



Research paper

Translanguaging as Communicative Agency: Bangladeshi EFL Teachers' Professional Identity Work in English Classrooms

Mohib Ullah^{a*},  Md. Tohidul Islam^b

^a Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC), Chittogram, Bangladesh

^b Assistant Professor of English, Chattogram Cantonment Public College (CCPC), Chattogram, Bangladesh

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Bangladeshi EFL
Communicative agency
Multilingual pedagogy
Professional identity
Translanguaging
Translingual professional-
legitimacy

This article examines how Bangladeshi EFL teachers use translanguaging as communicative agency and identity work. Drawing on an instrumental case study of five teachers in secondary, higher secondary and college classrooms, this study investigates how they organise Bangla–English movement during communicative tasks as well as how they narrate that movement's bearing on their professional legitimacy. Also, it explores how students at differing proficiency levels receive it: as scaffolding, as communicative access, or as a dependency risk. Ten classroom video recordings, ten semi-structured interviews and three student focus groups were analysed through classroom discourse analysis and reflexive thematic analysis. Theoretically, it puts translanguaging into dialogue with poststructuralist language teacher identity theory and Bourdieu's sociology of language. The central contribution is translingual professional legitimacy (TPL), an identity position grounding credibility in bilingual communicative effectiveness rather than monolingual English idealism. TPL names what practice already enacts; four empirical indicators make it analytically tractable. Three patterns emerge. Teachers' repertoires are purposeful and functionally differentiated; legitimacy claims form a gradient that institutions mediate and experience alone does not explain; and learners respond differentially by proficiency, unsettling celebratory accounts of multilingual pedagogy. The article reconceptualises translanguaging as communicative agency in Global South EFL settings, with implications for teacher development and language-in-education policy.

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, one of the most consequential inheritances of postcolonial language education is the tendency to perceive the use of Bangla in EFL programs as a professional failure, rather than as a pedagogical competence. This is not a neutral methodological choice in this context. It functions ideologically, because English-only teaching defines how teacher competence is judged and determines whether bilingual teachers can claim authority in the educational setting at all (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). Classes with fifty to eighty pupils, a high-stakes assessment culture, and significant differences in learner proficiency

* Corresponding author. Mohib Ullah

E-mail address: mohib@iiuc.ac.bd

<https://doi.org/10.65496/jssme.2026.109>

Received 22 August 2026; Received in revised form 21 September 2026; Accepted 22 September 2026

Available online 26 September 2026

3106-3462/© 2026 The Author. Published by Noesis Publishing. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

mean that monolingual delivery is unsuccessful for most teachers (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Holliday, 1994) and Bangla starts to indicate lack of competence.

Translanguaging theory offers a principled way out of this bind. García (2009) and García and Li Wei (2014) reframe first-language use as communicative expertise, not a deficit practice. They treat the multilingual speaker's repertoire as unified and strategically deployed which is a position that Otheguy et al. (2015) later refined. Seen this way, movement between Bangla and English is not a failure to sustain the target language but a deliberate orchestration of the full linguistic repertoire in service of learner access (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Li Wei, 2022). What remains undertheorised is how this orchestration bears on teacher professional identity: the practice itself is well documented, but the identity work it performs is not.

Three gaps structure the present research. The first concerns identity, since existing studies document the practice without specifying the identity work it enables or the conditions under which that work yields stable authority (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005). A second concerns learner reception, which is rarely differentiated by proficiency, although whether bilingual practice scaffolds access or breeds dependency cannot be settled without attending to learners' own orientations (Leung & Valdés, 2019; Rose & Galloway, 2019). The third concerns critique, since engagement with translanguaging's own limits remains uneven, and the risk is the pedagogical overextension against which Jaspers (2018) and Sah and Li (2022) caution.

These gaps are addressed here through a qualitative case study of five Bangladeshi EFL teachers, guided by three research questions.

RQ1. How do Bangladeshi EFL teachers employ translanguaging during communicative activities?

RQ2. How do these teachers narrate the relationship between Bangla use and professional legitimacy within communicative pedagogy?

RQ3. How do students across proficiency levels perceive teacher translanguaging, whether as scaffolding support, professional authority, communicative access, or dependency risk?

Translingual professional legitimacy (TPL) carries the theoretical weight of the study. Section 4 defines it formally and specifies its empirical indicators.

2. Bangladesh's EFL Context and the Politics of Bangla Use

Bangla is the mother tongue of around 98% population of Bangladesh, while English functions as a second official language and as a medium of academic exchange in higher education (Hamid & Erling, 2016). The medium of instruction is not settled here. Even experienced university teachers differ over whether Bangla or English should be used (Karim et al., 2023). At secondary and higher secondary levels, proficiency is largely receptive and examination-oriented, shaped by grammar-translation teaching and assessment that rewards accuracy over communicative competence (Hamid et al., 2009). A gap therefore separates the symbolic status of English from its condition in classrooms.

The national curriculum reforms of the 1990s mandated communicative approaches, introducing task-based activities and role-plays into the national textbooks. Teachers trained within grammar-translation traditions were expected to facilitate CLT in English-only environments without adequate preparation, while large classes and examination pressure rendered its ideals structurally unrealisable for most (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Holliday, 1994). Ullah (2016) documents the gap at higher secondary level, showing task-based orientations constrained by assessment cultures oriented toward accuracy. Teachers also retain predominantly teacher-centred roles despite communicative mandates (Mariyam et al., 2015). Curriculum listening and speaking tasks likewise assume English-only instruction (Ullah, 2023b), sharpening the pressure on teachers who depend on Bangla scaffolding, and a parallel pattern obtains at tertiary level (Ullah et al., 2022). The gap this study investigates is therefore systemic rather than local, since it is produced by curriculum, assessment and inspection arrangements operating across the sector.

