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Bridging Beliefs and Practices: Exploring Translanguaging Perceptions and Classroom Applications in Saudi Efl Education

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ABSTRACT

The notion that incorporating native language practices can enhance individuals' proficiency in learning a foreign language has given rise to various bilingual language pedagogies, including translanguaging. In the context of learning English, numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of classroom translanguaging for second language learners. This study aimed to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging in Saudi upper-secondary classrooms and investigate the specific contexts in which translanguaging is employed during English classes. Using a mixed-methods approach that included questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, the study revealed that while teachers generally view translanguaging as a valuable practice, they remain hesitant to fully integrate it into their pedagogy. Instead, its use tends to be spontaneous and limited to specific functions, such as classroom management, and key point clarification rather than being systematically planned to achieve broader learning objectives. On the other hand, students held positive perceptions, finding translanguaging effective for enhancing comprehension, participation in classroom activities and vocabulary acquisition. These findings provide critical insights into the practical applications of translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language classrooms, highlighting the need for more structured pedagogical approaches that leverage students' linguistic backgrounds to foster a more inclusive learning environment.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Perceptions; EFL Learning; English Teachers; Spontaneous; Pedagogical

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1. Introduction

Since the dawn of the 21st century, the linguistic landscape of the world has evolved dramatically. Today, the global population is more multilingual than ever before^[1]. The rise in multilingualism is reflected in statistics showing a continuous increase in the number of people who speak multiple languages worldwide^[2]. However, despite this shift, language teaching has remained predominantly monolingual.

Ref.^[3], notes that for much of the last decade, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been governed by monolingual teaching methods, sidelining more effective bilingual strategies.

In English language instruction, the emphasis on English-only practices has gained traction, often leaving teachers who encourage the use of students' mother tongues feeling conflicted or even guilty^[4, 5]. This trend persists despite growing evidence that monolingual English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has fallen short in various learning contexts, prompting an increasing interest in the potential of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool.

Translanguaging, as defined by^[6], involves the intentional incorporation of students' linguistic and cultural resources into the instructional process. Refs.^[7, 8] distinguish between spontaneous and pedagogical translanguaging; the former refers to the natural, unplanned shifting between two or more languages in daily communication, while the latter involves deliberate, structured practices aimed at enhancing linguistic and academic performance. However, this distinction is not always clear-cut, as spontaneous translanguaging often occurs naturally, even in planned pedagogical contexts.

By allowing students to use their native language, educators can help them bridge the gap between their dominant language and English, thereby enhancing learners' ability to become fluent communicators^[4, 9]. Cook argues that rather than minimizing the use of students' native languages, teachers should embrace these languages as assets that can aid in vocabulary acquisition and grammatical comprehension in English^[4, 10].

Despite growing advocacy for bilingual pedagogical approaches in English instruction, many EFL teachers remain anchored to monolingual models of English teaching, reflective of native speaker norms^[11]. This trend is particularly evident in Saudi Arabia, where English serves as the medium of instruction across numerous scientific disciplines

at the tertiary level. The prevailing academic mindset, with few notable exceptions, continues to endorse the traditional view that promotes the exclusive use of the second language (L2) in classroom settings^[1]. This pedagogical preference for strict L2 immersion, however, is increasingly challenged by the realities of students' linguistic experiences and needs. While attaining a high level of English proficiency is a prerequisite for university admission in various disciplines and is vital in a job market that increasingly values multicultural competencies, in alignment with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, a significant proportion of students continue to face substantial difficulties in mastering English. This language barrier not only hampers students' academic progress but also limits their future career prospects, creating a mismatch between educational objectives and labor market demands^[12].

