

Investigating Translanguaging Practices in Multilingual ESL Contexts: A Foundation for Developing a Language Program

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ABSTRACT

Translanguaging is the dynamic use of multiple languages by multilingual speakers that enables them to utilize their linguistic repertoire to communicate and learn more effectively. This study examined the use of translanguaging as a learning tool among Bachelor of Secondary Education – English (BSED-English) students in ESL classrooms at North Eastern Mindanao State University–Bislig Campus, Philippines. Specifically, it investigated the types, frequency, and functions of translanguaging, as well as the sociocultural factors influencing its use. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, data was gathered through class audio recordings, online surveys, and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that first-year students produced the highest number of translanguaging utterances, likely due to their ongoing academic adjustment. Intra-sentential switching was the most frequently used type across all year levels, reflecting the fluid language practices among the students. They also blended English with local languages, particularly Cebuano (Bisaya), Kamayo, and Surigaonon. Translanguaging was prevalent in both informal interactions and formal academic discussions, functions aligning with Jakobson's metalingual and phatic functions of language. While students valued the benefits translanguaging offered, they also acknowledged the relevance of the English-Only Policy in their academic training. The study concludes that translanguaging plays a significant role in students' academic and social engagement. These findings also suggest a need to embrace translanguaging as a strategic pedagogical practice in ESL education.

Keyword: *Translanguaging, Multilingual, Surigao del Sur, ESL, Pedagogical*

1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the use of translanguaging as a learning tool among BSED-English students in ESL classrooms at North Eastern Mindanao State University-Bislig Campus, Bislig City, Philippines. Specifically, the researcher explored the types of translanguaging, the frequency of practices employed by students, the functions these practices serve in facilitating learning, the various sociocultural factors that influence the occurrence and effectiveness of translanguaging.

The term "translanguaging" gained prominence in the 1990s through Cen Williams' work on language alternation in bilingual classrooms^[1] and the concept of linguistic repertoires^[2]. In the Philippines, linguist Maria Lourdes S. Bautista significantly contributed to research on translanguaging, particularly code-switching, as a pedagogical tool. Bautista argued that code-switching reflects strategic language use rather than poor skills, as it helps bridge students' native languages and English to foster comprehension and participation^[3]. Her work, in turn, has influenced many Filipino researchers^[4,5] who emphasize translanguaging's role as a communicative tool in classrooms.

Despite the extensive research on this subject, a significant gap persists in understanding translanguaging as a learning tool in Bislig, Surigao del Sur, where ethnically diverse students use Surigaonon, Bisaya, Filipino, and English. Although translanguaging is often stigmatized as a barrier to target language learning^[5] it has the potential to be an effective tool in ESL classrooms. Unfortunately, the lack of structured educational programs recognizing its value limits opportunities to enrich local language practices and improve educational experiences.

Therefore, this study explored the types, frequency of use, user perception, functions, influencing factors, of translanguaging, particularly code-switching, among BSED-English students at North Eastern Mindanao State University-Bislig Campus. The findings will help develop targeted language programs for local teachers, providing strategies to enhance communication and language learning. Moreover, the data gathered will benefit stakeholders such as CHED and LGUs by offering valuable insights into improving English language education in the region.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study asserts that translanguaging, often seen as a barrier to target language acquisition, can instead serve as a powerful pedagogical tool. By exploring its types, frequency, user perceptions, functions, and influencing factors, the researcher aims to develop a language program that bridges students' native languages with English. Shana Poplack's foundational work on code-switching^[6] outlines three key types, the Intra-sentential, Inter-sentential, and Tag-switching, which offer structural insight into how language alternation occurs. While Poplack focuses on grammatical constraints^[7] Other researchers also expanded the concept by highlighting the fluid, socially situated, and ideological dimensions of translanguaging^[8], particularly in educational and communicative contexts.

In terms of function, Roman Jakobson's model^[9] identifies six purposes, including Referential, Emotive, Conative, Phatic, Metalingual, and Poetic, that help explain why speakers code-switch. However, his approach views language systems as fixed, whereas translanguaging reflects dynamic use of a full linguistic repertoire^[10]. In contrast, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and García's sociolinguistic theory emphasize cognitive and social integration through multilingualism^[11]. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory further frames translanguaging as a culturally mediated practice within learners' Zones of Proximal Development^[12]. Supporting theories such as Cummins' model and Baker's Dynamic Bilingualism^[13] complement this view, enriching the understanding of translanguaging within the multilingual Filipino ESL context.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

This study hypothesized that translanguaging, a linguistic practice that involves the strategic use of multiple languages within a communicative context, can serve as a valuable learning and pedagogical tool in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. By examining the types, frequency of use, user perceptions, functions, and influencing factors of translanguaging, this research aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of how this linguistic practice can enhance language learning and teaching.

The study drew upon the theoretical frameworks of Shana Poplack, Roman Jakobson's model of language function, and Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. Shana Poplack's work identifies three main types of translanguaging: intra-sentential switching (within a sentence), inter-sentential switching (between sentences), and tag switching (short phrases or words). Roman Jakobson's model of language functions provide a framework for understanding the purposes of translanguaging, including referential (information transmission), emotive (expressing emotions), conative (influencing behavior), phatic (maintaining social connections), metalingual (clarifying meaning), and poetic (focusing on emphasis, rhythm, or humor). Translanguaging is influenced by cognitive, structural, and social factors, with Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizing its role in scaffolding learning and navigating complex content.