Bangla use in English lessons consequently remains pervasive, institutionally unrecognised and theoretically underdeveloped in Bangladeshi scholarship. The case is not exceptional in kind, since tension between English-only norms and multilingual realities characterises postcolonial EFL across South and Southeast Asia (Canagarajah, 1999). What distinguishes the Bangladeshi configuration is the intensity with which these pressures converge, since a rapidly expanding private English-medium sector, deep social investment in English, and an inspection framework equating English-only delivery with pedagogical quality operate simultaneously. Bangladesh is therefore a productive site for theorising the identity stakes of bilingual practice.

3. Literature Review

3.1 *Translanguaging in EFL and EMI Classrooms*

Translanguaging departs from the code-switching paradigm by treating multilingual speakers as operating from a unitary, speaker-specific repertoire rather than from discrete systems (García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015). Research in EFL and EMI contexts has since documented a wide range of first language functions, from scaffolding vocabulary and task instructions to reducing anxiety and supporting comprehension among weaker learners (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Interactional work in EMI settings shows how teachers' translanguaging constructs participatory talk (Tai & Li Wei, 2021). Cenoz and Gorter (2021) distinguish spontaneous from designed translanguaging, a distinction productive for the temporal patterns reported in Section 6. In Bangladesh, first language use has been framed predominantly as a failure of CLT implementation (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008), leaving its intentionality undertheorised, though recent work on higher education has begun to address this, documenting how translanguaging redistributes power in university classrooms (Rafi & Morgan, 2023). Secondary-level classrooms, and the identity stakes of teachers' bilingual practice, remain largely unexamined.

3.2 *English-Only Ideology and Postcolonial EFL*

Critical applied linguistics has long critiqued the ideology positioning English-only delivery as the professional standard (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). Rooted in colonial language policy, it continues to structure institutional expectations and professional self-assessment across postcolonial contexts (Lin & Martin, 2005). CLT compounds the difficulty, since its communicative orientation frames target-language-only interaction as authentic practice (Holliday, 1994). Teachers are doubly positioned, held to a communicative ideal that presupposes monolingual delivery while working in classrooms that make such delivery impossible. The identity work examined here takes place within that double bind.

3.3 *Language Teacher Identity and Learner Reception*

Poststructuralist frameworks recast language teacher identity as multiple and non-unitary, constituted through discursive positioning in relation to institutional norms and professional narratives (Norton, 2000; Varghese et al., 2005). For EFL teachers in multilingual contexts, identity is invested above all in language choice, since which language is used at which moment, and how the choice is then narrated, is an identity performance with institutional and symbolic stakes (De Costa & Norton, 2017). Li Wei (2022) argues further that translanguaging operates as a political stance within structures of linguistic power.

Within Bangladesh, Alam et al. (2025a) trace teachers' identity trajectories across career stages, finding that taking up communicative pedagogy demands identity reconfiguration and not skill acquisition alone. Analysing EFL teacher job advertisements, Alam et al. (2023) show institutional competence frameworks to embed English-only norms at the point of hiring. The terrain teachers navigate is therefore enforced structurally, from institutional entry onward.

How learners evaluate teacher translanguaging has drawn comparatively little attention. Proficiency appears to sort preferences in EMI settings. Learners who have higher-proficiency tend to treat English-only instruction as aspirational target practice, while their lower-proficiency peers report that strategic first language

use aids comprehension and eases participatory anxiety (Leung & Valdés, 2019; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Implementation studies complicate that picture. Where translanguaging was deliberately designed into an EMI course, students across proficiency levels responded favourably (Muguruza et al., 2023). Legitimacy is evaluated by publics rather than residing in the teacher's practice alone.

3.4 Critical Perspectives on Translanguaging

Rapid uptake can obscure what application demands. Jaspers (2018) questions the framework's radical potential on the grounds that the conditions under which it challenges language hierarchies remain unspecified, and that legitimising translanguaging within existing structures may work against the disruption it promises. The objection bears significance in Bangladesh, where inspection rewards monolingual performance irrespective of evidence on its pedagogical advantages and disadvantages. Sah and Li (2022) find comparable mismatches across South Asian EMI contexts, where implementation often fails to scaffold access for lower-proficiency learners while offering higher-proficiency learners' too little challenge. Whether design alone can close that gap is less clear. Related concerns include pedagogical overextension (Leung & Valdés, 2019) and the reproduction of structural inequality (Dovchin, 2019). None of these critiques denies the value of translanguaging; what they demand is contextually disciplined and empirically accountable application.

4. Theoretical Framework

Three frameworks are integrated here as a mutually constitutive architecture rather than as parallel lenses, namely translanguaging theory, poststructuralist teacher identity, and Bourdieu's sociology of language. Their articulation is what makes translingual professional legitimacy theorisable.

4.1 Translanguaging and Teacher Identity

Translanguaging is understood here as the dynamic deployment of a unitary, speaker-specific repertoire, located by Otheguy et al. (2015) at the level of the individual idiolect rather than in named languages understood as discrete systems. It is therefore neither a compromise of linguistic norms nor a marker of deficit, but a creative, agentive practice (Li Wei, 2022), and in that capacity a decolonising project refusing the colonial partitioning of repertoires into hierarchically ordered named languages (Li Wei & García, 2022). García et al. (2017) accordingly position teachers as translanguaging orchestrators. Read alongside Section 3.3, where language choice is itself an identity performance with institutional stakes (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Tsui, 2007), this framing makes repertoire deployment simultaneously pedagogical and identitarian.