While numerous researchers have explored translanguaging at the tertiary level^[13, 14], its application in pre-university settings, particularly in secondary schools, remains largely overlooked. Secondary education is crucial in preparing students not only for college admissions but also for meeting the linguistic demands of their future academic courses. At this stage, students with adequate English proficiency possess a significant advantage over their peers, particularly in English-medium instruction environments. In addition to the limited number of studies on the Saudi EFL context, most of the existing research relies primarily on surveys and/or interviews. Observing actual translanguaging practices in classrooms can either support or challenge the reported perceptions, while also shedding light on the extent of alignment (or misalignment) between teachers' perceptions and their actual practices, and the potential balance between spontaneous and pedagogical translanguaging practices in the EFL context—especially in Saudi classrooms, an area that has been under researched in previous research. Given these considerations, this study aims to investigate translanguaging as a tool for facilitating English learning among Saudi students. Specifically, it explores both teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging and examines the contexts in which it is utilized in upper secondary classrooms. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the use of translanguaging in EFL classrooms?
2. What are students' perceptions of the use of translanguaging in EFL classrooms?

3. In what situations is translanguaging used in English classes?

Guided by the research questions, the literature review will explore the concept of translanguaging and its functions within the EFL context. Additionally, it will examine relevant studies that have informed and motivated the current investigation, highlighting key findings and gaps in the existing research

2. Literature Review

2.1. Translanguaging

Ref.^[15], defines translanguaging as “many discursive strategies that bilinguals engage in to make sense of their bilingual surroundings” (p. 45). This definition views bi/multilingual practices from the perspective of the users rather than through a traditional language-centric lens. According to García, translanguaging in education extends beyond code-switching and translation, encompassing the process through which bilinguals perform

bilingually in a variety of multimodal ways within the classroom.

To distinguish between translanguaging and code-switching^[16], define translanguaging as “the various ways multilingual speakers employ, create, and interpret diverse forms of linguistic signs to communicate beyond settings and participants and act their various subjectivities” (p. 28). This definition shifts the emphasis from switching between two fixed languages to the individual agent’s creativity in communication.

Translanguaging emphasizes the utilization of the entire linguistic repertoire of bilingual or multilingual users to facilitate learning, building on earlier concepts such as code-switching^[17]. In this sense, a distinction has been made between spontaneous translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging, where named languages contribute significantly to language repertoire development^[18]. Translanguaging pedagogy is proposed to help learners “gain knowledge, ... make sense, [and] articulate [their] thought and to communicate about using language”^[17]. Translanguaging use in EFL classrooms then utilizes students’ overall linguistic expertise as a resource to learn the language of which the student has lesser proficiency (English, in Saudi students’ case), improve academic material comprehension and enhance interaction

between fluent and less fluent language learners^[19, 20].

2.2. Previous Studies

The monolingual dominance of English in EFL/ESL contexts poses challenges for learners who may lack the requisite language proficiency and confidence to express their ideas in the target language^[21, 22]. Consequently, translanguaging has attracted considerable attention from ESL/EFL researchers. Overall, studies indicate that translanguaging serves as a valuable pedagogical tool, promoting student understanding, simplifying complex topics, and aiding in language acquisition^[23–27]. Incorporating L1 into language activities, for instance, has been shown to reduce cognitive load, thereby enhancing learners’ speaking abilities over time^[3].

Research on both teachers’ and learners’ perceptions of translanguaging reveals a lack of consensus among educators. Ref.^[9] study, which surveyed 19 instructors teaching in mainstream and dual-language programs in the United States, found that most teachers viewed translanguaging as beneficial for a range of pedagogical objectives such as providing feedback, clarifying instructions, and praising students.

Similarly, Ref.^[28] examined the attitudes of 50 English teachers in Turkey. The majority expressed positive perceptions of translanguaging, particularly as an effective strategy for increasing the participation of low-proficiency learners. These findings are consistent with those of^[29, 30], who explored Chinese teachers’ attitudes toward translanguaging in tertiary education. In both studies, a significant number of participants acknowledged the value of using students’ first languages as tools to scaffold learning for low-English proficiency students and foster stronger relationships with both L1 and L2.