Based on the findings of this research, the study will help in recommending effective language programs for local and national use. Specifically, the study will advocate for a more adaptable curriculum that enables university students to maximize the benefits of translanguaging as a learning tool for the target language, English. By incorporating translanguaging into language instruction, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for ESL students.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the translanguaging phenomenon among BSED-English students at North Eastern Mindanao State University-Bislig Campus. Specifically, the study will:

1. Identify the types of translanguaging (code-switching) found in the utterances produced by the students;
2. Determine the frequency of translanguaging (code-switching) used by students;

3. Investigate the students' perceptions on the use of translanguaging in the language learning experience; and
4. Identify the different functions of the translanguaging (code-switching) phenomenon.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study investigated translanguaging (code-switching) among BS Education-English students in ESL classrooms at North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) Bislig. The research adopted a descriptive qualitative research design, through collecting data from online surveys and in-depth interviews with students. Qualitative descriptive research is an approach used for in-depth understanding of the phenomena or events studied through the collection and analysis of qualitative data^[14]. This is used to extract meaning and deep understanding of the perspectives, experiences, and social context of research participants.

The types were identified via audio recording classroom interactions during class sessions^[15]. At least one hour of class were recorded from each of the four (4) year levels to capture student discourse. The recordings were reviewed to locate conversations with translanguaging, which was then transcribed for analysis based on the types of translanguaging focusing on Shana Poplack's typology^[15].

For the frequency and student perception of translanguaging in ESL classrooms, an electronic survey via Google Forms was conducted. The survey gathered data on the students' perceptions on the use of translanguaging in their classrooms. Descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequencies, were used to analyze the data. This determined the frequency under what conditions translanguaging was most prevalent. A thematic analysis was also used to determine the students' perceptions on it.

A focus group discussion (FGD) was also be conducted to explore the functions and factors influencing students' use of code-switching^[16]. The discussion was audio-recorded using a mobile phone and transcribed for analysis. Thematic analysis^[17] was then be used to identify patterns or themes shaping the code-switching phenomenon among the students. The FGD allowed the participants to share experiences and perceptions of translanguaging, revealing its functions (e.g., clarification, expression) and influencing factors (e.g., social dynamics, policies). The interactive nature of FGDs encouraged reflection on language use, often uncovering insights missed in individual interviews or observations.

2.2 Research Locale

The research was conducted at North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) – Bislig, located in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines (Figure 2). This site was chosen for its linguistic diversity, as students in Bislig City speak multiple languages, including Surigaonon Bisaya, Kamayo, Filipino, and English (Mila et al., 2021). This multilingual competence enables residents to switch between languages seamlessly depending on context and audience. Additionally, NEMSU-Bislig, the only state university in the city, is known for its strong academic programs and its use of an English as a Second Language (ESL) module. The interplay of multiple languages within an English-only classroom policy makes this location an ideal and rich site for study. Moreover, the university has an estimated 250 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English (BSED-English) program. This concentration of students dedicated to studying the English language creates an optimal venue for data collection on code-switching practices within an ESL context.

In this study, gatekeepers played a crucial role in facilitating participant recruitment by having access to the BSED-English students. Specifically, the gatekeepers include the department head of the Education program and lead faculty members at NEMSU – Bislig Campus. They have provided permission for recruitment and share information about the study, ensuring compliance with institutional protocols. However, to prevent undue influence, gatekeepers were not involved in the direct selection of participants. All students were approached independently with their participation entirely voluntary and no academic or institutional consequences. Communication with the gatekeepers included formal requests for access and written consent, ensuring transparency and ethical adherence throughout the process.

The current study utilized translanguaging interchangeably with code-switching, though the two terms differ in their conceptualization of language use in multilingual contexts. Translanguaging is a broader concept, encompassing strategies like that of code-switching. It involves the fluid and dynamic blending of languages based on a unified linguistic source. In contrast, code-switching refers to the alternation between distinct languages within a conversation, maintaining clear boundaries between them. While translanguaging emphasizes fluidity and integration across languages, code-switching focuses on the deliberate shifting between separate linguistic systems for pragmatic or social purposes.