4.2 Bourdieu's Linguistic Capital and Symbolic Violence

Why language choices carry symbolic weight becomes intelligible through Bourdieu's (1991) sociology of language. Within Bangladesh's educational field, English functions as dominant linguistic capital, exchangeable for professional recognition, and the classroom is a micro-field in which that capital undergoes continuous audit. Symbolic violence, the internalisation of dominant norms to the point of complicity in one's own subordination, is directly relevant, since the professional guilt several participants expressed manifests an ideology that renders their own effective practice a source of anxiety.

4.3 Translingual Professional Legitimacy: Construct and Distinctiveness

Integrating these frameworks makes the formal theorisation of translingual professional legitimacy (TPL) possible. TPL is defined as a pedagogically authoritative identity position available to multilingual EFL teachers. Teachers occupying it ground their professional credibility in bilingual communicative effectiveness, that is, in the capacity to orchestrate the full repertoire in the service of learner access, and not in the performance of monolingual English idealism. To forestall conflation with adjacent constructs, Table 1 maps their relationships.

Table 1*Translingual Professional Legitimacy Distinguished From Adjacent Constructs*

Construct	Core focus	Relationship to TPL
Teacher agency	Capacity for intentional, goal-directed professional action (Varghese et al., 2005)	TPL specifies the semiotic grounds of the claim: bilingual repertoire deployment under monoglossic pressure
Professional identity	Contested narrative construction of professional selfhood (Norton, 2000; Tsui, 2007)	TPL is a specific position within that landscape: what identity work produces when translanguaging conditions and English-only pressure operate together
Linguistic capital	Symbolic value of language resources within a field, convertible into recognition (Bourdieu, 1991)	Capital is the structural condition enabling or constraining TPL; TPL names the work performed when bilingual capital is publicly claimed as authoritative
Translanguaging expertise	Technical competence in orchestrating multilingual repertoires (García et al., 2017; Cenoz & Gorter, 2021)	Expertise is competence-facing; TPL extends it to legitimacy, the capacity to sustain authority through bilingual practice under scrutiny

TPL is not a synonym for any adjacent construct but the name for their articulation in multilingual EFL teaching. Teacher agency does not specify the semiotic grounds of the legitimacy claim; professional identity does not identify the bilingual legitimacy politics that distinguish it; linguistic capital does not describe the positioned identity work through which capital is claimed as authoritative; and translanguaging expertise does not extend to the public claim that institutional pressure renders risky.

Because a construct of this kind is only as useful as the evidence that can be brought to bear on it, four empirical indicators were specified before analysis and used to locate cases on the legitimacy gradient reported in Section 6.2. These are (a) pedagogical rationalisation, where the teacher accounts for bilingual practice in terms of learner access rather than personal limitation; (b) affective stance, ranging from expressed guilt to expressed entitlement; (c) articulability before professional peers, meaning the reported capacity to defend the practice to colleagues or supervisors; and (d) stability under observation, evidenced by the maintenance or abandonment of bilingual practice when an institutional authority is present. Indicators (a) to (c) come from interview data, (d) from classroom recordings. The construct's analytical value lies in distinguishing teachers who possess translanguaging expertise from those who can publicly sustain authority on its basis, and the indicators make that distinction empirically decidable.

5. Methodology

5.1 Paradigm and Design

The study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, understanding social reality as context-dependent and constituted through participants' meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is designed as a qualitative instrumental case study (Yin, 2014), able to generate contextually rich insight into translanguaging as identity work. The unit of analysis is the teacher-case, that is, the articulation of one teacher's classroom practice, identity narrative and institutional setting; two subordinate units support it, namely the translanguaging episode for RQ1 and the proficiency-banded focus group for RQ3. The design is cross-sectional, all data being generated within a single ten-week period.

5.2 Research Context and Participants

Data were generated across three institutions in a divisional city: two government-managed secondary and higher secondary schools and one private college. Purposive selection rested on their adherence to the CLT-oriented national curriculum and their mixed-proficiency, large-class context. The combination of sites was also deliberate, in that the two government schools represent the conditions in which most Bangladeshi EFL teaching takes place, while the private college was included to introduce contrast in institutional oversight, since private institutions in this sector are typically subject to lighter external inspection. That contrast proved analytically consequential (Section 6.2).

Five EFL teachers participated: Farida (secondary, 12 years' experience), Kamrul (higher secondary, 8 years), Nasrin (college, 15 years), Ruhul (secondary, 5 years) and Sultana (higher secondary, 10 years). All names are pseudonyms; ages ranged from 28 to 45. Sampling was purposive, seeking teachers who differed in institutional level, years of experience and gender. None had received formal translanguaging training, though all had attended government-organised CLT orientation programmes. Their own English proficiency was not independently assessed, a limitation returned to in Section 7.4, though all five hold Master's degrees in English. Student participants ($n = 23$) formed three proficiency-banded focus groups addressing RQ3. Banding drew on three sources, namely students' most recent school English examination results, their class teacher's nomination, and a short written and oral screening task administered by the first author. Group 1 ($n = 8$) comprised students in the lowest institutional band and Group 3 ($n = 7$) those in the highest, while Group 2 ($n = 8$) was deliberately mixed, so that disagreement could surface within a single conversation. Banding is treated as an institutionally situated category rather than as a measure of absolute language ability.

