (Cronbach's α=0.905 via SPSS 26.0). Modifications were made to improve the clarity of wording: (1) we explained "translanguaging" more accessibly. An explanation of the jargon was given in the introduction section, while in the actual questions, it was simplified to "Chinese use"; (2) in "teachers' attitudes towards their own Chinese use in specific situations", "to praise students" was removed because several teachers in the pilot study reported that they rarely used the L1 for this purpose, and "to explain concepts" and "to describe vocabulary" were integrated into "to explain concepts or vocabulary"; (3) for "teachers' attitudes towards students' Chinese use in specific situations", "to discuss content or activities in small groups" and "to brainstorm during class activities" were combined into "to discuss or brainstorm in small groups". Finally, an online questionnaire, translated into Chinese, was distributed online via WeChat groups and other platforms. A total of 63 questionnaires were obtained and all were valid, meeting statistical requirements (Leavy, 2022), with results demonstrating satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's α=0.879) and validity (KMO value=0.772).

For classroom data (about 250 students, 210 minutes total), prior to the video-recorded observations, informed consent forms were distributed to the teachers. All teachers provided informed consent and informed students of the recording in advance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Chinese with four high school English teachers after classroom observations to allow teachers to reflect on and explain their language choices observed during actual lessons, using "L1 use" in place of "translanguaging" for clarity. Key areas include: (1) general opinions about Chinese in English teaching; (2) opinions about student L1 use in English class, L1's effects on L2 learning, and the English-only monolingual ideology; and (3) expectations of class language use.

3.4 Data analysis

For the video recordings, translanguaging instances were identified and then analysed via multimodal conversation analysis (MCA), as MCA focuses on "how teachers draw on multiple linguistic, multimodal, and spatial resources to shape their pedagogical practices and how the students themselves treat these practices" (Tai, 2023, p. 1). Transcription was coded on the basis of the Jefferson Transcription System (2004) and Mondada's (2018) conventions for multimodal resources.

The audio recordings of the teachers' interviews were transcribed verbatim using iFLYTEK Dictation (Xunfei Tingjian), a Chinese automatic speech recognition (ASR) software, and edited, then translated into English. Qualitative content analysis was applied to group answers, code concepts, and summarize key findings. For the teacher questionnaires, descriptive analysis was used.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Teachers' translanguaging practices (RQ1)

The taxonomy of translanguaging practices presented in this study was adapted from previous studies (e.g., Wang, 2019; Zhou & Mann, 2021; Fang & Liu, 2020) and further refined based on the data collected in this context. Thus, five classroom excerpts were analyzed to illustrate the types of translanguaging adopted by teachers in EFL classrooms in senior high schools: explaining unplanned vocabulary (Excerpt 1), clarifying grammatical concepts (Excerpt 2), localising content knowledge (Excerpt 3), provoking critical thoughts (Excerpt 4), and facilitating tasks (Excerpt 5). Each category features representative excerpts that showcase typical translanguaging practices in Chinese EFL classrooms (Have, 1990). These excerpts are then triangulated with questionnaire and interview data to identify consistencies and contrasts across different data sources.

4.1.1 Explaining unplanned vocabulary

Prior to Excerpt 1, a student asked the teacher (T2) for the meaning of "stay in touch" in the silent reading session, which is regarded as unplanned vocabulary. In Excerpt 1, T2 explained the phrase to students by translanguaging, utilizing Chinese, gestures and other communicative repertoires.

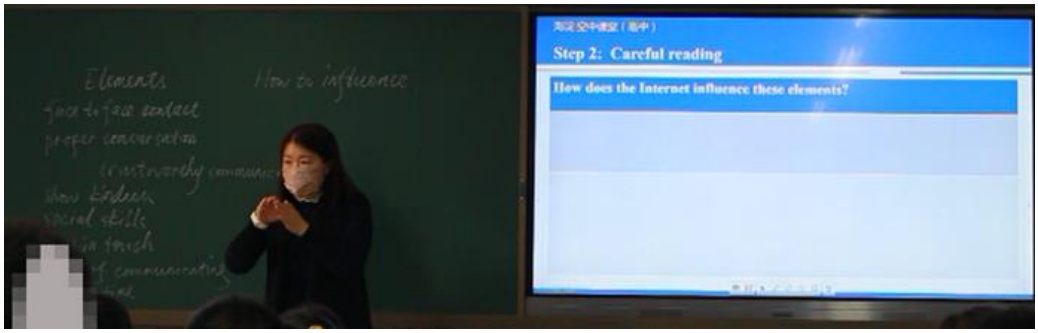

Figure 1. T2 Explains Unplanned Vocabulary "Stay in Touch" by Putting Hands Together