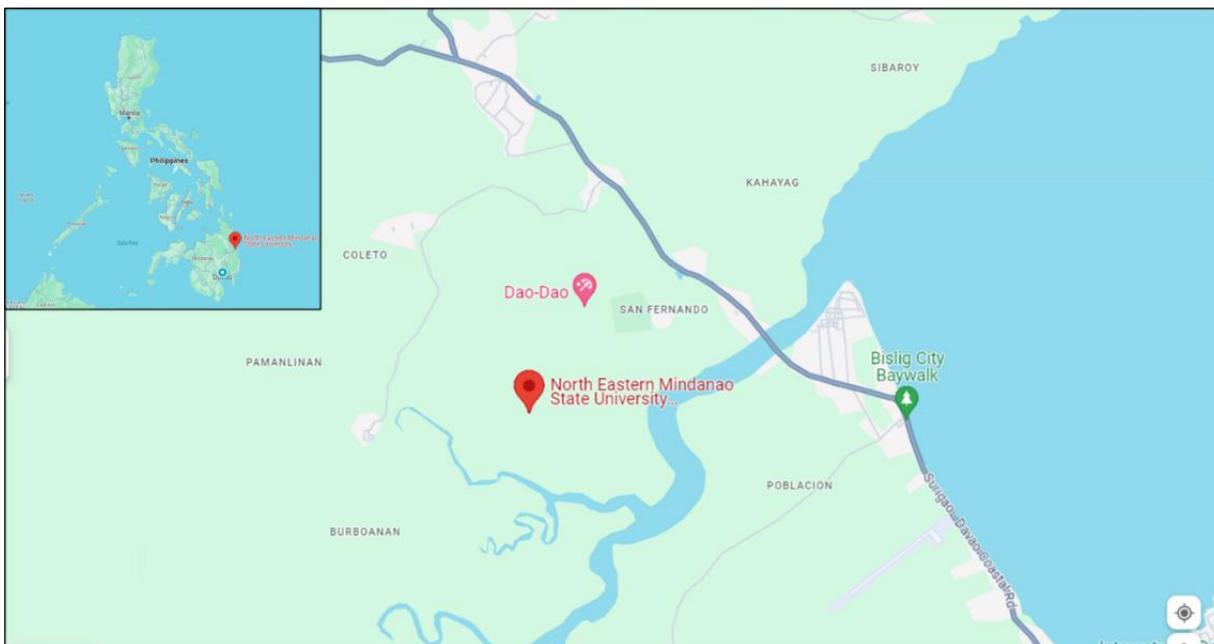


Figure 1. Location of the study site, North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur

2.3 Subjects of the Study

The study recruited Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English students from North Eastern Mindanao University – Bislig Campus. These students are enrolled in a multilingual English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, where they are required to use English as the target language. The participants are currently enrolled in the program during the current academic year with ages between 18 and 59 years old. The research was inclusive with no discrimination based on gender or ethnicity.

The study targeted BSED-English students from the first to the third year levels. The researcher was able to observe classes from six (6) sections, with each class expected to have 30 to 40 enrolled students. Thus, the estimated number of participants for the audio recordings ranged from 180 to 240. For the online survey, a total of 156 respondents were recruited: 44 from the first year, 61 from the second year, and 49 from the third year, and 2 irregular students. Additionally, 10 students participated in the focus group discussion (FGD), consisting of four first-year students and three each from the second and third years. This respondent structure provided a comprehensive view of translanguaging practices across different academic levels and instructional contexts.

Table 1. Distribution of the target number of respondents for the online survey and focus group discussion.

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Respondents for Audio Recording		
First Year	~200	
Second Year		
Third Year		
Respondents for Online Survey:	156	93.98

	First Year	44	26.51
	Second Year	61	36.75
	Third Year	49	29.52
	Irregular	2	1.20
Respondents for FGD:		10	6.02
	First Year	4	2.41
	Second Year	3	1.81
	Third Year	3	1.81
Total Number of Respondents		166	100

2.4 Research Instrument

This study conducted an online survey and focus group discussion to explore the types, frequency of use, user perception, functions, and influencing factors of translanguaging, particularly code-switching among BSED-English students at NEMSU-Bislig.

The types of translanguaging (code-switching) and the frequency of its use in ESL classrooms, were identified using an online survey via Google Forms^[18]. The first part of the survey asked about the demographics of the respondents, followed by items that examined how frequently students engage in translanguaging during their everyday activities at school. The choices include “Never,” “Sometimes,” and “Always.” Moreover, the students were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the use of translanguaging^[19], using Likert scale questions answered with “Strongly Agree”, “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree”. This instrument was validated by 3 experts and was subjected to a pilot test which was participated by 61 fourth year students from NEMSU-Bislig’s BSED English program

In parallel with the survey, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with a selected group of students to explore the functions and factors influencing their use of code-switching. A researcher-developed questionnaire, grounded in the literature review, was created to examine these aspects. The questionnaire contained questions related to Roman Jakobson’s six functions of language and Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural theory.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The collection methods (class audio recording, online survey and focus group discussion) were conducted concurrently the second semester of the school year 2024-2025 (January to May, 2025).

When the approval to conduct the study at NEMSU-Bislig was received, the researcher collaborated with the teachers of the classes to schedule the class recordings. The teachers were asked to inform students about the study beforehand. An informed consent form (ICF) was distributed to students for their review and signature. The assigned student gatekeeper per class starts the recording as the class session proceeded with the recording device placed in a discreet area in the classroom. Each of the recordings lasted for at least an hour or until the end of the class discussion.

For the online survey, the researcher disseminated the survey through social media (Facebook and Messenger) and flyers on campus walls. The recruitment advertisements contained information about the study, eligibility criteria, and a link/QR code to a pre-screening form. The link contained a screening form that determined their eligibility to participate. The succeeding section was on the online Informed Consent Form (ICF), that provided a detailed information about the research methods, their rights, confidentiality and privacy. Their responses were assigned a unique code for reference. The entire process, including pre-screening, reviewing the ICF, and completing the survey, took approximately 10-20 minutes.