However, not all studies have reported such favorable attitudes. Ref.^[31] investigated English medium instruction (EMI) teachers in Spain and found that most participants preferred to exclude L1 from their teaching practices, believing it hindered the acquisition of the target language. Similarly^[32], noted that four out of five English language instructors at a Canadian university felt that translanguaging impeded students’ learning rather than facilitating deeper understanding. Ref.^[33], also reported that some teachers felt uneasy about using the L1, adhering strictly to a monolingual approach despite occasional deviations from this practice.

While the topic of translanguaging has garnered international attention, only a limited number of studies have explored its role in EFL contexts where Arabic is the mother tongue^[13, 14, 34, 35]. In the UAE, Ref.^[34] study revealed that students at an Emirati university viewed the inclusion of both English and Arabic positively, recognizing the dual-language approach as beneficial for their future employment.

Ref.^[13] examined the attitudes of Saudi senior business students and their instructor toward translanguaging. Based on semi-structured interviews with 14 students and their instructor, the findings suggested that students appreciated the use of Arabic alongside English due to the students' insufficient proficiency in the latter, indicating that L1 use can help them enhance their grades in English. However, some students expressed concerns that this practice might impede their long-term language development and hinder their career prospects.

Ref.^[14] expanded on this by surveying EFL learners from various departments at a Saudi university. His findings, drawn from 72 participants through questionnaires and focus group interviews, reflected strong support for translanguaging in the classroom, though concerns about its impact on students' English competency remained, echoing the findings from^[13] research. Furthermore^[35], study on Saudi teachers' attitudes toward translanguaging highlighted a nuanced perspective. While educators recognized the integration of multiple linguistic and cultural codes as a natural and humanistic practice, they also expressed ambivalence, driven by pedagogical, institutional, and ideological factors.

Despite the generally positive reception of translanguaging in Saudi ESL contexts, the limited scope of existing studies primarily focusing on higher education hampers the generalizability of these findings to other educational levels, particularly in secondary schools where awareness of translanguaging remains limited^[1]. Moreover, the ambivalence expressed by teachers in these studies underscores a crucial knowledge gap regarding the practical and ideological challenges associated with translanguaging in the classroom. Importantly, all previous studies have relied on interviews and surveys, with none exploring discrepancies between teachers' and students' perceptions and actual classroom practices. This raises questions about whether translanguaging is implemented spontaneously or as part of a deliberate pedagogical strategy.

3. Methodology

3.1. Instruments

A mixed-methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative was used to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging in Saudi upper secondary classrooms and to investigate the contexts in which translanguaging is employed in English classes. To address the first research question, a questionnaire adapted from^[36] was distributed to teachers. The questionnaire comprises ten self-reported statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These statements prompted respondents to remark on their agreement with statements about the role of L1 in class engagement (items 1–4) and L2 development (items 5–10).

For the second research question, a questionnaire adapted from^[37], was distributed to students, with modifications to suit the study's focus. The researcher amended Moody's questionnaire and added additional items for relevance. The questionnaire, validated by three applied linguistics experts, consists of 12 self-report statements on a five-point Likert scale, to survey teachers' feedback on three themes: TL as practice (items 1–4), the significance of L1 use for L2 development (items 5–8), and for meaning-making functions (items 9–12). Both questionnaires were translated into Arabic to ensure comprehension among teachers and students. In the online questionnaire administered via Google Form, a section labeled as the "description box" provided a definition of translanguaging, along with an illustrative example in Arabic.

To triangulate survey data and gain deeper insights into translanguaging contexts, the third research question was addressed through one-to-one interviews with five teachers and ten upper-secondary students from various female schools. Additionally, observations were conducted in two different secondary school classes to validate interview responses and identify instances of Arabic language usage.

3.2. Participants

A convenient sample of female English teachers and upper-secondary students was recruited for this study. Data collection involved questionnaires and interviews. Interviews included five English teachers and ten upper-secondary

students chosen from various schools in Zulfi. Additionally, 11 English teachers and 106 students from upper-secondary schools in Zulfi received the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics of frequency, percentages, and mean. Data interpretation of the participants' perception of the questionnaire statements using the five-point Likert-scale, as can be seen in **Table 1**, is based on the following mean-based categorizations suggested by^[38, 39].