Excerpt 1. Explaining Unplanned Vocabulary

03		what's the meaning of +"stay in touch"?
		+T2 put her right hand and pointed at the word "stay in touch" on the blackboard.
04		+Do you know the meaning of the phrase?
		+T2 gazed at students and leaned forward.
05	S1	°保持[联系°.]
06	S2	[>使之感[动.<]]
07	T2	[保持-]
08		So, um, what (.) +what do you say?
		+T2 made a gesture as invitation to S2.
09	S2	感动的.
10	T2	+No:↑.
		+T2 gazed at S2 and students in that direction.
11		+"in touch",
		+ T2 made a gesture that two hands formed fists and moved close to each other. It's a quick gesture.
12		"keep in touch",
13		that means +"communicate with your friends
		+T2 put her two hands together. See Figure 1.
		for +>many many< times".
		+T2 moved her right hand a bit far from her left hand.-->
14		保持联系+.
		-->+
15		So it means (.)
16		when you can't keep in touch with your friends,
17		your friendship will be over.
18		(0.2)
19		Clear, everyone?
20	Ss	Um.

The interaction starts with T2 pointing to the word "stay in touch" on the blackboard and asking students for its meaning (lines 3–4), thereby initiating a moment of contingent scaffolding in the students' ZPD. In response, students offer varying Chinese translations (lines 5–6). Instead of immediately correcting S2, T2 invites elaboration through gesture (line 8), fostering an inclusive meaning negotiation translanguaging space for explaining unplanned vocabulary. Upon hearing S2's "感动的" (moved) (line 9), T2 gently disconfirms with "No" while maintaining gaze and visual engagement (line 10), preserving the student's willingness to participate—essential in sociocultural approaches to scaffolding. T2 then mediates meaning through multimodal semiotic resources: using hand gestures to bring fists together (line 11), symbolising connection, and reinforcing the English phrase "keep in touch" (line 12). The gesture of putting hands close (Figure 1), alongside the verbal explanation "communicate with your friends for many many times" (line 13), constitutes a multimodal translanguaging move—where speech, movement, and bilingual phrases co-construct meaning. The

subsequent shift into Mandarin "保持联系 (stay in touch)" (line 14) demonstrates that no rigid language boundaries are enforced. Instead, students' whole linguistic repertoires are activated to support conceptual understanding. T2 then provides a contextualized summary— "when you can't keep in touch with your friends, your friendship will be over" (lines 15–17)—which not only clarifies the lexical item but also embeds it in a socially meaningful scenario. The final comprehension check (line 19) and the students' collective affirmative response (line 20) suggest that the translanguaging space created through dynamic bilingual scaffolding and multimodal mediation effectively supported vocabulary acquisition and classroom engagement.

4.1.2 Clarifying grammatical concepts

Before Excerpt 2, Teacher T5 had students complete a fill-in-the-blank exercise using linking words. While students easily recognized the first function of linking words—indicating time order (blue blanks in Figure 2)—they struggled with the second function: enhancing dramatic effect (purple blanks). In Excerpt 2, T5 strategically employs translanguaging, blending multimodal repertoires and code-switching, to clarify both the grammatical role and pragmatic impact of the adverbial connector "surprisingly".

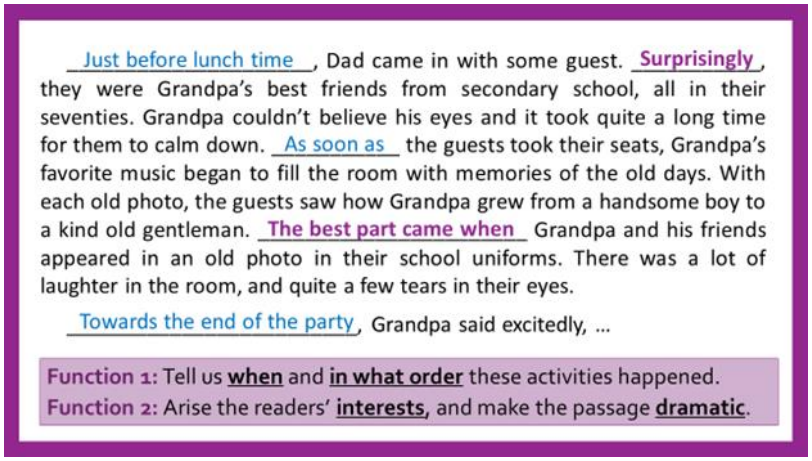

Figure 2. A Slide in T5's Class, with a Blank-Filling Task of Linkers to Guide Students to Identify The Functions of Adverbial Connectors