In parallel with the survey, the respondents for the FGD were recruited using convenience sampling. They were invited through a letter of invitation that included information about the research, participant rights, and the scheduled date and venue of the FGD. The invited respondents confirmed their interest in continuing with the study through replying to the letter of invitation through email or message. During the FGD, the researcher followed the script which included a brief introduction, an explanation of participant rights, and a review of the ICF. After the ICF was signed, the researcher facilitated the discussion using open-ended questions based on the research focus. The FGD was audio recorded for documentation purposes and lasted approximately two hours. Following the discussion, the participants were provided with snacks as a token of appreciation for their time and contribution.

To ensure the ethical conduct of this study, several steps were taken to secure the necessary approvals and maintain transparency with all parties involved. First, the approval was sought from the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), the Campus Director, and the BSED Department Chair. This was to ensure institutional support and the alignment of the research with the university's academic goals and policies. By securing these approvals and consents, the research process was conducted with respect to the rights and privacy of all participants, as well as the ethical standards of the institution and its faculty.

Additionally, participants were informed of their voluntary involvement, and all data handling methods to ensure confidentiality and minimize potential risks. This approach guaranteed a thorough and ethical procedure, balancing the interests of the participants, the institution, and the research objectives.

2.6 Statistical Treatment

The data collected from each method underwent various statistical treatments to provide a comprehensive understanding of translanguaging among BSED English students at NEMSU-Bislig.

The class audio recording data of the classroom sessions were transcribed and then coded where the types of code-switching used by the students were identified. The frequency and average of each code-switching type were calculated to determine the most prevalent forms used in the classroom setting^[20]. For the online survey, the result of the frequency of usage and the student perception underwent quantitative analysis through calculating the frequency and average occurrence of each type of code-switching.

For the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), the recordings were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, wherein recurring themes and patterns related to the factors influencing students' code-switching behavior were identified and categorized. This qualitative analysis enabled a deeper understanding of the functions and the influencing sociocultural factors that driving translanguaging^[16].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Types of Translanguaging

A total of 2,249 minutes of class recordings were obtained from the three NEMSU Bislig BSED English year levels. From this, 1,112 minutes of recording were obtained from the 2nd year level, followed by the 3rd year at 646 minutes, then 1st year at 491 minutes. Upon transcribing the recordings, a total of 2,325 translanguaging utterances were recorded from all the year levels. The majority of this was contributed by the 1st year students with 866 instances, followed by the 2nd year students that had 754 utterances and lastly by the 3rd year students with 705 utterances (Figure 3).

The data indicates that although the 2nd-year level had the longest total recording time, it was the 1st-year students who produced the highest number of translanguaging utterances. A downward trend is evident in the number of utterances as the year level increases. This pattern may reflect the students' linguistic adjustment to academic settings, first-year students, having just transitioned into university, may rely more heavily on translanguaging due to limited familiarity with the target language. As students' progress to higher levels, increased exposure and experience may enhance their confidence and proficiency, resulting in reduced reliance on translanguaging.

The observed translanguaging utterances were classified according to Poplack's typology of translanguaging. Among 1st-year students, intra-sentential translanguaging was the most frequently used type, accounting for 720 instances, followed by tag-switching with 120 instances, and inter-sentential switching with only 26 instances. A similar distribution was found among 2nd-year students, who also exhibited a predominance of intra-sentential code-switching (696 instances), followed by tag-switching (49 instances), and inter-sentential switching (9 instances). The same pattern was observed among 3rd-year students, who produced 680 intra-sentential instances, 20 tag-switching instances, and only 5 inter-sentential instances. The results show that there is a significantly high use of intra-sentential translanguaging across the three-year levels. These trends are illustrated in Figure 4.

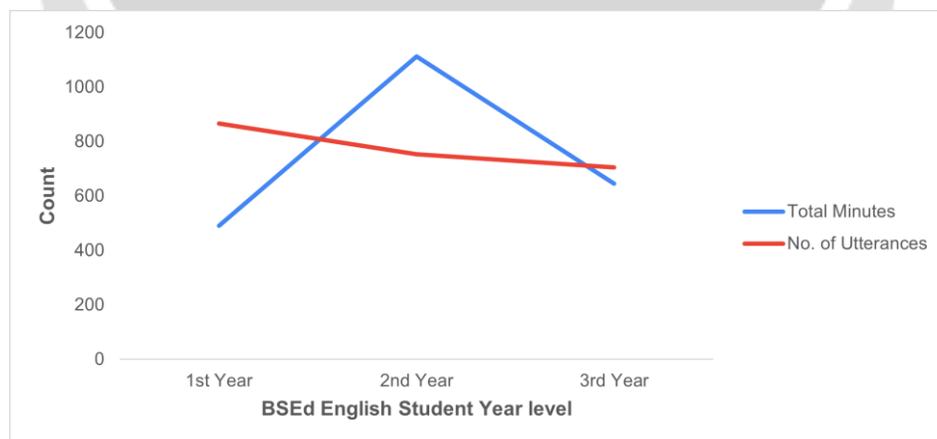
The results indicate that the most common translanguaging is the mixing of languages within the same sentence. Intra-sentential switching, or the blending of languages within a single sentence^[21] is by far the most prevalent across all

groups, with a total of 2,096 instances and a high mean of approximately 699. This indicates that students are most comfortable integrating different languages within the same sentence, possibly reflecting a natural tendency to switch^[22]. First-year students show the highest frequency, with 720 instances, suggesting that new college learners may rely more heavily on this type of switching as they adjust to academic demands. The sample utterances are listed in Table 2.