Table 1. Data interpretation using five-point Likert-scale.

Mean Rating	Score Range	Interpretation
1. Strongly disagree	1.00–1.80	Very Negative
2. Disagree	1.81–2.60	Negative
3. Neutral	2.61–3.40	Positive Moderate
4. Agree	3.41–4.20	Positive
5. Strongly agree	4.21–5.00	Very Positive

In the analysis of qualitative data obtained from interviews and classroom observations, a structural coding approach was employed. In qualitative inquiry, a code is “often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. The data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents...etc.”^[40]. This method involved an initial independent coding of the collected interview and observation data. Subsequently, the assigned codes were revisited and organized into thematic categories based on the contextual situations.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Teachers' Perceptions towards the Use of Translanguaging in the EFL Classrooms

To respond to the first research question, this section elucidates the survey findings crafted to delve into educators' perspectives on translanguaging across varied objectives and contexts. The outcomes pertaining to the two primary themes—classroom engagement and L2 proficiency enhancement—yielded an aggregate mean score of (3.39),

as depicted in **Table 2**, indicating an overall consensus on the importance of translanguaging strategies in nurturing language development, Nevertheless a close look at the data results shows that teachers perceive translanguaging to be a more important factor in enhancing class engagement than contributing to language learning per se.

Table 2. Mean scores of teachers' questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Mean	General Mean
Teachers	Class Engagement 3.70	3.39
	L2 development 3.03	

4.1.1. Results Related to Teachers' Perceptions of Translanguaging for Class Engagement

The findings, as displayed in **Table 3**, reveal predominantly favorable attitudes among teachers regarding the role of translanguaging in classroom engagement, with an overall mean of 3.70. This tendency is mainly reflected by the third item, which received the highest mean of 4.36 and 90.8% agreement that the use of translanguaging or L1 increases learners' engagement with the lesson. These results imply that teachers acknowledge the potential advantages of integrating students' native tongue (Arabic) for various instructional purposes, including fostering participation, facilitating inquiries, and promoting student engagement.

These findings are consistent with the research of^[28, 36], which similarly underscored the favorable disposition of teachers to L1 efficacy in enhancing the involvement of learners with lower language proficiency levels.

4.1.2. Results Related to Teachers' Perceptions of Translanguaging for L2 Development

The examination of teachers' perceptions regarding the use of translanguaging in language development revealed, as shown in **Table 4**, a spectrum of viewpoints among the participants. Item 6 garnered the highest mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.98), with 63.7% agreement that employing Arabic translation does aid students' comprehension of content. Nonetheless, the general mean score of 3.03 of this domain and the low agreement scores on item 5—which considers the exclusive use of L2 in evaluation of subject knowledge to be unfair—suggest a neutral to moderately positive stance concerning the integration of TL in L2 development. This tendency to undervalue the efficacy of translanguaging for

Table 3. Results related to the teachers’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in EFL classrooms (class engagement).

No	Items	N	Sort	M	SD	F/%	1	2	3	4	5
1.	The class is a success if the students get to share their ideas in English or Arabic as they feel comfortable.	11	2	3.82	1.33	F	0	3	1	2	5
						%	0	27.3	9.1	18.2	45.5
2.	I am positive about allowing my EFL students to use their mother tongue to ask questions.	11	3	3.73	1.19	F	1	0	3	4	3
						%	9.1	0	27.3	36.4	27.3
3.	My students feel more involved in the lesson if they are allowed to use their mother tongue.	11	1	4.36	0.92	F	0	1	0	4	6
						%	0	9.1	0	36.4	54.4
4.	I allow my students to interact freely with each other in Arabic to discuss the English lesson	11	4	2.91	1.04	F	1	3	3	4	0
	General mean 3.70					%	9.1	27.3	27.3	36.4	0

Note: On the scale used here, 1 stands for Strongly Disagree, and 5 stands for Strongly Agree.

language development, particularly in comparison to its role in enhancing classroom engagement, indicates a reluctance to fully recognize its potential in advancing the language

proficiency of EFL students. Additionally, it reflects a limited inclination to adopt translanguaging as a pedagogical approach in instructional settings.