Excerpt 2: Clarifying Grammatical Concepts

17 "Surprisingly, they were Grandpa's best friends."
18 +But if you don't have this word, "surprisingly",
the text will be look like this:
+ T5 looked at the whiteboard and pointed at the sentences and circled the word "surprisingly". -->
19 "Dad came in with some guests. They were Grandpa's best
friends." +
-->+
20 Do you think this expression is better than
"Dad came in with some guests. Surprisingly, they were
Grandpa's best friends"?
21 (.)
22 看看有 surprisingly 和没有 surprisingly 的区别，是什么?
((tr. What are the differences between "with 'surprisingly'" and "without 'surprisingly'"? What are the differences?))
23 (.)
24 Can make this passage. 能让文章怎么样啊?
((tr. Can make this passage what?))
25 S2 更[生动].
26 S3 [更[生动.]]
27 Ss [更生动.]
((tr. More vivid.))
28 T5 生动对吧? 有同学说.Yes.
((tr. More vivid, right? Some students said.))
29 +那其实我们可以啊… We can arise the readers' interests,
((tr. So we can…))
+T5 pointed on the whiteboard and switch to the next page of PPT.
+and make the passage dramatic with these linkers. OK?
+T5 gazed at students. -->
30 "Arise the readers' interests" means. 是什么呀? 可以…
31 S1 *兴趣.
*S1 put up his hand.
32 S2 可以吸引读者的兴趣.
((tr. Can arouse readers' interests.))
33 T5 可以，对，吸引读者的兴趣. 对吗? +
((tr. Yes. Can arouse readers' interest. Right?))
-->+
34 And make this passage dramatic.
35 "Dramatic" means, 是什么呀?
((tr. what))
36 (.)
37 就是"戏剧性的"，"充满戏剧性的".
((tr. That's dramatic.))
38 (0.3)
39 Or can make your passage more impressive.

The episode begins with a comparison between two English sentences—one with "surprisingly", one without (lines 17–19)—and a prompt that invites students to evaluate (line 20). T5's gesture of pointing and circling "surprisingly" on the whiteboard (line 18) introduces multimodal mediation, aligning with sociocultural views that learning is supported by visual and embodied tools. The switch to Chinese in line 22 marks the entry into a translanguaging space, where the teacher temporarily shifts into students' L1 to lower cognitive load. Evidently, this flexible boundary-crossing allows students to engage more fully using their whole linguistic repertoires. T5 further prompts students by code-switching within the same sentence (line 24) to guide students to verbalise answers. Students respond nearly in unison with "更生动" ("more vivid", line 27), demonstrating collective understanding negotiated through bilingual dialogue. After getting the answer, T5 affirms their contributions in Chinese and expands the explanation bilingually, thus fusing metalinguistic explanation with meaning construction. The Chinese phrase "可以吸引读者的兴趣" (line 32) is validated by the teacher (line 33), and another term "dramatic" is then explored via bilingual prompting— "what does 'dramatic' mean?" followed by the clarification "就是 '戏剧性的', '充满戏剧性的'" (line 37).

Throughout this exchange, T5 fluidly alternates languages, reinforces with gestures and visuals, and uses metalinguistic questioning to mediate grammatical meaning—demonstrating how semiotic resources (speech, gesture, visual emphasis) can scaffold student understanding of abstract grammar concepts like adverbial connectors.

4.1.3 Localising content knowledge

Before Excerpt 3, T1 had students review key details about both players (Figure 3). In Excerpt 3, T1 employs translanguaging—blending English, Chinese and other semiotic resources—to introduce Lang Ping's nickname, "Iron Hammer", making the cultural reference more accessible to students.