Inter-sentential switching, which involves switching between languages at sentence boundaries, is the least frequent form of code-switching, with only 40 instances in total and a mean of about 13. This suggests that students are less likely to alternate full sentences between languages, possibly due to formality constraints in academic contexts. Tag-switching, or the insertion of single words or tags from one language into a sentence of another, shows a decreasing trend from 1st to 3rd year (120, 49, 20 respectively), indicating that as students' progress academically, they may become more conscious of language use and lean toward more structurally integrated forms like intra-sentential switching. This downward pattern also suggests increased language proficiency and confidence in sticking to a primary language structure while still using translanguaging strategically. Sample inter-sentential and tag-switching utterances are listed in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

It was also observed that students did not limit their code-switching to a single local language paired with English. Instead, they engaged in translanguaging involving multiple local languages alongside English. Instances were recorded where English was alternated with Tagalog, Bisaya, Surigaonon, Kamayo, or even combinations of two or three of these local languages. An example is “So kanang, dili, hindi tayo nahihirapan makipag usap because it is a natural way of conversation.” Wherein the words Bisaya words “kanang, dili”, Tagalog phrase, “hindi tayo nahihirapan makipag usap,” and English phrase, “because it is a natural way of conversation.” Is mixed in one sentence. Additionally, among 1st-year students enrolled in a subject on the Life and Works of Rizal, some utterances included Spanish words, as required by the course content. An example include: “Kana, and madalas nagkuan din ito sa social divine, dahil nga sa principales at madalas na nakikita bilang collaborators o katuwang ng colonial government.” Wherein Bisaya words like “Kana, nagkuan”, Tagalog words, “madalas, din ito sa, dahil nga sa, at madalas na nakikita bilang, o katuwang ng,” the English words, “social divine, collaborators, colonial government”, and the Spanish word, “Principales” were mixed intra-sentential. These findings suggest that students utilize a diverse linguistic repertoire when engaging in classroom discourse^[23]. The multilingual nature of their utterances reflects the complex sociolinguistic environment in which they are situated where multiple local languages coexist and interact with English in academic contexts^[16,20].

Figure 3. The total duration of class recordings from 1st-3rd year levels of BSED Students and the number of



translanguaging utterances used by the students per year

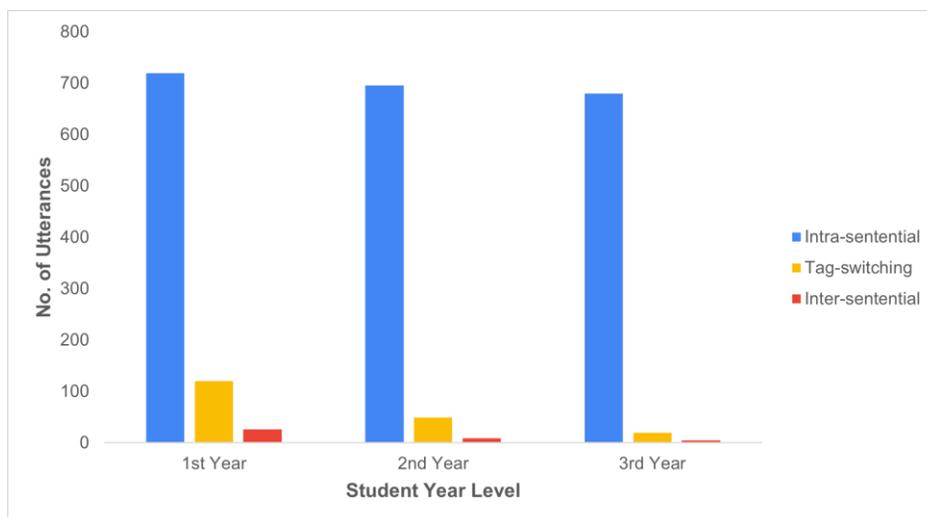


Figure 4. Number of instances of Intra-sentential, Tag-switching, and Inter-sentential translanguaging of NEMSU BSED English 1st – 3rd year students

3.2 Frequency of Translanguaging

A total of 156 students across the three-year levels of NEMSU BSED English program participated in the survey. Majority of the respondents were from the 2nd year level with 61 respondents, followed by 49 third year students, 44 first year students, and 2 irregular students. From these, 117 students were Female, 36 were Male, 2 were non-binary/third gender, and 1 preferred not to say (Figure 5).

The local languages spoken by the respondents were also identified through the online survey. The findings revealed a total of eight (8) distinct local languages represented among the students. Of the total respondents, 91 students reported Cebuano Bisaya as their primary local language, making it the most widely spoken among the group. This was followed by 31 students who identified as Kamayo speakers and 12 students who indicated Surigaonon as their local language. In addition to these major groups, a small number of students reported speaking Manobo, Mandaya, Tagalog, and other Indigenous Peoples' (IP) languages. Notably, two respondents opted not to disclose their language preference.