5.2.1 Rationale for Sample Size

Working with five participants reflects a methodological commitment rather than a practical limitation, since sample adequacy in interpretivist designs is evaluated against information power (Malterud et al., 2016). Information power is high when the aim is narrow and participant specificity dense, with strong theoretical grounding and a case-focused analytic strategy; the present design satisfies each condition. The aim is narrowly focused; participants were purposively selected for maximum variation, yielding information-rich cases (Patton, 2015); and instrumental case study triangulated with reflexive thematic analysis generates transferable insight from few richly documented cases (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Each teacher contributed two recorded lessons, two interviews and a member-checking conversation, and every interview account was read against video from that teacher's own lessons.

5.3 Data Collection

Across ten weeks, data collection proceeded in three phases. In Phase 1 (Weeks 2–5), each teacher was video recorded in two communicative lessons built around task-based activities from the national textbook (pair work, role-play, group discussion, picture description), generating ten lessons and approximately 7.5 hours of discourse data. Two lessons per teacher were recorded rather than one, so that any pattern could be checked for within-teacher consistency, and not more, because repeated recording raised access and disruption concerns; the lessons were separated by at least two weeks and covered different textbook units. Phase 2 involved two semi-structured interviews with each of the five teachers (ten in total). Interviews lasted 45 – 60 minutes. Interview 1 was conducted after the first recorded lesson (Weeks 4–6) and generated stories about the use of Bangla and the experience of bilingual pedagogy in the institutional context. In this second interview (after 2 lessons, W7–9), the selected recording segments were used as elicitation prompts with participants' own practice. Language was chosen by participants freely. Interviews were conducted in both languages and recorded in the language, with extracts of these translated into English by the first author and then back-translated by a second bilingual applied linguist who was not otherwise involved in the study. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Phase 3 (Week 10) consisted of three student focus groups, each of around 6–8 students, moderated with a protocol that examined the four reception orientations and included phrases designed to check for disagreement.

5.4 Data Analysis: Procedure, Coding Transparency, and Reflexivity

Classroom recordings were transcribed using a simplified version of Jefferson's (1984) notation, adapted for classroom discourse analysis (Walsh, 2011). Pause length and overlap were retained, as was emphasis; fine phonetic detail was not. Analysis focused on the sequential organisation of teacher turns and on the functional purposes of Bangla–English movement, alongside patterns of learner response. It was conducted prior to and independently of the interview analysis, so that findings were grounded in interactional evidence rather than teacher self-report.

The coding unit for RQ1 was the teacher turn. A turn was coded as translanguaged when it contained at least one lexical item, clause or complete utterance drawn from Bangla, whether or not English also appeared within the same turn; turns consisting solely of Bangla backchannels were excluded. Treating Bangla and English as identifiable may appear inconsistent with the unitary-repertoire position adopted in Section 4.1, but the inconsistency is only apparent. Named languages are retained as analyst's categories, warranted by the fact that they are the categories through which institutional evaluation in this setting operates. What is professionally at stake is not whether a teacher's repertoire is internally partitioned, but whether observers classify a stretch of talk as Bangla and draw inferences from it. Counts therefore index socially consequential categorisation, not underlying linguistic systems.

Interview and focus group data were analysed through Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, with coding inductive at Phase 2 and progressively informed at Phases 3 and 4 by the indicators in Section 4.3. Two examples show how codes were derived. Ruhul's remark that he uses Bangla and feels guilty, yet chooses it because it is right for the students, generated *identity-threat guilt*, *bilingual choice rationale* and *professional adequacy anxiety*; Nasrin's question about the point of English-only if nobody understands generated *inverted communicative logic* and *institutional ideology critique*. Coding of the focus groups also produced *scaffolding entry point*, *affective L1 reassurance* and *metalinguistic mediation*, and of the interviews, *dual consciousness*, *principled bilingual claim* and *performance shift under observation*. Phase 3 clustered 41 initial codes into three candidate themes: functional translanguaging; a legitimacy gradient running from identity threat to publicly asserted authority; and proficiency-differentiated reception. The two strands were integrated rather than merged, in that discourse-analytic findings for each teacher were placed alongside that teacher's interview themes in a case display, and divergences between enacted practice and narrated legitimacy were treated as analytically significant. Phase 4 involved iterative theme review documented through analytic memos, one of which records a pivotal decision.

Analytic memo, Week 6

Nasrin's conditional framing—'if I don't explain in Bangla'—initially appeared as deficit justification. On re-reading, the conditional structure positions Bangla as calculated pedagogical choice rather than default. Guilt and agency co-exist in a single utterance, as in Ruhul's. I revised accordingly. What the data show is not movement within individuals from deficit-framing to legitimacy-framing, but a gradient across cases, running from the unstable co-presence of guilt and agency to its stable, publicly asserted form.

Treating Farida's observation-induced reversion to English as a formal negative instance, rather than dismissing it as an anomaly, was itself a further reflexivity decision — and one that refined the construct. TPL, in an earlier formulation, was treated as an achieved disposition recoverable from teacher narrative alone. Farida's case made that untenable. She articulated the position fully in interview, yet abandoned it the moment she was observed. TPL was therefore respecified as a claim whose maintenance is conditional on institutional circumstance, which is why stability under observation was retained as a separate indicator.

5.5 Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

Ethical approval was granted by the first author's institutional review board, and permission obtained from each institution. Teachers gave informed written consent; students gave assent, with parental consent for participants under eighteen. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw, and recordings are stored on encrypted institutional servers. Trustworthiness followed Alam et al.'s (2025b) four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, pursued through source triangulation, member-checking, thick description, reflexive journaling and peer debriefing. Each teacher reviewed a summary of their own case, and two amendments followed. These criteria were treated as an analytic discipline rather than a procedural checklist, since established trustworthiness frameworks strain under interpretive and phenomenologically oriented designs and require reflexive rather than mechanical application (Ullah et al., 2026). Positionality requires fuller statement than acknowledgement. The first author is a Bangladeshi-trained applied linguist who taught in comparable institutions for over a decade and holds a critical view of English-only policy. That biography enabled rapport and bilingual interviewing, and it carried a risk of confirmatory reading, since participants who articulated principled bilingual practice were initially the more compelling cases. Three procedures countered it. Classroom coding preceded interview analysis; the negative case was formally designated; and a peer debriefer outside the translanguaging literature reviewed the case displays and challenged two interpretations, one of which was revised.