Figure 3. A Slide in T1's Class, with a Blank-Filling Task of Nicknames and Fields of Lang Ping and Michael Jordan

Excerpt 3: Localising Content Knowledge

01 T1 OK. So do you know the nickname of Lang Ping?
02 +Nickname. °郎平的昵称°.
((tr. The nickname of Lang Ping.))
+T1 walked among students.
03 Ss 铁榔头.
((Tiě láng tou, which is the nickname of Lang Ping in Chinese.))
((tr. Iron Hammer, which is the nickname of Lang Ping in English.))
04 T1 +铁::
((tr. Iron.))
+T1 put up her right hand.
05 Ss 铁榔头.
06 T1 铁榔头.+
+T1 put her right hand up. The gesture was like an invited gesture.
07 How do you say it in English? +
+T1 gazed and smiled at students nearly.
08 S1 Iron:
09 T1 铁:
10 S2 FE!
((“Fe” is the terminology for iron in the periodic table of elements. And the subject Chemistry is one of the main subjects in Chinese senior high schools, which is chosen by a large proportion of senior high students as one of the subjects in the College Entrance Examination.))

11 T1 Fe↑ (hhhhh).
12 Ss Fe. (hhhhh). Fe.
((Here the teacher and students laughed due to the jock of “Fe”. See Figure 4.))
13 S3 Iron!
14 T1 Iron. Iron. Yes. 铁.
15 “榔头”呢？榔头，+锤子.
((tr. “Hammer”, what about “hammer”?))
+T1 made a gesture of hitting with a hammer.
16 S4 Ham[mer.]
17 S5 [H[ammer.]
18 Ss [Hammer.]
19 T1 Iron hammer.
20 +Iron is 铁. Hammer, 锤子. 铁榔头. Um.
+T1 walked onto the stage, and pointed out the answers on PPT. The slide of PPT is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 4. A Laughing Moment in T1's Class Due to Students' Response "Fe"

T1 begins by asking a question that invites students to recall prior knowledge, activating their ZPD. When students answer "铁榔头" (Iron Hammer) in Chinese (line 3), T1 immediately reinforces this by translating it into English, demonstrating a direct linguistic and cultural connection: After the initial response, T1 uses a gesture to reinforce the word "铁" (Iron), raising her hand as a cue (line 4), prompting students to recall the term in English. Notably, this gesture not only provides a visual cue but also represents the multimodal approach to learning—where both language and gesture work together to facilitate deeper comprehension. By doing so, T1 builds a translanguaging space, where students can draw from their entire linguistic repertoire (both English and Chinese) and multimodal resources to make sense of the vocabulary and its context. The interaction takes a playful turn when one student (S2) offers "Fe" (line 10), referring to the chemical symbol for iron. T1 responds affirmatively, laughing along with the students (line 12), fostering an engaging, relaxed learning environment, which forms a laughing moment (Matsumoto et al., 2022). This semiotic repertoire—which includes the chemistry term "Fe", the word "iron" in English and Chinese, and laughter—supports the process of learning through a playful talk (Tai & Li, 2021b). It's evident that the incorporation of laughter and humor helps students bond with the content, making learning both enjoyable and memorable. After a talk about "iron", T1 then continues with the second part of the nickname, "榔头" (hammer) (line 15). She supports students' understanding with a gesture of hammering, further linking the term to a physical action and helping students internalise the meaning of the word "hammer". Students are then encouraged to pronounce the English equivalent "hammer" (lines 16–18), completing the bilingual exploration of the term. T1 then sums up the vocabulary by

combining the two terms into "Iron hammer" (line 19), reinforcing both the English and Chinese versions of the phrase. In summary, by walking through both the Chinese and English terms, supported by gestures and laughter, T1 effectively localizes content knowledge.

4.1.4 Provoking critical thoughts

Prior to Excerpt 4, the teacher (T1) led a textual analysis. In Excerpt 4, the teacher (T1) effectively employed translanguaging to engage students in critically reflecting on whether Lang Ping remains a "living legend" despite not winning gold at the Tokyo Olympics (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Post-Reading Discussion in T1's Class, to Deepen Students' Understanding of "Living Legends"

Figure 6. T1 Pointed to the Blackboard Writing "Influence" and "Strong" to Link the Current Discussion and Prior Taught Knowledge