Table 4. Results related to the teachers’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in the EFL classrooms (L2 development).

No	Items	N	Sort	M	SD	F/%	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I believe it is not possible to fairly evaluate students’ content knowledge by asking them to answer in English.	11	6	2.55	0.69	F	1	3	7	0	0
						%	9.1	27.3	63.6	0	0
6.	By translanguaging, I understand the use of translation to Arabic to help my students understand the content.	11	1	3.82	0.98	F		1	3	4	3
						%		9.1	27.3	36.4	27.3
7.	I feel that it is not helpful for students to use their mother tongue as it will only get reinforced in their language repertoire. (reverse coded)	11	4	2.73	1.19	F	1	1	5	2	2
						%	9.1	9.1	45.5	18.2	18.2
8.	The idea of translanguaging is difficult to implement in class. (reverse coded)	11	3	3.18	0.98	F	1	3	4	3	0
						%	9.1	27.3	36.4	27.3	0
9.	Students’ speaking output may improve if they are not inhibited in the use of MT in demonstrating their knowledge.	11	5	2.64	1.21	F	3	1	4	3	0
						%	27.3	9.1	36.4	27.3	0
10.	I am not sure if it is right for the EFL class to allow the use of the MT. (reverse coded)	11	2	3.27	1.42	F	3	2	2	3	1
	General mean 3.03					%	27.3	18.2	18.2	27.3	9.1

Overall, a substantial number of teachers acknowledge that translanguaging is relatively easy to implement and see it as beneficial for enhancing student engagement, interaction, and content comprehension. These results are in line with the literature contention that translanguaging is a useful technique to encourage learners with low language competence to answer and ask questions and participate in classroom activities^[18]. Nevertheless, the findings from teachers’ perceptions indicate notable ambivalence about its impact on language proficiency development, as illustrated by the prevailing view that performance evaluations should be based primarily on L2 input and output.

4.2. Students’ Perceptions towards the Use of Translanguaging in the EFL Classrooms

This section presents the survey findings that aim to explore students’ perspectives on translanguaging across var-

ious objectives and contexts. The results are organized into specific thematic categories: translanguaging as a pedagogical practice, second language development, and meaning-making. As shown in **Table 5**, the overall mean score of 3.79 reflects a predominantly positive attitude toward the use of translanguaging in EFL classrooms. Notably, the function of meaning-making garnered the highest level of agreement, with a mean score of 4.06 on the five-point Likert scale.

4.2.1. Results Related to the First Dimension: Students’ Perceptions of Translanguaging as a Practice

In relation to the first theme, translanguaging as a practice, the data presented in **Table 6** indicates that students generally hold a positive view towards the incorporation of translanguaging by their teachers in EFL classes, with an overall mean score of 3.65. This suggests that students recognize the value of using multiple languages in the classroom

Table 5. Mean scores of students' questionnaire.

Questionnaire		Mean	General Mean
Students	Translanguaging as a practice	3.65	
	L2 development	3.66	3.79
	Meaning-making	4.06	

Table 6. Results related to the students' perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in the EFL classrooms (Translanguaging as a practice).