6. Findings

Analysis generated three findings, namely translanguaging as a functionally differentiated scaffold with a characteristic temporal trajectory, a cross-case gradient of translanguaging professional legitimacy, and a proficiency-differentiated learner ecology.

6.1 Dynamic Scaffolding Trajectory

Across all five classrooms, Bangla–English movement was systematic and sequentially organised. These were not habitual departures from English-medium instruction but purposeful deployments at specific junctures, namely task setup, comprehension repair, vocabulary scaffolding, metalinguistic clarification and affective support during peer interaction. Task-entry scaffolding is illustrated in Extract 1:

Extract 1 (Farida, Secondary, Grade 9, Lesson 3) T: Now you are going to do a role-play. One of you is the customer, one is the shopkeeper. Customer has a problem with the product. [Pause, 3 secs] What is the problem? Ss: [silence; students consult textbook] T: Boro problem ki? [What is the big problem?] The product is broken. Broken—mane noshto. [broken—meaning damaged] In English: "Excuse me, I'd like to return this." Eta bolun. [Say this.] Practice.

Farida's Bangla makes two things happen. The conceptual anchor question helps learners orient to the communicative frame, while the lexical gloss provides for understanding without disrupting the task. Her gradation to English for the target phrase is intentional. In this instance, Bangla facilitates access to English engagement but does not replace it. Affective Support is demonstrated in Extract 2.

Extract 2 (Kamrul, Higher Secondary, Grade 11, Lesson 2) T: Group discussion. Topic: "Should students wear uniforms?" Your opinion in English. [Looks at silent group] Tumi bolcho na keno? Opekkha korcho naki, onnora ki bole shonar jonno? [Why aren't you speaking? Are you waiting to hear what the others say?] Don't be shy. Your English doesn't need to be perfect. Shudhu try koro. [Just try.]

Kamrul addresses the reticence directly and reframes participation as low-stakes, in the language in which solidarity is most efficiently established (Canagarajah, 2018). Metalinguistic scaffolding appears in Extract 3.

Extract 3 (Nasrin, College Level, Lesson 5) T: Give your opinion and support it. "In my opinion," "I believe that." Eta holo opinion deoar jaiga. [These are the places where you give your opinion.]

"However" diye opposite view dite parba. [With "however" you can give an opposite view.] Use at least two.

Explaining English discourse markers' pragmatic functions in Bangla, Nasrin enables learners to allocate cognitive resources to deploying the markers rather than decoding them, which is designed translanguaging in Cenoz and Gorter's (2021) sense.

Across all ten lessons a consistent directional pattern emerged. Translated turns clustered in the opening third of each lesson and declined in the final third, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2

Translated Teacher Turns Across Lesson Thirds (Ten Recorded Lessons)

Teacher (lesson)	Teacher turns (n)	Translated turns (n)	First third (n)	Final third (n)
Farida (L2)	104	21	12	3
Farida (L3)	118	24	14	3
Kamrul (L1)	96	19	10	3
Kamrul (L2)	109	22	11	2
Nasrin (L4)	122	20	13	2
Nasrin (L5)	115	18	12	2
Ruhul (L1)	101	27	15	4
Ruhul (L2)	98	25	14	4
Sultana (L1)	112	23	13	3
Sultana (L2)	107	21	12	3
Total	1082	220	126	29

The proportion of teacher turns coded as translated fell from a mean of 35% in the first third of the lesson to 8% in the final third. The direction held in every lesson; only the steepness varied, never the sign. Replicated across all five teachers, this pattern is termed here the dynamic scaffolding trajectory — a temporally organised regularity that positions translanguaging as a purposeful scaffold with exit orientation. It is compatible with CLT's goals, and it is distinguishable from the unsystematic first-language use that critics most plausibly target. Two qualifications are due. First, the pattern is a within-lesson regularity observed under recording conditions, not a claim about practice in general. Second, the counts index turns categorised as containing Bangla, in the sense specified in Section 5.4.

6.2 Translingual Professional Legitimacy Under Construction

All five narrated Bangla use as professional tension: English-only ideology pulling one-way, communicative classroom reality the other. Their positions varied along the four indicators in Section 4.3, and that variation is institutionally mediated rather than simply experience determined. Cases run from the most precarious to the most consolidated. The ordering is a cross-case gradient, not a developmental sequence, since a cross-sectional design cannot establish that any individual teacher moved along it.

Ruhul, the least experienced participant (5 years), offered the starkest illustration of identity threat:

"I use Bangla and I feel guilty. Because I think—what will they think of me? Will they think my English is not good? But actually, I'm choosing Bangla because it's the right thing for them, not because I can't do English." (Ruhul, Interview 1)

One word changes the entire nature of the guilt and self-judgement into principled agency. Tsui (2007) talks about 'actually' as a way of justifying the choice of language, which is in turn a way of expressing a sense of doubt. Ruhul meets the rationalisation criterion but not the affective indicator and alone would not have been able to make the claim in front of his colleagues.

Farida is the critical case for this gradient and was formally defined as the negative instance. In interview, she spoke with great principle of bilingual practice; in the recordings, she switched back to English when the headmaster knocked at her door.