These results suggest that Cebuano Bisaya is the dominant local language among the student population, with Kamayo and Surigaonon also comprising significant linguistic groups. This distribution may be attributed to the geographical context of the North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) Bislig Campus, which is situated in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, a region known for its linguistic diversity. The proximity of neighboring municipalities and provinces, each with their own linguistic communities, may also influence the variety of local languages represented among the students, as many may commute from or reside in surrounding areas. Furthermore, the presence of other minor languages, though represented by only a few individuals, further strengthens the previously discussed diverse linguistic repertoire of students in NEMSU-Bislig. It highlights the role of academic institutions as converging spaces for diverse linguistic and cultural identities^[10].

On the frequency of translanguaging within the classroom during nine (9) common academic tasks, the data reveals that students engage in code-switching with varying frequency across different contexts, with the highest occurrence observed in informal and personal interactions (Figure 6). Specifically, a significant number of students “always” translanguage during casual conversations (86), while expressing personal experiences (73), and when texting or chatting with friends (72). These findings suggest that in relaxed or peer-centered communication, code-switching becomes a natural part of language use, likely because it allows students to express themselves more comfortably and authentically^[12].

In contrast, the academic domain shows more moderate or situational use of Translanguaging. For example, students “sometimes” change language when answering in class (105), presenting in class (104), and clarifying concepts (91). This indicates that while code-switching may not be a consistent practice in formal academic settings, students use it

strategically when needed, particularly when explaining complex ideas or ensuring better understanding. This behavior highlights the adaptive nature of students' language choices, as they switch languages to bridge communication gaps, emphasize points, or simplify explanations, especially when the primary language of instruction might be limiting their expression. Meanwhile, Translanguaging is least practiced in highly formal academic tasks, particularly in writing. A significant number of students responded "never" to code-switching when writing class notes (40) and while working on academic tasks (34). These responses align with academic norms that prioritize consistency in language use, especially in written outputs where standard language is typically required^[18].

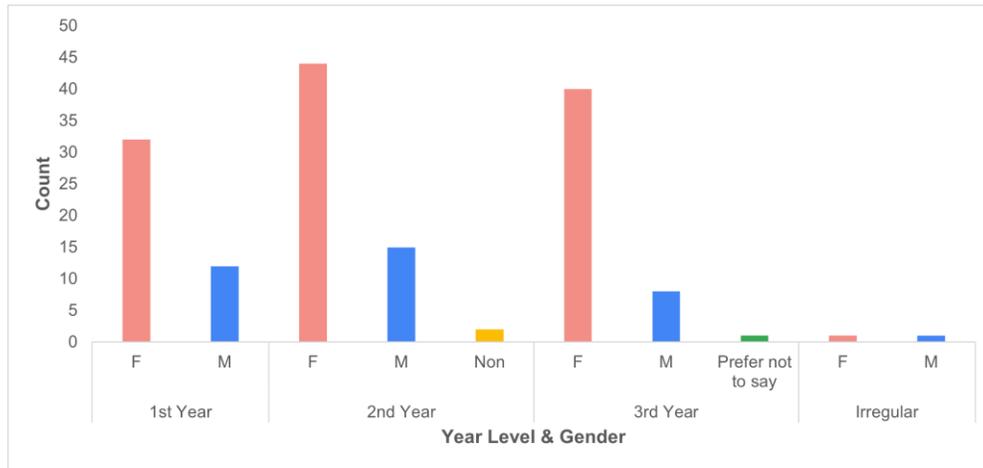


Figure 5. Number of the online survey respondents per year level and gender from NEMSU Bislig Campus, BSED English students.

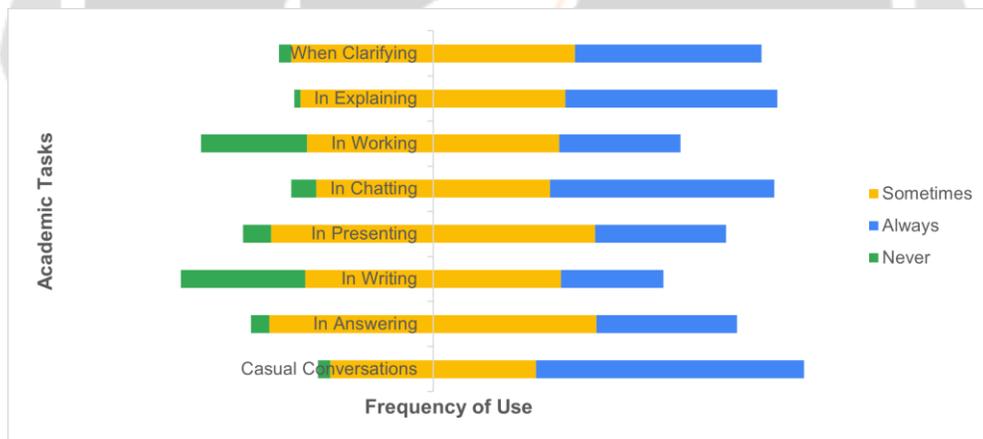


Figure 6. Frequency of use of Translanguaging across common academic tasks in NEMSU Bislig BSED English Program.