No	Items	N	Sort	M	SD	F/%	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Translanguaging is a natural practice in EFL classes.	106	1	3.91	1.06	F	3	10	17	40	36
						%	2.8	9.4	16	37.7	34
2.	My English teacher always engaged in translanguaging.	106	3	3.55	1.11	F	6	11	30	37	22
						%	5.7	10.4	28.3	34.9	20.8
3.	I think it is not professional for my teacher to use Arabic during English classes. (reverse coded)	106	4	3.33	1.39	F	25	32	19	13	17
						%	23.6	30.2	17.9	12.3	16
4.	I have found it difficult to understand when my teacher uses both Arabic and English in my English classrooms. (reverse coded)	106	2	3.82	1.23	F	37	39	13	8	9
						%	34.9	36.8	12.3	7.5	8.54
	General mean			3.65							

to support their learning. These results are consistent with previous research that highlights students' positive attitudes toward the inclusion of their native languages as a crucial and natural component of language learning^[4, 37].

4.2.2. Results Related to the Second Dimension: Students' Perceptions of Translanguaging for L2 Development

The findings concerning the second theme, L2 development, as depicted in **Table 7**, received an overall mean value of 3.66 pointing to a favorable perception towards the effectiveness of translanguaging as an instructional tool in enhancing L2 learning and facilitating comprehension (Mean = 4.32, Standard Deviation = 0.95, 87.8% agreement), particularly when the teacher utilizes Arabic as a medium of explanation. These findings resonate with prior research emphasizing the potential advantages of integrating TL in educational settings^[13, 37].

Notably, participants expressed neutral perceptions regarding the avoidance of translanguaging by English teachers to mitigate obstacles in English language learning (Mean = 3.21, Standard Deviation = 1.2). This neutrality may stem from various factors, including divergent viewpoints on the effectiveness of translanguaging (TL) or apprehensions regarding potential drawbacks associated with its implementation.

4.2.3. Results Related to the Third Dimension:

Students' Perceptions of Translanguaging in Meaning-Making

As depicted in **Table 8**, the third thematic aspect concerning meaning-making unveils predominantly positive perceptions among the participants, exemplified by an overall mean value of 4.06. This notably high mean score denotes a robust consensus that translanguaging's main function, from learners' perspectives, is to clarify meaning, be it of words or grammatical rules and to facilitate L2 production.

4.3. The Situations in Which Translanguaging Is Used in English Classes

The third research question, concerning the contexts in which translanguaging is employed in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, was addressed through interviews with both students and teachers as well as observations of the situations in which translanguaging is used in EFL classes. Two classes were selected randomly, and field notes were obtained from one hour teaching session in each class. Structural coding of both interviews and class observations revealed that translanguaging is mainly utilized in teaching vocabulary, grammatical points, providing rapid clarification (see excerpts 1–5), and classroom management (excerpt 6). In addition, class observation showed that teachers do accept learners' use of their L1 to demonstrate their understanding of how some grammatical rules can be applied in real lan-

Table 7. Results related to the students’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in the EFL classrooms (L2 development).

No	Items	N	Sort	M	SD	F/%	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I find it helpful when my teacher uses Arabic to explain things in English class.	106	1	4.32	0.95	F	3	4	6	36	57
						%	2.8	3.8	5.7	34	53.8
6.	I think it is important for teachers to use Arabic when teaching a new language.	106	2	3.88	1.2	F	5	13	14	32	42
						%	4.7	12.3	13.2	30.2	39.6
7.	English teachers should avoid using Arabic because it will prevent English language learning. (reverse coded)	106	4	3.21	1.2	F	13	37	28	15	13
						%	12.3	34.9	26.4	14.2	12.3
8.	I feel translanguaging indicates a lack of linguistic proficiency in the second language. (reverse coded)	106	3	3.25	1.15	F	14	36	26	22	8
						%	13.2	34	24.5	20.8	7.5
General mean		3.66									

Table 8. Results related to the students’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in the EFL classrooms (meaning-making).