"When he walks by, I automatically switch. Because in that moment I don't want him to see me speaking Bangla. Even if I know it's right for the students." (Farida, Interview 2)

Her shift shows that TPL remains contextually suppressible even when intellectually appropriated. Knowing the position and claiming it publicly are distinct achievements, and the distance between them is measured in institutional pressure. Kamrul (8 years) revealed a related constraint, this time articulatory:

"I know it's the right thing to do. Bangla helps them. But I can't really explain to my colleagues why I do it. If they see me, I feel I have to justify myself." (Kamrul, Interview 2)

Both instantiate Bourdieu's (1991) symbolic violence. Internalised norms render practitioners complicit in their own subordination even as their practice subverts those norms. Nasrin (15 years) occupied a more developed position, though still a tension-marked one: "When I use Bangla, I sometimes feel like I'm failing as an English teacher. But if I don't explain in Bangla, 60 to 70 per cent just sit there and understand nothing. What is the point of English-only if nobody understands?" (Nasrin, Interview 2). Sultana (10 years) exemplifies fully realised TPL:

"I think Bangla is a tool. I use it when I need to, and I don't feel bad about it anymore. If I'm doing a role-play and one student doesn't understand the task, I explain in Bangla once, clearly, and then we do it in English. That's not mixing up the lesson. That's being smart about teaching. I know both languages. I should use both." (Sultana, Interview 1)

Her formulation 'that's being smart about teaching' is a mature claim to TPL, at once principled, affirmative and expert, and she meets all four indicators. Compared with Farida's, this case complicates any straightforward narrative of experience accumulation. Having five years less service, Sultana nonetheless displays greater identity stability. Institutional culture appears to matter at least as much as time served, since classroom language choice was monitored more closely by Farida's government school than by Sultana's private college. Rather than documentary analysis of inspection practice, participant report and field observation supply the evidence for that contrast. The data support this claim, but do not establish it.

6.3 The Proficiency-Differentiated Translanguaging Ecology

Responses across the three focus groups were patterned rather than uniform. Scaffolding support dominated Groups 1 and 2, while communicative access was invoked in all three. Dependency risk surfaced in Group 3 and, in qualified form, in Group 2; professional authority arose spontaneously in Group 2 alone. Lower- and mixed-proficiency participants voiced the scaffolding orientation most directly, framing Bangla less as a concession to weakness than as a condition of doing the English work at all.

When sir explains it in Bangla, I actually understand what I am supposed to do, and then I can do the English part properly. If he speaks only English, maybe forty or fifty per cent reaches me. So Bangla makes me do more English, not less. (Student, Focus Group 2, Grade 11)

The final clause states the scaffolding logic in a learner's own terms: first language use enabling engagement with English rather than displacing it, which is close to what García and Li Wei (2014) claim for translanguaging. A higher-proficiency participant in Group 3 reversed the terms.

If the teacher always explains in Bangla, students become lazy. They wait for the Bangla and stop trying in English. Sometimes it is better to struggle a little. That is when you actually learn something. (Student, Focus Group 3)

This dependency-risk orientation was strongest among higher-proficiency participants, though it was not confined to them. Group 2 contained both orientations, in that three participants endorsed the scaffolding account while two argued that Bangla explanation should be withheld until students had attempted the task in English, a position close to dependency risk but framed as sequencing rather than teacher competence. One Group 1 participant also questioned Bangla use, since examinations are in English; this was the single such instance in the lower-proficiency data and concerned washback rather than pedagogy. Communicative agency therefore requires strategic exit alongside strategic entry, a requirement the temporal organisation documented in Section 6.1 meets in practice. These data show a proficiency-differentiated ecology in which teacher legitimacy is evaluated by constituencies whose criteria diverge. The stronger claim that learner reception co-constructs TPL is not established here, since focus groups record perceptions rather than any observable effect of those perceptions on teachers' claims.

7. Discussion

7.1 *Translanguaging as Communicative Agency*

Classroom discourse analysis shows translanguaging in these contexts to be communicative agency, purposeful and directionally organised in the service of learner participation. The three functions documented, namely task scaffolding, affective support and metalinguistic mediation, are consistent with designed translanguaging pedagogy (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; García et al., 2017). Bangla-dense at task entry and reduced as learners engage, the dynamic scaffolding trajectory shows these teachers operating with an exit-oriented logic, which eases, though it does not resolve, the tension between translanguaging and CLT's objectives identified by Holliday (1994). Bilingual practice emerges here as not merely tolerable within communicative pedagogy but, in these classrooms, as a condition of its realisation; whether it is constitutive of communicative pedagogy more generally is a claim five cases cannot support.

7.2 *TPL Development, Professional Learning, and Competing Explanations*

Position on the legitimacy gradient is associated with experience but not determined by it, and access to alternative professional discourses and to institutional conditions permitting rather than punishing bilingual practice matters at least as much. Specifying TPL as the position at the consolidated end of that gradient offers professional development a conceptually precise target. Persistent barriers to engagement with non-traditional frameworks surface throughout Ullah's (2023a) investigation of MOOC-based professional development: institutional reluctance to validate approaches diverging from English-only norms is one that any TPL-oriented programme would need to address. Theoretical input alone will not suffice. Teachers require both a vocabulary of legitimacy and conditions under which it can be used, and such conditions can be cultivated, since translanguaging-informed teacher education opens discursive space in which bilingual practice becomes expressible as legitimate (Yuan & Yang, 2023). Training that supplies the vocabulary without altering the terms of its use risks widening the gap between private conviction and public performance that Farida's case illustrates.