Excerpt 4: Provoking Critical Thoughts

04 And she (.) said to the media that
05 +>I'm sorry↓<, I didn't lead the team to the world champion↑, >I'm sorry↓<.
+ TS tried to imitate and apologize with a sad and pitiful mood.
06 啊，她对全国人民道歉，说 (.) 很遗憾.
((tr. Ah, she apologized to the public, and said what a pity.))
07 Then, do you think it's a losing legend?
08 +Or still a living legend↑?
+T1 gazed at students and leaned forward.
09 (.)
10 Is she still a living legend, do you think?
11 Ss Yes.
12 T1 Yes or no?
13 Ss Yes.
14 T1 她这一次并没有成功，那她还是我们的传奇人物吗?
((tr. She didn't get success this time. So is she still our legend?))
15 Ss 是:
((tr. YES.))
16 Ss YE:S.
17 T1 +Why did you say so? Why?
+T1 walked among students. -->
18 Why do you think though losing, she is still a living legend?+
-->+
19 S1 Nobody can deny her.
20 T1 Nobody can (.) +deny her (.)achievement,
+ T1 made a gesture of parallel movement of her right hand.
21 nobody can +ignore her (.)
+ T1 made a gesture of parallel movement of her right hand.
22 S2 Hard work.
23 T1 Hard work+, right↑?
+ T1 made a gesture of right index finger pointing down.
24 +So, her +influence,
+T1 walked on the stage.
+T1 pointed at the blackboard writing "influence", which was written in the former pedagogical section about the characteristics of a living legend. See Figure 6.
25 her +strong influence,
+T1 pointed at the blackboard writing "strong".

The interaction begins with T1 quoting Lang Ping's media apology in English with performative emotion and simultaneously conveying the sadness through tone and body language (lines 4–5). This multimodal mediation, including mood, gesture, and prosody, acts as a powerful tool in motivating students' responses. T1 then switches to Chinese to contextualize and localize the emotional

significance (line 6), scaffolding comprehension by drawing on students' familiar language and cultural knowledge. Notably, this fluid shift between English and Chinese and the use of multimodal resources establish a translanguaging space, where meaning-making is enhanced through the interplay of the whole communicative repertoires without rigid boundaries.

T1 continues by asking provocative questions (lines 7–8) and then again rephrases the question in Chinese (line 14). This movement across languages strategically mediates deeper reflection by anchoring the abstract idea of "living legend" within students' ZPD. The dialogue becomes more interactive when T1 prompts students to explain their reasoning (line 17). When S1 answers (line 19), T1 echoes and expands the idea using gesture-based mediation (lines 20–21). As S2 adds "Hard work" (line 22), T1 again echoes and affirms with gesture and rising intonation (line 23), sustaining student motivation through positive feedback. T1 then brings attention to previously taught content by pointing to "influence" and "strong" on the board (line 24–25, and Figure 6), thus linking current discussion with prior knowledge and mobilising multiple communicative repertoires—a translanguaging move that fuses written, oral, gestural, and bilingual elements. To sum up, T1 not only encourages students to critically evaluate the concept of living legends but also demonstrates how translanguaging practices leverage the whole semiotic and linguistic repertoire to build cognitive, affective, and cultural engagement.

4.1.5 Facilitating tasks

Before Excerpt 5, T2 had students identify "elements that help maintain friendship" and introduced a follow-up task on how the internet affects these elements. Due to time constraints, T2 assigned the second task as homework. In Excerpt 5, T2 strategically uses translanguaging to clarify instructions and support student engagement.

Excerpt 5: Facilitating Tasks

03	But (.) the time is limited↑,
04	and we can't now read the sentences one-by-one.
05	And: (.) tomorrow,
06	we are going to summarize the influence together,
07	can you understand me?
08	好，留给大家一个作业.
	((tr. Well, this is homework for you.))
09	请你把咱们写作本上的这个表格完善，
	((tr. Please complete the table in your exercise book.))
10	我这里先不呈现答案了啊.
	((tr. Now I won't show you the answers.))

T2 begins in English by stating, "the time is limited, and we can't now read the sentences one-by-one" (lines 3–4), providing a clear rationale for shifting the learning activity. This use of English

maintains instructional formality, whereas the shift to Chinese (line 8) marks a pedagogical translanguaging space that enhances clarity and eases students' processing demands. In the following lines, T2 continues in Chinese to clarify the specific task (line 9). Here, the switch to the students' L1 allows for precision and efficiency, ensuring no ambiguity remains in understanding what is required. This moment reflects the activation of students' whole linguistic repertoire to enable successful participation in the learning task. By choosing not to display the answer immediately (line 10), the teacher scaffolds the task by leaving space for student autonomy, encouraging independent effort while maintaining pedagogical structure. Overall, the teacher's strategic use of both English and Chinese creates a flexible, learner-centered classroom where instruction is clarified and task completion is supported through dynamic, multilingual resources.