3.3 Students' Perceptions on Translanguaging

The Likert scale results provide a strong indication that students hold a highly positive perception of translanguaging in the classroom. The data shows that most responses fall under categories 4 and 5, with the highest mean value (481) under category 5, suggesting strong agreement (Figure 7). For instance, items such as "Promotes a more inclusive and supportive environment" and "New lessons are easy to learn when teachers Translanguage" received particularly high ratings in the 5th category, indicating students' strong affirmation of the value of translanguaging in making lessons more understandable and accessible^[5]. Additionally, students expressed significant agreement that translanguaging

enhances their confidence, academic performance, and enjoyment in learning, highlighting its role not just in comprehension, but also in fostering motivation and engagement^[14].

Furthermore, the consistently low responses in categories 1 and 2 reinforce this positive trend, with mean scores of just 7.5 and 5.6 respectively. This suggests that only a small fraction of students disagree or strongly disagree with the benefits of translanguaging. Interestingly, while still high, the slightly lower average in category 4 compared to category 5 implies that many students are not just agreeing but are strongly endorsing the benefits of translanguaging. These findings suggest that integrating translanguaging in English classrooms not only supports language development but also creates a more inclusive and emotionally supportive learning environment, aligning with culturally responsive teaching practices^[14].

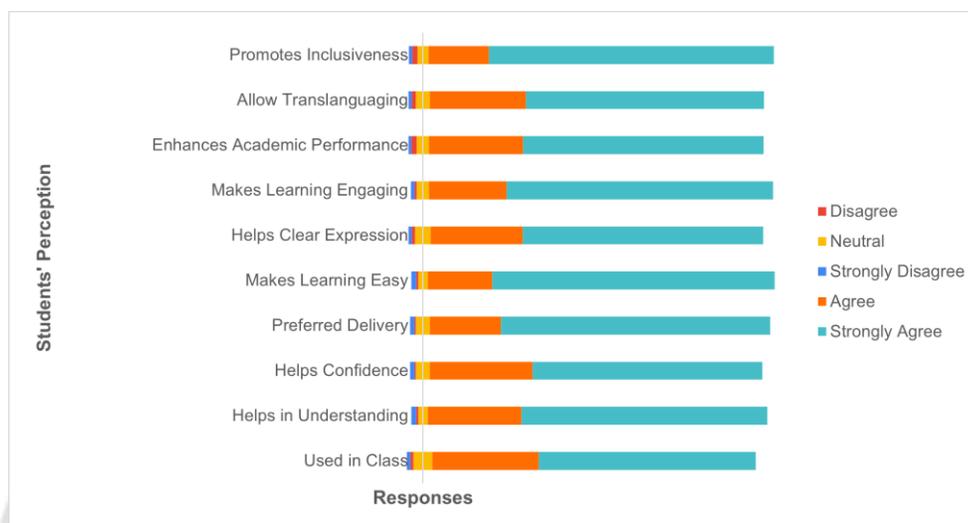


Figure 7. NEMSU Bislig BSED English students' perception on the use of Translanguaging in their classroom.

3.4 Factors Affecting Translanguaging and its Functions

Thematic analysis of the focus group discussion revealed the various factors affecting translanguaging and their functions among BSED English students at NEMSU Bislig. It was found that students employ translanguaging to ease the demands of academic tasks, particularly those requiring the use of the target language, English. They reported using translanguaging to ensure their audience understands them during teaching demonstrations and to communicate more naturally in casual conversations with peers^[18,20]. Although the program requires students to speak English, reinforced by an English-Only Policy (EOP) among teachers, many admitted to lacking confidence in using the language. As a coping mechanism, students switch between languages to reduce anxiety of being wrong grammatically and contextually, especially during classroom discussions. According to a student, “Ang experience ko is yung reporting tsaka kapag medyo hindi ko na alam kung ano yung sasabihin ko kapag nabablangko ako dun ko nalalabas ang pagtatagalog kasi di ako confident pag English baka mamali pa.” A similar observation was reported by a research study whose student interviewees admitted to experiencing language anxiety, particularly when presenting in class, due to their limited English proficiency. They turned to translanguaging as a strategy to reduce this anxiety and boost their confidence during presentations^[24].

Furthermore, during impromptu oral recitations, students tend to use translanguaging to better articulate their responses. They explained that it helps them organize their thoughts and express their ideas more clearly and directly^[10,21]. According to a student, “I do codeswitch kay helpful siya sa mga impromptu and oral. Pagmamantal block ka you tend to codeswitch para makadeliver kang information and express ideas.” A similar pattern was observed during teaching demonstrations, especially when addressing complex topics such as literature. According to the students, translanguaging enhances audience comprehension, as shown by more engaged and responsive classmates^[25]. They said that “Yes, in all ways makahelp siya. Pagmuabot mog third year daghan literature na basahon and words are difficult to express that’s why mahimong effective ang translanguaging for example, Diary of Anne Frank, naay word nga “attic” maglisud kog explain ana kung walay picture however kung magtranslanguaging ka ang attic is maexplain

nimo na dali masabtan sa studyante.” This practice reflects Jakobson’s metalingual function of language, wherein students switch to their preferred language to clarify word meanings or explain concepts effectively^[9]. This is supported by authors who found that students demonstrated better understanding and familiarity with lesson content when translanguaging was used during class discussions^[14]. In addition, participants in the current study shared that using discourse markers such as “diba?”, “kuan,” “kanang,” and “noh” helps maintain the flow of discussion. These expressions serve not only as fillers to allow thinking time but also as rhetorical tools to emphasize points and manage the pacing of speech^[16].