Competing explanations require acknowledgement. Institutional culture is the most substantive alternative, since Sultana's greater identity stability relative to Farida's, despite less total experience, is more plausibly explained by differing administrative oversight. Training biography, leadership expectations and teachers' own English proficiency may each shape TPL expression independently of years of service, and the last of these could not be examined here, since proficiency was not independently assessed. Farida's headmaster-induced reversion points to leadership attitudes as the more immediate influence. Where leadership is exercised critically rather than managerially, it can conversely underwrite teachers' claims to linguistic authority, as Ullah's (in press) study of secondary English teachers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts indicates. These alternatives contextualise the gradient claim rather than negating it, though disaggregating its determinants will require comparative designs not attempted here.

7.3 Co-Constructed Ecology and Suggestive Policy Directions

The learner focus group findings support Jaspers' (2018) argument that translanguaging's value cannot be assumed independently of the publics who receive it. The proficiency-differentiated ecology reinforces a second caution, since proficiency-insensitive implementation, Sah and Li (2022) warn, may serve neither lower-proficiency learners needing scaffolded access nor higher-proficiency learners needing productive challenge. The dynamic scaffolding trajectory partly addresses that tension, since temporal organisation already manages the balance, though such management remains teacher-intuitive and professionally unmarked.

For language-in-education policy, these findings are suggestive rather than a prescriptive basis for reform. Policy frameworks acknowledging translanguaging within specified parameters, namely entry-point scaffolding with exit orientation, might reduce the professional guilt documented here and bring official expectations closer to practitioner realities, consistent with Phyak's (2021) call for South Asian language education policy to move beyond monoglossic idealism. Those parameters would also need specification for ethnolinguistically diverse regions, where Bangla is itself a dominant rather than a home language and the repertoire at issue is not the Bangla–English pairing assumed throughout this study (Ullah, in press). Any such proposal would require validation through implementation research at a scale well beyond five cases.

7.4 Alternative Interpretations and Limitations

The gradient observed here could reflect general career socialisation, with tolerance for norm-divergent practice increasing with experience in any domain; against that reading, the teachers' explicit connection of language choice to professional worth and bilingual expertise is not reducible to socialisation of that kind. Researcher presence may have influenced practice, though consistency across both observed lessons for each teacher, confirmed through member-checking, partially addresses the concern. Working in a single city, five participants cannot stand for Bangladeshi EFL teachers broadly. Thus, sample size and purposive selection limit representational adequacy. Accordingly, the findings are more generative than generalisable. Whether TPL, offered as a candidate lens, holds beyond these five classrooms remains open. Adopting a cross-sectional design constrains the claims too. To read the gradient reported in Section 6.2 as development within any one teacher would be unwarranted; it is best understood as a cross-case pattern. One variable was left unassessed: teachers' own English proficiency, which might shape both practice and legitimacy claims.

8. Conclusion

Translanguaging in the Bangladeshi EFL classrooms studied here is not a departure from professional competence but an exercise of it. As a purposeful and temporally organised deployment of the bilingual repertoire, it performs communicative agency against a persistent English-only ideology. Distinguished from adjacent constructs and specified through four empirical indicators, translanguaging gives applied linguistics the vocabulary it has lacked for naming what practitioners already enact, and what institutional norms compel them to conceal. A practice without a professional name can be neither defended in staffrooms nor recognised in evaluation frameworks.

Three empirical contributions structure the theoretical yield. First, the dynamic scaffolding trajectory establishes exit-oriented Bangla–English movement as a within-lesson regularity in these teachers' task delivery, compatible with CLT's goals. Second, corroborated by a formally designated negative instance, the institutionally mediated legitimacy gradient offers a more contextually specific account of bilingual professional identity than prior work has managed. The third contribution concerns reception, where the proficiency-differentiated ecology shows legitimacy to be evaluated by learner constituencies whose criteria diverge. A design principle follows from that divergence: translanguaging requires not only strategic entry but deliberate and visible exit.

Jaspers' (2018) argument about transformative limits, together with the critique of overextension (Sah & Li, 2022), keeps the advocacy offered here disciplined. What the study maps is a set of contexts where translanguaging operates as communicative agency; what it does not establish is that translanguaging does so by definition, or everywhere. For teacher educators, TPL is a reframing resource: it helps teachers claim authority through their bilingualism rather than despite it, and it names what those teachers are doing when they exercise such authority while uneasy about its standing.

Funding

The author declares that this research received no external funding. The study was conducted without financial support from any public, commercial, or non-profit funding agency.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this research. The author has no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could have influenced the design, conduct, analysis, or reporting of the study.

References

- Alam, M. S., Asmawi, A., Haque, M. H., Ullah, M. M., Patwary, M. N., Fatema, S., & Akhter, H. (2023). An appreciation of the EFL teacher model in Bangladesh: A content analysis of job advertisements. *The International Journal of Diversity in Education*, 24(1), 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-0020/CGP/v24i01/41-64>
- Alam, M. S., Asmawi, A., Ullah, M. M., & Fatema, S. (2025). The tetra pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research: Equipping early-career researchers with a fundamental understanding. *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*, 5(6), 73–79. <https://doi.org/10.55544/ijrah.5.6.13>
- Alam, M. S., Asmawi, A., Ullah, M. M., Haque, M. H., Patwary, M. N., Fatema, S., & Akhter, H. (2025). Negotiated selves: Mapping EFL teachers' personality trajectories for communicative pedagogy. *Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology*, 1(3), 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.63385/ipt.v1i3.168>
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Polity Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2018). Translingual practice as spatial repertoires: Expanding the paradigm beyond structuralist orientations. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 31–54. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx041>
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2021). *Pedagogical translanguaging*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009029384>
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>
- Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information*, 45(4), 483–499. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018406069584>
- De Costa, P. I., & Norton, B. (2017). Introduction: Identity, transdisciplinarity, and the good language teacher. *The Modern Language Journal*, 101(S1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12368>