4.2 Teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging (RQ2)

The second research question aimed to explore how English teachers in Chinese senior high schools perceive their use of translanguaging and students' use of that in EFL classrooms, drawing on data from questionnaires and interviews. According to the two datasets, there are three major findings of teachers' attitudes: they (1) held generally positive but contextually grounded attitudes, (2) showed greater acceptance of their own translanguaging than of students' translanguaging, and (3) positioned translanguaging as student-centred scaffolding despite favouring the monolingual principle.

4.2.1 Teachers held generally positive but contextually grounded attitudes towards translanguaging

Results from both the questionnaire and interviews suggested that Chinese senior high school English teachers generally held positive but contextually sensitive attitudes towards translanguaging. Firstly, the result of a general question showed that the teachers were more likely to find L1 use beneficial, accounting for 80.95% of the sample (see Table 4).

Table 4. The Result of a General Question: "Do You Believe the Use of Students' Native Language is Beneficial in English Language Classroom?"

General Opinion	Number	Percentage
Beneficial	51	80.95%
Not beneficial	12	19.05%
Total	63	100%

Table 5. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Importance of Their Own Translanguaging in Specific Situations

No.	Item	Mean	
1	To explain concepts or vocabulary	3.30	3.43
2	To quickly provide clarification during activities	3.38	
3	To give directions	3.41	
4	For classroom management	3.37	
5	To give feedback to students	3.27	
6	To build bonds with students	3.44	
7	To help low proficiency students	3.83	

Table 6. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Importance of Students' Translanguaging in Specific Situations

No.	Item	Mean	
1	To discuss or brainstorm in small groups	2.90	3.12
2	To respond to teacher's questions	2.81	
3	To provide assistance to peers during activities	3.30	
4	To enable participation by lower-proficiency students	3.92	
5	To explain problems not related to content	2.86	
6	To ask permission	2.95	

Additionally, Table 5 and Table 6 show teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging in specific classroom situations. Table 5 presents teachers' attitudes toward their own translanguaging, significant differences found across the 7 items ($p < .05$, via independent samples t-tests). The overall mean value was 3.43. Table 6 presents the preliminary analysis of teachers' attitudes toward students' translanguaging, indicating significant differences across the 6 items ($p < .05$, via independent samples t-tests). The overall mean score in this area was 3.12. Obviously, by synthesizing the results of the two tables, it can be concluded that in the five-point Likert scale survey, teachers rated the importance of

L1 use moderately high (M=3.43 for teachers' use and M=3.12 for students' use) across multiple classroom scenarios. These results indicated that most teachers recognised the pedagogical value of translanguaging in supporting teaching and learning.

Furthermore, this general positivity was echoed in the interviews, where all four participants acknowledged the benefits of translanguaging, especially two teachers mentioned that it supported students' metalinguistic knowledge acquisition. For example:

> T4: *"The second point is that we can make a comparison, that is, compare Chinese and English, so that students can experience the characteristics of English and Chinese."*

Although generally positive, two teachers still held fixed attitudes toward L1 use due to (1) concerns about over-reliance on L1, and (2) perceived conflicts between L1 and target-language linguistic features. For example:

> T3: *"Chinese has its own composition of the subject, predicate, and object in the sentence pattern. In fact, these will cause some misunderstandings in English."*

Meanwhile, three teachers mentioned that they used L1 based on lesson types, and two reported more L1 in grammar lessons. For instance:

> T3: *"I prefer to use my native language (Chinese) in grammar teaching because students will have a clearer understanding of the corresponding grammar concepts."*

Thus, the questionnaire and interview data suggested that the teachers were largely positive about L1 use in EFL classrooms, which they felt might benefit metalinguistic knowledge acquisition but might be context dependent.