In peer conversations, students also reported using translanguaging, with their choice of local language varying depending on the group of friends they were interacting with. They acknowledged that their classmates come from various localities around Bislig City, each with distinct languages or speech patterns. Some students are multilingual and can shift between languages based on their peers’ linguistic backgrounds. One student responded that, “Same sa ila dependi sa tapok. Sa balay og friends naay bisaya og kinamayu. Ang kamayu sa uban kay pinabusdak murag nasuko so paggamiton nako muana sila kung nasuko ko.” They explained that using a specific language within a group helps maintain rapport and ensure mutual understanding, thereby strengthening their social connections^[26]. This aligns with Jakobson’s phatic function of language, where students switch to a local language to establish and maintain interpersonal connections^[4] ultimately reinforcing their sense of belonging^[10].

Nevertheless, the students are fully aware of the program’s requirement to speak exclusively in English. Although many of them lack confidence in using the target language, they make a conscious effort to comply with the English-Only Policy (EOP). They regard their teachers’ feedback as a source of motivation to improve their English communication skills for future classroom interactions. This perspective is supported by several studies^[24], which argue that consistent reliance on translanguaging may hinder the development of English language proficiency. These authors emphasize that the enforcement of EOP plays a significant role in enhancing students’ proficiency in English. However, some students shared that certain teachers permit code-switching, provided that students seek prior consent. They expressed appreciation for educators who allow linguistic flexibility or show interest in their home languages, noting that such gestures make them feel that their local language and culture are recognized and valued within the classroom setting^[14].

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the phenomenon of translanguaging among BSED English students at NEMSU-Bislig. Through a combination of class audio recording, online surveys and focus group discussions, the research identified the types, functions, and influencing factors of translanguaging practiced by students from three-year levels.

The results of the class audio recording showed that first-year students had the highest number of translanguaging utterances compared to students in other higher year levels. This may be attributed to their ongoing adjustment to the academic demands of the program and the university. When classified according to Shana Poplack’s three types of translanguaging (code-switching), the intra-sentential type, which is defined as switching languages within a single sentence, was found to be the most frequently used across all year levels. This finding suggests that students are able to fluidly shift between languages in a single sentence, which is typical of multilingual speakers in linguistically diverse settings like the Philippines.

The study also revealed that students use a variety of local languages in combination with English during translanguaging. Based on the online survey results, eight local languages were identified among the student participants highlighting their diverse linguistic backgrounds. Among the languages mentioned, Cebuano (Bisaya) was the most used, followed by Kamayo and Surigaonon. The predominance of these languages can be due to the university’s location in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, where these languages are widely spoken in the community.

The result of the online survey also showed that translanguaging is most frequently employed during casual and informal interactions within the classroom. However, the study also found that translanguaging is strategically employed during formal academic tasks, particularly when explaining complex ideas or when aiming to ensure the audience’s understanding. This selective use of translanguaging indicates that students are aware of the appropriateness of language choices depending on the context and as a learning strategy in class. Nevertheless, the students showed significant agreement of the use of translanguaging within the class. However, during a focus group discussion with

selected students per year, the students also recognized the importance of adhering to the English-Only Policy (EOP), especially as they are enrolled in a program focused on English language education.

On the factors influencing translinguaging and its communicative functions, the study found that one major reason students engage in translinguaging is to ensure clarity of expression and facilitate understanding, especially when dealing with difficult academic content. This aligns with Jakobson's metalingual function of language, where language is used to discuss, clarify, and interpret meaning. Another influential factor is the social setting—students are more likely to translanguage when they are with friends or among peers with whom they share a common linguistic background. This reflects Jakobson's phatic function, where language serves to establish, maintain, or reinforce social relationships.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that translinguaging plays a vital role in the academic and social lives of BSED English students at NEMSU Bislig. The use of translinguaging demonstrates the students' resourcefulness in using all available linguistic tools to allow students to bridge knowledge gaps, foster peer understanding, and develop deeper engagement with content. The findings also challenge the strict implementation of the English-Only Policy as the most effective approach in language instruction. While the policy aims to promote English fluency, the study shows that a more flexible and multilingual sensitive approach can enhance the student's language acquisition and overall learning.

Considering the study's findings and conclusions, it is recommended that educators and language policy makers revisit strict English-only policies and instead foster classroom environments that value multilingualism as a pedagogical tool. Institutions can support this by incorporating translinguaging strategies into teacher training programs to help educators effectively integrate students' full linguistic repertoires into instruction. For future researchers, further exploration is encouraged on the cultural and identity-related aspects of translinguaging, particularly how local values and language attitudes influence students' language use in academic contexts. Studies may also delve into the cognitive processes behind translinguaging, including how students determine when and how to switch languages based on context, audience, and purpose, as well as the varying frequencies of translinguaging across year levels.

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