No	Items	N	Sort	M	SD	F/%	1	2	3	4	5
9.	It is easier to prepare my thoughts in Arabic before saying them in English.	106	2	4.02	0.98	F	3	6	13	48	36
						%	2.8	5.7	12.3	45.3	34
10.	I think it would be helpful for me to understand English better if my teacher used Arabic in class.	106	3	3.97	1.08	F	3	11	12	40	40
						%	2.8	10.4	11.3	37.3	37.7
11.	Translanguaging helps me understand and engage in conversations with my colleagues.	106	4	3.91	1.01	F	3	7	20	43	33
						%	2.8	6.8	18.9	40.6	31.1
12.	I prefer to translate new English words or statements into my Arabic to help me understand them better.	106	1	4.36	0.91	F	2	5	4	37	58
						%	1.9	4.7	3.8	34.9	54.7
General mean		4.06									

guage use (see examples 7–8). The observation of classroom interaction, however, suggests that while teachers allow L1 use to verify understanding vocabulary meaning or grammatical points, this practice does not extend to utilizing the L1 for promoting L2 output. For example, as shown from excerpts 7–8, the teacher accepted students L1 response as a sufficient sign of comprehension but did not encourage the students to reformulate the answer in their L2. The lack of knowledge of how effective translanguaging pedagogies can be utilized to inform L2 output may explain the relative reluctance among teachers in endorsing L1 in promoting language development compared to the overwhelmingly approval of its functions in classroom management.

1. “I find Arabic phrases and idioms helpful when working on vocabulary, especially with phrasal verbs. Therefore, using Arabic in phrases or idioms can be explained better and students will understand better”. (Teacher 1)
2. “The practice of translanguaging in my EFL class, it sometime appears if I asked my students for an English meaning of an English vocabulary, sometimes they will first think of the Arabic meaning before looking for the English meaning.” (Teacher 2)
3. “With grammar lessons, especially the difficult ones, I usually use some Arabic in this situation. Also, I let my students feel comfortable asking or participating

in Arabic during grammar lessons. Because I notice TL in this situation, it often helps them overcome grammar difficulties.” (Teacher 2)

4. “Translanguaging is usually used when there are new vocabulary words introduced in class. Sometimes, we struggle to understand the meaning of English words..” (Student 8)
5. “Typically, I employed the Arabic language as a means of verifying my comprehension of assigned tasks and activities, by consulting with my teacher or peers.” (Student 6)
6. “If we have a group-work activity, often there will be too much noise, so to manage the class sometimes I find it more effective when I warn the students in Arabic.” (Teacher 3)
7. Teacher: what is the meaning of All and can we use it?
Students: معناها جميعا ونستخدمها اذا كنا نتكلم عن أكثر من شخصين أو شئينين
(All, refers to more than two People or things)
8. Teacher: Excellent!, who can give me an example of neither and either?
أنا لا أحب اللون الأحمر ولا الأسود Student2: Neither
كتابي إما في الفصل أو مع زميلتي Either
(Neither: I likes neither red nor black, Either: I left my book either in the class or with my friend)

In summary, consistent with findings from surveys,

interviews, and classroom observations, Arabic was predominantly used for teaching vocabulary, managing the classroom, and offering quick clarifications during class activities. These uses align with previous research emphasizing the role of the first language (L1) in supporting the learning of complex second language (L2) concepts and materials while also improving classroom communication and management e.g., [28, 29].

While teachers acknowledged that translanguaging can facilitate meaning-making and classroom management, they remained skeptical of its effectiveness in enhancing language learning outcomes. This skepticism, highlighted in the teacher survey, aligns with other studies where teachers expressed concerns that L1 usage might hinder L2 acquisition^[31]. Restricting translanguaging to certain functions, such as comprehension and classroom management, mirrors findings from tertiary-level EFL teachers^[35], who viewed translanguaging as a natural phenomenon but were uncertain about its pedagogical benefits.