4.2.2 Teachers showed greater acceptance of their own translanguaging than of students' translanguaging

Although teachers generally acknowledged the value of translanguaging, both quantitative and qualitative data revealed a clear distinction between attitudes toward teacher versus student use of the L1. Firstly, in the questionnaire, the overall mean value of teachers' attitudes towards their own translanguaging is 3.43, while students' translanguaging 3.12, which is relatively lower. Specifically, while teachers rated all seven scenarios of their own translanguaging practices above the neutral point ($M > 3$), indicating a consistently positive perception of teacher-led translanguaging across diverse classroom contexts, several scenarios involving students' translanguaging were rated below the midpoint ($M < 3$), such as discussing or brainstorming in small groups ($M = 2.9$) and responding to teachers' questions ($M = 2.81$). This suggested a more cautious view of student translanguaging, particularly in relation to language output.

Meanwhile, interview data supported this asymmetry. On the one hand, three participating teachers viewed their own translanguaging as a supportive tool, such as for class instructions and explaining grammatical concepts, which echoes the findings of classroom observations. For instance:

> T3: *"I prefer to use my native language (Chinese) in grammar teaching because students will have a clearer understanding of the corresponding grammar concepts."*

Moreover, three teacher participants stressed the role of translanguaging when students had insufficient English proficiency. For instance:

> T1: *"The first is the student's ability. If the student cannot use the target-language, (the teacher) may still need to use the first language for assistance."*

On the other hand, all four teachers adopted a cautious stance on students' L1 use when students engaged in language output, as they all preferred to use English to guide students to answer the questions in English if students answered in Chinese. For example:

> T2: *"I will ask students to think about how to express the idea in English, and we work together to help them solve the problem in English. After that, I ask students to repeat it in English."*

This cautious stance towards L1 use in the response-feedback process was also supported by the questionnaire results, as "to give feedback to students" in teachers' translanguaging had the lowest mean score (3.27) among all the items in the teachers' translanguaging scale, which reflected teachers' slight unwillingness to use Chinese to guide students. Thus, when students answered the teachers in Chinese due to their low English proficiency, the teachers mostly continued using English to guide and encourage them.

Taken together, these results suggested that teachers viewed their own use of L1 as controlled and supportive, while students' use was tolerated but expected to be transitional and scaffolded toward target-language use.

4.2.3 Teachers positioned translanguaging as student-centred scaffolding despite favouring the monolingual principle

Despite expressing an ideological preference for English-only instruction, teachers in both the questionnaire and interviews demonstrated a student-oriented stance toward translanguaging in practice. Firstly, in the interviews, two out of four participants (T1 and T4) described the ideal English classroom as "fully immersive," one as "80% English" (T2), while two mentioned "it depends on students' conditions" (T2 and T3). For example:

> T4: *"I think the ideal English classroom language use is English-only."*

Notably, teachers maintained a conservative attitude towards the proportion of translanguaging practices in the whole-classroom discourse. Meanwhile, all four teachers acknowledged the benefits of English-immersed instruction, such as (1) providing students with an English learning environment or context; (2) enhancing students' experience and feelings of the English language; and (3) encouraging students' English expression. For instance:

> T1: *"English is a language that can achieve maximum learning effectiveness only through immersive learning in a target-language environment."*

Evidently, it is concluded that teachers express an ideological preference for English-only instruction. However, in both questionnaires and interviews, teachers demonstrated a student-oriented stance towards translanguaging. In Table 5, the highest-rated item in teacher categories is "to help low proficiency students" (M=3.83), while in Table 6, the highest in student categories is "to enable participation by lower-proficiency students" (M=3.92), indicating that teachers regarded translanguaging as particularly valuable when it served an inclusive function. This alignment across teacher- and student-related items suggested that supporting struggling learners was the most widely accepted rationale for L1 use in the EFL classroom.

Furthermore, the interview data suggested that the teachers permitted students to translanguage for the following purposes: (1) when they lacked metalinguistic knowledge, (2) when they expressed ideas related to critical thinking, and (3) when students found it difficult to understand. For example:

> T2: "*If students need to engage in highly advanced thinking and express themselves, but their second language hinders their ability to do so, (at that moment I will allow them to use L1).*"

This aligned with the results of classroom observations, where students' use of L1 emerged during moments of conceptual difficulty or critical reflection. Moreover, when further interviewed about English-immersed instruction, three teachers expressed reserved attitudes towards it, mentioning "it depends on students' proficiency and receptivity" (T1, T2 and T3). For instance:

> T2: *"...but this still depends on students' learning proficiency."*

To summarize, the findings showed that teachers navigated a tension between their belief in the monolingual principle and their practical commitment to translanguaging due to the student-centred ideology. This reflects a pedagogical rationale grounded in sociocultural theory, where teachers act as mediators within the learners' ZPD, using all available semiotic resources—including the L1—when necessary to advance learning.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

While previous research investigating translanguaging instances and beliefs across contexts has emphasized the benefits and shortcomings of translanguaging, studies on Chinese senior high school

EFL teachers' translanguaging practices and perceptions are still under-researched. Therefore, the study explored this group of teachers' translanguaging practices (RQ1) and perceptions (RQ2). In response to RQ1, five types of translanguaging practices were identified in classroom observations—explaining unplanned vocabulary, clarifying grammatical concepts, localising content knowledge, provoking critical thoughts, and facilitating tasks. With respect to RQ2, they held generally positive but contextually grounded attitudes, showed greater acceptance of their own translanguaging than of students' translanguaging, and positioned translanguaging as student-centred scaffolding despite favouring the monolingual principle. And interview data showed the rationale behind this acceptance, citing its role in metalinguistic knowledge support and critical thinking, which echoes the findings in classroom observations. This reveals a subtle gap between stated attitudes and actual practices, which echoes Xiong (2025), reflecting the context-driven nature of translanguaging. Overall, the integrated findings provide a more context-sensitive understanding of translanguaging. They unpack translanguaging practices and attitude-practice tensions, which are tailored to Chinese high school EFL contexts. And these contexts are shaped by curriculum policies, students' varied English proficiency and cultural norms.

The findings reveal that teachers' practices echo translanguaging, utilizing multimodal elements such as multiple languages, PPTs, gestures, laughter, moods, and prosody to create translanguaging spaces that aid students' meaning-making and knowledge construction. This aligns with recent studies exploring translanguaging processes incorporating multimodal resources (Zhou, 2023), semiotic repertoires (Zhu et al., 2020a, 2020b) and "embodiment" (Blackledge & Creese, 2017, 2020).

The observed translanguaging types partly align with findings from previous classroom studies, while also offering new insights. Firstly, "explaining unplanned vocabulary" and "clarifying grammatical concepts" resemble the explanatory strategies of Wang (2019) and Zhou and Mann (2020), "the concept/language point explanation" of Fang and Liu (2020), and "localising content knowledge" also echoes "content knowledge localisation" of Fang and Liu (2020). Meanwhile, the laughing moments and playful talks identified in translanguaging practices in the current study match the interpersonal strategies of Wang (2019), the rapport-building strategies of Zhou and Mann (2020), and the creation of class rapport strategies of Fang and Liu (2020). Furthermore, this research identifies seldom-studied translanguaging as a strategy of provoking critical thoughts, which is also supported by teachers' interviews where they admitted L1 as a supportive tool for students' critical thinking issues. Moreover, the study also emphasizes the role of translanguaging in task promotion, which echoes the claim in the previous studies that teachers take translanguaging as a managerial support (e.g., Wang, 2019; Syed et al., 2025).

The study shows that teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging align with student-centred ideologies. Teachers generally hold positive views, particularly regarding student participation (aiding low proficiency students) and scaffolding (facilitating understanding, acquiring metalinguistic knowledge, and expressing critical thinking). The positive attitudes in these aspects resonate with the

translanguaging strategies of teachers in this study. Unexpectedly, the study suggests that teachers believe that translanguaging should take up a relatively small proportion of the classroom language instruction, revealing adherence to an English-only approach, indicating conservative views on the role of translanguaging in classroom discourse. One interviewee noted school restrictions on Chinese use in English classes, highlighting challenges of utilizing translanguaging in EFL classrooms. Teachers valued the English language experience of students, emphasizing the importance of English input and immersion.

In terms of pedagogical implications, practitioners can utilize these translanguaging strategies during the teaching process to attain optimised outcomes. Concurrently, re-evaluating the monolingual principle and enhancing teachers' awareness of translanguaging are important. Limitations include a lack of survey questions to explore teachers' motivations and emotions during translanguaging, and a lack of space to report focal students' practices and perceptions. Future research could explore how translanguaging supports foreign language acquisition in Chinese contexts longitudinally and how situations of the monolingual ideology inform translanguaging practices and perceptions.

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