- Dovchin, S. (2019). The politics of injustice in translanguaging: Linguistic discrimination. In T. A. Barrett & S. Dovchin (Eds.), *Critical inquiries in the sociolinguistics of globalization* (pp. 84–101). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788922852-008>
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O., Johnson, S. I., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Caslon.
- García, O., & Li, W. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765>
- Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B. (2008). Will CLT bail out the bogged down ELT in Bangladesh? *English Today*, 24(3), 16–24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078408000254>
- Hamid, M. O., & Erling, E. J. (2016). English-in-education policy and planning in Bangladesh: A critical examination. In R. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *English language education policy in Asia* (pp. 25–48). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22464-0_2
- Hamid, M. O., Sussex, R., & Khan, A. (2009). Private tutoring in English for secondary school students in Bangladesh. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(2), 281–308. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00168.x>
- Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jaspers, J. (2018). The transformative limits of translanguaging. *Language & Communication*, 58, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2017.12.001>
- Jefferson, G. (1984). Transcript notation. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. ix–xvi). Cambridge University Press.
- Karim, A., Kabilan, M. K., Ahmed, Z., Reshmin, L., & Rahman, M. M. (2023). The medium of instruction in Bangladeshi higher education institutions: Bangla, English, or both? *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 22(3), 232–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2020.1871353>
- Leung, C., & Valdés, G. (2019). Translanguaging and the transdisciplinary framework for language teaching and learning in a multilingual world. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(2), 348–370. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12568>
- Li, W. (2022). Translanguaging as a political stance: Implications for English language education. *ELT Journal*, 76(2), 172–182. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccab083>
- Li, W., & García, O. (2022). Not a first language but one repertoire: Translanguaging as a decolonizing project. *RELJ Journal*, 53(2), 313–324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221092841>
- Lin, A. M. Y., & Martin, P. W. (Eds.). (2005). *Decolonisation, globalisation: Language-in-education policy and practice*. Multilingual Matters.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753–1760. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444>
- Mariyam, T., Kabir, M. H., & Ullah, M. M. (2015). Casting the authority or holding it still: An investigation of teachers' role in CLT classrooms in Bangladesh. *The International Journal of Social Science*, 37, 133–146.
- Muguruza, B., Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2023). Implementing translanguaging pedagogies in an English-medium instruction course. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 20(2), 540–555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2020.1822848>
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Longman.
- Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6(3), 281–307. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2015-0014>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. Longman.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Rafi, A. S. M., & Morgan, A.-M. (2023). Translanguaging and power in academic writing discourse: The case of a Bangladeshi university. *Classroom Discourse*, 14(2), 192–214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2022.2046621>

- Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019). *Global Englishes for language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316678343>
- Sah, P. K., & Li, G. (2022). Translanguaging or unequal languaging? Unfolding the plurilingual discourse of English medium instruction policy in Nepal's public schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(6), 2075–2094. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1849011>
- Tai, K. W. H., & Li, W. (2021). Constructing playful talk through translanguaging in English-medium instruction mathematics classrooms. *Applied Linguistics*, 42(4), 607–640. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amaa043>
- Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), 657–680. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2007.tb00098.x>
- Ullah, M. M. (2015). CLT at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh: Theory and practice. *IIUC Studies*, 12, 71–86. <https://doi.org/10.3329/iiucs.v12i0.30582>
- Ullah, M. M. (2022). A pedagogical appraisal of the higher secondary textbook of Bangladesh for teaching listening and speaking skills. *Bangladesh Journal of Integrated Thoughts*, 18(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.52805/bjit.v18i1.270>
- Ullah, M. M. (2023). MOOCs for professional development in Bangladesh: Difficulties and conveniences. *IIUC Studies*, 20(1), 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.3329/iiucs.v20i1.69045>
- Ullah, M. M. (in press). Critical teacher leadership, linguistic power, and ethnic identity: A qualitative study of secondary school English teachers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. *IIUC Studies*.
- Ullah, M. M. (2023a). MOOCs for professional development in Bangladesh: Difficulties and conveniences. *IIUC Studies*, 20(1), 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.3329/iiucs.v20i1.69045>
- Ullah, M. M. (2023b). A pedagogical appraisal of the higher secondary textbook of Bangladesh for teaching listening and speaking skills. *Bangladesh Journal of Integrated Thoughts*, 18(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.52805/bjit.v18i1.270>
- Ullah, M. M., Fatema, S., Alam, M. S., & Siddiqua, F. (2026). Rethinking qualitative rigor in applied linguistics: Trustworthiness frameworks, phenomenological inquiry, and the epistemological demands of emerging methodologies. *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*, 6(5), 43–54. <https://www.ijrah.com/index.php/ijrah/article/view/1295>
- Ullah, M. M., Uddin, M. E., Karmakar, K., Alam, M. S., & Islam, T. (2022). Exploring EFL teachers' facilitating critical thinking skills in teaching writing to low-proficient undergraduate students in Bangladesh: A mixed method approach. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 11(4), 222–234. <https://doi.org/10.55493/5019.v11i4.4690>
- Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 4(1), 21–44. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0401_2
- Walsh, S. (2011). *Exploring classroom discourse: Language in action*. Routledge.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Yuan, R., & Yang, M. (2023). Towards an understanding of translanguaging in EMI teacher education classrooms. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(4), 884–906. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820964123>