This apparent paradox may arise from teachers' limited understanding of how translanguaging can go beyond classroom management and comprehension to actively support L2 production and promote more fluid communication in English. Classroom observations, in fact, suggest that current translanguaging practices tend to be spontaneous, driven by immediate situational needs, rather than preplanned activities with clear pedagogical objectives. While students generally demonstrate positive attitudes toward translanguaging as an integral component of language learning, this contrasts with the findings of^[1]. In their study, secondary-level EFL students, though familiar with translanguaging as a classroom practice, perceived it as a hindrance to learning English. This discrepancy may be attributed to several factors. For instance, Alzabidi et al. employed open-ended questions and interviews that focused on students' general attitudes toward translanguaging, rather than examining its specific functions or benefits for language acquisition. Furthermore, their study highlighted students' limited understanding of translanguaging as a concept, which likely contributed to their reluctance. The time gap between the two studies may also suggest evolving perceptions and growing awareness of translanguaging's pedagogical potential among students.

These findings contribute significantly to the broader literature by underscoring how teachers' narrow conceptu-

alization of translanguaging constrains its pedagogical potential in EFL classrooms. Many teachers, as was evident by class observations, tend to prioritize its use for enhancing comprehension of specific linguistic points and managing the classroom, rather than fully leveraging its potential to promote more fluid and dynamic communication in the L2. This tendency highlights a crucial need for professional development that better equips teachers to understand and implement translanguaging as a tool for facilitating deeper language learning and active communication in English.

5. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions and the use of translanguaging practices within Saudi Arabia's pre-university EFL context. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The small sample size of teachers restricts the generalizability of the findings across broader EFL contexts, both within Saudi Arabia and in other similar settings. Additionally, while classroom observations provided valuable insights into the types of translanguaging practices employed, a more extensive and longitudinal examination, covering multiple class sessions and diverse contexts, would offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of both spontaneous and pedagogical translanguaging, how these practices evolve over time, and their long-term effects on language acquisition.

6. Conclusions

This research sheds light on the perceptions of EFL teachers and students in Saudi secondary schools regarding the use of translanguaging in the classroom and whether these perceptions align with actual classroom practices. The results from surveys, interviews, and classroom observations revealed that teachers generally recognize the value of incorporating students' first languages, acknowledging its potential to enhance engagement and facilitate participation. Despite these positive attitudes, teachers remain cautious about fully integrating translanguaging into their teaching practices. Translanguaging practices tend to be more spontaneous, emerging in response to learners' immediate needs (such as classroom management and comprehension), rather

than being deliberately planned to achieve specific learning objectives.

These findings are unique in that they highlight how teachers' limited understanding of the pedagogical role and applications of translanguaging may influence their perceptions and approaches to its use in EFL classrooms. This lack of knowledge underscores the critical need for professional development and support to help teachers effectively harness students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. By leveraging these resources, teachers can create more inclusive, dynamic learning environments that not only boost student engagement but also contribute to long-term improvements in English language proficiency.

The implications of this research are significant for both EFL teachers and students. Firstly, the findings highlight the perceived benefits of incorporating translanguaging practices in the classroom, as reported by both teachers and students. This suggests that embracing students' mother tongue, in this case Arabic, can enhance student engagement, participation, and overall learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to explore and utilize translanguaging strategies as a means of creating a more inclusive and effective language learning environment.

Secondly, the study underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing students' linguistic backgrounds. By incorporating students' native language into instruction, teachers can better cater to the diverse needs of EFL students, especially those with lower levels of English proficiency. This approach can provide a sense of comfort, support, and clarity, fostering a positive classroom atmosphere and facilitating students' understanding of English language concepts.

Based on these implications, future research can delve deeper into the implementation and effectiveness of translanguaging strategies in diverse EFL contexts. Additionally, professional development programs and curriculum design should incorporate guidance on incorporating translanguaging practices, empowering teachers to leverage students' linguistic resources effectively.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, A.A. and Z.A.; methodology, A.A. and Z.A.; software, Z.A.; validation, Z.A.; formal analysis, A.A. and Z.A.; investigation, A.A.; resources, A.A.; data

curation, A.A.; writing—original draft preparation, A.A.; writing—review and editing, Z.A.; visualization, A.A.; supervision, Z.A.; project administration, Z.A.; funding acquisition, Z.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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